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Kauhau: The Past Legacy, the Growth, the Present & the Vision for Kahui Wahine

By Moeawa Callaghan

First of all I thank the organizers of this hui for the privilege of being able to offer some words of reflection. This kauhau draws on conversations and discussions in recent years with Tairawhiti women in the Mihingare Church and some of the themes that emerged from yesterday's presentations.

er into one body separateness and diversity and thus provides strength and support, just as a woven piece is, in itself, strong and supporting. Weaving is an appropriate image for community because it is an image of actuality and possibility. In actuality, it is connected to the earth, to the cycles of life and death, and to power



Pictures by Melody Tapene

I begin with a poem written by Mother Theresa in her book "All this for God"

*Joy and woe are woven fine,
A clothing for the soul divine;
Under every grief and pine
Runs a joy with silken twine.
It is right it should be so;
Man was made for joy and woe;
And when this we rightly know,
Through the world we safely go.*

Mother Theresa's theme of weaving is a theme appropriate for *The Past Legacy, the Growth, the Present and the Vision for Kahui Wahine*. Weaving presents an image of community and the way community is shaped, strengthened, and interconnected. Community brings together

and creativity. In possibility, it seeks to symbolize in powerful ways these natural elements of creation. Thus it symbolizes a world view, and as feminist theologian Christine M. Smith suggests, it is a way of living sacramentally, of worship, a way of affirming and proclaiming wholeness and integration in the life of faith.¹ Significantly, within a life of faith weaving can be powerful symbol for justice because it embodies difference, tensions, and stresses with hope and vision.

A much loved Taapapa colleague and skilled flax weaver whom many of us knew, sadly, passed away last year. The previous year she had taught me something very important about being a weaver. She taught me to appreciate the imperfections found in the woven flax piece

Kauhau from Kahui Wahine *continued from page 1*

– and by extension our own human imperfections. Through the art of weaving we are taught to accept those imperfections as a part of who we are as community and as individuals, with a love so unconditional that we cannot separate the imperfections from the whole piece. Thus weaving symbolises the way in which community is imperfect yet whole, where not only is everything a part of everything else it *is* everything else. Likened to the bringing about of the peace of te rangatiratanga o te Atua we discussed in Bible study yesterday, weaving requires concentrated effort.

Consider for a moment the preparation alone required for weaving a flax taonga. The weaver learns the art of weaving from someone who has the knowledge already – knowledge passed on, old knowledge. She has to grow or find the particular type of flax provided in and by the natural environment. Then she prays, cuts and skilfully and patiently strips the flax for the strong fibre that will form the foundation of her piece and hold it together, using the appropriate tool, usually a muscle shell, to be able to do the job as best it can be done. Then she prepares the dyes for her flax in the colours she has imagined. She tests and tests until the right colour applied to the fibre is the exact colour she has imaged. Then she is ready to weave. Through imagination and vision a woven article comes into being. It is a creation of the hands, the spirit, the mind, working in harmony to form a taonga of colour, texture and meaning. In my observations, the preparation, the planning, the vision takes time, utmost care and love. Yes, it is labour intensive. In fact, in the ancient biblical world flax was widely cultivated and used for garments.² Its disadvantage was that it was indeed labour intensive. So much so that in Zechariah, and also the First reading this morning, it is ranked with gold and silver in value. “And the wealth of all the surrounding nations shall be collected – gold, silver, and garments in great abundance” (Zechariah 14:14). Because of the labour intensiveness of working with flax, textiles that required less work, like wool, were more widely used in those times, so we understand how much more valuable a woven flax garment was.

Weaving the Legacy of the Past

In weaving past legacy we have acknowledged all those whom we knew and loved, as well as those whom we didn't know but who made significant contribution to our family of faith. Those known and those unknown who travelled the 'dark night of injustice'³ (a term used by the grandfather of Latin American Liberation theology Gustavo Gutierrez) - those who

struggled and sacrificed something of their lives to contribute to the well being of the family, and of the community. We celebrate not just those whom we have come to know about but also those who have anonymously given their lives for love of their people, those who have experienced the 'grief and pain' Mother Theresa wrote about. After all, the passage through the dark night of injustice is part of the journey toward te rangatiratanga o te Atua. In the weaving of community of which the 'dark night of injustice' is intimately interwoven, we are instructed in the way the Psalmist wrote: 'in the night my heart instructs me' (Ps.16:7). The Psalmist's teaching calls to mind Maori Marsden who wrote when analysing religious philosophical and metaphysical attitudes upon which Maoritanga is based: 'It is important to remember that Maori-



Pictures by Melody Tapene

tanga is a thing of the heart rather than the head.⁴ Taking up those teachings, weaving community likewise is a matter of the heart – 'ngakau aroha'⁵ as Bishop Muru and Lorraine explain in their popular *Taapapa Awhi Whanau* booklet.

This weekend we have acknowledged those who have left their legacy of the 'weaving' of relationships. We have spoken of the centrality of whakapapa and whanaungatanga in the lives and legacy of those tipuna of faith. When we think about such persons in the history of the Mihinare Church we might also wonder about the legacy of those women at the point of contact with the early CMS missionaries. What did they do and think as this new religion impacted on their lives? What were their joys and woes? From various records of the early mission in the Wairoa District, for example, we can gather that the young mission women were very clear about what was important to them - their families and their communities. Responsibility for their whanau and their community was of the utmost importance, over and above their domestic involvement with the mission stations. They actively engaged with the Bible and with church tradition, and were involved in teaching and leadership in the Mission schools. But they held firm to what we might call their cultural principles. As such, whakapapa and whanaungatanga obligations were interwoven with their new found faith. The cultural principles formed the interconnectedness and strength of their communities of faith.

Because of the centrality of the principles of whakapapa and whanaungatanga (and related values) to the faith of our tipuna and ourselves, they can be claimed as ways of understanding the work of Jesus in those times and today. They are appropriate faith principles because they involve the weaving of relationality and connectedness. They acknowledge the strengths of women's ways of knowing. Further, they are the

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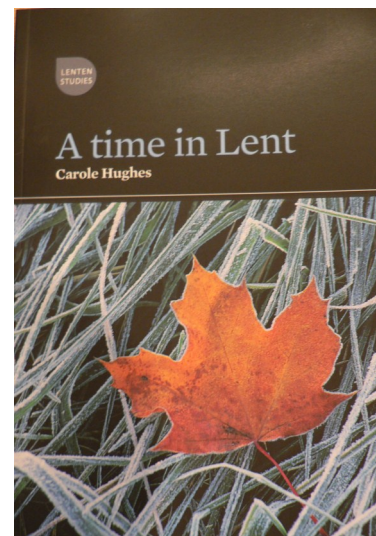
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God, during Lent.

Kauhau from Kahui Wahine continued from page 2

means for addressing important aspects of religion and spirituality for us because they are embedded in a particular worldview with its sustaining values, ethics, morals, and beliefs. Both principles are about maintaining identity and connectedness with creation.

Present

Jesus' ministry was also centred on identity and connectedness with creation. He was profoundly aware of the strands that connect people to each other and to the world. His actions and his words were grounded in a ministry of 'presence' in which everything he did and all that he suffered was grounded in deep solidarity with all creation. His love and relational work in the world point to the threads of a strong and rich Christology of presence.

Through an awareness and understanding of Jesus' life we are informed on how we might create our own weaving in response to God's activity in our own lives and in the world. Jesus' struggles for justice, his healing work, and his relational presence embody and reveal God in our world. Further, Christ as the resurrection and the life points to the weaving of community, and embraces loved ones who through memory come into the 'present' as a part of our community of wholeness. The 'wairua' element of whakapapa means that when we consider past, present, and future, there is that aspect of whakapapapa that transcends time and place so that the 'present' is a synthesis, or a symphony, of the past and the future. Wairua binds the spiritual and the physical aspects of whakapapa and therefore the many layers and threads within a Mihingare faith.

In our discussions and conversations of the past legacy and the present, a deeply embedded spirituality is revealed, a spirituality that enables us to cross the barriers of time and space to achieve an understanding of both the continuing wairua presence of not only tipuna but also of Christ - a way of understanding resurrection. Christ's presence means that Christ is with us as we struggle to understand the possibilities arising from that awareness that Christ actually is with us.

Future Vision

Isaiah (11:3-5)

*"His delight shall be in the fear of the Lord
He shall not judge by what his eyes see,
Or decide by what his ears hear;
But with righteousness he shall judge the poor,
And decide with equity for the meek of the earth;
He shall strike the earth with the rod of his mouth,
And with the breath of his lips he shall kill the wicked.
Righteousness shall be the belt around his waist,
And faithfulness the belt around his loins."*

Isaiah (11: 6-9)

*"The wolf shall live with the lamb,
The leopard shall lie down with the kid,
The calf and the lion and the fatling together,*

And a little child shall lead them.

The cow and the bear shall graze,

Their young shall lie down together;

And the lion shall eat straw like the ox.

The nursing child shall play over the hole of the asp,

And the weaned child shall put its hand on the adder's den.

They will not hurt or destroy on all my holy mountain;

For the earth will be full of the knowledge of the LORD

as the waters cover the sea."

The image of weaving reminds us that community relies on the natural environment and the creatures we share that environment with. The Bible offers images of how that reliance should be understood. For example, Isaiah's vision (Isaiah 11:6-9) provides an image of what the journey to 'te rangatiratanga o te rangi' will look like. But he also instructs in 11:3-5 that the road to peace will not be an easy one. We will need to be righteous, work for equity for the meek, and be faithful. The road to te rangatiratanga o te Atua of the New Testament will be found through the difficult task of the weaving of human identity and giving. Yesterday we had some wonderful interpretations of Isaiah's visions for the future and we compared those to Jesus' Kingdom of God. The visions of each Hui Amorangi provided the whole group with shared visions for the future based on practical 'mustard seed' steps.

In summary, who is our community? Today we remember that it is those who have passed on and whose presence is captured in memory, together with those with whom we live with and share in the world, all bound together in the weaving that holds the hope and vision of the community – that something of the heart for wholeness and healing. It is our presence with each other, with all our imperfections, through woe and through joy that brings healing and ultimately human wholeness. Jesus taught this truth through his words and actions. That is why for many Mihingare he is known as healer, tipuna, and loving presence – all ways of knowing and being known that lead to moments of human transformation and empowerment. 'Wherever people live in community in the power of relation, or perform radical acts of love, or give witness to a transforming love, there is the Christ.'⁶ There is the Christ resurrected, there is the Christ who saves by being really present in the weaving of the life of the community and of the individual.

*Kauwhau delivered at
Kahui Wahine Runan-
ganui, 12 February, 2012
on the theme of the hui:
The Past Legacy, the
Growth, the Present and
the Vision for Kahui Wahine. Moeawa Callaghan is
a Lecturer at St John's
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has recently completed
her PhD at The University
of Auckland.*



Six Tomatoes

By Revd Wendy Scott

Within my professional nursing career throughout many years in bedside practice, nursing management and then into nursing education I had always had a plan. Whether short or long term I loved them: a career goal, a "what comes next" list that would require measurable goals both personal and organisational. There were always outcomes to measure success and achievement against. A transfer from career to calling and in a sense a transfer of professional loyalty from chief executive officer and clients to God of the universe and parishioner has been (and continues to be) a life altering experience. Training at St John's, then a curacy where I was able to develop as a beginning practitioner before moving to be sole charge vicar in a rural parish has been a steep learning curve, though the transition from nursing into ministry has meant that many of the skills acquired over a long career have had their advantages.

When I heard I was to be appointed of vicar of St Peter's Pahiatua I thought - "what was the goal"? Was it the great commission, was it to seek justice, make the blind to see, the lame to walk? All daunting tasks for a beginner. The parish seemed to be in the building process with plans for a new hall come community space that required "moving onto the next phase", but in a sense that was the brief for the parish as a whole. What I was looking for was what God expected of me. Having grasped the underlying principle of committing issues to prayer I prayed to the Great CEO. You can only imagine my surprise when I received a vision - plant tomatoes!

I didn't think it was much of a plan, I asked for verification, however it was confirmed time and time again and there was no other offered goal. (I was hoping for something a little more tangible like grow my people! Grow my church!) Of first concern was that "the goal" might've been more achievable had I been given green fingers but success in the garden was not part of my skill set. I did remember thinking at the time "are you sure, God?"

In my introductory speech at my induction I said I had only one goal in the role as vicar: I've come to plant tomatoes. I'm sure some must have thought me mad, or at least quaint, especially as I pointed out I would need extensive help to achieve this

God given goal. The following week plastic buckets arrived, followed by the appropriate soil, next came the tomato plants six in total, no less no more they were duly planted and watered. And we waited, and we watered.

What happened next is what I have come to rely on as being a recipient of following the Great CEO's divine plan. The parishioners had always had their cup of tea at the back of the church, standing around the small kitchen window, what children that were there played outside or in the body of the church depending upon the inclemency of the weather. I suggested one Sunday that we might check on the progress of the



tomatoes, a number of interested parishioners (two in total) came outside to view said plants, with cup of tea in hand, the following Sunday I noticed those parishioners invited others to go outside to 'see' the tomatoes. The following Sunday it was a fine day and I asked how about we all go outside with the tea trolley and enjoy the sun and check on the tomatoes, everyone came, tea trolley, children

playing, people enjoying the sun, wandering around the garden and admiring the tomatoes.

As the plants grew, flowered and fruited so did the parish. It became the norm to have our tea outside, we rejoiced with the children as we saw them play and somehow the tomatoes kept growing, someone watered, someone protected them from the birds and when the fruit was ripe we picked them and gave them away. Six plants multiplied into ripe fruit that was plentiful, juicy and inviting as the summer moved towards autumn.

Over this period the congregation changed, it was fun, less formal and new people came. The congregation was more welcoming, more relaxed and it appeared there was a changed community that had grown and ripened as the tomatoes had. Children came and we made other gardens. The beans the kids planted were the most successful, and like the tomatoes we gave them away. The growth was evident in a number of ways - it became the norm to have morning tea outside in the garden, adults watched over the children, we needed more food for morning tea to be hospitable to the growing numbers, we went

6 Tomatoes *continued*

from requiring one litre of milk to two and from one plate of home baking to two and three and then something for the children, and to ensure there was enough to go around the children had their own morning tea table and being outside reduced the after match function cleaning. There just seemed to be so many benefits to being outside.

We became visible as people drove past, the children playing which I'm sure became an advertisement in itself and people stayed much longer after church catching up with each other. From this time on the church as a whole became more visible within the community and has continued to grow in credibility.

God of course has given us many more opportunities to work out his vision for this community. Within two years the building project was completed and paid for, a miracle in itself. We are reaping the benefits of old facilities given a face lift and new facilities built into the old which will hold us in good stead for the next 100 years. I think back to those six tomato plants and thank God for simple goals that when

followed grow, ripen and bear fruit beyond anything we could humanly imagine.



Revd Wendy Scott is the Rural Dean Northern Wairarapa



Book Review: A Radical Theology of Baptism

By Jenny Campbell

Jenny Dawson's 'A Radical Theology of Baptism' will impact on all those who interact with her research project 'Towards a Radical Political Theology of Baptism'.

She has captured the significance of baptism for all involved in ministry in their unique social and cultural contexts, including changes through our ageless faith stories.

Reflection through her own experience brings to life the intricacies of what baptism means in people's lives, whether taken 'seriously or lightly', impacting in their local faith community, whanau, society or international settings. She recognises its implications and power for living the Gospel to right injustices and empower both lay and ordained. Local Shared Ministry's emphasis on team relationship, groundedness in local concerns, and working together being at the heart of God are expressive of both Trinitarian life and also of baptismal commitment.

Jenny Campbell, Local Shared Ministry Enabler for Fiordland and Winton and member of Anglican Social Justice Commission

Copies of this book can be purchased as follows:

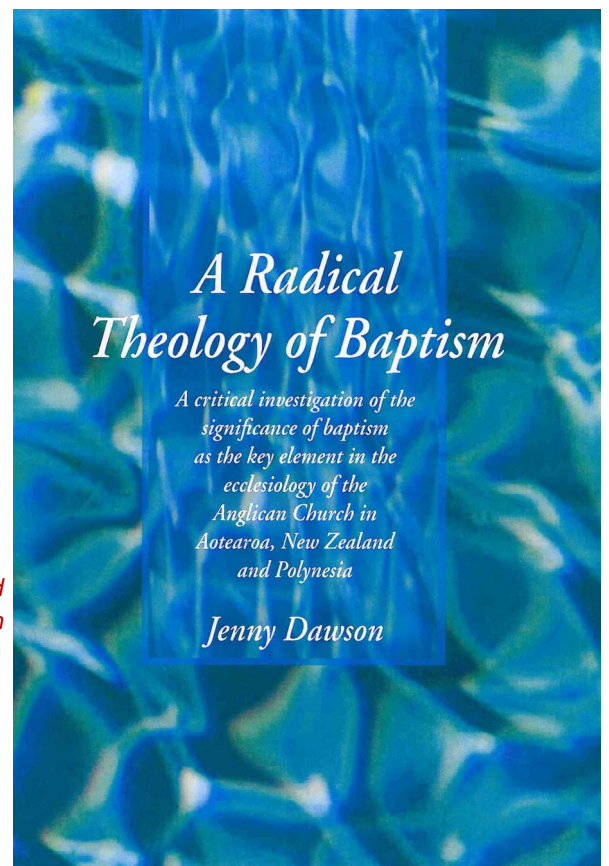
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The Centre for Anglican Women's Studies, commonly known as the **Women's Studies Centre** was set up to serve and to advance the interests and needs of the women of this Church particularly those undertaking Theological training.

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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