

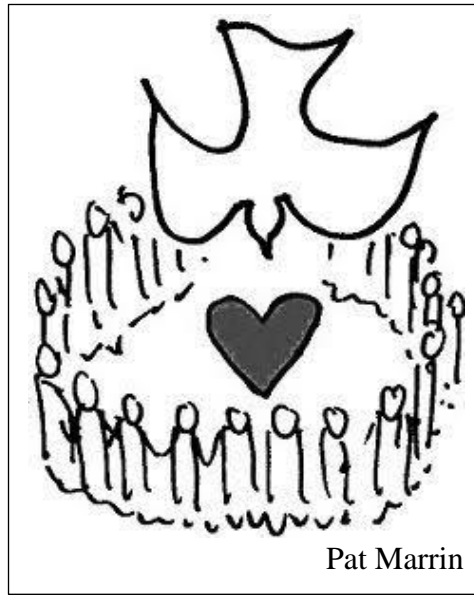
## War Again - will we ever learn?

Claire Schaeffer-Duffy

Several of us were on a fast for peace when the US and its 'coalition of the willing' launched the first Gulf War. It was January 16, 1991. The downstairs kitchen was cold. Wobbly from days of only consuming soup and coffee, we sat in front of the television, staring numbly at military footage of planes dropping bombs. In the preceding weeks, we had organized teach-ins, rallies, and marches in opposition to a war we hoped would never come. All that frenzied energy gave way to feelings of dread the night the war began. In the years that followed, UN-imposed sanctions broke Iraq's impressive health care system and caused the death of a half million Iraqi children.

I first learned of US plans to invade Afghanistan on a glorious day in October. The children and I were en route to pick apples, the trees bordering the road aflame with colour, when I heard President George W. Bush on the car radio declare war was afoot. A year later, we marched in New York and Washington, DC to oppose the impending US invasion of Iraq, a war Pope John Paul II condemned, not once, but 53 times. Millions of people around the world took to the streets in protest. For a few months, we felt giddy at the prospect that this global outpouring might push back the diabolical violence of war. Then came the tanks, some bearing Marines from New England, barrelling north across the Iraqi desert. Then came Shock and Awe, the staggering bombardment of Baghdad, one of the world's most ancient cities.

Now comes war again, 'Illegal, immoral, and completely unnecessary,' one UN official said of Russia's invasion of Ukraine. The summary could well apply to the many wars of this century. Afghanistan, Iraq, Ethiopia, Libya, Sudan, Syria, Yemen, the list goes on. The plot line here is depressingly familiar. There are the posturing, the



Pat Marrin

lies, and ominous military build-up, the last-ditch negotiations, the fervent prayers for peace, the collective dread when bombs begin to fall, followed by a breathless side-taking and wilful naivete about the reality of war, its barbarism, its addictive killing energy, its capacity to reduce human beings, who are made in the image of God, to quivering rats that scuttle into subway tunnels for safety.

### Church response

Our knowledge of God's indivisible love is never large enough for the occasion. In our churches, we pray for the Ukrainians, but rarely for the Russians, and certainly not for Vladimir Putin. The recipient of Western opprobrium, he embodies our own deep-seated faith in violence. Violence to right the wrongs of history. Violence to install or defend democracy, violence for political power, natural resources, or revenge. And most insidious of all, violence for profit. (2022 may have started miserably for the people of Eastern Europe, but it's proving to be a banner year for the weapons makers. Stocks for Raytheon Technologies, to name one, are up 18%.)

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***In our churches, we do not beg forgiveness for our faith in this bloodletting, our acquiescence to the systems that ensure its persistence—the war economy, extractive capitalism, tribalistic religion. We are not taught how to identify these sins and are clueless about the harm they cause.***

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In our churches, we do not beg forgiveness for our faith in this bloodletting, our acquiescence to the systems that ensure its persistence—the war economy, extractive capitalism, tribalistic religion. We are not taught how to identify these sins and are



clueless about the harm they cause. The West's cries of 'war crimes' in response to Russia's horrific attacks on Ukrainian hospitals, residences, and civilians fleeing in the street are hard to stomach for those who remember the US targeting of water purification plants in Basra, Iraq, the decimation of Fallujah, the Iraqi father who ground his forehead in the dust in grief after a US missile struck the Ameriyah bomb shelter, incinerating his entire family and hundreds of others.

Of all the statements denouncing Russia's war on Ukraine, the one Catholic Worker Mark Colville wrote on behalf of the Kings Bay Seven Plowshares is the most thorough. 'Killing indiscriminately with impunity; environmental destruction without boundary or responsibility; the plunging of millions into refugee status; the flouting of law, human rights, international cooperation and the authority of the

United Nations—these are the common threads that tie together Iraq, Afghanistan, and now Ukraine,' Mark writes. These are the 'constitutive elements,' he goes on, of the 'unmitigated evil' of nuclear weapons. They loom large in this conflict, turning regional war into one that could have planetary consequences.

Regime change is too superficial a solution for these times. We need to overthrow the whole damn system of war. Nuclear abolition is the work of first order. But, O Lord, what a seemingly Sisyphean task. In the early days of the war, before Putin's press crackdown, there were frequent reports of Russian opposition to the invasion. One million Russians signed a No War petition. More than twelve thousand publicly protested, many enduring police beatings and detention. These and other acts of resistance prompted a statement of solidarity from Israeli activists who oppose Israel's occupation of East Jerusalem and the Palestinian Territories. 'Like you,' the statement reads, 'we have watched with dismay and disgust as the Russian army launched its criminal invasion of Ukraine, but besides the firm resistance of the Ukrainian people, the striking activity of the anti-war movement in Russia has also been a great light in the darkness. Without comparing our situation with yours—and the differences are many—we take inspiration from your resistance.'

Our friend and historian, David O'Brien, reflects on lessons learned and the work required when this war ends. We need to reflect more deeply, he writes on 'the trajectory, from *Pacem in Terris* (1963) to Pope Francis, that 'the world' actually matters; it is not just a stage on which to act out our particular faith. The earth and its people are at the centre of God's love, and of ours. All else, including church and such human creations as states, must be measured against that love.'

This upswelling of human courage and compassion appears insignificant against the enormity of war's destruction. Like the work of microscopic decomposers, these myriad acts of resistance and solidarity break up the hard, bitter soil of war in a million tiny ways. Here in the dirt are so many seeds of peace sown by peacemakers past and present. We must cultivate them and sow some as well, because this beautiful, beleaguered world matters. It matters very much. Ω

*Claire Schaeffer-Duffy, a writer, mother and grandmother, with her husband Scott, has run a Catholic Worker house in Worcester, MA for nearly 40 years. Together they edit The Catholic Radical, from which this article is reproduced with permission.*

### 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 regular liturgies 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@extra.co.nz](mailto:jim.conse@extra.co.nz). Layout: Barbara Corcoran burkespass@gmail.com.

[www.catholicworker.org.nz](http://www.catholicworker.org.nz)

# Editorial 1 Is lasting peace possible?

*And when a king wages war against another king, does he go to fight without first sitting down to consider whether his 10 000 men can stand against the 20 000 of the opponent? And if not, while the others are still a long way off, he sends messengers to sue for peace. Jesus of Nazareth (Luke 14/31-32).*

With war raging in Ukraine, we watch in horror and sheer disbelief as rockets destroy whole apartment blocks, schools and hospitals and drive millions of ordinary people into refugee status, fleeing (if they are lucky) across neighbouring borders to escape the mayhem.

War is always brutal. It always has been and always will be. It is hard to believe many still defend its use as a way of resolving disputes given the destructive firepower available today. War has always to be dressed up as heroism and patriotism, bolstered by parades of strength, special uniforms and a touch of glamour. Warmongers love showing off!

Propaganda dictates who the ‘goodies’ and the ‘baddies’ are in wars. Remember Vietnam? The ‘baddies’ were the communists, whose sin was they didn’t believe in capitalism. The ‘goodies’ the US and its allies (including Australia and NZ) who invaded a country thousands of miles away. The same scenario developed with the invasion of Iraq. The Americans and their allies went seeking ‘weapons of mass destruction’ (which didn’t exist) and those responsible for the 9/11 attack on the World Trade Centre in New York (who were from Saudi Arabia, not Iraq). It didn’t matter. The war machine kicked into action, weapons manufacturing went into overdrive, scapegoats were identified, and the destruction began.

Iraq, previously a thriving country (admittedly with an autocratic government) was reduced to the ruined state it is today. Naturally, violence led to more violence. ISIS was born out of the ruins of Iraq and continues to spread terror throughout the region.

Besides the politicians and their major military and corporate backers, the people most responsible for the death and destruction war brings surely are those who manufacture and profit from the weapons they make and sell. These people remain hidden, far from the battlefield. They never get their hands dirty. Around the world, these corporate shareholders have blood dripping from their soft hands and pleated skirts.

Five out of the six largest arms manufacturers in the world are based in the USA. Russia, the UK, France and China are distant placegetters. Collectively, the top 10 armament manufacturers

make a profit of around \$2000 billion each year. That buys a lot of drinks, influence and real estate!

## Gospel non-violence

For Christians, who claim to follow Jesus, war is not an option. Whatever the rationale used in the past, Pope Francis has spelt out ‘repeatedly that a ‘just war,’ no matter how appealing, is not an option today for the believing Christian. There is no such thing as a just war. A just cause – yes. But not a just war.

War contradicts the explicit teaching of Jesus to Peter in the Garden of Gethsemane to ‘put away the sword.’ And the challenge to live Gospel non-violence, as spelt out in the Sermon on the Mount (Matt 5/Luke 6). We have divine insight from Jesus as to how to live together. Peace and justice sit at the centre of his strategy for developing just and loving relationships.

Trying to cope with the destruction of Ukraine is a bitter potion to swallow. The Gospel non-violence scenario runs against all our fighting instincts. We instinctively want to hit back. But where has the current fighting led? To widespread destruction of the country they love and are protecting. Just imagine if the Ukrainians had conceded from day one the idea of joining NATO (which Russia for legitimate reason obviously fears), and even settled for allowing a peaceful invasion of sorts.

From there, a position of moral power, could they have launched a nationwide movement of non-cooperation and passive resistance to such an occupation? Such a Gandhian tactic, enjoined by the majority of the people, aided by targeted international sanctions, arguably could have worked.

A stronger than ever Ukrainian identity may have emerged. Thousands (including Russian soldiers) would still be alive, families intact, millions more safely living in their homes. The major infrastructure of schools hospitals, businesses, transport and local government would still be operational.

If it sounds like madness or naivety, could anything be madder (or more evil) than what has ultimately unfolded since Russia invaded? Thousands dead on both sides. Cities destroyed. Millions homeless. Families wrecked. Tens of millions made refugees and traumatised. A legacy of hatred and violence handed onto future generations.

Given widespread internal non-cooperation and collective passive resistance over a lengthy period of time, how long could a foreign occupation of this proportion actually last?

—Jim Consedine

## Editorial 2 We must abolish war

Last week, the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND) delivered a letter to the Russian Government, in which we said, ‘For the sake of Ukrainian children taking shelter from Russian missiles; for the sake of those who will die if the situation escalates and for the sake of millions of us who will perish if the heightened risk of nuclear war turns into a nuclear conflict, we urge your government to halt the attacks, withdraw the troops and withdraw the nuclear threats’.

Today we are in this highly dangerous situation because Mr Putin thinks that might is right. We know that is not true. So what can we do about it? I have four suggestions.

Redouble our efforts to dismantle all nuclear weapons everywhere. The UK Government should lead all the nuclear nations to sign the UN Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons and should send a representative to the first Treaty meeting in Austria this summer.

Redouble our efforts to build more powerful ways to respond to conflicts: a fully functional, fully respected, fully effective United Nations. Look up the Charter for yourselves. The UN was founded in 1945, ‘to save succeeding generations from the scourge of

war.’

Support those who say ‘no to war’ and refuse to take part. Use your own power to reduce support for the war by getting the message across to ordinary Russians through all possible networks – sporting, cultural, religious, social media. It’s Putin’s war, not theirs.

Offer compassionate help to refugees – not just those desperately fleeing Ukraine, but to all those forced from their homes by war and oppression. Those escaping across the English Channel need our compassion and care.

This appalling situation for Ukraine, for Russia, for Europe and the world, is a terrifying wake-up call. Our vision and our aim must be the abolition of war itself. As Archbishop Desmond Tutu said, ‘If the world can abolish apartheid, it can abolish war.’

This is a task for all of us. Let’s redouble our work for peace everywhere.

—Bruce Kent, lifetime peacemaker, aged 90, founding president, Movement for the Abolition of War, speaking in Trafalgar Square, London, 6 March 2022

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## Fire destroys Otaki CW farmhouse

Cyclone Dovi caused havoc on its way over the North Island in mid-February. None more so than at the Catholic Worker farm, Te Puawai o te Aroha, on the outskirts of Otaki. The farm is home to Shelley and Adi Leason, the youngest three of their seven children, and more than 30 others who live in associated buildings.

The wooden home, on this small organic holding, was built in the early 1950s and was burnt down after Dovi’s fierce winds knocked a tree onto a power line, causing power surges which led to electrical shorts, sparking the house fire. Fortunately, the Leason family, were out when their home caught fire.

The Leasons have developed their small farm into a CW community over several decades and live the ideals of their CW spirituality, which includes practising voluntary poverty, open door hospitality especially to the poor, non-violence as a way of life, and regular communal prayer.

Dedicated peace activists, they have shared their home and their resources with the needy without hesitation, engaged in local development projects and given prophetic witness to social justice on many

issues.

In April 2008, Adi was part of the Waihopai Ploughshares action which ‘deconstructed’ the dome protecting a satellite dish at the ‘five eyes’ spy-base at Waihopai, near Blenheim. Arguing they were protecting the greater good, he and his co-defendants were acquitted of criminal charges laid by police.

The Leasons have taken the sacred scriptures to heart and live them as few others have in recent times in Aotearoa. Already they are rebuilding and plan to continue with their loving witness in the community.



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# Peace Network Says it's Time for KiwiSaver to Quit Weapons Industry

A New Zealand peace network says it's time for KiwiSaver to quit its investments in Lockheed Martin, the world's biggest weapons manufacturer, which has four bases in New Zealand and works closely with the NZ government.

Lockheed Martin produces nuclear weapons and last year had revenues of more than \$67 billion, and they are being called out.

World BEYOND War Aotearoa spokesperson Liz Remmerswaal says that's an unbelievable amount of money based on an horrific amount of harm to both people and the environment.

'Lockheed Martin is making a killing out of killing', says Mrs Remmerswaal. 'Its profits are going through the roof, with stock increases of nearly 30% since the war with Ukraine began, and we're sure that many kiwis would not be happy with that.'

'Lockheed Martin's products have been used to spread death and destruction around the world, not least in Ukraine, as well as Yemen and other war-torn countries where civilians are the casualties.

'We're telling Lockheed Martin that it needs to stop making profits from war and threatening the world with nuclear death, and the New Zealand government should not be dealing with such a dubious company. We encourage Lockheed to transition to creating a peaceful and sustainable business economy that they can be proud of,' she says.

Ethical investments expert Barry Coates of Mindful Money says the 2021 value of KiwiSaver investments in Lockheed Martin was \$419,000, while their holdings in other retail investment funds is far higher, at \$2.67 million. These investments are mainly in the KiwiSaver funds that have index-linked

investments, such as the list of the largest US listed companies. Other weapons manufacturers, such as Northrop Grumman and Raytheon, show similar increases in profits.

Mr Coates says New Zealanders do not expect that their hard-earned savings to be invested in companies like Lockheed Martin that make nuclear weapons and sell other weapons for use in the most brutal conflicts around the world, such as Yemen, Afghanistan, Syria and Somalia as well as Ukraine.

This comes during a global week of action against the company, which has seen campaigners protest at sites across the United States, Canada, Australia and Europe, as well as Colombo, Japan and Korea, with a number of actions around New Zealand during the week (<https://www.stoplockheedmartin.org/>).

The week of action is coinciding with the company's annual general meeting on 21st April which was held online.

Lockheed Martin's products include the widely-sold F-16 and the F-35 stealth combat aircrafts. Its missile systems include the submarine-launched Trident missile, the main element in the strategic nuclear force of the USA and the UK.

Mindful Money has already had success getting investments in nuclear weapons producers out of KiwiSaver and investment funds, with the value of KiwiSaver investments in nuclear weapons production falling from \$100 million in 2019 to around \$4.5 million now.

Mindful Money is also calling for those investment providers to switch to alternative indexes that exclude nuclear weapons producers and other unethical companies.

## CW Website

Leading articles from the first 24 years of  
*The Common Good*  
Alternative funerals  
Restorative Justice  
Other theological issues  
[www.catholicworker.org.nz](http://www.catholicworker.org.nz)

## FUNERAL CHOICE

A Catholic Worker Project  
Cheaper alternatives to consumer funerals  
[www.funeralchoice.co.nz](http://www.funeralchoice.co.nz)

# Around the Traps

**#Death of Ann Somerville (1928 – 2022)** – It was with sadness we noted the death of Ann Somerville in late January. Ann was a regular attendee at our Christchurch Wednesday night liturgy for many years having driven in from Halswell where she ran a small farm. She was a fiercely independent woman with a tough Irish fighting spirit who will be missed. Francis, Jim, Carmen and Piper attended her requiem mass at Our Lady of Victories, Sockburn.

**# Fruits of War** – UN Secretary-general Antonio-Guterres says one quarter of humanity, 2 billion people, are now living in conflict areas, and the world is facing the highest number of conflict areas since 1945, when WWII ended. He cited conflicts from Yemen, Syria, Myanmar and Sudan to Haiti, Africa's Sahel and now the war in Ukraine. He said last year 84 million people were forced to leave their homes because of conflict, violence or human rights abuses. The UN estimates that this year, at least 274 million people will need humanitarian assistance – a 17 percent increase for 2021.

—*The Press*, 2 April 2022

**# Climate crisis – latest ICCP Reports** – The world is on course for a catastrophic 3.2C increase of warming by the end of the century, according to part three of the ICCP reports, released Holy Week. The latest report was produced by 278 scientists, who analysed 18 000 studies. It focused on climate change, mitigation measures, and solutions. It is encouraging in its finding that the solutions we need already exist and are extremely effective. However, thus far, political and financial motivations have kept them from being embraced and utilized to the extent necessary.

The secretary-general of the UN, Antonio Guterres, says climate change is a threat to human wellbeing and planetary health, and urgent and far-reaching change is desperately needed. 'Any further delay in concerted anticipatory action...will miss a brief and rapidly closing window of opportunity to secure a liveable and sustainable future for all. We are beyond crisis point. Our planet faces catastrophe if we don't act now.'

New Zealand and Australia are at 'very high risk' of serious and unavoidable damages if the heat keeps rising. This is doable if we are willing to change our behavior, if our political leadership is able to step in. But we don't want to wait for others to lead. We think we should be leading our communities. Human ingenuity can't get us out of suffering from climate

change but preparing fast could hugely limit the carnage. Even in wealthy countries, adapting to worsening floods, fires, droughts, heat waves and other disasters will get much harder once the planet tops 1.5 degrees Celsius increase.

Despite our supposed 'green' image, New Zealand remains one of the highest emitters in our region. Progressive measures outlined in the reports ranged from bolstering 'blue and green defences in the form of lakes, river margins, forests and estuaries, to farming more diverse foods, to protecting jobs and incomes, to designing cities to be cooler.

—*The Press*, 1 March 2022/10 April 2022

**# Climate protesters acquitted** – Three activists who targeted London's public transport network to raise the alarm about the escalating climate crisis have been acquitted by a jury. The three Extinction Rebellion campaigners disrupted rush-hour services for more than an hour, with two of them climbing on top of a train. The three defendants – Rev Sue Parfitt, 75, Father Martin Newell, 54, and Phillip Kingston, 85, said they had been motivated by their Christian faith.

—*The Guardian Weekly*, 22 January 2022

**# Banks cash in** - Despite battling the second year of a global pandemic, banks operating in New Zealand collectively made more than \$6 billion in 2021 according to a report by KPMG. Their *Financial Institutions Performance Survey* of banks found net profits rose nearly 48 per cent last year to hit \$6.13b – the first time it had gone over the \$6b mark since KPMG began monitoring the sector.

—*CathNews NZ* 10 March 2022.

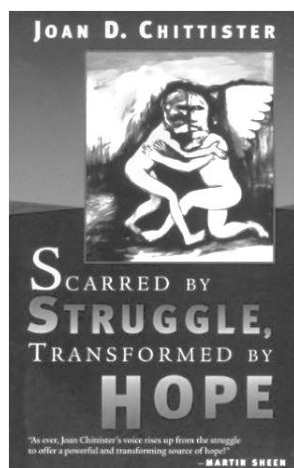
**# Plastics action** – In a UN environment binding agreement, millions of tonnes of plastic waste could be prevented by 2024 from contaminating the ocean, soil and air each year after 175 countries agreed to develop the first binding treaty on plastic pollution. Measures to take could include limits on the production of virgin plastic, the phasing out of single-use products and requirements to recycle.

Plastic production globally increased from two million tonnes in 1950 and is on course to exceed 600 million tonnes by 2040. About 11 million tonnes end up in the ocean annually. This could triple by 2040. Only 9% of plastic waste is recycled, 19% is incinerated, and 60 percent ends up in landfills. The remaining 22% if dumped in unregulated sites.

—*The Press*, 4 March 2022

# The dawn of hope

Joan Chittister OSB



Hope and despair are not opposites. They are cut from the very same cloth, made from the very same material, shaped from the very same circumstances. Every life finds itself forced to choose one from the other, one day at a time, one circumstance after another. The sunflower, that plant which in shadow turns its head relentlessly toward the sun, is the patron saint of those

in despair. When darkness descends on the soul, it is time, like the sunflower, to go looking for whatever good thing in life there is that can bring us comfort. Then we need music and hobbies and friends and fun and new thought.

Despair colours the way we look at things, makes us suspicious of the future, makes us negative about the present. Most of all, despair leads us to ignore the very possibilities that could save us, or worse, leads us to hurt as we have been hurt ourselves.

Hope, on the other hand, takes life on its own terms, knows that whatever happens God lives in it, and expects that, whatever its twists and turns, it will ultimately yield its good to those who live it consciously, to those who live it to the hilt.

When tragedy strikes, when trouble comes, when life disappoints us, we stand at the crossroads between hope and despair, torn and hurting. Despair cements us in the present. Hope sends us dancing around dark corners trusting in a tomorrow we cannot see because of the multiple paths of life which we cannot forget.

Life is not one road. It is many roads, the walking of which provides the raw material out of which we find hope in the midst of despair. Every dimension of

## Reviews

**Film Review – *Soldiers Without Guns*, documentary produced and directed by Will Watson (2019). Rated M, available on [www.nzonscreen.com](http://www.nzonscreen.com). Reviewer – Kathleen Gallagher.**

*Soldiers Without Guns* is a film about the largely untold story of one of the most dangerous military

## death in Ukraine

attacking Mariupol  
relentlessly  
rockets, bombs, tanks, mortars  
indiscriminate carnage  
women, children, the elderly  
the city virtually obliterated  
bombed back to the stone age  
a Pyrrhic victory

along Bucha streets  
tree-lined, normally bustling  
teachers, plumbers, clerks, nurses  
civilians all  
raped, disfigured, tortured  
executed - mafia style  
a bullet in the head  
simply for being Ukrainian

war is the crime  
murdering, butchering, looting  
bringing unimaginable suffering  
the deepest grief  
mass graves its rotten fruit  
genocide the ultimate outcome

the death of Russia's soul  
its humanity betrayed  
an additional price being paid  
for these atrocities

—Jim Considine

the process of struggle is a call to draw from a well of new understandings. It is in these understandings that hope dwells. It is that wisdom that carries us beyond the dark night of struggle to the dawn of new wisdom and new strength.

missions to war-torn Bougainville in the late 1990s. It was led by New Zealand's own unarmed soldiers using guitars instead of guns, non-violence instead of rockets.

It is a David and Goliath story of the Pacific Island people of Bougainville rising up against the largest mining corporation in the world and seeking their own independence. Ten years of war (1988 – 1998)

had seen 14 failed peace agreements.

In 1997 the NZ Army stepped into the conflict with a radical new plan. Instead of taking guns into the warzone, unarmed soldiers took guitars, music, aroha and culture. We see our NZ army entering into Bougainville, greeting the people, stopping the bloody decade-long civil war and bringing peace.

In the film, we follow the riveting journey of the peacekeepers as they endeavoured to use music, Maori culture and aroha to end the worst civil war in the Pacific's history. This idea was condemned by the national and international media – no-one thought it could work. But work it did. Brilliantly.

This film inspires new hope for creating peace in our time. It shines a light on the story of unsung heroes of the New Zealand Defence Force. It is a story all New Zealanders can be proud to call their own.

Like the NZ military, the Russian soldiers need to carry sunflowers, violins, precious icons, and dancing their beloved Russian dances into their Ukraine.

In these turbulent times, lay down your guns and tanks Russia. Shower the Ukrainians with music, dancing, sunflowers and works of art, public toilets, scholarships, small and large acts of kindness. Win their hearts. Show us your humanity. Nothing else matters. Like Bougainville, this is what Ukraine needs. This is what we all need.

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**Film Review – *Carbon: the unauthorized biography*, documentary, Genepool Productions and Handful of Films. In cinemas from April. Reviewer – Peter Healy SM**

This documentary film made in Australia is all at once a cosmology, a geology and an ecology of carbon. Our planet home's most ubiquitous element, it is everywhere, in our bodies, our food and what we wear. If you have ever wondered what the carbon cycle is, then this documentary is for you.

The carbon atom is cleverly animated in this film and speaks in the first person about our current crisis of extraction, burn and overload. Towards the end of the documentary carbon utters these pertinent words, 'Don't you see what you've done to me when I've got no place to hide.' These words are in reference to the felling of old growth and tropical forests, to decades of oil extraction and to hundreds of years of coal mining. Since oil was first discovered, we have taken and consumed around 135 billion barrels of it.

While this documentary is a sobering reminder of what the industrialized world has done to the geo-chemistry of our planet home, there is still hope.

We need to befriend carbon, come to an understanding of her, appreciating her as a gift and promise, rather than an exploitable resource. The documentary is indeed an invitation to relationship

with the elemental and the essential.

I am sure Teilhard de Chardin would approve of this hymn to carbon. How she matters so much to the whole of life. Thomas Berry and Brian Swimme would probably sing its praises too. It is Berrian in the way it gives voice to a key element in our web of life that is a great communion of subjects.

The greenhouse gas methane flares in the arctic tundra, escaping into the atmosphere as temperatures rise. Given Aotearoa NZ's methane footprint (hoofprint), a producer here might well make the sequel: *Methane: the unauthorized biography*?

The film has an interesting website with a workbook for youngsters. As reviewers say of inspired and timely work; recommended, take the whole family.

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**Book Review – *The Cry of the Earth and the Cry of the Poor: Hearing Justice in John's Gospel* (SCM Press, 2020) Kathleen P. Rushton RSM. Reviewer – Jane Higgins**

Lent, Easter and Pentecost – these are the seasons for John's gospel. While the synoptic gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke claim a year each in our three year liturgical cycle, readings from John's gospel are heard in our sacred seasons.

Unlike the more straightforward storytelling of the synoptics, John's gospel has a reputation for being theological, spiritual: for being, in other words, 'difficult' and otherworldly.

And yet, this is a gospel of beauty, richness, and layer upon layer of meaning. It shows us a radical Jesus crossing social, religious and political boundaries. Moreover, from its prologue reaching back to the creation of the cosmos, to its climax in a garden and its epilogue on a lakeside, it is profoundly embedded in the natural world.

I saw John in a whole new light reading this wonderful book. Kathleen is a Sister of Mercy, a biblical scholar and a long-time social justice activist living in Ōtautahi Christchurch. What she gives us here is a resource for prayer, reflection, understanding and action towards justice.

The book provides a framework based on readings from John's gospel as they appear in both the Roman Lectionary and the Revised Common Lectionary (used by many Christian denominations). This ecumenical focus is important; after all, one of the great prayers of Jesus in John is that his followers 'may all be one.'

Prayer is a main way into this book. Each chapter is structured according to the ancient contemplative practice of *lectio divina*: reading and rereading the text, meditating on it, praying with it, contemplation in the presence of God, and all this leading to action.



And so the book takes us through key moments: John's extraordinary Prologue, the wedding at Cana, Jesus at the Temple, the meeting with the Samaritan women, the raising of Lazarus, Jesus's many boundary crossing acts of healing, and his passion, death and resurrection.

Each chapter offers insight into the historical and contemporary world of the text while also drawing us forward towards 'spirituality for transformation to participate with Jesus to finish the works of God for social and ecological justice.'

For example, reading the book in Holy Week, I was struck by the chapter on Jesus's washing of the

disciples' feet. Foot washing was associated with slavery and here Jesus elevates his disciples from the status of slaves (not 'servants' as is often translated) to that of friends.

The chapter's discussion of slavery in the Roman empire helps us to understand the truly radical nature of this act of love. We are then invited to consider modern day slavery – and to act on this. (Notably, our government is currently seeking feedback on a law to address modern slavery and worker exploitation.)

This is a book to be read slowly, Bible at hand, perhaps with a small group of friends who can offer a space for prayerful contemplation moving into action.

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## I'm Vexed – and I'm Vaxed

Judith Woolston

I believe that immunisations can be seen as a contribution to the common good and therefore aligned to the Catholic Worker principles. Many things have come to pass since vaccinations have become a divisive issue. I feel a bit fatigued by the never-ending debate.

Just after the mandates were announced last year, a good friend said to me (very sad and disappointed), 'there goes the government's kindness. Where is it now?' In hindsight I found his disappointment with the government a little strange. Since when has kindness been the main characteristic of a government? Have we only learned to expect this since Jacinda Ardern? Now, those who don't agree with vaccinations call her mean and unkind, and want her gone. Do they really believe a National or ACT government is going to restore kindness? Do we prefer a patriarchal conservative party to what we have got at the moment?

Our government's actions can be viewed on widely differing spectrums by a diverse and divided population. For some, they are measures to preserve public health. For others, attempts at systemic mind control, coercion and/or worse.

I don't have a problem accepting that the government, with its duty to protect public health, based its decisions on best health advice and overseas Covid experience. It used masks and vaccine mandates to achieve the recommended vaccination rates because it expected these rates would hardly be achieved otherwise. I do NOT advocate for vaccine mandates, but I understand the motives behind them.

I believe these decisions were intended for the greater good and most people complied with them for the same reason. Of course there are pros and cons. The vaccine is not perfect, and pharma cashes in. But it is what we have got.

Yes, I am biased because, as a community health nurse who has always been an immunisation advocate, I am surrounded daily by people whose health is compromised and who very much like to be protected. On the other hand, I feel genuine empathy and sorrow for those lovely folks who have lost their jobs and whose lives and beliefs did not allow for compromise. It has been difficult to see people come forward for a vaccine they did not want. No nurse feels comfortable in injecting someone who feels coerced. The mandates needed to go.

I have listened to many people who prefer a lifestyle free from artificial substances and believe in the power of natural healing. I can see their point of view that for them it makes perfect sense. There are many ways to care for and protect one another and everyone has the best intentions.

I still come away from these conversations feeling a little unsettled. If people live somewhat isolated from society and have the option of living on and off their own soil, this is beautiful, health, and good for them and the planet. It is a unique way of life and one I respect, admire and aspire to. I am privileged to be surrounded by people who live wholesome lives because it enriches me and inspires me to do better.

### The wider world

But it is not the reality for many around us and elsewhere – especially those in urban crowded places, and those who suffer from chronic illnesses and the diseases induced by all kinds of addiction, lack of good nutrition and lack of self-care knowledge. For those of us who are connecting with a community less fortunate, standing in the way of a public health effort doesn't make sense.

Even if this vaccine is not a wonder drug, if it reduces hospitalisations it still has value for those

without strong immune systems and healthy lifestyle choices. They need our health system to function and the skills and care of those working within it. I do feel frustrated about the amount of fearmongering causing vulnerable people to have an irrational fear of a vaccine rather than of a disease that has cost thousands if not millions of lives – elsewhere, more than here, thanks to our remoteness and restrictions.

The voices of science and medical research have been clear and transparent throughout the pandemic for those who were looking for it. It has been suffocated by an avalanche of uncredited, unverifiable internet sources. Since everyone can publish their own opinions and sell their as truths to millions of people who can pick and choose what ‘truths’ to believe.

With regards to the anti-mandate protest, I have no doubt they were mostly good people with genuine grievances, wanting to be heard. This was reflected in many news reports I have seen. I cannot agree with the criticism and abuse hurled at the media for one-sided reporting. I watched news reporters walking through the crowd talking about a peaceful majority, filming the singing, the dancing, the sharing of food. They reported respectfully about a midwife who had lost her job and was now offering first aid services to her fellow protesters.

## Letters

St Francis Farm  
Whirinaki  
April 2022

Dear Friends

Our planet groans under the weight of our human greed. Our synthetic lifestyles take us further and further from the truth of nature. We are only just now finding out that fungus in the soil communicates across kilometres of forest soil to distribute nutrients where they are needed.

In our human wisdom, our great intelligence, we seem unable to do the same for our own species. As millions of children starve to death, others eat themselves to death on opposite sides of the world. Cancer continues to rise as we pump the environment full of pesticides and herbicides, our food covered in synthetic chemicals. Our oceans grow warmer, the sea life struggle to breathe.

Here in Aotearoa, we continue to use gig phosphate at scale despite many countries making it illegal due to known health risks caused by exposure.

But there were other elements as well. I am sure they were a small minority within the crowd. Nevertheless, they were a reflection of a global anti-Covid restriction turned anti-government movement of a disturbing and alarming kind... In the US and Germany, you see colourful eco-lefties marching side-by-side with the ‘white Right’ and skinhead neo-Nazis. Any movement involving swastikas and calling for executions makes me recoil.

I would like to imagine that all this protest energy for personal rights and freedom of choice could be channelled into bigger issues such as building world peace and promoting fairer distribution of wealth. Those intentions would have my wholehearted support.

We are evolving. That is what makes us human. We are meant to be together to share and grow in love. It is a lifelong challenge to remain connected despite our differences. For those who try to follow the teachings of Jesus, he never asked his disciples to all live in the same way. But he did command love and a willingness to put aside one’s own interests. I still have a lot to learn.

*Abridged and reprinted with permission from Bread and Roses, the Hokianga NZ CW paper, No 9, April 2022*

### Home soil

Here on these few acres of land, I attempt to decrease my reliance on mass manufactured and mass-produced food that produces mass waste. I live with minimal electricity, enough for lights and radio. I wash my clothes by hand, I saw my firewood by hand and cook on a wood stove. I put my hand in the soil and I plant my food, fight the slugs face to face without chemicals and try to minimise the food that has to travel further than the valley I live in.

I do it all for love. Love of the earth, love of my children and future generations, love of my neighbour here in Aotearoa and my neighbour on the other side of the world who lives in terrible conditions, enslaved by the greed of their fellow humans.

So, if I hesitate to take a vaccine created in a lab, created to slice into microscopic parts of my being, do not say that my reasons are selfish, that I am an idiot. By not jumping to and taking the vaccine, I have apparently declared myself a red-necked white supremacist, conservative, anti-community, humanity hater and an idiot.

However, I have paused because it seems to me that as a race we continue to silence nature. In fact,

we continue to declare war on it. And I know we cannot win. I have no doubt that Covid-19 is a new, terrible and sometimes deadly virus. That is evident. I do however doubt that we can inject our way to health in the long run.

A local woman who has worked tirelessly for our local community and is a member of many groups for social change said she and her family have pledged to die before they take the vaccine. And it is true. We may. However, we will not be silenced by labels of 'idiocy' and 'selfishness'.

I do not take the situation lightly. I value all life as sacred. I believe in giving those who wish the chance to fight Covid with their own immune systems. I would not want to pass on Covid to someone who wishes not to have it. However, we will need to live with it as part of life.

### **The rhythm of life**

Before you say I am clutching at straws, thinking myself to be on some high moral ground while people die, let me say this. This is not a 'high horse'. I question the vaccine. I am attempting wade into the deep waters that bind all life together. There is a rhythm here on earth that indigenous people have moved to and some still do and it beats far for deeper and stronger than the beating of my heart. It moves regardless of life or death and it binds everything together. But we are doing our best to create tears in it in our efforts to stay alive and maintain our toxic lifestyles for this speck of time in creation.

I am not 'anti-vax' as it were. Those who believe in it and whose lives may be prolonged by it have access to it. However, there is misinformation on both sides of the argument, *The Lancet* medical journal published a study in October 2021 that showed that vaccinated individuals, if infected with Covid, can have the same viral load to those who are unvaccinated and therefore transmit the virus at the same rate! So, is there such a need to demonise the unvaccinated? As though they are the sole carriers of the virus?

My lifestyle, beliefs and family culture are based on a vision for a better world and a healthier planet. Right now, this does not include taking the Covid jab.

However, everything I do, I try to do for love.

*Marissa Dowling*

*Marissa Dowling lives in community at St Francis CW Farm, Whirinaki. She is a nurse, married to Patrick and they have two children.*

Christchurch  
6 March 2022

Dear Jim,

Regarding the situation in Ukraine, diplomacy is sorely needed, not more warfare. Sanctions are a form of warfare, used by the US to destabilise whole societies: Russia, Cuba, Iran, Afghanistan, Venezuela. Acknowledgement must also be made of NATO's role in creating the current war situation, by lying to Gorbachev when agreeing not to expand Eastward and instead surrounding Russia with heavily armed forces.

Questions need to be asked, if we are to have a world where all can live in safety. Why the silence about the continuing Saudi bombing of Yemen? Why is the world ignoring the famine facing Afghanistan, whose assets have been confiscated by the US? How can the American regime claim any moral authority after Iraq, a war Biden approved of at the time?

The international arms trade must be condemned and stopped. Russia and the US are both nuclear powers. A nuclear confrontation is an existential threat too.

Yours,

*Lois Griffiths*

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Bishopdale  
Christchurch 8053

Kia Ora CW Community,

Pope Francis has been a long-awaited breath of fresh air. I wish to endorse the remarks you made in your letter to him in *The Common Good* (CG100), particularly in relation to the status of women. We are half of humanity and probably a greater proportion of churchgoers than men, yet women are still not given equal status with men. One of the main reasons I was attracted to Quakerism was our Testimony to Equality which we practice.

Some years ago I remember going to a meeting at the Anglican Dean of Christchurch's home in Bealey Avenue for women from several church groups, including Roman Catholics. We heard that so many women felt frustrated about their status in churches. However many have stayed within the church and slowly worked to make changes. The Anglican church has changed its stance on many issues from when I was a member.

I wish you well in this particular part of your work. He mihi mahana ki a koe i tenei wā.  
Warm greetings to you at this time.

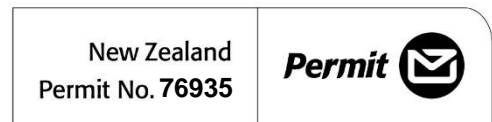
*Deborah Williams*

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*Read The Common Good online at <http://wp.catholicworker.org.nz/the-common-good/>*

***The Common Good***

Te Wairua Maranga Trust  
 Box 33-135  
 Christchurch 8244  
 New Zealand



The shepherds of the galaxies, the Hubble telescope astronomers, have released photos of the universe from fourteen billion years ago. As I attempt to fathom the very notion of billions of years, my gaze settles on a large maple tree outdoors. Nestled in the fork of the trunk and a snow-covered limb, a squirrel wrapped in its tail is sleeping. Its ability to slumber while so precariously balanced is as mind boggling as the distance of light years – equally deserving of the ‘I-don’t-know-what’ of God. Awareness is a gift. Meditation on God’s mystery, whether it be the creation of the universe or the ingenuity of providing squirrels with tails for winter sleeping, is gift. The presence of God in one’s life is a gift.

—Carmelites of Indianapolis, Hidden Friends, p67