

ANNUAL REPORT: TE KOTAHITANGA

E ngā mana o tō tātou hāhi, Te Hīnota Whānui e ngā Ātipīhopa, e ngā pīhopa, e ngā reo o ia Amorangi, o ia Pīhopatanga, tēnā koutou katoa.

This annual report is offered on behalf of Te Kotahitanga, with thanks to members and partners who have carried a demanding year of work. Across the year, Te Kotahitanga focused on equity, tino rangatiratanga, three Tikanga partnership, education and formation, governance clarity, and its relationship with the St John's College Trust Board. It has been a year of transition and reset as we prepare for new funding and accountability arrangements beyond 2027.

Role and Mandate

Under Title E, Te Kotahitanga has oversight for theological education, ministry training and formation, and other education that advances the mission and ministry of the Church. This includes encouraging cooperation between Tikanga, consulting Tikanga Ministry bodies, identifying shared opportunities, and supporting negotiation where education, formation and resourcing priorities meet. While funding distribution has taken significant time, especially through the move toward bulk funding, Te Kotahitanga is not simply a funding advisory body. Its wider role is to strengthen the life, mission, education and formation of our hāhi across the three Tikanga.

This mandate shaped Te Kotahitanga's approach to equity, resourcing and future planning throughout the year.

Equity, Tino Rangatiratanga and Future Funding

Equity was the central and recurring theme. Through work with the Trust Board, members returned often to funding arrangements that better reflect tino rangatiratanga, the realities of the three Tikanga, and the different capacities and needs of Dioceses, Amorangi and Tikanga Pasefika. The move toward bulk funding for 2026–2027 was seen as both an opportunity and a responsibility, requiring clear priorities, transparent reporting, and transitional arrangements that protect key areas of ministry.

Looking beyond the immediate funding period, Te Kotahitanga identified the need for a longer-term strategy for 2028 and beyond, shaped by theological reflection, data, Tikanga perspectives on equity, and a Church-wide conversation about priorities for the next generation.

These funding questions also brought governance, accountability and relationship with the Trust Board into sharper focus.

Governance, Accountability and Relationships

The year highlighted continuing questions about Te Kotahitanga's role, advisory function, relationship with the Trust Board, and links with Te Kaunihera and other Church bodies, including General Synod Standing Committee. These were not only structural matters. They reflected the need to rebuild trust, strengthen transparency, and clarify accountability as future funding models are developed. The Trust Board relationship is especially important because its funding decisions shape theological education, ministry formation and mission resourcing across the Church.

Joint hui with the Trust Board were important in this work. They enabled frank discussion about funding criteria, beneficiary review, reporting, legal advice and future strategy, building on earlier

joint workstreams such as scholarship review, 3(c) review, Covid funding review and Te Pae Tawhiti. The period ahead will require ongoing dialogue, shared planning and trust across the three Tikanga and their related bodies.

Alongside these structural matters, Te Kotahitanga continued to attend to the wider vision for formation and mission expressed through Te Pae Tawhiti.

Te Pae Tawhiti, Youth and Future-Focused Ministry

Te Pae Tawhiti 2040, commissioned with support from the Trust Board, remained an important thread. It offers a mirror to the life of the hāhi in its diversity, challenges and hopes, and invites the Church to look beyond short-term needs: *Ko te pae tawhiti, whāia kia tata. Ko te pae tata, kia mau kia tīna*. During the year, members focused on making its vision accessible, developing implementation pathways, and connecting it with General Synod, Ministry Councils, education, youth ministry and mission innovation.

Youth formation remained a hopeful area for future investment. Early support for a three Tikanga youth forum developed into a more focused planning approach with youth coordinators and Bishop Ana, with attention to climate change, Pacific realities, youth ministry skills and a possible three Tikanga youth exchange in Polynesia in 2027.

That focus on young people sat within a broader commitment to education, scholarships and new forms of ministry innovation.

Education, Scholarships, Innovation and AI

Education and formation remained recurring priorities. Te Kotahitanga supported scholarships for ordained candidates, candidates for ordination and lay scholars, while recognising that future scholarship and education funding may need to sit within broader bulk-funding models. Members also considered transitional support where funding rounds had been disrupted and emphasised flexibility so each Tikanga can respond to its own formation priorities.

The year's conversations also looked outward to mission innovation and AI. Members supported new initiatives, explored Anglican-focused gatherings, and noted both the opportunities and risks of AI for education, archives and Church systems. These matters will require careful policy, resourcing and three Tikanga engagement.

Questions of innovation and digital change also connected naturally with the Church's responsibility to care for its knowledge, records and taonga.

Kinder Library and Archival Stewardship

Kinder Library's role as a three Tikanga institution and strategic asset was affirmed. Te Kotahitanga maintained its relationship with the Kinder Library Oversight Committee as appointing body and received regular reporting, while noting pressures around funding, succession planning, storage, digital systems, AI-related archival questions, stewardship and regional support.

The same concern for formation, stewardship and sustainability informed discussion about St John's Theological College.

St John's Theological College

St John's Theological College brought wider funding and accountability questions into particular focus. Members raised matters of governance, sustainability, staffing, student numbers, budget transparency, episcopal representation, asset use and the College's strategic fit with the needs of the three Tikanga. By October, the joint session with the Trust Board had identified 2026 as a year of reset for the College, with a clear need to align funding, accountability and educational purpose.

The emphasis on accountability and institutional integrity also carried into Te Kotahitanga's engagement with safeguarding and canon reform.

Safeguarding, Royal Commission Response and Canon Reform

Later in the year, safeguarding and the Church's response to the Royal Commission came into sharper focus. Members discussed the need for consistency across the Province, possible engagement with Kooyoorā, restorative approaches, Title D reform, and the funding required to support Church-wide co-ordination. These matters were understood as part of the wider work of accountability, care and institutional integrity.

To carry this breadth of work well, Te Kotahitanga also reflected on its own membership, rhythm and capacity for the period ahead.

Membership and Meeting Rhythm

Te Kotahitanga also attended to its own rhythm of work, including meeting dates, pending membership changes, succession planning, nominations, three Tikanga sharing and future planning. Its membership reflects the three Tikanga, with additional connection to the General Secretary, the Trust Board and General Synod Standing Committee. Continuity has supported the work, but the changing workload and evolving mandate require careful planning for the period ahead.

Current Membership

Tikanga Pasefika – Archbishop Sione Ulu'ilakepa, Ven Chris Solomona, Sione Mafi

Tikanga Pākehā – Rt Rev'd Dr Peter Carrell, Ms Karen Spoelstra, Very Rev'd Dr Graeme O'Brien

Tikanga Māori – Rt Rev'd Waitohiariki Quayle, Ven Michael Tamihere and Ven Susan Wallace (Chair)

General Secretary – Rev'd Canon Michael Hughes

These strands together provide the basis for the concluding reflections that follow.

Conclusion

Taken together, the year's discussions show Te Kotahitanga working through a significant period of transition. The core challenge is to hold together equity, tino rangatiratanga, formation, accountability and three Tikanga partnership while preparing for new funding and governance arrangements. The next phase will require courageous conversation, careful planning and continued commitment to the shared life of our hāhi.

Before closing, I return to my opening remarks and again extend my thanks to everyone who has contributed to the work of Te Kotahitanga, in whatever capacity, small or large. Te Kotahitanga means more than unity; it calls us into collective action. The work before us will require not only the members of this commission, but all of us, to live into Te Kotahitanga as we consider the future of our hāhi.

Nō reira, e āku nui, e āku rahi, mā te Atua koutou e manaaki, e tiaki hoki. Tēnā koutou katoa.