



Opportunity Knocks

Throughout the country there are hundreds of opportunity shops staffed by volunteers dedicated to sorting, curating and on-selling second-hand goods to shoppers motivated - by a variety of reasons - to purchase pre-loved furniture, household goods, books, bric-a-brac and clothing. Many of the enterprises are run by charitable organisations and community outreach is

as important as matching buyers with bargains. We meet three managers overseeing charity shops with a connection to the Connexion.

St Andrew's Op Shop, Waiuku

People from all over Tāmaki Makaurau travel regularly to Waiuku, a small settlement about an hour south of the CBD, to an op shop that last year won the prestigious title of "Number One Op Shop in Auckland". It is an accolade that St Andrew's Opportunity Shop manager, Sharron Levestone, and her team of 80 volunteers are working hard to maintain. "It is a status we are endeavouring to keep. It surely is motivating to receive such daily praise from our customers," Sharron says.

Trading hours and revenue generated have increased exponentially since the operation started in May 1976. Back then goods laid on a trestle table at the back of a garage raised \$65 in a day. Now the large shop, purpose designed and built in 2017 by the Waiuku and District Combined Churches, is typically open six days a week and takings average \$2,200 per day. Closures include Public Holidays, the Christmas period, and any other days deemed necessary to allow the operations team, including a 92-year-old, to take a well-deserved break.

Volunteers include church parishioners and members of the community; 'walk-ins' and volunteer referrals eager to be part of the close-knit, highly motivated sales and operations force. Where possible Sharron tries to match her staff to working in an area that appeals to their interests. "I always ask, 'Do you have a passion in a particular area?' Some prefer to work backstage, some like being out front. For example, I have a retired school teacher in charge of our book department."

When Sharron started in 2017, she was the only pmployeee. The payroll has grown to include an assistant manager and more recently, a cleaner. "This helps me to delegate some of the workload and allows for my annual leave. Having a paid cleaner takes the pressure off my elderly volunteers who were previously completing these tasks," Sharron says.

Stocked to Go

Most donations come from the Waiuku township although sometimes donors drive from outlying regions. "We aim to accept donations all year round, unless we get overwhelmed and need to place a temporary hold, usually after the busy Christmas season," Sharron says.

Maintaining their reputation for quality goods is a priority. Skips are available for any items deemed unsuitable for sale and the local recycling station takes old metal appliances. Electrical items are tested and tagged by one of four trained and certified volunteers. Every effort is made to minimise waste.

"We have free trolleys outside for shoes, bric-a-brac, books and linen. Clothing garments that don't match our strict quality control conditions are put outside on our free rack or cut up for rags and sold to local businesses" Sharron says.



In April and September the store is closed for a day and a half as staff prepare for the two annual End of Season changeovers. "These major working bees are well attended by my volunteers. We have sales leading up to the changeover with stock drastically reduced. No stored boxes of clothing of that season are carried over into next year."

Collaborating with other enterprises and charities benefits the extended community and enables the Waiuku shop to maintain a high turnover of goods. "I donate any excess stock to, for example, our sister church op shop in Tuakau, We Care Manurewa, Rawiri Community House, and Waiuku Family Support. Other case-by-case situations include needy families, fire victims and WINZ clients. At the end of each season anything left over is put outside for free."

A Facebook page has been invaluable for promoting the store. Since its introduction the site has attracted 2,100 followers with the numbers increasing daily. A Trade Me account is used to list valuable items. "Our most prized item was a Crown Lynn vase that had a closing bid of \$1,500. On average, we can generate \$700 per month in Trade Me sales," Sharron says. Last year furniture sales alone generated \$75,000 and plans for a site redevelopment on church property next door include a new hall with the frontage dedicated to a second-hand furniture showroom and store. Over the past 30 years, many local and national charities, schools and other organisations have benefited from this highly successful operation.



Paraparaumu Thrifty Place

In 1998, Kapiti Uniting Parish members started the first opportunity shop at Raumati beach. A building behind the church was designated as a trading space and one day a week, volunteers opened the doors to anyone passing. In 2015 when parishioner Kay McIntosh joined the dedicated team of volunteers, Thrifty Place was open three days per week. In 2019

Kay was asked to take on the management role and her current team includes many of the original parishioners involved since Thrifty Place first opened.

Opening hours have been scheduled around the groups that use the church facilities, many of whom did not realise the op shop was there. "We have no street frontage so people beyond our immediate local and church communities didn't know we existed," Kay says. Now members of the arts and craft group, yoga, tai chi, playgroup parents and other parish facility users are regular patrons.

Kay called on the expertise of a younger, media savvy friend to help promote the op shop. "She put us on every social media platform and suddenly we were very popular," Kay says. Donations and volunteers come from parish members and the wider community. Many regular customers have offered to work shifts and Kay says there is a strong sense of companionship and camaraderie between the helpers and those who visit. "This is just like family, for the volunteers and for the many regulars who pop in for a chat and company. For some, the visit to our place is their first daily point of personal contact. We operate outreach as much as anything else."

Funds raised from selling goods – small pieces of furniture, linen, clothing, books, bedding, children's toys and homewares – are used to support parish facilities and church projects, including a community garden, a free counselling service and resources for community groups. The recent installation of new carpet to replace the threadbare flooring was an unexpected gesture appreciated by the entire Thrifty Place community. "We would have been happy with recycled carpet, but new carpet is great. The church supports us 100 percent and we all get so much enjoyment and enthusiasm out of being involved," Kay says.



Opawa Community Church Op Shop Open for Business



What began 40 years ago as a community outreach service offering soup and a second-hand sales table from a room in a decrepit villa next to the Opawa Community Church in Christchurch has evolved into a thriving second-hand shop. The old property was burnt down in a suspicious fire in what turned out to be a blessing for the parish. The insurance payout was used to build a replacement three-bedroom home that now provides space for the op shop and offices for the church administrator and presbyter.

Every Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday morning at 10am the garage door is swung open to enable passersby and destination bound shoppers to browse the laden shelves in the garage and racks in the living rooms of the house. The spare bedroom is chock full of clothing and Christmas decorations. Racks and shelves are replenished daily according to what is available and seasonal demand. In December, the Christmas decorations, trees and lights collected throughout the year are brought out of storage and used to transform the sales areas into a festive space.

Shop manager, Rachel Hood, a long serving member of the church leadership team, took over the management role about 18 months ago. As well as sorting rosters, managing volunteers and working shifts as required, Rachel pops in every day the shop is open to visit staff. Daily she scoops up and sorts random drop offs. Rachel says, "Stuff just arrives at the door. Deceased estates, clothing, boxes of utensils, mattresses and even old tyres."

Clearing the doorway ranges from being a pleasure to a pain. Items too big to accommodate in the retail space are left on the pavement outside and invariably get taken by passing opportunists. Other drops go straight into the skip in the carpark. Emptied fortnightly, Rachel says she is constantly surprised by the stuff that people leave. Dirty but saleable clothing and linen is taken home by staff to be laundered, and goods and clothing not suited to the Opawa Op Shop community are passed on to a local trust.

A high-profile freestanding promotional flag placed outside on the pavement each morning the shop opens, attracts the interests of passersby and alerts the local community to the fact the shop is open for business. A wooden sign hanging at the street entrance has been upgraded and Facebook posts done by the minister Rev Craig Fairhall's daughter, Samantha, ensure that the shop attracts loyal regular and new customers.

Volunteers typically work in groups of two or three to staff the shop. Mostly retired, some have a connection to the parish but many have no church affiliation. Rachel welcomes the collective passion, expertise and skills that her team bring to the busy little enterprise that generates income and goodwill.



On average the shop earns around \$1,000 each week and the funds are used to support overseas mission. Currently that includes a family providing medical support in East Timor and a family in Asia assisting with coffee production.



May a Month of Many Celebrations

Aside from it being the month that my now five-year-old started 'big school,' in addition to attending various consultations, forums, and pastoral duties expected of me in this current role, I had the pleasure of observing a range of special Sunday celebrations. These included Fakame, Mother's Day, Wesley and Pentecost Sunday and Trinity Sunday, as well as a phenomenal symposium hosted by our own Trinity Methodist Theological College in collaboration with St John's Theological College on: 'reWeaving Theological Education.'

May is also the month we celebrate NZ Sign Language Week, Pink Shirt Day (dedicated to raising awareness about bullying), Rotuman Language Week, Samoan Language Week, and other significant causes and anniversaries in our local contexts.

Given that so much was happening in this one month, it was inevitable that there would be date clashes between liturgical festivals, causes, and things to focus on - by no means am I suggesting that this hasn't ever happened before. But it never ceases to amaze me, when people in our churches, our institutions of learning and our communities find ways to uphold, engage with and celebrate some of these different festivals and causes together, in ways that are relatable, creative and inspiring.

During Friday School Assembly at Wesley College on the morning of 'Pink Shirt Day,' they also closed 'Rotuman Language Week.' Head Girl Leilani Mua prepared a devotion and programme that observed both of these aspects, and she invited me to briefly talk about how they might relate to each other. Then, later on that same evening, in collaboration with the Kingsland Rotuman Methodist Congregation, some of the fantastic hostel staff of the college accompanied a group of students to the congregation's Rotuman Language Week event, called 'Fere Friday'. Those same themes of embracing a unique yet vulnerable Pacific language and empowering people to stand up against bullying, were engaged within a more practical way, with lots of other young people at an indoor trampoline park in central Auckland.

In both Tauranga and Te Awamutu on Wesley and Pentecost Sunday, the spaces of worship were beautifully decorated with seas of red fabric, fiery shades of streamers, and flowers adorning the sanctuaries, and in one church, a framed portrait of John Wesley. Conversations included how 'John Wesley would have been quite warm to Mason Durie's Whare Tapa Wha model of Hauora, because of the holistic way in which it defines wellbeing,' and how 'the way that we engage with our communities can inspire shifts in individual and collective trajectories.'

Whether it is embracing different festivities, causes, or foci in meaningful and relatable ways, or embracing different people in safe and mana-enhancing ways, we are often all the better for it. We do ourselves and the Hāhi a massive disservice if we only focus on operating in silos of our familiarities, perspectives, privileges, or comfort zones.



Touchstone Contact Details

I welcome feedback on content included in Touchstone.

Ngā mihi nui

Ady Shannon, Editor Touchstone

Email: adys@methodist.org.nz

Phone: 021 209 9702



Greendale Church Celebrates 150 Years

Rev Lynmaree Sopoanga (Aunty Lyn) Minister for the Malvern Cooperating Parish

The beginnings of Methodism in Greendale date back to 1867 when George Rudd and his family settled in the district, approximately 40 kilometres from Otautahi. Services were conducted in sod whares, old sheds and eventually in the school, prior to the first Greendale Methodist Church, built by John Frew,

opening on 4 May 1874. On Sunday 5 May this year many people associated with the church and particularly the Sunday School celebrated the 150-year Jubilee, with a service followed by a sumptuous country-style lunch.

The Jubilee service was well attended by past ministers including Rev. Mark Gibson who spoke about his late father's contribution to the Greendale Methodist Church. Rev. Loyal Joseph Gibson served there from 1955 to 1960 and designed the stunning stained-glass window for the replacement church building that opened in 1958. Rev Loyal made his last pilgrimage to Greendale in July last year at the age of 95. Rev. Mark blessed the congregation with the Greendale Blessing specially written last year for his father's pilgrimage.

As a newcomer to the district, it was a joy to be amongst the descendants of the pioneers of this rural, Canterbury farming gem. Hearing the history from Ian Warren, and memories shared by Evan Frew and John Clarkson was spellbinding.

Rev. Andrew Doubleday led the singing of the Wesleyan hymns and preached a sermon which inspired and resonated with the inter-generational congregation packed into the church. Graham Gough and Evan Frew unveiled a plaque made from recycled kauri. The inscription read: "Psalm 121:1 I look to the mountains, where will my help come from? My help comes from the Lord who made heaven and earth."



Celebrating Mātāriki

St John's Co-operating Parish – also known as St John's Golden Church - has been hosting special events for the local Whangarei community for several years. Covid-19 stifled their community outreach programme for a couple of years but in June this year they will be celebrating Mātāriki with friends and families during an evening that includes a shared dinner, story-telling and star-gazing.

Parish Steward and Children's Ministry leader Kerry Upson likens the events to a "family dinner at home, only bigger." Despite there being few children that regularly attend church services – children come occasionally with their grandparent's – the parish has a commitment to develop outreach and support the many young families living in the adjoining suburbs.

The fun nights were initiated with the help of Let the Children Live grants, and evolved alongside a long-running annual Festival of Christmas Trees event where community groups are invited to decorate trees. The tree display is open to the public and attracts more than 2,000 people annually to visit and to share in the Christmas Story.

This year's Mātāriki event is being held on 14 June. Rev Freddy de Alwis and the worship and ministry team will draw on resources from the Ministry of Education for the story-telling component of the event and in addition there will be cake decorating, craftmaking, a shared meal, and games.

Kerry says they focus on using the resources available to the parish. "Keeping the event simple uses the skills available with the people we have in our parish. I guess that you could say that we celebrate the whakawhanga aspects of Mātāriki."



Affirming Our Weteriana Commitment In Aotearoa

Rev Barry Jones and Rev Dr Arapera Ngaha

"He Whakaputanga o te Rangatiratanga o Niu Tirenī," the Declaration of Independence, asserted that sovereignty and authority rested with Te Whakaminenga, the Confederation of Northern Tribes. It was signed on 28 October 1835 between several Northern Chiefs and the British Resident, James Busby. Five years later a second

declaration Te Tiriti o Waitangi outlined what were the rights and privileges of Māori and later arrivals (Tauīwi) to Aotearoa.

He Whakaputanga o te Rangatiratanga o Niu Tirenī stated unequivocally that Rangatira Māori were the decision makers in Aotearoa. It affirmed the mana, rangatiratanga and independence of the chiefs who signed it, supported by a commitment to unify in the face of foreign threat and to ensure that no foreign law or government could be imposed on them. The Rangatira who signed also agreed to send a copy of this declaration to His Majesty the King of England, to thank him for his acknowledgement of their flag. That flag was chosen by Māori traders to signify their identity, as trading entities of Aotearoa. The flag, a symbol of nationhood, became important when some New Zealand colonial officials later tried to dismiss Te Tiriti as 'a simple nullity'. The Māori flag, "Te Kara o te Whakameninga o Nga Hapū o Niu Tirenī," contradicted that patronising assumption as it signified that in international waters Māori were a nation, having the power of unity.

Te Tiriti o Waitangi – 1840

Former Chief Justice Sian Elias said, "It can't be disputed that the Treaty is actually the Māori text." More than 500 Māori chiefs signed Te Tiriti, only 39 signed the English-language document because the te reo document was not available at that meeting in Manukau. Local missionaries explained it to them in Māori.

So, what does Te Tiriti say? The preamble in the Māori text emphasised that the Queen's main promises to Māori were twofold: to safeguard tribal rangatiratanga and to safeguard Māori land ownership. The first article assured Māori that they would continue to retain the authority to manage their own affairs, as they had always done, gave a right of governance to the Queen over her own citizens in this land, in return for the promise of protection. 'Te tino rangatiratanga' or the unqualified exercise of their chieftainship over their lands, villages and all their property, and matters and items of value to them was guaranteed by the Crown in the second article. In that article also, Māori agreed to give the Crown the right to buy their land, but only if Māori wished to sell it. Equality was the crux of the third article, where the Crown gave assurance to Māori that they would have the Queen's protection and all the same rights accorded to British subjects.

Some New Zealanders hold the view that Te Tiriti is a contract that benefits Māori only. However, Sir Edward Durie, speaking at Waitangi in 1989, made this significant point. "... It is the Treaty that gives the Pakeha the right to be here. Without the Treaty there would be no lawful authority for the Pakeha presence in this part of the South Pacific."

The Treaty Principles Bill.

The ACT party has openly signalled its intention to introduce a Treaty Principles Bill to Parliament. This is a significant assault on Te Tiriti for three reasons.

The first reason is that it fails to recognise that Te Tiriti was an agreement between Rangatira Māori and the Crown. As such then, it is inappropriate for representatives of one of the two parties to Te Tiriti to unilaterally propose a revision of its terms.

The second reason is that the proposed Bill interprets the second article of the Treaty as: "The New Zealand Government will honour all New Zealanders in the chieftainship of their land and



all their property.” This totally changes the Treaty’s second article which guarantees that hapū (tribes), their rangatira (leaders) and all Māori will keep their full authority (te tino rangatiratanga) over their lands, settlements and all that they value. ACT’s Bill completely removes any reference to Māori - which is to empty the Treaty of its meaning, namely, the solemn commitment between the Crown (NZ Government) and Māori.

The third reason is to do with the ACT party’s proposal to hold a referendum on their three Treaty Principles; such a process cannot safeguard the rights of minorities.

The constitutional referendum held in Australia, 14 October 2023, asked Australians to approve an alteration to the constitution that would recognise indigenous Australians - 3.2 percent of the population - through a body called ‘the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Voice’. This indigenous body could then make representation to Parliament on matters relating to their interests and needs. The referendum rejected the proposal nationally and by a majority in every state.

Māori are 17.1 percent of the population of Aotearoa. A referendum of all eligible adult New Zealanders cannot ensure that the provisions enshrined in Te Tiriti o Waitangi will be safeguarded. It is a politically mischievous tactic and it needs to be called out for what it is!

Our historic commitment to Te Tiriti o Waitangi.

Wesleyan Rangatira and Missionaries actively promoted Te Tiriti, believing that it would protect the interests of Tangata Whenua. Revs Samuel Ironside and John Warren travelled to Waitangi to be present at the Treaty negotiations on 6 February 1840. They came to support the Hokianga chiefs and particularly Tamati Waka Nene. When it looked as if the chiefs wouldn’t support the Treaty, they encouraged Waka Nene to address the gathering. His speech was said to have influenced other chiefs to support the Treaty.

Christian voices affirming Te Tiriti.

In 1990 when the 150th anniversary of the signing of Te Tiriti was being celebrated, eight denominational church leaders, including the then President of the Methodist Church, issued A Church Leaders’ Statement for 1990. The text said, “We believe it is our Christian calling in Aotearoa to honour the Treaty. It was seen by many in 1840 as a covenant with its own spiritual significance and we uphold that today. In this we follow the leadership of people like Sir James Henare who considered the Treaty of Waitangi to be ‘a sacred treasure’. We believe the Treaty is the basis of our nationhood.”

The late Anglican Bishop Manuhua Bennett stated that the Treaty is a sacred covenant based on the promises made between two peoples, “to take the best possible care they can take of each other.” In 1995 the Catholic Bishops said, “The Treaty of Waitangi issues are not about party politics. They are about honouring with goodwill the covenant entered into by the Crown and Māori, on which this nation is founded.”

And at Waitangi, on 6 February 1990, in the presence of Queen Elizabeth II, Anglican Bishop Whakahuihui Vercoe said, “What I have come for here is to renew the ties that made us a nation in 1840. I don’t want to debate the Treaty. I don’t want to renegotiate the Treaty. I want the Treaty to stand firmly as the means by which we are made one nation.” Māori continue to see Te Tiriti as that enduring sacred covenant made in good faith by our tūpuna.

In the statement “Appeal to preserve the integrity of Te Tiriti o Waitangi” (included in this edition of Touchstone and sent to the Prime Minister’s Office) President Peter Taylor, Vice President Te Rito Peyroux-Semu and Tumuaki Rev. Dr. Arapera Ngaha state clearly, “We call upon the Coalition Government to preserve the integrity of Te Tiriti, so what it proposed in 1840 can be realised today and in the future.”

And in Biblical terms, justice knows no statute of limitations. Injustices must be put right. Will you add your voice to that appeal also?



The Methodist Church of New Zealand Te Hāhi Weteriana o Aotearoa

AN APPEAL TO PRESERVE THE INTEGRITY OF TE TIRITI O WAITANGI

Wesleyan Missionaries and Rangatira were to the forefront in 1840 promoting Te Tiriti and advocating the benefits that it would give to both Māori and migrants from Britain seeking to settle in Aotearoa.

We, the successors of those Wesleyan Missionaries and Rangatira, are gravely concerned at the ACT Party's intention to introduce to Parliament a "Treaty Principles Bill." We believe this proposed Bill is an assault on the integrity of Te Tiriti o Waitangi.

We cannot in good conscience remain silent. As leaders within Te Hāhi Weteriana o Aotearoa - The Methodist Church of New Zealand we acknowledge that at Mangungu on the 12th of February 1840, Rev. John Hobbs, the senior Wesleyan Missionary, acted as Governor Hobson's interpreter throughout the day. He translated Hobson's "most solemn assurance" that if the chiefs signed Te Tiriti, "truth and justice would always characterise the proceedings of the Queen's Government."

The 56 Rangatira who signed Te Tiriti on that day, did so only after seeking the opinion of the Wesleyan Missionaries, and being told by them that Te Tiriti would be good for Māori.

We note with regret the many instances when the Crown has acted in breach of the provisions of Te Tiriti o Waitangi. The many Treaty claims endorsed by the Waitangi Tribunal, and accepted by successive Governments, is ample evidence of how the intentions of Te Tiriti have been dishonoured.

We call upon the Coalition Government to preserve the integrity of Te Tiriti, so that what it promised in 1840 can be realised today and in the future.

Rev. Peter Taylor – President;

TeRito Peyroux-Semu – Vice-President;

Rev. Dr. Arapera Ngaha – Tumuaki.

President – Perēhitini
Rev Peter Taylor
PO Box 931
Ōtautahi / Christchurch 8140
M: (021) 794 524
E: president@methodist.org.nz

Vice President – Perēhitini Tuarua
TeRito Peyroux-Semu
PO Box 931
Ōtautahi / Christchurch 8140
M: (021) 794 530
E: vicepresident@methodist.org.nz

Secretary – Hekeretari
Rev Tara Tautari
PO Box 931
Ōtautahi / Christchurch 8140
T: (03) 366 8049, ext 824
M: (021) 062 0466
E: tarat@methodist.org.nz



Different Outlooks Lead to Different Outcomes.

We share a reflection of an article by Jonathan Tautari in the book *Rekindle the Vā of Papatūānuku*, from one of our Kaikarakia, Sharon Waaka, Waikato Rohe. Mori

Me īnoi tātou,

I waenganui te ora, ko te mate. Mai i te pouri, ka puta ki te wheiao, ki te ao marama, mai i te āwangawanga, kei reira tētahi huarahi tika, kia puta mai te huarahi pai. Nā te aroha o te Atua, me ngā akoranga o ngā tupuna, ka kitea ai ngā ara tika, ngā ara pono, ngā ara kia haumaruru ai te tangata, ki te oranga tonu. Āmine

In life there is death. From the darkness emerges the light of life and from out of despair arises a path that is right and good. Through the love of God, and the teachings of our ancestors can be found the right path, the true and safe path to life in abundance. Amen.

We are in a global environmental crisis - that is evident in day-to-day events both at home and abroad. The Methodist Church of NZ, as a part of its quest for social justice, is focusing on climate change for the next decade, and more particularly Climate Justice. The Church recognises that this challenge is not a problem to be solved by science alone but that people of faith communities and indigenous cultural backgrounds can also contribute through their stories and their unique outlook on the world. Marginalised groups suffer disproportionately during climate crises and though it is part of church mission to be a voice for the powerless, creating a shared platform for voices is also another way that these voices may be heard. *Rekindling the Vā of Papatūānuku* is one such platform that opens a door to many perspectives.

In his chapter "Tāngata Whaikaha" Jonathan Tautari shares his unique experience of being both Māori and disabled. Born with cerebral palsy during the 70s, Jonathan's parents declined the advice of doctors to place him in institutional care and chose instead to take their child home. Here he was nurtured under an umbrella of Christian values and beliefs and Mātauranga Māori (cultural knowledge) and aroha (care). Despite conventional views of the day, that Tautari should grow into adulthood to lead a productive, educated and meaningful life, is an example of how a different outlook might lead to very different outcomes. These are the types of personal stories that remind us to think outside of the conventional wisdom and remember that within our cultural stories and referencing our theological wisdom, solutions may be found. Tautari himself pays homage to both his Christian and Māori beliefs, opening this piece with the pepehā (proverb) of the strong and steadfast mountain – a metaphor for strong tribal identity and connectedness to the environment. He also quotes Hebrews 13:8 to remind us of God's constant presence in our lives - that very same steadfast mountain.

Jonathan reminds us that whaikaha experiences can inform amid adversity and solutions. Who knew that disabled people were left in their homes after the Christchurch earthquakes because they could not leave their buildings? Or that those with intellectual impairments would suffer even more because of their dislocation from their "home" after Cyclone Gabrielle. But armed with this information, rescuers might be better educated when dealing with vulnerable communities in future environmental catastrophes, although Tautari sadly reminds us that such traumatic events often uncover already existing and longstanding inequities for disabled people.



In Christ

Rev Andrew Doubleday

E. Stanley Jones was an American Methodist Missionary to India where he served 50+ years. Jones died in India in 1973 just short of his 90th birthday. He was truly one of the most remarkable people of the 20th century. Jones abhorred racism and worked tirelessly in the interfaith space. As we might expect, Jones was a committed ecumenist.

To quote Wikipedia:

In 1947 in the United States, he launched the Crusade for a Federal Union of Churches. He conducted mass meetings from coast to coast and spoke in almost 500 cities, towns and churches. He advocated a system through which denominations could unite as they were, each preserving its own distinctive emphasis and heritage, but accepting one another and working together in a kind of federal union patterned after the United States' system of federal union.

I've got to know Jones a little – his theology, his thinking, his heart. I don't agree with everything he said - like all of us he had his own foibles - yet his book *In Christ* has been a constant companion over the past two decades. Why did Jones write this book? To quote his introduction: This twenty-third book is the result of a feeling of a need. The need is this:

Some concept that would reduce the whole of life to the utmost simplicity. If you have that, you're "in"; if you don't have it, you're "out." By "in" I mean "in life," and by "out," "out of life." I felt I had found that concept in the phrase "in Christ." If you are "in Christ" you're "in life"; if you are "out of Christ" you're "out of life." If that proposition be true, then it cuts down through all veneer, all seeming, all make-believe, all marginalisms, all halfwayisms — through everything — and brings us to the ultimate essence of things: If you are "in Christ" you are in life; if you are "out of Christ" you're out of life, here and now, and hereafter ...

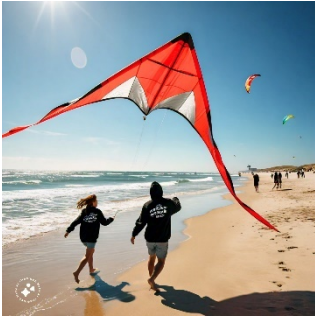
The phrase "in Christ" is the ultimate phrase in the Christian faith, for it locates us in a Person — the Divine Person — and it locates us in Him here and now. It brings us to the ultimate relationship — "in." Obviously, this "in" brings us nearer than "near Christ," "following Christ," "believing in Christ," or even "committed to Christ." You cannot go further or deeper than "in." To be "in Christ" means to pull up the roots of one's very life from the soil of sin and self and herd and plant them "in Christ." He becomes the source of our life, the source of our thinking, our feeling, our acting, our being.

This obviously involves self-surrender; surrender of our sins, our bad habits, our wrong thinking, and our wrong motives, of the very self behind all these. So the phrase "in Christ" is not only the ultimate concept but it demands the ultimate act - self-surrender.

One would expect that this ultimate concept in Christianity, "in Christ," leading to the ultimate human response, self-surrender, would be deeply embedded in the New Testament. Is it? It is far more deeply embedded in the New Testament than many things upon which we have built whole denominations — the new birth, conversion, baptism of the Holy Spirit, justification by faith, baptism by water, apostolic succession, presbyters, bishops, forms of church government, inner light, absence of forms.

The response of some will be "Andrew you're simply promoting a form of exclusive individualised Christianity rather than recognising the call to participate in the cause of freedom and justice for all." I recognise the tension.

What I can't help noticing is that this 'E Stanley Jones' was one of the most effective promoters of the call to freedom and justice for all – and it sprang from a profound spirituality being rooted "in Christ". There was a deep generosity of spirit within Jones as he reached across all barriers with the love and acceptance that was in him - because he was "in Christ".



Is the Wind Blowing? Embracing change.

Julie Roberts

Methodist Mission Southern (MMS) has always sought to provide services that reflect the evolving needs of the society we serve. That ethos is embodied in the tagline: Change That Works: enough support and challenge for you to risk a better future.

From its early beginnings in 1890 as a street Mission, through the building of our aged care home in Company Bay, adopting a struggling early childhood centre in the 1950s, and the later 20th century central city "Friendship Centre", to our current day core services, we are committed to supporting those we work with to rewrite their futures and create positive generational cycles.

Together with our local community radio station, we have produced a podcast series titled *Change that Works*. Through eight insightful episodes, listeners are invited into a conversation with staff members, delving into the essence of each of the mission's services—their purpose, scope and underlying motivations. You can hear what a day in the Transition house looks like, the support we have received from our community, the driving issues we are responding to, and what our support looks like from those on the front line.

Our research and evidence-backed services encompass seven core services, each meticulously designed to address critical needs within our community. From Youth Transition Houses to Parenting Through Separation, Sustaining Tenancies, Early Childcare Education/Little Citizens, ENGAGE, the Young Mums' Transition House, and Taituāra a Hāpori/Community Service Specialist, our work is structured around the fundamental principle that our clients are the owners of change.

Each episode of our podcast series offers an in-depth exploration of these services. Listeners gain insight into how we prioritise our clients' aspirations, working together to bring their goals and ambitions closer to reality. Our approach goes beyond "fixing" what's on top; it's about creating change from within by supporting and nurturing the development of skills, looking to longer-term decision making, navigation through a wide array of resources and supports, improving the capability and capacity of those we work with.

We employ a combination of passionate and skilled staff, rigorous methodologies and specialised tools, always looking to create an effective alliance with those we're seeking to help. We too are always learning from the work.

The podcast series concludes with Laura Black, our director, talking about the challenges we encounter, the impacts achieved, the stewardship exercised and the Mission's vision for the future.

With the unprecedented challenges and uncertainties of this era, the significance of our mission has never been clearer. We're driven by innovation, inclusivity and a fierce dedication to social justice.

As the autumnal wind blows, the earth turns and the seasons change, it is a poignant reminder that our efforts to bring about positive change will eventually yield fruit. Much like the Holy Spirit carried on the wind, unseen forces of transformation and renewal constantly shift and shape the world around us. Armed with this understanding, we stand ready to confront the challenges of tomorrow, secure in the knowledge that real, enduring change is not merely an aspiration but a collective endeavour worth pursuing, one step at a time.



Wellington Area MWF Gather

Marie Smith

On 27 April 2024, Methodist women from across the greater Wellington area came together at Wesley Wellington Church for a day of worship and fellowship. Special guests from Auckland included NZMWF National President Lesieli Pope, and members of the National Executive.

The Gathering provided an opportunity for members of the Fijian, Samoan, Tongan and Wellington MWF Districts - from Waikanae, Raumati, Tawa, Johnsonville, Wellington City, Waiwhetu, Avalon, Upper Hutt and Masterton – to meet each other.

Wellington put on a beautifully sunny autumn day to welcome our President Lesieli Pope, and members of the National Executive including Tokanga Filiia, Simulata Pope, Saloni Manase and Selina Lavaka.

Although there was no formal agenda, the day provided a great opportunity to exchange ideas and concerns about the Special Project, Smethurst, Kurahuna and Friendship Scholarship funds, and to plan for the South Pacific Area Seminar in Samoa in October 2024. After lunch we gathered in groups round tables and discussed a variety of topics with each of the executive members. A great sharing time which was appreciated by all.

This was the first time we have held a combined event like this and there is enthusiasm to have another one.

CHRISTIAN WORLD SERVICE



For a World Where Refugees are Welcome

Gillian Southey

Later this month Christian World Service will launch its annual campaign for refugees, [Operation Refugee](#). Operation Refugee is an opportunity to draw attention to the tremendous contribution people make to the country where they are resettled, including in Aotearoa New Zealand, and raise funds for our local partners helping refugees and other displaced people from places like

Palestine, Syria and Ukraine.

Welcoming the stranger and providing hospitality – manaakitanga - are central to the teaching of Jesus. Providing relief supplies, psychosocial care, education medical treatment and more recently cash transfers is one of the core aspects of CWS's work.

Parishes may like to invite former refugees or those supporting resettlement to share their stories and organise a fundraiser for refugees. "Organising a special morning tea after church, a film evening or a simple banquet are enjoyable ways to raise funds for people who have lost everything," says Dori Lloyd, Operation Refugee organiser. Dori is keen to speak with schools, youth groups or others interested in raising funds to help refugees.

The United Nations has designated June 20 as [World Refugee Day](#). This year's theme focuses on solidarity and finding ways to offer a warm welcome to refugees.

Refugees are people who have fled their countries because of war, conflict, human rights violations and persecution. At the end of 2022, the United Nations Refugee Agency [reported](#) 108.4 million people were forcibly displaced, of whom 35.3 million were refugees.

For more information, or to donate, call 0800 74 73 72.



CCA Regional Workshop



'Ecumenical Diakonia and Sustainable Development'

In February this year *Rev Keita Hotere* was appointed to the Christian Conference of Asia (CCA) Programme Committee, as the Methodist Church of New Zealand (MCNZ) representative. She recently attended a CCA Regional

Workshop for church leaders on 'Ecumenical Diakonia and Sustainable Development' closely followed by the CCA Programme Committee meeting. She reports on those two events that of all her ecumenical commitments over the years, rate as the most profound.

Around 40 participants gathered for the workshop from April 29 to May 2 in Medan, Indonesia. Dr Mathews George Chunakara, General Secretary, CCA, provided an overview of the theological foundations of diakonia and development of ecumenical diakonia. There was an emphasis on the pressing issues, the realities and challenges of our times, as well as the important role of churches in contributing to the attainment and monitoring of the United Nations 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The workshop explored several themes related to Diakonia: Trinitarian perspectives on Diakonia: understanding diakonia from a theological standpoint. Diakonia as an integral part of the church's Being and Mission: recognising diakonia as an essential aspect of the church's identity and purpose. Diakonia as discipleship: linking diakonia to the discipleship journey. To support these themes, participants delved into the WCC & ACT Alliance resource titled, *Called to Transformation – Ecumenical Diakonia*. The workshop provided a practical platform for participants to share their own lived experiences from their church contexts. This sharing deepened our understanding of the breadth of diaconal ministry and fostered collaboration and capacity building among participants.

Understanding diakonia is powerful in that it unveils the divine essence of service rooted in love, unity and humility. Given this recent training workshop experience I commend to the church a collaborative approach of *wānanga* to explore ecumenical diakonia from an Aotearoa context.

The workshop endorsed the work of an Asian Ecumenical Diakonia Network Forum. I thank the Church for the ongoing support of my appointment.



Mavis considered the op-shop was as much about 'opposition' as it was 'opportunity'.

Jim's Cartoon

Brendan Boughan

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



CCA Programme Committee Meeting

Rev Keita Hotere

The newly constituted CCA Programme Committee held its first meeting from 2 – 5 May in Medan, Indonesia. During this meeting, the committee identified and prioritised programme areas and activities for the next five years. Programmes were mandated by the 15th General Assembly, 'God, Renew Us in Your Spirit and Restore the Creation,'

that took place from 27 September to 4 October last year in Kottayam, Kerala, India.

Dr Mathews George Chunakara, General Secretary CCA, provided an overview of the geo-political issues and realities that shape discussions around the priority areas of need in the Asian context. The committee explored these issues, considering the inescapable realities that influence programme delivery "within an emerging geo-political context and the changing ecclesial and ecumenical landscape that is Asia." The multi-lingual, multi-faceted region geographically extends from Iran in West Asia to Japan in East Asia, Nepal in the North to Aotearoa New Zealand in the Southeast.

CCA recently completed an extensive review of its structure. The organisation focused on four core areas:

1. Mission in Unity and Contextual Theology (MU) understanding the theological foundations of mission and unity within diverse contexts.
2. Ecumenical Leadership Formation and Spirituality (EF) nurturing leadership and spirituality within the ecumenical movement.
3. Building Peace and Moving Beyond Conflicts (BP) engaging in peacebuilding efforts and addressing conflicts.
4. Prophetic Diakonia and Advocacy (PD) advocating for justice and serving prophetically in the world.

Our committee reviewed these core areas and prioritised accordingly. We endorsed the formation of five Working Groups to assist the CCA staff to work out strategies to improve the quality of programmes. Five thematic focus areas will be:

- Human Rights
- Ecumenical Diakonia
- Health and Healing
- Care for Creation
- Good Governance in churches.

While addressing immediate challenges, supporting emerging leadership within the ecumenical movement remains a strong focus for our committee. Ecumenical and theological education and training of young ambassadors for peace building and succession planning are imperative in the sustainability and effectiveness of building a CCA future beyond our 2024 – 2028 brief.

Our first meeting provided an orientation to CCA programme directions, strategies and considered emerging trends of geo-political, geo-economic and geo-strategic arenas in Asia. CCA programmes and advocacy serve as, "a collective prophetic witness, responding to moments of brokenness and human need." MCNZ plays an essential role in this collective action. Our unique world perspective and our ongoing participation further strengthen the unity of this vital ecumenical movement.



“Neither Male Nor Female”

Rachel Hurd, Archivist, Presbyterian Research Centre

“...there is neither male nor female, for ye are all one in Jesus Christ”
(Gal 3:28)

Sixty years ago in 1964, it was reported to the General Assembly of the New Zealand Presbyterian Church that all Presbyteries had approved the amendments to regulations regarding women and the Ministry and that the way was now clear for suitable women to be accepted as ministry candidates.

Rev. L.H. Kerr the Convenor of the Special Committee on the Position of Women in the Church wrote in that committee's report:

“We believe that the true Christian standard in the relation of the sexes is a frank recognition of sex equality,...”.

Less than a year later, on 13 May 1965, Margaret Reid (later Margaret Reid-Martin) became the first woman to be ordained to the Ministry of Word and Sacrament in the New Zealand Presbyterian Church.

The progress towards this moment began in 1948 when the Special Committee on the Position of Women in the Church was set up to examine whether women as well as men should be eligible to become elders in the New Zealand Presbyterian Church. Although women played a substantial role in the life of the Church, because they were not allowed to become elders they could not officially participate in the governance of the Church. This included both at the level of the local congregation and at the national level at the General Assembly, where only elders could be delegates and have voting rights.

This was particularly difficult for deaconesses who played a significant role in the running of many parishes and yet were not officially permitted to attend the meeting of parish sessions, where decisions about parish life were made.

In 1950 this committee produced a pamphlet entitled *Neither Male nor Female*. Written by the Rev. Ian Fraser, this booklet explored attitudes towards the position of women in First Century Palestine and discussed the writings of both Paul and Timothy in relation to the position of women in the Church. It stirred discussion and debate within the Presbyterian Church which over the next five years eventually led to the decision to ordain women to the eldership. The first women became elders in 1955 and in 1957 the first women attended the General Assembly as voting members.

1958 saw the publication of *Women's Work in the Church*. It included an appendix on “The Ordination of Women” written by Molly Whitelaw, who wrote:

“The main point at issue is this: are the Churches carrying out the purposes of God and acting according to the Mind of Christ when they deny the full ordination of women to the Ministry of the Word and the Sacraments?”

This was a question that resonated with many and in 1959 the Committee on the Position of Women in the Church turned its attention to the question of whether women should become ministers of Word and Sacrament. Again, there was lengthy discussion and debate, and ultimately agreement that women should be enabled to become ministers.

Molly Whitelaw was one of a number of women and men who worked hard to campaign for an increasing role for women within the New Zealand Presbyterian Church. Sadly, she died a few months before the 1964 General Assembly, but her legacy can be seen in the lives and service of the women who have ministered in the Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa New Zealand over the last sixty years.



Political Issues In A 'Religious Journal'!

Rev Donald Phillipps

Percy R Paris 1882 -1942

In the June 1924 edition of *The New Zealand Methodist Times* the editor, Percy Paris, directly faced an issue that could no longer be avoided in those post-WW1 years. He noted the response of his fellow Australian Methodist editor to a letter he had published that claimed that some article was offensive and/or unjustified. Its author was a chaplain at the Singapore Naval base – a somewhat unlikely place from which to receive criticism.

For that reader it was wrong for a religious journal to deal with political issues of 'national policy'. Percy Paris, on this side of the Tasman, took up the 'cudgels' (as they used to say – though a rather incongruous word for all that) and gave expression to the role of a religious journal in "educating the mass of the membership along true Christian lines". In a short space, he summarised the change in thinking within 'Church circles' over the previous decade. "Prior to the Great War there existed a preponderance of opinion in favour of a Christian view that war under certain circumstances was justifiable and right. Today, under educative influences, the pendulum is rapidly swinging in the other direction, and we are approaching a point at which war, with duelling and slavery, will be internationally ostracised." As an aside, almost, and with the Singapore Naval Base in mind, Paris included the present naval policy of Great Britain.

At this moment, a century later, as Israel sets its sights on Rafah and the Gaza Strip and 100,000 refugees with nowhere to go, as Russia increases its military pressure on their borderland with Ukraine, and while the internal rivalries in the Sudan continue to take their toll on ordinary folk, we watch with frustration the inability of the United Nations to take effective action for peace. Our own politicians, and those of a hundred other countries, can declare their commitment to a peaceful outcome in all these places but if they are of a mind, the so-called 'Great Powers' take no heed. In my last contribution I spoke of the 'challenges' facing the younger generation in this country. Of all these, the need to understand the nature and the demands of peace are at the top of the list.

Percy Paris was editor of *The New Zealand Methodist Times* for ten years, from 1924, and had been a contributor to it under the pen names of Brother Giles or Brother Juniper. His appointment by Conference to this very responsible and demanding task must have been made with the awareness that he would challenge the readership. He had already made a name for himself. Born in Dunedin, he had been converted to Methodism through the Central Mission in that city. He trained for the ministry in Auckland and was ordained in 1906. He was in circuit work in Levin, Mahurangi, Upper Thames, Auckland Central, Sydenham, Hamilton and back in Dunedin. His experience in the principal cities of the country was extensive, especially when he was appointed to Taranaki St, in Wellington. There he continued his involvement in the sort of social ministry he had begun in the Depression years in his home city. Pacifism was always a part of his way of being, and he was interested in monetary reform and employment - he was a proponent of the 'welfare state'. He died too soon.

For Percy Paris there was no obvious division between the 'sacred' and the 'secular'. And yet we must be careful with the words we use. Is it not blasphemy, even, when the leader of one side, in its battle to totally extinguish the other, invokes divine aid: "With God's help," said one such person this week, "we will achieve victory." Where is the compassion and justice that Jesus knew to be at the heart of the God whom he called 'Father'?