



## A Blatant Betrayal of Trust

Rosslyn Noonan, CNZM

Callous, distressing, outrageous – just a few of the adjectives that describe the decision of the National led Coalition Government's decision not to establish an independent process for determining redress for victims of abuse in state and faith-based care, as recommended by the Royal Commission on Abuse in Care and developed in collaboration with survivors. What's more, funding was provided for only an insultingly pathetic increase in any financial compensation granted.

It was a betrayal of the trust built with survivor activists by Erica Stanford, the Minister now Responsible for the Royal Commission on Abuse in Care. At the end of April, I attended an Investiture ceremony at Government House, Wellington, honouring survivors who had campaigned for decades for justice and for the protection of current and future generations of children and young people.

Each one I talked with expressed ambivalence about being there, still wary about whether the Government could be trusted despite the effusive Parliamentary apologies. I observed, however, the warmth with which Minister Stanford, representing the Government at the formalities, engaged with them. Since the establishment of the Royal Commission she is, to my knowledge, the only Minister to invite survivors to her office, to listen to them in person. But she is only one Minister and had to gain support of Cabinet colleagues for any responses to the Commission's recommendations.

To recall, the final report of the Royal Commission on Abuse in Care, established in 2018, was publicly released in July 2024. *Whanaketia – Through pain and trauma, from darkness to light – Whakairihia ki te tihi o Maungārongo*. It concluded that between 113,000 and 253,000 children, young people and adults had been abused and neglected at state and faith-based institutions in New Zealand between 1950 and 1999, and that abuse had continued since 2000. The survivors' accounts and the investigations undertaken made visible a shameful period in New Zealand's history. The extent of the physical, sexual, mental and emotional abuse of children is heartbreaking. Made worse by nearly 50 years of denial and cover-up by senior public servants and the politicians they advised. The actions of senior public servants in the 1990s and throughout the 2000s included denigration and re-traumatising of survivors who came forward. The actions of faith-based institutions were no better.

As early as December 2021, the Royal Commission had released a report with detailed recommendations on a holistic redress process, *He Purapura Ora, he Māra Tip* from Redress to Puretumu Torowhānui. While accepting its recommendations the then Labour Government delayed in developing the redress process proposed. In the meantime, elderly and unwell survivors were dying, while anger and frustration were growing amongst those who had courageously given evidence at the Commission. Eventually a new process was finalised just before the 2023 election. It has yet to be made public.

The Royal Commission's report was scathing about the way the Crown (the government and its agencies) had responded to claims of abuse even when it knew they were true. Survivors' experiences were "downplayed, disbelieved or dismissed". They were subjected to "inconsistent claims processes run by the same departments and ministries responsible for the abuse". Faith-based institutions were described as no better.

With Budget 2025 decisions, except for the separate offer for the Lake Alice survivors, nothing has changed. A Lake Alice patient of the Child and Adolescent Unit had to go to the United Nations to finally get acknowledgement by the Crown that they had been tortured. The offer to Lake Alice survivors is \$150,000 on application or an opportunity to negotiate an individual package.

Thousands of other survivors, many who suffered treatment and conditions akin to torture, are now back to square one – in exactly the same position that they were before the Royal Commission. They are faced with dealing with the agencies, state and faith-based, responsible for their abuse as children or vulnerable adults, facing those in government departments and church lawyers who previously denied the truth of their claims and denigrated them, and who, despite claims to the contrary have consistently put the reputation of their faith or their agency and the government's fiscal interests ahead of the well-being of survivors and today's children in care. Any financial compensation remains minimal.

Senior public servants were responsible for the reprehensible treatment of survivors who had the courage to make public in the 1990s and 2000s how they had been treated as children in care, treatment that re-traumatised many of them. Not a single public servant has been held accountable in any way for their behaviour. Some have recently retired, others are still in senior positions. All of them have earned much more than \$150,000 a year. Yet \$150,000 is the maximum currently offered to those whose lives and potential were damaged often beyond full repair while in care as children and young people.

It is a further betrayal.



## AROUND THE CONNEXION

### Levin Uniting Host Writing Workshop

As part of a vibrant and diverse community outreach programme, Levin Uniting Parish recently hosted a 'Write Your Story Community Workshop'. We share a poem written by participant **Jenny Benton**.



*I met a friend for coffee  
In a cafe yesterday  
She looked at me and asked  
How are you today?*

*Asking how are you's a trigger  
Shall I tell the truth this time?  
My life has changed forever  
And I'm anything but fine*

*Can't you see that I am hurting?  
I think inside my mind  
I'm full of grief and sadness  
And I'm crying all the time*

*But she doesn't need to hear that  
So I turn to her and say  
I'm fine thanks, and you  
How are you today?*



## Pacific Church Leaders Meeting a Call for Transformation

Te Aroha Rountree. MCNZ President

In 2025, the Pacific Church Leaders' Meeting convened in Pago Pago, American Samoa. Under the theme *Do Kamo – Transformation of the Pacific Household of God*, Church leaders reflected on our shared mission and the evolving challenges facing our communities.

The term *Do Kamo* originates from the Kanak language of New Caledonia, where 'Do' signifies 'sacred' and 'Kamo' refers to 'the authentic, living person'. Together, they encapsulate a vision of transformation rooted in authenticity, sacredness, and communal reciprocity. This concept emphasises a return to spiritual and cultural roots, advocating for a holistic transformation that encompasses personal, communal, and ecological dimensions.

The meeting underscored the importance of unity among Pacific churches in addressing regional challenges. Leaders recognised that the Pacific's diverse cultures and traditions are interconnected, forming a collective 'household of God'. This unity calls for collaborative efforts to tackle pressing issues such as climate change, gender justice, and the preservation of indigenous cultures.

A significant focus of the meeting was the urgent need for climate justice. Pacific island nations are among the most vulnerable to climate change, facing rising sea levels and extreme weather events. Church leaders emphasised their role as *Kaitiaki* of creation, advocating for sustainable practices and policies that protect the environment. This commitment aligns with the *Do Kamo* ethos, which calls for a harmonious relationship between humanity and the earth.

Gender-based violence and inequality remain critical issues in the Pacific. The meeting highlighted the need for churches to be safe spaces that promote gender justice and empower women. Initiatives like the Pacific Ecumenical Youth Council and programmes in collaboration with UN Women aim to address these challenges by fostering leadership and participation among women and youth.

The theme of *Do Kamo* also encompasses a call for decolonisation and self-determination. Leaders discussed the importance of reclaiming indigenous identities and practices, particularly in theological education and church governance. This approach seeks to dismantle colonial structures and empower Pacific communities to define their own spiritual and cultural paths.

Recognising the pivotal role of youth in shaping the future, the meeting facilitated intergenerational dialogue. Young delegates shared their perspectives on issues like substance abuse, employment challenges, and the impact of social media. Their insights underscored the necessity of involving youth in decision-making processes, ensuring that the transformation envisioned by *Do Kamo* is inclusive and forward-looking.

The Pacific Church Leaders' Meeting in Pago Pago was more than a gathering; it was a call for transformation. By embracing the principles of *Do Kamo*, church leaders committed to fostering a Pacific Household of God that is authentic, sacred, and responsive to the challenges of the modern world. This vision requires collective action, rooted in faith, culture, and a deep respect for the environment.

As the Pacific continues to navigate complex social, ecological, and spiritual issues, the message of *Do Kamo* serves as a guiding light, reminding all that transformation begins with a return to authenticity and sacredness in every aspect of life.



## Climate and Natives: An invitation

Rev Dr Jione Havea

Climate crises are intensifying. The causes and effects are all around us, reaching into and through every kitchen and living room. Without belittling the pains and despairs due to climate crises, an alternative perspective is viable: climate crises are platforms, opportunities, and catalysts for reconsidering common practices, views, and values.

- Taking climate crises both as impairments and as catalysts, how might we reconsider some of the proverbial 'elephants in the room' in Oceania (for Aotearoa, Pasifika, and Australia)?
- And more importantly, how do we move from reconsidering to transforming who we are and what we do?

Knowing the causes and effects of climate crises is not enough; changing and transforming our practices, views, and values in response to climate crises are necessary.

### Elephants

There are many rooms in a big cluster of islands such as Aotearoa, and there are many elephants, but the mother-elephant that has avoided sustained public interrogation is Christendom. The marks of its tusks are everywhere, from the cargo holds of the pakeha explorers to the modern board rooms devoted to justifying and necessitating economic developments and capitalizing monopolies – modern projects that have fanned the intensity of climate crises. Christendom did an effective job of demonizing the natives, the first peoples of the many clusters of islands in Oceania.

### Natives

When the white missionaries came to Oceania  
they taught the native people to worship  
in the ways of the white missionaries

at that time, the natives already believed in deities  
in mana and tapu of whenua  
in mana and tapu of moana  
and in mana and tapu of langi  
the natives were worship-full  
in their native ways

When the natives learned to pray and to say 'amen'  
in the ways of the white missionaries  
the ways of the missionaries became the standards  
and the God of the missionaries became supreme

But the ancestors of the natives became demonized  
their native ways were made  
uncivilized  
paganized  
savaged  
by the bearers of Christendom and white civilization  
(jh, 2025)

This lament echoes the cry that has come from Africa – that the missionaries invited the natives to pray, after which the Africans were gifted with the Bible, but the missionaries took the land. In Africa and in Oceania, the natives lost quite a lot because of and to the missionary project (read: Christian elephant). In native eyes, what we lost are connected because whenua, moana, langi, natives, and ancestors interlink. With this reflection, I invite readers to



reexamine our attitudes toward natives – were they savages? in whose eyes? how might a change of heart toward the natives navigate us through the waves of climate crises?

Stay tuned.



## THEOLOGY



### Thinking Faithfully

Rev Dr Nāsili Vaka'uta Principal, Trinity Theological College

The Methodist tradition has long valued both heart and mind. John Wesley was a scholar, a preacher, and a reformer—a man deeply committed to holiness of heart and life, but equally committed to study, reason, and theological reflection. He read widely, thought deeply, and urged his preachers to do the same. For Wesley, there was no true Christian faith without an engaged and disciplined mind.

Yet in some corners of the church today, we are witnessing a quiet retreat from that commitment. Practical ministry skills are being prioritised—sometimes exclusively—at the expense of theological depth. The ability to preach, run a meeting, offer pastoral care, or lead a service is being treated as the full measure of readiness for ministry. These are important, yes. But they are not sufficient. Formation is more than function. It is about forming people—shaping the kind of person a minister is becoming. This requires more than training. It requires education. It requires the development of a thinking, discerning, and independent mind—capable of reading the signs of the times, wrestling with Scripture, reflecting on theology, and speaking into complex issues with clarity and grace.

Too often, however, we encounter a deep discomfort with thinking in the life of the church. This discomfort is what theologians call anti-intellectualism. It is not new, but it is dangerous. It hides behind spiritual language and often presents itself as a form of humility—“We don’t need theology; we just need Jesus,” or “Too much study can get in the way of faith.” But behind these sentiments is fear: fear of questions we can’t easily answer, fear of losing control, fear of change. Anti-intellectualism resists learning. It treats questions as threats rather than invitations. It discourages dialogue and reflection. And most concerning, it produces shallow faith. A church that discourages thinking will quickly find itself unable to respond meaningfully to the world around it. Without theological depth, we fall back on slogans, moralism, or nostalgia. And none of these are sufficient for the real challenges we face—whether it’s climate justice, racism, economic inequality, or spiritual harm done in God’s name.

The world is asking hard questions. If our ministers and lay leaders cannot meet these questions with both heart and mind, we will lose our voice. But if we take formation seriously—if we honour learning, encourage questioning, and form leaders who think faithfully—we will find that our tradition still has much to offer. Wesley’s own rule of life encouraged the use of reason, the reading of Scripture, the wisdom of tradition, and the lessons of experience. This “Wesleyan Quadrilateral” remains a gift to the church—but only if we use it. This is not about becoming elitist or academic for its own sake. It is about forming leaders who can discern wisely, lead boldly, and love deeply.

Formation is not a factory. It is a forge. It shapes character, nurtures conviction, and prepares us not just to do ministry, but to be ministers—thinking, faithful, grounded, and courageous.

As Methodists, let us recommit to the life of the mind—not in place of the heart, but alongside it. For loving God with all our mind is not optional. It is a sacred calling.



## Salvation Lies in Love

Dr Lucy D'Aeth

Since April, Christchurch West Methodist Parish has been hosting the Orange Sky van every Tuesday afternoon. The warm welcome offered by the volunteer hosts lifts the practical proposition of shower and laundry facilities into a transformational act of solidarity with those experiencing hardship.

The Orange Sky van is instantly recognisable on the streets of Ōtautahi because of its vibrant colour, however what is not immediately obvious is that the van is neatly kitted out with washing

machines, clothes dryers and a hot shower, all powered by solar panels on the van roof. To operate, the van merely needs to connect to a water tap and place its outflow pipe into a wastewater drain.

The service, offered every Tuesday afternoon on an initial three-month trial basis, is hosted by a diverse range of volunteers, mainly students from the nearby University of Canterbury. The Church shares its lounge so everyone can enjoy a hot drink while they wait for their laundry to be washed and dried. Those using the hot showers are able to borrow comfy dressing gowns while they wait.

Orange Sky is a not-for-profit organisation providing people experiencing homelessness with access to free laundry services, warm showers and genuine, non-judgmental conversation, across New Zealand. <https://www.orangesky.org.nz>. Christchurch West were keen to ensure that people in need on the west side of the city can benefit from the service, which already operates in the inner city and east side.

Those using the service may be sleeping on the streets or in their cars but equally may find the cost of hot water and a washing machine impossible to cover in these difficult times. Given the whakamā which can accompany poverty, Orange Sky is working to offer a mana-enhancing approach. Orange Sky was originally founded in Brisbane in 2014 and was named after an Alexi Murdoch song which affirms that we are all children under the same sky and that 'salvation lies in love'.

The parish is hopeful that over the coming weeks, those in need of the Orange Sky van and its practical welcome will find support and care to make life a little easier.



### CONTACT DETAILS

I welcome your feedback on content included in this publication.

Ngā mihi nui

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### St John's Tongan Congregation Youth Visit Hamilton Recycling Centre

Alilia Molitika

Earlier this year 25 young people from St John's Tongan Congregation in Hamilton had the opportunity to visit the city's recycling station. The outing was entertaining, educational and left a lasting impression on the group.

The group gathered in the education room, where a large viewing window overlooked the warehouse. Through this window, the children were able to watch the real-time process of sorting and managing recyclable materials. Everyone was surprised at just how much material passes through the centre every day. It gave a real sense of how much waste we all produce - and how much of it can be reused.

An educator / guide explained the importance of recycling and the impact of landfill waste. The fact that many items sent to landfill don't decompose for hundreds of years was a reminder to reduce landfill waste by recycling items like paper, cans, and clean plastics, and by composting food scraps when possible.

To reinforce the learning, children were divided into small groups and given an opportunity to sort items into what can and can't be recycled. This hands-on task helped them understand that not everything belongs in the recycling bin.

The following day, the group gathered to reflect on their experience. The children created drawings of what they had learned and proudly shared their ideas with one another. Their artwork and stories showed how much they had absorbed -from knowing what belongs in the yellow bin (recyclables) and the green bin (organic waste), to the importance of rinsing containers before recycling.

It was an inspiring and meaningful visit that left a lasting impression. Our children came away with knowledge and a new commitment to caring for the environment - one piece of recycling at a time.

Special thanks to Ma'uma'u atu ki he Loloto (MALO) who planned and sponsored this trip.



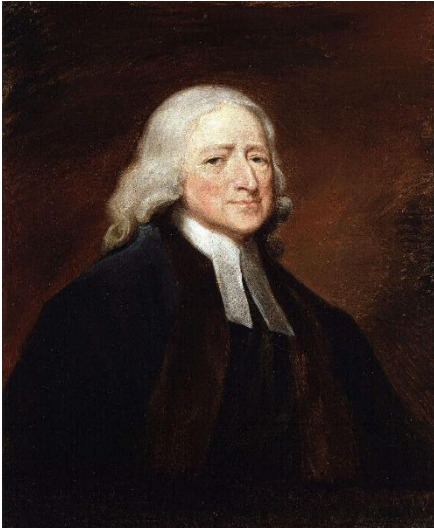
## CARTOON



### Jim's Cartoon

Brendan Boughen

Our regular cartoon from Jim, finds the funny, and sometimes not so funny, side of faith.



## Wesley Day from Different Perspectives

Rev Keita Hotere, Marama Hotere, and Rev Dr Arapera Ngaha offer three different Wesley Day reflections: from a small rural community, a hospital bedside and urban Auckland.

### Kawhia

Ecumenism thrives in Kawhia, where Baptist, Anglican, Methodist, Māori and Pākehā gather in faith, fellowship, and a shared meal together. On Wesley Day, we reflected on John Wesley's Aldersgate experience and the powerful presence of *Te Wairua Tapu* —the Holy Spirit moving in unexpected ways. Over kai talk turned from Kingitanga to upskilling locals to be first responders, preserving heritage buildings, and compliance issues in earthquake strengthening. We celebrated the season's abundance of *pōhata*, described as a flavourful plant that compliments a pot of pork bones. It was a day of learning, connection, and gratitude, reinforcing the vibrant spirit of this seaside community.

### Whangarei Hospital

Sitting beside my Tohunga Uncle at Whangarei hospital, we laughed as he casually forecasted rain—his informants, the pigeons. Sure enough, the sky had a tantrum, soaking us before making a sunny comeback. Then, we witnessed my dog's escape toward the rugby fields. I live across from the hospital, so the run was short-lived. Uncle, meanwhile, dropped gardening wisdom on ancient *peruperu* and *taro hoia* varieties high in antioxidant levels, making them a nutritious staple in indigenous diets. He then pondered whether the church held a community food-sharing database. I described the Church's Green Fund, and he nodded, reassured that Taiao projects are receiving support.

### Tāmaki Makaurau

John Wesley would be proud of the expressions of service in Glen Eden today! YouTube videos, young people acting out snippets of John and Charles Wesley's life, updates on the parish's homeless meals, their food bank, a Charles Wesley hymn, stories of our church's bicultural journey, all rolled up in scriptures read in three different languages. These experiences merged into John Wesley's central message of peace; social Justice is not silent, social justice is for all. One thing is certain; John Wesley would be standing alongside the marginalised. Protesting the injustice of government moves to implement laws that ignores Te Tiriti obligations and disempowers pay equity sanctions for working class women.

### He Inoi

*Loving God, we come together a kaleidoscope of memories and voices, keeping traditions alive, prepared to help others, united in faith and purpose.*

*We cherish Indigenous knowledge and wisdom passed down. Help us to care for your creation with respect.*

*Above all, may we, like John Wesley, never tire in doing good. Let us stand resolute to lift the weary, fight for justice, and reflect your grace in all we do.*

*Amine.*





## World Day of Prayer: A Personal Reflection

On Friday, 7 March 2025, Glen Eden Methodist Church hosted an ecumenical service for the World Day of Prayer. It was a celebration of faith, unity, and the wonderful creation that we all are. This year's theme, *I Made You Wonderful*, resonated deeply with **Sola Kuini Levi**.

Reflecting on the past few months, I see how God's hand was guiding me even when I was unaware. In November last year, I completed a First Aid/CPR course. My son, Israel, also

completed his CPR course in late 2024. At the time, we both thought we would never need to use these skills. However, God had a plan. In February, my son and I were able to use our training to save my partner, and Israel's father, Fagamoa's life during a heart attack. God's presence was undeniable, preparing us for what was to come. As Proverbs 16:9 says, "In their hearts humans plan their course, but the Lord establishes their steps."

This traumatic experience brought my family closer together and strengthened our faith. Fagamoa came home from hospital on the day before the World Day of Prayer. Attending the service was essential for me, as prayer had been our cornerstone throughout this challenging time. So many people lifted their hearts and prayers to God for Fagamoa's healing, and we felt the power of those prayers. James 5:16 reminds us, "The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective."

The service at Glen Eden Methodist Church was beautiful, heartfelt, and warm. I was moved by the sight of the women of God in their colorful clothes, adorned with flowers representing the Cook Islands in the Pacific with the biggest hearts for our Lord. The theme, *I Made You Wonderful*, fitted perfectly with my experience. It reminded me that we are all fearfully and wonderfully made by God, and His love and care are with us always.

As I stood among the congregation, I felt a profound sense of gratitude for the support and love we received during our difficult time. The service was a reminder of God's unwavering presence and the power of prayer in our lives. Philippians 4:6-7 says, "Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus."

The World Day of Prayer is an international, ecumenical, women-led movement that began in 1927. It enables participants to hear the thoughts of women worldwide, including their hopes, concerns, and prayers. This year's theme, *I Made You Wonderful*, is based on Psalm 139:14, which says, "I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works; my soul knows it very well." The service invites us to recognise the divine creation within ourselves and others, and to treat every person as wonderfully made by God.



## Facing the Unimaginable/ Refugees face the Future with Hope

Gillian Southey

In 2023, the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR), reported that a record 122.6 million people were recognised as displaced, 43.7 million as refugees. On Refugee Sunday we reflect on the plight, strength and courage of people forced to flee their home country to escape conflict or persecution.

This year Refugee Sunday falls on 22 June in the Methodist and Presbyterian church calendar. It follows [World Refugee Day](#) which this year focuses on solidarity. New Zealand [has committed](#) to resettling 1,500 refugees each year. Churches are involved in this process, some through sponsorship. The Judeo-Christian tradition strongly emphasises our responsibilities to the stranger throughout Scripture. Sharing these stories and those of former refugees living in our community is a valuable way to reflect on ways to advocate for the world that God loves.

### World Refugee Day

World Refugee Day is an annual international celebration of the people who have survived unimaginable suffering. The United Nations has set aside 20 June to honour the strength and courage of people who have been forced to flee their home country to escape conflict or persecution.

Cuts in international aid funding have [forced](#) UNHCR and other agencies to halt programmes that provide much needed support to refugees and returnees.

However, global military spending has grown for the tenth year in a row. According to the Stockholm International Peace Institute, in 2024 it [increased](#) by 9.4 per cent in real terms compared to 2023, reaching US \$ 2718 billion.

Later this month, [UNHCR](#) will release 2024 data on people displaced by conflict, war and persecution. An unimaginable 17.4 million children [are](#) in danger of harm and are already losing out to major cuts in services and aids.

### Churches seek Opportunities for Peace

"For us Christians, there is no stranger to the love of Christ," said Archbishop Ieronymos II in his [opening address](#) at the Churches' Commission on International Affairs of the World Council of Churches. He underlined the importance of caring for people who are suffering and have been uprooted from their homes.

Last month's conference brought delegates together to address a world of climate catastrophe, war, and economic and social injustice. The conference was held in Greece as part of centenary celebrations marking the beginning of the Life and Work Movement which [promoted](#) a larger Christian response to the world. Feeding the hungry or welcoming the stranger was not only an individual action but something that Christians and churches could do more effectively together. The Life and Work Movement contributed to the formation of the World Council of Churches in 1948.



## Preserving Aotearoa's Methodist History Frame by Frame

Katherine Doig, National Archivist, MCNZ

In October last year while undertaking an audit of the condition of our audiovisual holdings at Kei Muri Māpara, I found (by virtue of its ghastly vinegar odour!) a small crate's worth of magnetic media – both reel to reel films and audio tapes, and a few cassette tapes also - inherited from the former Auckland Methodist Archives, that were clearly suffering from vinegar syndrome.

Vinegar syndrome is a progressive chemical deterioration which can lead to acetate film stock shrinking and becoming buckled and brittle – and ultimately, if not caught in time, to the complete loss of the material recorded on the affected reels. Unfortunately, those that I found weren't catalogued, and the items that had casings were only lightly labelled at best. I contacted specialist colleagues at New Zealand Micrographic Services (NZMS) to request that they assess the material to tell us firstly what it was, and (content dependent) whether or not any of it was in good enough condition to be saved via digitisation.

Fortunately, NZMS found that the material in the poorest state of decay was foreign - recordings of preaching at Cliff College, UK. As our copies were likely one set of many, we asked that they safely dispose of these reels for us.

Film stock is generally best housed in a monitored cool store (i.e. 'on ice'). We don't have this capability at Kei Muri Māpara, so going forward, we are unlikely to accept any more film stock into the collection.

NZMS did find salvageable film stock during their assessment of the material we sent to them, and we were very grateful to be granted the funds by the BoA to have that material digitised for permanent preservation. That process is now complete, and the 12 digitised reels - the earliest of which dates from 1935)– are now available to view on our Recollect site!

Many of the films were problematic to date and place however, so we have spent an interesting month investigating their provenance. In the instance of [this film](#), I was confident from the outline of the hills in the background that the location of the film was Christchurch, and either the Heathcote or Redcliffs area. Dating it was tricky though as there's such a jarring difference in the clothing styles filmed - which I've subsequently realised is probably because attendees were dressing up in the garb of their particular era at Sunday School for this special occasion. The gym uniforms and dancing captured in the thumbnail image gave me strong 1950s 'Heavenly Creatures' vibes, but everything else looks so much earlier – as does the fact that it's black and white, whereas much of the 1950s film stock that we hold is in colour.

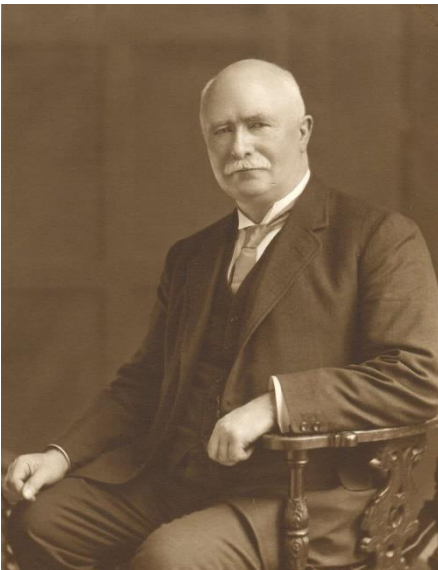
As we'd just uploaded [another film](#) that dates from the 1930s, where the women are wearing much less to exercise in than I'd have expected for that decade, I was doubly confused! However, after a few 'rekkies' of those two valleys, and the sites of the former Methodist churches in those locations, combined with a bit of historical detective work, et voilà - you can now turn back time to March 31, 1957 - and join Rev W T Blight and the congregation of St. John's Methodist Church Redcliffs to celebrate the opening of four new Sunday School classrooms.

We hope that you enjoy watching these films as much as we have these past few weeks – and while you watch, take a moment to consider that we were just a hair's breadth away from losing this precious material forever. We estimate that in just 5 to 10 years more if left as they were, the continued degradation of the reels would've completely erased this precious taonga – which via digitisation, is now permanently secure, accessible to anyone, anywhere - bringing MCNZ's rich and vibrant history to life as only moving image media can.



## William Ferguson Massey; Party Politician, National Leader & Great Human

Rev Donald Phillipps



In my family we have a story of a young farmer wearing gumboots, turning up at a meeting of a newly formed (1895) farming lobby group called the National Association. That man went on to become New Zealand's longest serving Prime Minister.

It is 100 years since W.F. Massey (1856 – 1925) died. This contribution is not an attempt to summarise his long and illustrious career in national and Commonwealth politics. He was however, front-page news in *The New Zealand Methodist Times* when he died, and the editor's remarks, brief though they were, are worth re-reading. The editorial concluded with these few sentences: "(He) was not a great man as a politician. His was a truer greatness. He was great in the best human qualities. And for these we honour his memory. What were those human qualities?"

William Ewart Gladstone, the English 19th century Prime Minister, was noted for his eloquence. A quote from one of his speeches, perhaps about his liberal political philosophy or his views on tea, could be printed on a poster or as a piece of wall art. Much nearer home was Michael Joseph Savage, the first NZ Labour Prime Minister.

Historian Dr Michael Bassett said: "When I was a small boy, few homes were complete in the working-class suburbs of Auckland without a framed, tinted photo of Michael Joseph Savage. It was usually mounted, sometimes with a gilt surround, that was out of all proportion to the socio-economic standing of the house in which it hung." Bassett recalled being offered a framed photo by one of his constituents. It came from a working-class home where it had hung in the hall next to a crucifix. The lady who owned it told him that "Savage was the nearest thing to Christ in her life."

It would be patronising in the extreme to dismiss such respect as a form of idolatry. Nevertheless, to honour someone by hanging their photos in the kitchen can create a sense of distance, rather than immediacy. Remembering someone in such a way doesn't necessarily lead to putting into practice what they stand for. Are we guilty of that when we limit our commitment to Jesus of Nazareth to an hour on Sunday? A recent lectionary reading from John reminded us of Jesus' words: "... just as I have loved you, so you must love one another." That's a call to action, not to adoration.

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This year and next we will all be exercising our political rights – at local and then at national level. Don't let any politician tell you that religion and politics don't belong together. But let's not forget, either, that what we look for in our politicians is more than mere adherence to a party line. As *The New Zealand Methodist Times* editor said of Massey "He was great in the best human qualities." Might that be a benchmark for us?