

Te Whāriki – We the People: We are Church Aotearoa 2022

In recent years, significant numbers of people have walked away from the institutional Church in Aotearoa and cut ties with its practices and beliefs. The rising strength of dissatisfaction and its direction are now seen, by many, to be associated with the work of the Spirit of God in our midst. If this is how you feel, read on. Te Whāriki is a work of the people. It is a contemporary response to the need for reform and it builds on a number of grass roots/alternative initiatives that have operated in Aotearoa for more than 25 years, e.g. the Rongopai community (formally of St Benedicts in Auckland) and Be the Change ¹

Our outright rejection of a hierarchical model of Church with its support for the practice of clericalism and tolerance of widespread abuse of laypeople, in particular women and children, has led to our proposing a different model of Church. We invite you to contribute to this work by your presence and your participation in a programme of action that aims to build community so that the way we live and work together better reflects the gospel values and is more consistently inclusive of all people, a bottom line in our understanding of the mission of God in the world.

We call our work *Te Whāriki* (a woven mat). It is intended to empower participants to conduct the necessary analysis and change that will lead to a different model of Church in our communities and a different experience of Church throughout Aotearoa.

We have a vision for this work:

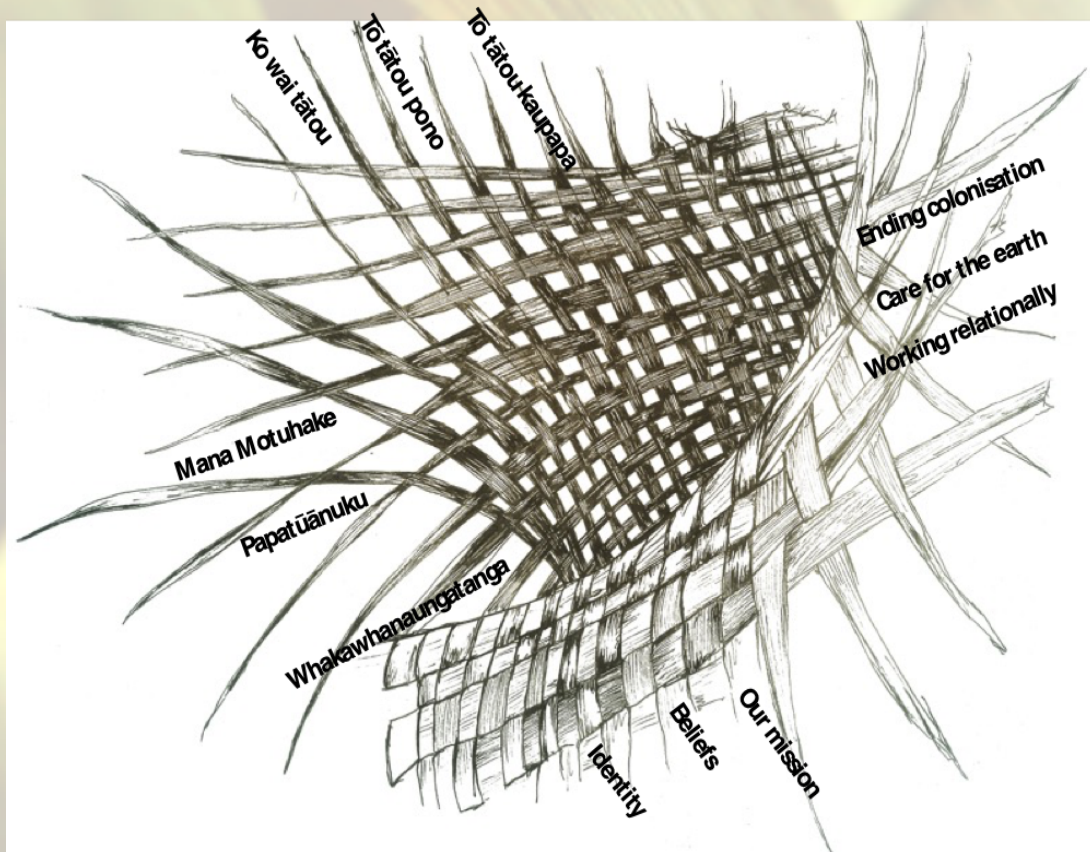
**To open ourselves up to *be Church* rather than being in Church.
For people to find their place in relation to each other, and in doing so,
create a new way of working together based on our relationship to God,
to each other and to the natural order of the world around us.**

Te Whāriki describes a relationship between parties that have distinct identities. The action of making a whāriki requires knowledge about how to weave the different strands together to make a whole that is both stable and strong. Key features are:

1. Connection and interconnectedness. These become critical features of the relationships focus of Te Whāriki.
2. We address the relationships between Tangata whenua and Tangata Tiriti (as a consequence of Te Tiriti o Waitangi).
3. Te Reo Māori and English are used extensively across the Whāriki to ensure clarity of understanding.

4. The key themes (making up the WEFT) are Mana Motuhake/Ending Colonisation; Papatūānuku/Care of the Earth; and Whakawhanaungatanga/Being Community.
5. The key questions that run across each of the themes (making up the WARP) relate to **identity** – who are we in relation to the theme, **culture** – what are our values, and **action** – what is our mission that follows from this?).
6. The intertwining of the weaver's warp and weft creates a robust and stable platform for the engagement of people and ideas. This is the precondition of a different type of relationship development, one that enables us to work positively with worldview difference and diversity rather than avoid it.
7. Te Whāriki is therefore open-ended. It is only the beginning – more strands can be added.

If there is a disconnect between the way the Whāriki works and our experience of it in action, this is a signal to pause and take time to learn more about this important relationship between ourselves and the natural order of which we are a part.



Te Whāriki – A change process to support a different model of Church

Te Whāriki contains three workstreams where we need to focus our energy for change. These are critical to the way we plan and work together as Church, as follows:

Workstream 1

Ending colonisation in Aotearoa

This workstream relates to building capacity to free ourselves from inappropriate constraints on our freedom to think and act generally. It also impacts on our ability to do environmental management differently. It contains a mix of analysis and communication skills, knowledge of tikanga Māori, organisational and team leadership skills. There is a focus on practical ways that we can work with cultural and worldview difference.

Workstream	Ko wai a tātou/ Who are we? (Identity)	He aha to tātou pono/ What do we believe? (Worldview)	He aha te kaupapa/ What is our mission? (Action in the world)
Ending colonisation in Aotearoa Coordinator: Anton Spelman	Tangata Whenua/ Tangata Tiriti	A Tiriti/Treaty Relationships Framework that enables us to understand and work respectfully and effectively with worldview difference in our public and personal lives	Re-forming our relationships with each other and the natural world in order to work cooperatively: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • with God, and God's mission • with God's world, and • with each other

Workstream 2

Our care for the earth and the other parts of the natural world

This workstream explores a bicultural understanding of the environment and the issues we need to face. It assumes that we are an integral part of our environment and not separate from its interconnected systems. We explore what a bicultural understanding of our place in the world looks like as a starting point for identifying changes to the way we live within the natural order and at the same time beginning to develop a new way of working together in the natural world.

Workstream	Ko wai a tātou/ Who are we? (Identity)	He aha to tātou pono/ What do we believe? (Worldview)	He aha te kaupapa/ What is our mission? (Action in the world)
Our care for the earth and the other parts of the natural world Coordinator: Mary Thorne	Recovering our role as teina not tuakana	Developing organisational forms that are environmentally sustainable and responsive to change when change is necessary	Becoming environmentally accountable <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Manaaki whenua • Manaaki moana • Manaaki tangata

Workstream 3

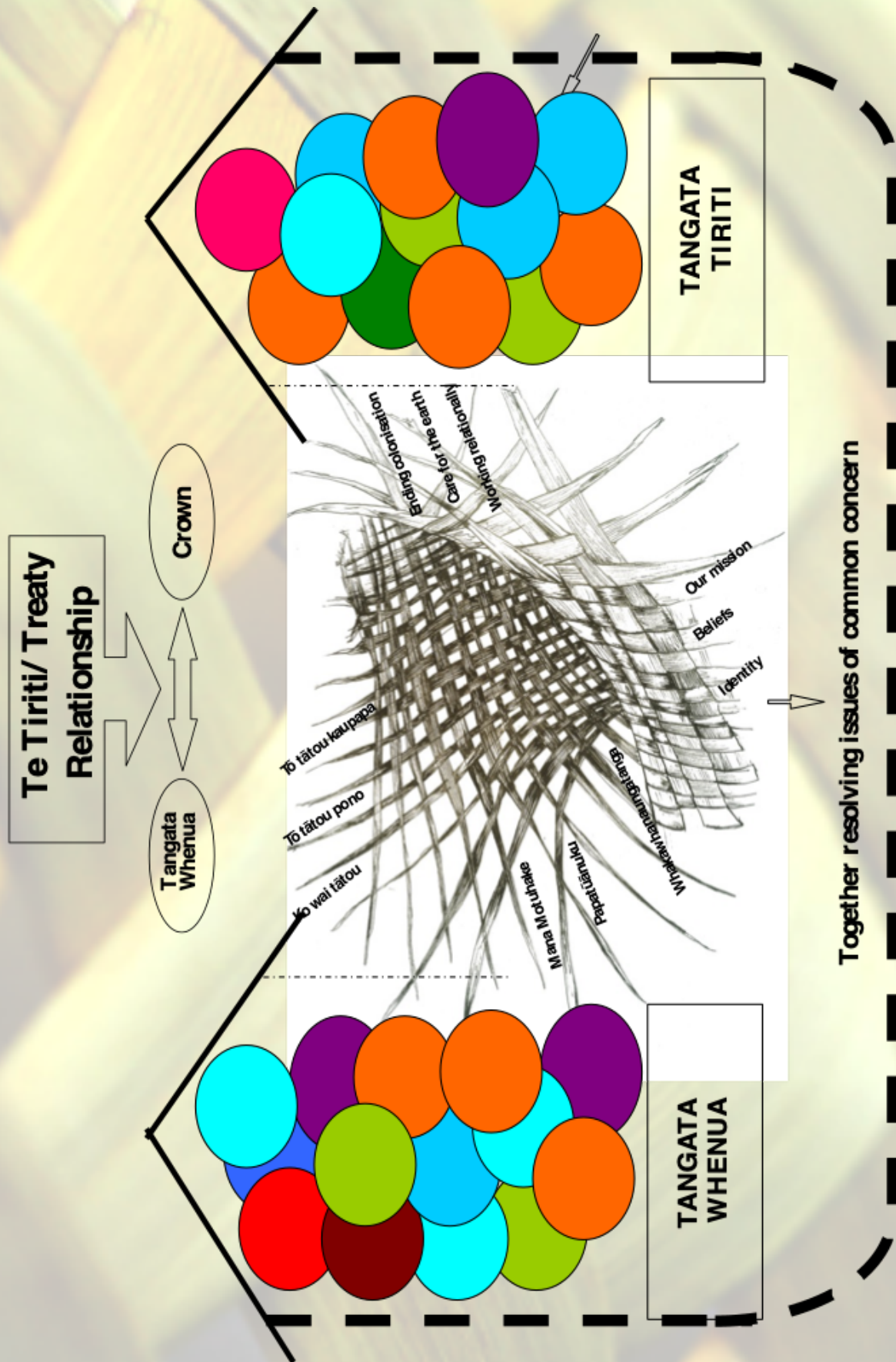
Working relationally to enhance community

This workstream explores a new way of working with each other in groups and organisations that support our common life together. It is governed by the discipline of a relationships approach and seeks to shape the actions we need to take to live well together in a Tiriti/Treaty Relationships framework. This will enable us to live responsibly within the natural order of the wider world and with each other.

Workstream	Ko wai a tātou/ Who are we? (Identity)	He aha to tātou pono/ What do we believe? (Worldview)	He aha te kaupapa/ What is our mission? (Action in the world)
Working relationally to enhance Community	<p>Mana tangata – the basis of working relationally with others</p> <p>Everyone of equal value and worth because of baptism</p>	<p>Democratisation of the institutional Church and governance practices with priority given to values like:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shared decision-making • Working collectively • Using transparent processes • Practising accountability to the community for performance <p>Leadership resides in the people and is based on models of relational leadership</p>	<p>Everyone who has a role has access to development and support to do it well.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pastoral ministry • Social justice • Communications • Liturgical leadership <p>Working inclusively recognising:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ethnic and gender diversity • the value of using inclusive language <p>Showing respect for mana tangata with a particular focus on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ethnic and gender diversity • being welcoming to LGBTQI groups
<p>Coordinator: Cecily McNeill</p>			

It is proposed that a Tiriti analysis underpins the whole of this development. Activities need to look and feel relevant to a people's movement, i.e. owned by the people and actioned on their authority rather than an imposition of rules that are complied with uncritically.

The way this is intended to work can be seen in the graphic which follows.



We have developed a webinar which we have called **WE THE PEOPLE – WE ARE CHURCH**. We are hoping to introduce this early in 2023. It is a five-session series, the first comprising an introduction and overview, a taste, of the planning to date and the rationale for our proposed approach to change in order to address the values of the gospel using processes that are sustainable into the future. This will be followed by sessions on the workstreams.

TASTER PROGRAMME DETAILS

WE THE PEOPLE – WE ARE CHURCH is built on relationships and has been planned along the following lines:

1. ENGAGEMENT

- Getting to know each other/who we are

2. RELATIONSHIP DEVELOPMENT

- Acknowledging the unique contributions that each of us brings, and
- Agreement across the group as to how we will work with each other.

3. WORKING TOGETHER

- Te Whāriki is intended to be a wakeup call for each of us and we will present and invite discussion on the rationale for a people's movement in the area of Church reform.
- We will provide a taster for each of the three workstreams that we have identified so far:
 1. Ending colonisation in Aotearoa
 2. Our care for the Earth and the other parts of the natural world
 3. Working relationally to enhance community

4. As the three workstreams are intimately connected, we will invite people to participate in the whole process. In addition, we will invite expressions of interest in further shaping of one or more of the above workstreams so that the planning of any future activity in these areas remains sharply focused on matters of interest and importance to you.

5. COMMITMENT TO CONTINUE:

- The ongoing learning and development process together, and
- The development of an emerging change action programme to follow.

COORDINATING GROUP

There is a coordinating group consisting of **Anton Spelman, Cecily McNeill, and Mary Thorne.**

This group will maintain an overview of all three workstreams so that people who participate in this process are well equipped to do the things they would like to see happening.

Their contact details are set out below.

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Cecily McNeill +64 21 235 6996 cecilymcneill@icloud.com

Mary Thorne +64 21 024 11653 mary.thorne@gmail.com

LIKE TO KNOW MORE?

We have attached a Q & A paper which addresses a number of questions you may have at this point. If you would like to speak to someone about the programme, feel free to contact members of the coordinating group.

Nā tōu rourou;
nā taku rourou;
ka ora ai te iwi.

Sharing from your basket and from mine,
grows the life of the people

Please respond to this proposal as requested in the accompanying email.

We would like to know whether Te Whāriki is a project that you would like to become involved with.

Please press the *reply* button on your computer and write YES or NO in the subject line.

If you are undecided but would like some more information, write QUERY in the subject line and write your comment or question in the body of the email.

We look forward to hearing from you. Thank you.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS (Q & A)

Q. Why are you not using the synodal process sponsored by Pope Francis?

A. Although Pope Francis' 2023 synod holds some hope for nurturing a church that is responsive to the needs of all, we don't feel confident that the people can get the quality of inclusion and participation within a hierarchical power structure such as the institutional church.

Q. Are you breaking away from the Catholic Church?

A. No, we are seeking to democratise church processes that are unnecessarily restrictive and focused on hierarchical control. We are asserting the right to "Be the Change" and live the lives for which we were baptised.

Q. Why are you using Te Tiriti o Waitangi?

A. Te Tiriti provides a way for us to work with worldview difference in a manner that is respectful, practical and useful.

Q. Is this just going to be a talk fest or how can it lead to actual change?

A. Te Whāriki has been designed to draw on people's experience. It is our intent to enable people to develop their capability to take action that they consider to be important and relevant and to do so with confidence. We believe change is already happening in our own communities and whānau in myriad ways. This Whāriki process is a support to those existing initiatives that are already underway and we encourage more and new change action to occur.

Q. I agree that we can't trust the Church because it's hierarchical but how can we trust you?

A. The people associated with this initiative have been developing this way of working in Aotearoa for more than 20 years both within the institutional church and in the wider community in Aotearoa.

Q. What could Pākehā learn from Māori about listening and relating to each other?

A. We believe knowledge of the Māori world can help all of us to work more collectively, to respect each other's worldview differences and to communicate relationally for the common good. Working on achieving right relationships is a precondition for any effective work on achieving positive outcomes for Māori or Pākehā.

Q. What does it mean to take a bicultural approach to the environment?

A. Indigenous cultures have much to teach about 'being' in the environment in a respectful way without expecting any return. We can learn from those cultures the value of simply being in the world.