**4. The Times, They are A-changing**

‘Like a mighty tortoise moves the Church of God’ is a parody of a line in one of the Church’s traditional hymns. Like any institution, the Church is often conservative in its beliefs and attitudes. But from the mid-1960s New Zealand Anglicans have made major changes in church life, and joined with others in the struggles against apartheid and for a nuclear-free New Zealand.

As a young curate attending my first diocesan synod in 1965, I listened to the opening salvos of a debate on the ordination of women as priests that lasted for 12 years. The Rev’d John Mullane was a key proponent, arguing that men and women were equal in the eyes of God, and had God-given gifts to enhance the wellbeing of Church and community. To exclude half the Church’s members from priesthood was not only a denial of such equality, but also deprived the Church of women’s many gifts and insights.

Anglo-catholics and evangelicals disagreed. These two wings of the Church found a rare unity in vigorously opposing the ordination of women, but for totally different reasons. Evangelicals hold firmly to the teaching of scripture about male headship. ‘A husband has authority over his wife, just as Christ has authority over the Church’,[[1]](#footnote-1) wrote St Paul, reflecting the patriarchal culture of his day. He added[[2]](#footnote-2) that women must not teach or have authority over men, but should keep silent. By contrast, Anglicans of a catholic disposition saw a priest as an icon of Christ, and hence necessarily male and part of an unchangeable tradition going back 1900 years.

There were some fascinating arguments. One synod member expressed her belief that because God was male only a male could represent God at the altar. But the speech that stands out in my mind came from the Rev’d Kenneth Prebble, the saintly and highly regarded vicar of St Paul’s, Symonds St. Standing in his black cassock, and speaking in hushed tones with eyes and hands directed to heaven, he made the point that when God wanted to send a saviour to save the human race, He could have sent a woman, but He sent a man. And when our dear Lord wanted to appoint twelve faithful disciples, He could have chosen women, but He chose men. And when God wanted to raise up an apostle to the Gentiles, He could have chosen a woman, but He chose a man. Father Prebble then drew the obvious conclusion about gender and priesthood.

The synod sat in hushed silence pondering his words, a silence broken only when the Rev’d Watson Rosevear[[3]](#footnote-3) rose to his feet. He said he had listened carefully to the previous speaker and was glad to hear him acknowledge that women *could* have been chosen for any of those positions, thereby conceding there was no question of principle involved, simply a matter of historical accident.

The mills of God, or at least of the Church, grind slowly. Lengthy discussions and complex rounds of local and national decision-making are required to change the Anglican constitution. By 1976 all the boxes were ticked for women to be ordained, but at the final moment a last-ditch appeal delayed things another year. In spite of the 12-year process, New Zealand was one of the first Anglican Churches worldwide to ordain women as priests. On St Andrew’s Day, 30 November 1977, the Church rejoiced at the ordination of the first female priests in Christchurch, Napier and Auckland. I was the preacher at the Auckland ordination, although in retrospect have felt how appropriate it would have been for the preacher to have been John Mullane, a pioneer in this long-running drama.

There is no question that the advent of women priests has greatly enhanced church leadership. As women were appointed to local congregations much of the original opposition fell away. The arguments seemed to stop the day the first ordinations took place. One heard, from both women and men, statements like: ‘Well, of course, I’m totally opposed to the ordination of women in principle, but our priest Susan (or Jenny, or Kate) is doing a great job in our church’.

The next step came in 1990 when Penny Jamieson was elected Bishop of Dunedin, the world’s first woman diocesan bishop. Penny retired in 2004, then in 2008 Victoria Matthews was elected Bishop of Christchurch, and in 2014 Bishop Helen-Ann Hartley in Waikato. Bishop Victoria has become known nationwide for her leadership in church and community through the ongoing trauma of the Christchurch earthquakes.

Sadly, there are many places still where women priests are not permitted. In Sydney, where the doctrine of male headship is deeply entrenched, women are excluded from a priestly role. But elsewhere in Australia Sarah Macneil was consecrated Bishop of Grafton in 2014, and there are also several women assistant bishops. In England the logjam preventing the appointment of women as bishops was finally breached by a substantial majority of the General Synod in July 2014.

Eighteen years earlier I wrote on this issue[[4]](#footnote-4):

Recent suggestions that the consecration of women as bishops will impair unity is one way of looking at things. The other way is to recognize that not to have women as bishops will be an even greater impairment to unity. With regard to the scriptural arguments about male headship, one needs to acknowledge the culturally conditioned milieu in which the scriptures came to birth. The culture was one of patriarchy, and it is not at all surprising that this should be the background in which scripture was written.

But there are other more abiding themes in scripture which affirm the great variety of gifts in the body of Christ, and which transcend differences of gender. I would predict that those who now hold to views of male headship will find that view subsumed into something richer and more inclusive, and expressed in a leadership of the Church which draws on the insights, talents and faith perspectives of women and men alike.

Another major shift in church teaching occurred in 1970 while we were in New York. This involved marriage when one or both of the partners had been divorced and the previous spouse was still alive. The Church’s teaching has always been, and remains so today, that marriage is lifelong in intent. A couple once asked me to marry them using the words ‘for as long as love doth last’. I declined insofar as the words lacked lifelong intent.

But they had touched on an important point. Should the Church compel a couple to stay in a loveless relationship or, if they split, forbid either from marrying again? With the best will in the world not all marriages work. Even after intense effort and counselling it sometimes becomes clear that a mutual, loving relationship cannot be sustained. The Church was caught in the bind of wanting to affirm the lifelong nature of marriage and yet to make pastoral provision for those who had genuinely tried but things had not worked out.

As a young single curate in Papakura I recall visiting a woman twice my age who had separated from her husband. The separation had caused her great pain, sadness and regret, yet there had been no other way. Her sadness was compounded because, although a committed church member, as a divorcee she was no longer able to receive Holy Communion when she went to church. I tried to explain that she was still fully welcome even if unable to receive communion, but I had a hard job convincing even myself that this was right.

Turning a good principle into an unbending rule can be harsh and uncaring, and not expressive of Jesus’ love for people whatever their situation. I welcomed the 1970 rule change which, in my experience, has not undermined the principle of marriage as lifelong in intent. What has changed is that the Church can now exercise compassion when things do not work out as planned, and offer the option of a fresh start in building a relationship with all the fulfilment married love can bring.

Clergy at the time who felt conscientiously unable to officiate at such a marriage were able to refer a couple to another priest. Some feared a Hollywood-style serial marriage situation might result, but the fears proved unfounded. In my experience couples presenting for marriage following a divorce take even greater care in their preparation and commitment. The learnings from their previous relationship, and the desire to put everything into a new commitment, often ensure a stronger foundation for success.

Reform of the Anglican Prayer Book became an issue around 1960. Until then the Church had used the 1662 Church of England Prayer Book as its central core of worship. Based on earlier versions in 1549 and 1552, and with some minor revisions proposed in England in 1928, the 1662 book had been used by Anglicans everywhere for 300 years.

Thomas Cranmer, Archbishop of Canterbury from 1532, played a major role in shaping the early prayer books. But as the charmingly archaic words of the preface to the 1662 book make clear, the compilers did not intend that any form of service should be set in stone for all time:

It hath been the wisdom of the Church of England, ever since the first compiling of her publick Liturgy, to keep the mean between two extremes, of too much stiffness in refusing, and of too much easiness in admitting any new variation of it. For, as on the one side common experience sheweth, that where a change hath been made of things advisedly established (no evident necessity so requiring) sundry inconveniences have thereby ensued; and those many times more and greater than the evils, that were intended to be remedied by such changes: So on the other side, the particular forms of divine worship, and the rites and ceremonies to be used therein, being things in their own nature indifferent, and alterable, and so acknowledged; it is but reasonable, that upon weighty and important considerations, according to the various exigency of times and occasions, such changes should be made therein, as to those who are in place of authority should from time to time seem either necessary or expedient.

For 300 years no ‘weighty and important considerations’ had led to any change, but around the world by the mid-20th century many Anglicans felt that the language of the 1662 book, while elegant, beautiful and familiar, no longer spoke simply and clearly to modern worshippers. Major shifts in theology also called for prayer book renewal.

Traditionalists, however, believed things should stay as they were. Archbishop Reginald Owen opposed any move for prayer book reform and, as president of the Wellington synod in the 1950s, firmly squelched any discussion on the topic. At the conclusion of a synod a senior cleric customarily rises to propose a motion of thanks to the bishop for his wise presidency. On this occasion the proposer moved ‘that members thank the bishop for the *indifferent* manner in which he had *prevented* all the doings of the synod’. The synod roared with laughter at this witty use of two words that today mean something totally different from their ancient meaning.[[5]](#footnote-5)

In terms of theology, the old prayer book laid heavy emphasis on sin. In one of the confessions, for example, we admit we are ‘miserable sinners’ and ‘there is no health in us’. Even in the prayer of thanksgiving after communion, we still reminded ourselves that we are ‘unworthy through our manifold sins’. To be aware of shortcomings, and seeking to live a better life, is healthy. But an over-emphasis on unworthiness and our own failings can have a negative impact on the oppressed, or those struggling with depression or lack of self-esteem.

In 1966 ‘the little red book’ appeared with the first proposed revision of the Holy Communion service. People loved it and hated it. My vicar sent me to visit an older member of the parish who had announced he would not attend any church using that ‘new-fangled’ service. We had a nice cup of tea and a long conversation but he was unbending.

Over the next 25 years feedback led to further revisions not only of the Holy Communion service but of the services for baptism, weddings and funerals as well. In the marriage service, for example, the primary purpose of marriage was changed from being for the ‘increase of mankind’ to having ‘the intention that husband and wife should be united in body, heart and mind (and thus) fulfill their love for each other’.

Having grown up with the old prayer book, I still enjoy using it on occasions. The old Holy Communion service is still in use although not as the main Sunday service. *A New Zealand Prayer Book (NZPB),* *He Karakia Mihinare o Aotearoa,* published in 1989, has some very evocative language such as this from a Holy Communion service:

We offer thanks and praise to God for this good land; for its trees and pastures, for its plentiful crops and the skills we have learned to grow them. Our thanks for marae and the cities we have built; for science and discoveries, for our life together, for Aotearoa, New Zealand.[[6]](#footnote-6)

And from one of the marriage services:

Marriage is the promise of hope between a man and a woman who love each other, who trust that love, and who wish to share the future together. It enables two separate people to share their desires, longings, dreams and memories, and to help each other through their uncertainties. It provides the encouragement to risk more and thus to gain more. In marriage, husband and wife belong together, providing mutual support and a stability in which their children may grow.[[7]](#footnote-7)

The traditional vows ‘for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health’ remain but there are other options such as ‘today I take you to be my husband/wife. Whatever life may bring I will love and care for you always’.

The funeral service has a moving thanksgiving for a loved one:

God, we thank you that you have made each of us in your own image, and given us gifts and talents with which to serve you. We thank you for *(Betty)*, the years we shared with her, the good we saw in her, the love we received from her. Now give us strength and courage to leave her in your care.[[8]](#footnote-8)

The new prayer book, published in 1989, also includes services in Maori, Fijian and Tongan. When the final touches were put to the new services at a General Synod in Christchurch, a Maori member said to Pakeha: ‘Don’t think all these prayers in Maori are just translated from the English: we’ve expressed it all in our own language and images’. He gave an example of how the English words[[9]](#footnote-9) ‘We shall all be one in Christ’ are expressed in Maori idiom ‘Ko te Karaiti te pou herenga waka’, which says ‘Christ is the hitching post where all the canoes tie up’.

The language of the NZPB is gender-inclusive, although this was not the case at the outset. At St Peter’s the arrival of new batches of draft services required parish twinking parties to remove offending male references. Sitting around a big table in the church hall and, under instruction from some of the parish feminists, words such as ‘men’ were whited out with Twink and ‘people’ written in. ‘Mankind’ became ‘humankind’, and ‘brothers’ changed to ‘sisters and brothers’. The congregation was encouraged to make appropriate changes in hymn-singing, this sometimes producing variations which neither rhymed nor scanned.

One or two parishioners staunchly opposed such changes, with some amusing moments. One year Christmas Day fell on a Saturday, a very unpopular year amongst clergy who have to front up again on Boxing Day to take Sunday services.[[10]](#footnote-10)

That year I went to the church on Boxing Day to take the 8am service and was met by a member of the congregation who addressed me fiercely: ‘You should see this.’ He led me round to the church hall where I was confronted by the signs of a wild party the day before - streamers hanging from the roof, bottles on the floor and left-over food and plates on all sides. Unbeknown to me, the hall had been hired for an anti-Christmas party by a Wellington women’s group. Their message was that Mary, having been recruited to be the mother of Jesus, had now become a role model for women as submissive, powerless, stay-at-home mums. Hand-made posters adorned the walls, one of the milder of which read: ‘Peace on Earth; Good-bye to all Men.’ My companion commented that it was outrageous that the church hall should be used in this way. ‘Outrageous indeed,’ I said weakly, and went home for breakfast.

Returning for the 10am service, I was met by one of the leading feminists in the parish, with big smile and eyes aglow, who took me by the arm and said: ‘You should see this.’ And so for the second time I was led round to view the scene of devastation. ‘Isn’t it wonderful,’ she said, ‘that St Peter’s should be giving its support to advance the cause of women?’ ‘Wonderful indeed,’ I agreed and went off to take the service.[[11]](#footnote-11)

Treading carefully through times of transition is not always easy, even at a liberal church like St Peter’s. Some visionaries took the lead on issues like women’s ordination, shared leadership, contemporary forms of worship and inclusive language, but others found the changes difficult. As a younger priest I had watched as others took leadership roles, but in the 1980s at St Peter’s I became more involved in movements for change.

In the wider community the Church joined others in working for peace and a nuclear-free New Zealand, and against apartheid in South Africa. The Rev’d Dr George Armstrong[[12]](#footnote-12) was prominent in both these movements. As the Cold War and threats of nuclear weapons were escalating in the 1970s, George assembled a flotilla of small vessels to sail out into the Hauraki Gulf to block the passage of American nuclear-armed vessels into the Port of Auckland.

Known as the Peace Squadron, the flotilla would sail whenever a nuclear-armed vessel of any nation sought to enter port, although the only vessels seeking such entry were from the USA. The first visits were by the USS *Truxtun* and USS *Long Beach* in 1976[[13]](#footnote-13). With each visit the flotilla of small boats grew larger. Dinghies, canoes, sail-boats and motor-boats carrying nuclear-free flags and peace signs sailed into the path of the incoming vessels, forcing them to slow down and at times stop.

It was a fearsome encounter. The sheer size of the American ships towering over the tiny protest vessels, at times in rough seas, was terrifying. The terror was compounded by the presence of water-borne police and military sent to drive off the Peace Squadron boats and clear a path for the US Navy. Helicopters were dispatched to create a downdraft, creating waves which swamped some smaller craft.

Although no naval ship was ever prevented from entering port, the action led to a groundswell for change in national policy on ship visits. What began in the public mind as the madcap actions of ‘peaceniks’ began to change public attitudes. Between 1978 and 1983 opposition to nuclear-armed ships rose from 32% to 72%. A ban on nuclear-powered vessels was also part of the campaign and, because of US policy to ‘neither confirm nor deny’ the armaments or power mode of their vessels, the call was for any US naval ship to be banned.

In 1987 Prime Minister David Lange’s Labour government passed legislation to ban all nuclear-armed or nuclear-powered vessels from New Zealand ports. The US Government reacted by excluding New Zealand from intelligence sharing or participation in ANZUS[[14]](#footnote-14) military exercises. Recently the standoff has thawed and co-operative defence relationships are being restored.

The anti-nuclear stance by a small Pacific nation has been instrumental in encouraging peace initiatives around the world, but not without some amusing moments. At a social gathering in New York City I was chatting with a local person. ‘Are you from Noo Zeelan’?’ she asked. ‘Is that the country that won’t take our ships? That’s the problem with you people from that part of the world – Noo Zeelan’, Nicaragua, the Philippines. All trained by the communists and runnin’ round with guns shootin’ one another.’

Another conversation started in the same way but with a totally different ending. This woman concluded: ‘Well, you just keep on doing what you are doing. Why, that Ronald Reagan is just a B-grade actor from Hollywood and doesn’t know what he‘s doing.’

While some saw the anti-nuclear policy as anti-American, it was in fact based on principles fundamental to human life and existence. This was spelled out in the 1989 nationwide statement[[15]](#footnote-15) signed by the Anglican archbishop, the late Brian Davis, and 93 other church leaders, clergy and members of all denominations. The statement called on the Government to reject proposals to purchase new state of the art ‘Anzac’ frigates from Australia, asserting that ‘New Zealand’s best defence strategy was to commit itself to a policy that builds economic stability and regional development on a co-operative basis between nations of the South Pacific’. It stated further that this could best be achieved:

by naval vessels suitable for civil defence purposes in the region, for fisheries surveillance and protection, and to counter low-level military situations, and by increasing overseas aid and development allocations which would help build educational, health and economic infrastructures in smaller island states.

The group noted that the high-tech Anzac frigates were far too sophisticated and expensive for peace-keeping in the South Pacific, and could in fact drag New Zealand back into global Cold War scenarios. And at a time when Government overseas aid had been frozen for six years at 0.27% of Gross National Income (GNI)[[16]](#footnote-16), such huge expenditure on military equipment at the expense of human well-being, justice and peace was immoral. The statement pointed out that 150,000 New Zealanders were unemployed, 20,000 families homeless, and recent cuts in hospital services seriously endangered the health of the nation, especially those who were poor.

As with the anti-nuclear movement, there was much opposition to the frigate purchase. Speaking for the clergy group, I addressed a large rally from Parliament steps, standing alongside leaders of other community groups. In the end the Government decided to purchase only two of the four frigates, with an option to purchase the other two at a later date. That latter option was never taken up.

Another element in the resistance to nuclear weaponry was the symbolic declaration by towns, buildings and institutions to be nuclear-free. The Wellington City Council declared the city nuclear-free, a large sign to that effect greeting the thousands of passengers travelling from the airport to the central city. Many churches, including St Peter’s, followed suit and attached ‘Nuclear Free’ signs to their doors. Brightly coloured helium-filled balloons with peace messages were often released into the air by the St Peter’s congregation on Peace Sunday to mark Hiroshima Day and the Feast of the Transfiguration on 6 August.

In 1984 Jackie travelled with a group of twenty-five New Zealanders to Eastern Europe. Sponsored by the National Council of Churches and led by its general secretary Alan Brash with his wife Eljean, the group visited the Soviet Union, Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria and East Germany. Members were actively involved in local peace groups and believed that contact with Christians in Eastern Europe was a small step in peace-building during the time of the Cold War. Our own congregation of St Peter’s explored a twin relationship with St Vladimir’s Orthodox parish in Leningrad (now St Petersburg again) as a result of Jackie’s meeting with them in 1984.

At the time US President Ronald Reagan was labeling Russia ‘the evil empire’, but the group was aware that many in Russia and neighbouring countries wanted international peace as much as they did, especially because of the suffering they had experienced. Human contact was critical: leaving it to the politicians was just not enough. Understanding and friendship between New Zealand churches and peace groups with their Eastern European counterparts needed to be achieved by face-to-face meetings to build confidence and trust.

Each of the countries visited had its own unique identity and way of life. One of the strongest impressions was the beauty and intensity of Orthodox Church worship. The experience of such worship was profound and Jackie said: ‘I now always cross myself in the Orthodox way when receiving communion.’ The group shared their insights widely back in New Zealand, their contacts being consolidated by a return visit from Russia some years later.

Running parallel to the Peace Movement in the ‘70s and ‘80s was the growing tide of opposition to South Africa’s apartheid regime. The question of international rugby matches between South Africa and New Zealand was hotly contested. One side of the debate argued that rugby was an exercise in bridge-building, demonstrating through sporting exchanges the values of a racially open society as against apartheid. The other side claimed that by refusing to play sport with South Africa, the strength of opposition to apartheid would be made clear, and that this would be a greater force for change.

This position was undergirded by the Gleneagles Agreement of the Commonwealth Heads of Governments in Scotland in 1977.[[17]](#footnote-17) Part of the wording of the agreement was:

They accepted that it was the urgent duty of their governments to combat vigorously the evil of apartheid by withholding support for and by discouraging contact or competition with sporting organisations, teams or sportsmen from South Africa or from any other country where sports are organized on the basis of race, colour or ethnic origin.

Despite this Prime Minister Robert Muldoon took the position that his government would not allow politics to interfere with sport and, with no official barrier to sporting contact, the Rugby Union invited the Springboks to tour nationwide in the winter of 1981. The civil disturbance that ensued was the largest since the 1951 waterfront dispute. More than 150,000 people took part in over 200 demonstrations in 28 centres, and 1500 were prosecuted for their actions during these protests.[[18]](#footnote-18)

At the second match in Hamilton, protesters breached the perimeter fence. Students and staff from St John’s Theological College in Auckland were prominent among the hundreds who made their stand in the middle of the playing field. Police stepped in but it proved difficult to move such a large group on.[[19]](#footnote-19)

The mood was ugly as thousands of rugby fans became angry as the game was delayed. They grew even angrier when it was announced the game would be abandoned. Now the police had an even bigger problem on their hands – how to get the protesters off the field without being attacked by a very angry crowd. In spite of their best efforts, violent skirmishes broke out. Many were injured, blood flowed and medical workers were stretched to deal with the wounded.

No other games were cancelled, but this was only achieved with huge rolls of barbed wire and increased numbers of police using batons, dogs, helmets and shields. In the ensuing confrontations many protesters, as well as members of the police force, were injured. It was farcical to say that the tour was an exercise in bridge-building. But millions of blacks watching in South Africa and elsewhere on the African continent were greatly encouraged to see thousands of New Zealanders willing to put their bodies on the line to end racial injustice and an oppressive government. In their continuing sufferings and struggles, the tour protests brought life and hope.

Apartheid lasted for another decade and debate continued in New Zealand. Many churches passed motions opposing apartheid and did what they could to show solidarity with blacks in South Africa. Tim Francis, New Zealand’s ambassador at the United Nations during the 1981 tour, said he could not have held his head up with African colleagues had it not been for the protests from New Zealand.

Changes in race relationships were also going on in New Zealand. The Waitangi Tribunal was established in 1975 by the Treaty of Waitangi Act 1975. The Tribunal is a permanent commission of inquiry set up to make recommendations on Maori claims relating to actions or omissions of the Crown that might breach the promises made in the Treaty of Waitangi.[[20]](#footnote-20)

A good example of the Tribunal’s work may be seen at Ngai Tahu headquarters in Christchurch where a document of formal apology by the New Zealand Government for the wrongful alienation of Ngai Tahu land in the 19th century hangs on the wall. The document is signed by Jenny Shipley, Prime Minister of the day.

The apology followed a finding by the Waitangi Tribunal that the claim by Ngai Tahu to the greater part of South Island was legitimate. But with that acknowledged, Ngai Tahu said they recognised the place of the many other settlers who had come subsequently to New Zealand, and did not want all of the land for themselves.

Instead an agreement was reached whereby the Crown allocated $170 million to Ngai Tahu, money which has been invested for the provision of health, education, housing and the general well-being of the tribe. Ngai Tahu were also affirmed as the guardians of 130 species of native flora and fauna, and of sacred sites such as Aoraki/Mt Cook. The mountain was deeded back to Ngai Tahu, who then formally returned it to the nation.

A basic dynamic of human relationships underlies this process. When a wrong has been done the wrong-doer is called on to acknowledge and repent of the wrong, and to make appropriate reparation. The act of repentance in turn frees the wronged party to act generously and, in a spirit of reconciliation, a new partnership is established.

We understand this dynamic at a personal level, but to see it as equally valid at the collective level between different groups, nations and races is a more recent insight. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission in post-apartheid South Africa is based on this same understanding. In Australia the 1997 report on the stolen aboriginal generations significantly raised the awareness of Australians, although it took ten years and a change of government for an official apology to be offered.

At the same time New Zealand Anglicans were having their own debate about the respective roles of Maori and Pakeha in church governance.[[21]](#footnote-21) Anglican Maori had long wanted their own bishop, but this was not easily achieved since the structure of the Church was based on geographical dioceses rather than ethnic or cultural factors. The idea of a Maori bishop was first suggested in 1876, but deemed unnecessary by the General Synod of 1880. Almost half a century went by before the Rev’d Frederick Augustus Bennett was consecrated as the first Bishop of Aotearoa in 1928. He served, however, as a suffragan (assistant) bishop under the authority of the Bishop of Waiapu. Bishop Bennett was licensed in Waiapu because of the large concentrations of Maori in that diocese which includes the East Cape, Bay of Plenty, Poverty Bay, Hawke’s Bay, Taupo and Rotorua.

A Maori bishop was a major step forward but had some restrictions. The Bishop of Aotearoa could not minister to Maori in another diocese without the consent of the diocesan (Pakeha) bishop. This was not always forthcoming. In the 1940s, for example, the Bishop of Auckland, John Simkin, believing he was responsible for all confirmations in his diocese regardless of race, declined to let the Bishop of Aotearoa confirm 100 Maori soldiers at Ohaeawai. Episcopal powers have their boundaries, however, and in the end army trucks took the candidates to Rotorua where they were confirmed by Bishop Bennett.

A second step came in 1978 when the Bishop of Aotearoa was accorded diocesan status, no longer under the authority of the Bishop of Waiapu and with the same status as diocesan bishops. Today Maori and Pakeha bishops cover the same geographical territory but ministering to different flocks. This was another significant step forward, and a major shift from the concept of only one bishop for a geographical region.

It immediately, however, prompted the next question: what does it say about Maori when they have one bishop while Pakeha have seven? Is it not just tokenism when one Maori bishop can be outvoted by seven Pakeha bishops? Could this not be restructured to reflect a stronger bi-cultural partnership as envisaged by the Treaty of Waitangi?

But such restructuring would require major constitutional revision. A commission was set up to investigate possibilities and embarked on a ten-year consultative process. Many church members initially sceptical or apprehensive about possible changes were assisted by the dialogue to see the meaning and importance of what was being proposed.

I headed a Wellington diocesan group responsible for explaining the proposed changes. We held meetings in different centres culminating in a special one-day synod in 1990 in Palmerston North. I proposed that the synod support the change in principle and a vigorous debate ensued. One woman told us that the previous night she had a nightmare in which a horse-drawn wagon was moving across a rocky hillside. On closer inspection she could see that the wagon was a band-wagon with ‘Anglican Church’ painted on the side. It came to a crossroads with tracks leading up or down. Tragically the Anglican band-wagon took the downhill path to destruction.

Synod members didn’t know quite how to deal with nightmares, but Rachel Underwood[[22]](#footnote-22) said she was encouraged to hear the wagon was a band-wagon because the essential feature of a band was that members with quite different instruments learned how to play together in harmony.

The day went on and by closing time the mood seemed to be quite favourable to the motion. I was exercising my right of reply when I was interrupted by an archdeacon who had earphones plugged in as he listened to the rugby. He asked what was meant by the words ‘support in principle’, setting off a lengthy procedural wrangle that led to the motion failing. I was angry that a church leader listening to the rugby successfully derailed progress made in a constructive day’s dialogue on a matter of great substance.

Nonetheless in 1991 the Church nationally, on the advice of the commission, adopted a two-tikanga model, Maori and Pakeha, for church governance. The Diocese of Polynesia[[23]](#footnote-23) also joined to make a three-tikanga body in which Maori and Polynesian voices now have equal standing with Pakeha. Today there are nine Pakeha bishops, five Maori and three Polynesian but decisions affecting the Church as a whole now require the agreement of all three tikanga. The numerical majority which allowed Pakeha to outvote Maori or Polynesia has been done away with. Underlying this structure is the biblical concept of different parts of a body working together for the common good.[[24]](#footnote-24)

There is also a parallel with the Treaty of Waitangi. In 1840 when Maori entered into a partnership with Queen Victoria and her subjects, Maori greatly outnumbered Pakeha. But the Treaty embodies a concept of equal partnership not based on numbers.

Changes have been made in resource-sharing as well as in governance. No longer do Maori need to come cap in hand for a budget allocation from a diocesan synod. Instead church trust funds and properties have been divided so that each tikanga can decide on its own priorities and funding.

The changes have not been without their tensions. In my view too much time is spent reviewing inter-tikanga relationships rather than working together on projects to meet community needs. Partnership is built best through co-operative endeavour rather than introspective analysis in a committee room. I think also there are times when Pakeha do not always say what they think out of a fear of being branded racist. True partnership involves plain speaking by all parties, not silent acquiescence with something that needs to be challenged.

A current cultural difference between Maori and Pakeha is in the age of their bishops. Tikanga Maori seem to emphasise the wisdom of years, with four of their five bishops being aged from 68 to 90. By contrast four of the Pakeha bishops are aged from 42 to 50, perhaps indicating an emphasis on energy and creativity.

Some creative endeavours in building tikanga relationships have occurred. In 2006 John Bluck, as bishop of Waiapu, led a year of pilgrimage around the diocese to places where bicultural partnerships had formed. John writes:

Over 1000 people took part in the twelve pilgrimages across Hawkes Bay, the East Coast and Bay of Plenty. Journeys lasted for up to three days and the pilgrims sang and prayed and gathered stories. Those stories were later published and continue to be celebrated and added to across the diocese.

Looking back over some of the major changes in church and society from 1965-1990 I can see how my own leadership developed as I grew in confidence and awareness of the issues. There were times when I felt very nervous laying out a case to a synod in the face of much opposition and there was disappointment when motions were lost, although I try to keep in mind the maxim that ‘you win some and you lose some’. But what is always painful is knowing you have lost not for any good reason but simply because institutional inertia has won out against the forces for justice and change.

I have been encouraged by the positive experience of finding that when one sets the issues out carefully, provides relevant background and a biblical underpinning, many are ready to take the changes on board. Today many of the changes outlined are taken for granted, and both church and society have flourished in consequence, but it took 25 years of hard work and debate for those changes to be made.

1. *Ephesians 5.23.* [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. *1 Timothy 2.11.* [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Watson Rosevear was sub-warden at St John’s Theological College and later Assistant Bishop of Wellington. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. The Australian *Church Scene,* 7 July 1996. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. In the 1662 prayer book *indifferent* means impartial, while *prevent* means to go before or to lead. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. *NZPB,* p.477. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. *Ibid.,* p.790. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. *Ibid.,* p. 829. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. *Ibid,* p.479. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. In a shameful dereliction of duty, some clergy have cancelled Sunday services in such years, feeling they are all ‘Christmased’ out. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. An arrangement had been made that the hall would be cleaned later in the day, and it was so restored. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. George was for many years lecturer in theology at St John’s College in Auckland. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. Source for this and some later details: *NZ History Online.* [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. ANZUS is the Australia, New Zealand, United States Security Treaty signed in 1951. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. Referred to in chapter 3. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. In 2012 the figure was 0.28%. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. Source: *NZ History Online.* [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. *Ibid.* [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. Media staff skilled in sporting commentary found themselves with a demonstration to report instead. They quickly adapted, however, and listeners were treated to some adrenalin-pumping lines like: ‘a demonstrator’s sprinting down the touch-line closely followed by two policemen. They’re gaining on him; they’ve brought him to the ground just five metres short of halfway.’ [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. http://www.justice.govt.nz/tribunals/waitangi-tribunal. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. I drafted this section in collaboration with our son, Jeremy, who was researching the topic in connection with the history and values of Playcentre.

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22. A parishioner at St Peter’s. [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. The Diocese of Polynesia includes Fiji, Tonga, Samoa and other Pacific islands. [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. *Romans 12.* [↑](#footnote-ref-24)