

Bishops and Food Baskets.

Our new Bishop, Rt Revd Helen-Ann, sends us a piece of Māori wisdom: an old proverb which translates **‘With your food basket and my food basket, the people will thrive’**. (Jesus had much the same message when he fed a multitude courtesy of a small boy’s packed lunch.)



Though Jesus never travelled to New Zealand, his presence is very much there, interwoven between Māori and Pākehā people (Pākehā are descendants of European settlers). Today the two cultures work respectfully together in schools and public life, where the two languages go side by side and cultures learn from each other. It is a way of life which allows people to thrive.

Bishop Helen-Ann is a former bishop of Waikato Diocese in the North Island - a land of volcanic rocks, hot pools and geysers, rolling hills and many Māori villages. Māori don’t understand the European concept of ‘owning land’ – to them the land belongs to every living creature and must be respected and protected for future generations. Rotorua is a popular holiday town where a number of Māori family groups live. Visitors are welcomed to sample Māori hospitality. Food is cooked underground in the heat of the volcanic earth - the most cost-effective of ovens! Food is shared and none is wasted, so people thrive.



Church liturgy also has two ‘baskets’. Services are both English and Māori. Cathedrals pay equal respect to the two cultures and traditions. This Bishop’s chair is in St John’s Cathedral, Napier, in Waiapu Diocese. The original church was destroyed in 1931 when the town was hit by an earthquake. When the new Cathedral was built, the local Māori people gifted the altar panels and bishop’s chair, woven in the style used for Whareniui – traditional Māori Meeting Houses.

So what might be in our Mothers’ Union baskets in Newcastle Diocese? Might they help Bishop Helen-Ann to transform attitudes and enable the marginalised to know dignity and thrive?