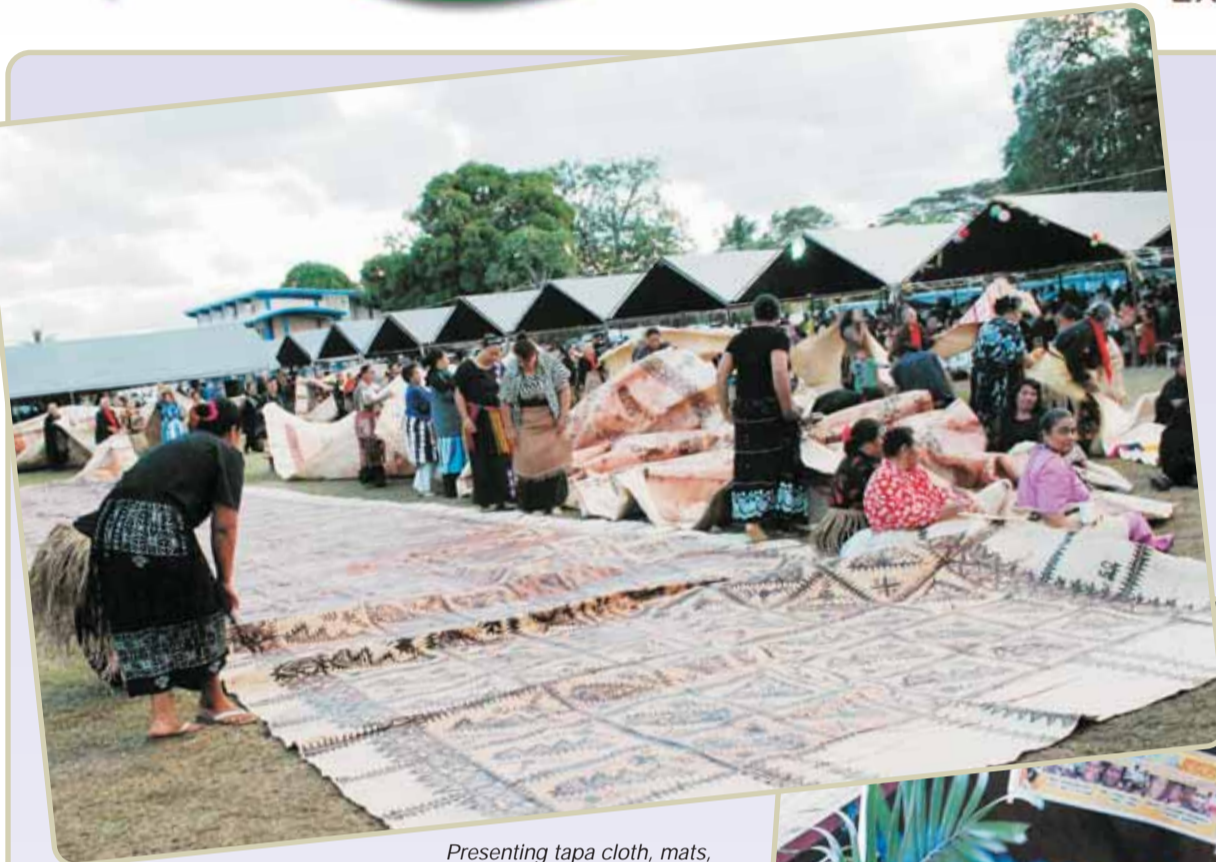


TOUCHSTONE

E whaia ana te putaketanga o nga whakapono mo tenei ao hurihuri
EXPLORING FAITH ISSUES FOR TODAY



Presenting tapa cloth, mats, and other gifts at the Free Wesleyan Church of Tonga's annual Conference

In June, Touchstone editor Paul Titus took a sabbatical during which he visited Fiji and Tonga.

In Fiji he interviewed Methodist Church leaders about the current political situation in the country and how the Church is responding to it.

In Tonga he observed the opening days of the annual Conference of the Free Wesleyan Church of Tonga.

This edition of Touchstone carries stories from his travels.

Fijian Methodist Church challenges military government

By Paul Titus

The Methodist Church in Fiji and the country's military government collided last month after Church leaders met and decided to hold their annual Conference despite the fact that the government has banned it.

On Good Friday this year, Fiji's military government imposed emergency regulations that abolished the constitution. Under the regulations, judges were removed and the media is prohibited from reporting on political issues. Public meetings are only allowed with police approval.

On Friday July 17th the Standing Committee of the Fijian Methodist Church held a meeting that breached the emergency regulations.

Two Church ministers were present at the meeting though the permit to hold it expressly forbade them attending. At that meeting Methodist general secretary Rev Tuikilakila Waqairatu read a paper concerning the military government's refusal to allow the Church to hold its annual conference.

The following week Tuikilakila, the two proscribed ministers, and Methodist Church president Rev Ame Tugau were taken into police custody for questioning.

Tuikilakila and Ame were released on bail and are to appear in court in the second week of August.

These actions extend from a decision the Fijian police and military announced in May that the Methodist Church would not be permitted to hold its Conference on grounds that it would raise political issues.

The Methodist Church is the largest and most influential in Fiji. According to the 2007 census, 54 percent of Christians in Fiji (nearly 290,000 people) are Methodists.

Each year the Fijian Methodist Conference brings together more than 800 lay and ordained representatives of the Church's departments, circuits and fellowships.

The Conference is preceded by an even larger choir competition which attracts hundreds of Methodist and other denominations' choirs from throughout Fiji and overseas. The choir competition is a major fundraising initiative for the MCF and last year raised more than \$1.5 million.

The government put an indefinite ban on Methodist Conference after a motion for discussion was circulated within the

Church on the current political situation. The motion rejected the moral authority of the military government, and made 10 demands, including that the 1997 Constitution be reinstated and elections be held by the end of 2009.

After the ban Methodist leaders met with government officials several times to request a dialogue. The Church was told it could hold its Conference if it removed two officials the government believes are pushing a political agenda. The Church has refused to do this.

The men the government wants the Church to dismiss – Rev Manasa Lasaro and Rev Tomasi Kanailagi – are both former MCF presidents and have been closely associated with previous coups or parties deposed by the current military government.

They were the ministers who were not supposed to be at the July 17th meeting of the Standing Committee. At that meeting the Standing Committee decided to confront the government and hold its Conference despite the ban.

Ame says the Methodist Church came to Fiji in 1835 and its annual conference has always been a vital part of its life.

"In an earlier meeting I told the prime

minister our Conference agenda would not include any political issues. There are many other matters the Church must discuss including our theological college, women's and men's fellowships, finances, and lay pastors.

"Conference is also the time when we station ministers, ordain new ministers, and receive new candidates for ministry and the deaconess order."

Ame says at their last meeting, Prime Minister Frank Banimarama told him people are running away from the Methodist Church to find new life in other denominations.

"I said it is not strange that people are running away from the Church. When Jesus preached many people ran away.

"I told him you have already abrogated the constitution and the Great Council of Chiefs. The only thing left now is the Methodist Church but the Church does not belong to you or to me.

"God brought Christianity to Fiji through the Methodist Church, and God will either approve or disapprove of this decision to block our Conference. Banimarama said he thought God would approve his decision," Ame says.

(See page 8)



Police perform at the Ruggers for Christ Crusade sponsored by the Fiji Police.

Statistical snapshot shows recession harming NZ families

As part of its efforts to create a just and compassionate society, the NZ Council of Christian Social Services (NZCCSS) has begun to compile Vulnerability Reports.

These reports use information from government agencies and community-based organisations to monitor the level of economic and social hardship New Zealanders experience.

NZCCSS says New Zealand entered the recession with hundreds of thousands of children and families already in poverty and with an under resourced social services sector. It is clear that the recession is making life more difficult for many people and placing an even greater strain on helping agencies.

The costs of necessities such as food, electricity and rent have been steadily increasing in the last two years. Food, energy and to a less extent rent, have outstripped the Consumer Price Index over the last three years.

Budgets are very tight for many families. According to a recent Families Commission survey over half of the families surveyed reported cutting back how much they spend on food and one quarter were spending less on health services.

For many people on fixed and/or low incomes, annual CPI adjustments have not kept pace with the increases in necessities like food, power and housing. This is compounded by the lack of CPI adjustment on some forms of assistance such as the Accommodation Supplement and has led to increased hardship for many.

At the end of the March 2009 quarter 115,000 people were unemployed – an unemployment rate of 5 percent.

Treasury is forecasting an unemployment rate peaking at 8 percent in the second half of 2010. This equates to 179,000 people unemployed by the September 2010 quarter.

Maori, who make up 15 percent of the population, have double the unemployment rate (9.2 percent) compared with the all persons rate of 4.5 percent and

constituted one third of people receiving the unemployment benefit in May 2009.

Pacific people are also disproportionately affected, with an unemployment rate of 8.8 percent.

For the March quarter the unemployment rate for all youth (aged 15-19 years) was 17 percent.

In the last eight weeks to mid-June the number of people in receipt of an Unemployment Benefit has increased by nearly 1,100 per week and an even greater number have lost their jobs.

Increasing levels of financial stress and poverty are reflected in the numbers of people applying for different forms of hardship assistance from Work and Income.

Although hardship assistance is available to low income working people, the vast majority of people receiving hardship assistance are beneficiaries. A disproportionate number of people reliant on hardship assistance are Maori.

Helping agencies are experiencing unprecedented levels of demand. In June the Suzanne Aubert Compassion Centre (Soup Kitchen) in Wellington reported a significant increase over the last several months in the level of demand for their community meals. For evening meals numbers are the highest recorded over the last 30 years.

The Salvation Army has experienced a 44 percent increase in the number of people seeking food assistance from their community services throughout the country in the twelve months to March 2009.

More than 200,000 children are living in hardship and numbers are likely to grow. The latest figures for the year ending March 2009 show that 211,736 children are living in benefit dependent households. Children in beneficiary households are much more likely to experience poverty and hardship.

The National Collective of Independent Women's Refuges is reporting a significant and ongoing increase for its services.

Between October and December 2007 and the same

period in 2008 there was a 15 percent increase in the number of women entering their community based services. For the same periods there was a 22 percent increase in the number of children who received community based advocacy and support.

Between January and March 2008 and the same period in 2009 the number of children benefiting from community based family violence support increased by 27 percent.

Methodist Trust Association takes hit

The Methodist Trust Association announced its results to 30 June 2009 on 7 July 2009.

The turmoil on world markets impacted on the income distribution for the quarter as the Association had to account for the loss of a fixed interest investment.

Executive Officer Greg Wright commented that the Association maintained a very wide spread of individual investments so that a loss, whilst never acceptable, did not significantly impair the underlying strength of the Methodist Trust Association.

The income distribution amounts to 30 June 2009 were significantly reduced but the returns for the 12 months to 30 June 2009 were still sound and future distributions should return to previous levels he said.

The Growth and Income Fund had a net reduction in value of -7.55% which was in line with the prior advice given to depositors both through Conference 2008 and earlier distribution letters. The Association noted that world equity markets had declined by nearly 25% over the same period. The negative return posted by the Association this year followed nine years of very good growth.

Full details of the distribution to 30 June 2009 are available from the website www.methodist.org.nz



The Leprosy Mission has built Sarah Arutun a copra kiln.

Practical support for leprosy victims

Sarah Arutun lives in a rather remote area in South Santo, Vanuatu. She suffered from leprosy some years ago. For a long time she was dependant on her family and because of her uncertain mental condition was sometimes seen as a burden even though the Leprosy Foundation provides her with rice, kerosene, soap and salt.

Many people in Vanuatu gain their income from the sale of copra (coconut meat), which has to be dried in a dryer over two or three days at the plantation, before it is bagged and trucked to the buyers. These dryers are 'rented' by the copra cutters for a share of the profits. Owners of these dryers have a guaranteed income and are held in high esteem.

In the photo, Sarah is standing in front of the dryer which the Leprosy Foundation built for her. Transporting the building materials into the bush and arranging the building was tricky because of the remoteness of the location but it was well worth it.

Now, Sarah's family help to look after the dryer and reap some of the benefits – in return they are much happier to look after Sarah! The Leprosy Mission also built Sarah a small house of permanent materials. She is very proud of it and it enables her to be a little more independent.

Pacific Leprosy Foundation

Caring for our Pacific Neighbours



P J Twomey 1893 - 1963

In 1939, Patrick Twomey, affectionately known as the "Leper man", founded the Makogai Lepers (NZ) Trust which was later to become the Pacific Leprosy Foundation.

68 years on, the Foundation continues to work extensively in the South Pacific region to provide funding for the treatment, rehabilitation and welfare of people affected by leprosy.

The Foundation, in conjunction with government departments and church-based organisations in Tonga, Cook Islands, Kiribati, Vanuatu, Samoa, Fiji and the Solomon Islands, is working to eliminate leprosy and provide continuing care for people with disability or disadvantages due to past active leprosy.

Your donations will go towards making life a little bit easier for those suffering from leprosy. Help us make life more bearable for those suffering from this disease.

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Young people get short, sharp dose of servanthood

By Mataiva Robertson

Where do you go when you've been diagnosed with a terminal illness, your teenage child has lost faith in you as a parent, and 90 percent of your weekly sickness benefit is being used up on paying the rent?

Who do you turn to when your husband has left you for another woman, leaving you with a mortgage and five young children to feed?

How do you keep your children warm during the winter nights when the only accommodation available to you is a four door sedan?

These are just some of the many different scenarios faced by some of the people who walk through the doors at the Wanganui City Mission – an ecumenical outreach service in Wanganui that helps bring hope to many in desperate need.

ServntHood is the name of a programme that was recently held in Wanganui. It is the brainchild of City missioner Deacon Shirley-Joy Barrow and Methodist Tauwi Youth coordinator Te Rito Peyroux.

Selected youths from around the country get to spend a week in Wanganui serving the community in need via the Wanganui City Mission under the guidance of Shirley-Joy, Rev Tony Bell and other volunteers. The Wanganui City Mission is jointly run by the Wanganui Methodist, Catholic, Anglican and Presbyterian

churches.

The pilot ServntHood programme took place in July. Youth participants were Lute Taufalele and Ane Kisina from Wellington, Alison Ranui, Julie-Anne Barney-Katere and So'otaga Misikei from Taranaki,



Nine young people spent a week working with the Wanganui City Mission last month.

Jessica Rabone and Loleini Fonua from Palmerston North, Mikhaela Kaiser from Auckland and of course the leader of the gang - Te Rito Peyroux.

The participants assembled in Wanganui on a Sunday night (July 4th) where they were given a brief of their week long assignment. This was definitely not a holiday camp.

For accommodation they were placed in emergency housing, for meals they were

allocated humble food parcels to ration throughout the week, (late night strolls to the takeaways were strictly forbidden!) and all were encouraged to make minimal use of their cell phones.

For many of the group what lay ahead

Possible – an op shop providing affordable second hand goods such as furniture, clothes and other household items. The ServntHood team was also involved with the Friendship Meals, which provides hearty meals for the community in need in churches around the city for only \$2 a meal.

On most nights the team was addressed by a guest speaker with the day then coming to a close with a reflection and discussion.

On two days the team also attended the Lower North Island Methodist Synod's School of Theology. The week with the ServntHood team leading the Sunday morning church service at the Wanganui Methodist Parish. Jessica led the service, Loleini read the Bible, So'otaga delivered a reflection, with Ane and Mikhaela saying prayers while Lute played the hymns on piano.

For most of the ServntHood team the week long experience was an eye opener about the state of our society. Each person who came to the Wanganui City Mission for help had a story to tell – many were stories of hardship, pain, fear, poverty and abuse.

The work of over 100 volunteers at the Wanganui City Mission continues to help in transforming such stories to stories of warmth and love. Let us pray that we can all learn to emulate the only King in history to ever wash the feet of his subjects.

Greed and violence challenge Asian churches

By John Roberts

'Once you are in the ecumenical movement you will never be the same again.' Dr Soritu Nababan of Indonesia heard these words at a world conference of Christian youth held at Kottayam, India in 1952.

They still hold true for him today, Soritu says, and he used them in his sermon during the opening worship of a conference of 34 Asian ecumenical officers held in Indonesia last month.

The purpose of the meeting was to establish a network of Asian ecumenical officers from churches affiliated with the World Council of Churches (WCC) and Christian Conference of Asia (CCA). Australia and New Zealand were included in the gathering.

Soritu observes that all too often we refrain from discussing how to strive for unity in our local and national situations. For him the kind of unity Jesus calls for isn't one of administration and organisation, but of personal relationship, like that between the Father and the Son.

"While churches around the world will never worship God in the same way, it is possible for all churches to hold common worship and pray the Lord's Prayer together. They will never believe precisely the same things but it is possible for them to affirm the universal creeds. They will never all speak the same language but they can all speak the language of love that transcends differences."

Soritu identified two things Asian churches must do together. Firstly, address capitalism and globalisation that is dictated by greed and strengthens the worship of mammon. Secondly, face up to fundamentalist Islam through communication and cooperation with Muslims.

The Islamic Wahid Institute monitors religious life in Indonesia. Its director Ahmed Sawadi told the conference that

Government has to be firm in dealing with perpetrators of discrimination and threats of violence on the basis of religion.

Ahmed said interreligious education for children should be done through the school curriculum. "All religious regulations must be brought into line with human rights provisions. Regional government must maintain a neutral attitude and not bow to pressure from religious groups."

Human rights are an issue in other parts of Asia as well. Delegates heard that the war in Sri Lanka is not over. It will not be over until Tamils are treated equally, allowed to return home, and given support. In the Philippines there have been four decades of human rights violations under authoritarian regimes. There has been conflict and armed confrontation with many atrocities, illegal detentions, and extra-judicial killing carried out by military and paramilitary elements.

The church has not been spared from these injustices. The church continues to be involved in the aspirations and struggles of the people as it marches, prays, talks, and fights on behalf of the people.

Elsewhere in Asia, the Korean Peninsula is becoming increasingly militarised and efforts for reconciliation and unification between North and South are being further eroded. The Korean church holds the view that peace cannot be achieved by military might.

It is calling for respect between North and South and for diplomatic dialogue, cultural exchanges, and economic cooperation to build up mutual trust.

In his speech Dr James Haire from Australia said the contemporary reality of Asia is one of deep violence manifest in many different ways yet there is much resilience among people who have been deeply wounded.

John Roberts is Methodist Church of NZ Mission and Ecumenical secretary.

Hymnbook Trust busy with conference, new hymns

Hope is our Song is title of the third hymn collection published by the New Zealand Hymnbook Trust. The book includes 160 new songs penned by 48 writers of music and words.

The volume has five indexes that cover themes, the Church's year, the worship service, pastoral/sacramental services, and a biblical index. It will be published in August or September.

Two other events are on the Trust's calendar:

First, a national conference on NZ hymns in Palmerston North over Labour Weekend, October 23 to 26. It will offer keynote talks, workshops, panel discussions, and a public singalong in the Catholic cathedral.

Keynote speakers are principal of the Theological College for the Uniting Church in Australia Clive Pearson, US hymnwriter Jim Strathee, ('I am the light of the world'), and NZ hymnwriter Colin Gibson. Other NZ hymnwriters attending include Shirley Murray, Bill Bennett, Bill Wallace, and Marnie Barrell.

The early bird registration fee of \$175 closes at end of August. The Trust's website (www.hymns.org.nz) provides fuller information on the Labour weekend conference. Or contact John and Gillian via email: info@hymns.org.nz.

The second event will be a CD recording, by Auckland-based choir Viva Voce, of a selection of the hymns from Hope is our Song.



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An idiot, not a fool

To the editor,

Regarding the review of *The Pink Panther 2* by Steve Taylor in the May edition of *Touchstone*, Steve suggests that the inspector could actually be a Christ-figure (Christ the fool) and thus, in a way, reflects Jesus.

If diamonds predate our current capitalist system and go back further to the time of Christ, then the composition of these facts or truths might possibly open up a dimension unseen. There could be a layer behind the surface, perhaps, which is spiritual in Jesus Christ, which the filmmakers weren't even aware of, and where God can use Christians to carefully point these matters out without trespassing what's

in God through Jesus Christ and the Word of God.

It takes reasonable evidence first and belief in the reality of God and careful, reasonable judgment. So, I put this movie to the test.

A couple of facts from the movie make the above possible but the inspector inadvertently supports the status quo of wealth and riches like an idiot. In fact, the inspector is more of an idiot than a fool.

That doesn't make the inspector an accurate representation of 'Christ the fool' in the biblical sense.

Peter Veugelaers, Lower Hutt

Lay preachers left begging

To the editor,

I was glad to learn that the President of the Methodist Church has formerly approved an increase in the Methodist stipend and allowances from 1 July 2009. I see this as necessary, good and right.

But, it concerns me that the presbyters' annual book allowance has moved to \$970 (will it be a grand next year?) when accredited lay preachers, who have also done hard yards of training get not a cracker!

Lay preachers are expected to do a good job. This requires being as resourced, up to date and well read as clergy. Both do the same task on Sundays but lay preachers are not valued by those they help out (apart from the rare enlightened parish, and the odd Synod that scrimps to provide an occasional indiscriminate token).

I view this situation as a systemic failure of the Church. I understand that on any given

Sunday more services are led by lay than clergy. Despite the increasing number of services being led by the laity, appreciation of lay preachers has decreased.

For example, there was a time when the Lay Preachers Certificate entitled the holder to automatic membership of the governing body of the parish served, and the work of lay preachers was recognised annually on the second Sunday in August.

Unlike the clergy, the majority of lay preachers are retired, many surviving simply on what the Government hands out.

If there are insufficient funds to give the active, accredited and up-skilled lay preachers the annual \$100 book allowance they have been cap-in-hand begging for the past eight years, is it asking too much to suggest the ordained top \$100 off their abundance towards this just cause?

Rosalie Sugrue, Raumati

Poem for peace

To the editor,

I have just read the June *Touchstone*, and I thoroughly enjoyed the articles. I especially liked the one concerning the Anglican and Methodist churches working together for Christianity.

The following is a poem I wrote in 2006:

*Peace and Unity
Peace, oh peace, let it be, let it be,
Among everyone near and far,
With colour or creed no bar
By working together in unity.*

*Peace, oh peace, let it be, let it be,
And all people world-wide show
How our friendship can grow
By working together in unity.*

*Peace, oh peace, let it be, let it be,
With people from lands of every ocean
All keeping peace in motion
By working together in unity.*

Noline Johnson, Dargaville

Who was responsible for the Crucifixion?

To the editor,

With reference to the article 'Beware the pitfalls of anti-Jewish assumptions' in the June edition of *Touchstone*, I don't want to be seen as anti-Jewish but keeping to biblical facts, I cannot agree that the Romans condemned Christ to death.

The Messiah was not recognised by the religious leadership (Sanhedrin) of that time owing to the fact that they would have lost their positions of power and authority. Christ's teaching and miracles worried them greatly and they had no real answers.

Christ was judged and condemned by the chief priests, scribes and elders of the Council to be put to death. See Mark 14:53-65 and Matthew 27.

Pilate representing Roman authority could find no wrong with Christ. He consequently washed his hands before Christ's accusers, whereas his accusers stated 'Let his blood be on us and our children'. The Romans carried

out Christ's crucifixion but did not condemn him.

If the general population in Jerusalem realised what this hurried council meeting was about, there would have been rebellion. The religious leaders would have realised this.

The Jews and Palestinians of today should both have equal rights to Palestine as their ancestry springs back to Abraham, Sarah and Hagar. Since Israel became a state in 1948, they have endeavoured to push the Palestinians out repeatedly. The Israelis have besieged Gaza compared to rocket attacks by Palestinians.

Another interesting fact related to the article is that the Essenes were a breakaway from the Jerusalem Church, of which Jesus' brother James was a leader. It appears he was assassinated by being pushed from a high wall. This order settled on the shores of the Dead Sea.

Clive Barker, Napier



Jeff was a follower of Jesus. On Twitter, at least.

KITCHEN THEOLOGY

A heart-warming feast

By Diana Roberts

Mouthwatering aromas floated into the worship space of Te Karaiti Te Pou Herenga Waka, the Anglican Maori church at Mangere, South Auckland. Maori Wardens had efficiently ushered hundreds of Methodists and Anglicans into the building across the road from the Lotofale'ia Tongan Methodist church, where we had gathered to begin the service celebrating the signing of the Covenant of Aotearoa New Zealand and Polynesia, and the Methodist Church of New Zealand.

It was May 24th, Wesley Day, when Methodists and Anglicans have for 200 years remembered and given thanks for the lives of John and Charles Wesley, on the anniversary of the date of that transforming experience when John felt his heart "strangely warmed". The now famous Aldersgate Street meeting was a low-key gathering, and that is how it was for our Covenant signing.

That's not to say it was a ho-hum affair. The leaders of the two churches – Archbishop and President – and many other notable guests filled the front rows. Great choirs and small music groups sang gloriously and the congregation joined in roof-raising hymns.

The simple liturgy was shaped around our faith in God and our commitment to Christ and to each

other. The Bible readings told of God's new covenant written in the hearts of people (Jeremiah 31:31-33) and of the fellowship we have with God when we deepen fellowship with one another (1 John 1:1-7).

I was reminded of family gatherings, such as anniversaries and birthdays, when shared ancestry links us in common understandings, and we sing together, tell stories and enjoy each others' company, listening as the 'head of the family' makes a speech looking backwards with affirmation and forwards with hope.

The Anglican-Methodist family was hosted warmly and generously by the Tongan and Maori branches of the family tree. The haakari meal whose savoury smells had tantalised us as we sat in Te Karaiti Te Pou Herenga Waka was piled high on the tables, and we filled our plates amid a buzz of talking.

This wasn't a stiff and starchy dinner party, but a real kitchen table gathering, open and joyful. It's a feeling expressed by the outcomes that are sought in the Covenant: an ongoing dialogue to deepen the relationship, a greater commitment to dealing with the issues that prevent closer communion between us; a relationship that holds an awareness of the other in everything we do; and a focus on a common mission to the world.

Find out about the Service and the Covenant at www.methodist.org.nz.

By Ron Gibson

Structures and the people inside them



One of the most influential books in my early attempts to marry up psychology, history and theology was undoubtedly Eric Fromm's classic '[Man's] Fear of Freedom'. Such classics were expressed in what we would now regard as politically incorrect language, so we must now read Fromm with an inclusive perspective and translate 'man' as 'people'. Given the latter, the book title was intended to convey the ways people slide into neurotic behaviour when presented with freedoms they cannot handle.

For example, the freedom to be responsible for our own behaviour is something most of us engage with and rejoice in. Others, for a variety of reasons, find such a responsibility to be beyond their comfort zone and engage in behaviour that is designed more to protect themselves from overwhelming anxiety than to engage with

reality. There is no judgement implied or intended in this observation. It is simply an observation of the human condition.

Fromm refers to that greatest of all Biblical myths, The Garden of Eden, as a metaphorical account of humanity being compelled to think for itself, work for its own survival and take full responsibility for how we behave or act. There is no going back to paradise – we have to find our own solutions to our own problems. We have to take responsibility.

Over whatever span of time is covered by recorded history, we have created institutions and structures to give order to our lives and avoid chaos. The solution to totally dysfunctional societies has been to create complex institutions and even more complex rules, regulations, laws, procedures, mores, folkways, and moral and religious imperatives. The Church has all the latter!

We all want freedom – from rules, regulations, and institutional constraints. At our places of work we want freedom to just get on with the job. But freedom is not the absence of structure, and this is most certainly the case with the Church.

In the Church, it is not a case of everyone going off and doing their own thing. That would be indicative of self-centred behaviour and would negate any sense of a faith community working together for the benefit of all. What we need is a clear structure that enables people to work within established boundaries in an autonomous and creative way.

Without some form or structure, church groups would flounder unproductively, and members conclude that they are merely wasting their time.

Participation, however, is essential for church groups to function effectively. It is significant in this respect that participation works better where all the members are valued and respected, and there is clear

leadership. Servant leadership, the existence of people with the vision and energy to mobilize others – and to set mutually agreed boundaries – is an essential ingredient in making participation work.

Freedom to participate is particularly dependent upon freedom of access to information, and freedom from the tyranny of hidden agendas or lack of transparency in the application of procedures. There is no excuse for withholding relevant information in a church organization, which should be a model for ethical behaviour.

Withholding information or working from less than obvious agendas says that we do not trust our members. Yet trust is the foundation of our capacity psychology or spiritually to engage with the real world.

If we say that we trust in the 'love that will not let us go', then that trust needs to be reflected in all our structures and in how we interact with each other.

Some theological questions about Methodist Church restructuring

In 2008 NZ Methodist Conference made a decision to set up a task group to examine how the Church can best be organised to carry out its mission in today's world. Convened by vice president Ron Gibson, the nine-person Task Group on Governance and Management has begun to examine the organisational structure of the Church.

Ron says the Task Group will report to Conference this year and will continue its work over the next two to three years.

One of the first things the Task Group did was to request Mission and Ecumenical secretary Rev John Roberts to lay out some of the theological principles that should underpin its work. John worked with a small group of Methodist leaders to establish some points and questions the Task Group could reflect upon as it deliberates. John says the wider church can also use these questions to critique the Task Group's reports.

The first set of questions focused on some of the metaphors that we can use to think about the Church.

Heavy or light – Do we want a church heavy with structure, or one that can travel light because it isn't burdened with a lot of baggage?

Static or mobile – Do we want a church whose life and structures are fixed in time and place, or do we want a church that's mobile, and whose structures enable it to keep on the move?

Solid or liquid – Do we want a solid inflexible church, or a liquid and flexible church readily able to adapt to a rapidly changing world?

Denominational or ecumenical – Do we want a church that looks only to its own traditions, or one that that is genuinely ecumenical in outlook and seeks the visible unity of the church?

Exclusion or embrace – Do we want a church that demands conformity, or a church that embraces diversity?

Rank or peer based – Do we want hierarchical leadership with

layered management in our church, or a flat horizontal structure that embraces a radical ekklesia of equals?

Board table or round table – Do we want a church structure that is formal, aloof and separated out, or one that is open to all, overcoming patriarchy, offering empowerment, dispensing justice, and providing hospitality?

An arrogant or a loving eye – Do we want a church that looks at the world and its people with an arrogant eye (i.e. with a gaze that is acquisitive, controlling and disempowering); or one that looks with a loving eye (a gaze that is respectful, interactive, and appreciative of difference).

Task or people centred: Do we want a structure in which people are primarily focussed on tasks, or one that is focussed on people and allows them to get to know each and develop trust to do their tasks well?

Attending to relationships: How can we promote a real sense of collegiality and purpose amongst those who hold significant positions in the structures of the church?

Koinonia: How can we develop a greater sense community across the connexion, with rich and open conversations taking place around the different views of the groupings that make up our church?

Another set of theological questions addresses the transforming mission of the Church.

God's mission: Does our thinking sufficiently embrace God's revelation in Jesus Christ as a basis for the church's mission?

Incarnational: How can we promote a sense of mission that is immersed in communities; i.e., not mission to others but mission with others that is empowering for people?

Context: Will what we propose take the context of Aotearoa New Zealand seriously, and reflect our church's Treaty understandings and bicultural commitments.

Justice: Will what we propose advance the cause of social justice in and beyond the church?

Evangelism: Will what we propose embrace gospel good news, and will it promote evangelism that is good news?

Liberation: Will what we propose be liberating for the church and its members, and those beyond the church?

Ecologically responsible: Will what we propose respect the need to care for God's creation act in ecologically responsible ways?

People who are different to us:

Will what we propose respect the divine image reflected in people of different genders, ethnicities, abilities, and sexual orientations, and will it enhance their place in church and society?

A third set of questions asks the Task Group to consider its work in the light of the four sources of authority that John Wesley believed underpinned his theology.

Scripture: Does our thinking reflect the best scriptural

understandings about what it means to be church?

Tradition: Does our thinking value the tradition of the church built up over the years, especially the Methodist tradition?

Reason: Does our thinking make real sense and is it workable?

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Ethical objections to euthanasia - a reply

By the Very Rev John Murray and
Rev Dr Keith Carley

Writing as the religious advisors of Dignity NZ Trust, we welcome the article by Professor David Richmond 'Ethical objections to euthanasia' in your June edition. In the spirit of open public debate we wish to respond to the points the Professor has made and hope that your readers will add their thoughts and experiences.

As 'advocates', as Dr Richmond would consider us, we would have to begin by questioning his opening statement. Actually we could not agree with him more in his proposition that the issue of voluntary euthanasia – and please note that he normally omits the essential word 'voluntary' throughout his article – is a very complex issue. We would go further and add that it is also a very complex legal and human rights issue.

Though the Professor seems to question the role of the media in its reporting of "tragic cases", we ask: how will we, the public, face this ethical dilemma if not through the stories of real people facing real life and death situations?

It is not long since Ian Crutchley of Taumarunui was found guilty of the attempted murder of his desperately ill mother because he helped her to die. Dignity NZ Trust was founded by Lesley Martin who was convicted and sent to prison for helping her mother end her misery. These tragic cases pose real questions for us all.

The first serious question we would raise with the Professor is his use of the word 'kill'. Though elsewhere in his article he admits the difference between "killing and letting die", his personal opinion is clearly that "euthanasia refers to killing". This difference is a crucial point because convinced opponents of the right-to-die – aka voluntary euthanasia, which means "good dying" – use this emotive word 'kill' to make it sound like a criminal act.

In ordinary speech the word 'kill' presupposes that the victim does not expect to die and certainly does not agree to being killed. That is murder. So we have to find another word to describe helping persons who, because of certain circumstances, wish to end their life, to die with dignity.

The Professor sets out, as is commonly agreed, the various types of "good dying", voluntary active and passive, non-voluntary active and passive. This is part of the complexity of the issue and each needs to be more carefully explained and studied in a fuller ethical and spiritual discussion.

But the primary question involved in making legal end-of-life decisions is who has the right to make such a decision? Is it the doctor or doctors? Or a member of the family? Or a priest or pastor? Or is it the dying person? On two occasions in recent years Death with Dignity Bills have been introduced to

our Parliament, both proposing to give the authority of deciding to the doctors.

The question raised in the article - "Is there a right to die?" - states that for advocates, such a right exists "on the basis [that] human dignity lies in self-determination". Yes, we believe very deeply that not only as a human right but also as part of our Christian faith, God gives each of us the choice of how we choose to live and how we would choose to die. That is why our voluntary euthanasia movement is called Dignity. And this same word is clearly stated in our Bill of Rights with regard to each person's right to say 'No' to further medical treatment.

Has the right to die no limits? Dr Richmond asks. This is why the law is needed. Law, informed by our ethical and spiritual understanding, is for the protection of the rights of the individual and the society. Therefore, the law is not meant to be an unchangeable ban on responsible freedom of choice. This is a big question and includes among other matters, the legal right to suicide.

So "does 'compassion' include an obligation to kill someone who is suffering?" We would ask the Professor to look seriously at how he has framed this question and what he is implying by the use of these words. We find the wording provocative and unhelpful as we search together for a humane and ethical understanding of physical and mental suffering and the struggle for dignity.

What then can we say to the question - "is there such a thing as a 'life worth living?'" Here the Professor, as we understand him, moves into an area of argument which is not only questionable but to us, unacceptable.

He draws his final, and for him his most convincing, objection to euthanasia from the very complex field of eugenics and situation ethics, ending up with direct reference to Hitler and the Holocaust. He says "the modern day pro-euthanasia movement is grounded in exactly the same philosophy. It involves a high level group taking end of life decisions on behalf of others, and an economic motivation hidden in it."

We can only respond to this by saying that we find the Professor's conclusion untrue, misleading and indeed offensive.

We thank the editor of Touchstone for opening up this very important issue for our day. It raises many more questions which must be thought through, out of our own and others' experience of suffering and dying, especially in the light and compassion of our Christian faith, so that we all may live and die with dignity.

John Murray is former moderator of the Presbyterian Church, Aotearoa NZ and Keith Carley is former lecturer in Old Testament Studies at St John's College, Auckland.

Social consequences of euthanasia

In the last issue of Touchstone Dr David Richmond discussed some of the ethical implications of euthanasia. Here he raises some questions regarding its social consequences.

Is it reasonable to introduce radical legislation on the basis of the perceived needs of a small proportion of the population?

Proponents of euthanasia are anxious to avoid any suggestion that euthanasia could eventually, as has happened in Holland, contribute large numbers to the annual mortality statistics. But to succeed, they need to frighten the majority into thinking that intractable problems at the end of life are common.

Therefore they focus on the very small number of people who face problems at the end of life and publicise these cases in emotionally charged ways. In fact, only a tiny minority of people face problems at the end of life that conventional treatments cannot cope with. The vast majority of us will die comfortably. As the legal aphorism has it: hard cases make bad law.

Reflections on the practice of euthanasia in Holland and Belgium show that it would impact adversely on the elderly, disabled and handicapped. Many families exert pressures on their elderly or disabled kinsfolk to make decisions that are not in their best interests. Elderly and disabled people often compromise their autonomy on the grounds that they do not wish to be a nuisance.

If euthanasia is legalised, additional pressures will inevitably surface and we too will have the spectacle of elderly and disabled people being talked into desiring death. The possibility of 'death on demand' will inevitably morph into an obligation to die.

Is euthanasia the appropriate solution for everybody who requests it?

Requests for euthanasia come not just from patients but from their relatives. In the presence of death, patients and their relatives are highly vulnerable, anxious people.

In my experience in 40 years of medical practice, most such requests from patients are not because of intractable symptoms but because of fear of the unknown. These people require love, physical and psychological support, and careful management of symptoms.

The majority of requests from relatives of patients are because they themselves cannot, or do not want to cope with the experience of watching a loved one pass away. These people need counselling and help to support their loved one.

We should not be so naive as to think that once we get comfortable with euthanasia, it will remain the preserve of the terminally ill. In 30 years, Holland has moved from euthanasia of people who are terminally ill to euthanasia of people who have chronic illness not under threat of death, euthanasia of people with mental illness, and euthanasia of people for psychological distress. In Belgium it has taken just three years to make the same transition. Moreover non-voluntary euthanasia is increasingly being advocated in these countries as a social duty, part of the care

package for patients who cannot choose for themselves. The distinction between what is happening in these countries and the old 1930s Nazi euthanasia-eugenics programme is increasingly blurred.

What effect would widespread euthanasia have on palliative care and hospice services?

Killing sick people is cheap. Providing palliative and terminal care is a highly skilled, labour intensive enterprise. The major underlying rationale that utilitarian ethicists use to justify euthanasia is the monetary cost to society of nursing and caring for the sick, disabled and intellectually impaired.

The New Zealand health system is struggling financially: there is currently great concern about people with potentially remediable problems being removed from public hospital operating lists because the District Health Boards lack the finance to cope with the waiting lists. Many of these people cannot afford private sector medical assistance.

If euthanasia were to be introduced inevitably some people – especially older people – with life-restricting disabilities would be shunted off waiting lists with no assurance of future reinstatement. They would seriously consider euthanasia.

And surely there would be a strong temptation to reduce funding for research and service provision in terminal care.

Is euthanasia consistent with a ban on capital punishment?

When New Zealand abolished capital punishment in 1961, the key reason for doing so was that despite the best efforts of the legal system, a small number of innocent people had been executed. The view prevailed that even though the numbers were small, any wrongful execution of an innocent person was abhorrent to the majority of us.

The diagnosis of an incurable illness, and if terminal, how imminent death is, carry a (often large) probability for error. The annals of medicine abound with incorrect diagnoses and erroneous predictions of death.

In my own years of practice, I can recall four examples where teams of medical specialists diagnosed people with terminal cancer who later proved not to have that disease. If euthanasia had been legal and these people had requested it before the progress of events proved the diagnosis to be incorrect, an 'innocent life' would have been lost.

As reported in the Melbourne Age newspaper, such a scenario did in fact occur in the case of Nancy Crick, an Australian devotee of Dr Philip Nitschke, who killed herself whilst surrounded by advocates of euthanasia, on the basis of a diagnosis of bowel cancer. An autopsy revealed no evidence of cancer. Such tragedies do not seem to trouble the consciences of euthanasia advocates, quick as they are to point the finger at the morality of those who are opposed to it.

Dr David Richmond, MD is professor emeritus, University of Auckland and founder and chairman of the HOPE Foundation for Research on Ageing.

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Roman candles in John Wesley's birthday cake

Every year Methodists of various stripes around the world mark John Wesley's birthday. A place you might not expect the event to be celebrated is Rome but this year a gathering took place at St Peter's Basilica to do just that.

The birthday reception for Methodism's founder was due to an initiative of the Methodist representative to the Holy See, Rev Dr Trevor Hoggard and his colleague on the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity (PCPCU), Mons Mark Langham.

Trevor says as the sun set over St. Peter's the party of about 30 people, made up of ambassadors to the Holy See, professors from the pontifical universities, members of the PCPCU and other offices of the Curia toasted John Wesley on the occasion of what would have been his 306th birthday.

"Some ecumenists describe the present time as an ecumenical winter," Trevor says. "Perhaps the momentum has gone from many of the bilateral dialogues across the globe as the churches search for the next step in inter-church rapprochement in a fast changing world, but here and there the green shoots of continuing goodwill are still to be found.

"Whatever that next step turns out to be and however long we must wait for its appearance, in the meantime we need to renew and celebrate bonds of friendship and ecumenical commitment.

"For the present, it is encouraging to see Catholics, Methodists and Anglicans celebrating the contribution of John Wesley to the collective Christian story, and where better to celebrate that contribution than in the holy city of Rome itself."



Some guests at John Wesley's birthday celebration (from left) Rev Gregory Fairbanks (PCPCU), Prof Donna Orsuto (Foyer Unitas), Mons Nicholas Hudson (principal Venerable English College), Mons Mark Langham (PCPCU), Mons Jeremy Fairhead (Vatican desk for migrants and refugees) and Rev Dr Trevor Hoggard (Methodist Rep to the Holy See).

The gift of Christian unity in a post-ecumenical age

An Australian ecumenical leader brought a message of hope to New Zealand this Matariki season.

Rev Dr Jonathon Inkpen says while we are living in an ecumenical winter, we can still find fresh clarity about divine purposes. In winter, fresh green shoots may germinate and grow.

Jonathon is general secretary of the New South Wales Ecumenical Council and secretary of the National Council of Churches in Australia's Faith and Unity Commission.

He spoke to a combined Presbytery and Synod meeting in Christchurch in June. He was invited to help Methodists and Presbyterians think more deeply about what it might mean to be ecumenical in a very different context to the one in which the modern ecumenical movement was born a century ago.

The theme he used to do this was 'Receiving the Gift'. He reminded his listeners that Christian unity is not merely a goal but also a gift.

"The biblical truth is that we are already one in Jesus Christ. It is not something just to strive for but something we already have, by God's grace. The ecumenical task is therefore to become what we already are."

Jonathon acknowledged that in a time of spiritual winter the climate and landscape can create coolness and disunity rather than the warm reception of gifts. Yet the reality is that we cannot go back and God is calling us to a fresh missional perspective.

Drawing on a message that the late Pope John Paul II gave to a gathering of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders some years ago, he suggested that "until the gifts of all those whom Christ is seeking to join his church, in any of its forms are fully received, the church in Australia, Aotearoa New Zealand or any other land will not be the church that Jesus Christ wants it to be".

At the heart of all of this is the need for a spiritual ecumenism, a unity of hearts not just minds. The unity of the church is ultimately not something we can organise but only receive from the Holy Spirit.

Jonathon was in Christchurch at the invitation of the regional Joint Ecumenical Affairs Committee of the Methodist and Presbyterian Churches, and he also delivered the inaugural Rafea Antoun Memorial Lecture to the Christchurch Inter-faith Council.

Christchurch South presbyter Rev Mark Gibson says he appreciated the challenge Jonathon posed.

"Too often the emphasis in ecumenical initiatives has been at the organisational level. If the Christian community is to have anything of lasting value to share with others it needs to come from a deeper place. This is a place of genuine openness to where God is leading," Mark says.

Mark says Jonathon stressed that the core to successful ecumenical development is "relationship, relationship, relationship". It is only in the context of meeting and knowing one another that we can give and receive from one another.

His council believes the critical ways to develop deep relationships are communicating the Gospel together in new ways, developing cross-cultural relationships – which means loving our neighbour who is different from us, and caring for all of God's creation.

"Jonathon explored this radical openness to others' gifts. He shared with us the inspiring story of the 'Journey of Promise' initiative that he helped bring to fruition in Australia. It brought together 30 young people – 10 Christians, 10 Jews and 10 Muslims – who lived and shared together for a week.

"This intense journey of encounter was framed as a pilgrimage and had a profound effect on the young people involved. Jonathon said that the experience of the young people is a reminder for those of the Abrahamic faiths that God is always ahead of us, calling us on, seeking to make of us a new Creation, a new understanding of how we can be a people together."

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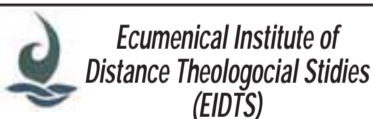
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New Methodist Church pushes spirit over culture



New Methodist Church senior pastor Waisea Vulaono address the Ruggers for Jesus rally.

One reason leaders of the Methodist Church in Fiji (MCF) have decided to take a confrontational approach against the government over its annual Conference may be that they believe the government is promoting an alternative Methodist Church in order to undermine them.

Last month Radio New Zealand International reported that the MCF general secretary Rev Tuikilakila

Waiqairatu has expressed concern about a movement called the New Methodist Church. The New Methodist Church, Tuikilakila says, is directly criticizing the MCF and working hand in hand with the police.

The New Methodist Church was created by two brothers Waisea Vulaono and Atunaisa Vulaono. The Vulaono brothers are in turn the brothers of the Fijian commissioner of police, Commodore Esala Teleni.

The New Methodist Church has taken a prominent role in a new initiative the Fiji Police have taken to reduce crime by promoting religious values both within the police force and in the community.

Waisea Vulaono says he split from the MCF and established the New Methodist Church 10 years ago. He cites four reasons for creating the new movement.

One was that the MCF does not allow the work of the Holy Spirit in its meetings. By this he means speaking tongues, shouting, clapping, and praising God.

The second reason was that the MCF does allow any musical instruments in its worship services, including the organ. Waisea says his Methodist neighbours condemned him because he played the guitar in family worship services.

Thirdly, while the MCF condones the use of kava, Waisea says it is a holdover from pre-Christian religion and not from God.

Fourth, he says the MCF places too many burdens on people through excessive fundraising. The New Methodist Church permits only tithing and donations, not other fundraising activities such as roti nights and choir festivals.

"A few families joined me when I left

the Methodist Church, and in the last five years our numbers have grown to 10,000. We have congregations throughout Fiji and overseas in Australia, England and France where a number of rugby players have joined us."

Waisea says he trained as a lay preacher and gained a certificate in preaching before he moved away from the Methodist Church. Neither he nor his brother is ordained and they use the title 'senior pastor' rather than reverend.

"We are closer to the Pentecostal churches than to the mainline churches. The old Methodist Church is more concerned with the things of this world than the word of God. They want to uphold Fijian culture rather than the Holy Spirit.

"We believe only the word of God can save Fiji. Not money, not outside aid."

The New Methodist Church carries out evangelism through DVDs it produces. It also has a weekly spot on television and two radio programmes.

Waisea insists the government is not supporting the New Methodist Church. While it does have a prominent role in the Fiji police's crime fighting crusades, he points out that other Churches are also involved.

Fiji police on crusade to cut crime

'New Soul, New Police, New Fiji' is the slogan the Fiji Police have given to its initiative to reduce crime through evangelism.

Police media liaison person Emma Mua says the initiative began in December, 2008 with a week-long public crusade in Suva, and has since been adopted in other divisions. She says it has already led to a significant drop in crime.

Police commissioner Esala Teleni's strategy is to first change the character and mindset of individual policemen through religion. They will be then become more proactive and engaged in their communities, and this in turn will lead changes in families and neighbourhoods.

The police crusade was very visible in Suva in June. While Fiji was playing host to Samoa, Tonga, Japan, and the Junior All Blacks for the Pacific Nations Cup, the police were sponsoring Ruggers for Jesus

in a downtown park.

Ruggers for Jesus featured action songs by police units, testimonials by prominent Fijian rugby players, speeches by police officers, and sermons by ministers and pastors. The volume was high and the worship style Pentecostal.

The 'bad boys of rugby', some of whom play for French clubs, testified how religion has saved them from wayward lifestyles.

Along with a pastor from the New Methodist Church, the religious leaders who addressed the rugby crusade came from the Assemblies of God, the All Nations Christian Fellowship, and the Fiji Evangelical International Church. One evening an Australian pastor was the guest speaker.

Emma says all churches have been invited to take part in the police crusade though only the Pentecostal Churches are taking an active part. She dismisses the criticism that people who belong to other

denominations or faiths will be disadvantaged by the police being so closely aligned with one part of the Christian spectrum.

"We have faced a lot of criticism for this policy," Emma says. "It sounds crazy but it is working.

"The Commissioner has always said if you are Catholic, be a sincere Catholic; if you are a Muslim, be a sincere Muslim; if you are a Hindu, be a good Hindu. All faiths promote good behaviour and different branches of faith can all be channelled for peace."

She insists it is not an initiative of the New Methodist Church but solely of the police force.

Police leadership and the New Methodist Church do share an antipathy toward kava, however. In June, the police have banned kava drinking at all police stations and barracks, a move that seems to have wide public support.



A rugby star addresses the Fiji Police's Ruggers for Jesus Crusade.



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Fiji military arrests church leaders

From Page 1

The Fiji government's ban on Methodist Conference has been condemned by Methodist partner churches, including the Uniting Church in Australia and the Methodist Church of NZ, as well as Fiji's Ecumenical Centre for Research, Education and Advocacy (ECCREA).

In June the MCNZ president Rev Jill van de Geer and vice president Ron Gibson wrote a letter to New Zealand prime minister John Key expressing concern about the Fiji government's intimidation of Fijian Methodists. They asked the NZ government to join other Pacific governments and persuade the Fiji prime minister to lift the ban and engage in dialogue with the Church.

Jill and Ron wrote that they have encouraged the Fijian Methodist Church to take a moderate, peaceful and diplomatic approach toward the government.

President of the Fijian Methodist Church's Indian Division Rev William Lucas says he urged the Standing Committee to convene a meeting of divisional superintendents and chief stewards rather than a full Conference and to seek dialogue with the government.

Now the Church has opted for a more confrontational approach. After the arrest of its leaders the question has become whether it will continue on this road, and, if so, whether public support for it will lead to wider disturbances in Fiji.



Rev Ame Tugae.

Culture and hospitality on display at Tongan Wesleyan Conference

By Paul Titus

The annual Conference of the Free Wesleyan Church of Tonga is a massive affair that attracts thousands of people from throughout Tonga and around the world.

They gather for 10 days of worship, business, choral singing, feasting, dancing, and kava parties.

This year, a large contingent of Methodists from New Zealand attended the Conference. They included Methodist president Rev Jill van de Geer, Vahefonua Tonga superintendent Rev Setaita Kinahoi Veikune, and a 160-strong choir from Otahuhu Tongan Methodist Church.

It is an honour for a choir to attend the Free Wesleyan Church's conference, say MCNZ Vahefonua Tonga financial secretary Paula Taumoepeau. It is also a major expense and requires a year of fundraising.

"The choir must not only raise money to pay for its trip but also to have money to give away at ceremonial events," Paula says.

"They give some money at events during the whole week and more at the large concert night that is held to raise funds for a particular cause.

"The same is true for individuals. Every night during the week kava parties are held to raise money for different purposes. If you go you are expected to contribute."

This year the big concert night

raised money for Tupou High School. Contributions made during the evening of singing and dancing amounted to \$97,000 (in Tongan tala).

When this figure was announced Jill van de Geer and



A highlight of the Free Wesleyan Church Conference is the cultural evening.

Uniting Church of Australia president Rev Gregor Henderson briefly consulted and agreed to contribute an additional \$3000 to bring the total to \$100,000. Their offer was greeted with loud applause.

The major worship and business sessions for Conference took place at Centenary Church in Nuku'alofa.

Next to the church is a large ground that was set up with marquees and long tables that can seat more than 2000 people. Twice a day this was the setting for feasts and presentations of tapa cloth and other gifts to the

Tongan Conference. Bruce says

his visit gave him a better understanding of some of the things Tongans do in New Zealand that seem unusual to Kiwis.

"For example, I could see that

personal level is a cultural value."

Bruce says it was also interesting to see the role of the royal family at Conference. Queen Mother Halaevalu Mata'aho or Princess Salote Pilolevu Tuita was present at all major events at Centenary Church.

This year's Conference was pivotal because it saw the retirement of long-standing president Rev Dr 'Alifaleti Mone and the election of his successor.

There was little surprise when the Free Wesleyan Church's acting general secretary Rev Dr 'Aho was elected by a large majority to replace 'Alifaleti.

The election to choose the new general secretary was a closer contest with Rev Dr Tevita Havea narrowly winning out over his cousin Rev Siotame Havea. Tevita is the son of a highly respected former president of the Church, Rev 'Amanaki Havea.

Another important event at the Free Wesleyan Church's annual Conference is the announcement of stationing for the following year. Paula says this always takes place on the final night of Conference.

This year the stationing process has an impact on the New Zealand Methodist Church. Superintendent of the large Auckland-Manukau Tongan Parish, Rev Taufu Filiai is a member of the Tongan Church. Taufu has been appointed to the island of Eua and will take up that appointment early in 2010.

For an English language interview with incoming general secretary of the Free Wesleyan Church of Tonga Rev Tevita Havea, see Page 16.



Jill van de Geer and Ted Grounds.

NZ Church 'father' has mana in Tonga

Rev Ted Grounds was a guest of honour at the recent Tongan conference. Ted was the superintendent of the Auckland District when Tongans began to enter the New Zealand Methodist Church in significant numbers and the Tongan Advisory Committee was in its formative stages.

Methodist president Rev Jill van de Geer says Ted has been a wonderful supporter of Tongan ministry in Auckland and in his retirement has provided knowledge and skill to the leadership in the Auckland-Manukau Parish.

Ted is an active member of the Dominion Road Tongan Church. At Tongan conference he was escorted by former head of the NZ Tongan Advisory Committee, Rev Taniela Moala.

Ted is the current 'father' of the Methodist Church of New Zealand. This means he is the Church's oldest ordained member.



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Applications close on 18 September 2009

GRACE CLOSES GAPS

Last month a report on the sharemarket included the statement, 'It feels like we might remain in a sideways market for a few months.' Sideways?

'Words, words, words!' protested GB Shaw's character, Henry Higgins. Might some, who have departed from our congregations, have done so feeling estranged by words, words, words?

The Letter of James addresses the gap between words and actions, 'Be doers of the word, and not merely hearers who deceive themselves... What good is it if you say you have faith but do not have works?' (James 1, 2).

And from the Letter to the Ephesians, "Let no one deceive you with empty words... once you were darkness, but now in the Lord you are light – for the fruit of light is found in everything that is good and right and true," (Ephesians 5).

Are Paul's words outdated? Or are we simply in denial?

It is not the words but what we do

with them: "For surely you heard about him and were taught in him, as truth is in Jesus... Let all of us speak the truth to our neighbours, for we are members of one another. Let no evil talk

come out of your mouths, but only what is useful for building up, as there is need, so your words give grace to those who hear," (Ephesians 4).

Love builds up. Graced by God, be gracious. There is no gap between God's word and action.

In the priestly hymn in praise of the Creator, God says, "Let there be... and it was so," (Genesis 1).

No gap as "the Word became flesh and lived among us... full of grace and truth," (John 1). He was united and

bonded with us in our creaturely humanity.

Yet although his people are assured by

his Spirit, they know mystery remains beyond revelation that 'surpasses understanding'. They live by faith in the grace and truth declared as preparatory, redeeming, transforming and inclusive (Ephesians 1-3).

"Your sovereign grace extends

to all, immense and unconfined; so wide it never passed by one, or it had passed by me," (WOV 50).

To accept his grace is to receive

him. To believe in him is to open every fibre of our being to him. Such a believing commitment includes offering our imaginations to grasp figures of speech in the gospel.

By contrast, bondage to literalism clouds perception, 'How can this man give us his flesh to eat? This is more than we can stomach!'

But he comes to us in bread and fruit of vines,

by faith we receive and ingest those signs

of One who has accepted us by his preparing grace;

he in us and we in him – communion.

With him within, from his table we arise

to travel on, trusting in the continuing power

of his transforming and inclusive grace.



Laurie Michie
reflects on words and actions

Earthquakes and the church

CONNECTIONS

By Jim Stuart



Last month night a strong earthquake shook most of the South Island. The quake had a magnitude of 7.8 and was centred at Dusky Sound. Unaware of the quake, I

was reading an article by geophysicist Xavier Le Pichon entitled 'Ecce Homo' which explores the relation between plate tectonics and the Christian faith.

A devout Catholic, Le Pichon has also been actively involved with his wife in the L'Arche community, founded by Jean Vanier and Father Thomas Phillippe in France in 1964. L'Arche is an international federation of communities that work with people who have intellectual disabilities welcoming them as full human persons. It is a profound expression of love in a world often devoid of compassion.

That hour on Wednesday as I now look back on it became what I call a moment of synchronicity. Synchronicity is a meaningful coincidence that reveals a bridge between mind and matter. Let me explain.

Le Pichon is best known among physicists and geologists for his groundbreaking research in the 1960s on tectonic plates, which in constant motion, have over time configured and reconfigured the earth's crust and entire continents. Through deep ocean exploration Le Pichon theorised that the fractures and the flaws of the earth's crust are really part and parcel of the vitality of a living system. In other words, earthquakes enable living systems to evolve, regenerate and survive.

However, after publishing his research findings, he nearly quit science as he entered into a period of deep despair. Science by itself had so narrowed his understanding of life, he said, that all that

seemed to matter to him was success and recognition. His findings regarding plate tectonics had changed the assumptions of scientists about the earth but it hadn't changed the way he saw his own life.

So in a moment of personal crisis in 1973 he travelled to Calcutta, India and spent a period of time working with Mother Teresa and the Brothers of Charity. It was there, he writes in *Ecce Homo* that he had his "founding experience". He encountered a dying child that transformed his life forever.

He wrote, "Who is this child that the tidal wave of human misery has deposited among the dozens of other dying destitutes, as announced on the board at the entrance, 'Home for the dying destitutes'. Why did I travel over ten thousand kilometres to meet him so that he would completely reorient my life. In this instant I suddenly discovered that my life would never be the same. I could not go back to my lab and continue to live as before. The 'Poor'

had knocked at my door. I had opened it."

Finally, Le Pichon discovered what had been a founding experience for humans since the beginning of the human race.

At the moment the Methodist Church is undergoing a significant shift in the tectonic structures of the Church – a kind of institutional earthquake. The church is becoming more diverse and more self-preoccupied. Its vision seems to be shrinking. The tectonic plates, one might say, are shifting. But all the tinkering with internal structures won't, in my opinion, change much if there are no founding experiences in the lives and hearts of the people called Methodists.

As Le Pichon observes, "A perfectly, smoothly running system, without any default is a closed system that can only evolve through a major commotion: the evolution occurs through revolutions." Using Le Pichon's language: the church needs an earthquake.

STANDING COMMITTEE HAPPENINGS

By Janet Taeye, UCANZ Co-Chairperson

The Uniting Congregations of Aotearoa New Zealand is a continuing journey of God's people seeking to reflect the essential unity of Christ's Church. This community of Partner Churches and Co-operating Ventures is discovering and living out what it means to be a missional church of Jesus Christ in today's world.

'Weaving the Threads' is the theme for our biennial forum to be held at Wanganui Girls High School October 1st to 4th. We will explore together how our faith is woven into the community with our partners, between generations, cultures, music, through history and within ourselves.

Exciting speakers and workshops have been organised, so bring your friends and a metre of thread. Remember you do not have to be a member of a Uniting Congregation to come, everyone is welcome. We look forward to seeing you there.

There will be time to have discussions and questions about matters you may wish to know more

about. Also during the Forum the new Standing Committee will be elected and the nomination forms are now available on the UCANZ website www.ucanz.org.nz.

I am often asked what UCANZ is. UCANZ is the ecumenical face of the partners, in some ways I think it is the broker between the Partners for Co-operating and Uniting parishes. The office deals with many administrative jobs on behalf of the partners and with the help from Joint Regional Committees (JRCs) carries out the day to day running of our CVs.

Peter MacKenzie's appointment as full-time executive officer has proved to be a wise decision. Peter has been able to visit many areas, parishes and JRCs and be the face of UCANZ instead of a voice on the end of the phone or signature at the end of a piece of paper.

To make his position full time we had to take a step in faith regarding payment for this position. The suggestion that we forgo a cup of

coffee from a cafe once a week per parish (\$5) would cover the extra cost has been taken up by a number thank you and this will be ongoing and parishes will be asked for a slight increase in their giving to support Peter.

Peter with two other members of Standing Committee Marilyn Welch and Nigel Hanscamp travelled to Northland to run a Mission and Ministry development workshops, a very successful and recommended workshop. We are fortunate to have skilled people with us who are able to carry out this mission in the churches and community. Peter has also carried out a parish survey and presented it an analysis of this. The results can be found on the UCANZ website.

The UCANZ office has moved to 16 Cambridge Terrace, Wellington, this is proving to be a good and convenient place for both Robyn and Peter. The telephone number remains 04 384 3587.

At the recent Standing Committee meeting, it was originally intended that the full UCANZ Standing Committee would meet with the church leaders. The leaders asked to meet separately as this was an opportunity where they could be together on their own and discuss what could be done together for CVs in the future. Several members of the UCANZ were involved with this meeting, so our concerns and questions were not ignored.

One issue is the term 'oversight' of a parish. Each of the main partners has a different view of the word and how they manage oversight of a parish. This discussion will be ongoing and they will meet again to discuss this issue in September.

Communication is important at all levels of life, may we keep talking to each other as well as praying for our churches and its committees as they work to spread the gospel of Christ throughout our communities.



Uniting
Congregations

Green shoots of recovery in Zimbabwe

Donations to Christian World Service consistently get where they're needed. CWS's Mandla Akhe Dube recently returned home to Zimbabwe for a look at how your support is helping vulnerable rural communities. He also confronted some personal fears. Here is his personal account:

My first trip home in seven years was marred by anxiety. When I left Zimbabwe in 2002, I was a member of Zimbabwe Election Support Network and suffering harassment by the Mugabe regime.

For speaking out, I got phone calls in the middle of the night that went dead. I was once driven off the road. To top it off, I was watching the painful demise of my country's economy. It left me with no choice but to seek shelter in New Zealand.

As my plane descended into Harare last month, my heart pounded. Would I be arrested at the airport? What would I see of my once-beautiful country? The destruction of Zimbabwe is well-known but in the ruins of southern Africa's former breadbasket, I saw hope and resilience.



Women of Gwanda in their maize fields dancing to welcome Mandla and the ACT forum. An ACT programme has taught them how to dig gullies to catch rainwater to irrigate their crops.

As well as catching up with family and friends, I was in Zimbabwe to attend a forum of Action by Churches Together (ACT) to review its food aid and recovery assistance programme. ACT is an international alliance of Protestant church organisations. Often CWS channels funds through ACT to reach communities in need.

Our forum travelled to the hardest-hit rural regions. In that sea of poverty, the only glimmer of hope I saw was the effectiveness

of aid agencies' food distribution and poverty alleviation programmes.

Throughout our visits, people expressed their gratitude to donors for saving the lives of thousands of people last year.

ACT's \$6.9m food insecurity appeal targeted Zimbabwe's hardest hit districts of Gutu, Mwenzezi, Gwanda and Zvishavane. It sought to salvage 50,000 households by supplying food, promoting food production, processing and preserving grain

and vegetables, and improving care for people living with HIV and AIDS.

I continually heard testimonies from people largely failed by their own state.

"We have no words to thank you. We received 10kg of maize seed as well as 5kg of millet and 10kg of sorghum seed per household," said a grateful villager from Mwenzezi who happily displayed her harvest. These villagers also received monthly food rations that included 10kg of corn soya blend, 10kg of maize, 300ml of cooking oil and 1kg of beans per person.

"We do not know how we pulled through 2008. It was by God's grace," a village headman told me. He applauded ACT's assistance.

Nearly 85 per cent of villagers now have some food to keep them going until the next farming season. ACT development director and former CWS director Jill Hawkey told us people have selected seed from their harvest, leaving them better prepared for the coming wet season.

But throughout the trip, I was reminded of Zimbabwe's

challenges. I was overwhelmed by the enormity of the collapse of basic infrastructure. Roads, rail, telecoms, health, education, energy – basically everything you can think of – is way below par in this once beautiful and stable country.

Yet Zimbabweans are resilient. While eight out of 10 are formally unemployed, there is a spirit of hope that one day they will rebuild the country. In my case, I kept a low profile throughout the visit, careful not to arouse the attention of the authorities. I avoided visiting my friends at the state-controlled newspapers but I did have joyous reunions with family and other friends.

I'm pleased to convey special thanks from the people of Zimbabwe to all Kiwis who supported the appeal. It is a practical way Kiwis can support Zimbabweans until a democratically elected government is in office: Thank you Kiwis!

If you would like to help Zimbabweans rebuild their lives, phone 0800 74 73 72 or go to www.cws.org.nz.



Write a card to clean up the climate

CWS has launched a postcard campaign and urges churches to sign up to ensure greater action in response to climate change.

2009 is a crucial year for the world's climate. International efforts to protect the planet for the future will culminate in the UN Climate Change Conference in Copenhagen, December 7-18. This conference will negotiate the successor to the Kyoto protocol, which expires in 2012. It will set the framework for global action on climate change for the next decade and beyond.

Campaigners warn it is the last chance to keep global temperature rises below 2°C. If the temperature increases by 2°C by 2050, climate change scientists warn 250 million people will be made homeless, 1-3 billion people will face acute water shortages and 30 million more people will go hungry.

Many CWS partners are already feeling the impact through increased coastal erosion, changes to rainfall patterns that disrupt traditional farming cycles and weather related disasters. Climate change is now a critical issue for development.

It adversely affects food production, health, water supplies and livelihood, while the cycles of extreme weather events trap communities into

greater poverty. The poorest communities have contributed the least to the problem but are the first to endure its impact.

"With arable land turning to desert and floods wiping out coastal and island communities, climate change has become a major cause of poverty," says CWS national director Pauline McKay. "The world needs to take significant action to create a climate for change."

The postcard calls on the New Zealand government to bargain hard at Copenhagen to ensure that wealthier countries pay their carbon debt and support a binding 40 percent cut in 1990 domestic carbon emissions by 2020. CWS is also asking the international community to provide poor countries with the means to adapt to the changing environment and provide additional assistance so they can develop clean technology to escape poverty.

CWS is collecting signed cards to present to the Prime Minister later in the year. You can help. Postcards and an information kit have been sent to all churches.

More information is on the CWS website: www.cws.org.nz. Or call 0800 74 73 72 if you would like to distribute copies of the postcard for signing.

WANTED

Seeds for next season's food crops

Food to eat until the harvest comes in



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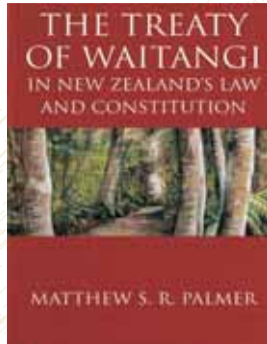
The Treaty of Waitangi in New Zealand Law and Constitution

Matthew Palmer writes on the Treaty of Waitangi and its place within our past and present legal system. He then proposes how the Treaty can be 'stabilised' for our future constitutional progress.

It is a big book, said to be for the general reader, but really more for the academic and serious researcher. The author takes care to list his credentials – and they are impressive. He is the son of a former Prime Minister, previous Dean of Law at Victoria University, and senior government official with experience in Treaty negotiations and government Treaty policy. He is currently Deputy Solicitor-General (Public Law).

Palmer's thesis is that even though there is at least a moral obligation on the Crown to honour the Treaty, it has never been directly incorporated into New Zealand Law with binding force. He suggests that the Treaty is best understood as an explicit commitment to the health of the relationship between the Crown, Maori and other New Zealanders.

Through patient, some might say exhaustive research, he shows how the Treaty's current meaning is inconsistent, depending on the different contexts in which it is examined, and suggests that this was the case when the Treaty was formulated, as well.



Palmer then weighs the effect of uncertain meaning, incoherent legal status, and tense uncertainty about the constitutional place of the Treaty, particularly in an increasingly driven democratic process where the rights of the majority are in tension with an explicit commitment to the Treaty rights of a minority.

He concludes that we should begin an ambitious constitutional debate (suggesting an idiosyncratic manner). He suggests finding a national consensus on restating the meaning of the Treaty, before the next set of problems confront us. And because the pragmatic, No. 8 fence-wire approach is no longer appropriate (he makes the example of the "foreshore and seabed debacle"), he proposes a new Treaty of Waitangi Court to apply the Treaty to individual cases in law and in the constitutional process, in order to hold the Crown – and Maori – to account. For example, he supports the entrenchment of

Matthew Palmer, Victoria University Press, 2008, 477 pages.
Reviewer: Peter Williamson

Maori seats in Parliament, rather than their previous history of temporary expedient.

The book includes unique material – Cabinet papers made available for the first time which show how little the Treaty figured in political thinking until extremely recently. The Treaty made the Cabinet minutes (kept since only 1949) for the first time in 1971!

This is a book of some significance in its survey of the Treaty and its past importance and, particularly, in its current implications, as Palmer looks at the attitudes of public power institutions – Parliament, the courts, Cabinet and the Waitangi Tribunal. However, the final part of his book – the future proposals of the ToW Court and his process for finding consensus – are overly legalistic, yet do not allow the Treaty to be supreme law. It would always be up to Parliament to set the value of the Treaty implications, retaining an unhelpful uncertainty. It is a compromise of the worst sort, and diminishes the worth of the rest of the book.

It's a hard read – and the ending is disappointing. But the sandwich filling is well worth while for a contemporary statement of the understanding of the Treaty of Waitangi.

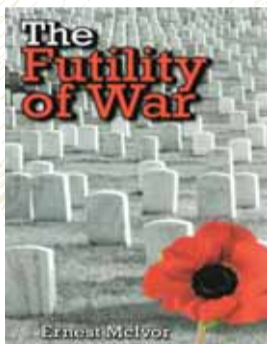
The Futility of War

I found this book to be very readable. Ernest McIvor's 366 page story of human war from the beginning of time right up to the book's publication date 2007 had me absorbed. He is a good story-teller. He did not drown me in detail yet the book is packed with dates, personalities quickly sketched, and statements presented as incontrovertible facts. The book is studded with excellent quotations – juicy morsels scattered temptingly throughout.

The book goes boldly where angels fear to tread. Its strong grand narrative spans several millennial and reaches for the Eternal: Pre-emptive War; Early Warfare; The Romans; Greece, Persia, Carthage; Christianity; The Arab Empire; The Christian Empire; The Crusades; Christian Violence; Feudal Times; The Reformation; Revolution in Europe; Trade and Colonies; Napoleon Bonaparte; World War I; Preparing for World War II; World War II; The Aftermath; The Oil War.

And what about little old New Zealand? This book could have been written from any part of the Earth's surface – or the moon's for that matter. There is nothing "contextual" about it and no clues from the publisher's cover "blurb" or the author's preface.

And what about Ernest McIvor? Google is not much help, except to direct me to another substantial book written by him The Science of Christianity (2008). Perhaps Ernest McIvor



wants his story to speak for itself. He may understand himself as just a voice – crying from the wilderness. Without some knowledge of the author and without some specifics about New Zealand's experience, participation, criticism and direct action in the business of war the book could be (wrongfully) discarded as opinionated and misleading.

On the above contextual counts, I'm not complaining. The book provoked me to ask questions like 'Was the war against Hitler altogether futile?' Did he not have to be stopped? And if it was too late to avoid a war to stop him, how can we make sure to start early enough next time. What has been done – actively - to start early enough?

McIvor offers his own solutions – tantalizing in their brevity:

- brief regional partnerships of nations after the model of the European Union,
- the United Nations purged of veto powers,
- potent religious experience and spirituality,

Ernest McIvor, National Pacific Press, Porirua, 2007, 366 pages
Reviewer: George Armstrong

uncorrupted religions, true to their origins New Zealand's nuclear free endeavours and our refusal to legitimate and prolong Apartheid by playing rugby with its perpetrators would be added by me to expand McIvor's list; also our "peace keeping" activities in East Timor or the Solomon Islands. To be provoked in this direction by McIvor is very salutary.

Is this book reliable? A well-read historian or history teacher could judge that and I am neither. Index, footnotes, references, bibliography – all the familiar scholarly apparatus – are not provided. Again, I am not complaining. A more academic treatise would require many more pages if not a further volume. A reader, supposing such could be found, could easily get distracted or lost.

After some hesitation I conclude the book to be neither opinionated nor misleading. I commend it to anyone who is captured by the subject matter: the futility of war. Three and a half stars from me.

George Armstrong, 78, in fulfilling his calling as a theological teacher and Anglican priest, has been a nuclear free, bicultural, and peace activist throughout his adult life. He is currently writing a theological interpretation of the final half century of the third millennium.

Between the Monster and the Saint

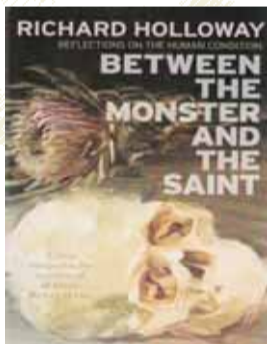
Former bishop of Edinburgh and Primus of the Scottish Episcopal Church Richard Holloway is no stranger to controversy. In his many previous books he has dealt with difficult subjects often avoided by the Church: doubt in an age of certainty, how to survive churches, keeping religion out of ethics, forgiving the unforgivable.

In this his latest book, he takes on perhaps the most enduring contradiction which lies at the heart not only of Christianity but of all religions: the battle of eternal goodness with utter and determined evil for the soul of humanity. In Holloway's words: "the eternal struggle between the Monster and the Saint".

According to Holloway, the world is a dangerous and unpredictable place and much of our misery and suffering is self-inflicted. Drawing on a wide range of literary sources particularly the writings and insights of women such as Hannah Arendt, Andrea Dworkin, Pumlá Gobado-Madikizela, Gitta Sereny, Simone Weil and Virginia Woolf, Holloway argues that force or power, often given expression by humans in their propensity to objectify others, to turn other human beings into things and to remain indifferent to the human cost, lies at the heart of the human condition.

This is the tragic complexity of being human and the source of the damage we often inflict on others.

Holloway then explores some of the ways humans have responded to this monster of force. While the natural order is



pitiless, humans, he contends, are capable of accustoming themselves to monstrous behaviours such as torture, the torment we perpetrate on animals, and our disregard for the environment. Humans, he writes, "have refined cruelty with such scientific precision as to make nature seem benign in comparison."

Myths or the creative powers of metaphor are one of the ways humans have responded to these tragic realities of life. Holloway suggests that it was death and the endless suffering that it inflicts that "whispered" the ideas of God and the soul into our heads. Death steals our loves from us, cancels and erases lives, and metes out unrelenting pain.

As the Book of Common Prayer reminds us, in the midst of life we are in death. In a sense, our preoccupation with our dead defines us as a species. Because of this finality of death, the concept of the soul, Holloway argues, emerged as an expression of the human conviction that though our bodies may die, the essential essence of the person survives. Over time the belief in the soul gave rise to the experience of the

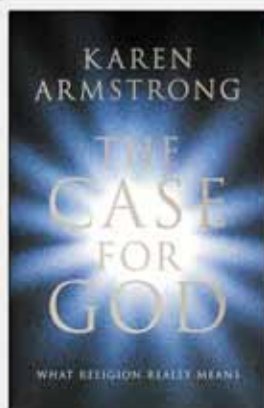
Richard Holloway, Text Publishing, 2008, 200 pages
Reviewer: Jim Stuart

transcendent self or self-consciousness.

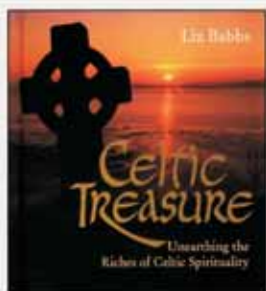
What does all this mean? Holloway identifies what he thinks are some of the human responses to the question of life and its inherent suffering: strong and authoritarian religion, weak or gentler religion, after religion or the way of generous hope, and the absence of religion altogether or what he calls neo-atheism.

He argues that "the myths and metaphors of religion continue to provide us with some of the deepest insights into the human condition, and offer us the best hope of saving ourselves from ourselves." Beyond this Holloway advises us to take ourselves less seriously, affirm the saints among us who have always resisted those forces that would turn us and others into things, and enjoy life for its own sake – even if it sometimes seems purposeless. In the end the most important things we can do are to learn empathy, offer compassion, and love with gratitude, as did Jesus.

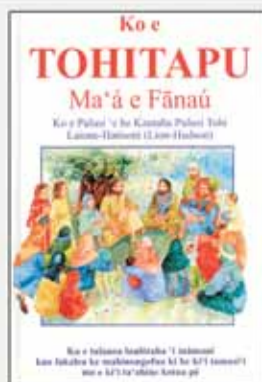
This is not a book for the fainthearted or those who want easy answers to deep and enduring questions. Holloway's book breathes with honesty and courage. While some will not like the conclusions he draws, his reflection on the human condition speaks deeply to all those who wrestle with the meaning of their own lives and how to stand up to the seductive power of the monster and draw closer to the fierce challenge of the saint.



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ON SCREEN

A film review by Rev Dr Steve Taylor

Earth Whisperers / Papatuanuku

Confession time. Watching Earth Whisperers/Papatuanuku increased my global footprint. Firstly, the coffee for the theatre only came in styrofoam cups. Secondly, on exiting, the rubbish tins remained devoid of an environmental option.

Such is the impact of Earth Whisperers/Papatuanuku. Directed by Kathleen Gallagher, the star taking centre stage is none other than the Land of the Long White Cloud. The movie became a vehicle by which the many blessings given by Papatuanuku, the land, could be named by some of her children.

Specifically this involves 10 interviews with 10 Kiwis spread over 73 minutes. They include Tuhoe healer (Rita Tupe), herbalist (Isla Burgess), tree farmer (Hugh Wilson), chef (Charles Royal), bird caller (Gerry Findlay), environmental campaigner (Alan Mark), seed saver (Kay Baxter), organic farmer (Jim O'Gorman), photographer (Craig Potten) and Maori kuia (Makere Ruka). The interviews are absorbing. Ordinary Kiwis share their passion to cleanse this land before it becomes one long, polluted cloud.

The narratives are compelling, ranging from soil's ability to heal, to the dietary potential of stinging nettle. Equally, the facts are disturbing, including our dependence on Northern Hemisphere seeds and the power of a persistent few to lever environment change.

A coup was the involvement of cameraman Alun Bollinger. One of New Zealand's most high profile cinematographers, Alun has removed the lens cap on works including Goodbye Pork Pie, Lord of the Rings, The Piano, What Becomes of The Broken Hearted, and River Queen. Much of the cinematography revolved around an earthbound camera, stylistically keeping clean, green, New Zealand centre stage.

Earth Whisperers/Papatuanuku falls somewhat uneasily between documentary and green whimsy. While a documentary is defined as a film or TV program presenting the facts about a person or event, choosing 10 'green' voices left little room for opposition viewpoints. The green whimsy was compounded by the cliché shots of dew laden spider webs (brunch at Aranea's place

anyone?) and the sound of tui and bellbird emanating from the lips of bird caller, Gerry Findlay. The soundtrack during the interview with Charles Royal was a standout, a funky set of electronic beats and clicks.

Which returns me to my coffee cup. As I sadly tossed away the styrofoam, I considered the practical reality of urban living. I would love to be one of the 10 interviewed, absorbed by dreams of a self-sufficient lifestyle block. But for this season of my life, I remain an urban dweller. So does most of New Zealand. For a No. 8 wire generation, change is more likely when it is framed, not as a rural idyll, but in suburban community gardens or urban recycling schemes. Finding a few such urban earth whispers might just make Papatuanuku less mythic.

Steve Taylor is senior pastor at Opawa Baptist Church and lectures in gospel and film at Bible College of New Zealand. He is the author of *The Out of Bounds Church?* and writes regularly at www.emergentkiwi.org.nz.

Earth Whisper discussion starters

Earth Whisperers/Papatuanuku is available on DVD from www.wickcandle.co.nz and would work well as a Kiwi church discussion group. All that is needed would be a free night, a set of couches, some candlelit tables, a stack of recycled paper on which to print invitations, and some good discussion starter questions.

Here are a few:

1. Of the 10 people interviewed, who did you feel most drawn to?
2. One way to describe these 10 people is as contemporary Kiwi environmental saints. Are there any Bible characters, or people in Christian history, that you consider could also be environmental saints?
3. How do you respond to the Maori concept of land as Papatuanuku, as earth mother?
4. Francis of Assisi famously wrote in *The Cantic of Creation*: "Praise be to You, my Lord, for our Sister, Mother Earth, who sustains and keeps us." How practically, on a regular basis, might we as humans pay attention to the whispers of the earth in ways that might sustain and keep us?
5. Craig Potten talked about the power of a persistent few to bring about environmental change. What examples of this have you seen?
6. In what ways has the green movement changed your attitudes and behaviours, whether positively or negatively?
7. What might change in your attitudes and behaviours as a result of seeing this film?

BIBLE PEACE PIECES

The Sunday nearest August the 6th (Hiroshima Day) is Peace Sunday. The atomic bomb dropped that day in 1945 killed about 80,000 immediately, and radiation poisoned a further 60,000 within the year. A statue erected by the children of Japan in the Hiroshima Peace Park has the inscription This is our cry. This is our prayer, Peace in the world. The Bible mentions *peace*, *peaceable* and *peaceably* no less than 420 times. The message is clear - peace is a vital to Christian understanding and lies at the heart of being Christian.

Bible Challenge

___ at peace with one another	B ___
Peace I leave ___ you	I ___
not a God of confusion ___ of peace	B ___
___ said to Hannah, 'Go in Peace'	L ___
peace of God which ___ all	E ___
___ for the peace of Jerusalem	P ___
let the peace of Christ rule in your ?	E ___
a time for ___ and a time for peace	A ___
Wonderful.... ___ of Peace	C ___
___ with God and be in peace	E ___
___ preached good news of peace	P ___
'Peace' is a ___ of the Spirit	I ___
Blessed are the peace- ?	E ___
Lead a quiet and ___ life	C ___
Peace I ___ with you	E ___
harvest of righteousness is ___ in peace	S ___

RSV

Mk 9:50
Jn 14:27
1Cor 14:33
1Sam 1:17
Phil 4:7
Ps 122:6
Col 3:15
Ecc 3:8
Is 9:6
Job 22:21
Ac 10:34-36
Gal 5:22
Mtt 5:9
1Tim 2:2
Jn 14:27
Jas 3:18

Be, with, but, Eli, passes; pray, hearts, war, Prince, agree; Peter, fruit, makers, peaceable, leave, sown © RMS

An interview with filmmaker Kathleen Gallagher

REVEALING THE EARTH WHISPERERS

By Cory Miller

For a year and a half, Kathleen Gallagher traversed the highways and byways of Aotearoa to bring to fruition her feature documentary Earth Whisperers / Papatuanuku.

Shot at breathtaking locations around New Zealand, Earth Whisperers documents Kathleen's search for people who are intimately in touch with the Earth and who are out to prove that a shift in consciousness can heal our environment.

'If you look after the Earth Mother, she will look after you.' These words, spoken by tohunga (healer) Hohepa Kereopa, were the beginnings of Earth Whisperers, Kathleen says.

She saw the truth of Hohepa's words while working on an earlier film about cancer survivors, *Healing Journeys*. She found that those who were getting better were spending more time outside. "I began to question the existence of those who were caring for the earth," she says.

Kathleen was inspired by the way the people she met loved the Earth Mother, making her a central part of their lives. "They are intimate with Her, and live with Her every day. They do not turn away from her, they stay with her through the seasons, through the winters and the summers, in the darkness and the brightness," she says.

These humble people, living extraordinary lives have shaped the film into the seasons. "It is a seasonal film that breathes in and out through the seasons, finding its own rhythm" says Kathleen. "It is the most unhurried piece of work that I have done."

Earth Whisperers is in part, a response to Al Gore's film *An Inconvenient Truth* that dealt with climate change. The earth is calling out but we have turned away.

"Earth Whisperers is my response to that as it shows people's individual response to climate change. Personally I have planted 33 food producing trees in my garden in my own effort to regenerate forest bush."

Kathleen's hopes it opens the hearts and eyes of audiences to different ways of living and being in the world. "I hope people will move out of their own narrowness to explore other ways of being and to keep their eyes wide open to the many possibilities of life."

Unlike many filmmakers who are in search of the red carpet, Kathleen is simply answering a call. "These things sort of press on me" she says. "So I feel like I have to respond."

Kathleen says filmmaking is a venture that has proven to be full of surprises. Her films often take on a life of their own. "It has a life separate from its makers, embarking on its own journey. Once it starts this journey it belongs to the world. It has its own song to sing. We just peel things back and the film is there waiting to reveal itself."

Filmmaking for Kathleen is also about faith, as she believes without it she could never achieve what she has achieved.

"In this business you have to have faith, you have to be optimistic. In the middle you often think, what can I do now? But you keep going through faith and trust. Making a film is like building a huge house, like birthing a child."



AN AWAKENING BREEZE!

The events of July 3rd-7th will remain a sweet awakening fragrance in the memories of about 300 Tongan young people from the Methodist Church of New Zealand and the Free Wesleyan Church of Tonga. Over those days they went on an invisible journey of the minds and hearts, where they experienced moments of awakening dissections of their souls.

It was a fresh reminding touch of the biblical Pentecostal experience to these young people and they arose and went out with conviction and perception to live a 'purpose-driven life' for the glory of God.

The event was sponsored by the Auckland-Manukau Tongan Parish and Vahefonua Tonga O Aotearoa. It follows from their vision for young people, which is 'To know and make Christ known in the lives of the Tongan Methodist young people in Aotearoa and for them to live in love and unity'. For four years, an annual leadership retreat has been staged as part of this vision.

Its aim is to 'kidnap' young people from the normal seas of engagements and distractions and focus them on what God in His Spirit has to say. These have been life-changing experiences to many young people and many are currently "walking on - walking strong" in the Lord. Some are leaders in their youth groups, and many are involved in the life of their churches.

This year's retreat explored the best



Last month 300 young people on a retreat organised by the Methodist Church's Tongan synod had some powerful experiences as they explored God's purpose in their lives.

selling book "Purpose-driven Life" by Rick Warren. The retreat was held at Ngaruawahia Christian campsite and explored what a life driven by God's purposes might be about. Rev Mele Suipi Latu acted as a 'tour guide' as the young people explored such purposes as 'Formed for God's Family', 'Created to become like Christ', and 'Made for a Mission'.

These were presented as challenges that can help fight other purposes that can be destructive in the young people's lives. With freedom of choice the young people were awakened to God's love and plan in their lives.

The programme was also enriched by other workshops, 'Godly Women' run by Dr 'Ana Mesui and Kato'one Kaho for girls, 'Godly Men' run by Nick Tuitasi from

Promise-Keepers for the boys, and a discussion on homosexuality run separately by Rev Alan Webster, of Evangelical Network, for both girls and boys.

Methodist Church of NZ Rev Jill Van Geer honoured the young people when she travelled from Christchurch to preach to them on Sunday July 5th. She elaborated on a purpose-driven life and helped the young people further on their invisible journey during the retreat.

Other leaders who shared their experiences and spiritual journeys were Vahefonua Tonga superintendent Rev Setaita Kinahoi Veikune, Auckland-Manukau Parish superintendent Rev Taufu Filiiai, Keith Moala, and Manase Latu. The young people's hearts were pleasantly warmed when they witnessed care and love from

church leaders taking time to be with them, not only to enrich but to talk, eat, sing, and dance with them.

The retreat was not all 'dead serious' as the young people thoroughly enjoyed two 'Bring-It On' showcases and a night of choir singing. Performing talents were displayed and laughter as medicine for the soul was unreservedly shared. The Worship Team also led singing and dancing in such a joyful generous outbreak that both young and old sang and danced in body and spirit to the fullness of joy and to the glory of God.

During the retreat the Tongan Methodist young people established new relationships with each other and with their God and His service.

Rev Setaita Kinahoi-Veikune closed the retreat with a plea to the youths that now is the time for young Tongans to stand up.

The Auckland-Manukau Parish youth organising committee acknowledges with gratitude the efforts and prayers that made this occasion 'an awakening breeze' of the Holy Spirit on His young people. "We are in-debt to Rick Warren and all the guest speakers who were part of this wonderful retreat. To God is the Glory!" says John Moala.

What a great event! Remember if you have any events that you want to share as a testimony to the wider church feel free to contact text Mataiva Robertson on 021 734 694 or email mdrobertson08@gmail.com.

Kidz Korna!

Welcome to this month's Kidz Korna

I hope you all had a great break from school and you are enjoying being back with your friends.

The children from St John's Methodist church in Hamilton East and their friends spent the second week of the holiday at a Holiday Programme. This is what they say about it:

"We had loads of activities including badminton, origami, making wall plaques and gift boxes. We even made chocolates to fill the boxes. A special treat was a visit to the Waikato Museum and the Da Vinci exhibition. We made helicopters and gliders while we were there."



Tutor Jessie Kemsley with kids on the holiday programme doing origami.



Three girls who attended the holiday programme were Akesa, Helena and Rebecca.

SEASONS OF THE CHURCH YEAR

This time in the Church year is called The Season after Pentecost, sometimes it is called Ordinary Time. It is the longest part of the year and continues until Advent.

It's not just a season that fills up the calendar until Advent, but a time when we can explore many stories and happenings in the life of Jesus and his disciples... Stories of healing, stories of how the disciples learned more about Jesus and what they must do after He had gone from the earth.

For a competition I want you to send me the names of the SEVEN Church seasons. Either mail them to me: Doreen Lennox, 4/22 Wellington St, Hamilton 3216 or e-mail me Lennox_xtra.co.nz.

There is a \$20.00 token for the first correct entry so remember to add your address.

BOOK REVIEW

LET THERE BE PEACE - PRAYERS FROM AROUND THE WORLD

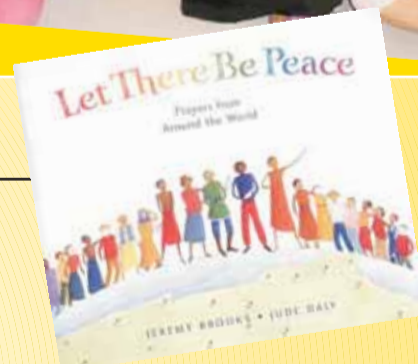
By Rev Jeremy Brooks

Illustrated by Judy Daly

Reviewer: Tristan Anderson

This is a great book for anyone four years or older. Each section of prayers has an introduction at the beginning. The quotes and prayers from around the world, ranging from Christian prayers, Shinto prayers from Japan, Native American prayers from the USA, make this a very special book. I found it amazing that the first prayer was written over 2 500 years ago by Lao-Tzu, the founder of Taoism. It is a prayer that is so relevant for today.

There are prayers for peace, prayers for forgiveness, prayers that show that whatever our religion there are many things we have in common. A good book for the children's corner in your church or for your own bookshelf.



PNG missionary milestone marked

By Fred and Marcia Baker

Touchstone often carries notices for churches celebrating anniversaries, seeking contact with past members, and inviting them to join special celebrations. One such occasion will involve the whole New Zealand Methodist Connexion, the 50th anniversary of Christian work at Nipa in the Papua New Guinea Highlands.

In 1953 Methodist Conference accepted an invitation from the Australian Overseas Mission Board to take responsibility for a new area. Eventually it was decided to appoint four workers, an ordained minister, a builder, a teaching sister, and a nursing sister. Rev Cliff Keightley was appointed as the ordained minister. Work had already started in Mendi and Tari, and a move had been made into the Lai Valley to the west of Mendi but other areas were still closed to Church and Government.

When Cliff first arrived in the Highlands, he was appointed to Tari and Rev Roland Barnes from Australia served as his superintendent minister. Returning from his first furlough in 1957 Cliff was appointed to Mendi. Then followed a time of frustration as he waited to

their responsibility to provide more staff and monetary support.

Finally, Cliff was able to write in his diary, "Saturday 28th November 1959, Word received that Gordon Young and I are permitted to move into the Nembi Valley to commence Mission work and that our movement was restricted to a half mile radius of the Government Patrol Post at Nipa." They were expected to meet their escort at Kip in the Lai Valley the following Wednesday. There followed three days of feverish activity as supplies were prepared and packed, and carriers found.

On December 1st, Cliff and Gordon Young set out by motor bike as far as Wambip, 10 miles north of Mendi. They then walked

site for the new mission. Eventually it was decided that Puril, south of the air strip and Government Station, would be the most suitable. When Gordon Young returned to Mendi, Cliff was very aware that the responsibility now rested on his shoulders.

They held negotiations with landowners, which took some time. The Mission could not buy land but had to lease it through the government. Once this was finalised, a church was built in a cross of casuarina trees. Missionary Aviation Fellowship pilots said from the air it was the most outstanding mission station in Papua New Guinea.

At the end of 1963 the first baptisms took place. Ten people



An early baptismal group at Nipa.

for five and a half hours. In his diary Cliff wrote, "We eventually arrived at Kip after dark. The last half hour with the aid of a dimly lit torch through mud over our boots and up and down steep slippery tracks wasn't much fun." The next day

it was on to Nipa.

Then followed days of scouting the area with an escort to find a

were received into the Church, the first of many hundreds. Cliff became chairman of the Highlands District, and after six years in Nipa he moved to the District headquarters in Mendi leaving behind a growing Church.

The people of the United Church in Nipa and the Methodist Church in NZ remember and give thanks for the outstanding service given by Cliff, Noreen and their family.



Rev Cliff Keightley recruiting carriers.

commence work in the new area, and the NZ Church and its Foreign Mission Board awaited to fulfil



50 Years To The Day Wesley Pukekohe celebrates 'new' church

Wesley Methodist Church in Pukekohe is set to celebrate the 50th anniversary of its 'new' church, on Sunday November 29th. The congregation hopes any people who have had connections with this Church will be able to join in the historic event.

The first Methodist Church in Pukekohe was built on a section in Queen Street in 1878. In 1891 the Church was moved to a prominent site on Queen Street, next to the present property. Designs for a new Church were suggested during the ministry of Rev WL Divers, 1956-58.

On November, 29th 1959, the new Wesley Church was opened and dedicated by Methodist president Rev Everill Orr.

A new parsonage was purchased in 1972 away from the Church. In December 1977 the original Sunday School Hall and rooms were demolished, and the following year a new hall and lounge were erected and officially opened by Rev Dr JJ Lewis.

Many of the families involved with the 'new' Church's construction are still actively involved in the life of Wesley Church Pukekohe today.

To mark the occasion, the Church hall will be open from 1pm on Saturday 28th November, to mix and mingle, view photos and enjoy a cup of tea. There will be a bus trip around points of interest also on this afternoon, with afternoon tea at Church by the Seashore, Clarks Beach.

A special service of thanksgiving takes place on Sunday November 29th. It will be followed by lunch at Wesley College, speeches and items, and a birthday cake.

For more information or to inform us you are coming contact Dorothy Postles, 09 238 6708 or write to her at 465 Sim Road, R D 1, Pukekohe. You can also wesleypukekohe@xtra.co.nz.

Women's work for women

METHODIST ARCHIVES

By Jill Weeks

A note from the Auckland Methodist Women's Auxiliary Souvenir Report of 1908-1929 states "Gifts of a steriliser and wallets of notes have been made to three of the nurses, while a portable gramophone and a horse were provided for our sister in the North." The Auckland Women's Auxiliary was one of many set up to promote and help the work of the Home and Foreign Missions.

The motto of the Auxiliary was 'Women's Work for Women' and had been encouraged by visits of the Rev William Slade following his return from Fiji. After this visit to Pitt Street Church in 1906, an Auxiliary was formed. The first President was Mrs HE Pacey, and other members of the executive were Miss E Gunson and Mrs G Winstone.

Meetings were held monthly and usually began with devotions and a roll call. Gradually more women joined and groups were formed in other Churches. Speakers addressed the meetings or letters received from the Sisters were read.

It must have been from these letters that the members began to appreciate the work underway in overseas postings and Home Mission areas. This led to fundraising in various ways to help the work. Much prayer and thought went into these efforts, and the Auxiliary sent many gifts and goodwill supplies to the Sisters.

Soon after Pitt Street's Auxiliary was formed, the



The First Executive



Despatching of Missionary Boxes

members expressed a desire to support a sister of their own. In October 1909 probationer Huia Tuatina was appointed to work in the Taranaki District at a small salary. For nearly six years she visited homes to relieve sickness. Her monthly letters indicated great difficulty and, it seems, not always warm acceptance. Her work required great patience and love. She was succeeded by Waitiri Taupoto who worked under Sister Nellie Hayes at Okaiawa for one year.

In the meantime, Alice McNeish was accepted by the Mission Board for the foreign field and gave one year of service with Helena Goldie in the Solomon Islands. There was then a period with no sister to support so various churches received assistance and money was raised for special projects such as the boat Auckland for Helena Goldie's use.

For seven years the Pitt Street Auxiliary supported a Nurse Clark who worked in Fiji. However, in 1922 the

New Zealand Methodist Church took the responsibility for the Solomon Islands mission field and they had to bid farewell to Nurse Clark and Fiji.

Auxiliary branches sent regular letters to the sisters, and a hospitality committee was formed so that greetings and welcomes with suitable gifts could be given to the sisters as they left or came home. A book convenor was appointed to send books and magazines regularly.

One form of practical assistance came about due to the initiative of Mrs Dellow. These were the gift boxes, with goods for an orphanage in Fiji. The first boxes sent in 1910 contained garments, toys, sweets and biscuits. From 1915 to 1922 similar boxes went to Nurse Clark at the Indian Boys Orphanage. Often material was bought and made into garments by the women. The boxes were packed at Pitt Street and sent from there with the help of some local business men.

The Auxiliary created strong bonds and better understanding of the work and conditions of these who responded to the call to serve Christ in missions overseas and in New Zealand. The many groups involved came together as the Methodist Women's Fellowship in 1963. The years have brought many changes but the Fellowships still respond to specific requests to support work such as Helena Goldie Hospital and funds for books for schools and libraries now staffed by local people.

Tongan general secretary says global economy impacts families and churches



Rev Dr 'Ahio (left) and Rev Dr Tevita Havea.

Declining membership and social pressures caused by the global recession are among the issues facing the Free Wesleyan Church of Tonga, in-coming general secretary Rev Dr Tevita Havea.

Tevita was elected general secretary at the Free Wesleyan Conference in June, and he says his first priority as general secretary will be to get up to speed with current realities within the Church and in Tonga generally.

This is because he has been out of Tonga for 14 years. When elected he was serving as lecturer and head of the Biblical Studies Department at Pacific Theological College (PTC).

"I had no idea I would be elected. I had just renewed my contract with the College prior to Conference. But I was seconded to PTC by the Free Wesleyan Church of Tonga, and if the Church calls me to be general secretary that is what I will do," Tevita says.

"I must now become familiar with the subtleties of political situation and the democracy movement in Tonga. In Tonga we have our own chiefly system, which should compliment the work of the Church.

"History has shown that when the Church and the chiefs are on the same side everything goes smoothly. We in the Church would find it difficult to pursue our

ministry without the support of the chiefs but that does not mean we should depend on them.

"We have benefited very, very much from the royal family. Throughout her life the Queen Mother has been very faithful and active in the life of the Free Wesleyan Church. She is the merging point between the Church and the chiefs."

Tevita says the Church's Standing Committee has expressed some concern that in difficult economic times members of the Church may be burdened by the cost of contributing to the traditional feasting and gift exchanges that take place during the annual conference.

"We will consider whether to cut down on the feasting or perhaps to hold Conference every other year. But people want to contribute. Extended families come together to provide for the feasts, and there is no waste because the food is redistributed back to the families."

"Another aspect of Conference these days is that it helps keep families in touch. More and more Tongans live overseas. They sacrifice to bring people together at Conference from Australia, New Zealand or the USA."

Today the global economy has a significant impact on Tongan society. It is now difficult for

Tongans to live self-sufficiently from the allotments of land they receive as a birthright.

As many as half of all Tongans live overseas and the money they send back home is important both for their families and for the Church. Money from overseas is a very, very important source of revenue for the Church, Tevita says.

"However, when people are forced to leave their homes it can cause the dislocation of families and communities. This is one of the serious problems facing the Church."

Census figures show that the Free Wesleyan Church has been losing 500 people a year. In an island nation the size of Tonga this is a significant loss, and it is a trend that has been going on for the last few years.

"Current predictions are that over the next 20 to 30 years the big mainline churches will become medium churches and some of the smaller churches will also become medium churches. Churches that are expanding in Tonga today are the Seventh Day Adventists and Latter Day Saints," Tevita says.

Tevita was a lecture at the Free Wesleyan Church's Sia'atoutai Theological College from 1985 to 1995. He left Tonga to pursue doctoral studies in the UK and joined the academic staff at Pacific Theological College in 2003. PTC is an ecumenical institutions owned by 20 member Pacific churches, including the Free Wesleyan Church of Tonga.

Tevita is the son of Rev Sione 'Amanaki Havea, the first Tongan president of the Free Wesleyan Church of Tonga. 'Amanaki was prominent in the ecumenical movement in the Pacific and has been described as the pre-eminent Tongan Methodist of the second half of the 20th century.



A special birthday and retirement party was held for Rev Dr 'Alifaleti Mone.



Queen Mother Halaevalu Mata'aho inducts the new president Rev Dr 'Ahio.



Otahuhu Tongan Methodist Church's Fuakava Ta'engata Choir at Centenary Church in Nuku'alofa.



Rev Taufu Filiai translates the words of Rev Jill van de Geer who spoke for the NZ delegation.

Education and literacy roadshow comes to Wellington

Na'e fakatefua mai 'a e To'utupu Metotisi Tonga 'o e vahe Uelingatoni ki Wesley 'o fakahoko 'a'enua Youth Rally fekau'aki mo hono tu'uaki ai pe ke 'iloa 'a Kalaisi 'i he 'enaumo'ui pea ke nau uoungataha ai pe mo tutupu 'i he kelesi 'a e 'Otua.



Silao of Weltec explains the many courses that are available for young people.



Fakamalo atu ki he kau taki 'o'utupu hono kotoa pe pea pehee ki he poupu na'e fai 'e he matu'aa



Kalolo talking about modern apprenticeships.