

A new song in a shared voice
Isaiah 42:10-20, 2 Corinthians 5:14-19, John 15:9-17

Te Pouhere Sunday (7 June) 2026
Waiapu Cathedral

Many centuries ago the prophet Isaiah called his people to “sing to the Lord a new song.” It wasn’t a call aimed at only one location, one group – it was to a bunch of people. It gathered together people who lived around the coastlands, those who dwelt in the deserts and on the mountains, in the towns and the villages, all coming from their different contexts to sing that new song. Te Pouhere, the constitutional “binding together” of our three Tikanga – Māori, Pākehā, and Pasefika – is like that. Not uniformity but polyphony – the type of music where multiple distinct melodies weave together into a sound that’s really rich. The sort of thing we hear sometimes from our Cathedral choir. Our Church’s unity isn’t about sounding the same, but about learning to sing the same song in different voices. And this unity is something that’s grounded in abiding love – the sort of love Jesus spoke to his disciples about when he redefined relationship from servants to friends: it’s bigger than just a structural arrangement.

It’s like this Cathedral, here at the heart of Waiapu: unique in the Anglican Communion this building holds two cathedra, two bishop’s chairs. One for the Bishop of Waiapu, one for the Bishop of Aotearoa, Atipihopa Don Tamihere. It’s about relationship – and the relationship between Pākehā Anglicans and Māori Anglicans here in this diocese is part of our Waiapu whakapapa. Our first four diocesan Synods were held in te reo Māori. With the vision for this cathedral that Bishop Andrew shared as part of our parish consultation last month we get to live deeper into that part of our identity.

Te Pouhere calls us to abide deeply – in Christ and also in one another. What Jesus was saying to his disciples – *to his friends* – the night before he died makes a connection between the two. When we abide in the love of Christ we will love one another the way he loves us. The binding together of Te Pouhere isn’t primarily administrative – it’s something that should mirror Christ-shaped friendship, a shared participation in Christ’s self-giving love.

And relationship is the key. I remember one of the Three Tikanga meetings I was part of a few years ago. It included a service in which everyone was involved, and the person leading the Prayers of the People began by outlining briefly what she was going to pray for. And then she switched to her first language, which was Tongan. Now, I have only a very few words in Tongan, but at the end I could easily join in the “Amen” along with everyone else. I don’t know exactly what she prayed, but I’m happy to say Amen because I know and trust the person praying. Te Pouhere, our Constitution, gives us the chance to know and trust each other – and that’s important. It’s an invitation to grow into mutual indwelling love, the love that Christ encourages his friends to have.

And as with any friendship, it’s not always plain sailing. Friendship implies vulnerability and listening across Tikanga. Sometimes it resembles that Facebook description of relationships “It’s complicated,” sometimes there are tensions, and sometimes it feels like things take longer and are harder than we might like. I remember another Three Tikanga meeting where only one of the Pasefika representatives could be there – and suddenly that person’s phone rang: it was his bishop calling from Suva. Of course we all know that when the bishop phones we pick up the call – and so he left the room. Without people from all three Tikanga there we didn’t have a quorum: that meant the meeting was paused until he returned. Relationship means everyone needs to be at the table. And sometimes, that mutual love asks things of us that aren’t easy. When General Synod / Te Hīnota Whānui meets later this year there’s going to be some discussions about a more equitable sharing

of resources. Jesus' command to "love one another as I have loved you" reminds us that sometimes love can be cross-shaped and costly.

Because of Te Pouhere / the Constitution our three waka can sail together. There's a lovely image in the Liturgy we use this morning. When we rejoice in God's forgiveness of our sins the English has "We shall all be one in Christ, one in our life together" but te reo is much more colourful: Ko te Karaiti te pou herenga waka: Christ is the hitching post for the canoes. Christ is what stops our individual waka from splitting up and drifting all around the lagoon. In a universal Church which is made up of different denominations, in an Anglican Communion made up of different (and sometimes disagreeing with each other) provinces, in a Province made up of three different Tikanga, it is good to hitch our waka to a strong post, to be bound together by Christ, and to gather together around his table.

In Jesus' words to his friends, the mutual love he speaks of is missional: unity exists for the sake of the world. Unity and love leads to bearing fruit, fruit that will last. Our diversity isn't an obstacle to mission – it can be the means by which God intends the Church to bear lasting fruit. Paul's letter to the community at Corinth invites them to be a sign for others, a sign of new life and a sign of reconciliation – for those around them as well as for their own community. That same invitation is for us too. We are also entrusted with a ministry of reconciliation, called to model reconciliation publicly in our society, with all its post-colonial baggage and sometimes uneasy interactions with our history. Our Three Tikanga Church can be a sign of the gospel's scope. The new song Isaiah invites us to sing can become a public witness of a people formed by God, a people who can see, love, and sing together, so that the world may glimpse reconciliation.

Last week we celebrated Trinity Sunday, and the Trinity says to us that at the heart of God there is diversity and there is relationship. Here's something that Henri Nouwen 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 community is about. Each of us is like a little stone, but together we reveal the face of God to the world. Nobody can say: "I make God visible." But others who see us together can say: "They make God visible." Community is where humility and glory touch.¹

Te Pouhere, our Three Tikanga Constitution, calls us into community, opening us up into the ongoing, unfinished work of deepening our relationships, giving us an opportunity to be a sign to the world around us. As it keeps us moving outwards together may it be an expression of mission. Today is an opportunity for us to pray, in the words our Prayer Book gives us,

Blessed are you, God of Aotearoa New Zealand and Polynesia
in all the peoples who live here,
in all the lessons we have learned,
in all that remains for us to do.

Ven Dr Deborah Broome
Priest Associate, Waiapu Cathedral

¹ Henri Nouwen, *Bread for the Journey: A Daybook of Wisdom and Faith* (1996, HarperOne).