

## AN ANGLICAN KING

King Charles – and it will take time to get used to that phrase – has already begun to define himself and his reign. Importantly, he began by confirming the constitutional convention whereby the Monarchy remains apolitical and neutral.

But interestingly, the new King has also been at pains to define himself as Anglican, although he is automatically Head of the Church of England. He was of course seeking to reassure those who seek continuity, but he went further, saying that as a proud practicing Anglican, he not only took on those responsibilities as Monarch, but also saw opportunities and freedoms. Among those freedoms, he identified freedom to include other branches of Christendom (a very diverse entity in itself) but also other faiths altogether in a dialogue about faith and life. He spoke of the confidence his own faith afforded as a means to reach out to others who were not Anglicans.

This is critically important if the modern Monarchy is to be an instrument for inclusiveness and unity, in a United Kingdom that is increasingly less united, and which is ever more diverse. The Church of England is still the 'Established Church' but fewer people describe themselves as active Christians – indeed it is sometimes said there are more active Muslims than Christians in modern Britain. And there is diversity of language as well – if you watched the service from Llandaff Cathedral attended by the new King, fully half the service was conducted in the Welsh language.

If there is a lesson here it is perhaps that by being proud Anglicans, and by holding fast to what is good, we can better accommodate the huge diversity we now encounter in our own parish. We'll shortly farewell the first of what may be a line of Pasifika ministers. We are gradually getting to grips with more Te Reo Maori, while holding fast to ancient Latin. Our congregation is beginning to reflect 21<sup>st</sup> century Hamilton.

We can do this because – not despite the fact that – we continue to brand ourselves as Anglican. We have the opportunity to define ourselves in a unique New Zealand way.

So we look forward to the Coronation. It will be held in that most Anglican of spaces, involving the most ancient of rites and traditions, but if the King's words are anything to go by, representatives of many faiths will be there as a gesture of solidarity and unity.

*Richard Swarbrick*