



The Methodist Church of New Zealand
Mission Resourcing



Information Pack

Methodism in Aotearoa / New Zealand

Historical Note

The beginning of Methodism in Aotearoa / New Zealand dates back to 1822, when the Rev Samuel Leigh who had also been the pioneer Methodist Minister to New South Wales, came to open the Wesleyan Methodist Mission. In 1823 he established the first Wesleyan Mission at Whangaroa. By 1840, the year in which the Treaty of Waitangi was signed, there were Mission Stations from one end of the country to the other. When European settlers arrived the missionaries included them in their pastoral oversight, and starting in Auckland organised them into Societies in conformity with British Methodist practice. In 1844 the Primitive Methodist Connexion began its work in New Zealand under the direction of the Rev Robert Ward. The United Methodist Free Churches were first represented in New Zealand in 1860, and the Bible Christians in 1887.



Wesleydale Mission Station from Morley's History of Methodism in New Zealand 1900

In 1854 the Wesleyan Methodist Missions in Australia, Van Diemen's Land, New Zealand, the Friendly Islands, and Fiji, were formed into the Australasian Wesleyan Methodist Church, and the first Conference was held in Sydney in January 1855. In 1874 the British Conference agreed to a New Constitution, providing for a triennial General Conference, and for four Annual Conferences having largely only administrative powers. One of these comprised the European and Native work in New Zealand. The other branches of Methodism in New Zealand retained their connection with their respective Conferences in England.

In 1896 the United Methodist Free Churches and the Bible Christian Church joined the Wesleyan Methodist, as a part of the General Conference of the Methodist Church of Australasia. In June 1910, when the General Conference met in Adelaide, a request was presented by the New Zealand Conference for independent and self-governing powers. After lengthy discussion this was agreed to by a unanimous vote, subject to the approval of each Annual Conference, and by the passing of an empowering Act of Parliament in each

State of the Commonwealth, and in New Zealand. These conditions were in due course complied with, and the independence of the New Zealand Church took effect on 1st January 1913.

Meanwhile, a united Committee representing the Wesleyan and Primitive Methodist Churches prepared a **Basis of Union**, which subsequently received the approval of the Conferences and Quarterly Meetings of both Churches. With this endorsement, the first united Conference of the Methodist Church of New Zealand was opened on Thursday 6th February 1913.

The Methodist Church of New Zealand, Te Haahi Weteriana o Aotearoa, has experienced major changes since the 1950's. The Cooperative Ventures with partner Churches has significantly altered the **presence** of the Methodist Church in both urban and country areas. From 1973, Maori Methodism has become largely autonomous, and as **tangata whenua** are one of the parties in the covenant relationship based on the Treaty of Waitangi to which the whole Church committed itself by resolution of the 1983 Conference. The multi-cultural goal of the Church's bi-cultural journey continues to find new expression in the changing nature of **Tauwi** Methodism. The growth of Samoan, Tongan and Fijian congregations alongside Pakeha Methodism has been a feature of recent decades.