

General Assembly opens at Ohope Marae

General Assembly began with a powhiri and service of worship at the Church's national Ohope Marae. The Assembly was last held at the marae in 1984.

Rain greeted visitors, however by the end of the service there was sunshine, the joyous song of tui, and a much anticipated hangi lunch waiting to be enjoyed.

The service began with the confirmation of the election of the Rev Ray Coster as Moderator from 2012 to 2014. In the Te Maungarongo Wharenuī the Very Rev Peter Cheyne passed the ceremonial korowai (feathered cloak) to Ray, surrounded by former Moderators and the Moderator of Te Aka Puaho.

The Moderator was presented with the Confession of faith, Kupu Whakapono in Te Reo Māori, which was then both spoken and sung by the estimated 400 people present.

In his opening sermon as Moderator, the Right Rev Ray Coster challenged the Church "to rise up in mission".

Ray expanded on his "Reviving the Flame" theme for his moderatorship saying he believes God is calling the Church "to live in the world and go to the world with a resurrection mind-set."

"It is too easy to look at the world and groan about the pain, the evil, the problems that we see in every country and city. A person with a resurrection mind-set sees a community that God loves. A person with a resurrection mind-set sees the despair, but sees even more the hope of the gospel and is moved by the love of Christ to care and share."

"A resurrection mindset looks forward and outward to what might be in hope for other people, rather than inwards and downwards. It leads to a heart of service. It leads to a sacrifice of self for the welfare of others. It leads us into mission.

He challenged the church to "leave the comfort and the security of its traditions" as we seek to become a hope-bringing resurrection church.

Ray used three numbers to illustrate how we're destroying some of the features of society: We're using the equivalent of 1.5 planets just to meet our current consumption. 2.5 billion people live in poverty throughout the world and three times as many people die from suicide as die from homicide or in wars.

"These three dimensions collectively – an ecological crisis, a social crisis and a spiritual crisis - constitute the most significant institutional and leadership failure of our time. We are the church are uniquely positioned to do something about this."

A full copy of Ray's opening sermon is available on the Church's website.

Caption:

Moderator the Right Rev Ray Coster and the Moderator of the Presbyterian Church in Korea,
the Rev Dr Dal Ik Son