



Acknowledging the Passing of His Holiness Pope Francis

MCNZ President Te Aroha Rountree joined leaders from around the world in acknowledging the passing of Pope Francis. We share the letter of condolence sent to the Most Reverend Paul Martin, SM.

Moe mai rā e te Pāpā Francis, e okioki atu rā ki tua o te ārai. E tangi ana mātou i Te Hāhi Weteriana o Aotearoa, mō te matenga o tō koutou rangatira tapu, a Pope Francis. E mihi ana mātou mō tōna oranga kaha ki te whakahaere i ngā mahi o te Rongopai, me te whakakotahi i te ao whakapono i runga i te aroha, te atawhai, me te rangimārie.

It is with deep sorrow and heartfelt respect that Te Hāhi Weteriana o Aotearoa - the Methodist Church of New Zealand

joins the global community in mourning the passing of His Holiness Pope Francis. Pope Francis was a shepherd of remarkable compassion, humility, and courage. His life and ministry have left an indelible mark on the world. He reminded us all of the centrality of love, mercy, and justice in the Christian journey, and he embodied the Gospel call to care for the poor, the marginalised, and the Earth itself.

Ko ia he rama i te pō, he rongoā mō te hunga rawakore, he rangatira i whai tika, i whai pono. Throughout his papacy, Pope Francis reached across denominational lines, building bridges where there were once barriers. His ecumenical spirit and commitment to dialogue brought Christians closer together in our shared calling to be instruments of peace and reconciliation. His voice for social justice, climate action, and indigenous rights resonated with the kaupapa of Te Hāhi Weteriana o Aotearoa, affirming our shared calling to serve with respect and integrity.

In Aotearoa New Zealand, we give thanks for the ways in which his leadership inspired us to seek justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with our God. His example encourages us to continue working toward a more compassionate and inclusive world. As you mourn the loss of your beloved leader, we pray for God's comfort to surround the Roman Catholic community, and for strength and guidance as you discern the path ahead. May the legacy of Pope Francis continue to shine as a beacon of faith, hope, and love in our world.

E te Pāpā, kua wehe koe i te ao nei, engari kāore koe e warewaretia. Ko tōu manaaki, ko tōu aroha, ko tōu kaha ki te tautoko i ngā hunga rawakore me ngā hunga pātea o te ao, ka mau tonu hei taurira mō ngā whakatupuranga kei te haere mai. Haere atu rā, e te Pāpā, haere atu rā. Haere, e te rangatira, moe mai i te korowai aroha o te Atua.

Te Aroha Rountree
Perēhitini o Te Hahi Weteriana o Aotearoa
President of The Methodist Church of New Zealand.



The Mug Cupboard, the Alb, and the Spirit on the Move: A Church Reawakened

Vice President Rev Peter Norman issues a call to embrace our stories, re-root our faith, and let the Spirit reshape the Church in Aotearoa.

The mug cupboard ...

Every household has one. It's packed with mugs — not matching sets, but a glorious jumble of colours, shapes, and backstories. Some are handmade with wobbly handles and thumbprints in the glaze. A few are cracked, others are stained. None of them match. All of them matter. And all of them are used — again and again. **That's the Church.**

Not the glass cabinet Church — the kind where theology is locked behind doctrinal doors and ritualised authority. No. The real Church is the mug cupboard. Scruffy, diverse, full of memory and meaning. Not ornamental or perfect, but useful and willing. Yet, much of Christianity since the 4th century has tried to model itself on the china cabinet. While the Nicene Creed was written to unify belief, it also had the effect of narrowing it — pushing out difference, mystery, and Spirit-led messiness. Theologian Grace Ji-Sun Kim, in *When God Became White*, challenges the Church to name and dismantle the colonial, patriarchal, and racial systems that were grafted into Christianity through its alliance with empire. Until we reckon with this history, she writes, “we remain trapped in forms that deny the liberating Jesus and silence the voice of the Spirit.”

The 4th-century Constantinian shift — when Christianity became the empire's favourite — reshaped everything. The Church began to mirror Roman structures: hierarchy, rigid authority, and centralised control. Apostolic succession, once a safeguard for passing on Jesus' teachings, became a framework for legitimising ecclesiastical power. Bishops shifted from spiritual guides to imperial officials, their authority tied as much to Rome as to Scripture. Even the garments worn reflect this shift: the *alb* from the Roman *tunica talaris*, and the *stole* — originally the *stolé*, a scarf of office worn by Roman bureaucrats — symbolised imperial rank and status. Over time, these signs of power became signs of piety. They were never everyday clothes — they were garments of empire. This transformation of dress mirrors the wider evolution of the Jesus movement — from grassroots service to imperial institution. But John Wesley didn't wear an *alb* and *stole*. As an Anglican priest in the 18th century, he wore a cassock and a simple preaching gown — sometimes just his coat and boots, especially when preaching outdoors. His theology was about grace that moves, not garments that impress. As historian Richard Heitzenrater notes in *Wesley and the People Called Methodists*, Wesley “advised neatness, plainness, and modesty in apparel — 'similar to that of the Quakers'” (2013, p. 243). If those symbols no longer speak to our time — what might sacred leadership look like in Aotearoa today?

Perhaps it looks like a taonga gifted with aroha, a pounamu resting near the heart, or a korowai draped over the shoulders, carrying the wairua and mana of those who came before. Maybe it's a *moko kauae*, etched not as ornament but as whakapapa made visible — a map of spirit and belonging. Or a flax kete woven by the hands of whānau. It might be heard in karanga and karakia, calling forth ancestors and opening sacred space. Or seen in how a leader tends to *mauri*, walks with *wairua*, and serves not from status but from spirit. Maybe it's also a lei woven with fresh

frangipani, the gentle scent of coconut oil massaged into the skin with reverence, or a tapa cloth (*siapo, ngatu, or masi*) handed down through generations. Perhaps it's the wearing of a *ta'ovala*, a *sulu*, or the gifting of an *ie tōga* or *kie hingoa* — sacred symbols of connection, care, and communal mana. These are expressions of embodied spirituality from our diverse cultural whakapapa, where the sacred is felt — in ocean, in breath, in body, in ancestry, in story. And for many who identify as Pākehā, it may be time to rediscover forgotten threads of their own — threads buried beneath generations of forgetting, shaped by colonial systems and Victorian rigidity. Beneath it all are stories of Celtic mysticism, Nordic reverence for land and sea, European folk spirituality, and values passed down from “working-class roots” — where resistance was practical, humour kept people grounded, and hospitality was instinctive. The phrase “working-class roots” here speaks not only to class but to the everyday wisdom of those who lived faith through humour, hospitality, and quiet resistance — often within systems that ignored or diminished their sacred stories.

These are not to be romanticised but reclaimed — as part of the unfolding journey to live more consciously in Aotearoa, in relationship with tangata whenua, with *te taiao*, and with each other. They too carry spiritual roots that matter. This is not rejection but transformation — a return to roots, not a tearing down. And yet — for those who feel uneasy, disoriented, or even grieved by such shifts — know this: not everything is being dismantled. We still stand on the solid ground of Wesleyan spirituality — a faith shaped by Scripture, reason, experience, and tradition. We still gather around the table of grace, where all are welcome.

We still uphold personal holiness and social justice, the call to grow in love and respond with compassion. These remain our anchors, even as the winds of Spirit invite us into new waters. At the heart of it all is God — not a distant ruler, but the Divine Presence who holds us together, who weaves us into one body, who fills every cup, every breath, every life with sacred possibility. The same Spirit made known in Jesus continues to be revealed — not only in the Church, but in creation, in neighbour, and in the quiet pulse of life itself.

“He is before all things, and in him all things hold together.” — *Colossians 1:17* **Whakataukī:** *He aha te mea nui o te ao? He tangata, he tangata, he tangata. (What is the most important thing in the world? It is people, it is people, it is people.)* We see this embodied in Jesus. In John 13, Jesus removes his robe, ties a towel around his waist, and washes feet. Leadership here isn't about status — it's about service. It's about nearness. About letting love kneel beside you and get its hands wet. And while we're naming things, let's name this too: There's nothing wrong with being “woke.” Before it was hijacked and ridiculed, “woke” simply meant awake — alert to injustice, tuned into the pain of others, and moved by the Spirit toward compassion and change. In their own ways, the prophets were woke. Jesus too. Wesley, in his time, was awake to injustice and grace. If being “woke” means seeing the world's brokenness and choosing love anyway — we need more of it, not less.

This is the kind of awakening *Te Hāhi Weteriana o Aotearoa* is being invited into — not just administrative change, but spiritual re-rooting. A renaissance of indigenous wisdom, ecological faith, and relational, Spirit-filled community. Because cups and mugs don't just hold liquid — they hold stories. They quench thirst, comfort the weary, carry the warmth of community, and gather us into something bigger than ourselves. They're made for sharing, not shelving.

So let's stop polishing the china.

Let's open the cupboard, fill the mugs — and let the Spirit pour.

Who knows what stories are waiting to be served next?



Awaken Maranga Mai 2025

In April, in Auckland, over 150 LGBTQIA+ Christians, allies, parents, and faith leaders from across the motu gathered for Awaken Maranga Mai 2025. The biennial conference celebrates the intersection of faith, identity, and belonging and creates space for worship, learning, whakawhanaungatanga, and healing, all intentionally shaped by and for queer people of faith.

Lexee Blackmore (they/them) reports on their experience as a firsttime attendee.

I grew up in the small town of Pōkeno, just south of Auckland, and began attending church as a teenager. In that local faith community, I experienced love, friendship, and belonging. But

even amid all the good, I learned early on that not all parts of me were welcome. The denomination I was part of didn't affirm LGBTQIA+ people, and so I often found myself hiding pieces of who I was in order to be accepted.

As I travelled and ministered across Aotearoa, I heard countless similar stories: people hurt and excluded by the church. Eventually, for the sake of my own wellbeing, I made the difficult decision to leave my denomination and I began searching for a community where my full, authentic self wouldn't just be tolerated, but celebrated. When I moved to Ōtautahi six months ago, I visited Durham Street Methodist, hoping to find that kind of welcome. I received it straight away. The church's expansive theology and genuine inclusiveness were a breath of fresh air. So when Durham Street offered to sponsor my attendance at Awaken Maranga Mai 2025, I gratefully accepted.

Minority Become Majority

One of the most impactful things about Awaken was the simple but profound experience of being the majority within a church context. For once, I wasn't scanning the room wondering if I was the only one. In most church spaces, LGBTQIA+ people are vastly underrepresented, particularly in leadership. At Awaken, we were the majority. It was a powerful shift - not just in numbers, but in tone. At a time when LGBTQIA+ people are still excluded from most church spaces, Awaken offered a rare glimpse of what an inclusive and expansive Church can look like.

Awaken offered a space to address topics that are often tiptoed around (or outright ignored) in many church settings. The conference had a particular focus on gender expansiveness with one keynote featuring a panel of transgender and gender-diverse people who shared their experiences of navigating faith and identity. Their stories carried both the ache of exclusion and the fierce hope for a more expansive Church that makes space for everyone.

This theme of expansiveness continued in a keynote from Steff Fenton (they/them), who explored the concept of *merism*, a literary device where two extremes are used to represent a full spectrum. The Bible is full of examples of merism such as when God is described as Alpha and Omega, the Lion and the Lamb, the creator of both day and night. Steff pointed out that these pairs don't exclude everything in between. In fact, they imply it. In this way, the mention of "male and female" in Genesis 1:27 becomes not a limitation, but an affirmation of a broader, more inclusive view of gender. Steff also reflected on God's declaration in Exodus 3:14: "I am who I am." A reminder that

God's identity is vast, mysterious, and beyond human categorisation; God's nature and love are far more expansive than binary categories.

Another keynote speaker, Brit Barron (she/her), used the image of a cup viewed from different angles to illustrate how no single perspective can capture the full picture of the Divine. One group may see one side of the cup, another sees a different angle, but the danger comes when we think our view is the whole. Encountering people different from us reveals more of the picture, and our view of God keeps growing. Brit's invitation to embrace complexity resonated deeply with a community all too familiar with being misunderstood.

Methodist Church Committed to Being Radically Inclusive

A particularly memorable moment was a panel where church leaders shared their denomination's stances on LGBTQIA+ inclusion. As someone new to the Methodist Church, I was nervous. It's exhausting and painful to have to your identity up for debate and I was worried about what might be said. But Rev Peter Norman, the Methodist representative on the panel, spoke with clarity and compassion about the Methodist church's commitment to being radically inclusive and actively encouraging LGBTQIA+ leadership. He also acknowledged the reality that not all Methodist parishes are equally inclusive. I was grateful for the honesty. It was a realistic and hopeful reminder that change is both happening and still needed.

For those who have spent years navigating unsafe faith spaces, Awaken offered more than just information - it offered healing. There was room to speak of both harm and hope, of complexity and joy, of deconstruction and reconstruction, of leaving and returning to faith.

If you are LGBTQIA+, please know this: you are loved. You are valued. You belong. You are made in the image of a God who delights in diversity and who sees you fully and loves you entirely.



CARTOON



Jim's Cartoon

Brendan Boughen

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



School of Theology Enriching and Stimulating

Rev Dale Peach, South Island Synod Superintendent

The second Kete Aroha o Waipounamu was held mid-March, following the South Island Synod - *Te Hinota Weteriana o te Waipounamu's* March meetings. Participants were enriched by the offerings of the speakers.

An eclectic and stimulating mix of presentations and workshops, included sessions on biblical interpretation led by Dr Emily Colgan, Trinity College Ranson Lecturer in Biblical Studies. These sessions and another series on the origins of Christianity on the West Coast from a Māori perspective, led by Paul Madgwick were a highlight for some. Rev Canon Michael Wallace presented ideas about the

possibilities the church has to add appropriate symbolism onto different events in the New Zealand calendar. The programme included sessions on congregational-based ministry with children, and working with Pasifika People in English Language congregations. President Te Aroha Rountree's two sessions, encouraging further consideration of the Church's commitment to the bicultural journey and climate justice, reminded all what a gift Te Aroha is to the Church.

Value Beyond Theological Stimulation

Schools of theology are valuable opportunities for theological stimulation. But they are also so much more than that. Those involved in parishes can find the busyness of parish life isolating, and connecting is especially limited for parishes situated in centres that only have one English-speaking Methodist or union Parish. Schools of theology provide the opportunity for those who are isolated in their ministries, ordained and lay, to come together and to carry the theological stimulation into conversations over meals and breaks. These events provide unhurried time to connect and process what has been learnt with others who have shared the same experience. Kete Aroha o Waipounamu was again held in Aldersgate, Christchurch Central Methodist Parish, which is a great location, with wonderful catering. The number of participants was lower this year – 32 compared to 47 in 2024. This might have been the result of the detailed programme not being available until February, which limited our chance of circulating it widely.

The majority of people who attended would like Kete Aroha o Waipounamu to continue being offered annually, but some wondered if it was slightly too long. This is not surprising considering that, combined with two days of Synod meetings prior, many participants ended up having five intense days in a row discussing church, faith and theology. The group planning the 2026 event will take this into consideration. Whatever is decided regarding the timing and length of this event for 2026, the programme is guaranteed to be worthwhile – so watch out for publicity later in the year!



Mothers' Day a Time to Celebrate Mothers

As Mother's Day approaches, Rev Alisa Lasi invite us to pause and remember all mothers - living and deceased - who have influenced our lives, contributing to the people we are today, as followers of Christ. In the Word, one can refer to Proverbs 31:10 -31: verse 30 says, *"Charm is deceptive and beauty is fleeting: but a woman who fears the Lord is to be praised."*

"Do ordinary things with extraordinary love". Mother Teresa

A mother's influence in the family, home, community, politics, world and environment can be extraordinary. Susanna Wesley is an example of a wife and mother who had huge influence and impact on the lives of her family and her community. Here in Aotearoa, the church is familiar with **Papatūānuku** Earth Mother. We are reminded to continue to practice good stewardship of the earth and planet, in our 10 year climate justice theme, Rekindle the Va of Papatūānuku. In the role of mothering, strong qualities such as resilience, humility, perseverance, strength, courage, knowledge and determination, and the soft tender qualities of nurturing, laughter, compassion, forgiveness and long suffering, all come into play.

Mary the Mother of Jesus

We can only imagine the shock and surprise of a young Mary, when the angel appeared and shared the divine plan ... We all receive unexpected news during our lifetime. Mary's response, shared with Elizabeth, is a song of praise to her God. Mary's faith, trust and knowledge of The God of Abraham cannot be underrated. In reverence and humility, she magnifies the Lord her God and proclaims his greatness and righteousness to all generations. Luke 1:46b-55.

During the Easter season, we recall that this same mother suffered heartache and pain watching the son, from her womb, suffer mentally, emotionally and physically as he journeyed to the cross. The Messiah's love for "she who gave physical birth and mothered him throughout life" was reciprocated in his words "Woman here is your son" ... Then he said to the disciple, "Here is your mother." Mary was beside Jesus as he grew in stature and in wisdom, knowing that to be part of the Lord's will, there would be suffering and heartache; that came with the special role of being the mother of Jesus.

O le Tina o le Pae ma le Auli

The Samoan saying **O le Tina o le pae ma le auli**: the mother is the smoothing agent (evens out and smooths the pebble/stone floor of the Samoan house) and the iron within a family, is heard often during Mother's Day services.

Just as the iron presses clothes and linen so that the items can be worn or laid beautifully, the mother's role is to wisely nurture or challenge the relationships in the family, so that all is well. So that all family members, from the elders to the babies are united as family, know who they are and their individual roles while living as God's righteousness. This role is naturally shared with others in the family. This cannot happen without the Love of God. A mother's love can be a picture of the agape love of the Creator God that we know. The love that knows no limits or boundaries and is everlasting.

May God's name be glorified as we celebrate and remember all mothers within Te Hāhi Weteriana o Aotearoa and beyond, on Sunday 11 May. Ma te Atua tatou katoa e Manaaki.



Sharing the Gospel for Hope, Unity & Resilience

Rev Keita Hotere

Reflecting on our past is key to building touchstones towards a more peaceful, life-affirming future.

Despite the heightened tensions in conflicts in the regions like Gaza and Ukraine, and the major disruptions caused from the tariff wars affecting global relations and supply chains, it is essential to find hope in unity and resilience.

Recently, the world gathered to mourn and pay tribute to Pope Francis, celebrating his legacy of peace and compassion. With anticipation, we look forward to the new leadership that will continue to inspire and uplift communities around the globe.

Anzac Day provides us with a special time to honour our veterans who served at Anzac Cove and in all other overseas campaigns. At times in New Zealand, we have been selective in the history we choose to remember. Acknowledging all of New Zealand's past, including significant events like *Ngā Pakanga o Aotearoa* The New Zealand Wars and the battles between British colonial forces and Iwi Māori enriches our understanding of who we are and how we came to be. Educating our youth about these historical moments is key to nurturing informed and empathetic future generations.

The gospels offer their own timeless stories of hope, with Jesus' act of gathering people around the table and in sharing Holy Communion, Kai Hapa, we remember. This sacred ritual highlights the enduring presence of the risen Christ among us, bringing communities together symbolising unity and transformation.

Tamariki Engage with Kai Hapa

This year, during Anzac weekend, our community in Pōneke Rohe gathered at Wesley Uniting Church in Upper Hutt. We embraced the chance to explore our origins as a faith community and followers of Jesus, here in Aotearoa. These insights are shared with joy and curiosity by our tamariki, who actively engaged with the meaning of Kai Hapa.

“I learnt a bit about a man named John Wesley and how the church follows some of his teachings, helping people be at peace. I also learnt that the red juice in the Holy Communion represents wine and the blood of Christ. And the bread represents the body of Christ. My Nan told me the bread wasn't on a plate, it was on a paten”. Mya aged 12.

“I listened to Auntie Keita but I still don't fully understand all the differences of the different churches. (Alluding to why Methodists use juice, not wine, in Holy Communion). I also always enjoy the kai afterwards”. Kiana, aged 13.



Communion at Tamahere is a Ritual of Special Significance

Rev Dr Susan Thompson

One of the most delightful things I do in my work is to lead a monthly Communion service in the chapel. Here at Tamahere residents can attend Catholic Mass and Liturgy or our ecumenical Communion service.

Both are open to anyone who comes. No-one is turned away because of their faith tradition or even their lack of faith.

The sharing of bread and wine in memory of Jesus is a precious ritual for many Christians. Since the night of Jesus' final meal with his followers, Communion has been celebrated wherever Christians gather: in chapels and cathedrals, on battlefields and beaches, in homes and hospital rooms. God's people have been nourished by a sense of his presence at the table. Churches celebrate the meal in different ways. For some, the service demands a high sense of festival with music, colour and drama. For others, it calls for an almost heightened simplicity which gives added weight to word and gesture. Yet there is beauty and grace to be found in all of these celebrations for it is Jesus who makes the feast.

Our Tamahere service is attended by residents in the care home (the hospital, rest home and dementia units), their caregivers and half a dozen people from the village. I always find it hugely moving to see the way long-standing familiar rituals still have the power to touch people even when so many other things have been lost or forgotten. It's as if the service has stirred some deeper memory. The presence of Jesus overcomes all their frailties (and mine for our Catholic residents don't even notice that the celebrant is a woman). So they hold out their hands to receive the bread and wine; they eat and drink sometimes with the help of a caregiver when they aren't able to feed themselves; they say "Amen" or "God bless you" in thanks for the gift which has been given.

The role of the caregivers is integral. They know which residents need help and move from row to row quietly and reverently. They come from diverse faith traditions, but they recognise how much the service means to the residents so they serve them tenderly and with great care. It's a beautiful thing to be part of; it feels like what church ought to be. For me, Communion at Tamahere is a place where everyone is welcome and where love and grace are freely shared and received. It's a privilege to be there.



I welcome your feedback on content included in this publication.

Ngā mihi nui

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On Globalisation and Ecumenism

Rev Andrew Doubleday UCANZ

Without thinking about it too deeply, I've arrived at this age and stage in my life suspecting that globalisation may be a bad thing. In allowing for a dramatic transfer of wealth from the poorest to the wealthiest (irrespective of where they live). The last few weeks have offered me a different way of looking at this. It has become clear that globalisation may also have brought some benefits to the planet. Donald Trump has brought this to my notice. His nascent tariff war has pushed the world back into nationalistic silos. For some, this might seem like a good thing.

Perhaps the view that we need to produce locally, and buy locally has some real attraction. It harks back to a simpler life, with more community-based values. Potentially such a policy is more likely to protect us from disruption to international supply chains caused by things like war. Yet it has become very clear, that two of the big winners around the planet in this tariffs war are the resentment-filled, nationalistic urge lying deep within the hearts of many, and the armaments industry. We're all discovering that suddenly, we're on our own. The world order has changed. The former international keeper of the peace (however imperfect it may have been) has now become the biggest threat to that world peace. Its recycled president acts overtly like a mafia don, using stand-over tactics, demanding fealty, all with the implied backing of the most powerful military the world has seen. The purpose - to bend those weaker (almost everyone else) to its will. I said almost, because clearly there is one nation that cannot be bullied, and one other, while much weaker, that mysteriously seems to command obeisance from this international bully.

You may be wondering why the Ministry Facilitator for UCANZ is writing about such things. Stay with me, I'm getting there. What has become very clear to me is the effect that globalisation has had upon the war-mongering tendencies of the human race. During the recently ended reign of Pax Americana, the last 80 years has seen relative peace, for most, and especially for what we know as the 'first' world. I may belong to the first generation in human history that hasn't been unwillingly flung into the meat grinder that is war. I turned 70 mid-April. At no time have I ever considered the likelihood that I'd be sent off to do battle. And I begin to believe that the primary culprit for this is globalisation! The fact that so many consumer products – from airliners to gadgets - are assembled from parts made in countries all over the planet, has meant that for trade to flow nicely, and for all of us to continue to live with the illusion that we are 'free', consumable products at an 'affordable' price needs to be available to us. It's the 20th/21st century version of Aldous Huxley's 'soma' from his 1932 book *Brave New World*.

There's a very real sense that globalisation has prevented wars – it makes more economic sense to those who might previously have profited from them, to make more money another way. Until Donald Trump. Trump has peeled back the thin veneer of civilisation. Here was I thinking that we were finally growing up as a species – increasingly heading toward Teilhard de Chardin's 'Omega Point' where humanity acts as a single organism. And now to have it all come crashing down as we all prepare to engage in an arms race, supposedly to protect ourselves from one another. Which, until a few long weeks ago, would have been unthinkable. Yet, the benefits of interconnectedness, of interdependence, of a recognition that 'we're all in this together', are now up for negotiation - in a race to see who can come out on top, in the 'Art of the Deal.'

This brings me to the ecumenical project. There is little doubt that we're in trouble – not just the Methodist Church, but also our ecumenical partners, Anglican and Presbyterian. And ultimately more broadly across the ecclesiastical landscape. It has become increasingly clear that even as church, our auto-response to threat is generally to do one of two things;

1. To reach for the latest programme running the international circuit – all in the hope that if we pull the right levers, and push the right buttons, then 'bingo' we're on the way to turning the ship around, or, at the very least, to stop it from sinking. I'm not too sure how often I've seen this strategy work. Part of the problem is that we're importing a process that worked in one context to another that is quite different. The other part is that there is inertia within every church that makes it resistant to change – starting from the 'top' and working its way down.
2. To 'double down', to pull up the draw bridge, to look back to our glory days, and imagine that if we only did what we did then, that we would Make Church Great Again. And just like what is happening in the area of international relations and trade, we're back to zero-sum thinking – seeing our ecumenical 'partners' not as allies committed to a common kingdom project, but as competitors. And it's a serious business, because when we see one another as competitors it takes on a much darker hue. While we may never admit it out loud, our tendency may then be a need to engage in a rescue mission. Rescuing people from our competitors – either from a destiny in a fiery, sulphur fumed, eternity, or from a naïve, ignorance infused, sub-human existence.

It's time to rethink church. To recognise the age and context in which we find ourselves. And to discern the moving winds of the Spirit as we seek to rediscover how the love of God as revealed in Jesus is good news in our time and place. And, perhaps, consider that this is something we might do better together.



WASEWASE



Children Take Centre Stage on Palm Sunday Iliesa Tora

As is traditional in the Fijian Methodist churches around the world, children take centre stage at the Palm Sunday service.

On 13 April within the Wasewase, the day was well celebrated, as children took services in Auckland,

Whanganui, Wellington, Christchurch and Dunedin.

Children who are members of Sunday schools in their respective congregations look forward to this celebration service every year.

In Wellington, Maciu Vucago, lead Sunday School teacher at the Koroturaga Fijian congregation said they tried something new this year. The usual entrance into Jerusalem was replaced by a mini-drama that kept the church members in awe as their children sang and acted out the entrance scenario. In Dunedin, Jerusalem church steward, Akuila Ratunisau, said their service was an 'emotional one' as 30 children led the Palm Sunday service, sharing the word of God through bible verses, songs and short messages.



Answering the Call – A Journey of Leadership, Faith, and Fellowship

Lynne Leitulua Vatau is both honoured and humbled to represent NZ at the SPA Young Women's Leadership training. In Fiji in April she reconvened with other young leaders to continue a programme they embarked on last year. She reports on the inspiring, new WFMUCW initiative.

I was chosen to attend on behalf of our NZ Unit, supported by the encouragement of Tuitui

Autagavaia-Salevao and my faletua, Ruanna Letalu.

This programme focused on young women (18–30) committed to the Methodist Church, involved in women's ministry, who have shown leadership in their local units. I feel blessed to have been selected. The programme brings together one representative from each island nation (NZ, Samoa, American Samoa, Fiji, Tonga, Papua New Guinea, and the Solomon Islands) to address a growing concern: the disconnect of young women from our church communities.

Our first gathering was in Samoa last September. This year, we reunited as a group in Fiji for a special 3-day update, alongside SPA leaders there for a meeting. As the only young NZ leader attending, I was proud to stand alongside our President Lesieli Pope, our South Pacific Area President Olive Tanielu, and her incredible executive team.

We shared updates on the goals we've been working on since Samoa. I was excited to report on three key SDGs (Sustainable Development Goals) we've been actioning:

1. **Gender Equality** – Through our *Faith and Flourish* Women's Empowerment event with Sinoti Samoa Auckland and Manukau fellowships.
2. **Good Health and Well-being** – We're currently wrapping up a 7-week church-wide weight loss challenge here at Manurewa Methodist — a fun and energising way to encourage better health.
3. **No Poverty** – Our *Green Fingers* project at Manurewa Methodist is teaching youth how to grow their own vegetables, building self-sufficiency and life skills.

These small but mighty efforts are just the beginning. It's a challenge to scale this kind of work to the wider unit, however I am committed to the mission. And I know with collaboration and guidance from our leaders, it's more than possible. I extend a massive thank you to Mataiva Robertson, who led both training programmes in Samoa and Fiji. Her wisdom, experience and faith have deeply impacted us all. Mataiva, along with Olive, and my faletua Ruanna, continue to encourage me to step up and grow as a young woman leader in the church.

These experiences have opened my eyes to the global sisterhood of WFMUCW. To walk alongside women from all corners of the South Pacific, united in Christ and in mission, is an experience I will forever cherish. We now look ahead with excitement to NZ hosting the World Area Seminar in 2026. There is plenty of work to do, but I'm ready. Here's to strong women, rooted in faith, lifting each other higher in Christ.



When Mahi & Whakapapa Collide

A serendipitous meeting between archivist Katherine Doig, and a visiting researcher from Wellington, revealed an extraordinary connection. She shares the story.

Serendipity struck in March 2021, while working my shift on the reference enquiries desk in my then role as an archivist at Archives New Zealand's Christchurch Regional Office. A researcher visiting from Wellington walked into the office and asked me if we would archive 38 essays by Emma Ford, an influential Christchurch-based Methodist who was a suffragist alongside Kate Sheppard.

The name Emma Ford rang a bell for some reason but I couldn't quite place it. I began to explain to the researcher that unfortunately, though the material sounded significant and interesting, we couldn't take in personal manuscripts such as these unless they were in some way connected to central government activities in the region.

Suddenly, the bell became a deafening siren and I asked the researcher whether she knew Emma's maiden name; might it perhaps have been Dellow? She said that yes, it was – and that Emma's papers had been entrusted to her by her neighbour, Emma's great-granddaughter Wendy Conwell (née Ford). During the COVID lockdown in 2020, Wendy had spent her afternoons transcribing Emma's papers for the family and felt that, having completed that task and knowing her neighbour was travelling south to visit various archives for her own research, perhaps she could also assist Wendy to find an archive in Christchurch that would accept the treasured material for permanent safe-keeping.

Wendy, the custodian of Emma's manuscripts, is my late father John Doig's first cousin – and Emma Ford (née Dellow) was my great-great-grandmother! I knew nothing at all about Emma, other than her name. I had no idea that she was a suffragist, nor a gifted writer who had left behind a valuable written legacy of her life and times. I promised Wendy that I would find the very best home for the records in Christchurch. As fate would have it, in October 2022, I accepted my current role as National Archivist for MCNZ and brought Emma's papers, in their little old red box, with me on my very first day here. I have since had the amazing pleasure of spending many afternoons at work surrounded by Emma's papers, comprising essays, sermons, notes and a scrapbook, while I arranged and described them for permanent care here at Kei Muri Māpara. Her wisdom and intellect shine through her beautiful writing, and also through the articles, poems, ephemera and photographs that she chose to keep in the scrapbook, all of which we have since digitised and made available online via our new Recollect website along with a biography of Emma.

Emma passed away in 1929, well over half a century before I was born. Her obituary in *The New Zealand Methodist Times* records that she "was a friend, counsellor and a guide of rare spiritual insight and sound judgment" and that "the charm of her beautiful life and witness to Christ will never be forgotten" by those with whom she worked. If I ever needed a reminder of how privileged I am to be an archivist, then Emma's manuscripts are it.



Bridging the Gap: Communicating with the Unknown

Rev Donald Phillipps

One hundred years ago this month. *The New Zealand Methodist Times* front-page report was about an expedition to the Arctic and of the use, for the first time, of radio communication as a means of sharing information.

Prior to that, the departure of an expedition meant a prolonged loss of contact and with it the awful uncertainty as to the safety and progress of those engaged in exploring new corners in an old world. Radio had been around for over 20 years, and Professor Robert Jack of the University of Otago had shown particular interest in it. The first radio programme was broadcast around the country from his Dunedin laboratory in November 1921. His twice-weekly broadcasts lasted for four months and reception was reported from all over the country. A year later Radio Station 4XD opened in Dunedin, relying on Professor Jack's advice and encouragement.

At 9.30pm on 3 December 1925 the first trans-Tasman broadcast took place; an Australian songwriter performed a programme, speaking the words and singing the melody. Listeners in Sydney recorded what they heard so that a local singer could perform the song at a theatre the next evening. In April 1934 the Rev. Leslie Neale, the Methodist Central Mission Superintendent in Dunedin, commenced the second 'radio church' in this country with 4XD. Though there have been a couple of breaks, it is regarded as the longest-running radio programme in this country. I am one of a multi-church group who maintain the regular Sunday morning half-hour sessions.

It would be interesting to know whether the audience for such broadcast worship has changed over the years. The format – hymns and prayers and a message – remain the staple and might suggest that the expectation is that those who listen are, or were, themselves churchgoers. I believe this is questionable – and it is worth rethinking seriously what the objective should be. Such questions have become even more pressing and relevant when one considers the number of churches who now stream their services to those who want to make the connection. I belong to such a congregation and we have every reason to believe that what goes on in our place on a Sunday morning is seen and heard by a greater number than those who 'belong' to this church.

The Sunday morning sermon is an essential part of worship. It has always been so. And so long as we regard the printed word of scripture as our principal source of inspiration, we will not want to change that. But the evolution of communication, from the printed word being passed on to a gathered group of hearers, to the present day with its means of communicating with any and every one throughout the world, is a challenge to the church. What language does it use? What are the issues that matter? How can our church engage in dialogue? There has been a national Methodist Church newspaper for the best part of 150 years. National and international concerns have been aired through this medium. But what about our dialogue with that larger local community to which we belong? It is time for us to be heard in that setting. Let us find our voice.