

July 2019  
Volume 9, Issue 4

The Anglican Church in Aotearoa New Zealand and Polynesia

Anglican Women's Studies Centre

## The Evolutionary Priest

Words by Lorraine Foster  
Photos by Epi Nasaroa

*The Anglican Women's Studies newsletter is delighted to reprint this interview from I AM WOMAN— a Fijian publication.*

Forty years ago, Mrs Chambers was in charge of Sales and Ticketing at Air Pacific Limited (now Fiji Airways) in Labasa. After these many years, it was nice to meet Mrs Chambers again and I was somewhat pleasantly surprised that she has aged gracefully. She still had those sparkling smiling eyes a wicked sense of humour, and a 'no nonsense' attitude, but now she is called **Reverend Amy Chambers**.

Caroline Amy Chambers, nee Fong Toy, was born on Naqaraniqoli Estate on the banks of Dreketi River, Makuata. She is of Chinese/Taukei and European descent, and is the eldest daughter of Reginald Fong Toy and Siliva Sovasova. She was married to the late George Williams Chambers and, with four children, six foster children, fourteen grandchildren, and five great grandchildren, Rev Chambers has enough love to share around with her wonderful extended family.

Her favourite type of music is country gospel and she is not fussy about food as long as it is cooked well and presented well, but her preference is for Chinese dishes. Her Chinese her-

itage is revealed as her favourite beverage is tea and her favourite social drink is red wine.



Being a romantic, she used to love Mills and Boon but over the years her choice of books has varied, and she will read anything that is interesting and adventurous. She is hooked on soap operas, and spy thriller movies and of course murder mysteries. In her spare time she loves to read, watch TV, do what any mother would do— cook and sew for her loving family.

### Her Work Career

Rev. Chambers has had a colourful work career which started when she was a licenced Primary School Teacher. She then moved on to the Bank of New Zealand for two years and left when she got married. Her longest work experience in the commercial field was with Air Pacific

(now Fiji Airways) where she worked for over 25 years. Her hard work was recognised as she moved through the ranks from Telephone Receptionist to Traffic Officer to Reservations Officer and finally to District Sales Manager in Labasa and then Nadi airport.

After working in the commercial field for over



twenty five years, she was drawn to her faith so she decided to go for further studies in New Zealand and obtained from Laidlaw College a Diploma in Biblical Studies and a Bachelor of Theology at Auckland University. Rev Chambers was now beginning to take heed of her calling to be an ordained person and be part of her religious faith in the Anglican Church.

### *Her Calling*

'For twelve years I struggled with what I felt was a call to go into full-time ministry as a priest. In 1998 all the material things I depended on in my life fell apart. That was when I knew that God was calling me into this vocation. When I said yes and fully committed myself to this calling, everything fell into place.'

Rev Chambers was ordained a Deacon in 2003 and a priest in 2004. In 2006, she became the first woman to be Principal of St John the Baptist Pacific Theological College in Desvouex Road, as well as a lecturer. She worked at the College till 2018. Within the church, Rev Chambers continued to thrive in responsible postings like being the chaplain of the St John Association in Fiji, and for ten years she held the position of Chair for WEAVERS, which is the arm of the South Pacific Association of Theological Schools (SPATS). In 2014, she was the first woman to be elected Vice President of SPATS and in 2016, at the Council meeting in Tonga, she was elected president by an overwhelming majority. Her election saw the first woman to hold this position in its forty-seven year history. Her other achievement within the church is being the first woman to be elected Vicar General of the Diocese of Polynesia.

Currently Rev Chambers is Manager of the Moana Anglican Services and Teaching Centre, at Desvouex Road- this is a new venture of the Diocese and they are working towards becoming self-sufficient. She is not attached to a parish but when required Rev Chambers preaches, presides at the Eucharist, baptises and conducts Bible studies and burials.

### *Challenges in terms of Christianity in Fiji*

I asked Rev Amy about the challenges happening in Fiji in terms of Christianity, her answer was brief and to the point. "Relevancy". She states that the churches need to be relevant in terms of what the people face in their everyday life.

*'The Fijian family nucleus is falling apart in Fiji because parents are so busy and therefore do not spend quality time with their families.'* This was a statement I heard over the radio from a Church Pastor and he insisted that this is why there is so much rape, violence and crime in Fiji.

Rev Chambers maintains that we should first teach ourselves the importance of love and respect. Then we teach our children and we continue on, to teach our grandchildren the im-

portance of love and respect. Out of these two attributes other good things will emerge, and if we don't love and respect ourselves, how can we do that to others, especially those who are different from us.

Rev Chambers goes on to add how we can be better people in our lives. *'Know your role in the family and in the community, and in the church and play it well. When you do this, you will complement other people's roles as well as allowing them to grow alongside yourself, and encourage, empower, and even mentor them. It is about moving together in whatever we do and looking to Christ the Head'.*



### *Advice to young Women who face challenges*

In Fiji our youths make up a large population and on a yearly basis there are secondary school leavers and tertiary school leavers who face many challenges, like finding employment and being affected by social distractions.

Rev Chambers' advice to young women is that they must persevere and be patient in what they do and when they do it, they should do it well. Nothing comes easy now so don't give up easily.



Also don’t expect a handout all the time, as it teaches you to be stagnant, to really rely on somebody else, and not used your God given gifts.’

### Effect of Modern Technology

Everywhere you look almost everyone is using gadgets, like iphones, ipads, tablets etc. And some of us fear that modern technology and social media are adversely affecting our lives as there is a lack of communication with each other. On the effect of modern technology and social media on our lives today, Rev Chambers believes it is a necessity but must be used wisely.

### Difficulties experienced

Rev Chambers has come across her fair share of challenges and difficulties throughout her life journey but her faith in God has allowed her to rise above the challenges she has faced. ‘I am a child from a broken marriage. At a young age I had to fend for myself as well as younger siblings. I persevered and worked hard rising above the challenges after so many years. The experience I learned from those years of struggle and poverty has strengthened me so much that very little surprises me any more. I can tackle anything that comes my way.

During these difficult times, God never deserted or abandoned me. That was the greatest learning curve of my life— to always depend on God’.

### Violence against women and girls

There have been many reported cases of sexual abuse and violence towards women and children in Fiji, where the victims are getting younger and the perpetrators are family members. Rev Chambers was concerned and mentioned that boundaries are an important aspect of our cultural traditions but a lot of people don’t know about this because they have never been told, or it is not part of their family teaching. People must be taught how to respect boundaries and this in turn will enable us to begin to address this issue of abuse and violence.

As the interview came to an end, Rev Chambers shared that one of her biggest challenges she encountered was when she decided to become a priest in 2000, was that it was a male dominated area. She emphasised that she became very unpopular because she dared to challenge the status quo. Her focus was to form a partnership with her male colleagues and not to compete with them, yet this was often misunderstood.



In the past five years, it has become better, but the thread of patriarchy is still very strong in our society, and more so in the church. Rev Chambers sees her role as encouraging young women and young men to work together and appreciate what each brings to their roles.

‘Balance for

Better’ is the theme for International Women’s Day this year 2019, and Rev Chambers is tipping the scales with her faith and setting examples for other young women who have the calling to their religion and faith. I thank Rev Chambers for sharing her life and her thoughts on various aspects of life.

*‘Leaders have power but power is safe only in the hands of those who humble themselves to serve’ John Scott.*



See more of I am Woman on <https://www.vintagelinkfiji.com/>

## Council and Links: 3 tikanga meeting

The annual Gathering of Links and Councillors takes place at St Johns College 5-7 August.

Be sure to ask your local Link for a coffee to hear all the news! See back page for contact details.



# Dream of Discipleship: hearing our unique call

Rev Kaye Dyer

I have been asked to share my dream for the next five years especially in the area of discipleship. However if my dream is not birthed in the heart of God, it is merely wishful thinking. We live in exciting times. Like the people of Israel on their journey to a new land, we also live in a time of transition. Christendom is over; a new model of church is coming. We cannot see it yet but we do know God is faithful and he will guide us. We live in the days that Joel speaks of when God’s Spirit is poured out and each one of us can experience this for ourselves. As in the days of Moses, God’s people are called to watch and listen, day and night, to ensure we move in step with the Spirit.

Three keys scriptures for my journey have been:

*“You are my beloved son/daughter with whom I am well-pleased.” (I know who I am and I am loved)*

*“My sheep hear my voice.” (What is Jesus saying to me? How will I respond?)*

*“I only do what the Father is doing.” (I do what Jesus asks of me)*

Our first priority in transitioning from our current style of church to a missional model is **spiritual formation**. It is not a matter of what we know but whether the life of Jesus is being formed in us. Are we secure in knowing the Father’s love for us? Are we hearing and obeying the voice of Jesus?

We have recently celebrated Pentecost—an annual reminder in our church calendar that Jesus told his disciples to “stay here in the city until the Holy Spirit comes and fills you with power from heaven” (Lk 24:49); power that transformed twelve fearful disciples to twelve fearless carriers of the gospel message. Is this a reality for ourselves and those we lead? We share a supernatural faith; the incarnation, resurrection and ascension are all supernatural events, yet **how often do we try to live in our own strength?**

## New Model of Discipleship

In 2000 I realized that I needed to find a new model for discipleship to **grow women to be whom God designed them to be**. Sermons, courses and more head knowledge were not developing women to be contagious for the gospel. More practical training and mentoring was needed. Also our creative side needed to find expression. This led to the birth of Focus events in which we received input from women from across



many denominations. We were experimenting. A major theme has always been listening to God’s voice for ourselves and then for others (prophecy). This proved to be transformative in many lives.

## Telling our own God stories

We were then able to explore having gospel conversations beginning with learning to tell our own God stories of how our lives are being impacted and we have been led.

This year my dream includes restarting Focus as a vehicle for missional discipleship to help people find and move in their calling.

In addition, Richard and I dream of creating an apostolic hub, a safe place for **apostles, prophets and evangelists to be disciplined and encouraged**. These gifts are desperately needed to work in partnership with the teachers and shepherds if the church is to be equipped to fulfill its mission calling. Unfortunately they are not understood and usually squeezed out or silenced.

In 5 years time I pray we will look back to 2019 and see how much we have grown as a people of the Word and Spirit, clear in our identity and purpose; confidently fulfilling our unique call in God’s mission.



Recently I have obtained two new teaching resources to use in the future.

### Hearing God's Voice in the Night: Interpreting Dreams and Visions

Until recently I have not paid much attention to dreams as a channel for communication with God. However it is biblical to hear God in the night. As we read through scripture we find many examples of God speaking in dreams and visions. Just think of Joseph—God told him in a dream to marry Mary, he warned him in a dream to escape to Egypt and in another when it was safe to return home. God trusted the life of his new-born son to a young girl and a man who was a dreamer! Today we hear many testimonies of people living in countries that are closed to Christianity, meeting Jesus in dreams and visions. The material that opened up this for me was the work of Charity Virkler Kayembe. She has studied this field for 25 years.

### Healing Heart Wounds

Mark Virkler has also produced an excellent teaching series called *Prayers that Heal the Heart* or *Counseled by God*. In it he teaches how to get to the source of our heart wounds using the Holy Spirit as guide. So often we understand the hurt in our mind but healing the emotion attached to the pain requires healing the heart. His teaching is simple, biblical and powerful.

The AWSC was formed with the aim to encourage women in our church in theological education and leadership. Both fall

under the wider umbrella of discipleship.

In Nelson we are very fortunate to have easy access to theological training through Bishopdale College (also distance education through Laidlaw and Otago). Since Focus began in 2000 eight women have gone on to theological study/ordination. Four of those have done postgraduate studies, three are in parish leadership.

### Leadership style

Our call is to encourage, support and release each other into the blessing of God. To do less is to hinder others' potential. A few years ago I was challenged to identify the leadership practices of Focus that made this difference.

As women we can become used to our voice not being valued and as a result cease to believe in ourselves. Maybe we have been trained to stand back and wait, and wait, to be noticed. Have we accepted lies about ourselves that are not in agreement to how God views us? We need to hear and receive God's truth spoken over us. We need a safe place to try new things. Five key points I have noted are:

People will only excel if we believe in them. Do we actively look to see what God has put into others and call it out of them?

Gifts can only function if we accept them. Can we let go to make space for others gifts to flourish?

Ministries will only flourish if we support them. Are we proactive in multiplying leadership and releasing ministries? I have bought quality video teaching material so that I can release group leadership to others.

Leaders can only rise to the height that people let them. When those we train go higher than us do we feel threatened or do we rejoice?

Our task is to make those we lead into heroes not to be the hero!

The church of the future will require relational leadership. This is a place women can excel. Let us together encourage one another and especially the younger generations to grow to be all that God has called us to be.

*For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. Jer29:11*





# Be the Change

*The Anglican Church in Aotearoa New Zealand Polynesia has been ordaining women to the Priesthood for over 40 years.*

*As we prepare a publication to mark this part of our history, our sisters in the Roman Catholic church are continuing their journey.*

*Christina Reymer writes*

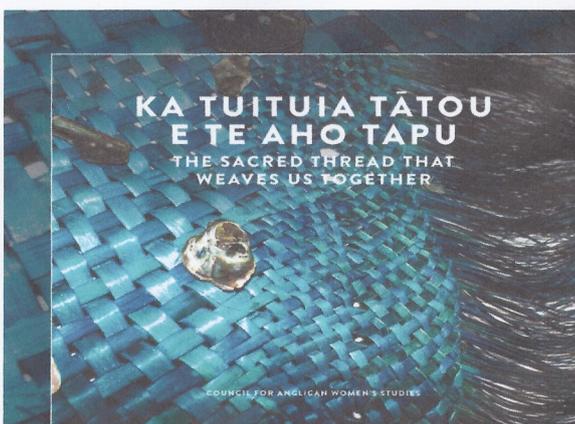
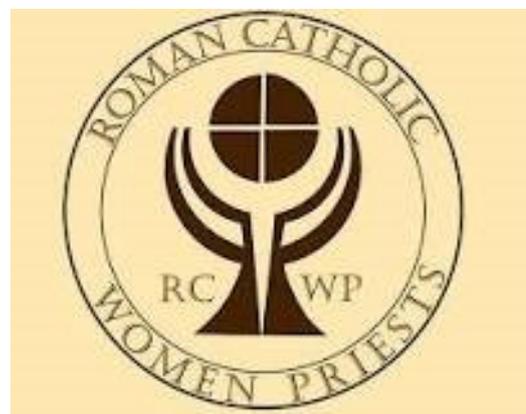
Who are we? We are a group of women and men committed to gender equity in the Catholic Church. Inspired by the Women’s Ordination Movement internationally, we want to become a supportive group for women in New Zealand called to particular ministries currently denied women, or which women find difficult to access, including priesthood, the diaconate, mediating the sacraments, giving homilies etc. While woman priesthood was the issue we originally gathered around, we are still discerning what this might mean, or how this might happen. We want to continue nurturing the formation of our community, build relationships, and mission our vision, all the while being open to how the Spirit may move among us. We are motivated by a sense of responsibility to Be the Change.

Sparked by the visit to New Zealand of Catholic Priest Paula Hoeffler, from Cincinnati, Ohio, USA over Easter 2019, Be the Change is brand new; the Spirit is afire in us! If you would like to know more, contact Louise Shanly [louise.shanly@gmail.com](mailto:louise.shanly@gmail.com), coordinator,

*Christina Reymer [cmreymer@xtra.co.nz](mailto:cmreymer@xtra.co.nz), spokesperson.*



*Paula Hoeffler, a Catholic priest from the resurrection Community in the USA, presiding over a home Mass.*



## KA TUITUIA TĀTOU E TE AHO TAPU THE SACRED THREAD THAT WEAVES US TOGETHER

Price is \$25 per copy plus post & packaging  
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on +64 9 521-4439 or email [gensec@anglicanchurch.org.nz](mailto:gensec@anglicanchurch.org.nz)

Publication sponsored by the COUNCIL FOR ANGLICAN WOMEN'S STUDIES,  
The Anglican Church in Aotearoa, New Zealand & Polynesia





## Matthew Fox in Auckland

The Rev Matthew Fox presented several addresses and workshops over several days in Auckland this month. He says, ‘I am awakening people—mystics and prophets all—to actions that come from a deep heart place to face the challenges that scient



Matthew Fox and Cecily Sheehy, OP, at St Luke’s, Remuera

ists and the United Nations have warned us about regarding climate change, the disappearance of species and much more. We are told we have 11.5 years left to rise to the occasion. We feel this awakening must be more than political and technological, it must also be *spiritual*’.

Cecily studied with Matthew Fox at the Institute in Culture and Creation Spirituality, Holy Names College, Oakland, California.

She has written a wide range of hymns and songs, including ‘The Earth is our Mother’.

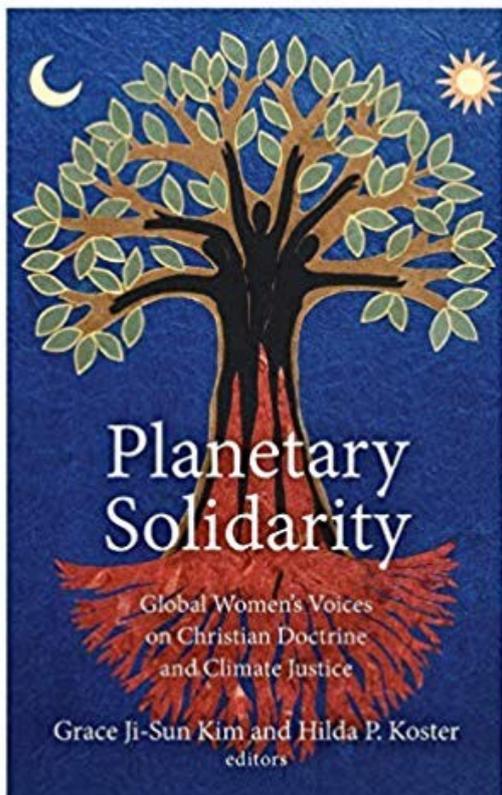
*The earth is our mother  
She feeds and she clothes us  
She gives our feet a place to stand.  
The ground is the ashes of all our grandparents  
So tread with respect in this land.*

*This do we know  
The earth does not belong to us  
It’s we who belong to the earth  
All things are connected.  
Like blood in one family,  
For better or for worse, we are one.*

*We’ve done so much damage  
To earth and to people  
The price can never now be paid.  
So let us repent now, while time is still with us  
A child is a sign that we can.*

*This do we know  
the earth does not belong to us  
It’s we who belong to the earth  
All things are connected  
Like blood in one family,  
for better or for worse, we are one.*

*Larksong*, a collection of Cecily’s music is about to be published. For more details, contact her on [cecilark@xtra.co.nz](mailto:cecilark@xtra.co.nz)



**Planetary Solidarity**, edited by Grace Ji-Sun Kim and Hilda P. Koster

ISBN: 9781506432625

Call Number: BT 695.5 PLA

"Planetary Solidarity brings together leading woman theologians on the issues of doctrine, women, and climate justice. Because women make up the majority of the world's poor and tend to be more dependent on natural resources for their livelihoods and survival, they are more vulnerable when it comes to climate-related changes and catastrophes.

Representing a subfield of feminist theology that uses doctrine as interlocutor, this book ask how Christian doctrine might address the interconnected suffering of women and the earth in an age of climate change. While doctrine has often stifled change, it also forms the thread that weaves Christian communities together.

Drawing on postcolonial ecofeminist/womanist analysis and representing different ecclesial and denominational traditions, contributors use doctrine to envision possibilities for a deep solidarity with the earth and one another while addressing the intersection of gender, race, class, and ethnicity."

New in the Kinder Library. See more at [www.kinderlibrary.ac.nz](http://www.kinderlibrary.ac.nz)



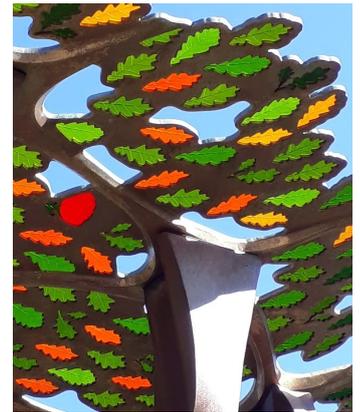
## 2019 LEADING WOMEN TIKANGA PROGRAMME

*Tikanga Maori Hui 29 November-1 December, Waipatu Marae, Hawkes Bay*

*Tikanga Pacifica Hui late October/early November*

*Tikanga Pakeha Hui, 10-12 November, Auckland*

This year, the Anglican Women's Studies Council are planning three tikanga-specific Leading Women Programmes. We celebrate the fact that women have been ordained in the Anglican Church in Aotearoa New Zealand since 1977. We are thrilled and excited with the recent selection of the first Maori woman Bishop Elect Waitohiariki Quayle. However, while there are many women who are Vicars and Chaplains, in almost equal proportions to men, we are aware that, like in most other professions within this Province, there are very few women who are currently in senior leadership positions. This leadership programme could help address that gap.



Each tikanga programme will invite 10-15 women to participate, who are identified current leaders and who wish to further develop skills, leadership pathways, mentoring networks, enhancing digital communication, and other methods of outreach. We anticipate some of these outcomes:

**Confidence**, as individual leaders and as a group.

**Networks** who can support, critique and encourage.

**Inspiration**, in order to feel positive about their contribution and also their possibilities.

**Insight** into community leaders' stories and experience.

**Knowledge** of how to stand for governance positions (for them or to encourage other women in their community).

**Visibility** so that they will be considered for governance positions.

**New Vision** for what might be possible for women in leadership in the future.

*Please contact your tikanga Councillor or the administrator for more information*

## 40 Years of Women's Ordination to the Priesthood

within the Anglican Church in Aotearoa, New Zealand and Polynesia

*A new AWSC Publication Project to celebrate this milestone*

### We would still love to hear from you!

The intention of this publication is to present a variety of essays and anecdotal stories of the experiences of ordained women from each of the three tikanga. It will be an opportunity to mark the significant milestones within each tikanga of women's ordination; the women past and present who have been ordained and their journey towards ordination; to acknowledge the journey and advocacy towards gender equality; to celebrate the many achievements and contributions of ordained women in this three tikanga Province; to share the stories of who mentored those being ordained and why.



These suggestions are just the starting point so we look forward to receiving an email expressing your interest in writing an essay or story along with your proposed topic so that the Editorial Team can contact you.

[anglicanwomenstudies@gmail.com](mailto:anglicanwomenstudies@gmail.com)



## Anglican Women's Studies Centre (AWSC)

Ceridwyn Parr, Administrator

Email: [anglicanwomenstudies@gmail.com](mailto:anglicanwomenstudies@gmail.com)

Home Office Phone: 027 573 8073

General Synod Office Phone: +64 9 521-4439 [www.anglican.org.nz](http://www.anglican.org.nz)

Postal: General Synod Office, PO Box 87188, Auckland 1742, New Zealand



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 fulfil 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 web publication. We remain optimistic that through continued support, the needs of women throughout this Province will be valued and recognized.

### Council for the Anglican Women's Studies Centre—2018/2020

#### TIKANGA MAORI—

† The Ven Numia Tomoana (Convenor)  
[revnumia@gmail.com](mailto:revnumia@gmail.com)

† Revd Bettina Maxwell  
[par1pa0pa0@gmail.com](mailto:par1pa0pa0@gmail.com)

#### TIKANGA PAKEHA—

† Revd Canon Helen Roud  
[helen.roud@gmail.com](mailto:helen.roud@gmail.com)

† The Ven Val Riches  
[vjriches@outlook.com](mailto:vjriches@outlook.com)

#### TIKANGA POLYNESIA—

† Kelera (Nai) Cokanasiga  
[keleranai@yahoo.com](mailto:keleranai@yahoo.com)

† Revd Evelini Langi  
[meleevelini.langi@gmail.com](mailto:meleevelini.langi@gmail.com)

### AWSC Diocesan & Hui Amorangi Link Representatives

#### TIKANGA PASIFIKA—

##### Samoa Archdeaconry

† Revd Sonja Hunter  
[sonja.hunter1@gmail.com](mailto:sonja.hunter1@gmail.com)

##### Fiji Archdeaconry

† Adi Lilieta Tuidama  
[fspace@ecrea.org.fj](mailto:fspace@ecrea.org.fj)

##### Tonga Archdeaconry

† Akanesi Folau  
[nesifolau@gmail.com](mailto:nesifolau@gmail.com)

##### New Zealand Archdeaconry

† *Position Vacant—tba*

#### TIKANGA MAORI—

##### Hui Amorangi o te Tairawhiti

† Ruihana Paenga  
[ruihanapaenga@gmail.com](mailto:ruihanapaenga@gmail.com)

##### Hui Amorangi o te Taitokerau

† Revd Jenny Quince  
[quincemail@xtra.co.nz](mailto:quincemail@xtra.co.nz)

##### Hui Amorangi o te Manawa o te Wheke

† Revd Raumiaria McRoberts  
[raumiaria2014@gmail.com](mailto:raumiaria2014@gmail.com)

##### Hui Amorangi o te Upoko o te Ika

† Revd Teri-Rori Kirkwood  
[rangitahi.upoko@gmail.com](mailto:rangitahi.upoko@gmail.com)

##### Diocese of Te Waipounamu

† Revd Mere Wallace  
[nganehu.mere@gmail.com](mailto:nganehu.mere@gmail.com)

#### TIKANGA PAKEHA—

##### Diocese of Auckland

† Revd Nyasha Gumbeze  
[tamarisk1999@yahoo.co.nz](mailto:tamarisk1999@yahoo.co.nz)

##### Diocese of Christchurch

† Revd Stephanie Clay  
[stephaniedemytruk@msn.com](mailto:stephaniedemytruk@msn.com)

##### Diocese of Dunedin

† *Position Vacant—tba*

##### Diocese of Nelson

† Revd Kaye Dyer  
[kaye@mightymessage.com](mailto:kaye@mightymessage.com)

##### Diocese of Waiapu

† Revd Isabel Mordecai  
[isabel.mordecai@gmail.com](mailto:isabel.mordecai@gmail.com)

##### Diocese of Waikato & Taranaki

† Heather Riches  
[heather.hilary@hotmail.com](mailto:heather.hilary@hotmail.com)

##### Diocese of Wellington

† *Position Vacant—tba*

**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.