

Rev Tere Te Akaraanga-Marsters Address at to the General Assembly

Kia Orana and greetings,

Right Rev Fakaofu Kaio, Moderator of the Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa New Zealand,

Very Rev Richard Dawson, immediate past Moderator of the Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa New Zealand,

Esteemed ministers, distinguished and invited guests, ladies and gentlemen.

Kia Orana tatou katoatoa i te aroa maata o te Atua

In God's great love, I greet you all.

It is my pleasure to address you on behalf of the President of the Cook Islands Christian Church, the Rev Tuaine Ngametua, the General Secretary, Mr Nga Mataio, and all the members of the Executive Council, ministers and members of the CCIC. It is their earnest desire that I convey their warmest Christian greetings.

Thank you for the invitation to attend this Presbyterian General Assembly in 2018. It is definitely a great honour and privilege to have the opportunity to fellowship and associate with fellow servants in Christ.

Over the years there has been a strong recognition of the valuable and effective work of the PCANZ amongst Cook Islanders in New Zealand. This commitment met the need of the increasing Cook Islanders presence in New Zealand. During this time the Cook Islands people were able to celebrate their faith through attending Congregational Churches and in joining the Presbyterian Church of New Zealand in 1969.

The 1950s saw the emergence of small Cook Islands communities throughout the populated centres in New Zealand. Some Cook Islands families moved to Frankton in Hamilton, due to employment opportunities, education and health. My own family lived in a railway house on 95 Massey Street in Frankton. I have fond memories of those early days growing up in a close-knit Cook Islands community.

There was a small Congregational Church on Massey Street, which was the meeting place of many Cook Islands families.

I remember the loud Sunday School hymns and my mother screaming at the top of her voice, with eyes closed and, at times, face covered, as she participated in the Imene Apii Sabati. I even remember my father and uncles with their low baritone voices, proudly and forcefully singing our traditional hymns, the Imene Tuki.

In that era, Sunday School was definitely no place to play for a child. I remember on several occasions being strongly motivated to comply with the rules. It was, 'learn your memory verse, sit up straight and look straight ahead' or else!

Afterwards there was always a continual abundance of food. I even remember the ample supply of donuts, the mayonnaise, chop suey and other Island delicacies.

To me, Sundays represented the warmth of family, the celebration of song and the expression of our Christian faith.

The Church eventually moved to a bigger building at Presbyterian First Church in King St, Frankton. In fact, many of my Cook Islands family, and those I grew up with, still are active members of that Church today.

Therefore, we, and I personally, wish to acknowledge the tremendous contribution and continued commitment of the PCANZ amongst our Cook Islands people.

With the continued flow of Cook Islanders moving to New Zealand as well as natural increase, it is estimated that there are over 50,000 Cook Islanders residing in New Zealand. Therefore, the work amongst our people continues to grow and it is only as we labour in partnership that we can provide a spiritual home that meets the ongoing needs of our people. It can also be the recognition, combination and exchanging of our strengths and gifts that will bring a unified approach which fosters harmony between our respective churches.

The invitation to our respective assemblies is important to the ongoing commitment and fellowship between ourselves which we have enjoyed over the past years. It is my hope, at this time, to explore and consider proactively, the possibilities, opportunities and the necessary steps to deepen and further our relationship that will benefit everyone involved. This could be the establishing of a strong and vibrant platform that reflects an agreed approach to information sharing, our spiritual life and our ministry activities that is meaningful and fruitful.

Your fellow co-worker in Christ

Kia Orana e kia manuia

Rev Tere Te Akaraanga-Marsters

Principal, Takamoa Theological College

Executive Council Member of the CICC