

THE PEACE

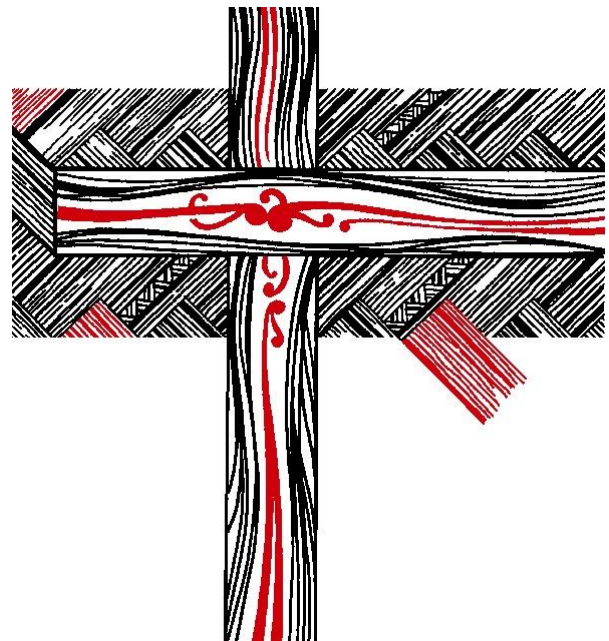
(page 419, 466, 485)

In the early Church, shortly after the time the last New Testament books were written, 'the Peace' took on so great a significance that only those who had been thoroughly prepared and grounded in the faith were permitted to hear these words. Sometimes such preparation took as much as three years – more often it was several months.

These words are not, as I noted earlier, 'Hi, how are the mokopuna?' (though I too slip up from time to time) but 'Kia Ora: God's peace be with you.' These are words that say 'In Christ, hope has come into human experience: let us journey together in that hope.' Not 'Good morning,' but 'Christ-peace beyond all understanding be with you.'

The words form the fulcrum between the Christianised Jewish liturgies, the 'Service of the Word,' and the 'Feast of the Passover'. From the moment the Peace concludes with a hymn or with

the priestly greeting 'Lift up your hearts' (*sursum corda*) the worship changes key. The work is over: let the party begin! The presiding priest's arms will probably slip into the *orans* position I mentioned earlier, for this is our Pentecostal outburst. Hallelujah: these are the mighty saving works of God spoken out in a sacred poem!



Diocese of Dunedin

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Faith Communities reading the Bible, praying, living out the life of Jesus Christ