

## SERMON : TE POUHERE SUNDAY 2020

**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.**

The decision at the General Synod/te Hinota Whanui of 1992 to ratify a new constitution forming us into one church made up by Three Tikanga (**INTERWOVEN THREADS**) : of Maori, Pakeha and Pasefika was not a sudden and dramatic change. We had been functioning somewhat like that for some time as the shape of the church had evolved, and so the new constitution gave new structure to what in many ways already was.

The 'signpost' at the time was (**and still is**) "partnership" - and the motivation is a genuine one. Partnership in the way we worship. Partnership in the way our church is governed. Partnership in effectively fulfilling our mission to an ethnically diverse group of people within this part of the Pacific - the indigenous inhabitants of this land along with later settlers, and the people of the Islands of the Pacific - Fiji, Samoa, Tonga.

**Our three Tikanga are cultural streams NOT racial ones.**

The three Tikanga give 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 "Constitution Sunday". General Synod set down Te Pouhere (Constitution) Sunday in our Lectionary and the Church Calendar for the 2nd Sunday after Pentecost.

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 helps link us to the world outside the church.

Aotearoa\New Zealand is much more a multicultural society than it was even twenty years ago. So, I firmly believe, that 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.

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 community.

Real community is about relationship, it's about talking together and getting to know each other.

It's about trust and mutual respect.

Praise God, Te Pouhere, our Constitution, gives us the chance to get to know and trust each other - AND THAT'S VITAL.

Last week we celebrated Trinity Sunday, and the Trinity says to us that at the very heart of God there is diversity and there is relationship. Here's something that the Dutch Catholic priest Henri Nouwen (1932-1996) 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 our three Tikanga community is all about.

Each one of us is like a little stone, but together we reveal the face of God to the world.

No single person can say, "I make God visible."

But others who see us together can say, "THEY make God visible."

Here in Aotearoa, New Zealand and Polynesia ... our unique, three Tikanga is where humility and glory touch.

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>