

Te Pouhere Sunday Sermon - Judy Youmans

18th June 2017

In 1990, I shifted to Lower Hutt from Auckland. I had spent two years at Bible College (as it was then –now Laidlaw) and one year at the College of St John the Evangelist in Meadowbank, the Anglican theological college. It was a time of dramatic change for the Anglican Church, with new Prayer book being published in 1989 and discussions about the new constitution for the church which would be ratified in 1992.

Since 1966, the church had been developing a new prayer book that would reflect the church in New Zealand and the Pacific in the twentieth century. There had been many trial services produced and distributed and finally the finished article arrived. It was very different; a variety of languages for a start: English, Maori, Fijian, and Tongan. There were new services such as prayers in a house after a death and unveiling of a memorial that reflected the cultures of this iteration of the Anglican Church. The place of lay people was more important with sections in each service that could be led by lay people and Holy Communion services that could be led by lay people when the sacrament had been consecrated elsewhere. The language was more personal as we addressed God as 'You' and recognition that we are both male and female with the use of inclusive language. It has been valued around the world as a great gift, a taonga, from the Anglican province of New Zealand.

The change to the constitution that was coming was being debated when I arrived and I took part in some of the discussions. The single church was to become three strands, Tikanga Pakeha, Tikanga Maori and Tikanga Pasifika who would be equal partners to the new constitution. The word tikanga (small 't') means custom, style or cultural model and so the three Tikanga would allow the different cultural styles to be expressed.

You may notice if you look at the prayer book it has three different coloured markers that represent the strands (as well as being useful for marking pages unless they have been plaited together).

Each of the Tikanga has its own archbishop and so the Province has three co-presiding primates. At Bishop Ellie's ordination a couple of weeks ago, the service was led by two archbishops: Archbishop Philip Richardson (Tikanga Pakeha) and Archbishop Winston Halapua (Tikanga Pasifika).

Each Tikanga has its own way of doing things and style but they come together in General Synod with each being an equal partner in the decision making process and there are a number of cross Tikanga bodies and committees where they act together.

Tikanga Pakeha has eight dioceses: Taranaki, Auckland, Waipapu, Waikato, Wellington, Nelson, Christchurch and Dunedin.

Tikanga Maori has five Hui Amorangi (regional bishoprics which cover New Zealand as well but have different boundaries): Te Tai Tokerau, Te Tairāwhiti, Te Waipounamu, Te Manawa o te Wheke, and Te Upoko o Te Ika. Tikanga Maori also has representation in the Anglican Indigenous Network and has relationships with Hawaii, Southern Ohio, Sydney, Brisbane, Perth, First nations Peoples of Canada, Australian Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders.

Tikanga Pasifika encompasses Fiji, Tonga, Samoa and the Cook Islands and is known as the Diocese of Polynesia with one of its bishops stationed in Auckland.

So why did it happen?

The church first came to New Zealand in 1814 when the first Anglican missionaries settled in Oihi in the Bay of Islands. You may remember the celebrations of the bi centennial of the first Christmas service by Samuel Marsden a few years ago.

The first members of the Anglican Church were Maori and it wasn't until after 1840 and the signing of the Treaty of Waitangi that large numbers of settlers, mainly from England and Scotland, arrived. The new settlers wanted a church that was familiar but not connected with the state (as the Anglican Church in England is – it is the established church) and in 1842 the first Anglican Bishop arrived – George Selwyn – he was a bishop of the United Church of England and Ireland.

So there was initially the missionary Maori church and later there came to be another strand, the settler church. The first constitution of the Anglican Church in New Zealand was agreed in 1857. It was then that the Church here became an autonomous province of the wider Anglican Communion.

The Church included the area of New Zealand and also the islands of the South Pacific. In the Pacific Islands the church was physically separate but in New Zealand itself the areas covered by the Maori and settler strands were the same geographically although the way of worship and where they were based differed. The settlers built churches in their growing communities (the land often gifted by Maori for the churches and schools) and worshipped in English whereas the Maori churches were associated with the marae as well and the Maori language was used.

In the Pacific Islands, the Anglican Church in Melanesia became a separate province in 1975. The Anglican Church in Polynesia (mainly Fiji, Tonga and Western Samoa) was established as an associated missionary diocese in 1925 and became a diocese in its own right in 1990. Being geographically separate they worshipped in their own way and languages but in New Zealand it was more complicated.

Bishop Selwyn was insistent that clergy were well educated and that included knowing both Hebrew and Greek. Unlike England, there were not a great number of places to learn and he set up the College of St John the Evangelist in 1843. It wasn't easy for Pakeha students but it was extremely difficult for Maori for whom English was a second language. The missionaries had translated the Bible and the Prayer Book into Maori and that was the language used in the missionary church. In the settler church the language was English and as the numbers of settlers grew the settler church grew. There were the Land Wars as settlers demanded land and disease such as measles devastated the Maori communities. By the end of the nineteenth century it was thought that the Maori may die out. The 1896 census showed a low of 42,113 Maori but after that the numbers began to climb.

The earliest Synods of the diocese of Waiapu were conducted in Maori led by Bishop William Williams, a CMS missionary, but by 1869 they were conducted in English and this was an affront to the Maori present and virtually precluded their attendance. CMS who had been working with the Maori church withdrew from New Zealand at the turn of the twentieth century and there was no specific support for Maori in the Anglican Church. Efforts were made and requests for a Maori bishop but they came to nothing. Many felt that that Maori should be integrated or assimilated into

the Settler church, a church that operated in English not Maori and used cultural traditions of the settlers.

Maori clergy were poorly paid and it was very difficult for them. In 1883, Te Rau College was set up in Gisborne to educate Maori for ministry. It closed in 1920 and the students moved to St John's College in Auckland. A divinity school was set up at Te Aute College in 1934 because St John's was unable to cater for the needs of Maori Students.

Very, very slowly the Anglican Church began to respond to the needs of the Maori Anglicans (Presbyterians were much faster).

In 1928, F.A. Bennett was consecrated as the first Maori bishop in Aotearoa but he was very limited in how he could minister. He was suffragan (assistant) to the Bishop of Waiapu, could not attend General Synod except when elected as a clerical representative and he could only minister to his people when the local diocesan bishop gave permission which was not always forthcoming. For example, the Bishop of Auckland from 1940-60, W. J. Simpkin, refused to allow this. Auckland diocese was where a large proportion of Maori were situated, aggravated by the rapid move of Maori into the cities after World War II. With this shift their needs increased as they tried to adjust to the change from their previous lives based around the marae.

Finally, in 1964, the Bishop of Aotearoa was given a full seat on General Synod as a bishop and in 1972 the Bishopric of Aotearoa was constituted although he remained a suffragan of the Bishop of Waiapu. In 1978 General Synod established Te Pihopatanga o Aotearoa with its own council licensed by the Primate to "share in oversight of the Maori people" but still required a commission from each diocesan bishop.

In 1986, responding to the changes happening in the wider society, General Synod received a report from the Bi-Cultural Commission on the Treaty of Waitangi. In response, the office of Te Pihopa o Aotearoa was put on the same basis as diocesan bishops and so no longer needed a commission from diocesan bishops and also had the right to attend, speak and vote in diocesan synods as a bishop. The report also called for a change in the constitution, recognising that there had always been two ethnic churches in New Zealand.

In 1992 General Synod approved a new constitution which provided for "three sections, tikanga-Maori, Pakeha and Polynesia, each of which expresses the Gospel within its own culture."

The fears expressed during the debate at the time were about the division into three churches and the some about the land that the Pakeha churches were sitting on. Would the Maori want it back? How would the change be funded?

The church is still one church, just as God is one God but three persons. It has, perhaps, been a bit more separate than envisaged but as time has passed we have become more used to the new structure. With changes in society and the increasing use of the Maori language and wider knowledge of the culture we may become closer in the future. People worship in the place where they are comfortable, with Pakeha worshipping in Maori settings and Maori choosing to worship in Pakeha settings.

As the Lions visit we will sing the National anthem in Maori and in English. When we meet as a diocese we sing the Lord's Prayer in Maori and have songs in English and Maori. At the back of the church there are copies of both the Lord's Prayer and the National Anthem in Maori with explanations of the literal meanings. As I read then I find that they help me to think about the meaning of the words that are so familiar to me in English and give me a deeper understanding.

The issues of different cultural traditions occurred back in Acts as the early Christian church spread beyond the Jews to the Gentiles and the decision then was allow the differences with some rules about avoidance of food that may have been offered to idols. They did not have to become Jews to become Christians.

Now the differences add to the vibrancy of the Anglican Church in the 21st century. Bishop Ellie's ordination reflected her journey that embraced many different cultures and that added to an exciting and warm ceremony onto the next part of the journey of this part of the Anglican Church.

Let us pray:

From Tikanga Pakeha:

God of the southern sea and of these islands, God of Norfolk Pine and Lofty Totara, God of spindle and sail, You brought us to this land of plenty and bound us here in sacred trust. Make us worthy of our covenant with You: Create in us a deeper belonging by your grace, That we may partner Your ways together And serve Your purpose in each other. In the name of Christ our dolphin guide. Amen

From Tikanga Maori:

Master weaver, you are the creator and we are the flax with which you have plaited Te Pouhere, a whariki which unites our tikanga in Aotearoa and across Te Moananui a Kiwa. Your hand has woven us so that each tikanga is revealed in the perfection of its design, its pattern in the texture of our differences, and its strength in the unity of its purpose to shelter and support your promise. Remind us you have woven us so that no strand by itself reveals your design but together we are the whariki, Te Pouhere. Amen.

(whariki is a plaiting technique used to make floor mats which are also called whariki.)