

Waikato Taranki General Synod / Te Hīnota Whānui (GSTHW) 2026 report back

Attendees:

- Lay reps: Christine Bryant, Frances Brown, Judge Chris Harding (not pictured)
- Clergy Reps: Rev. Peter Bargh, Very Rev. Jay Ruka
- Observers: Ben Ferreira, Kat Maxwell (TPC)



Not sure what General Synod / Te Hīnota Whānui even is? Check out this article from Archbishop Justin with some key explanations and reflections of the equity theme / Bill 15: [\(Arch\)Bishop's News — Anglican Movement](#) 😊

Anglican Taonga is the official online magazine of the Anglican Church in Aotearoa New Zealand and Polynesia and published a variety of articles covering GSTHW: [Anglican Taonga - News for the Anglican Church in Aotearoa, NZ and Polynesia](#)

GSTHW began with a one-day wānanga on 11 August in Auckland for Tikanga Pākehā held at St Margaret's Hillsborough to gather our thoughts ahead of meeting with the wider Province, and consider our response to a letter from the Pīhopatanga (Māori Anglican Church) asking us to give some thoughts to our identity as "Tikanga Pākehā". Bishop Philip travelled up with us to this day but did not attend the full Synod meeting in Tonga.



Bishop Philip presents on Waikato Taranaki Diocese at TPC

We heard from each Bishop responding to the letter on behalf of their Dioceses to answer the question: "how do we relate to our tikanga Māori partners at a local level?" which was a really interesting exercise and highlighted opportunities for strategic goal setting and for Bishops to collaborate more.

Bishop Philip spoke to our Waikato Taranaki context, noting our long-standing history of working together as a Tikanga and with Tikanga Māori. He noted the history of our tikanga making significant statements but not changing our behaviour and asked us to view the church balance sheets as an opportunity to leverage assets to create an economic engine for mission rather than a limitation. We reflected on the strong trust we can have in the Pihopatanga – and the conversations and outcomes at GSTHW reinforced this (see Bill 15 below for context!).

Another early morning Saturday start saw us flying from Auckland to Nuku'alofa, Tonga. The day's programme saw us welcomed by St Paul's Parish, a formal welcome and audience with the King Tupou IV of Tonga (we all got to shake his hand – very honoured!) and an amazing formal welcome event hosted by St Andrew's Anglican school followed by a feast.



Bishops prepare to lead the procession to the palace



Official welcome at St Andrew's Anglican School

You can see all the Bills, Motions and Reports discussed, debated and presented to GSTHW 2026 online here (noting that some were amended on the floor): [GSTHW 2026 Bills / General Synod / Te Hīnota Whānui \(GSTHW\) / News / Home - Anglican Church in Aotearoa, New Zealand and Polynesia](#).

GSTHW began with a Holy Eucharist at Tonga High School Gym (our venue for most of the business sessions) also attended by the King and Queen of Tonga, lunch at St Andrew's Anglican school, followed by tikanga caucusing (aka discussion and debate) on the various bills and motions of note ahead of the formal sessions. The day finished with an amazing brass band choral performance of 8 Tongan choir groups hosted at the Wesleyan Methodist Cathedral.



Examples of Saturday and Sunday hospitality

The business part of GSTWH ran from Monday 17 – Thursday 20 August. Mornings were spent in talanoa / wānanga, with consideration of various Bills and Motions in the afternoons, followed by dinner and an evening programme of Tongan entertainment hosted by different parishes around Nuku'alofa.

Phil. 2: 4 Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others / Kaua tana ake e tirohia e tetahi e tetahi, engari ko nga mea a era atu hei tirohanga ma tetahi ma tetahi.

Most of the business of GSTHW 2026 revolved around two key ideas:

1. Equity – Flourishing

Although the assets of the Anglican Church were divided between the 3 Tikanga approximately according to numbers in the 1990s, Tikanga Pakeha retained most of the assets capable of increasing in value and most of the control over how income would be distributed. It is time to review this and consider how to enable each Tikanga to flourish. We reflected in groups on 2 questions:

What does a flourishing church look like?

What are the impediments which are preventing your church from flourishing?

What we saw in Tonga is that despite having the least resources by far, there are full churches overflowing with the love of God in caring for their guests and their community.

2. Care for Creation

Creation points us towards the Creator. The oceans is the world's largest classroom. Most of the main island of Tonga is not more than 2m above sea level, therefore global warming, oceans rising and the impact of more severe cyclones are of crucial importance. Several presenters spoke about what measures are being taken to build resilience to disaster and to remove plastic pollutants from the ocean. However, Tonga itself, like New Zealand, can do little to reduce the quantity of greenhouse gases which arise from the large populations of the Northern Hemisphere. Since Care for Creation is one of the five marks of mission of the Anglican Church, we need to ensure that the NZ government stands beside the Pacific nations when they advocate for their islands in world forums.



Talanoa 2: climate change



7am Eucharist at St Paul's

Friday 21 August was spent either whale swimming, whale watching, or participating in an on-land Anglican Missions Tour visiting various disaster preparedness and community gardens. You may have seen media coverage of the traumatic experience of some GSTHW members who were on one of the whale watching boats that sunk – thankfully while some were hospitalised there were no major injuries.

Art display during GSTWH
from artist Felipe Tohi





Anglican Missions tour



Final night performance

Overall GSTHW was an amazing experience of our three Tikanga Anglican Church. The hospitality of the four Tongan parishes which hosted us was overwhelming and the music and worship were a foretaste of heaven.

We thank God for being able to represent the Diocese of Waikato-Taranaki at General Synod, for the worship, and for all we learnt there.