

## **Te Pouhere (Constitution) Sunday. (2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday after Pentecost.)**

*(This sermon was given by Canon Deborah Broome in 2007. Her comments are as follows:  
This uses an interview format, with another person (liturgical assistant) asking the questions.  
Please feel free to use in other parishes – please note it will need to be adapted for local situations.)*

### **So, we're observing Te Pouhere (Constitution) Sunday: what does that mean? What is this Constitution anyway?**

This is the Constitution (Te Pouhere) of the Anglican Church here, the Anglican Church in Aotearoa, New Zealand and Polynesia. The 1992 Constitution, which we think about today, revised the constitution agreed on in 1857 by a general conference held in Auckland. It was back then that the Anglican church here became an autonomous province. The 1992 Constitution of this Church provides for three partners to order their affairs within their own cultural context.

### **Three partners – what are these?**

The partners to the Constitution are the three Tikanga which make up our church: Tikanga Pakeha, Tikanga Maori, and Tikanga Pasefika.

### **What's a Tikanga?**

The word tikanga (with a small 't') means 'custom, way, style, or cultural model', but when it's used in a specifically Anglican context it's written with a capital T and means one of the three strands that together make up the Anglican church in this part of the world. Here, Tikanga Pakeha is made up of seven Dioceses, Tikanga Maori comprises five Hui Amorangi (regional bishoprics, the boundaries of which differ from those of the dioceses). Tikanga Pasefika encompasses Fiji, Tonga, Samoa and the Cook Islands, and is known as the Diocese of Polynesia. One of the bishops from the Diocese of Polynesia is stationed in Auckland, to care for the Pasefika people there.

### **So is it three churches, or one church?**

That sounds a little like the question that's often asked about the Trinity – do we worship one God or three? And the answer is kind of the same: it's about community which encompasses the distinctive character of its members. The Anglican Church of Aotearoa New Zealand and Polynesia is one church, in which each Tikanga is an equal partner in the decision-making process of the General Synod, and where each can exercise mission and ministry to God's people within the culture of each partner. There are some things we do together (General Synod and a number of cross-Tikanga bodies, including a couple of the committees I've been on) and many things we do separately. Many Anglicans live out their church life within only their own Tikanga – I guess most of us at St Anne's would be like that: we do things within Tikanga Pakeha, and especially within our Diocese of Wellington. And it's probably worth noting that which Tikanga you're part of isn't based on race: I know of Maori working within Tikanga Pakeha, and Pakeha working within Tikanga Maori, and similarly with Tikanga Pasefika. It's about where you find your home.

### **And don't we have three Archbishops?**

That's right – in this Province we have three 'co-presiding bishops' who are addressed (when we're speaking English at least) as 'archbishop': Brown Turei for Tikanga Maori, David Moxon for 'the New Zealand dioceses' (as Tikanga Pakeha is sometimes referred to) and Jabez Bryce in Polynesia. They work very closely together and have a real leadership role in this Province. As some of you know, Archbishops Brown and David came to part of our diocesan Synod last year; Archbishop Jabez would have been there too, but the death of the King of Tonga kept him away.

## **But the Anglican church is English, right?**

Well, actually, in New Zealand, the Anglican church was Maori first. It began in 1814 when the Maori chief Ruatara agreed with the Reverend Samuel Marsden to give protection to three missionaries and their families at Oihi in the Bay of Islands. Missionary activity, including Christian teaching in the Maori language, and by Maori themselves, quickly spread throughout the country. This was guided by the Church Missionary Society under the leadership of the Rev. Henry Williams from 1823. When organised European settlement began after 1840, mainly from England and Scotland, a new focus of the church emerged; the formation of the church in the new colonial settlements. George Augustus Selwyn, Bishop of New Zealand, arrived in 1842 as a bishop of the United Church of England and Ireland. The settlers were keen to establish their familiar church in a new land, but without the English connection with the state. So the history of the Anglican church here has been the history of the Maori church of the missionaries (including many Maori missionaries) and the settler church. Since European settlement, there have always been these two strands – but for a while there was only the Maori strand. The earliest Synods of the diocese of Waiapu (the eastern part of the North Island) were conducted in Maori, under Bishop William Williams.

## **And the church in the Pacific – how did that happen?**

From the time of Bishop Selwyn the islands of the South Pacific had been included in the Church of the Province of New Zealand. The Anglican Church in Melanesia became a separate province in 1975. The Anglican Church in the islands of Polynesia (mainly Fiji, Tonga and Western Samoa) was established as an associated missionary diocese in 1925. In 1990 the Diocese of Polynesia became a diocese in its own right. It has archdeaconries, just as our diocese does – in fact one of the archdeaconries is located in Auckland, for ministry by and amongst Polynesians there. So what are now the three Tikanga have a long history together. And this is something worth celebrating.

## **So is everyone celebrating this Constitution Sunday today?**

General Synod set down Te Pouhere (Constitution) Sunday in the Lectionary and the Church Calendar for the 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday after Pentecost. It's one of a number of 'special Sundays' that the Calendar offers us – Sea Sunday is another.

## **So in practice, what does the three Tikanga church mean for us here at *St Anne's*? Does it mean using lots of Maori language in services, even though we are largely a Pakeha congregation?**

Well, the liturgies in our Prayer Book include some parts in te reo, and we use some of these phrases here, though not as much as some other Pakeha churches in this city. Using some of the Maori is a way of recognising our membership, our unity with the larger Anglican church here that we're a part of. We do the same sort of thing in other respects. Bishop Tom isn't here with us every Sunday, but all the time we have the Bishop's Chair in the sanctuary. It reminds us that we are members of a larger body, the Diocese. We don't just put the Bishop's chair there when we know he is coming to sit on it – it is there all the time. Hearing some Maori words – like seeing the Bishop's chair – reminds us that we're Anglicans in this country, that we are part of a larger community. And of course, like all Anglican clergy, I have to be able to take a service in Maori (*I've done that a couple of times and it's a real joy*) and to administer communion and say the Lord's Prayer in that language.

## What else does it mean for us here?

Being part of a church that recognises a diversity of ways of being helps link us to the world outside the church. New Zealand is much more a multicultural society than it was *even when my family settled here in the early sixties*. So it's good for the church to reflect this, and to do so in a way that honours our history, that honours where we have all come from, and the things that have happened in this land. And to structure our church like this is very 'Anglican'. The Anglican Communion is a world-wide family of Christians who affirm an expression of the Christian faith in the local circumstances of the nations in which they live. Allowing for local differences is one of the key Anglican principles, one that goes all the way back to the very beginnings of the Anglican church.

And our Three Tikanga Constitution allows us to say something about community. Real community is about relationship, it's about talking together and getting to know each other. It's about trust and mutual respect. Let me give you an example. I'm very lucky because I've been able to go to several Three Tikanga meetings over the years, and I've got used to things happening in a number of different languages. The thing that really brings home to me what being part of our Three Tikanga church is all about is when, during a service, someone says 'I'm going to pray for the world, and especially for places where there is conflict' – and then she prays in Tongan or Samoan and at the end everyone says 'Amen'. Now I can't follow more than a few words in those languages and I don't know exactly what she prayed, but I'm happy to say Amen because I know and trust the person praying. Our Constitution gives us the chance to get to know and trust each other – and that's important.

*Last week we celebrated Trinity Sunday, and the Trinity says to us that at the heart of God there is diversity and there is relationship. Here's something that Henri Nouwen said that I think encapsulates some of the diversity and relationship that we have in our Three Tikanga church.*

A mosaic consists of thousands of little stones. Some are blue, some are green, some are yellow, some are gold. When we bring our faces close to the mosaic, we can admire the beauty of each stone. But as we step back from it, we can see that all these little stones reveal to us a beautiful picture, telling a story none of these stones can tell by itself.

That is what our life in community is about. Each of us is like a little stone, but together we reveal the face of God to the world. Nobody can say: "I make God visible." But others who see us together can say: "They make God visible." Community is where humility and glory touch.