

**Unuhia, unuhia**

**Unuhia ki te uru tapu nui**

**Kia wātea, kia māmā, te ngākau, te tinana, te wairua i te ara takatā**

**Koia rā e Rongo, whakairia ake ki runga**

**Kia tina! TINA! Hui e! TĀIKI E!**

Where to start? It would be easy to get carried away this morning focussing on the technical aspects of Te Pouhere Sunday. It is, after all, a day dedicated to the commemoration and celebration of a constitution, and anyone who's ever been to a Hinota Whanui – a General Synod – knows how technical and very very long a discussion about a constitution can be. So let's not travel that huanui.

We could instead focus on the metaphor used to describe our Haahi Mihinare constitution – te pouhere, the hitching post, the often communal post where people tied up their waka. As someone who like more than 50% of Wellingtonians relies on on-street parking I can get in behind that image. But then as a former Wellington City Councillor I also know there are seldom any positive outcomes from a discussion about parking, so let's skip that repo too.

So when in doubt, look to the Gospel, right? Let's talk about sandy piles and firm foundations? It's a better bet and possibly less likely to end in snoring, but much like the proverb itself I'm not convinced it's the most helpful starting point given that foundations are fixed and firm and mostly permanent, which is kind of their point, but that's a long way from what we're really living out today.

I suspect like us at Tangi te Keo last week you were celebrating the Feast of the Holy Trinity and experts will tell you that of all our high and holy feast days Trinity is the only one that focuses on a doctrine rather than an act of God. I've said it myself and it's partly right, but it also kind of misses the point. The same is true today. We can focus on the constitution and the structures and changes it's made to who we are and how we operate as a Church and that's not a bad thing 30 plus years down the track with many of us having never participated in the debates and doings that made it all happen, but like the Trinity if we focus solely on the mechanics it's just a lifeless theory or a two dimensional document, which is a light year away from the living, breathing iwi Mihinare that you and I are part of today.

Put more succinctly, it's all about relationships.

I don't know that the placement of Te Pouhere straight after Trinity was deliberate, but it works for me. Trinity Sunday is meant to help us consider the mystery of the God-head as Creator, Christ and Spirit intertwine and coagulate in a divine act of relationship where 3 is 1 and 1 is three and I can't think of a better way to think about our 3 Tikanga Church than that. Far from being the exercise in ecclesiastical apartheid that some have claimed it to be from time to time, what I've found is the separating and merging of 3 distinct cultural strands has truly created something that is bigger than the sum of its parts, often despite or in spite of the parts themselves.

I hope you appreciated the nice bit of hermaneuthical wordplay there, but again I'm in danger of losing the point because relationships, real relationships, don't live in words and phrases but in the lives and actions that come out of them.

Now to the gospel. We know it so well. The rains came down and the floods came up, and the foolish man who built his house on the sand spent an eternity on the phone with EQC while the wise man who built on the rock continued to enjoy his capital gains for years to come, and the rock, Jesus tells those gathered for the Sermon on the Mount, is hearing and acting on the words he has just said, which of course our reading today didn't give us.

Do not judge other people, but do judge yourself. Be generous, like God is generous and in everything do to others as you would want them to do to you.

These aren't a list of rules or objectives to spell out what's right and wrong, they're words to help us live together, to be a community. And it's not the only time we find that in the scriptures. The ten commandments, the Leviticus Holy Code – these and many others are examples of when instructions were given to the People of God because actually being the people of God takes more than a title and a building. It takes relationships. And we all know sometimes relationships are hard.

It's taken 3 decades for the relationships between our three tikanga to reach this point and anyone with any involvement will know they're not perfect by any means. We want to be different but equal and while we've certainly got the different part happening, equal has some way to go. With our constitution, Te Pouhere, we put in place some building blocks to ensure that while we might spend a lot of time apart we also do some work together, and I'm very grateful for the invitation Annette extended for Tangi te Keo to be with you this morning.

We know that for any relationship to grow and flourish it needs some ingredients. We need to have at least some understanding of each other – what makes us tick, where do our values lie, who are we in our souls? So to get that we need to know each other and that doesn't happen unless we make it so. Our gospel reading talks about seeking and finding and there's a whakataukī that says Ko ia kāhore nei I rapu, tē kitea – He who does not seek will not find. Unless we put the mahi in to meeting and knowing each other there will be no relationship and unless that relationship is based on mutual understanding and respect it will never be sitting on solid ground.

It all comes back to relationships.

In the gospel Jesus offers these teachings as a foundation for those who would follow him because from the very beginning our faith was never an exercise in solo sanctification. Anyone who says their faith is just about them and God hasn't been reading these scriptures. But even then if we get the idea that it's just about relationships for the sake of relationships we're missing a big part of the picture. Jesus never set out to create what I heard described recently as a country club church. The relationships he nurtured and encouraged were there because there was work to be done and no one could do it alone, not even Jesus. Just so, our relationships bring us back to what it means to be the People of God and the work we are called to do.

At the end of our Prayer after Communion this morning we will join together in one line that's taken from the te reo side of our prayer book. It's adapted from another whakataukī and it sums up my point:

Ko tau rourou, ko taku rourou, ka makona matou. Your basket, my basket, will sustain us.

Thanks be to God