

SYNOD SALT

Because everyone needs salt in their life!

Newsletter of the Methodist Lower North Island Synod

Synod Contact Details

Superintendent: Rob Ferguson. Phone: 029 772 8759 Email: super.LNIS@methodist.org.nz

Secretary: Rosie Greening. Phone: 022 184 2337 Email: secretary.LNIS@methodist.org.nz

Treasurer: Jane Pinney. Phone: 03 366 6049 Email: janep@methodist.org.nz

Property Secretary: Ian Harris. Phone: 027 233 3436 Email: property.LNIS@methodist.co.nz

SALT Editor: Richard Pittams. Phone: 027 223 5567 Email: richardsue@xtra.co.nz

December 2021 / January 2022

From the Superintendent's Desk:

A Word:

It gets confusing. We are approaching the end of the year, but it's the beginning of the year. This year the church year began on November 28th. First Day of Advent. Traditionally in Christian terms a time of waiting.

Learning to wait is not always easy. Trying to be quiet and still when all around us is frenetic activity and pressure to get stuff ready, and to work out the inevitable arrangements. Who is going where for the feast and presents? And there's the story we think we know so well. But which story are we knowing? How many plays involve a scene with an innkeeper? Or a donkey? How many words in Luke's Gospel are about innkeepers and donkeys? None. We are good at embroidery.

St Francis of Assisi began it. Or at least popularised it – religious embroidery of ancient tellings. He thought the story needed some illustrations. So he built them into real life with real animals and a crib. And it caught on. Of course it did. Made the invisible visible. And ventured further and further into the imaginative tapestry we now know as "the Christmas Story." The early church started embroidery really when groups of people, afraid they were forgetting, found a way to remember the Jesus they were following on the Way to God. There must have been a birth. Jesus was not a spiritual being with no human characteristics – yes there were lots of people in the first century who believed Jesus was fully divine, not human at all. But those who brought these stories together were clear that Jesus was human. He had a heritage, a whakapapa. Look, he was born. But they were equally divided on what his birth means. And that's the bit that gets forgotten in the rush to bring out the tapestry every year.

Luke's Jesus (Our Lectionary Gospel for this year) is surrounded by outcasts – shepherds from out of the city. Jesus is born out the back. There's no room in the inn. All the details are consistent in this telling. Jesus is the one for the poor, the outcasts, those on the edge. And the Gospel of Luke goes on to expand that basic understanding of Jesus in the way the stories build up a picture of who Jesus spends time with. There are no "Wise Men" or Magi in Luke's telling. Matthew has those. Read his story of Jesus' birth alongside Luke's and you find yourself in different worlds.

The underlying theology of those birth stories gets lost in our pageants. We sing lovely songs which include lines like "no crying he makes." Some baby that is then! We lump Shepherds and kings together, something the Gospels don't do. Luke and Matthew are engaged in the same exercise but from quite different starting points in their theological understanding of who Jesus is, and needs to be for their communities of faith.

As I said. It gets confusing. But only if we keep creating tapestries, and ignore the source of our threads – Luke and Matthew. Go read them sometime. In a place of quiet. Notice how different they are. Allow their ancient words to become your Advent journey. Journey well towards Christ Mass.

Arohanui, Rob



What is a Methodist? *Summary of an article by Colin Gibson*

A strange question? But there are so many Methodists who are only capable of scratching their heads when asked what distinguishes this species of the Christian Church from others. Outsiders seem to know only that a Methodist is some kind of Christian and that Methodists don't drink (alcohol). About the first point they are right, if very vague; about the second they are a good century behind the times.

First a word of optimism. The population numbers are healthy even if individual congregations are often quite small. Methodists belong to a Church with more than 20,000,000 members - 14,000,000 of them in North America. It is a worldwide Church, strongly represented on every continent - except Antarctica.

Methodist Attitudes to Creeds and Dogmas: Although Methodists recite the ancient creeds of the Christian Church with different degrees of belief and acceptance, they have no single definitive statement of belief of their own. They don't demand that their members sign up to a set of creedal statements (like the Westminster Confession), nor are they required to believe dogmas and papal encyclicals.

John Wesley himself declared, "Methodists alone do not insist on your holding this or that opinion; but they think and let think. Neither do they impose any particular mode of worship; you may continue to worship in your former manner, be it what it may." Now I do not know of any other religious society, either ancient or modern, wherein such liberty of conscience is now allowed or has been allowed, since the age of the Apostles. Here is our glorying - and a glorying peculiar to us. What society shares it with us?

A Methodist view of the Bible: The Bible is a book honoured and respected by Methodists, but it isn't carried into services of worship before the minister, as is done in the Presbyterian Church as a sign that it is that Church's supreme source and rule of belief and practice. Methodist preachers, both ordained and lay, usually preach from the Bible and follow the Lectionary, but they are expected to use their minds when they do so, and challenge and critique the biblical texts when that is necessary. The Methodist congregations to whom they preach are expected to do so as well.

Theology: Methodists have never thought it necessary to develop an elaborate and systematic body of thought about things religious. They have been comfortable riding on the backs of the theologians of other faith traditions, and prefer to keep in touch with and share modern theological thinking.

Methodists subscribe to the belief that the whole of the universe we inhabit is of worth and merit in the sight of God; that God delights in our thoughtfulness, respect and care both for each other and for creation. Most, if not all Methodists, embrace the Wesleyan idea of the priesthood of all believers: which makes a nonsense of silly and bitter controversies in the Church over gender, sexual orientation, theological difference, and lay/ordained distinctions. Methodists have been in the forefront of efforts to give children, lay-folk, women and gay people proper dignity and respect; that activity comes from a simple but deeply felt theology of the universal love of God and the infinite worth of creation.

Methodist Social Concern and Action: Although at the time of his famous conversion experience John Wesley realised that all his desperate efforts doing good works had got him nowhere near finding peace of mind and untroubled faith, and he wasted no time in putting his newfound sense of God's love into action. He strenuously and effectively cared for the poor and those in prison. His last letter was addressed to William Wilberforce, urging him to continue his fight against slavery. Ever since then one of the distinctive marks of Methodism has been its direct involvement in helping others, and its passion for a just society arising out of belief in a God of love who cares passionately for everyone.

Education and Methodism: For Methodists the world of religion (like the rest of the world) is active, developing, ever-changing and open-ended. They do not sit easily with ideas of a deep mysterious inner religious world of stillness and perfection, a polar landscape of unchanging spiritual realities and frozen truths; a world where what was given of insight and truth was given long ago and we must do nothing to recreate or adjust it. So Methodists are into education, learning and teaching others, to keep pace with our athletic God. John Wesley couldn't abide mute, ignorant and passive congregations. In 1739 he founded a first-class school for the children of his preachers. He pioneered popular education by publishing a Christian Library of over 50 classics, a concise history of England, a grammar book, a dictionary and an introduction to practical music.

A Singing Church: Methodists often pride themselves on their singing in church - which frequently means that they reckon they can sing hymns louder and faster than anyone else. But the real genius of Methodist song is its corporate nature (true Methodists don't leave it to priests or choirs to do their singing for them), and the expectation that what they sing will have meaning and point. They are not good at chanting, crooning or swooning in song in either the Old Catholic or modern Pentecostal manner. John Wesley

insisted that there be no doggerel, bombast or cant in the songs his congregations sang; only common sense and real poetry. These are uncommonly high standards; and it should be added that Wesley encouraged and put to practical use creative and contemporary writing. All the now familiar Charles Wesley hymns were once new and revolutionary. Modern Methodists try to preserve that standard.

To read the full article go to: www.dunedinmethodist.org.nz and click on "Links" then on "Old Website" then on "Methodism" then on "What is a Methodist"

From Ian Harris – Property Secretary

Synod Property updates – Property Approvals

At the beginning of this year there were a number of changes in the membership of the Synod Executive and its main subcommittee the Synod Property Advisory Committee (SPAC). Previously there were two property groups covering northern and southern areas of the Synod separately. From February 2021 these were combined into one group with members Alan Dine, Carol Dale, Mino Cleverly, Jim Gaudin, Josh Robertson, Nick Sunman and Ian Harris as Property Secretary/Convenor.

Our role is to assist parishes with proposed building works. These comprise a very wide range of expenditure, with structural or non structural aspects from interior refurbishment/painting, replacement of roof materials, erection of fences, earthquake strengthening, new builds, the demolition of buildings and the sale and purchase of land and buildings. Approval can be given by the Synod Property Advisory Committee (SPAC) for works less than \$50,000 which do not need a Building Consent or by the Methodist Church Property Committee (MCPC).

MCPC meets monthly in Christchurch (see dates below) to approve works with forecast expenditure greater than \$50,000 or those that require a building consent. SPAC members should be engaged early to guide parishes through the approval processes. Ultimately this saves time and frustration by ensuring that the case for the works is fully and properly made and includes all the necessary supporting documentation for SPAC to either approve or recommend approval to MCPC. For larger works these include a set of parish accounts and a credible mission plan as well as building plan details.

We can best help you if we are engaged early in the process especially for large projects so that plans can be discussed and explored as they evolve with the assistance of SPAC members. A good reference material is the booklet Bricks and Mortar published by the Connexional office in Christchurch and available for downloading from the website. Your parish may also have a physical copy as these have been available at a number of Synod meetings.

Apart from all the necessary supporting documentation, many parishes run into issues of timing for approvals. During the first half of 2022, the MCPC meeting dates and deadlines for all documentation to be received are given in the table below. SPAC members are volunteers who are not available to instantly consider a parish proposal, discuss with other members, obtain clarification or additional information from the parish in a few days before or on the date of the MCPC Agenda Close-off date! We need time to consider – and all the better if we have been involved early. Would parishes please make every endeavour to provide documentation to SPAC on or before the dates shown, so there is a reasonable opportunity to submit to MCPC by their Agenda close-off date. Property managers, please mark your diaries now.

SPAC Close off Dates	MCPC Agenda Close Off	MCPC Meeting Dates
1 February	14 February	24 February
1 March	14 March	24 March
4 April	18 April	28 April
2 May	16 May	26 May
30 May	13 June	23 June

Please don't hesitate to contact me if you have any queries or questions or you are planning some building works. Our aim is to support parishes.

From the Parishes:

Sheryl Wallis - Hawera

The Hawera Methodist church with the Hawera Anglican church has a combined Sunday School. Our churches alternate Sundays as we do not have enough ministers. Chester Borrowes, Pip Harrison and me (Sheryl Wallis – the Methodist, lol) have started an 'Out & About' program. This eventuated as a way to bring the church to the families as they seemed to be busy on Sunday mornings. Our last 'Out & About' was filling Christmas shoe boxes for the Kai Kitchen in Hawera. This organisation feeds needy children at all the schools in Hawera, and we felt they know which families need the boxes the most, along with keeping it local.



The next 'Out & About' was on the 28th November for a trip up York Road to the national park. After an amazing bush walk (an easy 1 hour each way), we put the billy on to boil. Our Jesus birthday party will be on the 15th Dec after school with a birthday cake for Jesus and party food and games. On the 19th is our Christmas children's show in church. God Bless

John Thornley - Wesley Broadway - Palmerston North

New Words for a Familiar Tune ('Morning Has Broken')

These words go well after the Reflection, as a contemporary Statement of Faith.

God to create us,
God to redeem us,
God to sustain us,
Through all our days:
One God forever,
Father, Son, Spirit,
We are your people,
We sing your praise.

Living and loving
From the beginning,
Endlessly moving,
Always the same:
God of all ages
Source of all being
We give you glory,
Honour your name.

God who invites us
Into the circle,
God who unites us,
Once far apart:
Draw us together
Draw us towards you
Till we are gathered
Into your heart.

Words: Marnie Barrell, Christchurch

Tune: 'Morning Has Broken'

Wesley Broadway's Access Radio over December to January: Christmas Carols and Songs from Aotearoa during December, followed by January replays of shows aired during 2021. New shows commence in February. You can download and listen to a choice of several back shows, accessed via the On Demand service. Each show lasts for half an hour, and you are given a wide choice. No commercials except to the Good Lord. Website: www.mpr.nz/show/wesley. All thanks and critiques to: John and Gillian Thornley: johngill@inspire.net.nz.

LNIS Diary

Inductions: David Harding – Napier - 30 January, 10.00am. Nicola Grundy - Wellington – 6 Feb -7.00pm

From the Editor:

The Methodist Lower North Island Synod "SALT" newsletter is a place where all the Methodist parishes, along with the union and cooperating parishes with a Methodist component, in the synod can share their news. This can include brief reports (200 to 300 words along with photos etc) of programmes and activities both past and planned, and it provides an opportunity to share successes, new ideas and knowledge. It can include such things as a brief parish history, special services, visits, special occasions and acknowledgement of people who are playing/have played an important role in the life of the parish. It would be great if each individual parish could provide at least one such report for inclusion in "SALT" during 2022. Reports can be sent to me at any time: email: richardsue@xtra.co.nz

The next edition is for February/March 2022. I would really appreciate reports around Christmas activities etc, along with plans for 2022. Please send them to me by 20 January 2022

In the meantime may you all have a blessed and relaxing Christmas as we celebrate the birth of the Master.