

SERMON : TE POUHERE SUNDAY 2021

MAY the words of my mouth and the meditations in our hearts be acceptable in your sight O Lord, our strength and our Redeemer. <Amen>

Today is Constitution (Te Pouhere) Sunday of the Anglican Church in Aotearoa, New Zealand and Polynesia. The 1992 revision of our 1857 Constitution provides for three equal partners to order their affairs within their own cultural context.

That 1992 decision formed us into one church made up by Three Tikanga (**INTERWOVEN THREADS**) : of Maori, Pakeha and Pasefika. It formally recognised what had been in existence for some time.

The 'message' at the time was (**and still is**) "partnership". Partnership in the way we worship. Partnership in the way we are governed. Partnership in fulfilling our mission to an ethnically diverse group of people within Aotearoa, Fiji, Samoa, Tonga.

Our three Tikanga are cultural streams **NOT** racial ones - for as Christ teaches us this morning, we are "friends" because HE "chose us".

Our three Tikanga gives expression to cultural forms of worship and of leadership and organisation within the Church and thus they live out the life of The Risen Christ in the rich cultures that make up our lands.

Our people are free to belong to and to worship within whatever Tikanga they choose, and there are Pakeha who worship within Tikanga Maori, and Maori who worship within Tikanga Pakeha, and so also within and between Tikanga Pasefika.

So, today, everyone is celebrating this Te Pouhere, "Constitution Sunday".

Our parish is part of Tikanga Pakeha but we do welcome people to and celebrate our liturgies, in some parts, in Te Reo.

Using some Te Reo is a way of recognising our membership in, and our unity with, the larger Anglican church in Aotearoa, New Zealand and Polynesia. Proudly reaffirming what we are a part of.

<GO AND MOVE THE BISHOP'S CHAIR>

We do the same sort of thing in other respects. This is Bishop Steven's chair. He isn't here with us every Sunday, but ALL THE TIME we have the Bishop's Chair in the sanctuary.

The chair 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 Te Reo every Sunday - like seeing the Bishop's chair - reminds us that we're Anglicans in the land of the long white cloud. That we are an integral, fundamental part of a larger community.

Being part of a church that recognises a diversity of ways of being REALLY helps link us to the world outside the church.

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.

Our Three Tikanga Constitution also allows us to say something about three other interwoven threads that should ALWAYS govern us:

TRUST IN, RESPECT FOR & SERVICE OF THE LORD,

TRUST IN, RESPECT FOR & SERVICE ALONGSIDE OUR LEADERSHIP, AND

TRUST IN, RESPECT FOR & BUILDING UP EACH OTHER.

Praise God, that Te Pouhere, our Constitution, gives us the chance to reflect upon these things.

My prayer continues to be that each and every one of us moves ever closer to the meaning of the interwoven strands of the 'Tikanga' flax cross because ... Christ "chose us".

Here in Aotearoa, Three Tikanga, forever united as members of the body of Christ.

I runga e te Ingoa o te Atua, te Matua, te Tama me te Wairua Tapu.
In the name of God, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit <AMINE>