



Prophetic Pacific Voice Remembered Rev Dr Nāsili Vaka'uta

Rev. Prof. Dr. Jione Havea
22 July 1965 – 29 April 2026

With deep sorrow and profound gratitude we mark the passing of Rev Prof Dr Jione Havea, a distinguished Pacific theologian, biblical scholar, pastor, teacher, mentor, editor, and prophetic public voice.

Jione's death is a great loss to the church, the academy, and the many communities whose lives were enriched by his wisdom, courage, and grace.

Jione was one of the most important Pacific theological voices of his generation. Deeply grounded in Tonga and shaped by the wider worlds of Oceania, he brought to theology and biblical studies a rare blend of intellectual brilliance, cultural depth, pastoral sensitivity, and moral courage. He approached scripture not as a distant or domesticated text, but as a living, contested witness that must be heard alongside the cries, hopes, and struggles of ordinary people, especially those on the margins.

His life's work was both wide-ranging and deeply influential. He served as a native pastor of the Methodist Church in Tonga, Catalyst for Climate Justice with the Synod of NSW and ACT in the Uniting Church in Australia, Adjunct Professor in Biblical Studies at Charles Sturt University, and Adjunct Professor in Indigenous Studies at Pilgrim Theological College, University of Divinity. Yet beyond these significant roles, he was, above all, a devoted co-parent of Diya Lākai, a calling he carried with deep love and commitment. Jione once described himself with characteristic humility and wit as one who learned and worked "among folx and creatures on the ground, and energies in and from the sea," and who "now and then dabbles and babbles as an academic activist." That description captured something essential about him: his originality, playfulness, relational depth, and refusal to be confined by narrow categories.

Across many years of teaching, writing, editing, mentoring, and public engagement, Jione made an enduring contribution to postcolonial and decolonial biblical interpretation, Pacific and Pasifika theology, contextual hermeneutics, climate justice, and the reshaping of mission and theological education. He challenged colonial habits of reading, exposed the operations of power and empire, and insisted that theology must remain accountable to land, sea, people, and the realities of suffering and survival. Drawing from the moana, from talanoa, and from Indigenous and relational ways of knowing, he helped reshape how many people across the world understand scripture, theology, and justice.

His influence also extended significantly into international biblical scholarship. Within the Society of Biblical Literature, he was a respected and valued presence who worked to widen the horizons of the guild and create greater space for voices from Oceania and other marginalised contexts. His leadership in the Society's International Cooperation Initiative, including his service as chair, reflected his commitment to a more genuinely global, dialogical, and inclusive practice of biblical studies. In recognition of his extraordinary generosity toward emerging scholars, he was also honoured with the Underrepresented Racial and Ethnic Minorities in the Profession Committee's Outstanding Mentor Award.

For all his scholarly accomplishment, Jione will be remembered just as much for the kind of person he was. Those who knew him speak of his generosity, humility, warmth, humour, and extraordinary ability to draw out the gifts of others. He was a mentor of uncommon depth. He saw possibility in people before they saw it in themselves. He encouraged younger scholars, guided students with care, read drafts with remarkable attentiveness, and offered critique that was rigorous yet kind. He did not seek to reproduce himself in others; rather, he helped them discover their own voice, confidence, and calling.

As a teacher, Jione transformed classrooms into places of shared discovery. He challenged students to read more carefully, think more deeply, and engage more honestly, while honouring the wisdom they already carried. His teaching was rigorous, but also deeply humane. As a pastor, he remained committed to the church even as he called it to greater truth, justice, and compassion. His ministry reached beyond formal boundaries to those often overlooked or excluded, and his witness embodied a faith that affirmed the dignity of every life and every body.

Jione's legacy endures in the books he wrote and edited, in the students he taught, in the scholars he mentored, in the churches he challenged, and in the communities he served with love and conviction. He will be remembered as a son of the Pacific, a servant of God, a scholar of rare originality, an outstanding mentor, and a prophetic witness whose voice will continue to echo across classrooms, churches, conferences, and communities for years to come.

He is survived by his beloved wife, Rev. Associate Professor Monica Jyotsna Melanchthon, their daughter Diya Lākai, and a wide circle of family, friends, colleagues, students, and communities who mourn his passing and give thanks for his life.

Mālō e ngāue 'aufuatō, Jione. Toka ā mo mālōlō lelei he nonga 'a e 'Otua



CONTACT DETAILS

I welcome your feedback on content included in this publication.

Ady Shannon, Editor Touchstone

Phone: 021 209 9702 Email: adys@methodist.org.nz



Preparing the Way

Rev Tara Tautari, MCNZ General Secretary

In April, I participated in the Commission on World Mission and Evangelism consultation at the University of the West Indies (UWI), returning to the Jamaican campus I last visited 15 years earlier.

I was privileged to participate in April's CWME consultation hosted by the Jamaica

Council of Churches, as Vice Moderator after being elected following the most recent World Council of Churches Assembly. Gathered under the theme "Preparing the Way: Mission as Re-storying the World – Spirituality; Reparations; Legacies of the Transatlantic Slave Trade," the meeting drew together commissioners, partners, and local hosts in a season of intense global disruption.

For me personally, the consultation carried a particular resonance. I had last walked the UWI campus in 2011, then a WCC staff member, attending the International Ecumenical Peace Convocation. I remember those days vividly: the heat, the singing, and the sense of a global ecumenical fellowship wrestling with what 'just peace' might mean.

I remember, too, that Rev Greg Hughson was the sole delegate from Aotearoa New Zealand at that gathering, a quiet but persistent witness from a small church in a long ecumenical conversation. Returning 15 years later, in a different role and under a different theme, I felt the continuity of that journey acutely. The questions we asked then about peace and reconciliation now find a sharper edge in the language of reparations, re-storying, and structural repair.

A meeting held within crisis

Participants framed the consultation, repeatedly and deliberately, as one taking place within multiple overlapping crises. Caribbean colleagues spoke of the increasing ferocity of hurricanes and the slow violence of rising seas, set against economies still shaped by colonial extraction. Others named ongoing wars, displacement, democratic backsliding, and an information environment in which truth itself is contested. The question pressed upon us was uncomfortable but unavoidable: what does it mean to speak of mission, of the *Missio Dei*, in a world such as this? Others were vocal in their interrogation of mission itself, asking whether the word can still be redeemed from its colonial cargo, or whether the church must find new language altogether for what it is called to do in the world.

There was no rush toward easy answers. Keynote addresses opened up the theological and historical terrain, while panel discussions drew commissioners and local theologians into sustained, sometimes uncomfortable, conversation. Perhaps most formatively, we left the campus to visit local churches in communities that have borne the brunt of the climate crisis.

We sat with presbyters, lay leaders, and parishioners who shared, with extraordinary generosity, their stories of doing God's mission amid struggle and hardship. We heard of congregations becoming shelters and food kitchens, of small churches holding entire neighbourhoods together when state and market alike had withdrawn. We heard, too, of weariness, of grief, and of a faith that has had to learn new vocabularies for hope.

These encounters reframed the consultation. They reminded us that mission cannot be done credibly from a place of detachment. It must be rooted in particular whenua, particular wounds, and particular hopes.

Re-storying as ecclesial challenge

Across the consultation, the language of "re-storying" became more than a thematic motif; it functioned as an ecclesial challenge. Participants probed the colonial assumptions that have shaped much of modern mission, including its triumphalist narratives, its marginalisation of Indigenous and local spiritualities, and its tendency to baptise the priorities of empire as the priorities of God. Caribbean theologians pressed the question of reparations not as a discrete justice issue but as a theological question that goes to the heart of how the church remembers, repents, and retells.

Re-storying, as it was articulated, is neither tidy revisionism nor rhetorical gesture. It involves naming what was lost, recovering what was suppressed, and allowing those who have been narrated about to become the narrators. The community visits gave this commitment flesh: the people whose stories had so often been told about by mission agencies were now telling them to us, on their own terms and in their own places.

Toward the 2028 World Mission Conference

Much of our work was oriented toward the World Mission Conference scheduled for 2028. The Commission affirmed an approach grounded in participatory design, the deliberate inclusion of marginalised voices, and a contextual theology drawn from lived experience rather than imposed from above. Practical considerations such as programme architecture, regional consultations, and partner engagement were inseparable from the deeper question of who gets to shape the conference's imagination.

We were reminded that conferences themselves carry colonial inheritances in their formats, their hierarchies, and their assumptions about what constitutes a "plenary" voice. If the 2028 gathering is to embody the theme of re-storying, its very design must reflect that commitment.

Closing reflections

The consultation closed without a single, neatly packaged framework, and I believe we were right to resist one. What emerged instead was a shared recognition that mission is being redefined in response to global disruption and structural inequality, and that this redefinition will require deeper listening, ethical accountability, and theological reflection grounded in context.

Standing again on the UWI campus, I thought of those who gathered in this place in 2011, and of how a small ecumenical conversation can echo across years and contexts. So too, in 2026, the voices of Caribbean churches, Indigenous communities, and the partners who travelled to be in this place will continue to resonate. The work of re-storying belongs to all of them, and to all of us, as we prepare the way toward 2028 and the deeper conversion to which the gospel continues to call the church.



CARTOON



Jim's Cartoon.

Brendan Boughen

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



Wesley Village Residents' Voices Resonate at Parliament

Michael Herman, CMM

There are moments when quiet, personal stories grow into something much larger - when voices that are often unheard gather strength and begin to echo far beyond their place of origin.

For a group of residents from Wesley Village in Christchurch, that moment came when they travelled to Wellington in March to stand in Parliament's Great Hall for the national launch of the *Doors to Dignity* campaign. The event brought together community advocates, political leaders, and those with lived experience of housing insecurity.

The *Doors to Dignity* campaign was born out of an urgent and worsening reality. As CMM Executive Director Jill Hawkey explains, the initiative calls for "cross-party support for government investment in safe, affordable, and secure housing for older people across Aotearoa New Zealand."

Over the past five years, the number of older people on the social housing register has increased by 90 percent. Many older renters are now spending 40 percent or more of their income on housing, placing enormous strain on already limited resources. Jill's message, shared at the launch and echoed across political lines, is clear: this is not a distant or emerging issue. It is a present and pressing crisis that demands attention and action.

One of the most powerful elements of the *Doors to Dignity* campaign is its ability to bring lived experience into public view. Through the Listen Up! exhibition and companion graphic novel, created in collaboration with documentary photographer David Cook, the stories of older people navigating housing insecurity were made visible in deeply human ways. Cook collaborated with seniors and kaumātua during a 10-week residency at Te Matariki Tai Ora / The Arts Centre in Christchurch, listening to their experiences and translating them into a visual and narrative form that could speak across barriers of distance and circumstance. These personal stories—dignified, honest, sometimes confronting—formed the emotional core of the campaign; a reminder that behind every statistic is a person, and behind every policy decision is the potential to transform a life.

The Wesley Village residents' journey to Wellington was not only about advocacy—it was an expression of community and shared purpose. It reflected values at the heart of faith: compassion, justice, and the belief that every person deserves dignity and care.

"It was an amazing couple of days, and we achieved our objective of bringing older people's housing to the Government's attention," Jill said. She also acknowledged the role of supporters who promote the campaign, noting that such conversations are "a great way to get people talking about the housing need."

Her words highlight an important truth: meaningful change is built through ongoing conversation, shared commitment, and the willingness of individuals and communities to act together.

The *Doors to Dignity* campaign is not a moment but a movement—an ongoing effort to ensure that older people across Aotearoa New Zealand can live in homes that are affordable, accessible, secure, and connected to community. As the voices of Wesley Village continue to resonate beyond their community, they offer a powerful reminder to us all. When we truly listen to one another, we begin to see not only the challenges we face, but the shared humanity that calls us to respond. In that listening, and in that response, there is hope.



New Billboard Promotes Community Power Over Supermarket Power

Ruth Nichol, WCA

Wesley Community Action has recently installed a new billboard at the front of Wesley Methodist Church in Wellington's Taranaki Street promoting community power over supermarket power to combat rising household costs.

It replaces a heavily graffitied billboard which had been on the site since 2012. "Things had got a bit out of hand with the old billboard, so we're pleased to have finally got a new one!" says Wesley Community Action's Director David Hanna.

The new billboard, which was "unveiled" by Wellington Central MP Tamatha Paul and blessed by Rev Suiva'aia Te'o, was put up to officially launch [Kai Ora Collective](#) – previously known as Wellington Fruit & Vege Co-op. The Collective has also released [a video](#) promoting its work.

The Collective provides fresh, affordable, local produce to communities in the greater Wellington region (including the Wairarapa) every week. It is run as a partnership between Wesley Community Action and Health New Zealand / Te Whatu Ora.

Every week volunteers help pack fruit and vegetables at 10 packing hubs and deliver them to 39 pick-up locations. Members pay \$15 for a weekly fruit and vegetable pack.

"The Collective is all about the power of community," says Makerita Makapelu, WCA's Innovation Team Leader. "It's made possible by many wonderful volunteers giving their time generously to support their community."

She says the produce is always cheaper than the supermarket. A recent price comparison found that the contents of a \$15 pack would have cost \$24 at a supermarket.

"With rising fuel prices eating into people's household budgets and driving costs up that makes fresh produce more affordable for whānau doing it tough."

The Collective has recently introduced a popular online ordering system at two of its hubs which means people can choose their own produce. It is hoped that eventually this will be available at other packing hubs.

Makerita says the Collective is about more than just saving money. It's also about building a sense of community and developing a local food system that supports whenua, growers, and whānau.

"At Wesley Community Action we believe that real change happens when it is led by the people wanting change. We're committed to moving away from traditional charity model of "doing to" people to supporting people "to do" – rangatiratanga in action.

"Kai Ora Collective is a great way for communities to support each other and take action to make life better."



Tongan Women Leading the Way in Sharing Culture, Craft and Connection

Siu Kaufanga

For the past two years, a group of stay-at-home mothers and grandmothers from the Ponsonby Tongan Methodist Church have been meeting regularly to share cultural knowledge and traditional skills.

The idea was discussed during the Easter Break of 2024, and the group known as *Foheloa ki 'Itaniti* was formally established just a week later, on 9 April.

Our vision is to strengthen community, preserve Tongan cultural knowledge, and contribute to climate justice through a weekly programme of traditional handicrafts and zero-waste practices. We achieve this by working together, sharing knowledge, and teaching younger generations the traditional arts of weaving, gardening, handicrafts, embroidery, and macramé.

Cultural and Climate Resilience

As climate change increasingly threatens island nations and diaspora communities, our group stands as a model of grassroots leadership — keeping culture alive while responding to the present and future needs of our people and our planet.

Our Plan

- To gather every Wednesday from 10:00am to 2:00pm
- Use the knowledge and experience of members to teach and encourage others
- Hold monthly exhibitions to showcase our achievements
- Use Messenger to encourage and support members who may need assistance

What We Have Achieved

On 17 January, we held a garden tour which everyone greatly enjoyed. It was a wonderful opportunity to learn from one another, share gardening ideas, and appreciate the beauty of God's creation.

We have also completed many handmade items through weaving, embroidery, macramé, and handicraft activities. These activities have helped strengthen friendships and unity within our group.

Our exhibition was well supported by church members, families, and friends from the community. Visitors were encouraged by the creativity, teamwork, and cultural knowledge shared through the displays and handmade work. Many people gave positive feedback and expressed how important it is to continue teaching these traditional skills to younger generations so that our culture and heritage will not be lost.

Our project connects closely with climate justice and the theme of the decade, "Rekindle the Va of Papatuanuku," because gardening and working with natural materials help us care for the environment and appreciate the land that God has provided for us. Through planting, growing food, and reusing natural resources in our crafts, we are teaching younger generations the importance of sustainability, respect for creation, and caring for the earth for future generations.

Foheloa ki 'Itaniti means paddling with purpose, patience, and unity toward something greater. That is what we do every Wednesday — paddling together with weaving, laughter, and shared meals. Through this initiative, we hope to inspire others to do the same and to honour the earth and our ancestors in the process.



Wrestling with Ministry

Rev John Carr

Recently, I've been reflecting a great deal on ministry - what it is, what it is not, and what it could still become. I keep returning to this question, sometimes quietly and sometimes urgently: *How do we remain relevant?*

Many of us are in the same waka. Our congregations are aging. The numbers aren't what they once were.

The old ways of measuring "success" don't seem to make sense anymore. The late Eugene Peterson once said: "The word 'relevant' has no place in the Christian vocabulary ... because it assumes that the culture is the norm."

Something about that resonates with my soul. At the same time, it challenges me, because if relevance isn't the goal, then what is? Perhaps faithfulness is. But then what does faithfulness mean? Faithfulness is often far less quantifiable than we'd like. It looks like showing up, like loving people without an agenda, like investing in spaces where there is no guarantee of return.

If I'm honest, faithfulness in all its facets is something I've been working on, not primarily inside the church, but outside of it. Here's the part that might surprise some of you, I'm a wrestler. Not the theatrical, chair-throwing kind, but the Olympic style. I have been since I was a kid. I also coach wrestling, mostly kids from about age four- to 18-year-olds. Week after week, I find myself on the mat with these young athletes and their families. And somewhere along the way, I realised something: This is ministry.

There is a single mum who brings her kid along each week. Life is not easy for them, juggling everything, carrying more than most of us can see. Over time, what started as showing up became something more. We have invited them into our home, our kids play together, we share meals, celebrate life, and have deep, meaningful conversations. Nothing formal. Nothing programmed. Just presence that slowly becomes care.

Then there was one of the kids who broke his arm. Wrestling stopped for a while for him, but the need for connection didn't. The care shifted to checking in, to making sure he was okay, to staying connected when the usual rhythms fell away. Again, nothing strategic, just showing up. And what I'm learning over and over again is that people are carrying more than they show. Kids navigating pressure and identity. Parents holding stress, hope, and exhaustion. Beneath it all, there is a quiet hunger for connection, for belonging, for someone to see them.

These are not problems to fix. They are invitations to be present, but let me be clear, this is not an evangelism strategy. It is something deeper, and perhaps older. It is incarnational. It is the simple, profound act of embodying love in the places we already are. The love of Christ is showing up, not in a sanctuary, but on a wrestling mat. Not in a sermon, but in a conversation between rounds. Not in a church programme, but in presence.

And maybe that is one place where the church still has something vital to offer. A way of being in the world that is grounded, generous, and free of expectation. Ministry, increasingly, is less about drawing people into a church building, and more about going where we already are, with open hands. Truly, the measure of our faithfulness is not Sunday attendance, but our presence in the community. People don't need us to be relevant. They need us to be real. They need communities that hold space for their stories, their struggles, and their joys. We can do that in churches, in gyms, cafés, walking groups, school gates, wherever life is unfolding. I am wrestling. Not only with opponents, but with assumptions and for understanding. And in that wrestling, I can see ministry differently. Less as a programme we *run*, and more as something we *live*.



I was a Stranger & you Welcomed Me

Gillian Southey

In the lead up to World Refugee Day on June 20, there is time to consider how we might respond when so many people live with danger and in fear.

This year the church is encouraged to mark Refugee Sunday on June 21, offering prayers and practical support to refugees and people displaced within their homeland as well as advocacy to end conflict and persecution.

In places like Lebanon where more than one million people have been displaced. In the south, residents [are living](#) with airstrikes, shelling, demolitions, evacuation orders, bans on returning to certain areas and movement restrictions as well as limited humanitarian support. At least 380 people have been killed. There was a surge of hope when a ceasefire [was announced](#) in April between Israel and Lebanon. Many families tried to return or at least check on their homes.

On May 20, two people [were killed](#) and 900 pallets of humanitarian supplies were destroyed when a Russian missile hit a UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency, warehouse in Dnipro, eastern Ukraine.

Organisations including the United Nations are facing huge challenges as international funding for humanitarian support has been slashed and conflict has intensified. Speaking at the end of his term, the former United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees Filippo Grandi [challenged](#) all sectors to uphold the right to protection, pointing to conflicts and human rights violations as the main drivers of displacement.

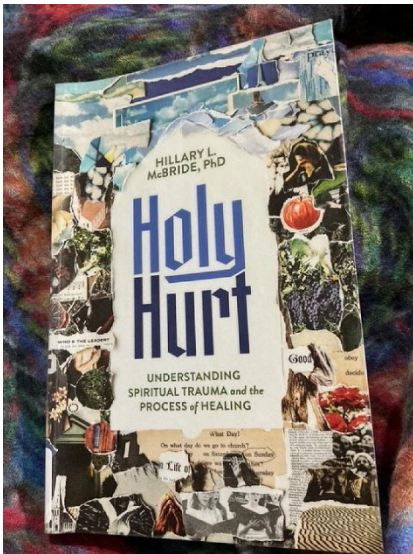
There are some signs of hope. Halfway through 2025, more than 1.5 million Syrians who had been refugees or displaced within their country [had returned](#) home and the trend was continuing. The numbers had declined almost five percent, but 117.3 million people remained forcibly displaced, of whom 42.5 million were now refugees. In Sudan, UNHCR reports 10 million people were displaced within its borders. UNHCR will release the final figures shortly.

Recently the World Council of Churches and European churches released the fourth edition of [Mapping Migration](#), documenting its work in Europe, expressing theological insight and sharing how this work is transforming churches across the continent. In his introduction, WCC General Secretary Jerry Pillay speaks of 'Migrant Theology' and the mandate to "Protect people more than borders!"

World Refugee Day is a time to acknowledge the former refugees who have brought new skills and understanding to Aotearoa and are now firmly part of our communities.

Most New Zealanders [have supported](#) the resettlement of refugees. Last year the Government [affirmed](#) its commitment to resettle 1,500 refugees each year, the majority from the Asia-Pacific region.

New Zealand is a signatory to the [1951 United Nations Convention on Refugees](#), which seeks to protect asylum seekers, refugees, internally displaced people, stateless people and returnees. It focused largely on European refugees before 1951. The 1967 protocol broadened its mandate to protect all people fleeing persecution and conflict at all times. UNHCR is marking 75 years since the adoption of the Convention.



Holy Hurt: Understanding Spiritual Trauma and the Process of Healing

A book review by Megan Blakie

In this thought-provoking book *Holy Hurts* (and subsequent podcast), Canadian psychologist and author Hillary McBride defines spiritual trauma and explains how it has detrimental impacts on us, both individually and collectively.

Considering NZ's recent royal commission on abuse in care, we might readily recognise some 'big T' spiritual traumas, but McBride pulls back the curtain on how 'little t' spiritual traumas can play out in our lives. These, she says, are the sorts of things that are normalised within a family or culture and lead to: "a subtle contortion of ourselves into a posture we had to take" in order to "stay safe, make us good, to keep us insulated from whatever we believe we needed to avoid".

Put another way, McBride says trauma is "how what happened to us lingers in us". Spiritual trauma is so insidious because it goes to the heart of our need to belong (to faith, faith community, family) and our understanding of God, ourselves and the world. We may even have trouble recognising it in ourselves. The book has a helpful list of possible psychological, physical and social-relational symptoms, which can include anger, our loss of ability to set appropriate boundaries, perfectionist tendencies, or a lack of sense of worthiness.

Holy Hurt includes a spectrum of clinical research, personal stories, and insights from McBride and other experts, which offers readers different voices and experiences to relate to. The Practice sections dotted throughout the chapters provide self-reflection that is gentle, encouraging and well timed if the material is eye-opening or triggering. Essentially the book is designed to offer insight, and healing strategies or ways forward from spiritual trauma.

We might read this book to bring awareness to our spiritual hurts, constraints or unhelpful internalised messages (about God, our bodies, etc) and to compassionately start a process to healing. Equally this book may assist us to recognise unhealthy patterns in our families and faith communities.

The dedication at the front of this book may strike a chord for those interested in exploring this topic: "To all our younger selves, who needed to know then but can finally learn now: you can listen to your body, you can trust yourself, and you are good at your core."

Author: Hillary L McBride PhD

Published by Brazos Press, Michigan, 2025, 262 pages

Available from libraries.



A Letter of Gratitude Speaks Volumes About our Past

Katherine Doig, National Archivist MCNZ

A letter written by the son of the late Rev John Armitage to Rev Platt, thanking him for publishing a tribute 50 years after his father perished in a maritime tragedy, is historical taonga.

Last year I stumbled across an uncatalogued collection of correspondence and other documents concerning the Tararua Relief Fund established by the Methodist Connexion in the aftermath of New Zealand's worst civilian maritime disaster.

The S.S. Tararua was a passenger steamer that struck a reef off Waipapa Point in the Catlins on 29 April 1881 and sank the following day; of the 151

passengers and crew on board only 20 survived. The dead included a party of four Wesleyan Methodists on their way from Canterbury to represent New Zealand at the General Conference of the Australasian Wesleyan Church. Reverends John B Richardson (President of the New Zealand Wesleyan Conference) and John Armitage (Editor of the New Zealand Wesleyan newspaper), and two lay delegates from Christchurch, Ebenezer Connal (associated with Durham Street Church) and Eltonton Mitchell (former headmaster of St Albans School) were all lost in the tragedy. The Tararua Relief Fund was set up to assist their wives and children.

Rev Armitage, who had only a month earlier arrived in Leeston to take up his appointment as Circuit Superintendent left behind a widow and eight children, including a young teenage son, also named John. A letter written by this John to the incoming President of Conference Rev Pratt in 1931 really captured my attention. Just a few simple pages penned to thank Rev Pratt for including a 'Jubilee in Memoriam' notice in *The New Zealand Methodist Times* on the 50th anniversary of the tragedy. The letter speaks volumes about the weight of grief carried for decades by the families of those lost.

John recalls the final service given by his father at Leeston on the Sunday evening prior to his departure for Lyttelton to board the Tararua, a prescient choice of sermon text and final hymn leading John to remark that it almost seemed as if his father 'had a foreboding that he was not to be with his people again.' He also relates, in a few heartbreaking paragraphs, how he, his mother and siblings belatedly and in harrowing-fashion heard the news of the disaster, and how the Rev Smalley who travelled from Springston to conduct his father's funeral service remarked upon seeing the Church draped in black, 'Why black? If one believes they have gone to glory, why not white?'

John, in his 60s at the time of writing, concludes his letter with news of the families, all of whom had clearly stayed connected, and maintained a keen interest in one another. He reflects with pride on his father's life, and the deep impressions he left upon his memory are best summed up, he says, in those simple words 'He was such a holy man, in all things.'



Manurewa Samoan Methodist Church Mother's Day

For the Manurewa Methodist Church Samoan congregation, Mother's Day was a special weekend of celebrating and honouring the women who faithfully serve our homes, church, and wider community.

Theme: "O Le Alofa E Tupu Mai Le Usita'I / *Love Grows by Obedience.*"

Our celebrations began on Friday evening with a Mother's Day dinner lovingly hosted by our Father's Fellowship, with support from our youth. It was a night filled with good food, laughter, entertainment, and love as our mothers were celebrated and appreciated. Special performances by the fathers and young people added so much joy to the evening, creating a memorable time of fellowship together.

The celebrations continued on Sunday with a special worship service led by our Women's Fellowship. A particularly meaningful part of the service was hearing testimonies from some of our senior women, who shared reflections on motherhood, faith, perseverance, and God's faithfulness through the seasons of life. Their stories were a beautiful reminder of the wisdom, sacrifice, and quiet strength carried by so many women in our families and church. We were also blessed by a heartfelt word of encouragement from our First Lady Talapauna Futi, who spoke so beautifully about the calling, value, and spiritual strength of women.

The service was made even more special through song and dance performances by our young women and young mothers, whose contributions brought celebration and joy to the day. As a congregation, we thank God for the mothers, grandmothers, aunties, and all the women who continue to love, nurture, lead, and pray faithfully—often behind the scenes, but never unnoticed. Mother's Day at Rewa Meko was a special reminder of just how much women shape the life of our families, our church, and our community.