

August 2023



## Chaplains at Large Ministry Beyond the Parish

Chaplains in schools, hospitals, prisons, aged-care facilities and universities, throughout New Zealand, provide support for the spiritual and moral wellbeing of students, patients, prisoners, residents, service personnel, and their whanau. This month Rev Chris Purdie, an ordained Presbyterian minister employed as a military chaplain based at Trentham, gives an insight into his ministry.

### Ministry in the Military

Meeting an army chaplain as a youth worker was life-changing for Chris Purdie; he was impressed by the prospect of a ministry role that supported young people *and* provided physical training and outdoor pursuits. Chris grew up as a member of Wadestown Presbyterian Church in Wellington and was eventually involved in youth leadership. Attending a Clinical Pastoral Education course in 1990 in Christchurch was foundational for his ministry. After the course he became a youth worker, then spent a year overseas with the Council for World Mission.

He married Silvia Crane, former National Methodist Youth Co-ordinator, and eventually the couple moved to Dunedin with three small boys in tow, where they undertook ministry training. Chris was ordained into Army Chaplaincy at Linton in 2007. He spent nine years based there, and then seven years at Burnham Camp in Canterbury. During that time Chris was deployed in Afghanistan and East Timor, engaged in disaster response in Vanuatu post Cyclone Pam, and in Christchurch post-earthquakes.

As an Army Chaplain, currently based at Trentham, Chris is a Specialist Officer within the NZ Defence Force, responsible for spiritual and pastoral care within the health and wellbeing team. Chris says that Military Chaplaincy is fully integrated into the wider organisation. "I wear military uniform but I also sit outside the system to some extent. I can relate to people right across the organisation. I hold the rank of Major but I don't have power to give orders."

Chris works in a multi-disciplinary team, with a particular focus on spiritual and mental health within a holistic context. "Our role is pastoral care, not clinical. We have a long-term relationship with units and individuals through all the transitions in people's lives, not just a one-off crisis intervention. Chaplaincy is a ministry of presence. I spend much of my day 'loitering with intent', visiting units, doing physical training and drinking coffee," Chris says.

### A Day in the Life of a Military Chaplain

Chris concedes that a big part of chaplaincy is putting yourself in places where people are. Some days are structured but a lot of the time the core chaplaincy work is about just being available. Any single day can revolve around physical, emotional, ceremonial, pastoral and social activities.

"Much of our work could be described as mental health prevention; we encourage healthy team functioning, spot potential problems early and inject goodwill, encouragement and trust. Chaplains also have important ceremonial roles within the military from large public events such as Anzac Day services to private baptisms. We carry out other tasks with mental health benefits such as blessing objects associated with a death, blessing a home or a pounamu carving. These ceremonial functions serve to honour transitions and provide structure for communal grief."

A chaplain's contribution is often not immediately obvious but the value of their presence can bring advantages across many aspects of an operation in unexpected ways. "We hang out and chat to people. That is especially important in disaster relief," Chris says. "The work of chaplaincy may seem intangible but when we do things well, the operation has greater effectiveness and military personnel are able to focus and sustain their efforts in a potentially traumatic environment."

### Always Ready to Deploy

The NZDF is tasked with making a major contribution to New Zealand's wellbeing and resilience. This includes providing local support to communities from disaster relief to support for hui of national significance. An important component of this is a standing order known as Operation Awhina - a readiness to deploy for a range of disasters, current or anticipated, within New Zealand. Once activated, Operation Awhina diverts military people from other tasks, and

resources the emergency with equipment and personnel. The chaplain is integral to the success of the military intervention.

Chris explains, "My role as a chaplain in Op Awhina is two-fold. First, to support and debrief military personnel and second, to provide pastoral care for disaster affected communities. These often happen simultaneously. I can release the truckie to do what he is tasked to do while I am present to the distressed person, explaining what is going on and listening to their concerns. It can be very difficult for soldiers to do the practical and the relational work at the same time. In the downtimes while we wait for stuff to happen, I chat to people. When the soldiers come off the job, I am around to help them process their day."

Chaplains play a vital role in ensuring 'that military personnel have improved individual and team resilience, performance and adaptability' - a key goal in the NZDF's Strategic Plan. "Dealing with traumatic experiences is a core component of sustaining performance and adaptability in a disaster situation," Chris says.

The chaplain is often uniquely placed to gather significant information about distinctive aspects of the local community that may impact on their willingness and ability to support or be engaged in recovery or relief operations. Chris gives an example. "In 2014 I was deployed to the Shepherd Islands in Vanuatu with disaster relief after Cyclone Pam. We were based at a school which I discovered was a Seventh Day Adventist school. The community was mainly Adventist. This had a very practical implication. The operation leadership assumed that Sunday would be the quiet day, which was true for most of Vanuatu, but I was able to inform them that Saturday would be worship day in this particular region. So the military operation had our rest day on Saturday, out of respect for their Sabbath. That helped our personnel also."

Priorities include 'showing up and building connection'. "We assess, on the spot, in unobtrusive ways. We notice things: people's demeanour, how they relate to one another. We build up a detailed picture of the dynamics of a community. We initiate conversations. Strengthening community resilience involves identifying the key people in a community and supporting them to function well. It is central to the ongoing disaster recovery of a community for the key leaders to feel that they have still got capacity. "

#### **Chaplains Have an Office But Not an Office Job**

"If I'm in my office, I'm probably doing administration. Our job is beyond the walls of our office. I make a point of getting to events in the life of an Army base: morning teas, functions, exercises in the gym. I am around soldiers and officers while they are doing their work and I participate to some degree in what they are doing. This is particularly fruitful when units are away from home base. Exercises take us out into the wilderness, tenting, walking, being in the field. Being out and about together we start to see how all the parts come together. At base we train for active service and combined work. Being in the field makes sense of a lot of the other things that happen in military life," Chris says.

Spiritual concerns sometimes bring people to Chris. Exorcism and blessing objects was a steep learning curve initially. "That was not part of my ministry training. Chaplains are often called on to bless things, in particular pounamu before they are gifted and anything associated with death."

Chris shares a memorable incident that happened soon after he started at Linton. "A soldier had died in a car accident and a few months later his family returned for his kit bag. I got a phone call: "Padre, can you come down and bless this kit?" Sure. I can do that. But I had no idea what I was doing. I phoned a friend and talked to one of the other chaplains who told me what to do. I was a bit sceptical about it. I walked into the disposals warehouse which was mostly empty except for a single army pack and two Māori women waiting for me. It was clear that these women were not going anywhere near the pack until I had dealt with it. They needed me to make it right. At that point I understood that regardless of what I believed there was a real issue here; these women could not do their job until I had facilitated what they felt was necessary. I put my stole on, said a prayer, and splashed water over the bag. They said: "Are you all done? Right, OK, thank you," and they picked up the pack and started to sort the contents.

"Moments like that make it very clear that I am under the cloak of the tradition of military chaplains going back over a century. The military is an organisation which honours tradition and chaplains have been in the New Zealand Army for 115 years. In that situation I am the new face doing the same role."



## RIP Rev Dr Dame Phyllis Myra Guthardt 1 August 1929 – 29 June 2023

On Tuesday 4 July whanau, friends, and former colleagues gathered at Knox Presbyterian Church in Christchurch to honour, celebrate and give thanks for the enormously rich life of Rev Dr Dame Phyllis Myra Guthardt who died peacefully, just short of her 94th birthday a week earlier. Phyllis served as the first non-Presbyterian minister at Knox Church from 1976 until 1984.

As a cherished daughter, sister, aunt, mentor, friend and esteemed scholar, Phyllis touched many lives and hearts. Words used to describe her included intelligent, trailblazer, progressive, supportive, facilitative, hardworking, dedicated, determined, bossy, remarkable, feisty and a champion.

Rev Dr Susan Thompson returned early from her WCC visit to Geneva, Switzerland to preside over the service. Susan first met Rev Phyllis almost 40 years earlier when she was 'a shy, young student at Canterbury University'. Susan said, "She encouraged, guided, challenged and at times gently pushed me to do things I never thought of doing. Of being someone I never thought I could be. "As an exceptionally gifted preacher, pastor, scholar and leader, Dame Phyllis lived an extraordinary life and opened doors for women in the church and in the wider world. Her career within Methodism, indeed within the Christian churches in New Zealand, was quite unique".

In a message from the General Secretary conveying news of Rev Phyllis' passing to the Connexion, Rev Tara Tautari briefly described the life and career of an exceptionally gifted and endlessly giving friend and mentor.

Born and raised in Nelson, Phyllis was influenced by two significantly gifted and challenging Methodist ministers Ashleigh Petch and Charlie Hailwood at St John's Church, Nelson. Phyllis led Bible Class there and like her mentors, influenced a younger generation.

After training at Christchurch Teachers' College she taught in Nelson, and then went through the processes to candidate for ministry. She spent three years at Trinity College and was the first woman of any denomination in New Zealand to be ordained. Her first appointment was in the Riccarton Circuit, and while there she completed her M.A. with First Class Honours. She received a scholarship to the University of Cambridge, was a student at Newnham College, and completed her PhD in biblical studies. While in the UK she tutored at Homerton College.

On her return to NZ she was stationed at Melville, Hamilton and acted as a Hospital Chaplain. In 1969 she became the first ecumenical chaplain at the University of Waikato, lectured in English and religious studies, and began her long connection with the NZ Tertiary Education system.

From Hamilton Phyllis returned to Christchurch, serving at Upper Riccarton Church and then with the Presbyterian congregation at Knox Church. During her time at Knox she became the first female President of the Methodist Church in 1985. From that time, she became part of the University Council (for 21 years) and was the University's Chancellor from 1998 till 2002. She received an honorary doctorate from Canterbury University, and from the University of Waikato. She was appointed Dame Commander of the Order of the British Empire in 1993.

Rev Donald Philips, a long-time friend of Dame Phyllis - known as Phyl by her wide circle of close associates - offered a heartfelt tribute to the minister of the Methodist Church of New Zealand whose record he described as unparalleled. "Her achievements as a minister of the Gospel, as an ecumenist, through her commitment to tertiary education in this country, and as a pathfinder in the journey towards gender equality, are remarkable." After sharing highlights from her 33-year career in ministry, Donald closed his tribute to his friend by acknowledging and thanking her for her "contribution to our lives and to the wider concerns of life in this country".

He then shared one final personal anecdote. "I followed her as President of the Church and at that moment in the proceedings when she read my name out to be her successor, I dutifully started to walk down the church aisle in New Plymouth to acknowledge the honour. From the podium came that crisp voice: "Donald, walk faster!" Phyl, I will try to do just that."



## Methodist Church Initiative Walk for the Planet for Matariki.

Walk for the Planet joined forces with the Oxford Area School Observatory to organise a 5km planet walk around the streets of Oxford in Canterbury on Matariki Day, Friday 14 July.

"Recognising how precious life on our planet is and how we need to nurture and protect it, we partnered with the amazing wee Mātakitaki ki te Raki observatory at Oxford Area School," Walk for the Planet founder, Rev Mark Gibson said.

The walk started and finished at the observatory. After a karakia led by local Oxford Methodist minister, Julia de Groot, the group of 12 walkers weaved their way through the township. The route included eight turns representing each planet in our solar system.

Following the walk, the school launched its new meteor camera, which Walk for the Planet made a donation towards. The camera - one of more than 30 throughout New Zealand, erected at observatories and schools - will benefit the students and it will feed into a global network tracking meteors and meteor showers. One of the largest meteors to fall in Aotearoa landed at View Hill in the Oxford area.

Conversations about doing a collaboration with the observatory started in 2019 but Covid stalled discussions. When the observatory revived plans to seek dark sky reserve status, Walk for the Planet sought a way to support the initiative. Walk for the Planet co-ordinator, David Hill, and his daughter Sasha Crawford began conversations with observatory

volunteer Raul Elias-Drago in February and the concept evolved from there. The event was part of the Oxford Matariki Winter Light Festival.

### The Walk for the Planet Journey

Celebrating the cosmos is the latest direction for Walk for the Planet which was founded in 2008, following discussions sparked by the late Rev Dr Jim Stuart at a Methodist Church event held in Queenstown. The following year, thanks to a grant from the Methodist PAC fund, a hikoi from Rakiura (Stewart Island) to Wellington was organised, to raise awareness of climate change, under the leadership of Mark Gibson and in collaboration with Christian World Service.

Walk for the Planet was revived in 2016 with another Methodist PAC grant as Seven Rivers, Seven Weeks. In 2017 an exploration of seven iconic Canterbury rivers, involving numerous environmental organisations, church groups, farmers, scientists and politicians became a feature film *Seven Rivers Walking*.

In 2018 Walk for the Planet was revitalised by David and Sasha with a new vision of “health of people and the planet, and celebrating the cosmos.” Thanks to a third Methodist PAC grant, the popular Great Otakaro Avon River Walk, founded in 2012 by Mark Gibson, was kept alive.

The Kaiapoi River Wellbeing Walk was established in collaboration with the Kaiapoi Food Forest to support Community Wellbeing North Canterbury (which local churches laid the foundations for in Kaiapoi in the 1970s and 1980s). Both walks are now well established in the annual Christchurch Walking Festival.

Walk for the Planet has also collaborated with an initiative based in east Christchurch called Flourish, making a financial contribution which allowed the group to gain a larger grant from the Rata Foundation to launch a social media campaign to raise awareness on climate change.



## Confirmation Service for Waitakere Methodist Parish

After a break of many years, Parish Superintendent, Rev Augusten Subhan, decided it was time there was a confirmation service in the Waitakere Parish.

He arranged confirmation classes for members of the Massey, Henderson and Glen Eden churches. On 16 July MCNZ President, Rev Peter Taylor, Vice-President, TeRito Peyroux-Semu and the Auckland

District Superintendent, Rev Uesifili Unasa, joined Rev Augusten at the Glen Eden church as 29 church members recalled their baptism and committed themselves through confirmation to follow Jesus Christ within the fellowship of the Methodist Church.

Rev Peter spoke of the privileges and burdens of being president as he encouraged the confirmands to embrace the privileges of being a Christian but to also realise that, at times, it would be a burden. He referenced the reading from the epistles (2 Cor 8: 1-5). The churches in Macedonia wanted the privilege of helping other Christians who were struggling financially, even though they could barely afford to do so, and this would be a burden to them. Rev Peter reminded the congregation that Jesus promises to help us carry our burdens, as we had heard in the Gospel reading (Matt 11: 25-30).

Lay preachers from the parish participated in the laying on of hands of those being confirmed before the Rev Peter formally blessed each one. To conclude the service, the confirmands each received a certificate and a candle to symbolise them taking the light of Christ into the world. The celebration continued with a shared lunch and fellowship in the church hall.



## Prophetic Writings and Hymn Collection Available Online

William (Bill) Wallace, a retired Methodist Minister and one of New Zealand’s most prolific hymn writers, has ensured his legacy of music and prophetic writings are available to all.

Over recent months he has completed posting a huge number of his hymns on the Progressive Christianity website, including his newest collection of hymns, *Cosmic Mystery*. Bill is described as one of Progressive

Christianity website’s most prolific contributors. Bill found his true spiritual home when he was introduced to the Christian mystics, especially Hildegard of Bingen and Meister Eckhart. This explains why he has sometimes been called a prophetic mystic.

Along with his parish work, Bill was the hymn selector for the *Praise Be* Television Programme. He also chaired Contemporary Hymns N.Z. Ltd. and was the convener of the N.Z. Methodist Media and Communications Committee. He

was the inaugural chair of the N.Z. branch of the Interfaith World Conference on Religion and Peace and initiated the formation of a Citizen's Advice Bureau, an adventure playground, a suburban team ministry, and coordinated a Community Care Centre.

He holds a B.A. in philosophy and a Dip. Ed. and is the author of nine published collections of his hymns as well as other resources on our website. His hymns have appeared in 13 different denominational hymn books, 17 other hymn collections, and other worship material has been included in 15 different anthologies. All of these are suitable for most Progressive Christians". To access the work, visit:

[www.progressivechristianity.org/?s=wallace&sv=author&submit=Search](http://www.progressivechristianity.org/?s=wallace&sv=author&submit=Search)

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## Wesley Church Refit Wins Architectural Award

At the 2023 Wellington Architecture Awards in May, the extensively renovated and seismically strengthened Wesley Methodist Church was one of 32 projects acknowledged.

Heritage architect, Paul Cummack, and architectural practice, architecture +, collaborated on the project that saw the church building undergo a major upgrade and seismic strengthening. The Wesley Church in Te Aro is regarded as one of Wellington's finest 19th century

timber churches and the building has provided a spiritual home to the Pacific Island Methodist community for many years.

The significant upgrade retained the architectural integrity of the original building, cleverly concealing many new and reinstated architectural features and elements. A refurbished lobby on the northern façade provides a light and airy indoor space. Weatherboards and timber trim have been repurposed and reinstated in the renovation that included reroofing and repainting. The outcome is a fit-for-purpose church and community facility, ideally suited to the congregations and community it serves.

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## The Story of the Unsung Carol

On 25 June Trinity Methodist Church in Pakuranga staged a mid-winter Christmas musical. According to those who attended, "It was one magical night – an experience never to be forgotten." Maheeka Gunasekara-Ariyapperuma shares the story.

The concept for the event was first mooted in October 2022, and nine sub-committees worked with missionary zeal from February 2023, to deliver a special event that thrilled the audience. The musical comprised a cast of

10, along with the Trinity Methodist Church Choir and two visiting choirs: the Pitt Street Methodist Church choir and the Mount Albert Methodist Church choir.

The Howick Brass Band accompanied the congregational carols and the grand finale, Handel's 'Hallelujah Chorus' performed by the three choirs. The congregation was requested to come in festive attire, to bring about the spirit of Christmas.

The story revolved around the Angels in Heaven, coming together on the night of 24 December to celebrate the birth of Christ in the Golden Lounge in Heaven. St. Peter introduces the 'hour of jubilation', where each Angel sings their favourite carols backed by their specific choir. A special guest, George Frederic Handel, joins the celebrations to make the hour of jubilation one memorable night for all. Handel hears the beautiful singing in the Golden Lounge and decides to take a break from his composing work. Upon his entrance, Handel sees so many talented choristers, along with the fabulous brass band, that he requests all the choirs to sing the 'Hallelujah Chorus' as a grand finale to the night of jubilation. The story was kept a secret until the performance, as it was intended for the audience to be surprised by experiencing something novel and magical.

The church was transformed into a magical heaven-like venue with a glittering Christmas tree, complete with a sledge full of presents guarded by a lighted reindeer, fairy lights cascading into torrents of flashing colours and impressive floral arrangements in a mix of gold, red and white.

The sermon, delivered by Rev. Amos Muzondiwa, the presbyter of the Trinity Methodist Church, was based on the act of mercy and love shown by the Angel of Mercy. The service ended with the Trinity Church choir walking out with candles, while the congregation sang 'Oh come all ye faithful' amidst a multitude of fairy lights.

This unique event was organized to glorify God for all His mercies showered upon the church, which celebrates its 60th year in its present location.

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## Report from MCNZ President

“What’s it like being President?” some have asked me. It is a mixture of privilege and burden.

As privilege I recently represented our church at the British Methodist Conference and next month I will be present in Fiji. As privilege I brought over twenty people into membership in Waitakere and attended the opening of the Wesley Community Centre at Hastings. Burdens include being away from home for 39 out of 43 days in June/July, dealing with

church crises and responding to many emails and demands on my time and energy.

I am not looking for sympathy! This mixture of privilege and burden is common to all presbyters and deacons. We are privileged to accompany a grieving family or a couple preparing for marriage and are given opportunities to share our understanding of God through acts of worship and service. Then again we face the burden of creating weekly meaningful worship and responding to administration from church and state.

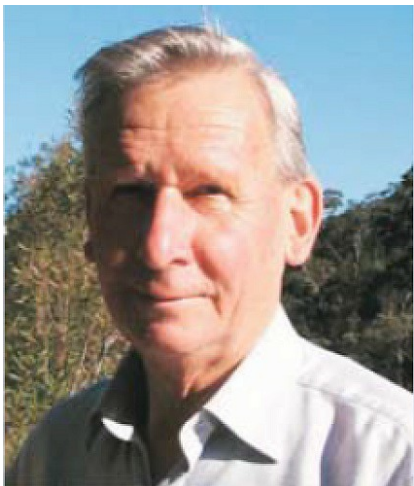
This same mixture is even experienced by church members and indeed every human when you think about it, though those privileges and burdens vary enormously.

It might seem better to have all privilege and no burden but that leads ultimately to arrogance and corruption. Conversely it could seem terrible to have all burden and no privilege, leading to despair and disillusion.

These are not two sides of the same coin but every privilege is in fact a burden and every burden a privilege. So the privilege of speaking twice at the British Methodist Conference, as well as sharing a reading at an ordination service, was also a burden. The burden of dealing with church crises is in fact a privilege to be involved in some deep stuff.

When our burdens seem too heavy to bear – like a terminal illness or the grief following a partner’s death – there are two pieces of good news: [1] Jesus too faced the burden of the cross which was also the privilege of carrying this burden for us; [2] Jesus will help us carry those burdens, Matthew 11:28 “Come to me, all of you who are tired from carrying heavy loads, and I will give you rest.”

Thanks be to God who rejoices in our privileges and upholds us in our burdens so that whether we are ‘mere’ members, clergy or even the President, we can continue in our faithful calling for God.



## Eco-human Future

*Ian Harris*

It’s high time our two-legged species evolved from being human to being eco-human, and a significant role for churches in this generation is to help make that happen.

That will require some adjustments in our theological emphases but is necessary if the church is to serve the new world and evolve a new dimension in our spirituality. Lloyd Geering touched on this when he wrote: “Ecological spirituality will focus on the nature of our relatedness, not only to one another as humans in human society but also to all living forms of life in the ecosphere and to the forces of nature.” *Relatedness. That’s the key word here.*

In opening ourselves to this, there’s wisdom to be drawn from communities who’ve come close to achieving that in their own environments. For example, the Omaha Indians welcome newborn children in a ceremony expressing a human intimacy with the earth. Something of that spirit could well be incorporated into our ritual of baptism.

Closer to home, the Te Urewera Act, passed in 2014, describes the Te Urewera forestland as “a fortress of nature, alive with history; its scenery . . . abundant with mystery, adventure, and remote beauty . . . a place of spiritual value, with its own mana and mauri” – a phrase that conveys the perception of “a living and spiritual force” over the whole forest area.

Three years later came the Te Awa Tupua Act, which gives the Whanganui River the rights and responsibilities of a legal person, similar to companies and charities, and with its own appointed guardians.

Te Awa Tupua conveys the idea of the whole Whanganui River system, its spirit and the people related to it, as “an indivisible and living whole ... incorporating the river and all of its physical and metaphysical elements.”

At the heart of both Acts is the recognition of a Māori relatedness with the natural world. The way they bring together two deeply divergent traditions, one western and legal, the other indigenous and cultural, has excited interest around the world. Mt Taranaki will be next.

As a secular Christian, I see no problem in conceiving of a mauri, a life force, at work in an ocean, a river, a mountain, the forests of Te Urewera – a life force that finds expression in their unique ecologies, a life essence to be respected, a life energy we can live alongside, respond to and enjoy. To Māori that's the mauri and it's everywhere in the natural world. Birds, animals, trees, plants, the soil, each has its own mauri.

Allow that in your thinking and you'll find yourselves subtly, profoundly, changing the way you relate to an ocean, a river, a mountain, a forest, your pet, your rose garden, your friends, yourself. I shy away from acclaiming Tangaroa as god of the ocean. But how about Tangaroa as symbolising the life force of the ocean?

Such a re-set could well broaden our Christian vision and nudge society forward into a new and deeper relationship with the Earth. What else might help?

Earlier I touched on baptism. Perhaps there's also room for conceiving a new trinity of God (or Godness), Humanity and the Planet, complementing the traditional Godhead of Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Religion must be free to evolve new forms to reflect new realities.

That kind of evolution is already being expressed in new hymns and new liturgies going beyond a decorative use of natural imagery to genuine theological depth – including one by the Ephesus Group drawing on the new story of creation, *Our Universe: Ourselves*.

Complement that with private contemplation and you're on to a winner. In *Sacred Nature*, English religious scholar, Karen Armstrong, offers some suggestions towards a spirituality befitting an eco- human future:

■ First, take your ego out of the centre of your being. "Many of us are eager to achieve spiritual enlightenment of some kind," she says, "but often we don't realise that this entails the loss of the self that we so busily and inventively preserve and promote." That's also key, of course, to living with compassion.

■ As to nature, begin by "looking closely at our immediate environment, making ourselves aware of the magnificence of trees, flowers, birdsong and clouds, until they are no longer just a backdrop to our lives but a daily marvel".

When that's embedded, we are ready to steadily expand our consciousness, rippling out to make room for all our fellow-beings, beyond our own ethnicity, sex, nationality, politics, religion and species. In other words, an eco-human spirituality.

***This is the final article written by Ian Harris for Touchstone. Our long-time contributor has decided that as 'a newspaper man', writing for an online publication has no appeal. We thank Ian for his thought-provoking and inspired contributions. Editor Touchstone.***



## Are We all in the Same Storm? Blinders of Climate Privilege

George Zachariah

*How the Rain falls Differently upon Māori* is the title of a recent article by Rawiri Taonui, on the controversy over the \$15 million post-Cyclone Gabrielle Māori Relief Fund announced by Minister Willie Jackson.

Mike Hosking criticised the announcement as unjustified "special treatment race-based funding." According to him, while extreme weather events impact geographic regions differently, the rain does not "fall differently on Māori" nor does flooding inundate by "race."

In his response to Hosking, Minister Jackson explained the correlation between colonialism, settler capitalism and climate change, and how Māori communities are disproportionately affected by climate change. According to him, Māori poverty, created by the "racist history" of Aotearoa, renders Māori more vulnerable to extreme weather. The Far North District Council (FNDC) outlines how colonisation forced Māori communities off traditional lands onto sub-optimal river and coastal floodplains with a higher risk of flooding, coastal erosion, storm surges and tidal inundations.

Taonui further observes that "Māori also encounter greater difficulties in recovery. According to the FNDC, lower incomes in flood-prone Māori areas reduce their capacity to both prepare for and recover from extreme events. With a higher percentage of Māori working in storm-vulnerable primary industries, any decline in existing low incomes aggravates already difficult recoveries." Yes, the rain indeed falls differently on Māori. These discussions invite us to be conscious of our climate privilege and to discern climate change as climate injustice.

Mainstream perceptions and analysis of the climate crises are tainted by dominant interests. The diagnosis and solutions are informed by the logic of the prevailing order, protecting and increasing the resources of the wealthy at the expense of all others. Mainstream climate politics is a betrayal of the communities who are forced to face the brunt of the problem. Our faith-inspired climate witness should begin with a critical interrogation of the mainstream discourses, informed by the perspectives of the victims of climate injustice.

An alternative theological and missional engagement with climate injustice requires a methodological shift, informed by the politics of intersectionality. Intersectional environmentalism helps us to understand how injustices happening to marginalized communities and the earth are interconnected. It advocates for justice for people and the planet. It examines how different marginalised groups are disproportionately affected by the climate and ecological crisis. Intersectional environmentalism exposes the systemic nature of the crises and links our climate justice witness with the struggles of the Indigenous and subaltern communities for economic, racial, gender and social justice. It uncovers state policies and practices that differentially affect, or disadvantage individuals or communities based on race, class, ethnicity and gender.

As internationally recognised scholar and theologian Dr Cynthia Moe-Lobeda rightly observes, “Climate change may be the most far-reaching manifestation of white privilege and class privilege yet to face humankind.” This discernment challenges us to recognize the blinders of climate privilege that prevent us from realising the consequences of differentials in privilege and power during disasters. Hosking’s seemingly factual and innocent statement, “the rain does not fall differently on Māori nor does flooding inundate by race” is an example of such blinders of climate privilege. Faith communities and our ecotheologies and ecological ministries are also infected with climate privilege.

Enabling the climate-privileged to recognise and remove their blinders of climate privilege requires the Church to immerse itself in the sufferings and struggles of the climate-condemned and become intentionally intersectional in our theological and missional engagements.



Harold took his lay preacher training seriously, especially the bit about 'good standing'.

## Jim's Cartoons

Our regular cartoon seeks to find the funny side of faith.



## The Future Has Arrived

*Rev Andrew Doubleday, UCANZ Ministry Facilitator*

I spent more than two weeks visiting Cooperating Ventures and denominational leaders in the Lower North Island. I enjoyed it. I hope the people I visited benefitted also.

Only a small proportion of the churches I visited were led by paid clergy. Most were small, aging, volunteer-led congregations. Overall, they were positive and engaged and they were a joy to meet with. They all faced challenges yet seemed open to new ways of being and doing.

Historically, the biggest challenge has been sustaining paid presbyteral ministry. For many of these congregations that ship has long sailed. Covid, with its carnage, has provided the church with opportunities to face the future with resources many would never have dreamt of mastering.

Lockdowns forced us to learn to use basic technology to allow us to provide worship experiences at minimal cost. We have discovered that nearly everything is available online to provide our people the necessities for vital encounters with God and one another. A bit like cup-a-soup where all one needs is to add hot water and stir, so in gathering and making sure that the bits they do are meaningful and community building, life-giving worship can be readily achievable.

A colleague informed me that the New South Wales Synod of the Uniting Church has 170 small rural congregations serviced by four full-time presbyters. Whether true or not it's a great story and lays before us the future that most of our mainline churches face, if not in the immediate future, then not far away.

Over the past couple of decades the Methodist Church has consistently assessed 'viability' according to passion, vision and energy, not according to numbers. This is admirable. It allows congregations to take responsibility for their own life, knowing they will be supported – until *they* decide it's time to 'throw in the towel'. My hope is that UCANZ will continue to support this approach. A small and vital Christian witness can be like seasoning that gives a special flavour to all else that happens in the hosting community.





## Finding Meaning in the Book of Proverbs

*Annabella Third, Lay Preacher MCNZ*

During my last university break I was lucky enough to go on holiday to the United States of America and visit Zion National Park in Utah which has long been on my bucket list.

There is a famously dangerous hike in the park which has high elevation and narrow exposed paths. In return for the risk you take, you get to observe the deep red canyons in contrast to the green grasses in the desert below. Seeing this was magnificent and I couldn't help but marvel at the beauty, vastness and majesty of the creator.

This hike pushed me in many ways, more than just the strenuous physical challenge in 40-degree Celsius heat. I was terrified while I walked. Looking at the dangers of the hike, the main reason for an untimely death, was distraction. It is so easy to try and get a better photo and misplace your

footing. I did a lot of praying on this hike as I was very scared but through fixing my eyes on the Lord, I was able to be calm and, like Proverbs 3:6 says, "In all your ways acknowledge Him and He will make your paths straight."

The Book of Proverbs has always fascinated me and I find myself only having to read small sections at a time as it is so rich with teachings and messages. The next chapter of Proverbs 4:26-27 says, "Give careful thought to the paths for your feet and be steadfast in all your ways. Do not turn to the right or the left; keep your foot from evil." This verse was also one that resonated with me at the end of the hike. It made me think that even when we're not on the side of a cliff but in our daily life, we can get distracted and go down the wrong path. In the end this will inhibit us from reaching the places we want to go. Through following God we can be on the right footing and not fall.

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## Non-Verbal Therapy Through a Māori Model of Health

*Naomi Paekau, Methodist Social Services Hamilton.*

Te ao Māori is the Māori world view where we believe that everything is connected. Sir Mason Durie's model of health, Te Whare Tapa Whā, highlights how wellbeing comes from ensuring that you take care of all four walls of your whare (house). These four walls are te taha hinengaro (mental/emotional wellbeing), te taha wairua (spiritual wellbeing), te taha

tinana (physical wellbeing) and te taha whānau (family/social wellbeing). It suggests that if one wall is unstable, we are unbalanced and may need support. This model is similar to the Pacifica people's model Fonefale. These models can work for people from all backgrounds and cultures.

Music has always been an integral part of Te Ao Māori through its instruments, waiata, kapa haka and their ability to share stories and pass on whakapapa.

Methodist Social Services Hamilton (MSSH) sees the importance of this with our people in the disability, mental health and youth sectors. We understand that talking therapies are not for everyone and research shows that Māori are 12 percent less likely than non-Māori to access supports. Because of this, we wanted to share an exciting programme that brings together culture and therapy to help improve the lives and lessen the burdens of all those who join.

We believe that some demographics such as youth, Māori and people with mental health difficulties have a perceived unwillingness to share their troubles. Our music expression class provides an avenue for all aspects of te whare tapa whā to be addressed without participants feeling like they are undergoing therapy.

Non-verbal therapy is a fantastic way to express yourself without the feeling of total vulnerability. Music expression classes provide a safe space to share pain, trauma, happiness or whatever aspect of life needs expressing. It allows people to see the beauty in your story at times when you may not be able to express it in other ways.

Our music expression class is run by Jack De Thierry who owns a music studio called De Stylez. Jack has had many years of experience working with teenagers in the youth justice and Oranga Tamariki environment as well as the disability sector, helping people release trauma and face their difficulties through music. Jack has partnered with us to create a safe group space to create and share.

The programme is tailored to every individual who attends and they can work at their own pace. The classes are a place where people can come and try musical instruments, lyric writing, singing/rapping, performing and beat-making guided

by Jack and their own interests and ideas. A holistic approach ensures that we assist people to connect with others offering services beyond our scope of practice and expertise.

On 9 June we hosted an Open Day showcasing the instruments and gear, meeting tutor Jack, learning about the programme and its tikanga as well as being introduced to the other programmes the centre has on offer. It was a hands-on experience where people were encouraged to try everything that was on offer. The disability students were intrigued and left with smiles, having shared personal stories and loud music.

Our Facebook page ensured that our connections with other services brought many new faces into the centre who shared their instruments, goals and stories. We were so excited about the passion and connection our programme made in only one session.

Music comes in many forms and genres: some we like and some we don't and that's the beauty of music; it's a very individual experience.



## Inoi Poi Tukua Kia Rere

*Rev Keita Hotere*

Last year we witnessed at the Women's Rugby World Cup tournament, a national movement, the regeneration of the poi used in sport. 'Wā poi' was the call for supporters of our Aotearoa Women's Rugby Team to get behind their team.

Pere Wihongi led the charge calling 'poi ka rere' (flying poi) and 'poi pakipaki' (slapping (noise) poi) urging the crowd to show their support of our team through the twirling of the poi. A critical mass of twirling poi in the crowds was a rally for support for wāhine everywhere and, in this instance, on the rugby field. But it was also a metaphor for support in all avenues of life; women's empowerment visibly and volubly enacted, lifting the occasion to new heights. New calls were heard. 'Poi kia mau'! Be ready! 'Poi kia rere'! Be prepared to let the poi fly!

This month, we are witnessing the beginning of our first ever FIFA Women's World Cup tournament and the cry has gone up again, 'Poi tukua', present your poi at the ready!

Great composers Erenora Taratoa, Ngoingoi Pēwhairangi and Rev Kingi Ihaka weaved metaphor into song and brought us iconic poi songs "Poia Atu Taku Poi", "Poi e" and "Tau Ake Au I Taku Tau". The latter, a poi chant drew us in karakia on the journey of the Anglican faith throughout the land and aptly 'the poi lands where it lands'.

'Poi Tukua' is a rallying cry from Sir Timoti Karetu "to send poi beyond Te Ao Māori (the Māori World). Poi Tukua encourages people from all walks of life to engage in Te Ao Māori during the FIFA Women's World Cup 2023TM." Poi Tukua is set "to be an international symbol of empowerment for wāhine and is a way of showing our support for athletes". Poi Tukua, the waiata has been written by Makayla Purcell-Mainini, in collaboration with Dame Hinewehi Mohi and Sir Timoti Karetu, and produced by Ji Fraser and Dan Martin. Poi Tukua is all about celebrating wāhine at the tournament, and beyond, through poi and waiata poi.

We have the world stage, our women athletes have already surpassed expectations in their first game, let us all get behind them, "poi ka rere, poi pakipaki, poi tukua, ā karawhūia!" Let us take Te Ao Māori to the world!

The Poi Tukua movement encourages us to value, enjoy and respect our hard-working women athletes. It symbolises what women can do and encourages women everywhere to be unafraid of the challenges we face, and to face them with all the supports at our disposal. In Aotearoa, we can use the knowledges of the Māori world to supplement what we already have.

Should you be attending a match in the FIFA competition, kua e wareware ki tō poi – don't forget your poi and be ready to 'karawhūia!' and give poi a go!

As we approach our first Hui on Liturgy, our Aotearoa context and the corpus of indigenous knowledge is very important. Poi Tukua is one such movement that we need to embrace, as a symbol of value to all New Zealanders shared with the world.

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## Choose Faith over Fear

Janine Tuivati, NZMWF

In the bustling city of Auckland, I found myself in deep thought about a crossroad and decision I faced that would shape the trajectory of my life.

As a 30-year-old New Zealand-born Samoan woman, I stood torn between staying within the comfort of the familiar or stepping out in faith, embracing the promise of growth and divine guidance.

The comfortable zone had its allure - a cosy cocoon where I felt safe and secure. But deep down, I knew that this place held me back from reaching my true potential. It was a place where nothing grew and dreams remained dormant, untouched by the rays of possibility.

I remembered the words of Jeremiah 29:11. "For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future." These words echoed in my heart, filling me with a sense of hope and purpose.

Choosing faith over fear demanded courage and a willingness to surrender my worries and doubts to a higher power. It meant believing that God had a plan for me, one that stretched far beyond the boundaries of my comfort zone. It required trusting that God would never leave me, no matter where the path of faith led.

With a determined heart, I took that step of faith. I embraced the uncertainty with the knowledge that it was the same energy required to stay in fear's grip but with the potential for a vastly different outcome. As I ventured into the unknown, I encountered challenges, obstacles and moments of doubt. Each time, I clung to my faith, allowing it to be the guiding light that illuminated my path.

With each step, I felt a profound sense of growth and transformation. It was as if my soul was blooming, nourished by the courage to choose faith. I saw doors open that I had never imagined and opportunities unfold in unexpected ways.

In moments of uncertainty, I held onto the promise of Jeremiah 29:11. I trusted that God's plan was greater than my own and that, even amidst the trials, there was a purpose to every twist and turn.

Looking back on this journey, I am filled with gratitude for the decision to choose faith over fear. It led me to a life filled with hope, purpose and a profound connection with the divine. The energy invested in faith was the catalyst for growth and transformation, birthing dreams that had once seemed impossible.

Reflect on a moment in your life when you chose faith over fear. How did this decision impact your journey? What steps can you take to cultivate a deeper sense of trust in God's plan, allowing faith to guide you through life's crossroads?

As you encounter your own crossroads in life, I encourage you to choose faith over fear. Both require the same energy but the outcomes are different based on what you decide. Trust in God's plan for your life and know that He will never leave you. Nothing grows from your comfort zone. Embrace the uncertainty with courage, for the energy invested in faith has the power to unlock the door to a future filled with hope and growth.



## Great Minds; Rene Descartes

Rev Abhishek Solomon

René Descartes, the 'Father of Modern Philosophy' was born in 1596 in a north-western French town called La Haye, which has since been renamed 'Descartes' in his honour. Descartes' mother, Jeanne, died when he was still young. His father, a member of the Parliament of Brittany at Rennes, could not care for Descartes. He was raised instead by his grandparents.

Descartes attended a Jesuit college where he studied Latin and Ancient Greek, classical poetry, philosophy and mathematics. Education in philosophy in the early 1600s meant a particular focus on the work of Aristotle. Alongside Plato and Hegel, Descartes is considered a key philosopher in the intellectual history of the West. Like the other two, Descartes enacted a paradigm shift, a period, according to Thomas Kuhn, where one way of thinking is replaced by another. Indeed, nothing remained the same after he published *Meditations on First Philosophy* in

1641 and *Principles of Philosophy* in 1644. Up until then, Aristotelian philosophy had prevailed within European academia for centuries. But Descartes would go on to upend centuries-old Aristotelian theories and provide a new foundation for future philosophical inquiries. His aim was, in his words, "to destroy the principles of Aristotle" for good.

Aristotle and Thomas Aquinas taught that sense perception is the bedrock of our learning. There is no distinction between what is out there and what our minds perceive. This view suggests that scientific conclusions can be drawn from sensory experience based on absolute certainty of sense perception. But Descartes disagreed. If sense perception is the bedrock of our learning, then our imagination is not free. Instead, it is limited to and predicated upon things outside. He questioned if material reality, empirical data, or, say, a fact can truly communicate the full truth. What if things are not what they appear to be? What if one is mistaken in their perception of reality, as Descartes claimed he had been many times? He contends that we cannot take our experience as a reliable guide to how things truly are. He casts doubt on sense experience as a reliable measure for understanding reality.

Since Descartes can't trust and accept the ruling ideas about reality, he is determined to doubt everything. He uses doubt as a methodological tool to overcome all his doubts, stating that "Doubt is the origin of wisdom." He taught that fidelity to truth is impossible until we learn to doubt: "If you would be a real seeker after truth, it is necessary that at least once in your life you doubt, as far as possible, all things." Descartes doubts all things as deeply and as far as possible, including his existence. He mistrusts his senses. He supposes that an evil deceiver could easily render false propositions he is inclined to believe. Since everything seems to be doubtful, can he be certain of anything?

He can be. Descartes claimed that one thing he can be certain of, even under the conditions of doubt, is that if we are doubting, then we are thinking, and if we are thinking, then we must, without a shadow of doubt, exist. Descartes expressed his solution by saying: "cogito ergo sum" or "I think therefore I am". From this, he concluded that our rational faculty guarantees at least one piece of true knowledge without any doubt: the perfect certainty of our existence. He favours rational faculty, including introspection and reflection, over sense-perception. For Descartes, truth neither derives from sensory information nor depends upon the reality of an external world but can only be accessible through our mind which he also called the soul or reason.



## Addressing the Enduring Challenges between Church and Indigenous Peoples

The agenda for the World Council of Churches Central Committee meeting in Geneva, Switzerland in June included developing the strategic direction and programmatic response to the assembly as a pilgrimage of justice, reconciliation and unity. MCNZ General Secretary, Rev Tara Tautari

delivered the following address at a plenary session.

A Māori theologian from Aotearoa, once said that it wasn't enough to engage in an arid abstract interpretation of our way of life as Māori, but rather what was called for was a 'taste of reality.' A reality that for Māori and indeed many other Indigenous peoples around the world, has been shaped by the voracious appetites of colonisers, whose rampant rampage has left as witness the scars etched upon our ancestral lands, our stolen legacies with its inherited pain, mingling with our grief, unspent.

Companionship in this context, therefore, in its truest form, propels us as the ecumenical fellowship, into that space where reality is met and tasted. Furthermore, sacred companionship takes us on a transformative and sacrificial journey, beyond a comfortable, risk-free engagement – to that of a companionship of solidarity that requires of us to risk everything, to give our all. Because nothing less, will do.

I was 25 years old in 1995, when I first walked through the doors of the ecumenical centre. I was coming as the indigenous intern, sent by my church to work with the Indigenous Peoples Consultant, Bishop Eugenio Poma, an Aymara from Bolivia in the Programme to Combat Racism. At that time, the WCC had proclaimed a strong commitment to the accompaniment of the justice struggles of Indigenous Peoples, with a focus on indigenous land rights and sovereignty, indigenous spirituality and healing and reconciliation.

Almost 30 years later the question of WCC's ongoing commitment to the struggles of Indigenous Peoples will once again be answered by its members churches in your deliberations at this central committee. And even as our collective memory echoes with the resonant milestones of the past and the hard-fought incremental gains, still we must be bold enough to speak to the enduring challenges that persist in the relationship between churches and Indigenous Peoples.

For companionship is not without its indigenous critique. Power dynamics and the power imbalances inherent in companionate relationships, particularly when it comes to Indigenous communities and the Church, continually need to be addressed and dismantled. Indigenous perspectives resound with a resolute call for agentic companionship, and we saw this in Karlsruhe last year—an unwavering demand for authenticity, rooted in reciprocal relationships founded upon the pillars of mutual respect, collaboration and collective decision-making.

It requires a spirituality of companionship that exhorts us to "rejoice with those who rejoice and mourn with those who mourn." Or as it says in the First Nations Version, an Indigenous Translation of the New Testament, to "*Dance with the ones who dance with joy and shed tears with the ones whose hearts have fallen to the ground.*"

For it is only when our feet have moved joyfully over the whenua (the land) and when our hearts have fallen to the ground, when our tears have touched Papatūānuku, our earth parent – it is only then that our connectedness with creation and our shared longing for reconciliation and unity is made most visible.

For as we dared to say together in Karlsruhe, with passion and hope – *“This would be a unity in which God establishes justice, an equal place for all, through which creation may be renewed and strengthened.”*

May it be so.

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## Aotearoa and Pacific Voices at WCC Central Committee

In June Rev Dr Susan Thompson attended her first meeting as a member of the World Council of Churches Central Committee (2023-2030 term) in Geneva, Switzerland. She reports on a diverse ecumenical gathering committed to global change on many fronts.

Representing churches from Aotearoa in such a forum is a daunting privilege and I was grateful to have the company of Rev Tara Tautari (Advisor to WCC) and Maungarongo Tito (Advisor, Te Runanga

Whakawhanaunga o Aotearoa: the Māori Council of Churches).

As this was our first meeting and 75 percent of the committee were new members, some time was spent on orientation, community building and ecumenical formation.

Relationships are fundamental to the ecumenical movement and I appreciated the chance to hear from and share with members from the Orthodox tradition, young people from Brazil and the Caribbean, ministers from North America and England, women from West Papua and the Marshall Islands and an indigenous person from Sweden. In the words of the WCC's Pentecost message, *“the Spirit of God speaks in gloriously different voices”*.

One of the main tasks of the meeting was to develop a strategic plan to guide the work of the WCC for the next eight years. At the heart of this plan lies a commitment to journey together as a fellowship of churches on a pilgrimage of justice, reconciliation and unity.

With this as a guide, it was agreed that the programmatic work of the WCC would be organised into two main areas: *“unity, mission and ecumenical formation”* and *“public witness and diakonia”*.

Highlights of this work include celebrating Nicea2025 (the 1700th anniversary of the Nicea Council and Creed), a continued focus on racial equality and decolonialism, peacemaking efforts (in particular a proposed roundtable of the Ukrainian and Russian Orthodox Churches to promote peace in Ukraine), greater support of and advocacy for refugees and mobilising the churches to respond to the urgent issue of climate change.

Those of us living in the Pacific are aware that the climate crisis is a present reality. Pacific members of the committee spoke strongly about this and other issues (also noting increased militarisation in our area and the destructive legacy of nuclear testing). One of the smallest regions of the WCC, we see our smallness as a strength, affirming *“our resilience as a gift of God, rooted in indigenous wisdom and celebrated as spirituality of abundance and hospitality”*.

The meeting's decision to establish a new Commission of the Churches on Climate Justice and Sustainable Development offers churches in Aotearoa an opportunity to be engaged in developing and implementing climate-focused programmes. Nominations for membership of the Commission are currently being sought and are due by 30 September.

Our ability to make a valuable contribution to the work of the WCC was affirmed when the committee appointed new members to its existing commissions. Appointments from Aotearoa included Rev Tara Tautari (Methodist) to the Commission on World Mission and Evangelism, Rev Tamsyn Kereopa (Anglican) to the Commission on Educational and Ecumenical Formation and Bishop Te Kitohi Pikaahu (Anglican) to the Joint Working Group between the WCC and the Roman Catholic Church.

Every central committee meeting is an opportunity to address issues of public concern. In order to avoid doing harm, these are carefully cross-checked with local churches and ecumenical partners. The meeting adopted four statements and nine minutes addressing situations like the current crisis in Myanmar, human rights in the Philippines, the suspension of food aid to Ethiopia and the territorial crisis in the Eastern Mediterranean. A full list of these is available on the WCC website, [www.oikoumene.org](http://www.oikoumene.org)

A final highlight of our meeting was celebrating the 75th anniversary of the WCC in a service with local churches at Saint Pierre Cathedral. It was salutary to remember that the WCC was founded after the Second World War at a time of huge global suffering. Coming together as a fellowship of churches, its vision was to serve the world by staying together, praying together, moving together and acting together in the cause of unity and common witness. The need for the WCC is just as great today as it was then. *“For the healing of the nations, we pray with one accord.”*

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## Witness for Peace

Christian World Service has put together materials for Peace Sunday on 6 August. Through this resource CWS encourages churches to explore their responsibility for peace-making in communities and the wider world.

Peace Sunday is a time to pray for peace and to remember people who have been harmed by violence, war and nuclear fallout.

This year Peace Sunday falls on Hiroshima Day, the 78th anniversary of the dropping of the first atomic bomb in Japan.

[Witness for Peace](#) includes stories of peace-making from its partners and the ecumenical family, focusing on the Pacific region.

The Pacific Conference of Churches and its member church, Ētārētia Porotetani Māōhi (Maohi Protestant Church), continue to campaign for compensation from the French government for all people adversely affected by 193 nuclear tests on Moruroa and Fangataufa. PCC is campaigning to stop the Japanese government from releasing water from the Fukushima nuclear power station, damaged by the 2011 tsunami.

The World Council of Churches and the National Council of Churches of Korea [are](#) asking for prayers for the peaceful reunification of the Korean Peninsula on 13 August. The 70th anniversary of the 1953 Armistice Agreement will take place two days later. The armistice signified a ceasefire but not an end to the war. Rev JooHong Kim and Rev Richard Lawrence have contributed to the Peace Sunday resources which will include information about global campaigns.

CWS is encouraging churches to accompany prayers with action. Churches might like to host a visiting speaker, organise a public meeting on a local concern like creating safer communities or fundraise to provide humanitarian support for refugees from conflict zones.

“There is so much talk about war. I believe as Christians we need to commit ourselves to being peacemakers,” says Murray Overton, National Director.

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## Farewell to CWS National Director

National Director, Murray Overton, finishes his time with Christian World Service on 4 August. After two years, Murray decided to step aside so the Board could appoint a new leader for the next stage of the CWS journey.

Murray joined the organisation during lockdown and led efforts to sharpen its strategic focus in a rapidly changing environment. Since joining CWS he has been able to strengthen relationships with its partner churches and Society of Friends (Quakers), including their mission bodies. He says he has enjoyed and appreciated the ecumenical nature of the work. A highlight

has been meeting so many CWS supporters in person or over the phone.

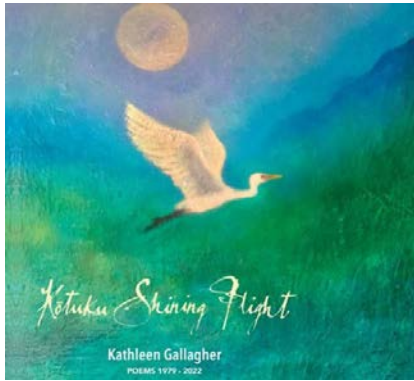
The opportunity to look at CWS from the inside and learn about the partners in more detail has left him with a deep respect for the work it is doing to assist many people who are facing immense challenges to survive.

Given the current climate, Murray felt it was necessary for the Board to seek someone with a greater level of fundraising expertise, the flexibility to travel more frequently and better positioned to develop relationships in Auckland in particular. Stepping down was not an easy decision to make.

The CWS staff and Board have appreciated Murray's warmth, energy, hard work and good humour, and wish him all the best for the future. He has used his practical administrative abilities and networking skills to raise the organisation's profile.

The CWS Board has appointed Rev Dr Tim Pratt as the new National Director. Tim is a Baptist pastor who has served most recently as the Lead Chaplain at the University of Auckland and chief executive for the Interchurch Council for Hospital Chaplaincy.

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## Book Review: Kotuku Shining Flight: Poems 1979- 2022

Jenny Dawson reviews a poetry book highly recommended for those who think they do not like poetry.

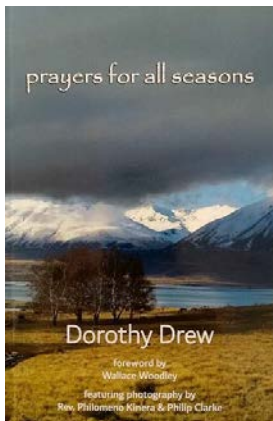
Kathleen Gallagher is a poet and a writer of fiction and non-fiction. She is probably best known for her ten films about the environment. Covering rivers, wetlands and peace-making people, these movies, which have been screened internationally, take us to the themes of many of the poems in this collection of writing. The rivers and marae of Canterbury, the prophetic people who have influenced others deeply, the family history on the West Coast, all provide ingredients for reflection.

This poet also chronicles some key events in the history of Aotearoa: “Song of the Ngai Tahu Women 1843”, “81 Springbok Tour”, “David Lange opening the Gandhi exhibition in Christchurch 2002”, “Silencing the Hikoī”, John Weir and James K Baxter, as John recalls, even “Benny Hinn in Addington”. Yet other poems are very simple. All are contemplative in some way.

Kathleen is a Catholic woman, from Christchurch so some of the work is about the events of earthquake and aftermath, the Al Noor Mosque, and characters who are part of the Catholic Worker community there. There are also very personal poems about her family and particularly, her son’s death.

Above all, I think this collection by one of our country’s most prolific writers will speak to people of faith. In the poem called “The way through”, the concluding line takes me back to the cross: “he becomes one with the tree with the sky”.

Published by Pukeko Publications with WickCandle Films 2022.



## Book review: Prayers for all Seasons

Garth Cant reviews a book by a respected prayer leader.

Dorothy Drew crafts prayers. After seven decades in the world of work, community, and local church leadership, Dorothy has homed in on one special task. She leads in the prayers of her local congregation at Aldersgate on Durham Street, Christchurch.

Her prayers celebrate our seasons, the liturgical year, and special moments in the life of a city and a worshipping congregation. The good things are enjoyed and the tough things are faced up to. Prayer 1 for an ordinary Sunday, for example delights in “stars of the Southern skies, for sweeping wind, for crashing waves and foam-covered rocks” and acknowledges “crippling fear, disturbing drought, and family disorder”.

Covid lockdowns have been shared and lonely. Dorothy has a prayer that thanks God for the technology that enables us to keep in touch with family and friends, and tells God we miss, “Human touch, the warmth of a smile, the comfort of a hug, and being together in worship”.

Anzac Day is poignant for Methodists. Many of us have forbears who fought in wars, and those who were pacifists in wars. Dorothy helps us to honour both: *God of gentleness. . . help us to treat gently our families, our friends, our neighbours . . . We know you accept us as we are. May we too learn to accept others just as they are.*

Aldersgate loves good worship, and supports worship with architecture, music, banners of different faiths, inclusive congregational life, and prophetic messages. Dorothy’s prayers are embedded in this nexus; she has crafted a book that affirms these things and makes them available to the wider Church.

***This free publication is available from Aldersgate Centre, PO Box 1416, Christchurch. (03) 365 1855. A koha may be made towards printing and postage.***



## Adam Madill and his Bible

*Rachel Hurd, Archivist Presbyterian Research Centre (Archives)*

The Seven Sharp television programme recently featured a story about the chance discovery of a Bible belonging to Rev Adam Madill at the Nelson Recycling Centre. The segment showed the Bible's return to Knox College where Adam had used it when he was a student studying for the ministry. Who was Adam Madill and what was his story?

Adam Madill was born in Pukekohe about 1880 and in 1911 joined his brother, Dawson, at the Theological Hall at Knox College to train for the Presbyterian ministry. His Bible dates from this period. It is worn and well-thumbed and the margins of whole sections are filled with notes and thoughts on the text, scrawled in dark ink. Adam obviously liked to scribble down his thoughts as other books that he owned are similarly annotated.

In April 1914 Adam was ordained into his first parish at Whakatane where he took an active part in community life, including being a member of the local hockey team. Two years later he went to the First World War, embarking for France with the Auckland Battalion of the New Zealand

Expeditionary Force. As an active Presbyterian minister, it would have been expected that Adam would take up a chaplaincy role. However, he turned this down, believing that he would be of more use to the men fighting at the Front by being among them, rather than behind the lines in a camp or hospital setting.

Adam's letters home to his brother Dawson describe the shock and horror of his first experiences of combat. "The Front is an awful place," he writes. "I feel that it is only through the mercy of God that I have come through safe and sound." And yet within weeks he had become used to his new environment, remarking that "a shell does not scare me at all unless it lights a few yards away."

His letters are full of fond wishes for Dawson and his family and thanks for gifts of Christmas cake and hand-knitted woolly vests. He describes the cold wintry weather in the trenches, warmed by brief meetings with old friends and acquaintances from New Zealand and a brief Knox College reunion held "somewhere in France". He also recounts holding Bible Classes for his fellow soldiers and his sense of being in a place where he was able to do good work among the men.

His last letter warns that there "will be something doing soon" and not to worry if they didn't hear from him for a few days. But there would be no more letters. Corporal Adam Madill was killed in action on 21 February 1917 and is buried at the Military Cemetery of Pont-du-Hem in Northern France. A family friend visiting in autumn 1928 sent a description of the site back to the Madill family: "On every grave flowers are growing. The trees were a blaze of autumn colouring – copper and gold. In the fading light of the afternoon the place looked eerily, wistfully beautiful, for the autumn mists were curling over the Flanders plain in the background."

Adam's family kept and treasured his letters for 80 years before entrusting them to the care of the Presbyterian Research Centre Archives. We are glad that his Bible has now been added to this personal collection, helping to bring to life the story of Rev Adam Madill.



## Evangelism and Freedom of Choice Leonard Monk Isitt 1855 – 1937

*Rev Donald Phillips*

Recent Court findings in relation to the Gloriavale Community bring into focus the blurred line between choice and duty as it applies to living out one's Christian beliefs in daily living. I suspect many New Zealanders will regard the judgment as a vindication of our freedom to choose how we express our beliefs. It remains to be seen how its leadership responds in its appeal but it is unlikely that they will win the hearts and minds of a majority within Aotearoa in favour of their strict code of behaviour.

Evangelism is centered, as its name implies, on good news. Throughout its 2000-year history the Christian Church has tended towards separation from the wider community. To some, even in its mildest form, 'orthodox' Sunday-morning worship still represents that 'coming apart' from our neighbours. The time and the place of such worship is witness to a different set of values. Just how far we are prepared to go in our weekday

living to maintain that difference is a matter of choice, rather than of rule.



One essential area of community and social life is related to the education of the young. Until relatively recently, in historical terms, education in the Western world was controlled by the Christian Church. The very idea of a secular education would have been almost beyond the comprehension of the European mindset – that which came to this country within the last two centuries. The idea that such people could learn from the nurturing traditions of the *tangata whenua* was, for them, unthinkable. And even to create an education system, in this ‘new world of Aotearoa’ which did not reflect that basic Christian premise took decades to achieve. It was not until 1870 that an Education Act was passed that enshrined the principle of secular education.

The Christian churches did not give up their commitment to religious training of the young even then. The ‘religion-in-schools’ movement was widespread. Some of the larger Christian churches, of course, had created their own Church School system – even the Methodists did so, and Wesley College, Paerata is a reminder of 180 years of such Methodist commitment to an education that gave expression to an understanding of the Christian way of life.

This article recalls one former Methodist minister who gave so much of his time and energy to keeping ‘religion’ at the heart of the New Zealand education curriculum. Exactly 100 years ago, in September 1923, Leonard Monk Isitt introduced a measure into the Parliamentary agenda entitled ‘Religion in Schools’. The *Methodist Times* described the intentions of the Bill as providing for religious exercises of a “simple character”. There was to be no instruction of a dogmatic or denominational nature. The Lord’s Prayer would be recited and a hymn would be sung, from a manual to be put together by the Education Department. The teacher would offer a Bible lesson, also from an approved manual. There was to be no compulsion to attend this instruction which would be offered every day. That the newspaper should describe it as a “splendidly suitable” Bill underlines how far the older view of the Christian religion still prevailed.

The promoter of the legislation, L.M. Isitt, with his brother Frank, came to this country in the 1870s from a thoroughly English Methodist family background. While Frank spent most of his life in regular ministry, Leonard had about 10 years in circuits, ranging from Lawrence to Tuakau. His commitment to the aims of the Prohibition Movement, including the editorship of the NZ Alliance’s national newspaper, was absolute. One gains the impression that Leonard preferred a national platform to a local pulpit.

While engaged in the work of the NZ Alliance, he retained his ministerial status but in 1908 he retired from ministry to set up business as a bookseller and three years later he entered Parliament as an Independent member for Christchurch North. He was not a ‘single issue’ politician in Allan Davidson’s view and he certainly was not a religious bigot. But he was committed to moral reform in its variety.

A lesson might be drawn from these two very different examples of the Christian religion in action. Gloriavale, it seems to this writer, has chosen to withdraw from the world for which it doubtless prays. Leonard Isitt represents that ever-present wish among committed Christians to be out and about – especially seeking change through influencing those who direct the affairs of society. The extraordinary developments in communications over recent decades brings the world, and the ability to speak with it, within the reach of literally anyone. Jesus went out into his world to change it. We can do the same and we don’t need to ask permission to do so.