

SABBATICAL REPORT

SPECIAL CHARACTER EDUCATION IN A METHODIST / WESLEYAN CONTEXT

Introduction

This report builds on previous research undertaken to prepare a document to describe the Methodist ethos, the underpinning philosophy that has driven Methodist / Wesleyan educational practice since John Wesley founded the first Methodist School in England in 1748. This previous research culminated in a paper entitled The Methodist Ethos, issued to the Wesley College Community and other interested people in October 2008.

During this sabbatical period I read extensively. These readings included works written by Mr George W. Best, a former Headmaster of Kingswood School, Bath, England, the successor to the first school established by John Wesley; the minutes of the Wesley College Trust Board during the decade prior to Integration and associated documents found in the archives at Wesley College.

In addition, I interviewed a number of people who I felt were able to provide information on the period preceding the signing of the Integration Agreement in 1976. A visit to Kingswood School in England and discussions with the Principal and Chaplain, complemented by discussions with the Secretary of the Board of Management of Methodist Schools in Great Britain provided me with some insights into the international character of Methodist Schools. In 2006 and 2007 I had visited Wesley College Perth. Discussions and observations in these settings allowed me to ponder on the distinctive emphases and target communities of Wesleyan / Methodist education in the contexts of England and New Zealand and to a lesser extent Australia.

The report that follows is not a definitive statement on Special Character Education in a New Zealand - Aotearoa context. It is more a comment on the process taken between 2006 and 2010 to review the Special Character Statement in the Wesley College Integration Agreement. A number of understandings about the Special Character of Wesley College and its context are able to be drawn from a reflection on this process. The sabbatical provided the opportunity to bring each of these experiences together into a document that provides a commentary on the development of Special Character understandings in a Methodist / Wesleyan context in Aotearoa - New Zealand.

While I have drawn extensively on some of my previous writings and on the conversations I have had with others, the responsibility for what is written and the conclusions drawn are entirely mine.

SPECIAL CHARACTER EDUCATION IN A METHODIST / WESLEYAN CONTEXT

On 31 May 2010 the Minister of Education, Hon. Anne Tolley, signed a Supplementary Deed of Agreement amending the 1976 Integration Agreement.¹ This supplementary agreement revised Clause 4 of the Agreement²: the Special Character Clause. The revised statement updates both language and terminology. It reflects the contemporary emphases of the Methodist Church of New Zealand – Te Haahi Weteriana o Aotearoa.

In 2006 I initiated some reflection by the Wesley College Trust Board (the Proprietor) about the meaning of aspects of the Special Character clause. The discussion that followed was a way of gauging whether the language of the 1976 document adequately reflected a contemporary Methodist / Wesleyan emphasis and whether a celebration of the special character was evident and consistently demonstrated in the day-to-day life of the College. This discussion informed the paper The Methodist Ethos³ issued in October 2008.

The suggestion that the Special Character Clause be examined was advanced by the Trust Board. Conference⁴ 2007 received a Notice of Motion⁵ sponsored by the Superintendent of the Manukau District⁶, Rev Setaita Kinahoi Veikune, and the Chair of the Wesley College Trust Board, Rev John Murray. The resulting Conference resolution charged the Council of Conference⁷ to initiate conversations aimed at clarifying the wording in the 1976 Clause 'direct affiliation with the MCNZ [Methodist Church of New Zealand].

As a result the Council of Conference established a Committee to examine this wording and to make recommendations. The Committee consisted of the then Ex-President, Rev Brian Turner (a former pupil of Wesley College), the Tumuaki of Te Taha Maori o Te Haahi Weteriana o Aotearoa, Rev Diana Tana (a member of the Wesley College Trust Board), the General Secretary of the Methodist Church of New Zealand – Te Haahi Weteriana o Aotearoa, Rev Jill van de Geer; and the Principal (also a former pupil).

¹ The Private Schools Conditional Integration Act 1975 provided a way for a Private School to become part of the State School network while continuing to have the right to reflect through its teachings and conduct the education with a special character provided by it. In 1976 Wesley College was private school affiliated to the Methodist Church of New Zealand. It was the first school to integrate under this legislation.

² Refer Appendix 1

³ Refer Appendix 3.

⁴ Conference is the governing body of the Methodist Church of New Zealand.

⁵ Refer Appendix 2

⁶ Wesley College is situated within the bounds of the Manukau District. The Superintending Chaplain, the Principal, the HOD Life and Faith, and the Deputy Principal Boarding (who is an Associate of the Synod) attend meetings.

⁷ The Council of Conference is the group that expresses through its structure the bi-cultural partnership within the life of the Conference. It consists of an equal number of Te Taha Maori and Tauwiwi members.

This Committee met and determined that ‘direct affiliation with the MCNZ’ meant more than simply creating a reporting link or a process for reporting directly to the annual Conference: it meant that the ethos and polity of the Methodist Church of New Zealand should be expressed in the life of the College. With this in mind the Committee decided to recommend a number of changes to the Clause.

To an extent some changes might have been regarded as superficial: they reflected a change in the language used in New Zealand – Aotearoa between 1976 and 2008. Terms such as multi-racial comfortably used in 1976 were no longer in common usage. The term multi-ethnic was substituted. Moreover, this reflected the contemporary emphasis placed within the life of the College on providing young men and women with an appreciation of their culture / ethnicity as one means of developing identity. This comes from a standpoint that understanding identity within one’s own cultural context, as well as in a multi-ethnic / cultural community, assists in developing balanced young people able to take their place in a rapidly changing New Zealand / Aotearoa and world.

It was also evident that in 1976 when the Board of Wesley Training College⁸ negotiated the Integration Agreement with the Department of Education⁹ that the Board members did not conceive of a time when there may be debate about what the Special Character might look like. In 1976 it was clear to all that Wesley College was a Methodist institution. The name Wesley would signal Methodist / Wesleyan emphases. Methodist was Methodist: everyone knew that!

The 1976 Special Character clause stated that “*while being non-sectarian (the College) has a direct affiliation with the Methodist Church of New Zealand and with the strength and support of this Church affiliation provides an education based in the beliefs and philosophies of the Christian faith.*”

By 2008 there was the feeling that the wording should clearly reflect contemporary Methodist understanding and emphases. With this in mind, the wording was changed to reflect the Church as a *Treaty-based* body, *expressing its governance in a bi-cultural, power-sharing partnership between Te Taha Maori and Tauwi.*

The Committee agreed to include a paragraph on the historical and contemporary understandings of New Zealand Methodism to ground the Special Character statement within the understandings and expression of contemporary New Zealand Methodism. To some extent this was a rebranding exercise. The change could be placed in the context of a similar process that was seen to be taking place within other denominational schools. The Committee was clear that they wanted to declare the gift that Methodism could extend to New Zealand / Aotearoa in an educational setting. The foundation of this paragraph is to be found in the Mission Statement of the Methodist Church of New Zealand – Te Haahi Weteriana o Aotearoa.

⁸ Now the Wesley College Trust Board. The change of name was approved by a Supplementary Agreement to the 1976 Integration Agreement on 8 September 1983. It is an interesting aside that the name ‘Wesley Training College’ (or more often its abbreviation WTC) remains in common affectionate usage today.

⁹ Now the Ministry of Education.

The Committee was also mindful of the tradition expressed as the Methodist Educational Style. This tradition has four components:

- i. Education as 'whole of life', 'whole of person', 'holistic'
- ii. Evoking gifts rather than providing information. Seeking achievement in ways which acknowledge skill and progress, individual gift, contribution and effort; not solely determined in academic or sporting terms
- iii. Looking to empower for living
- iv. Seeking to avoid undue competition, coercive methods, use of violence or dominating power

Therefore, the proposed new paragraph read:

This (the expression of Church governance) has historical and contemporary relevance that is expressed within the College as:

- Treasuring our Christian and Methodist heritage and learning to express it relevantly. This includes religious observances.
- Openness to the future and to new insights, experiences and people.
- Support for values that respect the integrity of persons and communities.
- Use of language and images which are inclusive and which express equality.
- Opposition to cultures of violence and to systems of domination and exclusion.
- Provision of safe environments and processes for dealing with conflict, harassment, abuse and violation
- Openness to the future and to new insights, experiences and people.
- Treasuring our heritage and working to express it relevantly.

Wesley College was to be the place where these expressions would be seen to be to be lived out.

The Committee also discussed the relevance of the terms 'industrial (*which term includes agricultural*) training and an emphasis on instruction in the English language' for both the immediate context and the 21st century. After discussion it was agreed that it was more appropriate to now use the term broad-based education, to indicate that the Church did not see Wesley College as a place with a narrow focus on a particular curriculum that may serve a few pupils at the expense of the greater number. The current Ministry of Education / Government emphasis on numeracy, literacy and other key competencies¹⁰ also featured. This affirmed the necessity to work with a number of students from varied ethnic and cultural backgrounds, a number of whom are secure in their home language, for whom English was not the first language, and to provide the opportunity for these students to develop the numeracy and literacy skills that are an essential component of the National Certificate of Educational Attainment [NCEA] emphasized in the New Zealand Curriculum.¹¹

¹⁰ The key competencies listed in The New Zealand Curriculum are: thinking, using language, symbols, and texts; managing self; relating to others; participating and contributing.

¹¹ At present the opportunity for these to be gained is offered in two language contexts: Te Reo Maori and English. Currently there is debate about providing this opportunity in other languages, particularly the Pacific languages commonly used at the College.

Further, the Committee noted the given: the historical charge extended to Wesley College to provide education for Maori and Pasifika descent and for students whose personal circumstances require special care. This is the charge that was expressed in the Methodist Education and Charitable Purposes Act 1911¹², reflecting the terms of the Land Grants made to the Wesleyan Native Institution by Governor Fitzroy in 1844 and 1845, and extended by Governor Grey in 1850, 1852 and 1854.

At the conclusion of their work it was the view of the Committee that the revised wording placed Wesley College in its current context, affirmed the work of its Board and staff, and encouraged the continuation and further development of the application of this Special Character.

The proposed wording was reported back to the Wesley College Trust Board in the first instance. It was warmly received. One significant addition was made. The late Rev Andre Le Roux proposed that the heritage statement be strengthened with the addition of the words 'and Methodist'. This was accepted. The Board wished to signal that there should always be a distinctive Methodist emphasis at Wesley College.

The only other changes made to the statement as prepared by the Committee occurred at the July 2009 Taiwi Strategy meeting.¹³ Rev Peter Williamson, District Superintendent of the Northland District, encouraged the retention of the words 'this includes religious observances'. The wisdom of ensuring that Wesley College remained a place where religious observances were at the centre of the life of the College and not an occasional add-on was accepted. The words 'this includes religious observances' were added as the second sentence in the heritage statement.

Rev Peter Williamson also advocated for the retention of the paragraph in the 1976 Clause stating that 'Wesley College caters primarily for students boarding at the Proprietor's hostel with which it has a close association. It is acknowledged by the parties hereto that the Proprietor's hostel at present provides for residential accommodation with a special character that is an essential component of the special character of the school.'

¹² The Methodist Educational and Charitable Purposes Act 1911 provided for the incorporation of a number of Trusts engaged in Methodist Educational and Charitable activities and established the Board of the Wesley Training College to refocus their work, providing for the resources for the eventual relocation of Wesley College Three Kings to Paerata in 1922. In 1911 there was opposition to the amalgamation of the various Trusts on the grounds that the intention of the original grants would be lost.

¹³ The Taiwi Strategy Committee meets twice a year to focus on strategic direction for the Taiwi section of the Methodist Church of New Zealand – Te Haahi Weteriana o Aotearoa. The equivalent body in Te Taha Maori o Te Haahi Weteriana o Aotearoa is Te Hui Poari.

Again, a well reasoned argument was accepted. It was recognized that the Proprietor's hostel has a unique place at Wesley College. Some 80% of the students at Wesley College reside in the hostel. Common sense requires that the same special character expected to be evident in the school is to be found and modeled in the hostel. A difficult dichotomy would be created if the two were not aligned.

At the conclusion of this consultation period the Wesley College Trust Board recommended to the 2009 Conference that the proposed Special Character Statement be affirmed. The presentation of the report created some discussion, particularly around how, in this expression of partnership, the Church might demonstrate its commitment to the special character. The decisions record that Conference affirms the proposed Special Character Statement.

Following Conference an application for the Integration Agreement to be amended by way of a Supplementary Agreement was lodged with the Ministry of Education. On 31 May 2010 the Supplementary Agreement was signed by the Minister.

The Challenge now is to ensure that the intent expressed in the Special Character Clause becomes embedded in practice. Discussion about this is not new to Wesley College. A report commissioned by the Wesley College Trust Board¹⁴ in 1998 set this challenge.

The conclusion to the section of this report headed: Specific issues relating to the school's special character and its affiliation to the Methodist Church noted: *"There are many examples to demonstrate that the school is working hard to meet its special character obligations that relate to being Christian, non-sectarian, and affiliated to the Methodist Church. There is a need for key staff, the two Boards and the Church to clarify what these three aspects mean, how they translate into practice, who is responsible for what, and to set in place monitoring systems to ensure that expectations are met. The expectations of staff (including the Chaplain) in this area also need to be spelled out. At the moment it is easy for some to pay lip service to or disregard the commitment they need to show to this area of the school's special character."*

Since 2006 there has been a focus on unpacking the Special Character and what it means for both staff and student to work and live in a community that is "affiliated to the Methodist Church".

¹⁴ Hill, J and Hawk, K, Educational Research and Development Centre, Massey University College of Education: Albany, Wesley College Review, July 1998.

In 2008 the teaching staff began to engage in conversations related to the introduction of the New Zealand Curriculum. It became clear that the Vision, Principles and Values statements expressed in the New Zealand Curriculum aligned very closely with The Methodist Ethos, Methodist Priorities¹⁵ and the Methodist Educational Style, all of which are reflected in the Wesley College Special Character statement. Heads of Department and other staff responsible for curriculum implementation were challenged to recognise this and to incorporate and be quite specific about how this vision, these principles and values could be embedded in Departmental Schemes and other curriculum documents: as a reflection of the Special Character. Responding to this occasioned much discussion about the Special Character: how it is understood and applied.

The Boards, staff and community have a significant resource in the Chaplaincy Team¹⁶ to ensure that the Special Character is implemented. This was demonstrated in 2009 when the Superintending Chaplain, Rev Sylvia Akauola-Tongotongo, assisted by the Head of Life and Faith Department [Religious Education] within the school, Rev Ali'itasi Salesa, seized the moment to build on the paper The Methodist Ethos and introduced several initiatives that were to have a significant impact in the life of the College.

These initiatives were:

- the introduction of a short devotional time at the start of the morning meetings of teaching staff;
- that these devotional times were based on the theme for the week;
- that morning Chapel observances were focussed on the theme for the week; and
- the introduction of a College Bible, so that the daily scripture readings were able to be read aloud in the same translation.

Also in 2009, the Wesley College Trust Board responded to a Supplementary Education Review Office report on the hostels that drew attention to some aspects of hostel life, primarily the safety of boarders, by employing a consultancy company, Paul Diver and Associates, to consider the structure and management of the hostels. The Education Review Office report highlighted some matters which could be said to be the antithesis of the Special Character in operation.

The Diver report suggested a number of changes aimed at focussing the structure and management of the hostels on a customer service model to create an atmosphere in the hostels that would provide for the best possible outcomes for the young men and women in the hostels. Meetings with House Parents and the subsequent House Parent Training established KPIs [Key Performance Indicators] and SOPs [Standard Operating Procedures] that established expectations and a consistent focus and operation across each of the 7 hostels.

¹⁵ Refer Appendix 5

¹⁶ The Chaplaincy Team consists of Rev Sylvia Akauola Tongotongo, Superintending Chaplain, Whaea Paewhenua Nathan, Chaplain Maori, Rev Ali'itasi Salesa, Head of the Life and Faith Department, Rev Stephen Tema, Deputy Principal Boarding, and Rev Ian Faulkner, Principal.

Significantly, one of the changes recommended in the report was the establishment of the position of Deputy Principal Boarding. The first appointee to this role was the School Guidance Counsellor, Rev Stephen Tema. Rev Tema a former pupil of the College, well versed in the ethos of the Methodist Church of New Zealand – Te Haahi Weteriana o Aotearoa, was ideally positioned to lead a change management process with a focus on the Special Character and its application to the daily life of the College.

One of the KPIs identified by the House Parents was that House Parents would be seen to support the Special Character. One of the key aspects of this was that the boarding day would finish with dorm meetings incorporating a brief devotional time. Thus for boarding students each weekday begins with a religious observance, Morning Chapel, and the day concludes with devotions in each hostel. An initiative by Rev Salesa was to provide the means by which consistent messages could be given. The daily bible reading and a precis of the Chapel message is emailed to all staff. Thus, the community have a statement that allows the same messages to be given to those in the school and in the hostel. This consistent focus has meant that students and staff now recognise this aspect of the Special Character dimension. Many adults and young people are comfortable continuing discussions as to the relevance of the daily observance in a setting other than the Chapel observance.

Parallel with and complementary to the above focus on developing a pedagogical and curriculum base to reflect the Special Character and changes to the administrative and human resource base within the hostels, the College has engaged in an investigation of disciplinary practices. In 2009 Margaret Thorsborne¹⁷ was engaged through the Ministry of Education Student Engagement Initiative to work with hostel staff and the school Deans. This Restorative Practices Workshop introduced a way of managing young people that was new to many. A new language was introduced and the workshop participants were exposed to thinking that encouraged a move from punitive measures to restorative practices to resolve difficulties. Subsequently, all hostel and teaching staff have had the opportunity to participate in a workshop designed to add the tool of restorative practices to their toolbox. Restorative Practice methodology is a very Methodist practice. Restorative practices create positive interpersonal values, use language and images that are inclusive, provide safe environments in which students can learn to live and work together in harmony, express opposition to cultures of violence and to systems of domination and exclusion; and provide processes for dealing with conflict, harassment, abuse and violation. As more staff become confident in the use of Restorative Practice methodology its use will become more marked. There is a view that restorative practice methodology is the easy option: with the miscreant being let off with a consequence that at the most extreme is a 'slap on the risk with a wet bus ticket'. Experience has shown that Restorative Conferences are far from an easy option.

¹⁷ Margaret Thorsborne & Associates: Restorative Justice – Transformative Justice, <http://www.thorsborne.com.au>

Special Character perspectives require us to ask:

- Which option builds community?
- Which option builds responsibility?
- Which option creates a positive future for all?

At present many would say that Restorative Practices have this effect.

As has been emphasised earlier in this report, the Supplementary Agreement in itself will not mean that the Special Character is a living and all-encompassing aspect of the life of Wesley College. The 2010 Educational Review Office report recorded: *Wesleyan principles and values provide a holistic framework for school life. They are aligned with the New Zealand Curriculum and are reinforced in daily chapel and teaching programmes. Students have ready access to pastoral care, which includes chaplaincy and counselling. Students enjoy positive relationships with their teachers and with each other. Students are proud of their school and appreciate the commitment of teachers and staff to supporting their learning and wellbeing.* A solid foundation has been established.

In conclusion, three further reflections are possible. Each comments on special character applications. The first notes that the Stationing¹⁸ of the Rev Sylvia Akauola-Tongotongo as Superintending Chaplain Wesley College in 2004 signalled that a new relationship between the Conference and Wesley College was beginning. The Stationing sheet listed Wesley College as Parish [number 2830]. Previous Chaplains had also been teachers. At times there was confusion between the role as pastor and the role as teacher and in previous years there had been recommendations that the roles be separated. Rev Sylvia Akauola-Tongotongo's Stationing achieved this. Its effect of drawing Wesley College into a closer relationship with the wider Church may not have been foreseen. It has been a definite outcome. The second is an emerging student awareness that it is acceptable to acknowledge a desire to develop a relationship with God. In 2009 and 2010 at the Chapel Services held to acknowledge those in Year 13 leaving the community approximately half of those leaving publically stated that they had begun a relationship with their God and that they wished to continue to explore what that meant for them. The third is an emerging openness within the community to discuss Ministry both as a 'call' and as a career option. From its inception there was the expectation that those attending Wesley College would develop the skills to provide leadership within their home communities. There are numerous examples of former students who have met this expectation. From the beginning the Church has offered a place for leadership to be shown and there are examples of those who have felt the call to Ministry. At present there are a number of students who are discussing how their experience of a call might be tested. At a time when Ministry may not seem an attractive or comfortable option for young people to consider this is a sign of hope for future generations.

¹⁸ Stationing is a Methodist / Wesleyan term that indicates the appointment by Conference of a Presbyter to a Parish.

The challenge for the Wesley College Trust Board, the Board of Trustees, the Principal and the staff of both Boards is to ensure that the intent and emphases of the Special Character Statement continue to be the overarching umbrella¹⁹ for everything that happens at Wesley College and that they are the touchstones against which everything is measured.

Ian Faulkner
Principal Wesley College, Paerata, New Zealand.

March 2011

Sabbatical period: Term 3, 2010.

Acknowledgements:

New Zealand Ministry of Education
Wesley College Board of Trustees
Mrs Susan Easter, Chair, Wesley College Board of Trustees
Mr Warrick Sanson, Deputy Principal, Wesley College
Rev Ali'itasi Salesa, Head of Life and Faith, Wesley College
Wesley College Trust Board
Rev John Murray, Chair of the Wesley College Trust Board
Rev Sylvia Akauola Tongotongo, Superintending Chaplain, Wesley College
Rev Stephen Tema, Deputy Principal Boarding, Wesley College
Whaea Paewhenua Nathan, Chaplain Maori, Wesley College
Mr Simon Morris, Headmaster, Kingswood School, Bath, England
Rev. Mike Wilkinson, Chaplain, Kingswood School, Bath, England
Rev. Graham Russell, Secretary for the Board of Management, Methodist Schools, Methodist Church of Great Britain.
Rev Dr Mary Gaygill, former Principal Trinity Theological College
Rev Dr Terry Wall, Convenor, Methodist Church of New Zealand Faith and Order Committee
Mr Eric Bevis, former member of the Wesley College Trust Board and the Wesley College Board of Governors (forerunner to the Wesley College Board of Trustees)
Mr Jim Peters, Pro Vice-Chancellor Maori, Auckland University, alumnus of Wesley College and former member of the Wesley College Trust Board
Rev Diana Tana, Tumuaki o Te Taha Maori o Te Haahi Weteriana o Aotearoa
Rev Brian Turner, alumnus of Wesley College and former President of The Methodist Church of New Zealand - Te Haahi Weteriana o Aotearoa
Rev Jill van de Geer, former General-Secretary of the Methodist Church of New Zealand – Te Haahi Weteriana o Aotearoa and former President of the Methodist Church of New Zealand – Te Haahi Weteriana o Aotearoa.

¹⁹ Or, should it be expressed as the 'undergirding foundation' upon which everything that happens at Wesley College is built and the touchstone against which everything is measured? Both project a powerful image of the place of the Special Character in the life of the College.

APPENDIX 1

The Special Character Clause 1976

THE parties hereto accept and agree that Wesley College was originally established to provide education with a special character and that at the date hereof it provides education with the special character described in this clause. Wesley College is a multi-racial school which while being non sectarian has a direct affiliation with the Methodist Church of New Zealand and with the strength and support of this church affiliation provides education based on the beliefs and philosophies of the Christian faith. This includes religious observances.

In addition to religious education the College also supplies industrial (which term includes agricultural) training and an emphasis on instruction in the English language.

Wesley College has a special obligation to provide education for students of Maori descent, students of Pacific Islands descent, and orphans or otherwise disadvantaged students. It aims to provide a school at which students of all races can receive their education and learn to live and work together in harmony.

Wesley College caters primarily for students boarding at the Proprietor's hostel with which it has a close association. It is acknowledged by the parties hereto that the Proprietor's hostel at present provides for residential accommodation with a special character that is an essential component of the special character of the school.

Attached hereto in the Fourth Schedule is an historical resume of the development of the special character of the school prepared by the Proprietor.

APPENDIX 2

CONFERENCE RESOLUTION 2007

Notice of Motion N

Moved by: Setaita Kinahoi Veikune & John Murray

That:

- (i) The Methodist Church of New Zealand – Te Haahi Weteriana o Aotearoa initiate conversations that will clarify what the Wesley College Special Character Statement expressed in the 1976 Wesley College Integration Agreement means for the 21st Century;
and
- (ii) This notice of motion is referred to the Council of Conference, Tauwi Strategy and Hui Poari.
The Wesley College Special Character Statement is clause 4 of the Wesley College Integration Agreement between the Board of the Wesley Training College (now the Wesley College Trust Board) and Her Majesty the Queen acting by and through the Minister, dated 30 November 1976.

Decision:

1. Conversations are initiated by the Council of Conference within the MCNZ to clarify what the Wesley College Special Character Statement, 'direct affiliation with the MCNZ', expressed in the 1976 Wesley College Integration Agreement means for the relationship between Wesley College and the MCNZ in the 21st Century.

APPENDIX 3

THE METHODIST ETHOS

From time-to-time I am asked to comment on the term ‘the Methodist ethos’.
What does it mean? In particular, what does it mean in the context of Wesley College?

In a review of Wesley College²⁰ in 1998 the Methodist ethos was described as:

- Expression of the Christian faith and Wesleyan insights with passion, integrity and in the setting of here and now.
- Consideration of the needs of others, especially those who are different from us.
- Support for values which respect the integrity of persons and communities.
- Use of language and images which are inclusive and which express equality.
- Opposition to cultures of violence and to systems of domination and exclusion.
- Provision of safe environments and processes for dealing with conflict, harassment, abuse and violation.
- Openness to the future and to new insights, experiences and people.
- Treasuring our heritage and working to express it relevantly.

This paper expands on some aspects of this statement, places the statement in an historical perspective and comments specifically on some Wesley College experiences / implications.

The Methodist ethos has its beginnings with John and Charles Wesley. Both men were priests of the Church of England. The Wesleyan / Methodist Church emerged out of the Methodist movement within this Church. The Methodist movement began at Oxford University when the Wesley brothers gathered an enthusiastic group of students around them. They met regularly for prayer and the study of the scriptures. They celebrated weekly communion and ordered their lives methodically. An interest in the social ills of their time was demonstrated through visiting the poor, the sick and the imprisoned.

Other students mocked members of this earnest group with the taunt “Methodist”. This mocking would indicate that these Methodists were different! It is this difference – the ‘Methodist ethos’ that finds its expression in the Special Character of Wesley College and the desire for this to be lived out at Wesley College.

In basic terms, the Methodist movement placed emphasis on two things: first a desire for salvation and then as evidence of this to work towards a betterment of society. These two intertwined hallmarks of the Methodist movement can found in the ‘Nature, Design and General Rules of the United Societies’²¹ issued on May 1, 1743 by John and Charles Wesley.

²⁰ Hill J and Hawk K, Educational Research and Development Centre, Massey University College of Education: Albany, Wesley College Review, July 1998

²¹ Laws and Regulations of the Methodist Church of New Zealand, Revised Edition 2006, Introductory Documents 1.

Methodists have always been clear that no-one is beyond the reach of God's love. Salvation is there for everyone who turns to God, and not just for the chosen few (the elect). We recognise that salvation is not earned or gained by good works: it is a measure of God's grace!

From early times Methodists combined a focus on an individual's response to God with a passionate and active concern for social justice. The huge crowds who heard and responded to Wesley's preaching were often the poor. The upper classes regarded him as a threat to the social order because he treated the lower classes as equally human. Early Methodists were active in the struggle against slavery, campaigned for prison reform and set up a range of educational initiatives to improve literacy and health. Improved literacy was seen as a means to develop understandings of the faith. Methodist Class Meetings, Leaders' Meetings, Quarterly Meetings, Synod Meetings and the Conference developed skills that Lay Leaders were able to use in a range of contexts, including local and national government.

Methodist folklore speaks of the impact of Methodism on the life of the early eighteenth century: of the rediscovery to some degree of a social message. In 1743 John Wesley wrote (in *An Earnest Appeal to Men of Reason and Religion*): "We see, on every side, either men of no religion at all, or men of a lifeless, formal religion. We... should greatly rejoice if by any means we might convince some that there is a better religion to be attained, a religion worthy of the God that gave it. And this we conceive to be no other than love; the love of God and of all mankind, the loving God in our heart, and soul and strength, as having first loved us, as the fountain of all the good we have received, and of all we hope to enjoy; and the loving every soul which God hath made, every man on the earth as his own soul."

In 1952 the New Zealand Conference adopted a statement 'Some Social Principles of the Methodist Church'.²² Its introduction quotes the above 1743 reasoning to underpin these principles. This statement was reaffirmed in 1967 and 1976. It continues to speak strongly to 21st century people.

In the New Zealand context, Methodist people have been active in a range of social contexts and national and local politics. Methodists have been prominent in speaking out on public issues such as the misuse of alcohol and the 'sin of sweated labour', racism and sexism, human rights abuses, unfair trading practices, unethical investment, environmental pollution and Third World Debt. Methodism has also made bold statements about Te Tiriti o Waitangi, beginning a bi-cultural journey leading to a multi-cultural Church, power sharing and the just distribution of resources within Aotearoa / New Zealand.

Methodists have traditionally held to a four-fold approach when applying the Christian faith to contemporary issues and practice. The four approaches relate to scripture, tradition, reason and experience.²³

Methodists seek to discover the Word of God through 'searching' the scriptures. While there are different understandings about this, Methodists have always warmed to prophetic words.

²² Laws and Regulations of the Methodist Church of New Zealand, Revised Edition 2006, Introductory Documents 1.

²³ Called By Name, Pastoral Care and Christian Education Office of the Methodist Church (UK), 2002

One other approach to applying the Christian faith is to exercise reason. Methodists affirm that we are called to love God with our minds as well as our hearts and that we are encouraged to think things through in the light of reason. This means that we seek to become aware of different points of view (for example by reading), and using our own critical thinking in order to make sense of God's world.

Some words of scripture particularly challenge those at Wesley College. The following are examples:

- “What does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God?” [Micah 6:8]. (*Methodist people and pupils at Wesley College talk about being humble. Are showing justice and demonstrating mercy seen as parts of walking humbly with God?*)
- “Then Peter went up to him and said ‘Lord, how often must I forgive my brother if he wrongs me? As often as seven times?’ Jesus answered, ‘Not seven, I tell you, but seventy-seven times.’ “[Matthew 18: 21 – 22]
- “The spirit of the Lord is upon me, for he has anointed me to bring the good news to the afflicted. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to captives, sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim a year of favour from the Lord.” [Luke 4: 18]
- “Ask, and it will be given to you; search, and you will find; knock, and the door will be opened to you.” [Matthew 7:8]
- “No, because when you weed out the darnell you might pull up the wheat with it.”
The parable of the weeds - Matthew 13: 24 – 30 and 36 -43]

At times scripture challenges how conventional wisdom and practice is applied at Wesley College and how members of the Wesley community, both adults and young people, are called to relate to each other. Recognising this requires responses other than the conventional to be considered.

At Wesley College we meet every weekday for worship and again twice on Sunday. These regular meetings create an opportunity for the scriptures to be examined and their application in relation to Wesley College, Aotearoa and the World to be noted, questioned, considered and pondered upon.

These emphases, approaches and social principles have expression in the Special Character clause of the 1976 Integration Agreement that highlights:

- religious observances [a desire for salvation]

Chapel observances, the Life and Faith programme and the ‘witness’ within the community provide the opportunity for all to discover who God is for them. For some this discovery is new. For others it is a reawakening or a rediscovery as new understandings emerge and are forged.

- Industrial training and instruction in the English language [skills to empower in the face of an invasive culture²⁴ in a new ‘world’]

²⁴ Chessum, Rev. W, Wesley College 160th Reunion Sermon, Wesley College Collegian 2004.

The invasive culture at this time might be seen in the negative influences that are prominent in New Zealand society - often transmitted through the media, internet, videos, music and lyrics - that promote violence, sexually explicit behaviours, gender discrimination, ethnic / cultural superiority and other life-sapping anti-social behaviours.

- providing education for Maori, Pasifika people, orphans, and disadvantaged in an atmosphere where students can learn to live and work together in harmony [living out the social principles]

These emphases, approaches and social principles also provide a context within which we view the challenges faced by those who live at Wesley College. It is reality that a number of the young men and women who enter Wesley College have prior experiences that mean they do not trust those in positions of leadership or authority. It is a reality that not all have the skills to manage social interactions or academic learning in a positive manner. It is a reality that not all have experienced stable, balanced interactions with others that allow them to live and work together in harmony. The Wesley College community is a microcosm of New Zealand society. The impact of a widening economic disparity, cultural / ethnic diversity and a heightened fear of the stranger and the different is marked in society beyond our gates. At times they are focussed within. Where the will exists, these are challenges that can be addressed. Wesley College recognises the risk that is inherent where these conditions exist. We also recognise that there is a greater risk in not taking that risk. In a small way the creation of a better society depends on taking it!

Within an educational (and predominantly boarding) setting the 'Methodist ethos' also speaks about how those who do not conform to the standards set by society or the institution are to be regarded. When we believe that salvation (a recognition by an individual of who God is and of the relationship that exists between 'me and my God') is available for all, then we must also hold the belief that all are human and redemption is available for all. Methodists recognise that punishment does not redeem a person. Redemption grows out of a recognition of 'doing wrong'; a wish to 'put things right'; a willingness to change; followed by making the most of an opportunity for 'a second chance'. There are many examples of students at Wesley College who have responded, begun a new journey and moved on to make a useful contribution to Wesley College and subsequently to society in the place they have chosen to live after Wesley College. The transformation of the heart, leading to a new way of living, is at the core of the gospel (the good news).

Therefore, to sum up in a very Methodist way: What is the Methodist ethos?

First, to recall the words in Jim Strathdees' hymn (1969): "I am the light of the world":

**To seek the lonely and the lost
To make the powerful care
To make music in an old man's heart
And sing to the colours of the earth**

**I am the light of the world
You people come and follow me
To follow and love is to learn the mystery
Of what you were meant to do and be.**

and then to quote the words attributed to John Wesley:

**Do all the good you can,
By all the means you can,
In all the ways you can,
In all the places you can,
At all the times you can,
To all the people you can,
As long as ever you can.**

Ian Faulkner
PRINCIPAL
October 2008

APPENDIX 4

The Special Character Clause 2010

THE parties hereto accept and agree that Wesley College was originally established to provide education with a special character and that at the date hereof it provides education with the special character described in this clause. Wesley College is a multi-ethnic school that has a direct affiliation with the Methodist Church of New Zealand – Te Haahi Weteriana o Aotearoa. The Methodist Church of New Zealand – Te Haahi Weteriana o Aotearoa is a Treaty-based Church that expresses its governance in a bi-cultural, power-sharing partnership between Te Taha Maori and Tauwi.

This has historical and contemporary relevance that is expressed within the College as:

- Treasuring our Christian and Methodist heritage and learning to express it relevantly. This includes religious observances.
- Openness to the future and to new insights, experiences and people.
- Support for values that respect the integrity of persons and communities.
- Consideration of the needs of others, especially the economically marginalised.
- Use of language and images that are inclusive and which express equality.
- Provision of safe environments in which students can learn to live and work together in harmony.
- Opposition to cultures of violence and to systems of domination and exclusion.
- Processes for dealing with conflict, harassment, abuse and violation.

Wesley College seeks to provide a broad-based education with special attention to numeracy, literacy and other key competencies. This emphasis on a broad-based education is expressed in the College motto: Fide, Litteris, Labore – Faith, Letters (learning) and Labour (hard work).

Wesley College has a special obligation to provide education for students of Maori and Pacific Islands descent and students whose family and personal circumstances require special care.

Wesley College caters primarily for students boarding at the Proprietor's hostel with which it has a close association. It is acknowledged by the parties hereto that the Proprietor's hostel at present provides for residential accommodation with a special character that is an essential component of the special character of the school.

Attached hereto in the Fourth Schedule is an historical resume of the development of the special character of the school prepared by the Proprietor.

APPENDIX 5

METHODIST PRIORITIES

Presentation of the Christian Gospel in contextually relevant forms, and in ways that are sensitive to the needs and aspirations of the hearers.

Development of theology which respects and reflects the time and place in which we live.

Commitment to a bi-cultural journey, including support for the Treaty of Waitangi, justice for Maori, and a process of decolonization.

Exploration of expressions of power-sharing, both structural and personal.

Extension of social justice and positive interpersonal values throughout society.

Concern for the environment.