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The Anglican Church in Aotearoa New Zealand and Polynesia

Anglican Women's Studies Centre

In Nadi at General Synod

By Archdeacon Carole Hughes

Convenor of the Council for the Anglican Women's Studies Centre

The Council for the Anglican Women's Studies Centre had the privilege of being able to present our report to Synod on Monday morning. Unfortunately, as Revd Amy Chambers had to return to Suva early and Dr Jenny Te Paa was invited to speak at the General Convention of the Episcopal Church so their apologies was offered to Synod. Both Jenny and Revd Tai Tuatagaloa are stepping down from their positions as Tikanga councillors for the WSC at this Synod. The Council wishes to acknowledge their wonderful contributions they have made in the interest of women in this church and WSC over many years. Their vision and work on our behalf will always be greatly appreciated by these pioneering women of our church. Our aroha goes with you..



Carole Hughes addresses the General Synod with Karena de Pont, Erice Fairbrother, Mere Wallace, Sepi Hala'api'api and Tai Tuatagaloa in support

Bula vinaka, kia ora, greetings to all the members of General Synod, Bishops, Archbishops, observers, guests, our hosts and of course, Mr General Secretary. Thank you for the opportunity to report to you today. I wish to begin by introducing our Councillors for the Women's Studies Centre, two from each tikanga – Tai and Amy (who offers who apologies) from Tikanga Pacifica, Mere and Jenny (who sends her apologies also) from Tikanga Maori, Erice and myself from Tikanga Pakeha and our administrator, Karena.

When you hear the words "Women's Studies" or "Women's Council", or in fact 'women any-

thing' what do you really hear? What is your immediate response? Perhaps our baggage of the past where we were radically challenged to have women representatives in our meeting structures, and to have women priests and women bishops? Or may be a sense of pride that we have got it sorted and so we do not need anything exclusively 'women' anymore because women and men now work in equal partnership? Or maybe it could be a 'yes' we do need to encourage our women, particularly our younger women, to be educated and to publish their work, and to feel confident and equipped and supported in applying for posi-

tions of responsibility in our church. My motivation is that this church has offered me all of the above, and I want to pass on these experiences to others.

That is why the General Synod Council for Anglican Women's Studies is vital to our church. At a General Synod six years ago, it was asked specifically by Tikanga Maori and Tikanga Pacifica, that such a Council be formed and that it be three tikanga. The intention being that on-going issues surrounding women's min-

istry then this year open to all women in ministry roles. This was held last week and there were 100 women present; we had some inspirational speakers and workshops.

Thirdly, we are encouraging women to **publish** and this year we have 16 women in our church who have completed post-graduate study, writing a chapter each for our academic book entitled "Our Place: Women in the Church of Aotearoa New Zealand and Polynesia", which we hope to have published in time for the ACC meeting. Last year we published resources including a book "A Time in Lent" which included six different Lenten study programmes ideas; the intention being that we are modelling resource sharing.

Our fourth emphasis is on developing our **communications and networking** capacities. Every month we publish a newsletter that is available to hundreds of people, not just in our church here in this place, but across the world. And I cannot proceed without acknowledging and thanking Karena, our administrator, who does a huge amount of work – in fact she organises everything for us, and we could not do this work without her. Kia ora Karena. We also have connections with Anglican women around the world and I am currently the link person for the **International Anglican**



Mere Wallace talks about the WSC Mentoring Programme

istry in our church be given a voice and a forum; identifying that we as a church have made huge steps forward for partnership between women and men and we need to keep working on this. The main focus was, and still is, to encourage women into **theological education**; a huge task in itself if we are to reach a wide group across our province. And also to work out positive ways in which women can contribute to **education, publishing and leadership within the wider church** because, believe it or not, our women are not very good at putting themselves 'out there', and so we are encouraging that to happen; institutionally and also personally. At this point I wish to commend the latest initiatives of tikanga Maori who have expressed an intention to appoint a woman as their next Bishop; one expression of leadership where equality is still being worked on, and as a church together we still have some work to do.

So how do we do this work? As always we grow the relationships with one another and grow our networks and gathering capacities, and we as a three tikanga church can never do enough of this.

The Council for the Anglican Women's Studies Centre have been working on four main areas:

Firstly, establishing **mentoring programmes** for younger or newly ordained women – particularly focussing on working across tikanga.

Secondly, over the past two years we have held a **hui** each year one year for ordained women from all three tikanga, and



Carole Hughes reporting to Synod

Women's Network, replacing our previous Convenor and Link Person, Dr Jenny Te Paa, who I wish to acknowledge and thank for her inspirational leadership and ministry amongst us.

In a few moments a couple of the Council members and Sepi Hala'api'api are going to speak briefly about specific experiences that they have appreciated in our ministry. But I wish to end by stating that what has been the most exciting for me in convening this Council is to experience our three tikanga church in action. The three tikanga structure works really, really well for us. Some of it is because we don't have to work with each other every day – I offer that, but when we do gather we are genuinely interested in learning from one another and hearing

our stories. We don't always get it right but we are committed to each other. I think partnership is way up there for us – partnership between tikanga, between gender, between age and between the roles we hold, and partnerships between Anglicans across the world. It is one of our success stories as a three tikanga church, so as a General Synod let's celebrate this.

It is not about women complaining about how we don't have roles and voice; it is about celebrating that we do, and identifying how we can best educate, resource, contribute and lead our church in partnership and grow in the responsibilities we hold. Thank you for recognising the need and being in partnership with us. Kia ora.



The Council took the opportunity to hold a Council meeting while in Fiji leading up to Synod – most Council business is done by email or by audio conferencing

Sepi Hala'api'api – spoke about what it meant to her being invited to speak at the Treasuring Women in Ministry hui last week.

Mere Wallace – spoke about the Mentoring Programme, challenging Maori Bishops to recommend Maori women to Council for mentoring.

Eric Fairbrother – spoke about the Publication Programme and how the Council are now realising the original vision and intention of the 1996 General Synod recommendations.

Tai Tuatagaloa – spoke about the Mentoring Programme and the three tikanga relationships and the support the Council has offered her and our Pacific sisters over the years as she steps down from her role as Tikanga Polynesia Council Representative.

The report was accepted and approved by General Synod – Bishop Phillip Richardson and Archdeacon May Croft spoke in support and we thank them most sincerely for this unsolicited support and encouragement.

Demystifying General Synod

By Revd Eric Fairbrother

General Synod is an experience I would hope many can have some time – perhaps on your 'church life bucket list'! Why? Because General Synod is a time of colour, rich korero, renewal of friendships and meeting new people from all over New Zealand, Aotearoa and Polynesia. I was glad to be part of IDC as Women's Studies delegate, as it meant I was able to be there for the cultural opening ceremony and then the Opening worship for General Synod itself. IDC is the Inter-Diocesan Conference – basically a Tikanga caucus that meets prior to the beginning of General Synod proceedings itself. Aotearoa and Polynesia also caucus beforehand – a system which lets us connect together as a Tikanga and do any work we need to do in order to come together into General Synod with a common sense of direction if not unanimity on the motions and presentations to the whole assembled church. General Synod is interesting as it is a mix of political, ecclesial and spiritual expression of who we are and what we are dealing with across the church and within the wider context of the Anglican Communion.

Polynesia welcomed us in style. We were overcome by their generosity in terms of hospitality, prayerful reception of us and the joy of the faith that they shared. We all noticed the strength of Polynesia's young people and the careful nurture of children and youth as the church of today. It was a privilege to be there. Our presentation of the work of Women's Studies was led by Carole whose very impressive summary of who we are and how we work and keep faithful stewardship of the resources General Synod allocates to us, was received with positive and generous responses. All the while she spoke the power point collation of where we had been over the last few years illustrated her report – marvellous piece of work by Karena. As our report was the first presentation on the first full day of General Synod, it set a high tone and auspicious beginning. Karena and I left Synod immediately after we presented our report, but with hearts full of the rich experience of what it means to meet with the whole church of Aotearoa New Zealand.

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The Centre for Anglican Women's Studies, commonly known as the **Women's Studies Centre** was set up to serve and to advance the interests and needs of the women of this Church particularly those undertaking Theological training.

The Link Representatives from each Diocese and Hui Amorangi have been chosen for their leadership ability to identify, gather, facilitate, resource and encourage women in their educational preparation for ministry whether lay or ordained. It is hoped that the Women's Studies Centre can continue to enjoy the support of each Diocese and Hui Amorangi in this endeavour.



The issue of increasing numbers of women in representative positions across the councils and committees of the Church is seen as a high priority and the practice of intentional mentoring by those already in national and international representative roles is seen as a good way to expose women of this church to fulfill their potential as leaders.

Ensuring that women's voices and stories are heard now and in the future is also one of our continued aims whether it be by traditional methods of publication or using more contemporary technologies like website publication. We remain optimistic that through continued support, the needs of women throughout this Province will be valued and recognized.



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EDITORIAL DISCLAIMER: *The Women's Studies Centre is committed to encouraging and enabling women's voices and perspectives from across the diversity of the Church to be shared more widely. We acknowledge that women's experiences of church differ considerably and that resultant theological perspectives also differ considerably. In general the WSC does not exercise editorial control, rather we welcome as many voices as are willing to contribute.*