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## Mentoring Across Tikanga: Reporting Back From the Archdeaconry of Tonga

Photos & Words By Revd Erice Fairbrother



*Erice distributes the Sacrament at All Saints, having preached a little earlier in the Service.*

This year the Women's Studies Council was able to follow up and on previous invitations from the diocese of Polynesia to go to the Archdeaconry of Tonga to offer mentoring and training opportunities. I was delighted to be able to take up that invitation, as I was travelling to Tonga alongside a Wellington team that regularly visits the archdeaconry and provides training and support particularly at St Andrew's school there.

We arrived late at night and stayed initially in a guest house before being taken to the Principal's House at St Andrew's School. It is right on the

school grounds, surrounded by tall breadfruit trees and opposite the Community of the Sacred Name house. Three sisters live there, and Sr Fehoko, is both RE teacher and Chaplain to the school. It was great to be able to join them for worship in the early morning or to just visit with them from time to time.

Anne and Joe Le'ota were part of the parish where I was in Tauranga, and it was wonderful to have time with them and to work once again alongside Joe. It was through Joe that I was able to offer the following:

### Modelling ordained women's ministry – a particular request from Fr Joe.

I was involved in preaching and in the distribution of the sacrament at St Paul's and at All Saints on the first Sunday of my stay. It was a real joy to preside at the Community of the Sacred Name House. During that liturgy we made it a remembrance for the life of Dean Lynda Patterson, as well as celebrating the 80<sup>th</sup> birthday of Sr Luisa. Fr Joe asked me to speak during the first day of term Assembly Chapel service at St Andrews School. I told the story of Jonah and the Whale – it was a story that followed the rest of my time there, and opened up lots of conversations with the students!



*As one of the guests of honour at the White Sunday feast held after the service*

### Mentoring: chaplaincy and R.E. teaching, and preaching

After the Chapel service I observed teaching practice in the Chaplain's classroom which then led to an invitation to teach over the next few days - five classes (F2 and F5's) in all! Part of that was modelling teaching practice and chaplaincy and then engaging in conversations about ongoing support for the chaplaincy and RE teaching role in the school. There was also an opportunity to follow up on a request for some time to be spent on sermon writing.

### Meeting other women in the archdeaconry

The women at St Matthias put on a dinner, (I should say a feast!) for the two of us women from Wellington, and some of their young people performed dances for us. It was humbling to hear how committed the women in the parish are who are teaching the faith to their children in their homes as well as Sunday Schools and youth work. Resources seem so few but the passion for resourcing children and young people is a huge priority.

### Mentoring and Training across the Archdeaconry

This was a particular request from Fr Joe and he had made sure that his deacons were there as part of their ongoing training. Those present included two ordinands to be deaconed in the next 12 months, the representative we sent to the UN, a priest who also works at Women's Centre and Refuge and a primary school teacher. In the morning we did the Bible study from our last Hui - men and women being leaders like Lydia. This led to challenging conversations about gender issues in their context, the significance of this way of reading scripture alongside work being done on prevention of violence, and how men and women clergy can deepen collegial relationships together.

The second part of the day was taken up with Ministry Standards as set out in Title D Canon 1 and as requested by Fr Joe. We worked in small groups followed by very open discussions. These discussions included practical ethics of confidentiality in small communities, how to share the load we carry with "safe others" which led to talking about Pastoral Supervision, and how do we grow spiritually/stay close to God in very time consuming and demanding work in parish and/or community which led us into talking about spiritual direction. In these discussions issues arose which included – addressing domestic violence, ecological impact of rising sea levels, poverty, the huge weight of the mission of so few to the wider community. The day was framed with morning, mid-day and evening prayer in a shared leadership model using the prayer book. This was noted by several, as a significant part of the whole day.

Personally, it was a wonderful experience in every way. It was so great to be able to be at a White Sunday at St Paul's with all the children and their families, and then to be part of the enormous feast that followed it! I did so appreciate the opportunity to be in the diocese and in the Tonga Archdeaconry in particular. I want to thank Archbishop Winston for the invitation, for the Wellington team for including me and for the Women's Studies Council for sending me. I met amazing lay women, and clergy who are inclusive and generous in their ministry and hospitality. Fr Joe and Anne made sure I got to see away from the usual tourist parts of the island around Nukualofa as well as spending time with them. Having taken luggage that included everything from cheese to prayer books (from the Wellington diocese) I flew home with very empty bags, but a heart full of love, memories and blessings.

*Revd Erice Fairbrother is one of the Tikanga Pakeha Councillors for the Anglican Women's Studies Council and is a Benedictine Oblate & Solitary in the Order of the Holy Cross*



# Collaborative Ministry: Towards a New Church

By Revd Vicki Terrell

"Knowing oneself as God knows us so that we can leave our egos behind to work together for God's realm to come on earth" is how I summed up the week.

This event was facilitated by the Ministry Enabling Team of the Auckland Diocese for people engaged in ministry leadership. The title attracted me because I am exploring new ways of doing ministry, most of which are on the edge of the church. Sincere thanks to the Anglican Women's Studies Council who enabled me to have a fantastic week (28 July- 1 August) hanging out with some of the "Cool Kids" of the diocese. Being on the edge of the church can be a lonely experience so it was great to have the companionship of colleagues as we dug deep into faith and ministry practise.

The reference book used was "Skills for Collaborative Ministry" by Dr Sally Nash, Jo Pimlott and Paul Nash. ©2008. Collaborative ministry is about empowering all believers to work together to build the realm of God in a holistic way that is inclusive of everyone. The principles of collaborative ministry are:

- ⇒ Recognition of the diversity of gifts and vocations in body of Christ and they need to be nurtured so all can contribute
- ⇒ Reflecting the nature of God and Christ requires people to be interdependent on and be willing to work together
- ⇒ Share a common purpose
- ⇒ Shared decision making and de-volution of power

"When we collaborate, creativity unfolds across people, the sparks fly faster and the whole is greater than the sum of its parts" Sayers 2007

This encapsulates both the hope and challenge of collaboration. It is wonderful and I am often awe struck when collaborative ministry happens well- truly God's spirit in the most amazing ways. I have always loved working with others collaboratively because what comes out the other end is often much better than one person working alone and it is theologically sound. Working collaboratively is a challenge because as individuals we cannot have it all our way we need to work together.

However this does not often happen without paying close

attention to our own feelings and responses and those of others working with us. Often I think we are encouraged to focus on others and end up not being aware let alone understanding our own reactions particularly in conflict situations so things go awry and this can lead to unhealthy relationships and abuse.

As leaders, if we can work through our own issues we are more open to the working of the Holy Spirit and less likely to dump our own stuff on others. It is when we know and are comfortable with ourselves, we can forget ourselves and truly be there for others. The teaching during the week helped us to become more aware of ourselves and the positions we hold in our communities and how this affects our ministry.

We looked at learning styles, power and our responses to conflict and how these can impact on our relationships in ministry. Also we looked at a variety of factors affecting faith communities such as life cycle, power dynamics, managing conflict, mission and development. There were strong biblical and theological reflection on the power and leadership of Jesus and on the new community he was building, the church.

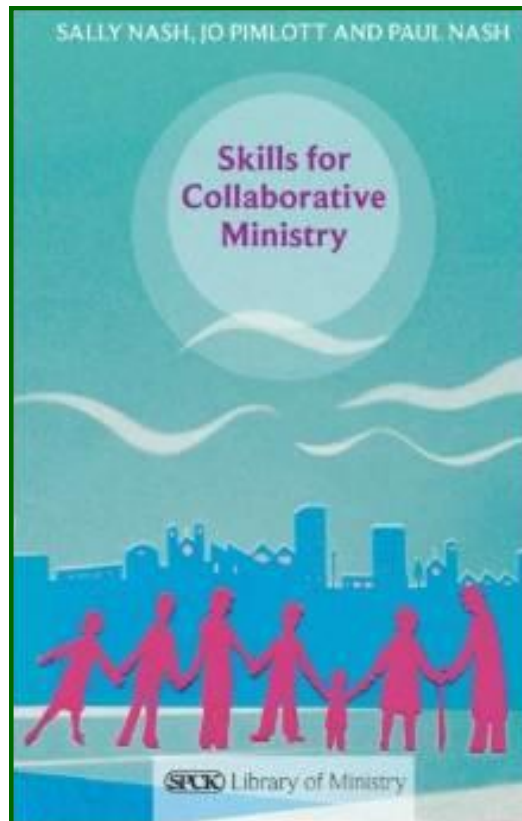
In the gospels, Jesus wanted the community of believers to have a new ethic of relationship. Instead of communities being built on hierarchy such the Greco-Roman society was, the community around Jesus wanted mutuality between the members of this new community.

After considering a number of Gospel passages dealing leadership; power and collaboration. We were invited to complete the statement:

## For Jesus, Godly leadership is ...

I wrote ... "serving and being served, the power comes from God. Inviting friends to share power because we are all human and all have gifts necessary to build the realm of God. We need to be self aware so who we are enhances and does not detract from the business of building God's realm"

In the mid 1990s, Elisabeth Schussler Fiorenza wrote a book called '*Discipleship of Equals: A Critical Feminist Ekklesia-logy of Liberation*'. She was challenging the church to find a new model of being church. I was excited on hearing this phrase "A discipleship of Equals" again, because this is what the church should be about empowering all to serve and be served, an equality between believers yet so often the church falls short of this ideal. Our model of Christian community is the Trinity. The





painting by Andrei Rublev shown here from the Old Testament Trinity depicts this well with the three figures holding the gaze in the same direction: "one in open heart, one in listening mind, one in mutual love" *Kevin Thew Forrester*. Unfortunately over the centuries the church has become hierarchical and congregations have been "deskilled" looking to the clergy for leader-

ship. Congregations have become passive consumers of the gospel.

We were also reminded that the liturgical act of bowing acknowledges the image of God in the other person. This is showing relevance to each other and to God. This is a good habit to get into for it reminds us that we all worthy to be treated with courtesy and respect particularly when we are at odds with each other.

### *"Power is like fire used to cook a meal or burn the house down"*

Power is a tricky concept and we need to take care how we use it. In the gospels Jesus empowered others in the process of giving away his power yet he was NOT a doormat. As women particularly in the church we sometimes struggle with power. I found it challenging to do the Personal power Awareness sheet because I don't particularly like looking at power. This may be because of being a pakeha New Zealander where the myth of equality is strongly embedded in my psyche and nice people do not talk about it. However the reality is power is inherent in any system and being aware of our own power helps us not to abuse it. Power comes from our position, resources, knowledge and experience and personality. When we are secure in our leadership we can share power and give it away so others are empowered.

Security in leadership comes from being comfortable in our own skin, so we can attend to the business in hand without our egos getting in the way and tripping us up. Relationships between people are fundamental to building community. It is important to be able emotionally connect with people in ways that lead to health and creativity. We looked at fusion and differentiation in our relationships with others. Differentiation is the ability to think for ourselves and act effectively in relationships with others we can be close yet emotional separate from others. This allows us to be "cool and calm" under pressure. "Our compass is demagnetized and less affected by the emotional force field".

Differentiation is an essential skill in leadership. Faith communities often can be anxious places because of the sense of declining relevance of traditional Church in our society. This requires

churches to re-evaluate what they are doing to sustain ministry, which can produce a great deal of anxiety within the community. Anxiety can lead to communities acting out of "survival instinct" rather than having the flexibility of being able to think rationally about the situation. Although death and resurrection is central to our Christian faith, we as individuals and communities so often resist change. As leaders we need to bring hope and resist getting caught up in the anxiety of the community. This requires carefully listening, a certain amount of emotional detachment, knowledge and trusting God through the process.

We often think that conflict is all bad but we were encouraged to look at the positive aspects of what can be achieved. It is the way conflict is dealt with that can lead to positive or negative consequences. If managed well, conflict can produce new and creative solutions to what seemed insurmountable problems. It is having the courage to work through conflicts in a constructive manner that can lead to new life.

One afternoon we had singing. Ian along with Sandy and Josh led us in a variety of congregational music. There was contemporary New Zealand hymns and worship songs. It was good to



*Josh Jones & Sandy Horton lead the gathering in song*

learn some new music and sing some songs I haven't sung for a while. It was excellent to feel my spirit being renewed as we sang together. It was wonderful emotional release and break from some intensive brain work!

As well as the teaching of the week I valued spent time with colleagues. The Enabling Team who facilitated the week practised collaborative ministry with us in that we shared and learnt as colleagues together. While they were in the role of facilitators mainly we were invited to join them as we explored together collaborative ministry.

I particularly enjoyed being with colleagues from Tai Tokerau listening to insights from their context and use of Te Reo in Eucharist and at other times. I hope this collaboration will continue between tikanga.

We built a community of collaborative ministry and behold it was very good! The challenge is to take our knowledge and use it effectively to keep encouraging collaboration in the places God calls us in ministry.

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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.

**"Church, Women  
& Leading?"**

29 Sept-1 Oct 2014

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.*