

Elders and Youth Gathering, Pala 2006

Teach, nurture, baptism, care, transform unjust structure, and protect creation – Goals of Te Pihopatanga o Aotearoa.

My Aunt had a certain way of teaching the young. If you asked her something she might not answer you right away. She might give you an answer a week later and not in the way you would think she would have answered you. But this is the way she thought you would best remember it, or this was the way she thought it should be learned but young people do not have the time to listen today. They want it now and they may not learn it at. So if we believe it is important for them to know we better respond different. – Mr. Frank Oberly, Elder Consultant , USA.

The second Elders and Youth Consultation was convened by the Secretary-General, Malcolm Naea Chun at the Pala Resort in Southern California to further the dialogue of these two groups as the next AIN membership gathering approaches in May 2007. Consultants from the member groups of USA , Hawaii and Aotearoa (New Zealand) were able to attend. They were: Mr. Frank Oberly, The Rev. Robert Two Bulls, and Mr Brandon Mauai from the USA , Mr. & Mrs. David and Linda Sproat and Mrs. Thelma Chun from Hawai'i , and The Rev. Hirini Kaa, Mr. Ryamond Hina, Mrs. Winifred Ehau and Mrs. Helen Gray of Aotearoa.

A day and a half was spent listening to existing and new programmes from their respective regions, reading and discussing national visions and goals, and the presentation of statistical data concerning the church membership and contemporary society. A point raised from the Maori participants was the desire to go beyond recommendations and to develop an actual working programme. It was also raised by the American participants of the need for the recognition of roles that each group has in congregational growth and development.

Through this discussion it was realised that both groups had complementary interests and goals that can be summarized in the Episcopal Church's vision called 20/20:

It is our dream that, when 2020 arrives, as many as 25% of our congregations will be less than 20 years old and that, while our worshipping numbers will have doubled from our present 830,000 each Sunday, the median age of our parishes will be considerably younger. It is also our fervent hp that those who are Episcopalians in 2020 will socially and ethnically "look more like America " as a whole than we do today.

In this regard the rest of the consultation looked at the implementation of some of the 20/20 goals: leadership/leadership training, the new generation, worship or prayer and more importantly what they could do about it now.

Episcopal Council executive members Oberly and Chun proposed to the consultants that if funding could be secured what could they do this year and for the next two years to further native youth ministry an the stated objectives like the 20/20 document. While the younger adult consultants hammered out a working programme, the elders gathered to discuss what role elders had in this "new" church vision.

The elders were able to come to a meeting of the minds that there was a strategic role for native elders: Elders have a role to guide, to be witnesses, and to support, nurture, and young people in their ministry. Elders have a role to ensure that the culture and traditions are passed down that they are considered to be important for the substance of the people to the next generation. How this is done is up to the next generation. Elders have a role to prepare the community and congregation for changes in ministry styles and direction that complement the ordained leadership.

It was agreed upon that native youth ministry needs to be recognize on its own merits and style which can be very different from that of traditional church worship and ministry. Young adults in the process or ordination and those already ordained need to determine and develop the training for this ministry in consultation with elders and adults. A liturgy of prayers and worship needs to reflect the life of youth and young adults which can be used daily beyond the communal Sunday worship. The encouragement and development of new music and liturgical expression needs to shared and offered as a gift of native youth ministry. The implementation of this challenges need to be properly funded and also to five the direction to national youth gatherings so they can be productive beyond social gatherings.

Before the consultation ended a working programme in these areas of leadership, network development, communication, and theology was produced that would:

Immediately open up the established youth web site in Aotearoa to the registration of other native young people in AIN and to link up with the Ain web site; put together the materials and contributions for a Journal publication as part of the First Peoples Theology Journal series and to compile a prayer calendar for native young people; begin the visitation and network building of young adults to the respective areas: North Dakota, California, Hawai'i and Aotearoa this year through projects such as the Red Shirt Project developed by the Diocese of Los Angeles. Native young adults will travel, live and be part of the community life of these areas throughout this summer and their reflections and learnings will be documented to the web site and journal, and to establish an internship programme for theological study at the respective indigenous schools and education programmes; and

to prepare for the AIN Vancouver 2007 gathering by further developing a plan of action for native youth ministry throughout the membership.

A proposal for initial funding was taken to an executive meeting of the Episcopal Council on Indigenous Ministries for \$20,000.00 and it was approved. The funds are to be dispersed by ITTI (Indigenous Theological Training Institute). It is anticipated that this new program will be sustained for the next three years as it grows and develops and that the other members who could not attend will soon be active participants.

The implementation of this action plan should be part of the direction to see that national visions like the 20/20 document go beyond being a "dream" to a living reality in our churches.