

METHODIST LOWER NORTH ISLAND SYNOD



“SYNOD SALT”



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December 2023/January 2024



From the Superintendent's Desk

DECEMBER 2023

Aio ki te rangi

Aio ki te whenua

Aio ki ngā tāngata katoa

Peace to the skies

Peace to the land

Peace to all people

A BIT OF HOPE



The Lutheran Church in Bethlehem's nativity scene: Baby Jesus wrapped in a keffiyeh, laid on rubble for his bed.

“We stand on the brink of everything collapsing. The entire world. It's unravelling. The conflict in Ukraine, the ongoing tensions between Hamas and Israel. Even in Aotearoa we are unravelling. Chaos. The church has its issues and challenges as well. Disorder everywhere.”

These were the words of someone that I met last week. A sense of hopelessness.

I think hope is a choice. I would rather choose to have hope, and at times be wrong, than to choose not to have hope, and always be right. Succumbing to despair is also an option. But I choose to do otherwise.

I choose to believe that something better awaits. I choose to live as though I can help birth a world where people are loved for who they are. I choose to believe that the only way we can get peace in our world is by embracing a love that's rooted in our unshakeable interconnectedness.

If we want hope, peace, joy and love in our world, it has to start with us. In the ways we relate to one another. In the language we use. In the values we act on and hold to.

As Christians we understand that the Good News is Jesus, especially Jesus as shown in the Nativity scene from the Lutheran church in Bethlehem this year.

In the birth of just another baby, the product of an unexpected pregnancy by a teenage mother, we find insight and potential for a world where there is peace and justice for all.

As we gather with our families this Christmas, let us remember that for many people, there is no peace, or justice, there is no hope or potential. Many people are suffering Christmas alone, or worried about what may lie ahead for them. Some gathering for the last time, some without family members for the first time.

I pray that as we celebrate the hope of Christmas, we find the joy that comes when we share our lives with others. We reach out with the love that says I stand with you. We discover the Christ child who gives life to the world.

Meri Kirihimete!

Nicola



2023

During the year focus of our Synod meetings has been about telling our stories. The last Synod meeting in Masterton in November was no different.

At the April synod in New Plymouth we heard stories from Taranaki while in July in Levin we focussed on Union Parishes. In Masterton we were all encouraged to share our stories of hope in story telling from our parish life this year. We did so with a challenge from President Peter Taylor in mind. He had sent the following message to the church:

"Faith is our foundation, and *love* is our action, but so often *hope* gets squeezed out of our journey with God. It is time to put this right. If we have lost our hope, we have become estranged from God, from each other and from our world.

Hope does not look to ourselves, our church, our systems or traditions, but to God alone. Hope is not optimism nor is it based on the progress of humanity. Hope begins with looking back at what God has done in the past. Hope then sees the present with all its contradictions and injustices. But Hope also glimpses the better realities promised by God's future. It is this Hope that impels us forward as a church."

Before lunch we shared stories of faith, love and hope from around the synod's motu – from Wairarapa and Taranaki, from Whanganui / Manawatu / Horowhenua, from Tairāwhiti / Hawkes Bay and from Wellington / the Hutt / and Kapiti. Following all the sharing of stories a shared lunch gave an opportunity over a meal to meet and talk with others and share in their individual stories - one of the big advantages of face to face meetings.

Lunch was followed by the formal confirmation of the Synod Executive for 2024:

Superintendent: Rev Nicola Teague Grundy

Secretary: Sarah Laurenson

Treasurer: Glen Williams

Property Convenor: Ian Harris

SALT Editor: Richard Pittams

Members: Kalo Kaisa, Sandra Williams, Jim Gaudin, Neti Petaia, Jannet Mudavanhu .

Synod Dates 2024:

8th February - Hāwera Synod Executive planning day

1st - 3rd March - Synod, Napier.

2nd - 3rd August - Synod, Whanganui

23rd November - Venue to be confirmed.

We will also hold a School of Theology likely to be held in May. Trinity College is seeking also to have a block course in our region during the year. Dates and venue to be confirmed in the new year.

2024 Conference Date: Friday 8th – Wednesday 13th Nov (dates include Tauīwi/Te Taha Māori mtg day)

Acknowledgements:

We presented pot plants to these people as acknowledgement of their involvement in LNI Synod and in recognition of the completion of their appointments:

- Paul Rogers and Colleen Rogers who are leaving St James.
- David Harding who is retiring from ministry and moving from Napier to Wellington
- Ian Harris who is retiring from the position of Treasurer.

STATIONING:

The Lower North Island Synod had a very good outcome at Stationing with the following appointments made:

- **Taranaki Regional Enabler** – Michael Lemanu
- **Whanganui Parish** – Sokopeti Sina
- **Napier Methodist Parish** – 'Ofa Taipaleti Taukolo
- **Crossway Union Parish** – Neti Petaia (shared ministry Sinoti and English speaking)
- **Wasewase Ko Viti Rotuma Tabacakacaka** – Basulu Seniceva

INDUCTIONS: (Dates and times)

Sunday 28th January, 4pm - Induction of 'Ofa Taukolo to Napier

Trinity Methodist Church. Napier

Thursday 1st February, 6:30pm - Induction of Neti Petaia to Crossway and Greytown

Crossway Church, Masterton

Thursday 8th February, 6:30pm - Induction of Michael Lemanu as Taranaki Regional Enabler.

Hāwera Methodist Church

Saturday 10th February, 10am - Induction of Basulu Seniceva and Sokopeti Sina to Whanganui.

Whanganui Methodist Church

SO WHAT'S THE STORY IN TARANAKI 2023?

Early in February parishes from around Taranaki with a Methodist component were invited to a conversation where the question was asked "What will Methodism look like in Taranaki in the future?" Nicola Teague Grundy led the day which included representatives from North Taranaki Methodist Parish, the Fijian

congregation, Samoan synod and congregation, Te Taha Maori in Ngamotu, St Luke's Cooperating Church in Bell Block and Mission Resourcing.

The day started with karakia and opening devotions led by Rev Keita Hotere in the Mission House Chapel where she outlined some of the early the history of Methodism in Taranaki. The first Christian missionaries to Taranaki/New Plymouth were Wesleyan and arrived in 1839 so Methodism has been in the area for over 180 years. A chapel was built on the foreshore but was later moved to the present site. It was from this discussion that the Friday programme was developed for the synod that was held in New Plymouth.

Moving onto the present day it was observed that where Methodism is concerned there are only 2 full Methodist Churches in Taranaki (Whiteley in New Plymouth and Hawera) – all the rest are cooperating or union churches with a Methodist component. This year there is only one stationed presbyter in the whole of Taranaki – Rev. Sally Carter in North Taranaki – and that is a 50% part time appointment. Which means that most parishes/churches are self supporting.

During discussions one person told of a recent induction service he had attended where he was “bored stiff” and the question he asked himself was, “If I was a young person would I want to be part of this?” His answer was a pretty emphatic “No!” He also posed the question to himself, “Are our traditional church buildings fit for purpose in the modern world,” and again the answer was, “No!” Another question he asked himself was, “How many young people in the modern world would want to come week by week and sit in a pew looking at the back of the head of a person in front of them and not be able to interact with them – a bit like being on a bus?” There was also an observation made that the church ‘missed the boat’ in the late fifties/early sixties when church attendance and rolls began to drop. Instead of acting to meet the changes in society, the church has carried on doing the same old thing – and as Henry Ford noted, “if you do what you’ve always done, you’ll get what you’ve always got.” Now, sixty years later, we have a major problem. As was observed at the 2019 UCANZ Forum it is no longer feasible to just ‘ring the bell’ and expect the people will come.

This sounds all very negative, and so it was. But over lunch and on through the day a good deal of discussion took place, and from our stories etc we identified some of our strengths, our weaknesses, our challenges, and our opportunities along with discovering our priorities and possible action points and next steps. We also realised we would have to go out and “sell” any changes “**BOLDLY**”

From all of this over the next few months the idea of a “Mission Enabler” in Taranaki emerged with the aim of “empowering parishes in the Taranaki region to serve God in the world by being **bold**, being **relational** and being **connexional** both in church and the community. We recognised that for the majority of our parishes in Taranaki there has been a long period of time when these values have not been at the forefront. Therefore, in creating this position the aim is to live by our values as we work towards our vision and purpose. We envisaged that the position of Enabler will be a position of innovation, development and especially of enabling parishes. The *appointee would not do all the work*, but work with the stationed leaders and leadership teams in each parish to enable ministry and leadership of all people in the Taranaki region. It was felt the appointee should be free to be creative, free to explore different styles and types of worship and be given space to be innovative in church and community. *There is no expectation to deliver traditional Sunday services as part of ongoing rosters.*

It has decided that the position should initially be for three years (to give it time to develop) financed by a combination of Mission Resourcing and the Methodist Lower North Island Synod. So a profile of the position was developed and interest in the position sort, Rev Michael Lemanu has been appointed and he will be inducted into the position in the Hāwera Methodist Church on 08 February 2024. It is worth noting that with so many cooperating or union parishes in Taranaki, both the Anglican and Presbyterian churches have expressed support for the idea.

In recent times there have been calls for the church to change – for the need to come into the 21st century in the way we operate. But how? This is a positive start – *but* it is only a start – and the hope is that we will **all**

be **BOLD** enough to **try** innovative and exciting new ways to do “Church” in 2024 and beyond. In the meantime there are things like a suitable location for the Enabler to be based along with accommodation and transport to be arranged in time for Michael, Esta and their young family to move to Taranaki to commence his ministry.

During the 2nd World War a padre in the army was taking a service in the Egyptian desert for the soldiers of the 8th Army and right next where it was being conducted a radio unit was set up and doing some testing. The service got to that part where prayers of the people were being said and at the end of a section the padre intoned “Lord hear our prayer.” Every man there knew the response to be “And let our cry come unto thee,” but before they could so much as open their mouths over the radio unit came, “I’m hearing you loud and clear. Over to you!”

That is the challenge for us all – it is over to us!

SUPER HERO CARNIVAL TIME AT ST PAUL’S, OPUNAKE, TARANAKI

Jesus says ‘Whoever welcomes one of these little children in my name welcomes me; Mark 9: 37

Each year people of all ages from the different churches in Opunake join together to help run this annual event that reaches deep into the community to provide a fun, family event for children of all ages as an alternative to the scary traditions of Halloween.

With 24 games, a mountain of burgers to cook and 135 children and their families it proved to be a busy but fun evening. Such a positive vibe, Super heroes from all walks of life enjoying the simplicity of the games and joy on the children’s faces. So many comments from parents thanking us for the safe alternative approach and donations freely given as an act of overflowing appreciation.



We are so blessed to have a church building with such good facilities, centrally located in this small community and providing a hub for children, youth and their families.

Never underestimate these social events for building relationships and pointing people to our Heavenly Father. How good and pleasant it is when God’s people work together in unity..... for there the Lord bestows his blessing. Ps 133

Jennie McCullough

Cyclone Gabrielle

Following Cyclone Gabrielle’s visit to the East Coast of the North Island this year we have had regular reports in SALT from Glenys Single, Presbyterian Methodist Parish of Wairoa and Stewart Patrick, Mangapapa Church in Gisborne. Many of their stories were pretty harrowing.

Two or three years ago the executive decided on a plan that each parish within the synod which came up with a new mission initiative could apply for a \$1000 grant. Only half a dozen or so parishes applied for it, so earlier this year the executive decided to use this pool of money to send \$2000 each to support the folk in Wairoa and Gisborne.

We have received the following note:

Thank you for the generous donation of \$2000 from the Lower North Island Methodist Synod for Cyclone recovery.

Eight months on and families are slowly returning to their homes. There is still a long way to go. We have transferred donations we received to the Rotary Wairoa Lend a Hand Account and it is being used for bedding, whiteware and emergency kits as the need arises.

Thanks and Blessings

Glenys Single

Presbyterian Methodist Parish of Wairoa

Meanwhile, Stewart Patrick (Senior Elder, Mangapapa Church, Gisborne) along with a team of folk at Mangapapa Church have started a search for a new church leader. They haven't limited themselves in their search to New Zealand, and have had interest from as far away as Britain. We look forward to hearing more of their search in the coming months.



A Christmas Blessing:

From this house to yours,
May you share in the gifts of this season.
May love, the promise of generations, attend you.
Joy, the gift of life together, fill you.
Peace, the desire of neighbour and nations, find you.
Hope, the horizon of faith, sustain you.
And may a very Happy and Joyous Christmas be yours.

Richard

Throughout 2023 we have been asking, "What's the Story?" and we have shared many of them. Everyone has a story, although many often feel their story is not very interesting. Yet when it is shared, others find it to be the opposite.

So share your story. The next edition of SALT is due out at the beginning of February 2024, so email your story to richardsue@xtra.co.nz by the end of January 2024.

I'm looking forward to reading them!

Richard

