

The Common Good

Taking a Preferential Option for the Poor

A newspaper of the Christchurch Catholic Worker

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Climate and Covid

Are they linked?

Jim Consedine

The Covid-19 pandemic has spread to every corner of the globe. No-one is immune from its sickening effects. It has forced most countries into lockdown at varying times. Some political response has been innovative and courageous, some has been self-serving, a smaller amount dismal and criminally neglectful. Scientists will continue to research and reflect on its causes and projected route into the future.

But is there a deeper meaning to this crisis? Is Covid-19 like 'a stone in our shoe', an irritating but essential reminder to keep us focused on the bigger issue of walking properly with justice and care on Mother Earth, our common home? It might sound sacrilegious, but could it be that the advent of this worldwide pandemic is a blessing in disguise for our under-siege planet?

The evidence is everywhere. Erratic weather patterns, widespread flooding, expanding deserts, raging forest fires, melting polar regions, catastrophic rising sea levels, shrinking grasslands, continued forest devastation, billowing greenhouse emissions, sea-life depletion, and contamination. These, like strands unravelling on a cloak, are all interconnected. The picture is daunting.

As with all crises, this one too may reveal a silver lining. But only if we choose to follow a different path on issues where the stakes couldn't be higher. With the whole world in chaos economically, socially, racially and environmentally to the point where the planet itself is under serious threat, the pandemic is showing us how little control we humans have over

our lives and how vital it is to develop and understand the spiritual side.

'A stone in the shoe?'

Because over decades we haven't listened to previous warnings, what is the Universe saying to humanity at this time through Covid? Is it saying something profound? Has Covid become 'a stone in the shoe' of modern-day life, an uncomfortable reminder that

there are vital issues confronting us and needing solutions which we are ignoring?

If we accept, as do most scientists and world religions including the Catholic Church, that everything is interconnected, that the whole of life forms a cloak of woven fabric with each part dependent on the other, that one strand unravelling can undo all the others, then we have to ask what part do pandemics and some other disasters play in the overall spectrum of events?

Has Covid become 'a stone in the shoe' of modern-day life, an uncomfortable reminder that there are vital issues confronting us and needing solutions which we are ignoring?

The recently published *Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change Report* (IPCCR) and the COP26 global climate summit in Glasgow have issued massive wake-up calls for the human community highlighting the damage we are continuing to do to the planet. Their warnings were stark, graphic, urgent. They came from the best sources – the IPCC Report reflecting the combined work over decades by more



than 200 scientists from 60 countries, and COP26 bringing together the world's political leaders and the frontline groundwork of tens of thousands of climate activists. They all agree we are living on a rapidly deteriorating planet.

The IPCC report shows that even with drastic cuts to emissions, Earth's temperature will keep rising for at least 20 more years bringing more frequent heat waves, tinder dry droughts, increased poverty, flash flooding, tens of millions more climate refugees and frequent social chaos.

It has also shown us sadly that the human family seems incapable of making the drastic changes needed to save the planet from its own demise.

Enter Covid-19

Enter Covid-19, one of the most microscopically tiny living organisms imaginable. Unseen, invisible, it has brought our modern, industrialised, corporatized, militarised world to its knees, almost holding us to ransom, challenging corporations, governments, communities, and individuals to think in new ways.

Who are we?

Members of Te Wairua Maranga Trust, which publishes this paper, have since August 1989 been operating as a community following a Catholic Worker spirituality. We view the Treaty of Waitangi as our nation's founding covenant. We try, however inadequately at times, to live the Sermon on the Mount and its modern implications. We operate three houses of hospitality in Christchurch named after Suzanne Aubert, Joseph Cardijn and Thomas Merton. We offer hospitality to people in need either on a temporary or more permanent basis. We have a continuing outreach to a number of families offering friendship and support. We promote non-violence and a 'small is beautiful' approach to life, practise co-operative work and peace-making, focus on issues of justice, support prison ministry, help create intentional communities, and try to practise voluntary poverty and personalism.

We engage in regular prayer and we also celebrate a liturgy every Wednesday at 6:00 pm at the Suzanne Aubert House, 8A Cotterill St, Addington, (off Poulson St, near Church Square), followed by a shared meal. Anyone is welcome – phone Francis, 338-7105.

We do not seek funding from traditional sources. We hope to receive enough to keep our houses of hospitality open and our various works going. Catholic Worker houses do not issue tax receipts since they are running neither a business nor a church social agency. We invite people to participate personally and unconditionally. Should you wish to make a regular contribution, you may do so through our Te Wairua Maranga Westpac Trust holding account (number 031703-0036346-02). Donations may also be made to Te Wairua Maranga Trust, Box 33-135, Christchurch. *The Common Good*: Editor: Jim Consedine, jim_conse@xtra.co.nz. Layout: Barbara Corcoran burkesspass@gmail.com.

www.catholicworker.org.nz

These include encouragement to work more co-operatively, to scale back projects and expectations, to place our neighbour (including ones we don't know!) at the centre of our thinking, to re-imagine justice in our time, placing the life of the planet at the forefront of our thinking. (What a vital role there could be for the Church to promote this divinely inspired vision!)

Like nothing else, the fragility Covid brings has shone a beacon on the interconnectedness of some of the deadliest sins of our time – expanding poverty rates, the continuing arms race and nuclear weapons build-up, the futility of war, endemic racism, inequality of income, widespread slavery, environmental destruction, discrimination against women and children, and the millions of people migrating, fleeing for their lives from the disasters of war, racism, poverty and climate change.

It has highlighted the deadliness of the values of corporate capitalism, state socialism, war economies, spiritual bankruptcy, rampant consumerism and the stupidity and barrenness of pursuing the 'golden calf' of materialist expansion alone. Yet most countries are still wedded to these goals.

Catholic Worker Spirituality

Building on the Hebrew scriptures, Church social teachings and those of Jesus, Catholic Worker spirituality is helpful in envisaging possible ways forward.

It has always taught a manageable spiritual path of growth accessible to all. It has stressed that Christ is to be found more easily in the poor and marginalised (who bear least responsibility for the current crises), that community-building and personal relationships are central to living well, that war is never a solution, that the non-violence of Jesus is the only way to live, that in economics 'small and local is beautiful'.

It has also taught that enhancing and protecting the land, rivers, air, and seas is crucial to having a future, that the God of Creation surrounds us every day, and that love, compassion, mercy, forgiveness, and social justice sit at the heart of the message of Jesus. What vital news for our times, more relevant now than ever.

This is the new urgent planetary mission – protect Mother Earth, show committed, strong, real gutsy love and compassion, work for social and environmental justice, live 'the good news' of God's love in practical ways. Remember, divine hope can nourish us even in the darkest times.

At this *kairos* moment in the history of the planet – the right, critical, opportune time – we can either seize the opportunity offered or be swept away from it by misplaced self-interest. The future is in our hands as never before.

Editorial 1 Covid and Radical Discipleship

In March 2020, living in the Indian Himalayas and working in development projects across Asia and Africa – mental health in Afghanistan, indigenous identity in Cambodia, livelihood in Nepal, street kids in Kenya – I felt fully engaged in this fabulous, flawed planet. My wife Kaaren was in complexity up to her armpits too, leading an Indian mental health project. Back then, India had declared only a few hundred Covid-19 cases, but the New Zealand government told citizens to get home.

I rang the High Commission in Delhi to ask what to do - a Kiwi family in a town with no known cases. 'Mate, get your arses home,' was their considered reply. Surely not, I thought. But as border closures and flight cancellations cascaded around us, we decided to take that very kiwi suggestion.

Getting our arses home involved bolting through doors that slammed shut around us. We departed Kolkata ten minutes before its midnight closure, transiting Singapore hours before it shut. Only when our friend Jane tossed us car keys in Ōtautahi did the 'Ahh, made it!' feelings flood us. We drove the station wagon she'd packed with groceries to Castle Hill for recuperation and reconstruction. With borders shut, MIQ almost impossible and overseas work off the cards for now, we're slowly finding our feet.

That's our Covid story. We've all got one – a lost job or family separation, a missed funeral or wedding, almost certainly a swab spiralling up a nostril. There's our shared story too: case numbers, updated alert levels and exhortations to keep our 'team of 5 million' safe. Now it's masks, vaccinations, supermarket queues, closed borders – a smaller world for us all, with Auckland doing the heavy lifting.

Radical discipleship

Saving arses, losing jobs, life plans turned over and now hunkering down behind closed borders, staying safe together. How does God see our Covid stories? I think she'd gently say, 'Break the borders of your mind and heart'. Just as she always does.

'Break your tribal borders,' Jesus said in one story about an ostracised Samaritan. 'Unwrite your rules of justice,' in another about hired workers' wages. To men with deadly stones in their hands and murderous texts in their holy (?) hearts ready to kill a woman for being a woman (where was the adulterous man?), he said, 'Scrap your scriptures, burst your gender bubble, she's part of us'.

Befriending a tax collector, he pushed his followers over self-righteous mental fences and forced them back when they fenced children outside

their inner circle. He opened the eyes of their blind minds to love and fragrance when a prostitute washed his feet, and re-drew boundaries as Mary and Martha wrestled with everyday household choices. 'I'll meet you out there beyond duty, in the rich fields of relationships,' he said.

By healing the child of an oppressive occupier he told Israeli nationalists 'I'm God, human first, second and third. Israeli? Not at all.' 'This is bigger than us,' he told his best friend, desperately defending him from arrest by the oppressive religious occupiers of Jewish minds. Then, to take Pilate out beyond his rules and political motives and convenient (aka selfish) decisions, he just stood before him, simple and human. Scared by the truth he saw, Pilate the man retreated to role and became Pontius Pilate, Roman Governor, washing his hands, wringing his soul dry and pronouncing sentence.

Fully human, unfettered by nationality, gender, geography, age, or job – Jesus accepted. A cock announced to the world how hard that is. Peter wept. 'Yes mate!' Jesus said to a man, dying in agony beside him, 'I'll see you on the other side.'

Back to us, locked inside a border, in our little Covid stories about me and my and our own. 'Go beyond yourselves. Join a team of 8 billion,' says God, inviting us into the big messy world, unbounded by race, gender, religion or nationality. Free of 'me' and 'my' and that limited 'we' which translates as 'me and those who affect me.' It's much freer out where God calls us – and more complex.

Breaking the barriers

God breaks the physical and mental borders Covid corrals us into. This month Her invitation to join a team of 8 billion might mean advocating for Afghan refugees or contributing to carbon cuts on personal, family, community, or all-of-Aotearoa scales. (Clean green NZ is a top greenhouse gas emitter!). Next month, there'll be further invitations to climate change and other issues – like Afghanistan – bigger than our borders, smaller than our responsibilities. The month after that too.

That's the whispered invitation 'Be free. Go beyond little borders and selfishly small bubbles into the big field. Become fully human. Let climate change, injustice anywhere, planetary problems torture you. I'll see you on the other side.'

—*Jeph Mathias is a NZ-born doctor who has worked in several countries including, most recently, India, and is currently working in Christchurch. Jeph is part of the Christchurch CW.*

Editorial 2 To Vax or Not to Vax

I have a social and a personal interest in getting our country through this Covid crisis – with my own immune system totally compromised by a kidney transplant. I could be among the first infected if Covid broke out in Christchurch and I came into contact with it. I had my two jabs months ago with no adverse effects and await a top-up. Meanwhile, I am careful.

But it is the wellbeing of the community that really drives me. How is getting vaccinated not an act of generosity, solidarity and justice towards one's neighbour and the wider community? How is it not enhancing the common good? Surely, it is enflashing the command 'love God and love your neighbour' that sits at the heart of our Gospel?

Along with our bishops, Pope Francis has spoken dozens of times these past two years, urging people to vaccinate. 'Vaccination is an act of love, a simple but profound way of care for one another'. He has challenged those who refuse, on more than one occasion.

The 'personalism' taught as part of Catholic Worker spirituality, is intimately tied to promoting and protecting **the common good** within the context of CW's Aims and Means (*Catholic Worker*, May 2021), which are visionary and global in outreach.

Individual rights flow from within community and are never a 'stand-alone' absolute. Without social responsibility, they are nonsense. They represent the barren philosophy promoted by Trump supporters who attacked the US Capitol on Epiphany Day 2021. These racist fundamentalists have hijacked the anti-vax movement and rewritten the narrative in the US, dominating social media outlets.

Genuine sceptics of vaccination for reasons including anxiety and other mental health issues have been lumped into the anti-big government and anti-progress lobby. Many have become convinced through the Internet that Covid is all part of a nefarious worldwide conspiracy, led by the WHO, to enslave people.

The Covid Delta variant is so infectious and can

infect through breath alone. It seems one person from Sydney flew over and brought the disease into Auckland. The result we all know – widespread infection, a total lockdown, schools closed, jobs lost, billions of dollars of business down the drain, medical services stretched to the limits, charities overrun with need for basic food supplies. Poverty levels are climbing and will get worse.

Happily, all our people at the CW in Christchurch have been vaccinated and will be able to mix and socialise without fear into the future, knowing that by being vaxxed they are lessening the possibility of infecting the vulnerable people they work with. Along with more than 6500 doctors who volunteered nationwide, I spent considerable time on Super-Vax Saturday in mid-October, visiting people on our CW outreach list to encourage them to get vaccinated. They live in parts of the city with few resources and poor transport.

I had mixed success: Several I found indeed were already vaccinated. In addition, I took one man down to the clinic. He was vaccinated in less than an hour. Three families I was unable to convince. 'It's my right to say no', 'I don't feel like it', 'I'm not ready,' 'I read on the Internet we shouldn't,' and 'I oppose all vaccines on principle' were the most common responses.

Covid is real enough. One of my cousins had Covid and, thankfully, has recovered. An elderly friend died in the UK. And sadly, one of our valued CW regulars in Christchurch, Bishop John Osmer, died of Covid in June.

It seems the unvaxxed will inevitably become more and more isolated in their vax-free bubbles. As the medical experts warn, 'the unvaccinated will be the ones this vicious deadly virus will seek out first.' So it is proving. At the end of October, 93% of Covid patients in Auckland Hospital were unvaccinated.

Is that not a wake-up call?

—Jim Consedine

CW Website

Leading articles from the first 24 years of
The Common Good
Alternative funerals
Restorative Justice
Other theological issues
www.catholicworker.org.nz

FUNERAL CHOICE

A Catholic Worker Project
Cheaper alternatives to consumer funerals
www.funeralchoice.co.nz

Editorial 3 Orca's Not AUKUS

If Australian politicians thought they'd look heroic and people would be pleased, they are getting a rude shock. There is outrage in many quarters over the new defence deal with the US and UK, though little of it is being reported in the corporate media.

Ocean life not death machines. Stop spending our money on weapons. Fund climate repair. These were among the many furious headlines on both sides of the Tasman which greeted the announcement on September 15 2021 that Australia, United Kingdom and the United States were forming a [trilateral security partnership](#), AUKUS.

The Guardian newspaper (UK) reports that it is aimed at confronting [China](#), and helps Australia to build nuclear-powered submarines. Angriest reaction came from France who formerly had a \$66 billion contract with Australia to build diesel-electric powered submarines with them. This has now been ripped up! So much for trusting traditional allies. . New Zealand and Canada were notably absent from this new arrangement, made up of three fifths of the Five Eyes spy partnership.

Our longstanding and hard-won nuclear-free policy, which was passed into law in 1987, means that Australian submarines developed under the deal are banned from New Zealand waters. As former Green MP and social justice activist, Keith Locke, points out New Zealand was a driving force behind the 1985 South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone Treaty, which envisaged a peaceful Pacific, free of nuclear weapons and nuclear pollution. 'It is not in the spirit of the Treaty to have nuclear-powered (and likely nuclear-armed) submarines buzzing around our region,' he says.

And it's in no-one's interests to get dragged into a new war with China which is being promoted by the United States 'pivot to Asia policy', prophesied by John Pilger in his 2016 documentary 'The Coming War with China' (available online.)

Despite all this, the talk is of 'interoperability' with the US military which is behind New Zealand spending \$2.3 billion on four American P8 Poseidon surveillance planes, optimised to detect and kill enemy [read Chinese] submarines. The frigate *Te Kaha* and the tanker *Aotearoa* have already joined the British aircraft carrier *HMS Queen Elizabeth* and Australian warships for 5-Power war games in the South China Sea.

NZ Foreign Minister Nanaia Mahuta may talk about a 'mature' relationship with China, but respect and understanding is also paramount both ways, as is recognition of human rights abuses wherever they occur.

Anti-Asian sentiment in NZ is ramping up. An increase in racism experienced by Asian people here prompted RNZ

commentator and scientist Steph Tan to organise a peaceful march in Auckland against anti-Asian hate, in response to the Atlanta shooting earlier this year.

Meanwhile, Thomas Nash from the NZ Alternative, says we should forge closer relationships with other anti-nuclear powers, increase our diplomatic capacity for conflict prevention and focus our energy on conflict solution and the urgent transition we need on energy, food and transport. 'Instead of focusing our diplomatic and security efforts on the Five Eyes spy network, we should strengthen our relationships in Asean countries, in Latin America and, of course, in our neighbouring nuclear-free Pacific Islands,' he says.

The Catholic Worker concurs. Nuclear subs won't protect our seas. We need orcas in them, not AUKUS!

Liz Remmerswaal, a Quaker, is national co-ordinator of World Beyond War, Aotearoa, NZ, and lives by a wild and stony beach in Haumoana, Hawkes Bay, with her empty nest and husband, Ton.



Alberto Beltrán

Around the Traps

Congratulations to CW Kathleen Gallagher on the launch of her new documentary at the NZ International Film Festival in late October, *Rohe Koreporepo – The Swamp The Sacred Place*. It played to a large crowd and was warmly received. Kathleen goes from strength to strength with her filmmaking. Well done, Kathleen!

NZ Welfare State – 175 000 jobs saved – In 2020 during the first national Covid-19 lockdown, the NZ Government paid out \$14 billion in subsidies, equivalent to 4 percent of GDP or 40 percent of social security spending. At its peak, wage subsidies were supporting 1.66 million workers, as much as 75 percent of the workforce. The wage subsidy scheme saved 175 000 jobs during this time.

The Press, 23 Sept 2021

Two-thirds of monitored rivers in NZ polluted – They have enough faecal bacteria to make people sick, and the situation is not improving new data shows. It shows rivers in rural and pasture dominated areas typically had poorer quality water, while pristine rivers were usually surrounded by native bush. The results come from 1500 river-testing sites across the country. *The Press*, 29 September 2021

Death of Fr Frank Kelly – It is with sadness we record the death in September of Fr Frank Kelly, formerly a parish priest for many years in the Christchurch diocese, who has died aged 80. Frank was a scripture scholar with a heart for justice and a great love of the poor. He worked in prison ministry in his later years and was a great promoter of *The Common Good*, distributing up to 100 copies per edition in his various parishes. He also donated vegetables and food from farms in his area to the CW. May he rest in peace.

Wealthy Kiwis live 10 years longer – It will be 100 years before Maori life expectancy catches up with Pakeha, while the wealthiest 10 percent of New Zealanders can expect to live a decade longer than the poorest 10 percent. Widening social and economic gaps were driving the nation's health inequalities. Current trends show the gap won't be closed for a century. *The Press*, 29 Sept 2021

Giant Hypocrisy – Despite pledges to cut greenhouse gas emissions, the G20 countries have provided US\$3 trillion in subsidies to fossil fuel companies since signing the Paris Agreement in 2015.

Damian Carrington, *The Guardian*

The Great Lie – When the Taliban recently took control of Afghanistan the American media began lamenting this fact, saying that American troops were

sent to Afghanistan to free the people from oppression and in getting revenge for the damage done to the Trade Centre and the people who died as a result. What the news people fail to mention is that the real reason for our invasion of Afghanistan was not our desire to stop the oppression and to help the Afghans regain their human rights. The real reason was our desire to force the people to allow us to build an oil pipeline through the country and to get to other valuable resources in the country.

The top five military contractors' profits grew to US\$119 billion from 2000 to 2020 (*Intercept*). Osama bin Laden and others who were responsible for the attack on the Trade Centre did not come from Iraq or Afghanistan. They came from Saudi Arabia. Our attack on Afghanistan was simply an invasion to get something for ourselves. It was blood for oil. We spent over a trillion dollars doing this. We killed thousands of Afghans and thousands of our young people were killed and others still suffer today from injuries, both physical and mental, as a result of the invasion. When will we ever learn?

—Don Timmerman, *Casa Cry*, August 2021

Cry of the earth, cry of the poor – Pope Francis and two other Christian faith leaders — Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew of Constantinople, who has long spoken out on environmental issues, and Justin Welby, Anglican Archbishop of Canterbury — called on 'everyone, whatever their belief or worldview, to endeavour to listen to the cry of the earth and of people who are poor, examining their behaviour and pledging meaningful sacrifices for the sake of the earth which God has given us.'

In the face of the continuing coronavirus pandemic and the weather disasters associated with climate change, they issued a first-ever joint message for the Season of Creation, urging the world's people to 'choose life,' that future generations may also live.

—NCR, 12 September 2021

High above Otago Harbour is a prominent monument to its fallen sons who went to fight in a pointless war on the other side of the world. Their parents and descendants picked a great spot to keep their sacrifice clearly in view. Not by accident, another location in direct view of the soldiers' monument has recently been unveiled in downtown Dunedin as Aotearoa New Zealand's first national memorial to those who suffered and sacrificed as Conscientious Objectors in wartime, the Archibald Baxter Peace Garden.

Archibald Baxter is perhaps the best known of the Conscientious Objectors of WWI, and his book *We*

Shall Not Cease details the torture and sacrifice made by him and his contemporaries. Baxter, from Dunedin, is remembered in this National Memorial Peace Garden which was opened by the Deputy Prime Minister Grant Robertson at the end of October.

The sculpture in the garden symbolises the deliberately cruel 'Field Punishment Number 1' that exposed Conscientious Objectors to potential gunfire and explosion, as punishment for refusal to bear arms, or even to wear the uniform. After this cruel treatment, soldiers who removed Baxter from what they referred to as 'Crucifixion', treated Baxter with care and deliberate gentleness to the real annoyance of the officers present! The Deputy Prime Minister offered a personal apology for this state-sponsored torture.

The two memorials stand in line of sight of one another, effectively bearing witness to mutual experience of sacrifice. Dunedin was not without objection to this peace garden of memory, and other potential sites previously had been discarded. Prior to

this occasion, the mayor of Dunedin was sent a white feather for his involvement in the establishment of this memorial. He reports that he used the envelope to write his notes for his speech.

Many of the speakers also referenced the sacrifices of Parihaka, where the tangata whenua exercised their conscientious objection to military colonialism. The slavery endured by the Parihaka prisoners is evident still in harbour pathways and protection either side of the harbour between these two monuments. This recognition of the futility, immorality, and waste of war was well-supported by citizens of the city. Unfortunately, there was no formal witnessing to this by any ecclesiastical organisation, though some ministers were present.

The garden itself is set in a steep and difficult little situation that rightly reflects the decisions made by Baxter and others that 'though they may bend, they did not break'. You can visit it at the intersection of George and Albany Streets.

—John D Corcoran

Take Action – CW Financial Appeal

At the Catholic Worker, we have to adapt to deteriorating banking conditions along with the rest of the world. This means that our annual appeal can no longer be responded to by cheque. Our yearly CW budget is \$25 000, of which about \$10 000 has usually come from the November appeal, the rest from our back pockets.

● In order to remain financially viable, we urgently need to supplement what was our annual November leaflet appeal with many more automatic payments. This is largely painless but could guarantee our financial security. This can be done by a weekly, monthly, or annual contribution to our current Westpac account:

Wairua Maranga Trust – 03 1703 0036346 -02.

● **One possibility** is to publish *The Common Good* exclusively online with no hard copies. We currently provide 3500 hard print copies which are sent free-of-charge to individuals and around most NZ parishes and many places overseas.

● **A second option** is to reduce the number of hard copies and expand our current electronic online reception by encouraging more people to opt for an



electronic copy by notifying our subscriptions manager Maree Williamson to that effect (address below).

● **Our third option** (which we prefer) is to keep both online and the hard copy editions going. Long-term this is looking more and more difficult, as postage costs have skyrocketed these past few years making postage our most expensive single item.

● **A final option** is to say it is all too difficult and close *The Common Good* down. This would be heartbreaking for us after

nearly 100 editions over 25 years (this is Issue 99) but that possibility has to be seriously considered.

We are seeking your feedback and your support. Please choose an option and take action to enable us to continue in a viable fashion for the next few years.

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Kairos Palestine

Call to The Holy See (Vatican), The World Council of Churches and Church Leaders Worldwide for Solidarity and Action

Thus says the Lord: Act with justice and righteousness and deliver from the hand of the oppressor anyone who has been robbed. Jeremiah 22:3

The Christian Palestinian Initiative, Kairos Palestine, urges the Christian community worldwide to act justly and speak the truth about Israel's oppressive policies and practices, especially regarding violent attacks on Palestinians in Jerusalem and Israel's deadly assault on the people of Gaza.

The latest cycle of violence began after Israeli security forces denied access to the Damascus Gate Plaza, a popular gathering place for Muslims breaking their daily fast, and Israel's subsequent violation of the status quo when security forces and settlers attacked fasting worshipers on the Al-Aqsa Mosque compound, the third holiest site for Muslims, allowing extremist Jewish groups to gather provocatively to celebrate the 1967 capture of East Jerusalem.

At the same time, Israel's courts again ruled in favour of radical settler groups, threatening some 500 Palestinian residents of Jerusalem with forced displacement from the homes they have lived in for decades. The bias of the Israeli courts and their discrimination against Palestinians in favour of Jewish settlers is part of a larger plan to ethnically cleanse Palestinians and non-Jews from Jerusalem. Kairos Palestine is also actively monitoring the status of church properties near Jaffa Gate and impending forced displacements in the neighbourhoods of Sheik Jarrah and Silwan.

Kairos Palestine, the most extensive Palestinian Christian ecumenical non-violent movement, is based on Kairos Palestine's document: *A Moment of Truth*, launched in 2009, affirming that the Palestinian Christians are part and parcel of the Palestinian nation, calling for peace to end all suffering in the Holy Land by labouring for justice, hope and love, embraced by the Christian community, signed by all historically recognized Palestinian Christian organizations, and endorsed by the Heads of Churches in Jerusalem.

We insist that the latest violence be seen in its broader context. Israel's decades-long, brutal occupation of Palestinians has been shaped by a growing system of punitive racist policies, laws and practices. We don't ask you to take our word for this.

Civil society groups such as Human Rights Watch and the highly respected Israeli human rights organization B'tselem have recently declared that Israel is an apartheid state.

As much as one might question the response from Gaza military factions – and though we do not condone any act of violence and we mourn the death of every life – we must interpret these acts in their context. Gaza has been under Israeli siege for more than 14 years. It is time to lift this siege and give the people of Gaza the opportunity to live as other human beings. Furthermore, there is no justification for the outrageously disproportionate Israeli response that has left many dead, including children and hundreds of injured. Ground incursion into Gaza on the part of Israel's defence forces will lead to even more death and the total destruction of civilian buildings, streets and other infrastructure.

We therefore call on the global Church and the international community to call things by their names, to speak truth to power, and to side with the oppressed. Shallow diplomacy serves only to empower the oppressors. Given such violent and severe escalations, empty words of condemnation are not enough. We do not need calls for calm and toothless church statements that 'call for peace.'

This is yet another *Kairos* moment calling people of faith to take prophetic actions.

Kairos Palestine affirms its position that Jerusalem is a sacred city to all the monotheistic religions, and that everyone must enjoy the freedom to worship. We also affirm our position regarding our Israeli neighbours: 'Our future and their future are one. Either the cycle of violence that destroys both of us or peace that will benefit both. We call on Israel to give up its injustice towards us, not to twist the truth of reality of the occupation by pretending that it is a battle against terrorism. The roots of 'terrorism' are in the human injustice committed and in the evil of the occupation.'

Kairos Palestine urgently calls upon the Holy See, the World Council of Churches, the ecumenical movement and all churches to demand that every country meet its responsibility to put pressure on Israel to immediately stop the deadly air strikes and ground attacks against civilians in Gaza and to stop its ethnic cleansing policies that target Jerusalemites.

Kairos Palestine www.kairopalestine.ps

NZ child poverty levels appalling

Andrew Becroft

Aotearoa New Zealand is a great place to be a child if you are rich, white and able-bodied. The reality for at least 125,000 children, however, includes abuse, neglect, poverty and poor health and education outcomes.

Over the last 30 years New Zealand has failed to prioritise children. Twenty percent live in and out of poverty, and 10 per cent are really doing it tough.

The two latter groups are disproportionately populated by Māori, Pasifika and disabled children. The width and depth of the inequities in child wellbeing is shocking.

The wellbeing of at least 125 000 children is significantly compromised by serious material hardship. For this reason and because this situation is totally avoidable, we belong on an international roll of shame.

The Government needs to commit \$2 billion a year over the next 10 years to improve outcomes for children. This would enable measures like lifting core benefit rates, introducing rent controls, increasing social housing and making adequate mental health services accessible to all youth.

Statistics on rheumatic fever are grim. The illness affects Māori and Pasifika children disproportionately it's a scandal that this entirely preventable disease even exists in New Zealand.

Youth suicide is one of the highest reported rates in the world, with the rate for Māori youth 2.1 times

that for non-Māori youth; abuse and neglect with 69 per cent of children in State care identify as Māori; bullying is one of the highest rates of school bullying internationally and racism.

There is a toxic stress of poverty, inconsistent early intervention and the lethal cocktail of the enduring legacy of colonisation and modern-day racism for the poor outcomes. One of the most pressing issues for youth is mental health. Our children and youth – especially girls and gender minorities – are at high risk of negative mental health effects from Covid-19. Children and young people are often invisible despite the grim statistics.

These groups are not well represented in *He Ara Oranga*, the report from the government inquiry into mental health. Nor are they represented in the Covid-19 response. Aotearoa-New Zealand is behind on diagnosing and supporting neuro-developmental issues. History will judge us harshly. For some reason, New Zealand has been asleep at the wheel.

Despite these alarming statistics, we have made terrific progress over the last five years, and the Government's goal to halve child poverty in 10 years is still very attainable.

Judge Andrew Becroft, a prophetic advocate for children, is retiring as Children's Commissioner after a 5-year term.

Letters

Dear Joseph, my son, you have asked me to write about the war in Afghanistan and Australia's role in it.

Two weeks ago, I had a sick feeling as I read about a memorial celebration of the Battle of Long Tan in our local paper. What was the battle of Long Tan? It was a battle in Vietnam where an invading force of Australian soldiers killed about 500 Vietnamese for the US Empire. In this battle 17 Australians died.

In military terms it was a great victory. In human terms it was part of the insane madness called war. Only the insanity of mindless patriotism could paint it in any other light. It reminded me of the modern definition of war—"Where we send our youth to kill people who are not our enemies for people who are not our friends."

But the sick feeling comes because I know the 500

poor people we killed on that day in Vietnam, will not be remembered or mourned. Perhaps if we had mourned and repented our war crime of supporting the US in the murder of over two million Vietnamese during the Vietnam War, we may not have so readily joined them in their insane wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Afghanistan

Many are now asking about the Afghanistan war. The undeniable fact is that the US helped establish the Taliban in the 1980's, funding training camps and Madrasas in Pakistan to terrorise the Russians occupying Afghanistan. Osama Bin Laden himself was a recipient of US help when he was a "good" terrorist fighting the "evil" Russians. Similarly, the US had no problems with Saddam Hussein when he was gassing their other enemy, the Iranians, in the same decade. Hell, the US even supplied the gas

chemicals! It was only when Saddam invaded the wrong country, Kuwait instead of Iran, that Iraq became the enemy.

In 1991 the country was “bombed back into the stone age”, as a US general famously threatened. After electricity, sewerage and water plants were all bombed and put out of commission, typhoid and other disease spread. Five years later the prestigious international medical journal *The Lancet* did a study that concluded there were 600,000 additional deaths because of these sanctions.

Australia played an integral part in enforcing these deadly sanctions. The US was so happy with us they placed out Navy in charge of the Naval blockade in the later part of the 1990s.

After September 11, the US invaded Afghanistan seeking revenge. Not content with bloodshed there, the US moved onto Iraq, fabricating charges of Iraqi possession weapons of mass destruction, and collusion with Al Qaeda. In 2003, once again Australia became a willing participant sending our SAS in to take an airfield before any other fighting even began. (Later the destruction of Libya, and Syria would come, and the devastation in Yemen. Sadly, we have helped in all of these ventures.)

Looking to the future

But could things change now in 2021? Sadly, I do not see much sign of it. We enjoy a power and privilege as an outpost of the US empire. We fight their wars to make sure this continues.

The sad fact is we are told by the media when to laugh and when to cry. For some reason we are now allowed to cry for the poor Afghan people, after we are no longer there “helping” them. Joseph, I hope this helps you understand.

Dad

Jim Dowling is married to Anne Rampa and the father of seven. He has been a Catholic Worker and peace activist in Queensland for more than 40 years.

Pukekaraka Mission House
Otaki Beach 5512

Dear Jim,

Manaakitia a Papatūānuku tō tātou kāinga – Care for Earth, our common home. It’s a divine imperative.

The UN Intergovernmental Panel on climate change has released its latest report. It is a weighty document at nearly 4000 pages and the science is described as robust. It has been tagged ‘code red’

because human activity is changing our climate in unprecedented ways. A key word for the whole report, is ‘urgency’. We have this current decade to act and to do so decisively. There can be no new coal, gas or oil developments and existing fossil fuel extraction has to be phased out with 2030 as a key date for at least, a 50% reduction in emissions.

The main findings of the report are the scale and pace of change to our climate system has no precedent. Human activity is changing the climate system in the form of ice sheet melt, ocean acidification, shifts in rainfall zones and rising sea levels. We are accelerating climate change, and the impacts are being felt in heat waves, fires, heavy rainfall events and prolonged droughts. Many of these impacts are worsening due to ‘baked in’ effects. Natural systems have not been able to cope with the rate of change we have inflicted on them and contain an ongoing momentum. Catastrophic events will increase for at least the next two decades, even as we make significant changes now.

This IPCC Report is sobering and serious. It is a final challenge to all life on earth and to all religious institutions. We do have time to make the changes being asked of us. We can take fresh encouragement at initiatives underway at different levels of church life and the newly named ‘Laudato Si Movement’. This Movement has the vision, goals and action plans that will guide and encourage us towards the ecological conversion of all 1.3 billion Catholics in the world.

Best wishes,

Peter Healy sm

Brisbane
31 October 2021

Greetings CW friends,

My old friend Max Stahl, who was hospitalised in Brisbane with throat cancer, has died.

Max’s footage of the 1991 Indonesian military massacre in the Santa Cruz cemetery, Dill/Timor Leste, did much to eventually rid this occupied land of the forces of death. Max hid the footage before being detained by the military, then went back and retrieved it and with the help of others got it out to the world, where it received worldwide publication, highlighting Indonesian brutality.

I met Max in the mid-90’s in England during this resistance & solidarity with the people of Timor Leste. We had a resistance community with East

Timorese exiles running out of Liverpool targeting British Aerospace.

Like the My Lai massacre and the WikiLeaks published Collateral Murder in Baghdad, the 1991 massacre wasn't unusual for the victims. What was unusual with all these incidents was the footage got out to the heartland of the imperial perpetrators.

Friday, November 12th, 2021 was the 30th anniversary of the Santa Cruz cemetery massacre.

In solidarity, Max Stahl, Presente!

Cíaron O'Reilly

Christchurch
25 September 2021

Dear Editor,

There is no comparison between Apartheid South Africa and Israel, according to lobby group, The Protection of Zion (full page advertisement, *The Press* 18 Sept).

Are they hoping the world has forgotten what happened earlier this year? Armed right-wing religious zealots were allowed to parade around one of Islam's holiest sites, in East Jerusalem, during Ramadan, chanting 'Death to Arabs'. Israeli forces in full military gear invaded the Mosque, attacking

worshippers. More East Jerusalem Palestinians were expelled from their neighbourhoods, accelerating the campaign to 'Judaize' all of Jerusalem.

These provocations led, as intended, to a response from Hamas. Cf *The Common Good*, No 97. Netanyahu then retaliated with a massive show of force on Gaza. There have been bombing raids on Gaza before but the one in May, during a pandemic, was especially vicious. Israeli forces deliberately targeted an international media centre, hospitals, roads to hospitals, residential areas, the Covid19 testing centre.

Dr Alice Rothchild of Jewish Voice for Peace accuses Israel of conducting a Super Spreader Assault on Gaza. This is not South African-style apartheid! These actions are those of a much crueller regime.

The Israeli Embassy here should be closed. New Zealanders should challenge our government to demand that the siege on Gaza be lifted NOW. Our commitment to humanity is being tested.

Yours faithfully,

Lois Griffiths

Ireland
6 November 2021

Dear CW Friends,

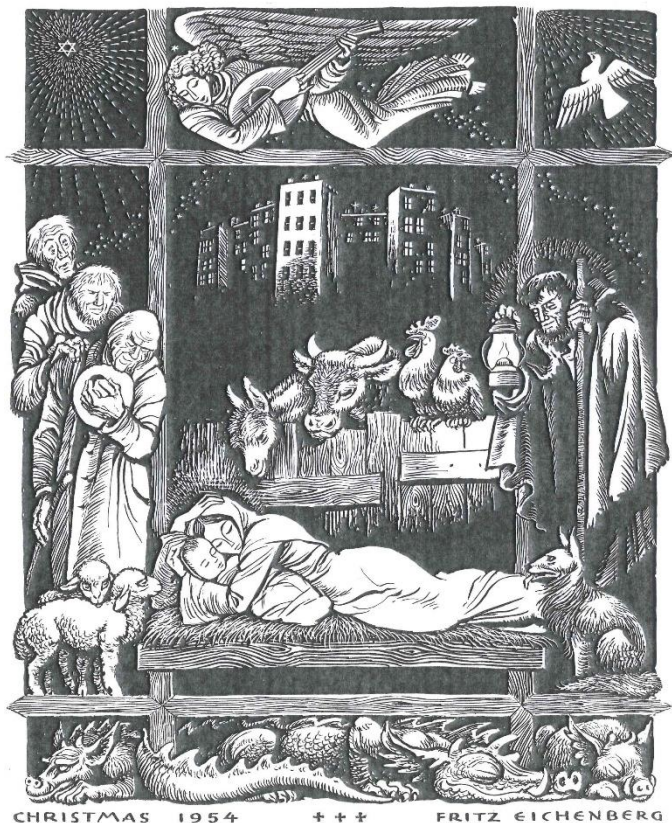
Bob Aroian is distributing a large number of materials of my work, written, audio and video free of charge. If you are interested in Gospel nonviolence, please send your requests to his email address: raroian@charter.net

If you can make use of them, multiple copies are fine. These include multi-CD sets (and some DVD sets) of Behold the Lamb; Kingdom of the Lamb; Boldly Like God, Go Against the Swords; Conversation; Refusal; Booties; Stations; Rosary DVD (and some Rosary CDs), the great George Zabelka (The Reluctant Prophet), and a number of others. He will be pleased to send them out free of charge while he still has them in stock.

God bless,

Emmanuel Charles McCarthy

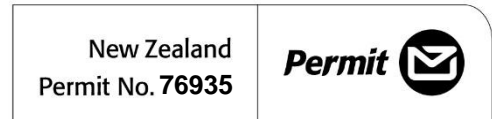
www.emmanuelcharlesmccarthy.org Emmanuel Charles McCarthy is an internationally known prophet of non-violence. A Melkite Greek Catholic priest, (in communion with Rome), he has had a special ministry promoting the non-violence of Jesus and non-violence as the Christian Way.



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The Common Good

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 New Zealand



Jesus, while never a Christian, was a social justice radical revolutionary Palestinian devout Jew, who rose up against the corrupt Temple authorities and challenged their job security by teaching the people they did not need to pay the priests for ritual bath nor sacrifice livestock to be OK with God, for God loved them just as they were.

– Don Timmerman