

Dr. Jenny Plane Te Paa

Principal of Te Rau Kahikatea

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Dr. Jenny Plane Te Paa is Ahorangi or Principal of Te Rau Kahikatea, a constituent of the College of St. John the Evangelist in Auckland, New Zealand. She was appointed to this position in 1995. Just 41 years old at the time, her appointment broke with Anglican ecclesial and seminary tradition on many fronts. Jenny is the first lay, indigenous, and single woman ever to be appointed as head of an Anglican theological college throughout the Anglican Communion. Her qualifications for the position are exemplary—a lifelong commitment to the Anglican faith, extensive service to local parishes and vestries, a serving member of General Synod since 1994, a teacher and an academic. She has led many women's and community social service projects and is a member of Church based research projects.

Jenny was the first Maori person to complete an academic degree in theology from the University of Auckland, and in 1994 she completed a Masters degree with Honours in Educational Administration. Her thesis traced the historical experience of theological education for Maori students from 1843 to 1990. Revealed in her research work is clear evidence of embedded structural injustice, which militated powerfully against Maori success in theological education. The transformative project she seeks to engage in her current position is to provide and sustain a teaching and learning environment in which all students may flourish and succeed in ways which give honour to their cultural contexts and in turn give ultimate glory to the God of Justice and Love.

Jenny completed her Ph.D. in 2001 at the Graduate Theological Union in Berkeley, California, writing on Race Politics and Theological Education. In 2003, in recognition of her international contribution to justice and peace through theological education, she was awarded an Honorary Doctorate from the Episcopal Divinity School in Cambridge, Massachusetts.

In her “spare time” she serves as a Trustee to Te Whareruruhau o Meri, a very successful indigenous partner Social Services Agency to the Anglican Trust for Women and Children in Auckland; as a member of the Social Justice Commission for the Anglican Church in Aotearoa, New Zealand and Polynesia; as Convenor of the Steering Committee for the International Anglican Peace and Justice Network; as a member of the World Council of Churches Commission on Ecumenical Theological Education and Ministry Formation; and as Moderator of the Working Group responsible for funding faculty development and Ecumenical Theological Educational projects on an international basis.

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In 2001 Jenny was appointed by the Archbishop of Canterbury to serve on the Inter-Anglican Theological Doctrinal Commission for a seven-year term, and in 2003 she was appointed to serve on both the Commission on Theological Education for the Anglican Communion and on the Lambeth Commission. She also belongs to the International Anglican Indigenous Network and the International Anglican Women's Network, and she has written many articles for publication in various theological journals and secular publications throughout the world.

Jenny has regularly taught courses in theological studies in New Zealand and Australia, throughout the South Pacific, and in Canada, the United States, and various parts of Asia. She is a popular, sought-after guest speaker, facilitator, media commentator, and panelist both nationally and internationally on a wide range of political and theological issues, particularly those concerning social justice, indigenous rights, race politics, feminist politics and theological education. In August 2005 she was appointed to the Auckland Cathedral Chapter as Lay Canon in recognition of her contribution to the life and public work of the Chapter.

Te Rarawa, the indigenous tribal people from whom Jenny is descended, have always very proudly claimed and acknowledged her as one of their very own and very special daughters of the land.