The Grief Ministry of Maori Priests:
A Conversation with Bishop Richard and Mere Wallace

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Grief is a process of "coming from the world of the dark world into the light, going from Te Ao Pouri to Te Ao Marama".[1] As a Pakeha[2] minister in the Presbyterian Church I have particular responsibilities for caring for those who are dying and grieving. One of the best ways to inform one's own practice is to listen carefully to how others see their role, in a different context. This essay is based on a fascinating conversation I had with the Right Reverend Richard Wallace and the Venerable Mere Wallace about the role of priests in the Maori Anglican Church, Te Pihopatanga o Te Waipounamu.[3] As they shared with me from their experience as priests and ministry educators we explored grief ministry, both around a death and in other pastoral situations involving grief, with a particular ear for how this impacts on priests personally. I highlight ten aspects of the role that Maori priests hold as they minister to those who are dying or grieving, and relate these to my own ministry practice.

Aspects of priestly role discussed are:
1. Manaaki: Priests demonstrate the love of God as they welcome the dead and care for those who mourn.
2. Tuku: Priests release the spirit of a person who has died.
3. Tangihanga: Priests lead a long process leading up to and beyond a funeral and burial.
4. Whanaungatanga: Priests nurture all-age community, and encourage the participation of children.
5. Karakia: Priests lead from Te Ao Pouri to Te Ao Marama.
6. Tapu: Priests hold the transitions between the unsafe and the safe.
7. Kaitiaki: Priests hold together Te Ao Maori and the Church of Ihu Karaiti.
8. Poroporoaki: Priests minister to a wide range of grief.
9. "I feel people": Priests trust their instincts in grief ministry.
10. Atawhai: Priests look after themselves.

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[1] Mere Wallace, personal conversation held 19 August 2020. Quotations are from Mere or Bishop Richard Wallace unless otherwise stated. Te Ao Pouri means the world or domain of sadness or darkness and Te Ao Marama is the world of light.
[2] 'Pakeha' refers to European New Zealanders. Simplistic translations for Maori words are given in footnotes where not explained in the text.
[3] Richard is the Bishop of Te Pihopatanga o Te Waipounamu, the Diocese of the South Island, and Mere is Vicar General. They are based in Christchurch.

Role

> *It's quite hard to say what the role is because you're in your priestly role or then in your community role in and then in your working role, gardening and doing all those things that you should be doing. So it's kind of evolving all the time. So quite often we work and we don't even think 'what did we do?'. When people do things, they can't tell me why they do it. What I'm really trying to find out is 'what is your practice?'.*

Mere is here identifying the need for ongoing self-reflective cultural and spiritual praxis, critical engagement of action and purpose. As a priest and ministry educator in Te Pihopatanga her own self awareness is fuelling her challenge to others to delve deeper into the role of Christian ministry in our time. My conversation with her and her husband Bishop Richard explored a range of aspects of the role of a priest in Te Pihopatanga o Te Waipounamu. For them this not about having a written Job Description because that "limits your ability to be able to do things in a different way" within a rapidly changing community. Their desire is to build up leaders who can stand strong in both the Maori and the Christian traditions with resilience, ethics, pastoral finesse, liturgical skill, self awareness and cultural confidence.

Manaaki:[4] Priests demonstrate the love of God as they welcome the dead and care for those who mourn.

The kaupapa[5] of the Diocese of Te Waipounamu is "Kawea te Rongopai, which is to take the gospel out. What we say here is, to take the gospel out to the four tides of Te Waipounamu with a loving and a thankful heart." (Mere). A central component of this is the manaakitanga offered to those who seek funeral services and pastoral care. They choose to offer this whether or not people are Anglican, are local, or can pay: "It's a way of us being able to support what we say we are." They welcome the bodies and whanau of those who have died onto their church marae, and sit with those in grief. For Mere the hardest part of manaaki is "to just sit and listen and do nothing. Because we are in an impatient world. It's gotta be done by now now now!" I am moved by the generosity of spirit, resources and time that underpins this pastoral practice. It is easy when working in the 'death business' to treat funerals (of those who are not members of the church) as a source of income and to minimise the time each one takes.

Mere placed the grief ministry of her church in the context of their community ministry, giving food for those in need, pastoral care, practical work around the church site on gardens and building community, partnerships with other groups and the ongoing regular worship life of their church. All of this requires different skills and mahi from the priests.[6]

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[4] To manaaki is to care for another.

[5] A kaupapa is an agenda or purpose.

[6] Not to mention their ministry education programme and the many demands that the institutional church and wider community place on them. They are on a lot of committees!

Tuku: Priests release the spirit of a person who has died.

Priests are called in to a person who is dying to do a prayer of commendation, called a Tuku, which asists with the death and the spirit's transition out of the body. Paratene Ngata describes how the tuku ceremony "purifies and cleanses the spirit of the deceased".[7] Mere talked about her husband's ministry in this regard: "Often times when he's done a tuku the person then dies. It's a release, because sometimes they don't want to go."

There are a range of views in Western Christianity about the human soul after physical death; a soul may simply be extinguished or it may go to heaven or hell. Christians disagree about what might happen to whom but most would agree that this occurs instantaneously at the point of death. This is not a Maori understanding. Maori culture, like most cultures in the world, has a more fluid and dynamic understanding of the human spirit after death. Bishop Richard described, for instance, a foster son who would happily play with his deceased Nana in the night, despite never having met her while she was alive. Each iwi has things it looks for around a death. He described their hapu[8] in Tai Tokerau who see white fungal-like markings appear on a tree after a person has died, which are understood to be a manifestation of a kehua[9].

In terms of pastoral practice, this emphasises for Bishop Richard the importance of prayer at the time of death. A death is opens a space between the living and the death that can be potentially dangerous. A priest has a vital role in both fully releasing the person to leave and in protecting the community: "you don't only tuku the person. You ask that nothing untoward is left here. If it is of no use to mankind then it must go as well."

Tangihanga: Priests lead a long process leading up to and beyond a funeral and burial.

Thomas Lynch states that "we deal with death by dealing with the dead" and critiques "the estrangement between the living and the dead" that is increasingly prevalent in western culture.[10] A tangihanga is quite the opposite of the "refusal to deal with our dead" that Lynch observes.[11] A tangihanga is a prolonged intensive community grief process in the presence of the dead body. The casket is kept open and the deceased is kept 'warm' by the constant presence of family and friends. Over several days people come and go, are welcomed and fed, in a rich spiritual, relational and emotional flow leading up to the funeral ceremony and burial. "The tangi gives you an opportunity to cry, to laugh, to celebrate, to connect

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[7] Paratene Ngata, "Death, Dying and Grief." in *Last Words: Approaches to Death in New Zealand's Cultures and Faiths*, edited by Margot Schwass (Wellington: Bridget Williams Books, 2005): 29-40, 31.
[8] An iwi is a tribe, and a hapu is a sub-tribe.
[9] A kehua is a manifestation of the spirit of a person who has died.
[10] Thomas G. Long and Thomas T. Lynch, *The Good Funeral: Death, Grief, and the Community of Care* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2013), 60.
[11] ibid.

and reconnect, and to feel part of something", writes Sharon Clair. "First there's this grief and sadness, and you vent it all … then there's this deep, deep sense of prayer and healing".[12] Tangihanga is highly valued by Maori, and is seen as "the ultimate form of Māori cultural expression".[13] Pastoral care for the grieving is not the one-on-one visitation or therapy that is prized in the Pakeha world; tangihanga is an intensive collective journey: "the therapeutic value of the whole process is immeasurable."[14] Craig Ahipene describes how tangihanga "contributed greatly to dealing positively with my loss because it facilitated the expression of grief" after the deaths of his sons.[15]

Priests play a central role, leading daily prayers with the family, culminating with the poroporoaki[16] on the last night, then the day of the tangihanga at the church then at the cemetary, followed by the prayers at the family home, and other karakia of blessing. Bishop Richard expressed that "it's quite hard because you're there at night doing the karakia … It takes ages. It is a long process." In terms of workload and time involved this is very different for myself in a Pakeha context. A Pakeha family might expect a couple of visits, with prayer, but the main focus is on the funeral service. I would rarely be asked to come out in the evening. With cremation being the cultural norm in the Presbyterian church, family typically say farewell to the body outside the church, so I am free after the 'cup-of-tea' to go home and relax. Cultural changes are impacting on Te Pihopatanga, with some Maori families now choose a secular funeral celebrant, or requesting a funeral devoid of 'religion'. For Bishop Richard this is a source of sadness, such as when the funeral of local Anglican woman was taken by a celebrant despite her uncle being a priest; "he was a bit hurt to not be asked". He also finds that when he leads worship in Te Reo Maori he is able to incorporate more Christian faith than if he was speaking in English; in a Te Reo service "God was everywhere in it".

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[12] Sharon Clair, "Contemporary Perspectives", in Margot Schwass, *Last Words: Approaches to Death in New Zealand's Cultures and Faiths* (Wellington: Bridget Williams Books, 2005): 41-45, 42.

[13] Nīkora, L.W., Te Awekōtuku, N., Rua, M., Temara, P., Maxwell, TeK., Murphy, E., McRae, K. and Moeke-Maxwell, T. *Tangihanga: The Ultimate Form of Māori Cultural Expression—Overview of a Research Programme,* Tangi Research Programme, University of Waikato, from *'Proceedings, TKC 2010 Framework'*, (2010): 400-405, 400. https://researchcommons.waikato.ac.nz/bitstream/handle/10289/7968/Nikora%20et%20al%202010%20Tangihanga%20overview.pdf?sequence=1 [accessed 11 April 2018].

[14] Ricki R Witana, "He Tikanga Tangihanga" in *Counselling Issues and South Pacific Communities*, edited by Philip Leroy Culbertson (Auckland: Accent Publications, 1997): 93–105, 102. ISBN: 0958345422

[15] Craig Ahipene, "The Boys' Dad's Story", in Meeni Morehu, *The Tree of Life: My Journey With Grief* (Te Wånganga a Aotearoa, 2013):79-86, 85.

[16] A poroporoaki is a farewell. In the context of a tangihanga it is a prolonged time when everyone present pays tribute to the person who has died.

Whanaungatanga: Priests nurture all-age community, and encourage the participation of children.

British tradition excluded children from the rituals of death, and still today many families are reluctant to explose children to the realities of death. This has never been the case for Maori tangihanga, where children take a full part. I was blessed to have a mokopuna[17] join in our conversation for a while. She told me about the funeral of a mother and baby, describing their car accident in a matter-of-fact way. She had not known the family but during the tangi she made friends with the older sister of the deceased. “We drawed some stuff and wrote some stuff and gave it to the baby and the mum. It felt heart warming for me.” I suggested that sometimes people are afraid that kids will be freaked out by seeing a dead body. “I was not freaked out”, she replied. “It was just so sad. But it was really nice there because I had a friend.” Mere affirmed that children “are part of it, they come in, they are in the karakia, they go and sit up by the coffin even if they don't know who it is.” She sees the benefits for the children of death being normal, giving them skills to “talk about all kinds of things”.

I was moved especially by the ministry that the girl offered to the child of the bereaved family; what she named as friendship included the functions of pastoral ministry and assisted the sister into healthy processing of grief and trauma in the presence of God. Her description of this as “heart warming” is a clear sign to me of a life-long calling!

Karakia: Priests lead from Te Ao Pouri to Te Ao Marama through prayer.

In the Maori church, prayers are something you ‘do’. Bishop Richard described a role of the priest leading up to a tangihanga as “you're there at night doing the karakia.” Mere talked about “doing a lot of prayers” through the whole process. The spoken word is the means of a spiritual action. Prayers have a function. They achieve something. In the Pakeha church, prayer is more a form of communication or a private spiritual experience. We ‘say a prayer’ or ‘have a time of prayer’. The minister when leading prayer creates a space for people to bring their own personal prayers within communal prayer. My observation is that in a Maori context prayer is more an objective action than a subjective experience. This is especially significant in the grieving process as there is full confidence that karakia will enact a change in spiritual reality, whether of a departing spirit, a grieving person, or to the nature of an object.

Mere and Bishop Richard talked about karakia as a process of transition. “You are actually coming from the world of the dark world into the light, going from Te Ao Pouri to Te Ao Marama” (Mere). “Karakia is the process that ties it all together.” Karakia is the way to “fix” the connection between life and death. Mere said that as a priest leading karakia “You hold the key to the prayers between heaven and earth.”

[17] A mokopuna is grandchild or descendant.

In an Anglican context, almost all the spoken prayers are also written prayers, mostly from the Anglican Prayer Book, He Karakia Mihinare o Aotearoa. These include texts from the Bible. The use of written karakia goes back to the beginnings of Christianity in Aotearoa, with the publication of both prayer books and the Bible functioning as a significant motivation for Maori to gain literacy. In contemporary worship the flow of familiar liturgy is a distinctively Anglican worship pattern enabling the words of prayer and scripture to be ingrained in the soul. Mere encourages priest to memorise the prayers and scriptures, so that the book does not become a "barrier between God and the people". She noted that the women especially "try to learn it off-pat", so that "the right things we ought to say" are said "by heart". Bishop Richard also affirmed that "we do have we do have the ability to have our own prayers." Some of the prayers he uses "are an integration of the ancient [Maori spiritual tradition] and the Prayer Book."

Tapu: Priests hold the transitions between the unsafe and the safe.

Central to Maori culture are the concepts of 'tapu' and 'noa', and these are notoriously difficult to translate. The terms 'sacred' and 'profane' are inadequate, as are 'holy' and 'ordinary'. Tapu is particularly important in relation to death. Mere described the particular role that priests play in holding these and managing the transitions from one to the other: "You become the connection between the two places. And how do you fix that? By karakia." The process of welcome onto a marae, enacted over and over during a tangi, moves visitors from being 'waewae tapu'[18] to becoming noa through "the rituals of encounter" of increasing proximity, formal words, prayer, touch and eating together.

A fascinating thing for me was hearing Mere describing tapu as what keeps us safe. Mere and Bishop Richard made several references to safety, and I asked about whether some things are dangerous at a spiritual level. Their sense of safety and danger is different to mine. My theology and practice are shaped by Western assumptions about the world which are essentially materialistic. My parents, and their parents, held a view of the universe which they saw as logical and true, which judged non-Western spirituality as superstitious. A thing is just a thing, it holds no spiritual value or threat. In a Maori world-view, objects can carry a spiritual dynamic which can have direct impacts on human wellbeing. Mere told me that one of her roles as a priest is to bless objects which are causing problems:

> *One of the biggest things we do is blessings for is people going north and bringing stuff back down here, and they're suffering. Things like pounamu, taking things off dead people, having things they shouldn't have; after family have died, bringing stuff down here and then things are happening in the houses and they start to panic and they ring here.*

It would not occur to me as an aspect of pastoral care after a bereavement to enquire about the objects that people have brought home with them. I would have assumed that any object from the dead person would be a healthy thing, a continuing association with the loved one.

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[18] Waewae tapu literally means 'sacred feet'.

Mere and Bishop Richard see karakia as the process by which any hang-over tapu or spiritual presence is released. This changes both the spiritual essence of an object and a person's relationship with it. This is a cultural expression of the 'continuing bonds' theory of grief which suggests that "for continuing bonds to assist with grief, the former attachments must be 'transformed' rather than retained."[19] They did caution, however, that the power of the karakia to bring healing is limited by any unwillingness of the part of those involved to be fully open and honest; "They have to tell us the truth so we can fix it."

Kaitiaki: Priests hold together Te Ao Maori and the Church of Ihu Karaiti.

I was particularly interested to ask Mere and Bishop Richard about their theology in relation to the atua[20] of Maori cosmology, especially in a funeral context. Bishop Richard explained that their prayers would not normally include reference to traditional Maori concepts of death, such as Hine Nui O Te Po,[21] but that these could be mentioned in whaikorero[22]. They explained that for many years the Anglican church had banned any mention of the atua, but in more recent years there is more integration as part of a commitment to what Mere described as "indigeneity" of church practice. The Anglican Prayer Book includes references to Ranginui and "Papa-Tuanuku e takoto nei" in a communion liturgy.[23] Bishop Richard feels that "there is nothing to stop us" refering to Maori spiritual entities during prayers and blessings: "those with confidence are able to do this." His confidence in incorporating traditional Maori spirituality with Anglican tradition comes from "my experience over the years". Mere seemed less comfortable with this and more adamant that she did not do this in worship: "No, we don't go back through old traditions." I wonder if perhaps it is more a male role, related to the realm of whaikorero.

Bishop Richard shared his theology that "Christ is the guardian. He is the Kaitikiaki of all things", including the figures of Maori whakapapa.[24] Mere invites visitors to see this in the physical structure of their church marae, "Who would be the ancestor to the chapel? That would be Jesus. And what is the kaupapa? That

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[19] Margaret Holloway, citing Boerner and Heckhausen, "Understanding Bereavement and Grief", in *Negotiating Death in Contemporary Health and Social Care* (Bristol: Policy Press, 2007): 65–92, 76. ISBN: 9781847420152

[20] Atua refers to a God or spiritual entity. By 'the atua' I mean the immortals of Maori legend.

[21] Hine Nui O Te Po is the goddess of death (the 'long night') in Maori mythology.

[22] Whaikorero are speeches on the marae, typically the preserve of men.

[23] The Church of the Province of New Zealand, *A New Zealand Prayer Book, He Karakia Mihinare o Aotearoa* (Auckland: William Collins, 1989), 477.

[24] The atua are seen by Maori as ancestors, at the heart of genealogy. Mere said that "we didn't see them as gods as such. We see them as as part of our cultural heritage. They were there really to support us across making sure that there was respect for the forests and the waters. It's really a respectful thing, it's not to minimize God."

would be whakapono, tumanako, aroha."[25] This is the context for grief, the setting for tangi and karakia. All is wrapped around by Jesus Christ, and enriched by the figures of Maori cultural identity. My observation is that the spiritual ancestors function for Maori in a similar way to how the Jewish people related to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (e.g. Exodus 3:15), and their women, through the importance of narrative and geneology in the Bible (e.g. Luke 3:23-38).

Mere and Bishop Richard are careful to understand and work within the canons of the Anglican Church, and they appreciate the freedom they have within that. As a "three Tikanga church we can from time to time do things in a cultural way, which gives us the impetus to be able to do whatever we want within the church in a cultural way." This creates a distinctive kawa of Maori Anglican practice, especially around the rituals of death. One feature of this is the centrality of the eucharist. Every tangihanga service would include a eucharist. It is important to Bishop Richard to be inclusive, pan-Maori and ecumenical, but "when we are celebrating at the altar we are Anglican".

Where they feel it is appropriate, Te Pihopatanga incorporates infant baptism in a tangihanga service. This is a practice they have developed over recent years, to baptise grandchildren of the deceased: "they really they love it! They just love it because their granddad was there on the day the kids got christened even though he passed away and was in his coffin." Through my Pakeha eyes I found this quite startling. Pakeha funerals reflect our Western individualism; they are all about the individual who has died. To do a baptism during a funeral would feel to Pakeha to be a diminishing of the respect for that person, a distraction. In a Maori framework, yes, the tangi is about the deceased, but it is very much also about whanau and community and strengthening the bonds of the living in the presence of God.[26] To celebrate the sacrament of baptism there is a unique expression of life in the face of death which I'm sure Jesus would delight in.

The symbols of the Anglican Maori church express this holding together of Maori culture and Christian tradition. Within the whare which is tangibly the body of Christ are carvings and weavings whose metaphor and meanings are simultaneously Maori and Christian; for example the ascending stair pattern tukutuku which holds a particular relevance in a time of death. Other objects in the church, such as the brass candlesticks, are Pakeha in origin but become imbued with Maori meaning. Mere spoke, for instance, of the vases of flowers which decorate the church for a service which express hospitality and honour to God.

> *The thing with the flowers, is to make sure that your table, your communion table is dressed for Christ. I always tell people you need to have everything pristine and think that Christ is standing in front of your altar. So things have got to be cleaned and beautiful, because it's a sign of respect, the same as our grandmothers always got their best crockery out when the*

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[25] Faith, hope and love (1 Corinthians 13:13).

[26] It is also an expression of a Maori belief that our life-force, mauri, is passed on to our children along with our DNA. As Mere put it, "If you look at the person who's died, and then you look at their children and the grandchildren, you can see them, and we tell them [the kids] that. They haven't gone, it's just their earthly body that's gone. But their mauri, their soul, is in their kids."

priest came to come to the house or a visitor came. They always dressed the table for a cup of tea even though they had nothing.

This to me is a beautiful illustration of a seamless flow between Maori cultural values, from a women's perspective, and Christian liturgical practice.

Mere shared about leading her people and challenging her ministry students through a process of critical reflection, consciously considering and applying Maori kawa. This requires understanding it well enough to know its essence and its purpose, rather than simply applying rules handed down, so that one is able to set and adapt protocols that make sense in terms of Maori Christian principles. "It's quite interesting when you ask these questions, because we do things by rote and we never think. If you had to write it down, what did you do? Why?" An example related to tangihanga is the question of where to bless objects associated with a corpse after the burial, such as a korowai. I was fascinated to catch a glimpse how Mere thought through the 'logic' of it: "sometimes I have to think about things that are logic".

A considered application of kawa and church protocol is essential in a changing world. Mere and Bishop Richard spoke about the challenges of social change and how they are seeking to hold the vitality of tradition and respond to changing requests from whanau. Mere said that now "people want weird things" and society's norm is "you can do whatever you want". They noted that families are becoming less likely to call the church immediately after a death: "they don't ring up until after they've got the body out." This creates "a big gap" because the priest is not able to pray the tuku while the body is still at home with family. We discussed the trends in Western society towards more physical distancing from dead bodies. A trend is towards families wanting to be more in control of funerals: "people come and use our church, but they don't want to use our ministers." They are continually refining their own protocols, such as not allowing funeral celebrant to lead a tangi, and considering when and how to welcome non-Anglicans.

Poroporoaki: Priests minister to a wide range of grief.

In addition to processes around a death we discusses several other pastoral care contexts involving grief. I mentioned that I had been reflecting on the grief of ministers at the end of a ministry, and Mere readily identified with this. She has a pastoral responsibility for retired clergy in the Pihopatanga, and she described their experience as being "quite isolating, you don't have the company to talk to God. You're lost." The attitude she sees toward people who retire is "oh well you just get over it", which can disenfranchise their grief. She has established pastoral support systems for retired priests because she is concerned about the negative effects of isolation: "a team goes out and visits to keep them company to let them know that we still love them to live to know they are cared for."

Bishop Richard discussed a fascinating pastoral situation where a man was struggling with ongoing anxiety and suicidality. "What it really turned out to be was that he had a lung transplant but he never got to poroporoaki his lung. It was put into a bottle and is in some lab somewhere." He described this as a deep-seated grief that no one had been able to identify. His pastoral response was to pray with

the man. He sees prayers of blessing as “a release, the ability to release and let it go.” Maori culture has a keen sense of the integrity of the human body, and for part of one’s body to be “in some lab somewhere” is a violation of identity with spiritual implications.

“I feel people”: Priests trust their instincts in grief ministry.

Mere described several instances where her pastoral care for others came from a highly intuitive understanding of another person. She talked about a situation where an elderly woman had seen many specialists and had various diagnoses but continued to be emotionally unwell. Mere said to her: “Look, smack my head if I'm on the wrong track. Did you have a baby taken off you?” The woman was amazed that Mere said this and opened up to her about a forced abortion when she was a teenager. When she asked Mere how she knew, Mere replied, “I don't know. I could feel you.” Mere described her ability to “feel people”. I asked her if she sees it as a gift of Wairua Tapu and she responded, “I do see it as a gift. Sometimes you just have to accept what things are, because if you try to fight them you're in trouble. It is what it is.”

At one level this is a form of empathy, which is prized by grief therapists as a central component of emotional healing. Carl Rogers believed that the connection with a grieving person through empathy and understanding the complex experience of mourning ‘as you might experience it yourself’ makes the caregiver ‘‘a more effective growth enhancer, a more effective therapist’’.[27]

There is, however, a distinctive aspect to this experience of ‘feeling people’, in understanding it as a spiritual gift. Mere’s intuitive depth of understanding of others is not the “introspective inventory” which Peter Capretto claims to be essential for an empathic connection with a grieving person.[28] It is less verbal, more a physical sensation that may not require words, a form of knowing that is experienced as coming from outside rather than arising from introspection. I personally relate to this; a central aspect to my own pastoral practice is a spiritual connection that enriches empathy but comes from a different place. Like Mere I understand it as a gift from God. Perhaps this is more likely to be accepted as ‘normal’ in a Maori than a Pakeha context.

Atawhai:[29] Priests look after themselves.

I heard from Mere and Bishop Richard of the high expectations on Maori clergy: “sometimes it's hard, because there's an expectation; people expect certain things because you're the priest.” For Mere, a vital part of ministry training is coming to terms with the fact that “you can't be everything to everybody”. She teaches that

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[27] Peter Capretto, “Empathy and Silence in Pastoral Care for Traumatic Grief and Loss.” *Journal of Religion and Health,* vol. 54, issue 1 (2015): 339–357, 345. doi:10.1007/s10943-014-9904-5.
[28] ibid, 344.
[29] Atawhai is kindness.

“we're human and we're frail. And the thing is, Jesus knows it. And, we are allowed to make mistakes.” As she negotiates her own role and chooses which tasks to undertake she finds that people assume that she is “bullet proof” and should do everything. She feels that not all roles are appropriate for a woman priest, and starts from the conviction that “Jesus knows all about me. He knows which bits I am not going to do. And he knows that I'm naughty sometimes.” I found this a very mature and refreshing approach to ministry. Especially as a woman I easily get sucked in to trying to meet everyone’s expectations of me and keep everyone happy. I really like Mere’s strong sense of herself, her values and her limitations, very much wrapped around by the grace of God.

I asked Mere and Bishop Richard about the spiritual implications for them personally of working in the presence of death, and how they disengaged from this. Bishop Richard identified the importance of releasing spiritual and emotional ties: “when you Tuku Wairua, when you lift the spirit, you also let go all those things that affect you.” He noted that recovering can require rest: “you know when you need to regurgitate whatever is happening because you just fall asleep. You fall into a deep sleep.” Mere also mentioned the need to debrief with others in the ministry team about what they had done or could do better and what had affected them personally, and to pray together: “mostly what we do is we have some karakia. We do blessing for ourselves. We do that after whatever ceremony.” Karakia is vital for self care:

> *Karakia is the process that ties it all together. because you always start with a karakia. It doesn't matter which part of the priest's role that is. And sometimes it extends out to saying the karakia for the cup of tea, which then finishes your role. So you go down through a process of a role.*

Anglican priests are very conscious of their clothing, and choose the appropriate dress for each occasion, whether that be a ‘dog collar’, casual, or full robes. This creates clarity about role and function from being ‘just Mere’ to the priestly expression through robe and colour and formality. ‘De-roling’ involves taking off the robes, eating and drinking together, so that people can relate to you just as you rather than as the priest.

Managing our own grief is a central task for those in pastoral ministry. Mere and Bishop Richard referred to their own grieving process as their daughter died from cancer. Their reflection six years on is that their Christian faith made a significant difference in enabling them to grieve well, from a place where “it really wasn't that traumatic. We miss her. We know she's not there and we're just thankful.” She pointed out that “I'm not saying that Christians don't suffer, they do” but felt that Christian faith enabled them to be “just thankful for the time we had.”

Bishop Richard and Vicar General Mere hold in themselves the priestly, servant, pastoral and episocopal ministries with a calling to teach and to care, to feed the hungry, wash the dishes and weed the garden. In humility and with authority they are leading their people as they stand in the ground of Maoritanga and point to Jesus Christ. I was honoured to learn from them about the role of Maori priests in Te Pihopatanga o te Waipounamu, especially through times of grief, death and mourning.

To conclude, a prayer:

Ihu Karaiti, Lord of all,
to you be all glory and praise,
from us your people and all the hosts of heaven.
We love you because you came to us before we came to you,
welcomed us and drew us into your arms of tender care.
Thank you for your manaaki.
Give us your heart to care for those you send us to love.

Lord Jesus, you made nga mea katoa,
all things, seen and unseen, things from nga ra o mua
and the freshness of each new day
We name you Kaitiaki of our past, our present and our future,
and all those we carry with us.

Ihu Karaiti, crucified and risen one,
as you were released from the tomb,
so, we pray, release us from Te Ao Pouri,
receive our loss and heal our grief
that we may live in the light and shine your light.

Lord Jesus, you are always interceeding for us to the Father,
teach us how to pray
and inspire our karakia with your Spirit
so that together with you we may minister to the hurting.

Ihu Karaiti, Kaikaranga, you have called us and we thank you.
Raise up your people, we pray,
call forth leaders and ministers of your Gospel
who will honour you and speak your word
and minister to your people in this land.

E te Matua, e te Tama, e te Wairua Tapu,
to you be all glory and praise
from us and all people, ake ake ake. Amine.