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Return to South Africa

By Revd
Pane Kawhia



Revd Pane Kawhia with the newly appointed 44th Bishop of Zululand, Monument Makhanya

Durban beachfront, I boarded a Greyhound bus for a 12 hour trip from Durban to Grahamstown in the Eastern Province.

I should explain. Towards the end of my first year at St John's Theological College in 2001, Te Ahorangi of Te Rau Kahikatea, Dr Jenny Te Paa, asked if I would be interested in going to South Africa as part of a cross cultural exchange programme she had initiated with the South African theological college, the **College of the Transfiguration** (COTT) in Grahamstown.

I had always wanted to visit South Africa since reading '*Cry the Beloved Country*' for a 3rd

As I watched my Emirates flight draw closer to the city of Durban on the flight path monitor, I was filled with excitement and anticipation to be returning to South African soil once again. Though I'd never been to Durban before, I was excited to be seeing another part of this beautiful country and also looking forward to reconnecting with old friends. I was coming to attend the consecration of the Revd Monument Makhanya as the new Bishop of Zululand, a dear friend, who I'd met in Grahamstown in 2002. But that event was a week away and after giving myself two days to get over jetlag in a hotel with sea views at the cheaper end of the

form school assignment; being on a debate team in the 5th form with the topic of 'Separate development is necessary in order for South Africa to be a first world nation' - I was placed on the affirmative side and was quite convinced after reading the resource material slash propaganda obtained from the South African High Commission. My side won. In later years I'd watched the movie '*The Power of One*', I'd heard about people like Steve Bikko and Nelson Mandela and by then of course, my opinion had changed but I had always been fascinated by this country of contrasts. So it didn't take long for me to say 'Yes' to Jenny. I'd gotten some good marks in my

first lot of assignments so I felt I could afford to take the time off formal study.

I spent six months in Grahamstown and this time involved being part of the COTT community. I loved it: interacting with fellow students, sitting in on lectures without doing any formal study, learning about Anglicanism in their context, and of course sharing about Anglicanism in our context of a three Tikanga church and our Maori culture. I visited schools, a prison where men wanted to learn the haka so I taught them 'Ka mate, Ka mate!'; a military camp, helped out at a food station for the homeless and hungry and an HIV Aids shelter; a Moravian community, a coloured rural parish, a black rural parish and I was hosted by white families on a visit to Capetown. I felt I was experiencing a good cross section of South African society but really I was just scraping the surface.

There were around 60 students at COTT, they were predominantly black with a small number of coloured and white students. I've often been chastised back here in New Zealand for differentiating these groups but I do so because they are such different contexts even though it's one country; just like Maori and Pakeha.

Other students at COTT were from Zimbabwe, Lesotho, Swaziland and the Seychelles. I loved the mix of people and was determined to get to hear people's stories and learn and understand as much as I could about the different lenses through which they viewed their country.

This first trip to South Africa was an experience I will never forget and I will always treasure the friendships I made while there.

And so here I was sitting in the downstairs business class of the bus (luxury class was upstairs), making the long trip to Grahamstown where I was to be hosted at COTT for two nights.

I was genuinely overjoyed to be seeing the beauty of this fascinating country with its overwhelming landscapes once again. The vast terrain with rolling hills amidst a backdrop of huge mountains in the distance was spectacular. All along the route there were groups of mud huts with thatched roofs, dotted here and there, near and far, on the plains and up in the mountains. Whenever we neared a township, the huts would sometimes become more sophisticated dwellings, signalling perhaps that the residents had better means of living than others.

I remembered going into similar huts on my first visit, the dark and cool interiors, the earthy smells, and very basic furnishings. On one occasion I joined a group from a rural parish to go and pay our respects upon the death of a parishioner. There was no body but on the floor on one side of the room, a candle burned continuously and a saucer was next to it. I was told the protocol was to put some money into the saucer as a gift to the family. I thought of how we give Koha at our tangi and though there was much that was different about their way of doing a funeral, the tikanga of people paying their respects, giving to the bereaved family, sharing words of comfort from God's Word and offering prayers and songs of praise was very present.

Back to the bus ride: I found myself gasping in awe at the scenes before me for as far as the eye could see. I even placed my hand on the bus window in an effort to be at one with the magnificent vista and my spirit went into prayer for this vast land and its people.

The 12 hour bus journey really didn't seem that long because of the scenery and when I finally arrived in Grahamstown I was met by some welcoming COTT students and taken to my accommodation.

I attended chapel the next morning - as always it began with 15 minutes silence for reflection/meditation followed by a Eucha-



Vashti's Banquet
Voices from her feast

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Images from The College of the Transfiguration in Grahamstown, South Africa. 1—The College Chapel in the dawn light; 2— Revd Dr Vicentia Kgabe celebrating Holy Communion at COTT; 3—Students start the day with morning prayers in the College Chapel; 4— Some COTT students waiting for breakfast; 5— A joy to see a familiar face, Mama Felisha who worked in the kitchen when Pane was an exchange student at COTT in 2002

rist service. I met the current Dean, Revd Dr Vicentia Kgabe. She introduced me to the College community after the service and asked me to give a brief greeting. People seemed genuinely interested in where I came from and that I'd been at COTT as an exchange student.

Revd Dr Vicentia is the first female Rector of a theological college in South Africa and it was a pleasure to meet her. We met again later that day to talk and share some more. I was grateful for the time she gave me and that she had offered me free accommodation. However in true Maori fashion, I couldn't leave without giving a koha.

I dined with the students, reconnected with some of the old household staff who still remembered me and dined at the home of a lecturer and her husband who I'd met before. We had so much to talk about, reminiscing about my previous visit and talking about current issues. I did enjoy attending the three services a day for morning, noon and evening prayers. Memories of the rhythm of spiritual life at COTT flooded back as I had enjoyed these compulsory disciplines during my six month stay.

One of the first students I met at COTT in 2002 was a young man called Monument Makhanya. His first words to me were "you sound like a white person!" It wasn't meant as an offence and I didn't take it as such. Monument was a real gentleman with impeccable English, a warm personality, a loud infectious laugh and he became a good friend to me. He loved to tell me about Sizwe the woman he loved and who he was going to marry once he completed his studies. We shared a deep evangelical faith and would frequently discuss ecclesiology and contextual theology and mission amongst other things. I made other close friends as well and I was grateful for their friendship when I was so far from home.

Towards the end of my time at COT, Monument was selected as the second exchange student to come to St John's Theological College. The first had been a woman called Nomveliso who I didn't meet until my return to New Zealand. I did however visit her village and met her whanau who very generously gifted me a goat. This was followed by the gift of a chicken from another community I visited that week.

Monument came to New Zealand for six months and along with Nomveliso, came to one of our Hui Amorangi in Rangitukia on the East Coast. A memorable event for them and for me who witnessed it, was when they were in their beds in the whareniui and Bishop Brown walked down the aisle in his pyjamas and night robe. Highly embarrassed they slid under their blankets and Monument made the comment 'We have never before seen a bishop in his pyjamas. Ours would never sleep with us like this'. Bishop Brown on hearing about this later, was very intrigued by this reaction. He couldn't see what the

fuss and bother was about in a bishop being seen in his nightwear!

And so here I was in May 2016, about to attend Monument's consecration as the 44th Bishop of Zululand. And what a spectacular event it was. A crowd of around 5,000 filled a huge stadium at the University of Zululand, about three hours north of Durban. Amidst the pomp and ceremony of liturgical worship and the spontaneity and joy of African worship, the Archbishop of Southern Africa, the Most Reverend Thabo Magoba, consecrated my dear friend who looked absolutely at home with all that was taking place around him. This was immediately followed by exuberant expressions of celebration with accompanying applause, shrills, singing and dancing that could only happen in Africa. For what seemed like hours, people streamed from their seats to personally congratulate their new Bishop.



Left: Revd Dr Vicentia Kgabe, Dean of The College of the Transfiguration and first Rector of a theological College in South Africa. Right: A joy to finally meet Sizwe, the wife of the new Bishop of Zululand.

What was even more amazing is that I learnt that Monument had not been one of the nominees in the Electoral College. It was only after there was difficulty in getting a majority vote that someone nominated him and he was successful.

It was such a privilege to witness this event. I was seated in the front row of the clergy section immediately behind the stage so had a birds-eye view of the proceedings. I was pleased to see a large number of women clergy; a woman preached the sermon; bishops representing their respective dioceses from within Southern Africa and neighbouring countries occupied the main stage dressed in their colourful robes and mitres; there was a sea of women in the black and white uniform of the Mother's Union; the hundred plus choir had their section; and dignitaries included members of the Zulu Royal Family.

In his first speech as Bishop, Monument thanked many people for coming from afar including myself which meant I had to stand. Because of this, fellow COTT students throughout the stadium saw that I was there and came to greet me later. We had a brief but wonderful time of reconnecting at the celebration feast.

A magnificent feast was served for 500 invited guests and I managed to catch some moments with Monument before returning to my hotel. He would very much like to return to New Zealand with his family in the near future.

I felt like I'd had a spiritual feast and I was full to overflowing. I was also full of gratitude to have been able to return to a land which will forever have a special place in my heart.

I wrote a song during my first visit and the chorus was "Mzantzi

Africa (South Africa), you have not been abandoned, the Lord your God is with you". I learnt so much from this great country where the extremes of wealth and poverty exist together, comfort and suffering, and the legacy of the injustices of the apartheid system and its consequent abolishment will take years to heal at so many different levels. Wherever I visited and especially in the rural parishes, I saw people who lived with little, many suffering with HIV Aids, schools with the barest of resources, churches with dirt floors and raised boards for seats yet there was an enthusiasm and joy in their praise and worship to God far more than I've ever seen in any service I've attended in Aotearoa. There's a lesson here I believe for the western church. In our difficult times, do we lavish our God with exuberant praise? Do we turn our cries for help into shouts of praise?

I asked God once, 'Where are you in all of the suffering?' He answered my question a few days later when I experienced the most amazing generosity, joy, friendliness, hospitality and love from my African hosts. I sensed God's presence strongly and heard his quiet voice saying 'I am here in the midst of it all, Pane!'. He was very present in the suffering and remained true to his Word to never leave nor forsake his people. I remember asking the question quietly "Who says you are poor?" The people I visited were so spiritually rich.

In the clutter of our western lifestyles - even as Maori where we have so much, where materialism, consumerism, capitalism, intellectualism and so many other 'isms' are the modern idols of our society, even in the church, we should always stop to ask ourselves, "Where are you God?"

SITTING ALONE

By Revd Rosemary Carey

Sitting alone

My friend is the phone

One never be lonely, knowing out there

The world keeps on turning and there's many who care.

Not only of me, but of others they see

That can do with a smile and a nice cup of tea.

Thought I never would say, "Computers will stay"

But after today, please don't take mine away.

It's connected me from my space in my bed

With the whole world out there that's inside my head.

It's easy to praise when all I can see

is the kindness of others, surrounding me.

I don't feel hopeless or lonely or sad

In fact laying low is not all that bad!



Stepping back off our veranda 3 weeks ago into a void, resulted in me breaking bones in my right ankle. Never have I been so grateful for pain relief and the care and attention of the St John's trained crew who took me off to hospital where I underwent surgery and discovered I would not be mobile for the next six weeks.

It's amazing the emotions one goes through as grief and acceptance kick in and what one learns about oneself when your independence disappears. I can only be thankful for the opportunity it has given me to realise and accept how much expertise and goodness surrounds me. ACC has been marvellous, so has the understanding of my work place. My empathy of my tetraplegic brother has reached a whole new level. Being able to join the congregation last Sunday at Church was such a blessing, and one I usually just take for granted. For me, I have discovered many blessings along with my healing that has come out of this misfortune. One of the blessings has been time... time to reflect... time to pray... time to be still... time to appreciate friendship and receive from others...time to read.

The above poem came out of the blue. I don't write poems, I write historical novels. For those of you who like reading and who enjoy a good testimony, may I recommend my first published novel, "The Walnut Legacy" to you. Copies are only NZ\$20:00 each and I tith my profits to Mission.

The Walnut Legacy

By Rosemary Carey

The first of a sequel this historical family novel is based on the life of Thomas Coto, a Chinese-Australian (1831-1883)

Around 1843 a young Chinese lad from the island of Amoy became a cabin boy on the cutter "Atlas" and sailed to Port Albert, Australia, with only a small bundle of personal possessions which included a walnut and an English Bible. He was passed on as a houseboy to Angus McMillan, an early explorer and surveyor in Victoria, by the ship's Captain, and so began his new life far away from home.

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Order your \$20 copy directly from Rosemary by emailing her on rbcarey.carey@gmail.com or by phone 021 203-5895 or land-line phone 06 876-3925

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The Centre for Anglican Women's Studies, commonly known as the **Anglican 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 Anglican 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 Anglican 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 AWSC does not exercise editorial control, rather we welcome as many voices as are willing to contribute.