



## **Submission - 2023 Synodal Process**

*We envision the Church of Aotearoa as an inclusive Church which incorporates our Tiriti O Waitangi, prioritises care of our planetary home and raises our consciousness to a deeper form of loving.*

***For a new, inclusive model of Church!***

***bethechange.aotearoa@gmail.com***

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## **Whakataki**

### **Introduction**

We who are **Be The Change, Catholic Church, Aotearoa** appreciate this opportunity to speak to the Synod 2023.

We are formed by the scriptures and teachings of the Catholic Church and today our vision comes from OUR CONTEXT, Aotearoa, and OUR TIME, 2022. We are using the synodal lens of PARTICIPATION.

We recognise that this is a time of major transition for our planet, for humankind and for the Catholic Church. Together we must do the deep analysis and envisioning which will carry us into the future.

We are guided by contemporary understanding that all things are subject to evolutionary movement: created reality is dynamic and developing. To have a future, the Church must change.

We are working to re-express our Catholic faith and restructure our institution so that it be adequate for today's work of transformation and healing in our communities.

We envision the Church of Aotearoa as an inclusive Church which incorporates our Tiriti O Waitangi, prioritises care of our planetary home and raises our consciousness to a deeper form of loving.

## **Ko Tēnei Te Kaupapa**

### **This Is What We Believe**

#### **WE THE PEOPLE - WE ARE CHURCH**

Participation in today's Church is discouraged by inflexible expression of theological doctrine and rigidly imposed liturgical practice which do not reflect contemporary scientific knowledge and our cultural context.

#### **Image Of God As Source And Creator**

We seek to enliven and re-express our image of God, in dialogue with contemporary scientific and theological learning. It is time to emphasise a different narrative and interpretation of the Christian story.

We understand God as a God intimately present through the power of love, as a life force in all created reality. This triune God of relationships is in the whole and all the parts, in us and outside us and is beyond being contained by space, time and gender.

## **Unravelling Traditional Fall/Redemption Theology**

We tell a new story that makes more sense to people of our time, drawing on the voices of contemporary theologians.

We acknowledge human sin but reject the unbalanced emphasis on a mythical original sin and the image of an offended God which is still so evident in liturgy and prayer.

## **Incarnation As Part Of God's Infinite Love Expressed In Creation**

In the light of *Laudato Si* we venture new understanding of Incarnation and Salvation. Jesus shows us that God is merciful love, and teaches us that his way is the path to becoming a New Creation.

The extraordinarily wonderful implication of God-with-us as matter, must be told more clearly.

## **Theology Of The Human Person**

Made in the image of God and found good.

Radical inclusivity regardless of sex or sexuality, nationality, economic status, education or disability. All voices have a right to be heard.

We prioritise the Catholic notions of *sensus fidelium*, subsidiarity and Inculturation to achieve change in our own communities.

## **Ko Tēnei Te Tikanga This Is What We Do**

Clericalism and rigid rubrics have precluded much creative participation in sacraments and liturgy and mission has become a secondary focus in many faith communities.

We understand our work as twofold:

- **Care and development of who we are (Liturgy & Pastoral Care)**
- **Advocacy and action for justice in our world (Mission)**

These aspects are equally important.

## **Care And Development Of Who We Are**

- We support and facilitate neighbourhood opportunities to gather to praise and thank God in relevant, participatory liturgy. We call forth liturgical leadership from within our communities.
- We work to develop our language and practice to reflect the essential bicultural foundation of Aotearoa and subsequent multicultural reality, to image God appropriately and to use accessible vernacular expression.
- We recognise our responsibility to make available excellent adult faith formation and education opportunities to develop Church communities.
- We nurture our whānau relationship by good pastoral care.

## Advocacy And Action For Justice

- We work to earn the moral authority to speak justly and truthfully into the public discourse in Aotearoa.
- Major priorities for mission are planetary crisis and, in Aotearoa, decolonisation.
- All social justice work must be supported and sustained.
- We see the necessity to recognise, affirm and support all endeavours for good wherever they are occurring so we celebrate:
  - The Season of Creation
  - The internationally marked United Nations World Earth Day - 22 April
  - World Environment Day - 5 June
  - Human Rights Day - 10 December
- We believe the joy and hopefulness of a renewed Church will communicate new hope into the contemporary conditions of depression and hopelessness in our society in Aotearoa.

## Ko Tēnei Te Kawa

### This Is How We Work Together

Today in the Institutional Church, the possibility of participating in genuine leadership is only open to those who are ordained.

We envisage, authority and leadership as it relates to organisational and liturgical decision-making, will always practise:

**Flexibility in our approach to everything we do so that everyone can be included** All of diverse humanity has the right to participate as co-equal partners in the task of theological reflection, doctrinal development and Church leadership

**Humility** We emphasise collective benefits not individual achievement as the focus of our work

**Transparency** All our proceedings are open to those who wish to participate and work together on matters of interest and concern to us.

**Accountability through open communication and the use of appropriate language** Those affected by decisions need to feel encouraged to participate in decision-making processes and review what we have done against what we have said we will do.

We, the people, share membership of this Body; consequently, we share responsibility for its wellness. We need a structure made up of small, local groups in which genuine relationships can flourish.

## **Tūtohutanga Recommendations**

### **Ko Tēnei Te Kaupapa This Is What We Believe**

- We recommend that significantly increased emphasis be placed upon accessible, high-quality education in faith, which draws on contemporary theology and scripture study, being made available to communities.
- We recommend a new emphasis on the excitement of robust dialogue between religion and science. This necessitates a humble and communicative Church.

### **Ko Tēnei Te Tikanga This Is What We Do**

- We recommend that the Church in Aotearoa works hard to better inculturate our liturgies taking into account Te Tiriti, gender inclusivity, ethnic diversity, age diversity.
- We recommend that in every parish community, Church life and community life are much better integrated.
- We recommend close, egalitarian, ecumenical relationships.
- We recommend that ecological and social justice awareness is a top priority in every parish. We exist to be transformative in our local place.
- We recommend that the voice of the Church in Aotearoa is strongly heard in the discourse on Ecological Crisis and Decolonisation which are two major issues in today's world.
- We recommend that UN marking of World Earth Day, World Environment Day, and Human Rights Day, be woven into our Church calendars.

### **Ko Tēnei Te Kawa This Is How We Work Together**

- We recommend welcoming a completely new Church structure in which human persons are genuinely treated as equals and included, have the right to communicate their views, discern leadership, and work to heal and care for the wider communities in which they live.
- We recommend the dismantling of clericalism and the requirement to have effective councils at every level, who listen, are accountable and whose actions can be scrutinised.

# Appendices

# Appendix 1

The following are **Be The Change, Catholic Church, Aotearoa** statements outlining Our Purpose and Our Beliefs.

## Our Purpose



We, as a group, see ourselves as people who in a safe, supportive, nourishing, hope-filled space are journeying towards a radical, new, inclusive model of Catholic Church that reflects our faithfulness to the Gospel message and God's wondrous wholeness.

# Our Beliefs



We carry hopes for a renewed inclusive Church and are willing to help build it.

We gain hope from being part of a group and will support and nourish each other.

We are Church who desire to 'be the change', creating a faith community ourselves to help achieve this.

We are prepared to take responsibility to bring about changes that are just and inclusive.

We offer a space to explore rituals and prayer together.

We seek to network with other groups desiring change in our Church.

We will be part of exploring how women can be part of the governance role of the Church.

We will stand alongside women who feel called to leadership and/or ordained ministry.

We believe that all earth and everyone of us reflect the wonders and diversity of God.

# Appendix 2

The following are names of members of **Be The Change, Catholic Church, Aotearoa** who are submitting this document.

Adriann Anne Herron Smith  
Ana Maria de Vos Sanchez  
Anne Minkhorst  
Anne-Marie Pike  
Bernard Kernot  
Bruce Drysdale  
Carmel O'Neill-Gregory  
Catherine Birt  
Cecily McNeill  
Chris Sullivan  
Christina Neunzerling  
Christina Reymer  
Christine A Billante  
Clare McGivern  
Clare Terwiel  
Colleen Woodcock  
Dr Sara Cotterall  
Elizabeth Beazley  
Fiona McLean MbChb, Dip Obs, FRNZCGP  
Helen Cooney  
Helen Dougherty  
Janet Pearson  
Joan Fogarty  
Joan Hardiman  
Joseph Green  
Josephine Ayers  
Judith Crimmins  
Judy Wilton  
Julie Randall

Kathleen Baran  
Kathleen Cain  
Katie O'Connor  
Katrina Brill  
Kevin Liston  
Leone McIndoe  
Liz Hickey  
Louise Shanly  
Maree Williamson  
Marie Skidmore  
Mary Betz  
Mary Dudson  
Mary Ebyarimpa  
Mary Nankivell  
Mary Thorne  
Michael Blakely  
Michelle Hughey  
Noelene Landrigan  
Philippa Ryan  
Rod Orange  
Sande Ramage  
Stephanie Daly  
Sue Williams  
Susan Doody  
Tracy Robinson  
Val Dallimore  
Vicki Baas  
Yvonne Fogarty  
Yvonne Munro