



# K Ō W H A I W H A I



## **Kōwhaiwhai**

**(noun)** painted scroll ornamentation - commonly used on meeting house rafters

## **Background**

The last few years the church has been grappling with a big question: how do we, as a community of believers, be relevant, authentic and available to the communities and cultures in which our church resides in all that we do, including the Sunday gatherings? It's what we've come to call the 'cross-cultural journey'. This journey has not begun recently, some may remember the work that Lionel Stewart and others did 35 years ago. The passion has remained a fire in people's hearts over many years.

Six years ago, the flame was refanned when Duane Major shared a challenge he and the other 24-7 Youth Workers felt by the diversity evident in the youth communities in South-West Christchurch.

At a wānanga retreat on Ōnuku marae, Banks Peninsula, in February 2011, the church leadership teams determined that the church would actively journey to be authentic and inviting to all the different ethnicities and cultures which make up the wider church communities. Also, that this journey would endeavour to draw insight from the Māori cultural heritage that is unique to Aotearoa, New Zealand.

This journey would be done in the context of the church vision:

... by word, sign and deed; helping people become lifelong followers of Jesus Christ  
... mā te kupu, mā te tohu, mā te mahi e āwhinatia mai te tangata kia whakawhai noa ai i a Ihu Karaiti

This determination at Ōnuku was a spoken commitment to the journey... **mā te kupu.**

The kōwhaiwhai is part of demonstrating this commitment... **mā te tohu.**

The manifestation of this commitment is determined by what we do... **mā te mahi.**

Many of you are fully committed to this journey and are excited about where it might take us. However, others are perplexed by it and do not see its relevance. Yet despite these reservations, most have determined that it is what Jesus is calling us to do. The day Emily Hill, the artist, spoke concerning the kōwhaiwhai design, many in the church were encouraged. A number in the Sunday morning gatherings joined in taking a stone from Birdling's Flat and committed to pray for God's leading on this journey.

Emily spoke of the kōwhaiwhai as the history book in a wharenui/ meeting house. It tells the story of its people, not only its history but its values, hopes and aspirations. The telling uses what is initially, an unfamiliar alphabet but once you know the meaning of the symbols, a narrative is revealed.

So our kōwhaiwhai tells our church story.

### **The alphabet/symbols**

poutoko manawa: the central support of a meeting house

- the vivid red post at the very centre
- the centrality of the cross of Christ Jesus

pou: other supporting panels

- the two green crosses either side of the central panel, the two who were crucified with Christ
- the veracity of the Word of God, that Christ came and lived among us and He died among us

whenua/earth: from whence we draw sustenance

- the unbroken red lower border, the blood of Jesus Christ which is shed for every one of us
- whakapapa: through his blood we become sons and daughters of the Most High, brothers and sisters in Christ, joined one to the other and become whānau/family

rangi: sky

- the unbroken green upper border
- it is God Almighty who reigns, he who was from the beginning, who is and is forever more

wairua tapu: Holy Spirit

- the white which entwines on every panel from beginning to end
- the constant ever present reminder that Christ rose from the dead, ascended to the Father but did not leave us abandoned, He sent the Comforter

koru: unfolding fern frond

- new life, growth
- manaakitanga: reaching out, embracing, drawing in, making an inviting space, welcoming

mangopare: double koru in the shape of the hammerhead shark

- strength, perseverance, endurance, symbolic of both the faith we are called to and our God's faithfulness to us

whiwhingatahitanga: the intertwining of the Father God, Jesus Christ our Redeemer, the Holy Spirit the Enabler

- we can choose to be knitted in to the Trinity
- this is our prayer for our whānau/families and hāpori/communities, the whenua/land and the taone nui/city

## The design overview

- a central panel [C] with symmetrical classical koru shape: the cross of Jesus at the centre and bounded by the two crosses on each side
- to the right of the central panel are two further panels [R1 & R2] which depict the local story of the church
- to the left of the central panel are two further panels [L1 & L2] which depict the global connection of the church

## C panel, the centrality of Christ Jesus and the Work of God



### Spreydon Baptist: whakapapa/roots

This is home base for our community. Our roots are displayed in the earthy browns of the Canterbury plains. The colour also depicts the wall linings of the raupo whare which was the meeting house the Spreydon forebears worshipped together in. The first service was held on 17 September 1865 under Thomas Jeffcoate, in a little whare gifted by Charlotte Twiggers.



The arching of the koru mimics the embrace of the port hills on the peninsula, the nodules siting the city and communities nestling into its lower slopes, the red bounding represents our hopes and prayers for Christ's covering to be over the city. The white line represents those promises being realised through the workings of the Wairua Tapu/ the Holy Spirit. The physical communities of the city have their spiritual counterparts where white nodules are found, these grounded in Christ through the working of the Holy Spirit.



The black background signifies parts of our world which have not yet experienced the light of Christ Jesus, both within us and outside of us.



The koru resolves into the inner reaches of the pastoral green grass lands towards the Southern Alps/ Te Tiritiri-o-te-moana and on the other end towards the blue of the Pacific Ocean/ Te Moana-nui-a-Kiwa.

## R1 panel, local mission

The work of local mission is geographically located in the Canterbury landscape. This local mission and heritage filters through Polynesian influences. The many islands which ring the South Pacific are represented. The classical mangopare reminds us that our faith and ministry is grounded in the endless faithfulness of our God. We are also reminded that it is the work of the Holy Spirit in our hearts and lives which ultimately bears good fruit.





### R2 panel, local landmarks

On the extremities of the design, the classical symbolism gives way to a pictorial representation of where and who we are. The 'where' is Waitaha/ Canterbury over which Ngāi Tahu hold mana whenua/ tribal lands<sup>i</sup>. It is framed by the pounamu/ greenstone of the mountain ranges, the pātiki/ flounder from Waihora/ Lake Ellesmere and the pebbles from Birdling's Flat. The whakapapa of many of us and the adapted landscapes are intrinsically tied to European influences represented by the oak leaf and acorns. The kuaka or godwit<sup>ii</sup> ties the global mission story to local mission as does the tuna.



The Lord taught us to pray, 'give us this day our daily bread' (Matthew 6:11). As such, the kumara is significant - it is durable, stores well and is a nutritious energy source. As a food it applies noa, completing any process of tapu which means being set aside for a period and is used as a sign of rongomau/ peace. Here it is shown in an open basket, one to which you can add or take<sup>iii</sup>. It calls us to manaakitanga, warm and generous hospitality.



### L1 panel, global mission

As with the local mission panel, the extended global panel affirms the long-term commitment and faith which gives strength and endurance to our walk with the Lord.



### L2 panel, global landmarks

On the extreme left of the design we see the same kuaka, which for a season were in Aotearoa, but are now in flight, much like our global mission teams and partners. It reminds us that without the nourishment of biblical truth worked out in local mission, global mission is unsustainable.

<sup>i</sup> Power from the land - power associated with possession and occupation of tribal land. The tribe's history and legends are based in the lands they have occupied over generations. The land provides sustenance for the people and hospitality for guests.

<sup>ii</sup> The bar-tailed godwit or kuaka, its Maori name, is a migratory bird that spends the southern summers in New Zealand then migrates northwards to Alaska, via China, Japan, and South Korea for the breeding season, returning in the southern spring.

<sup>iii</sup> Nā tōu rourou, nā tōku rourou ka ora ai te iwi. With your basket and with mine, the people will flourish. A call to pool resources to achieve more than we can alone.



# +++ SOUTH WEST BAPTIST CHURCH

FORMERLY SPREYDON AND HALSWELL BAPTIST CHURCH

