



The Methodist Church of New Zealand
Mission Resourcing



Information Pack

Methodist Involvements

THE EARLY HISTORY

Missionaries, Wesleyans among them, took an active role in getting the Treaty signed. The Church has had a prominent place in Maori-Pakeha interaction from the beginning.

The Church has been part of that history. Land deals have not always honoured the spirit of the Treaty. The Gospel has been used to justify European sets of values, and the Gospel has been interpreted and presented in European ways. Our Church structures have followed patterns imported from Europe, so Maori patterns and interests have been overridden. As Methodists, we have need to consider that history, its present effects, and action now that would express justice.

But the Methodist Church has also continued to express its concern. There has been a thread which sought to make real the protection talked of in the Treaty of Waitangi. In the years immediately after the Treaty, missionaries like John Whitely and Thomas Buddle tried to represent Maori interests in regard to land, and worked hard to get the letter and the spirit of the Treaty adhered to.

In 1940 the Methodist Conference called from the principles and provisions of the Treaty to be placed on the Statute Book. It wanted to see the Treaty in action in New Zealand society.

Similar concerns have kept coming through the official voice of the Church. Conference 1942, for example, called again for a proper legal basis for the Treaty, noting that this would be “perennial source of concern to Maori people until it is properly clarified.”

Wesleyan missionaries – John Hobbs, Samuel Ironside, and John Warren – were certainly involved. They saw the Treaty as a way of protecting the rights of the Maori, and of protecting their land, forests, and fisheries. So they encouraged Maori Chiefs to add their signatures.

The missionaries say the need for ordered government, but feared the effects of European immigration on Maori life. On balance, they felt the Treaty was in the best interest of the Maori people. Early New Zealand Methodism expressed the Biblical concern for justice in trying to ensure that Maori people were protected.

History since 1840 tells a different story. The Treaty has not protected Maori rights or land. The Pakeha-way has come to dominate. Maori place and power is restricted in Pakeha society.

THE HISTORY SINCE 1840

So what’s happened since 1840?

A Pakeha perspective, concentrating on the Pakeha side of the Treaty partnership, shows no partnership, little honouring of the Treaty provisions, with Pakeha dominance well-established by the 1860’s and continuing till now.

To begin with, many missionaries continued to see their mission as support of Maori, in education and in protection against the damaging effects of contact with white settlers. The

Churches – Roman Catholic, Church of England, Wesleyan – were churches engaged in mission to the indigenous people.

But as the balance of numbers altered, with increased European settlement, the bias of the churches shifted. They become focused on the settlers and their interests. And as more settlers arrived, they brought with them new denominations and sects, and these were there predominantly for the settlers' benefit from the beginning.

Even those missionaries who had sided with Maori against the Pakeha onslaught seem to have changed sides as pressure for land led into the Land Wars. Like Wesleyan John Whiteley. When in 1847 Grey in England told the Colonial Governor to take over unoccupied Maori Land to sell to settlers, Whiteley objected to London on behalf of the Maori owners and in terms of the Treaty. Later, during conflict in Taranaki, he took the colonial-settler position over against Maori Land Owners.

There continued to be Maori churches and Maori Christians, but the major weight of the Church, by the 1860's, had become identified with the Pakeha colonists.

And those Pakeha colonists had quickly abandoned either the Letter or the Spirit of the Treaty. Alienation of Maori Land took place as if the Treaty had never existed.

Already in 1841, the Land Claims Ordinance said all 'unappropriated' or 'wasted land' not occupied by Maori was now Crown Land. The Crown right of pre-emption seemed maintained, but rights to Maori rangatiratanga over their own land was denied. Pre-emption itself was abandoned in 1844.

By the early 1860's, Pakeha pressure on land led to conflict and further Acts of Parliament. At Land Court was set up to individualise Maori Land ownership, and the Suppression of Rebellion Act of 1863 provided Land confiscation and death as penalties for rebellion. This in the face of military action against Maori – provoked just that so-called 'rebellion'. These moves meant the confiscation of some 3 million acres in the mid-60's – most of it going to land speculators.

Sale or altered use of land originally gifted for a particular purpose has continued. Confiscation, purchase in debatable circumstances for low prices from individuals or small groups, individual free-holding of communal Maori Land – all decimated the acreage under Maori control.

Pollution of waterways and fisheries, cutting and burning of forests, imposition of European attitudes to land and the natural environment, have made a mockery of the Treaty's promise of "full, exclusive and undisturbed possession of lands and estates, forests, fisheries, and other properties."

What about any sense of partnership?

Certainly not in relation to real power, to Govt. Maori were not invited to participate in the 1840 Legislative Council and the 1852 Constitution Act effectively gave no voting rights to Maori, as they held land communally. After the Land Wars, individualised titles enabled more Maori to vote, which threatened the Pakeha majority in some electorates – so four Maori seats were set up. Seventy seats for Pakeha; four for Maori. The political reality is **minority** Maori voice, representation, and access to decision-making. Western European democratic Govt. was established, preserving Pakeha values and power, and is still firmly in place.

In place of partnership, a policy of assimilation. Early education provisions were designed precisely for that purpose. Use of Maori Language was denied in schools, and punished – even if used in the playground. English was the only official language. The Suppression of Tohunga Act in 1907 outlawed tohunga, whose spiritual and educational influence was seen as a threat to assimilation. The 1961 Hunn Report still, implicitly, pushes for assimilation. And assimilation policies effectively work to kill off all cultures other than the dominant one.

Against all this, there have been some Pakeha moves to encourage Maori, to respond to their grievances. In recent years, the Waitangi Tribunal is late and so far limited. Taha

Maori in schools, Kohanga Reo, Maori Language in courts, are moves in the direction of what should always have been there under the Treaty.

Churches have developed various forms of ministry amongst Maori people, and from time to time have made reference to the Treaty, or said and done things designed to respond to the health and welfare needs of Maori suffering in a Pakeha society. Current bicultural commitments are seen as mission, intended to work towards the partnership implied in the Treaty. But generally churches have continued to portray in all aspects of their life, decision-making, theology, and liturgy, the same European dominance as has been evident in the rest of society since that dominance was firmly established in the 1860's.

In the light of the history since, 1840 signalled the beginning of alienation, poverty, disinheritance, disempowerment, cultural denial for Maori – not the opening up of the promises of the Treaty. Maori have had to fight every inch of the way for any recognition of their grievance, for any sign of repentance, for any return on what **they** have invested in the Treaty, for any sense of partnership as envisioned in the Treaty.

The 148 years since its signing show no significant sign of Pakeha honouring the intentions or spirit of that 1840 covenant.

(From a presentation by John Salmon to the 1988 Conference of Churches in Aotearoa-N.Z. Annual Forum)

WHERE WE'VE BEEN MORE RECENTLY

The origins of the bicultural journey for the Methodist Church, Te Haahi Weteriana o Aotearoa, go back into that earlier history. Perhaps the most significant starting point of more recent times, though, was the rising awareness of white racism during the 1960s. It was here that people began to understand the dynamics of the oppression that black people had experienced for so long. When the connection was made with colonialism (which usually also went handclapped with Christianity), the relevance for places like New Zealand began to be recognized.

It was at this time that the World Council of Churches set up the Programme to Combat Racism. Amongst other activities, this Programme made funds available to groups struggling against white racism in various parts of the world. Some people from this country began to see that work, to hear the reasons for it, to react to it. So debate began to rise to the surface.

Through the 1970s more New Zealand church people had contact with what was happening in other parts of the world, and began to see the part white racism had to play in this country, and something of the role of the churches in that. So a variety of local programmes were begun. These were explicitly anti-racism programmes, such as ACCORD, HEART and CARE, in which church people were involved. The Race Relations Act of 1971 was a sign of the growing awareness, and led to the setting up of the NZ Race Relations Council. The National Council of Churches took a stand, with the result that the Programme on Racism was set up in 1980, with the backing of the Methodist Church.

More and more, Methodists were exposed to the issues of racism and the Christian colonial heritage. When the 1982 Conference in Napier began with a series of workshops on the theme of Evangelism, one of these was "Evangelism and Racism", led by Te Rua and Brian Turner. Out of that workshop came the recognition that if the gospel was going to be 'good news' for people who were powerless because of the effects of racism, then it had to address power. So in 1983 a 'Power-Sharing Seminar' was held at Whakatuora, with 10 Pakeha Methodist church leaders and an equal number of Maori Division people, and with facilitators from outside the Methodist church. It was that vent which brought the recommendations to Conference at Takapuna in 1983 which led to the church committing itself to a bicultural journey.

Still at the heart of that process must be the addressing of white racism. At times it has seemed likely that we would be side-tracking into other questions of cultural interaction, and move away from the issues of power. It is in those power relations that the good news of the gospel must be heard. We also began to see more clearly that our foundation is Te Tiriti o Waitangi.

(From the 1988 Report of the Bicultural Committee)

A METHODIST APPROACH TO THE TREATY OF WAITANGI

The Treaty establishes the basic relationship between Maori and Pakeha, and must be responded to in terms of the way power is exercised. The use of Pakeha power to dishonour the Treaty over the years shows the impact of racism in Aotearoa. The treaty is also part of our Methodist heritage, as Wesleyan missionaries were deeply involved in decisions about the Treaty, in its preparation, and in persuading Maori to sign.

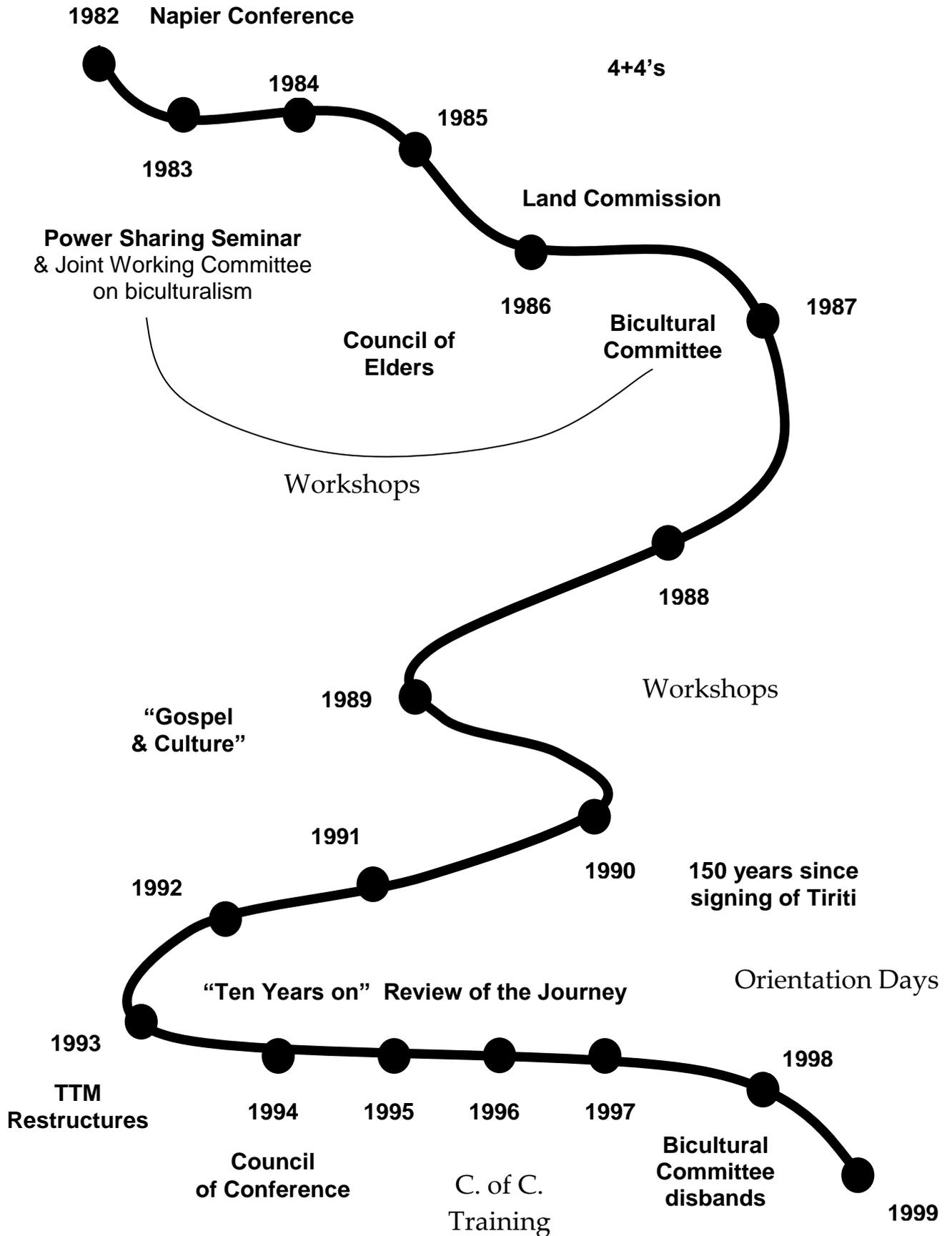
Te Haahi Weteriana, the Methodist Church, therefore regards Te Tiriti o Waitangi as a foundational documents, which we must seek to honour, and in that honouring seek to redress the injustices of the years. The Treaty is not open to negotiation or choice. It is not a piece of past history but of the essence of our living now and in the future. The Methodist bicultural journey, then, is based on the Treaty. As we do that we recognize that the Treaty is not just another document. Its place in the life of the people is as a 'covenant'. Our Biblical heritage sees covenant as significant, and the people called Methodist have had a special reverence for covenant. A covenant has the binding force of legal contract, but is wrapped around with spirituality in a way which gives it sacredness and keeps it living for each new generation. That is how it was with the covenants made with Noah and his family, with Moses and the people escaping from oppression in Egypt, with David and the leaders of the nation. That is how it is with the New Covenant in the person of Jesus, and in the covenant we renew each year as Methodists.

Biblically, covenant is related to creation, to the life of a people in their particular time and place, and calls for relationships and a way of living which reflect God's priorities of life and justice (righteousness). Covenant involves promises made, promises which give hope but which also never 'let us off the hook'. So covenant is ongoing, binding us by virtue of our being part of a community, calling us to obligation, and setting the seal of Spirit on the promises.

This is the way we are to appreciate the Treaty and respond to it. It becomes another sacred covenant in our life. As people of God we can respond to that warmly and responsibly – we know about covenant, we value God's covenanting with us, we are prepared to re-covenant ourselves each year as Methodist. This covenant places us in Aotearoa, sets the basis for our obligations here, and provides the setting for the way we talk about our Christian faith in this country.

(From the 1988 Report of the Bicultural Committee)

THE BICULTURAL JOURNEY



“Samuel Ironside and John Warrant travelled with the Hokianga Chiefs. Hobbs held a long discussion with Tamati Waka Nene, their leader, before they left, but Hobbs remained at Hokianga. Ironside and Warren were with Nene when the discussions reached their climax. When it looked as though the decision would go against the Treat, and Nene expressed his concern to the Wesleyan missions at this turn of events, they encouraged him to rise and make the speech which swung the gathering in favour of the signing. Hobson later repeatedly expressed the debt he owed to such support.

As soon as the signatures of those at the Bay of Islands had been obtained, another large gathering was held on February 12 at Mangungu Mission Station where Hobbs acted as interpreter, and the result was the obtaining of another large group of signatures. In all this, the Missionaries pledged their word to the Maoris that the Queen and the British authorities would honour their word to safeguard the Maori interest in their land.

Many of the Chiefs stated that in spite of much uneasiness of mind, the assurances of the Missionaries were the deciding factor in their decision to sign. Tamati Waka Nene and other Chiefs later travelled through many parts of the country with the official party gathering signatures, and whenever they arrived at a Wesleyan Mission Station, the Missionaries and the Chiefs under their guidance were to the fore in expressing their support.”

(G.I. Laurenson – Te Haahi Weteriana. Page 59-60)