

# PAX CHRISTI AOTEAROA NEW ZEALAND

KIA TAU TE RANGIMARIE KI A TAATOU KATOAA/ WORKING FOR PEACE FOR ALL EVERYWHERE



## THIS MONTH'S NEWS

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How do we go forward?**

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into the Attack on  
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Australia AGM,  
Melbourne .**

Tēnā koutou katoa

At the time this newsletter is published, the Season of Creation has begun; beginning on the 1st of September and finishing on the feast of St Francis, October 4th. All of creation is in need of hope and a change of attitude towards use and ownership of resources. There is an implicit connection of the degradation of land to the poverty and livelihoods of the most marginalized peoples.

In particular we remember the indigenous peoples of the Amazon. Their world is burning out of control. Fires, both legal and illegal are destroying great swathes of rain forest. The world's media is focused on the Amazon fires at this present time, but there are also large fires happening in other parts of the globe - Africa, Siberia and Indonesia, to name just a few.

All creation on our planet need our prayers. I invite you during this Season of Creation to pray for life - all life; human and non human. For others and for ourselves.

*Bridget Crisp rsm.*

# Climate Emergency: How do we go forward?

*by David Tutty*

In mid-June, Pope Francis addressed a group of energy executives, investors and experts on energy transition and the need to care for our common home. In his speech, he said, “Faced with a climate emergency, we must take action accordingly, in order to avoid perpetuating a brutal act of injustice towards the poor and future generations.”

Among religious leaders, the pope is not alone in expressing grave concern about the state of the climate. The Archbishop of Canterbury, Patriarch Bartholomew, the Dalai Lama and Archbishop Desmond Tutu alongside key Islamic, Buddhist and Rabbinic organisations have named human-induced climate change as a real threat, not only to the environment, but also to human well-being. Like Pope Francis, they call for urgent action.

At the secular level, many local government authorities and even some countries have declared that we are now in a state of climate emergency. Auckland and Sydney, Wellington and Melbourne, the United Kingdom and Portugal are among about 800 local and national jurisdictions which are now seeking actions to follow from their emergency declarations.

Actions are urgently needed at all levels of human society. Yet in order to have some sense of how best we can go forward, we first need to look at what has brought us to this point.

To ask the question “what has contributed to this climate emergency?” requires many levels of analysis. At one level we could focus on the factors that contributed to the rise of the industrial revolution and the development of coal, oil, and gas as key energy sources. At

another level, we could analyse the contribution of capitalism and the neo-liberal economic agenda. We could also attempt to unpack what has contributed to the level of consumerism that has evolved. While these analyses are vital, I think they do not adequately go to the core of the problem.

What has contributed to this state of emergency has its roots in the intertwine of the moral, cultural, spiritual and theological assumptions that underpin the ways we relate with each other, with the rest of creation, and with the one we believers call God. It is this complex mix that we need to unpack and analyse.

Yet to do this does not come easily. By their very nature, our assumptions reflect deeply held values and beliefs about how we are to live life and what constitutes a good life. For the most part, we are not conscious of our assumptions even though they guide so much of our day-to-day thoughts and actions. While assumptions can vary depending on an individual’s personal history and socio-economic, cultural context, in a community there are usually some key assumptions that dominate, often because the vested interests of those with power control the key formative institutions.

For us, who are descendants of western colonisers, I believe we do share a range of dominant assumptions that have contributed to the climate emergency we now face. Fundamental is our stress on the autonomy and personal responsibility of the individual. Underpinned by a privatised God, or no God, individuals focus on their own context and needs and name themselves as the

## Climate Emergency: How do we go forward? cont.

ultimate rational yardstick. Also fundamental is the assumption that human beings are separate from and above nature. This allows us to objectify, marginalise and exploit nature for our own ends. With this objectification, the economic is given priority. Progress, increasing production and material consumption, and improving standards of living guide how success and the good life are defined. Material prosperity is even used as the yardstick of God's blessing. We have also inherited the assumptions that enabled the whole hierarchical, patriarchal, colonial enterprise. Not only do we see that we can rightly exercise power over the earth and its resources, we also see that we can do this over those who are female, indigenous and poor in each land.

These assumptions are so fundamental that it is extremely difficult for the majority to envisage alternatives. Our capacity to avoid, and even deny, truths that do not fit with how we see ourselves in the world is incomprehensible. Fear is also a huge factor, as people fight to hold on to what they have. Alongside this, multinationals keep trying to distract us with the products of modern consumer living.

So, with this in mind, for us to go forward we do need to face the reality of climate emergency and deliberately seek alternative assumptions that enable a more sustainable and just future. I wish to name, in broad brush strokes, a few assumptions I see as vital for our way forward. What we need is a new balance between the individual, the collective (particularly the poorest and most vulnerable and those who will be born in the future), the rest of creation (particularly the ecosystems and creatures under stress) and the one we name as God.

Firstly, I believe that seeking the truth about our climate emergency needs to be a fundamental basic assumption. This truth respects the best of peer-reviewed science concerning both the existence of an emergency and the factors that have contributed to the reality we now face.

Secondly, we need to be committed to a new future that seeks to do things very differently than what has been. Learning to listen to the earth, those who are the indigenous of the earth, and those who are the poorest and most vulnerable of the earth is needed. A vital starting point is the basic assumption that we are diverse yet interdependent and that we need the earth and the most vulnerable on the earth to be healthy. Building on this, then, is the commitment to being deliberately present within the ecosystem that is our planet earth, to see the importance of belonging, to value all of the creation of which we are a part, and to collaborate in seeking a new sustainable and just future.

Finally, I believe that this new way forward is only possible through a renewed sense of awe and wonder. Whether we choose to name God as God or not, it is crucial that we can see that there is so much more to reality than we can ever know and imagine. A more realistic sense of our true size in the universe opens us up to a greater sense of gratitude for the gift of life, a renewed sense of humility, an increasing willingness to accept vulnerability, a greater desire to love and be compassionate, and a more realistic understanding of how a good life is to be lived.

## Climate Emergency: How do we go forward? cont.

Key for believers is the need to re-vision and re-image the very nature of God and to learn to be open in new ways to how we experience God and hear God's call for us. Those who write from an eco-feminist, eco-theological, eco-spirituality or indigenous perspective have much to teach us! It is in all of creation that God is present and it is in all of creation that we humans can encounter the divine.

Now, there is a huge gap between the dominant assumptions of today and the ones we need to live by for the sake of the hoped-for future. How we go forward in the intervening years and decades needs to be shaped by our goal. To seek the truth about our climate emergency and to be committed to a new sustainable and just future through a renewed sense of awe and wonder will take significant work. This work needs to be out of love and compassion and therefore non-violent. It needs to model the hoped for sustainable, just, compassionate, collaborative, interdependent future in its strategies and its care of friend and foe. In this journey, we will need to be open to both the mystics and the prophets amongst us.

Pope Francis' address can be accessed at [http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2019/june/documents/papa-francesco\\_20190614\\_compagnie-petrolifere.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2019/june/documents/papa-francesco_20190614_compagnie-petrolifere.html)

*David Tutty, a Catholic missiologist, currently the Executive Officer to the Social Justice Commission of the Catholic Diocese of Toowoomba, Australia. David has been associated with Pax Christi NZ for many years. This article is written for Talking Cents. Talking Cents is an ecumenical group charged by the Auckland Anglican Diocesan Council to promote an alternative to current economic and political thought, and to encourage debate within the church. Ministry units are encouraged to distribute these articles. David has written this article in a personal capacity.*

## Royal Commission of Inquiry into the Attack on Christchurch Mosques on 15 March 2019

Pax Christi Aotearoa has recently made a submission to the Royal Commission of Inquiry. The following content was in our submission:

Pax Christi Aotearoa New Zealand is an independent section of Pax Christi International, the Catholic peace movement set up 74 years ago in France following the end of the Second World War. It began with a bold and courageous French woman who crossed the border into Germany to seek peace and reconciliation with the German people. Peaceful relations were strengthened, and a movement began. Since its inception, Pax Christi has spread to more than 50 countries and now has members and associates across all faiths and representation at the United Nations. In furthering the international mission, seeking 'peace for all everywhere', our section has focused on a range of issues, some relating to: Te Tiriti o Waitangi, the development of peaceful relationships among nations in the Asia-Pacific region, the protection of human rights, and to disarmament and demilitarisation.

Pax Christi would like to make reference to: 3 'Scope on Inquiry', vi (d) 'whether there was any inappropriate concentration of, or priority setting for counter-terrorism resources by relevant State sector agencies prior to the attack' and 5 'Matters upon which recommendations are sought' (b) 'What changes if any, should be implemented to improve relevant State sector agency systems or operational practices to ensure the prevention of such attacks in future'.

# Royal Commission of Inquiry into the Attack on Christchurch Mosques on 15 March 2019 cont.

## **3 ‘Scope on Inquiry’, vi (d) ‘whether there was any inappropriate concentration of, or priority setting for counter-terrorism resources by relevant State sector agencies prior to the attack’.**

Pax Christi Aotearoa New Zealand is concerned that there appears to have been an undue focus on Islamic groups by our intelligence agencies and a lack of focus on white supremacy groups. Pax Christi recommends that focus by intelligence agencies should be on groups and individuals whose actions could promote violence and hate and not on specific ethnic or faith groups per se.

## **5 ‘Matters upon which recommendations are sought’ (b) What changes if any, should be implemented to improve relevant State sector agency systems or operational practices to ensure the prevention of such attacks in future’.**

Pax Christi Aotearoa New Zealand recommends that up to date, correct and impartial education be given to agencies involved in intelligence and security within and beyond New Zealand on the faith, values and culture of all ethnic groups within Aotearoa New Zealand.

### NOTE:

1. Education of agencies on these matters needs to be regular and comply with the articles of Te Tiriti o Waitangi particularly in regard the spoken assurance made by Hobson to Bishop Pompallier at the original signing of Te Tiriti, regarding the preservation of the religious rights and freedoms of peoples.

2. The Human Rights Commission should oversee such education and ensure that educational content is neither biased nor contravenes Human Rights Law.

3. Pax Christi Aotearoa New Zealand recommends that all intelligence and security agencies are trained to listen actively. A concern of many ethnic groups is that they feel that agencies like the Police do not listen carefully to their concerns regarding issues happening in their communities. Ongoing and regular training in active listening is a necessary tool for all those who maintain the peace within Aotearoa New Zealand.

4. Although it falls beyond the scope of this Royal Commission’s investigation, Pax Christi recommends the education on the faith, values and culture of all ethnic groups within all New Zealand schools and tertiary institutions to ensure the prevention of radicalisation of people. This could help prevent the repetition of another terrorist event like that which occurred on March 15th, 2019.

Thank you for your consideration of our recommendations.

*Barbara & Kevin McBride went to the AGM of Pax Christi Australia mid- August, here is their report...*

## Visit to Pax Christi Australia AGM, Melbourne, 16-18 August 2019

The 2019 National Conference of Pax Christi Australia was held at the Kildara Centre, Malvern, commencing with a welcome and meal on the evening of Friday 16 August. Proceedings began with registration then a buffet meal at 6.30 pm. Harry Kerr, Coordinator of Pax Christi Melbourne, led the welcome then chaired a discussion session, "Where is Peace Today?" which focused on the question: "Why are we violent?" which had been circulated prior to the conference. In a previous response sent in before the conference, we referred to the non-violence practised by NZ Forces sent to Bougainville in the 1990s, referring to the film "Soldiers Without Guns", and the response of Prime Minister Ardern to the Christchurch massacre. We also referred to our high levels of suicide and family violence. In answer to further questions asking for three factors which illustrate our approach, we mentioned the "Well-being Budget", which aimed to address libertarian policies of earlier governments, proposed gun-control laws, and current high pollution rates in water and land and related high levels of dairy-farming. There are positive signs in the increased use of Te Reo Maori in public broadcasting and in schools and our own hopes to develop a peace spirituality more closely related to Maori values.

The Saturday session began at 9.30 am with prayer, followed by a keynote address "Exposing Violence: Steps on the Way to Peace" delivered by Sr Susan Connelly, RSJ. Basing her address on the work of Rene Girard, she considered violence from the point of view of scapegoating,

drawing attention to historical and contemporary examples and explaining how the Gospels reverse the myth through the image of Jesus. After discussion on the general topic, she focused on its application to the situation in Australia, where indigenous people have been scapegoated under the "terra nullius" myth, a primary example of violence perpetrated by application of "white supremacy" and resulting in land pollution as well as unjust subjugation of a people and their culture.

The afternoon began with the showing of a film on "Timor Leste" which showed the process by which village people retrieve honey from tall forest. Climate change and the depopulation of the countryside have affected the yield of honey.

Following that, small groups formed to discuss a range of topics. Kevin attended one on "Our unfinished response to indigenous Australians" while Barbara went to "Abandoning the stranger at our gate", which dealt with immigration policy, particularly related to refugees and asylum-seekers. As might be expected, there was deep dissatisfaction towards current Australian policy in both areas and some admiration of New Zealand's approach. At one point, a picture of Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern, based on the Pacific Leaders' meeting in Tuvalu, was posted on the screen, headed by an enthusiastic "Go Jacinda!". The afternoon finished with drinks and nibbles followed by a meal, with all the vegetarian food being provided by a refugee-led catering group.

The Sunday morning session was devoted to the Annual General Meeting of Pax Christi Australia and opened with reports from each of the three Australian groups, in Victoria, New South Wales and Queensland. We were invited to give a brief report on our work in New Zealand in which we included our moves towards developing a peace spirituality. These were based on local values held by Maori in relation to God, land,

## Visit to Pax Christi Australia AGM, Melbourne, 16-18 August 2019 cont.

and people, represented by whanaungatanga (relationships), tapu (concepts of sacredness), mana (the power to act for good), utu (the idea of balance and reciprocity) and manaakitanga (the duty of care). We also mentioned our public Study Sessions and changes to our national office situation.

Among matters covered in the Annual Meeting, were those related to the upcoming World Assembly planned for Hiroshima in 2020. There was some strong criticism of the current draft programme which was felt to be too focused on “peace tourism” with too little emphasis on situations of conflict and peace which face the people of this region, as distinct from those in Europe and the Americas. Included among these is the threat, particularly to small island nations, presented by the effects of climate change and also the growing rivalry between USA and China for dominance in various aspects of trade and militarism. Suggestions for changes would be sent to the World Assembly organising committee.

There was also regret expressed about the failure of the new international Secretary-General to include Australia in her recent visit to New Zealand and a hope that the new staff appointments would enable her to visit in the not-too-distant future. The meeting concluded with a liturgy led by Harry Kerr and Claude Mostowik, followed by closing lunch, again catered for by the refugee group.

Once again, we are grateful to Pax Christi Australia for including New Zealand observers in their national gathering.

Kevin and Barbara McBride



## Pax Christi International World Assembly Remember, Rise: The Promise of Peace 75th Anniversary Gathering in Hiroshima, Japan, May 18-22, 2020.

Registration is now open for the PCI World Assembly in Hiroshima, Japan, next year. Go to the Pax Christi International website <https://www.paxchristi.net/news/join-us-hiroshima-japan-may-2020-remember-rise-promise-peace-pax-christi-internationals-world>. For more information on registration and a list of close hotels to the International Conference Centre, where the Assembly will be held. Those from New Zealand who are interested in going could you please let the Pax Christi Aotearoa New Zealand national office know through email on [paxnz@xtra.co.nz](mailto:paxnz@xtra.co.nz). We invite you also to promote the event using the following hashtags: #Hiroshima2020, #RememberRise, #PaxChristi75, #WA2020.

## Pax Christi Aotearoa New Zealand

Pax Christi is an independent Catholic social justice organisation. We work hard to address issues of peace and justice at a local, regional and global level.

If you want to know more about Pax Christi, to join meetings, or to set up group meetings in your area, please contact [paxnz@xtra.co.nz](mailto:paxnz@xtra.co.nz) or ring 09 377 5541.

Pax Christi relies on volunteers & donations to enable the work to continue.

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Editor: Bridget Crisp rsm  
Promotor/Manager of Pax Christi Aotearoa NZ.

## Diary Dates

Sept 1st - Oct 4th

Season of Creation

21st Sept UN International Day of Peace.

26th Sept World Day against Trafficking of Persons.



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