



Ngāti Kahungunu Iwi
INCORPORATED

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A legacy of Faith in Aotearoa

Today the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in Aotearoa celebrated the Groundbreaking for the Wellington New Zealand Temple marking a historic milestone for Latter-day Saints in the region and continuing a legacy of faith that began in New Zealand over 170 years ago. Elder Taniela B. Wakolo, a member of the Pacific Area Presidency of the Church, presided at the groundbreaking.

The temple will be constructed on a 3.35-acre site near Okowai Road and Whitford Brown Avenue in the Aotea neighbourhood of Porirua. Once completed, it will be the third temple in New Zealand, joining those in Hamilton and Auckland.

The Church's presence in New Zealand dates back to 1853. The first baptisms were performed in Karori Wellington. Since then, the Church has grown to nearly 120,000 members across the country, with deep roots among both Māori and other communities. The Wellington Temple will serve thousands of members in the lower North Island and South Island, including most of the whānau who reside in the Kahungunu rohe from (Hawke's Bay through to Wairarapa), providing a sacred space for worship, reflection, and spiritual renewal.

"Ngāti Kahungunu has a rich history in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints with many strongholds throughout our rohe in places like Māhia and Nuhaka, Hastings, Bridge Pā, Te Hauke, Dannevirke and Masterton. Many of our parents, grandparents and tipuna sacrificed much to build the Hamilton Temple, Church College and the many chapels around the motu. Having a Temple in Porirua is a huge achievement and will bring the Temple blessings closer to our iwi of the East Coast, Lower North Island and Te Waipounamu" – Bayden Barber, Ngāti Kahungunu Iwi Incorporated Chairman.

A significant portion of the membership of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in New Zealand are of Māori descent. When the Hamilton New Zealand Temple was built, many whānau members migrated to Hamilton to live in 'Temple View' to be closer to the Temple and for their children to attend the Church College of New Zealand.

Ngati Toa Chief Executive, Helmit Modlik, is a devout member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. When asked what the impact of having a Temple built in Porirua, he commented as follows:

"It's impossible to overstate the significance to Latter-day Saints in our iwi, and even many not of our faith, how significant it is to have the Temple built here"

"Like all temples, it will bring peace, beauty, and spiritual blessings to our community".

"The Temple represents a blessing upon the heads of this generation that flows out of the faith and service of our faithful tūpuna to whom we owe so much"

“A blessing of the temple in Porirua is that it will bring our manure home! Only 30-40% of our iwi live at home, with large numbers in Hamilton and further abroad. No doubt the attraction of a temple on our doorstep will bring many home...a great blessing for our iwi” – Helmut Modlik

Temples are central to Latter-day Saint worship, where members participate in sacred ordinances and make covenants with God. For local members, including members who reside as far as the Hawke’s Bay region, the Wellington Temple will reduce the environmental footprint that is produced by the need for long-distance travel and offer greater access to spiritual blessings. The temple will also bring economic and social benefits to the area, including local employment and a beautifully maintained site that enhances the neighbourhood.

The groundbreaking ceremony was attended by Church leaders, local dignitaries, and special guests. Local members who could not attend were invited to a special devotional at the Porirua Stake Centre taking place on Sunday 3 August. Church leader Elder Taniela Wakolo will share inspiring messages and will acknowledge Pioneers of the Region.

In his closing remarks Elder Wakolo gave special mention of the early saints of the Aotearoa and visited Te Ore Ore marae in Kahungunu ki Wairarapa to acknowledge the place where many prophesies of the church in Aotearoa occurred.

“With the temple being built here our whanau will have easy access to the House of the Lord that will bring all the blessings that temple attendance always brings greater peace, faith, kindness, and other fruits of the spirit in the lives of attendees and their whānau” – says Modlik.

The gathering today was very inspiring. Young Kahungunu ki Wairarapa child, Hemi Fermanis, was among the few Primary Children who were able to turn the soil alongside church and community leaders. It was a fantastic day.

Ngati Kahungunu Iwi Incorporated acknowledges all faiths and church ministers, other iwi, government dignitaries and other special guests who attended today’s proceedings but especially the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints officials for a special day.

Ends.

Helmut Karewa Modlik

Helmut Karewa Modlik (Ngāti Toa Rangatira; Tainui waka) is a well-respected Māori leader, economist, and Christian servant whose work spans iwi development, governance, and faith-based community action. In 2019 he became Tumu Whakarae (Chief Executive) of Te Rūnanga o Ngāti Toa Rangatira, where he has pioneered projects grounded in tino rangatiratanga and mātauranga Māori.

Helmut is a member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and is currently serving in his Ward as the Sunday School President.

Bayden Barber

Bayden Barber (Ngāti Kahungunu, Ngāpuhi, Ngāi Tahu) is a respected tribal leader and governance expert hailing from Waimārama in Hawke’s Bay. In 2022 he was elected Chair of Ngāti Kahungunu Iwi Incorporated, one of Aotearoa’s largest iwi organizations, representing over 100 hapū & 90 marae.

Bayden Barber is a member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Bayden and his devoted wife, Myra Barber, serve in their Ward as Gospel Doctrine teachers.