



METHODIST MISSION AND ECUMENICAL NEWSLETTER – May 2023

Easter Church Service from Holy Trinity Cathedral

This climax of Holy Week in the Christian calendar came from Holy Trinity Anglican Cathedral, Auckland. Interwoven with te reo Māori, the Eucharist is presided over by the Reverend Ivica Gregurec, the Cathedral's Precentor. The music was provided by the Cathedral choir under the direction of Peter Watts.

Easter Reflection by Dr Emily Colgan



Photo: RNZ/Paul Bushnell

In the name of God, creator, redeemer, and giver of life. Amen.

There's a really well-known story about a young girl walking along a beach where thousands of pātangaroa – or starfish – had been washed up during a storm. When she came upon a pātangaroa, she would pick it up and throw it as far as she could, back into the ocean.

She went on like this for some time, until an old man approached her and called out, 'E Kare! Why are you doing that? Look at those starfish, you can't possibly save them all! You can't even begin to make a difference!' But the little girl looked him in the eye and then bent down, she picked up another starfish and threw it as far as she could, back into the sea. 'I made a difference for that one,' she said simply.

Now, this story has become something of a cliché, but bear with me because it asks us to think about those deemed to be of little account and a world that is quick to turn away in indifference or give up in the face of overwhelming odds. And I want us to think with this story as we reflect on Easter Day and the events that led up to this moment.



Photo: RNZ/Paul Bushnell

The gospels tell us that, like the little girl, Jesus shows concern for and commitment to those the world has deemed to be of little account. Time and again throughout his ministry, Jesus challenged the Roman empire, which favoured the rich and powerful when the majority of the population lived in abject poverty. His actions and words proclaimed a world where the first will be last and the last will be first. A world where those at the bottom of the pile – those of little account – hold a special place in God's kingdom.

Jesus dared to suggest that the values of empire – and its elitist trappings of wealth, power, and influence – are not the values of God. Rather, God sides with those who are marginalised and oppressed, willing a world where all are able to flourish and mutually enjoy abundance of life. Unsurprisingly then, it was here, on the margins, that Jesus spent much of his time – with tax collectors, fishermen, women, those who were stigmatised because of illness, and those considered ethnically or religiously 'other.' It is those that the world deems to be of little account that are given priority in the divine re-ordering of society.

Ultimately, of course, the empire responded to Jesus's vision of an alternative kingdom with execution by crucifixion. But in death – as in life – Jesus was accompanied by those on the margins. It is the women who remain at the foot of the cross until the very end. It is the Earth who holds Jesus, And because of their witness to the risen Christ, others also came to recognise that the empty tomb does not signify absence, but presence: it proclaims the resurrected Christ's presence with us! In the weeks, months, years, and centuries that have followed, millions of people have come – in different ways – to experience something of the resurrected Christ; to experience a God who is always present and bringing newness of life. So, 2000 years on, their claim is our claim: Christ is alive and that even in death, new life is possible.

But the resurrection is more than something we marvel at; it is something that we are called to participate in. The claim that Christ is alive is a call to action. When we seek justice for those who suffer violence and death, we participate in the resurrection. When we work to reconcile damaged relationships, we participate in the resurrection. When we protect the life of a single starfish – or indeed any aspect of creation – we participate in the resurrection. womb-like, in the rocky darkness of the tomb for three days and nights, who then quakes as the stone sealing his grave is removed to reveal an empty space. And it these figures of little account – these women

and the Earth – who cannot stay silent, who proclaim the good news of the resurrection, announcing that, despite all reason and logic, Christ is alive, that death is not the final word.

When we act to keep our vulnerable communities safe, when we share love with our neighbours, when we work to restore peace in the world, when we offer welcome and hospitality, when we stand in solidarity with those the world deems to be of little account, when we work towards a world where all are able to flourish and live abundantly, we participate in the ongoing resurrection.

So, the resurrection of Christ was not a one-off event that happened 2000ish years ago. Christ's resurrection is simply the clearest example of God's ongoing action in the world. Wherever there is death, God struggles with us to find new life – even in the face of indifference or against overwhelming odds. And this is cause for celebration; this is good news for all creation! Christ is risen and present with us. So, let us go out into the world and live that resurrection. Amen. From Church Services, 7:00 am Sunday 9th April 2023 live on Radio NZ

The Week of Prayer for Christian Unity



The Week of Prayer for Christian Unity is celebrated in the Southern Hemisphere between Ascension Sunday and Pentecost Sunday, thus from 21 to 28 May in Aotearoa New Zealand for 2023. The theme for this year is “Do good; seek justice” from Isaiah 1:17.

The theme for the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity 2023 was chosen, and the materials prepared, by a group of Christians in the United States of America convened by the Minnesota Council of Churches. The draft resources were finalized by an international group jointly sponsored by the Dicastery for Christian Unity and the Faith and Order Commission of the World Council of Churches.

A Service For Christian Unity: Friday 26 May 2023 7.30 pm.

A service will be live Streamed from Takapuna Methodist Church, 427-429 Lake Road, Takapuna Auckland. The Rev Tony Franklin-Ross is Cordinator for the Auckland Week of Prayer for Christian Unity. Supper and refreshments will be served after the service.

Participating clergy and church leaders:

TeRito Peyroux-Semu – Vice President, Methodist Church of New Zealand – Te Hāhi Weteriana o Aotearoa

Reverend Uesifili Unasa – Auckland Methodist Synod Superintendent, Methodist Church of New Zealand

Reverend Peter Norman – Northcote-Takapuna Methodist Church; Vice President-elect, Methodist Church of New Zealand

Most Reverend Stephen Lowe, Bishop of Auckland, Roman Catholic Church

Very Reverend Fakaofu Kaio – Onehunga Cooperating Parish; Auckland Presbytery, Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa New Zealand

Dean Anne Mills – Dean of Holy Trinity Cathedral, Anglican Church:Diocese of Auckland, Anglican Church

Reverend Ivica Gregurec – Holy Trinity Cathedral, Anglican Church

Reverend Joseph Zachariah Maramkandam – Cor Episcopa, St Peter's Jacobite Syrian Orthodox Church

Father Jean Paul Abou Naoum, St Elias Melkite Catholic Church

With representatives from:

St Peter's Anglican Church, Takapuna

St George's Presbyterian Church, Takapuna

St Joseph's Catholic Church, Takapuna

Northcote-Takapuna Methodist Church

St Gregory the Illuminator Parish, Armenian Apostolic Church

The major theme for this service, drawing on Isaiah (1: 17) is — Do good; seek justice.

This service is taking place around the world. The liturgy was prepared by an ecumenical group overseas and has been adapted for Aotearoa New Zealand by a working group from the National Dialogue for Christian Unity. The National Dialogue for Christian Unity is a gathering of Church leaders, supported by members of their congregations or leadership teams. It is primarily a forum for sharing as we move forward together on our faith journeys.

The people will be given a stone as they enter the church, or they may have brought their own from home: For each person attending, a small stone is offered. During the service there will be opportunity to place their rock around a cross or lit candle placed at the front of the church.

This emulates the pilgrimage to Santiago to Compostela, where pilgrims place a rock, stone or item from home at the Cruz de Ferro. The Traditional Pilgrims Prayer at the Cruz de Ferro is :

“Lord, may this stone, a symbol of my efforts on the pilgrimage that I lay at the foot of the cross, weigh the balance in favour of my good deeds some day when the deeds of my life are judged. Let it be so.”

CCA facilitates advocacy training for young Cambodian Christians on HIV and AIDS



4 April 2023 Participants of ATCHAA national training programme in Cambodia

Phnom Penh, Cambodia: The Christian Conference of Asia (CCA) organised a two-day national training programme on 30–31 March 2023 that equipped a group of Cambodian Christian youth leaders with essential knowledge and leadership skills to work towards combating the HIV epidemic in the country.

Dr Ronald Lalthanmawia, CCA Programme Coordinator for the Action Together to Combat HIV and AIDS in Asia (ATCHAA), conveyed greetings on behalf of the CCA. Rev. Sok Nev from the Beautiful Church of Christ in Cambodia greeted the participants on behalf of the church leaders of Cambodian churches.

The sessions that focused on enhancing comprehensive knowledge of HIV transmission helped participants to understand the seriousness of the growing menace in Cambodia. The SAVE approach (Safer Practices, Access to Treatment, Voluntary Counselling and Testing, and Empowerment) was emphasised in the HIV awareness sessions. The Biblical expositions and group discussions analysed the role of churches in providing a platform for vulnerable communities to attain the fullness of life through the holistic healing of Christ.

An interactive session allowed participants to share their personal experiences of encountering HIV in their homes and their neighbourhoods, highlighting the realities of HIV being close to

one's families and communities, and not a distant or isolated phenomenon. The participants committed to acting in their own surroundings to ensure that comprehensive knowledge of HIV is shared.

Two sessions further analysed the challenges and opportunities faced by Cambodian youth, the fourth-largest youth population in Southeast Asia. They included understanding the vulnerabilities of youth and identifying solutions for the problems they face, such as mental and psychological weakness, violence and abuse, high incidences of teenage pregnancies and unsafe abortions, and forced migration. Sessions also discussed how young people could overcome challenges through faith, values, and traditions, followed by a presentation on servant leadership and other concepts and models of leadership.

About forty Cambodian Christian youth leaders including young pastors and church workers from different provinces participated in the national training programme. The CCA continues to prioritise equipping young people with the knowledge and leadership skills to be mobilised in efforts against HIV and AIDS through its special programme, Action Together to Combat HIV and AIDS in Asia (ATCHAA)

We reach out to all



Child rights ... children in the Solomon Islands benefit from PCC Child Protection programmes

The first quarter of 2023 has seen a flurry of activities across the region. From the Republic of the Marshall Islands to Nauru and Kiribati, the Pacific Conference of Churches has been involved in a series of activities. These included the training of trainers in Child protection

methods and creating safe churches in the region. A concerted effort has been made to involve the Northern Pacific churches in regional activities in a greater way.

In May, Marshallese churches will host a meeting of church leaders as they become more involved with the ecumenical family. A quick survey has been done on Nauru to determine the needs of the local church before implementing programmes around youth, women and children.

PCC General secretary, Reverend James Bhagwan, said that a project to improve meeting facilities on Majuro would take shape soon as activities were ramped up in the Northern Pacific.

“We are able to help refurbish one of the oldest church schools on Majuro ahead of meeting the Pacific Church leaders meeting”, said the Reverend James Bhagwan. “The PCC is committed to keeping all its members involved through meaningful dialogue and activities.”

Last quarter Rev. Bhagwan visited the Marshall Islands and Kiribati to support ecological stewardship and youth programmes. He also spoke at the annual Gay Pride event in Sydney after an invitation from the organisers. He said, “The task is now to go back and find ways to respectfully share the messages and the lessons from our rainbow community to our Christian community in the Pacific: that is my role.” From Talanoa Toktok Issue No 15 March 2023

Ecumenical Prayer Cycle for May 2023: World Council of Churches

30 April - 06 May 2023 Afghanistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Mongolia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan

07 - 13 May 2023 India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka

14 - 20 May 2023 Bangladesh, Bhutan, Nepal

21 - 27 May 2023 Indian Ocean Islands: Comoros, Madagascar, Maldives, Mauritius, Seychelles

28 May - 03 June 2023 Angola, Mozambique

The Ecumenical Prayer Cycle takes us through every region of the world over the course of a year. Praying for each place on earth and its people at least once a year, we affirm our solidarity with Christians all over the world, brothers and sisters living in diverse situations, experiencing diverse problems and sharing diverse gifts. Pray with us!

The suggested prayer texts are based on the publication "Pilgrim Prayer – an Ecumenical Prayer Cycle". The book and the website offer valuable aids for intercessory prayers, prayer on behalf of and in solidarity with others. (oikoumene.org)

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