

## Council of Elders

### Address to Hui Toopu (Wednesday 8, 2011)

Tēnā ra koutou e te Hui Toopu, e tika ana ki te mihi atu ki a kourua, ko John rāua ko Olive hei arataki i a tātou i tēnei wā, me mihi hoki ki a koe e te whaea, te kaihautu o tēnei o tātou waka o Te Taha Māori, ka nui ake ngā mihi hoki ki te Kaiarataki o ngā Tauwi i roto i o mahi maha rawa atu, nō reira tēnei te mihi atu ki a tātou katoa e huihui mai nei.

We want to be a little creative in this our final kōrero to Hui Toopu and we want to ponder the thought, if our church, Te Haahi Weteriana o Aotearoa, if our conference, was a rugby team in the World Cup how would we fare?

The Coaches of our team would likely be our all wise, all knowing President and Vice-President who would be entrusted with leading our team to victory, victory in this instance would come in the form of positive, engaging, bi-culturally affirming decision-making.

Following this line of thinking the General Secretary would likely be the Referee, someone who is not always popular with the crowds for the calls they must make such as keeping to time, or following carefully laid out processes.

The Wings of this team would have to be the Children, Youth and Rangatahi of our haahi, they are the most dynamic and creative play-makers who add flair and good looks to the team.

We guess that this would make the Council of Elders the Backs of this team, always there to offer support at the breakdown, attempting to keep the ball in play and to keep the game flowing.

That would make the Council of Conference (5+5) the grunty Forward Pack, moving and pushing forward, edging the team forward, making ground for our team.

That would make the rest of you unruly bunch the Die-hard Fans! Always vocal and constantly heckling from the sidelines, but always solid and committed supporters of our team!

What can we take from all of these rugby analogies?

We have a phrase in Māori 'whakaiti tangata' meaning literally to 'belittle a person'. We saw through words and actions, some of that begin to creep into our conference. People began to talk but not to listen, we saw words and actions begin to diminish the 'mana' of individuals and our collective whanau, our haahi, our team. So we ask Hui Toopu, 'me manaaki tangata' (let us care for people).

Let us value our team and our team management, let us remember to show our commitment to our team's vision of a bi-cultural partnership in practice, let us all be those confident play-makers for our team.

In these our places, God's places, both within and outside of Aotearoa, we as a church have travelled around the world to places filled with rich histories, we have travelled to places where people continue to struggle with poverty and injustice and we have travelled to places where people are recovering and rebuilding with a renewed vigour and hope.

We have returned home to our 'turangawaewae', our place, Aotearoa, God's place, we have brought back with us an appreciation for our places, places of Aotearoa, places with whanau and friends, places abundant with fresh food and clean water, places without conflict and war to ravage our communities, but places nonetheless where poverty, injustice, inequalities, family violence, child abuse, youth suicide and environmental destruction still occur.

Let our church continue to 'kōrero' about these issues, but even more so let us 'mahia te mahi', let us put our kōrero into action!