

Book launch creates a buzz

Rev Barry Jones

More than 140 people from many different denominations and justice and peace organisations filled the main hall of the Columba Catholic Centre, Ponsonby, Auckland, on February 22 for the launch of the thought-provoking book, *Listening to the People of the Land: Christianity, Colonisation and the Path to Redemption*.

Dr Susan Healy, a lay member of the Catholic Dominican Order, conceived the idea for the book in 2016 and invited 13 other people to join her in contributing to the book's contents. Dr Healy acted as the book's editor.

At the launch, guest speaker Sue Bradford gave a stimulating presentation on the theme "Facing our Colonial History: a Challenge for All". Sue, better known as the former Green MP, is a descendant of two of the early Church Missionary Society (CMS) missionaries: Joseph Matthews and Richard Davies. Sue said that, while she has not belonged to any branch of Christianity, "This book calls to me profoundly." She thanked the book's contributors - 11 of whom were present at the launch - for the passion, research and knowledge they brought to the publication.

Rev Dr Arapera (Bella) Ngaha and Rev Barry Jones each contributed a chapter in the book focussing on the Methodist bicultural journey. The ministers were asked to create a liturgy for the blessing

of the book, and jointly conduct the blessing. The words of the blessing were:

"In the name and strength of the God who seeks a just and fulfilling life for all, we invoke God's blessing on the book. May its contents challenge and inspire its readers to be proactive in addressing the enduring consequences of colonisation here in Aotearoa New Zealand."

In introducing the book, editor Susan Healy said it was conceived to achieve two things: to look at the underlying causes of the harm of colonisation and Christianity's contribution to that harm, and to search out how Christian churches, and those of Christian persuasion, could play their part in healing the deep-seated ills of colonisation.

The book is published by *Pax Christi Aotearoa/New Zealand*, the local independent section of the international peace movement founded by the Catholic Church in France 1945. *Pax Christi* is currently engaged in Treaty of Waitangi issues as well as other projects.

Contributors did not receive payment for their work. Any profits from sales of the book will go to the development of indigenous theology.

Copies of the book can be ordered online from Accent Publications www.accentpublications.co.nz (Cost \$40 including postage).

John Meredith has reviewed the book in this issue of Touchstone.

Sue Bradford's presentation is available to view on www.paxchristiaotearoa.nz