

Te Pouhere Sunday 19 June 2022



Wairua Tapu, Holy Spirit, kuhu mai, nau mai ki konei, come, be welcome in this place and in these words.

Coming as I do from a working life of over 20 years in Communications, I'm very attuned to visual images or logos, which are used to represent the essence of an organisation – to encapsulate what it does, what it stands for, and particularly what it values. The logo is part of the brand – as they call it. A few words are used too in logos– sometimes as a strapline or phrase under the image. But the values, integral to the organisation and the way it does things, and why it does what it does, are usually given in more detail in the Vision and Missions statements.

Now I'm going to put you on the spot – anyone know parish's vision or mission statement –maybe have a quick google on your phone for our website (under the 'About' section)here they are:

MISSION

To love and share Christ

VISION

To be a thriving intergenerational and multicultural community sharing the good news of Jesus Christ.

VALUES

Togetherness

Discipleship

Community

I'm going to home in on the vision... "To be a thriving intergenerational and multicultural community sharing the good news of Jesus Christ" – great words –and of these the one I land on for the purposes of this sermon – is multicultural. Note these are things we want to be, aspirations, and it all sounds good to me ... but how do we make this happen?

If we look at ourselves as part of the wider Anglican Church an example is set out before us.

Te Pouhere the name given to the 1992 revised Constitution of our Anglican Church of Aotearoa, New Zealand and Polynesia. At the heart of this is our unity in Christ and our diversity in being human which we celebrate today. We are stronger together, is the message, richer together too. Let's take 3 separate strands of rope - and I need a helper here...what would make these stronger - knot them together at the top – we'll imagine they're tied to something. And what's the principle of

plaiting - how do we do it? Bring each strand in turn to the centre...and doesn't that final product look more interesting too?

Te Pouhere is literally the hitching post - POU - representing Christ, to which we tie - HERE -our waka, our separate boats or ways we worship. We have three distinct Christian cultures with their own tikanga (style of doing things), but also interrelating and enriching each other. Note these **cultural** streams rather than ethnic ones, which give expression to different cultural forms of worship and thus contextualise the gospel. People are free to belong and worship within whichever Tikanga they choose - they not exclusive – inclusive rather - and there are Pakeha who worship within Tikanga Māori, and Māori who worship within Tikanga Pakeha, and so also within and between Tikanga Pasifika. Te Pouhere represents the dynamic reality of life in our diverse region, and closer to home -just take a walk down Queen's Drive. (I understand we have a Tongan service here at this church once a month later on a Sunday afternoon.) It's about partnership with Tangata Whenua –and our Pasifika neighbours (in the islands, and those who have made Aotearoa their home – and aren't we glad that did, especially when it comes to rugby!). I realise there's lots of room for more multicultural revision of Te Pouhere, but it's a good start...

Yes, I know, Words words words as Hamlet said, so back to visual images...

Our Anglican church is symbolized by the Woven Flax Cross, Te Ripeka Whiringa Harakeke. It's the artwork at the beginning of Our New Zealand Prayer Book. The colours of the logo are black and red on a white background. The Maori Koru design is at the centre - the koru a symbol of life, ever expanding, and lines flowing, in red, the life-blood – the life-giving love of God in Christ which flows through the heart of the Christian message and mission. The design also presents the woven mat (weaving common to all cultures) with the flax strands -harakeke - moving outwards (lower right-hand side) symbolising the life patterns of the gospel to form a new creation. A gospel which is for all people.

And there's a good reason why Te Pouhere Sunday follows hard on the heels of Pentecost and Trinity Sunday we celebrated on the previous two Sundays. The 3 tikanga resonate with the 3 persons of the Trinity. A partnership of three equals. The outworking of this tri-unity draws us into its life - because if we are one in Christ, with his Spirit working in us, we participate in the life of the Trinity.

Back to our epistle reading this morning: 2 Cor 5: 14-18...

14 "For Christ's love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all die
15 And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again.

16 So from now on we regard no one from a worldly point of view. Though we once regarded Christ in this way, we do so no longer.

17 Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!

18 All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation."

Being a new creation in Christ, we are entrusted with reconciliation. It's about seeing people in a different way – not as different. And in the process, seeing the world more through their eyes, we let ourselves be changed, as we cooperate with God in healing of relationships between God, people and creation – all it fauna and flora.

To do this, we ask for God's love to be poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, which empowers us for this ministry of reconciliation. Like the koru, this spirals outwards, powered by the Spirit, and we

gather others into reconciliation – which we need in this nation, with bicultural and multicultural tensions that can spill over.

The cry of reconciliation after the mosque shootings in 2019 “They are us” called us to recognise our common humanity in our diversity. For some of us this may have felt like we were stepping outside our comfort zone to embrace others. But that’s the mission for all of us. Differences can divide and separate as people, causing misunderstanding and hurt. How then do we stop differences separating us and start to celebrate diversity as a strength? Think of the plaited ropes.

In today’s gospel reading, John 15:9-17, Jesus speaks about no greater love than laying down one’s life for one’s friends. Jesus commands us to love. We are to love each other by loving each other in a way that goes beyond our own interests and seek to put ourselves in another’s shoes.

Next week we have a whole service next week focussed on Matariki celebrations - connecting our world views, especially in relation to our care of creation – one of the 5 Anglican marks of mission – our role as Kaitiaki – those who help safeguard God’s good world, starting here in Aotearoa.

And with Te Pouhere, we look outward to focus on loving our Pasifika neighbours, locally and in the wider region, especially those low-lying islands, so vulnerable now with climate change as sea levels rise and extreme weather batters the islands, damaging crops and homes. Their very survival is threatened. Maybe through better relationship, and closer interactions and support- we may also start to mitigate the threat of other powers and influences, from which none of us are immune.

A final prayer—Loving God, master Weaver, you are the creator and we are the flax with which you have plaited Te Pouhere, a whāriki, a mat which unites our tikanga in Aotearoa and across Te Moananui a Kiwa, Polynesia. 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 your purpose, as we lean into each other toward the centre, in Christ. Amen.

- Catherine Froud

