

PUBLIC ISSUES NETWORK

Pope Francis's *Laudato Si* gives a fine theological reference for the pivotal year of Climate negotiations. Pope Francis following his namesake, celebrates the sun and the moon, plants and creatures, water and oceans and earth as brothers and sisters. In this understanding of an inter-related universe climate is the underlying life support system that sustains the fabric of life of the planetary system.

As this report goes to press Public Issues is working with the President Aumua and Vice-President Arapera and MM&E for a Methodist church response to Refugees.

CHURCH NETWORKS

Te Taha Māori

PIN Reports to Hui Poari and meets with Tumuaki Diana and members of Te Taha Māori as often as needs and opportunities allow. Topics for 2015 include the proposed Methodist hosted Climate Workshop, transitions to Low Carbon, Fresh Water governance.

Tauivi – Sinoti Samoa, Vahefonua Public issues works actively with Sinoti Samoa Social Issues Group and Vahefonua Social Issues Group. The congregation and parish base for Sinoti and Vahefonua is an inspiration for addressing the aspirations and needs in these communities. Regular, ongoing work for education, support for families and community initiatives with the use of professional expertise to support such initiatives, are a feature of the social issues committees.

Parishes

The engagement and contributions of parishes are the life and soul of Public Issues, as they bring a grounded, local reality to issues that are often activated at the national level.

A big vote of thanks to all parishes and parishioners who contribute to Public Issues, and who bring attention to local issues as well as to the scope of national issues.

A few parishes initiate links with Public Issues. For example:

- The Palmerston North and Kapiti Social Issues and Let the Children Live groups meet regularly to discuss topics at hand and to put issues on the agenda. Response to Syrian refugees is on the agenda of both groups. They engaged in consultation child vulnerability, the Child Hardship bill. Palmerston North is active on the Convention to End All Discrimination Against Women, they work with the City Council to monitor election promises for children.
- A New Brighton group met throughout the year to revise the Green Church criteria for Aotearoa NZ.
- Members of the Papatoetoe parish raised matters of youth unemployment and public health.
- Wesley, Taranaki St is involved with the Living Wage and contributes to local Public Issues, as well as submissions.
- Trinity Newtown – on child hardship and the broader issues of the need for change in economic direction
- Mataiva Robertson, Sinoti Samoa regularly prepares Samoan language articles on Public Issues for Sinoti.
- Soana Muimuiheata is on the Vahefonua Social Issues Committee, Siola, and will bring matters to the attention of Public issues, as well as requesting engagement in national issues.
- Parishes in Hamilton, including Chartwell, St John's and the City parish are interested and active on Public Issues. Chartwell engages on environmental and social issues.

Often the Public Issues Co-ordinator will contact parishes on topical issues. There have been contributions on Family Violence, Climate responsibility, local and national issues of freshwater, child hardship and vulnerability, Living Wage, Trans Pacific Partnership. Jan Fogg, Thames parish, gave input into the building guidelines resource (Green Church Aotearoa)

Public Issues prepares regular communications with messages for bulletins and links and

websites. This year we were active on the Child Hardship Bill, the Strengthening the Law for Family Violence and the Climate consultations. Many parishioners responded to the opportunity of our Submission on Child Hardship. We do not think that \$25 per week per family will reduce hardship, as the government proposes. Rev. Motokiai and some of the Wesley Taranaki parishioners attended the hearing for Public Issues.

Methodist Mission and Ecumenical

Appreciation is expressed to Prince for his ongoing support and engagement with Public Issues. Prince's support for the involvement in Public Issues in the WCC PCC Auckland Workshop, September 2015, is much appreciated. Betsan gave a presentation on climate change at the Auckland Workshop, and contributed to drafting the Statement of the Auckland Workshop for the WCC and COP21, and for the New Zealand Church Leaders.

PUBLIC ISSUES COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Migrants and Refugees

The migrant crisis worldwide, in Europe Syria and parts of Asia is a most compelling humanitarian crisis requiring a social justice response. As this Report goes to Press we note the strong calls to the NZ Government to double our minimal refugee quota of 750.

Amnesty is calling for the quota to be doubled. We ask Conference to consider how the church can contribute to alleviating the refugee crisis. In September President Tovia Aumua and Vice President Arapera Ngaha sent a media statement, circulated an eMessenger and sent a letter to the Prime Minister calling for increasing the New Zealand quota.

Clearly the real solutions lie in solving poverty and war – both beyond the immediate gambit of New Zealand's influence. We should not use our remoteness and smallness to sidestep taking a step in solidarity with desperate people. In the coming months, with the small increase in the number of refugees New Zealand will take (effectively 600 over 2.5 years, announced Sept 2015) we need to attend to the capacity of parishes to respond, and the kind of support that a parish can provide.

The Living Wage

Wellington meetings have been given a great boost with the appointment of a Wellington-based Living Wage co-ordinator (funded by J.R. McKenzie Trust). The early part of the year was focussed on the Wellington 10 year Plan and ensuring that there is commitment to follow through on agreements for the Living Wage, including both directly employed and contracted employees. A 'Mop March' in July, led by cleaners went along with submissions to the Wellington Plan. Ministers and parishioners from Porirua, Wellington and PIN supported ensuring the Living Wage is in the Council Plan.

Living Wage Porirua was launched in Porirua in August to engage with the Porirua City Council. Although the Porirua Council has turned down the Living Wage they haven't heard the last of the action! There was a big public turnout for the launch identifying a large business or company will be important for taking the Living Wage further into the business sector. A similar response can be heard in Lower Hutt – Hutt Valley City Council Chief executive David Kiddey said, in 2013 raising wages from the minimum wage of \$13.50 to \$18.40 an hour would cause massive unemployment in Lower Hutt and limit new job creation. Living wage is underway in Lower Hutt.

Although the focus in this report is on Wellington, Christchurch and Auckland are both dynamic centres for Living wage action.

Just Transitions

A group associated with the CTU and the Union-Enviro Group is running occasional workshops on Just Transitions. This is a major step forward for Unions to be looking at the interests of workers with an environmental lens. In the past, the priority of jobs have trumped climate issues. Now there is an emerging drive to integrate the interest of jobs and worker protections with climate justice. They are very interested in what the Methodist church is doing on the transitions pathway.

Trans Pacific Partnership

Mobilization on the TPP has mounted this year with Marches throughout the country as information on the likely impacts of the TPP are exposed. There are almost daily articles from different sectors: medical professionals concerned about the undermining of public health, the over-riding of human rights, aggressive commercial interests over-riding state social and environmental responsibilities, such as restrictions on tobacco, sidelining of human-trafficking and many forms of labour exploitation. The details are formidable.

The main rallying points continue to be the secrecy of the negotiations, and Investor Stated Disputes Tribunals, in which companies can sue a government for laws and regulations which effect profits. Many New Zealanders oppose a deal for which the terms are not be open to democratic engagement.

Public Issues works with partners on the TPP including the CTU (Union-Enviro Group), and a coalition that meets periodically: Ora Taiao, Nurses Association, CTU, NZ Education Institute, Environment and Conservation Organizations', Churches, Coal Action network, University Students Assn. This group is given briefings by Jane Kelsey periodically.

Inequality

Inequality continues to be a reference point for Public Issues work on poverty. It is very important because it invokes a whole of system approach by accounting for the disproportionate allocation of wealth is accounted for. Poverty is to a large extent a function of distribution and the social and economic systems that rely on unjust inequality.

ECOLOGY AND ECONOMY – JOINING TOGETHER STEWARDSHIP RESPONSIBILITIES

Public Issues and Climate / Low Carbon

This is an optimum year for mobilizing on climate. Rev. Aso Saleupolu has championed the Methodist church hosting an ecumenical Climate Workshop and the committee for this has met twice. We have postponed the Workshop until 12 March 2016 (to be confirmed). A longer lead-in will have the benefit of more time to circulate information, and also to have the perspective after the December COP21 summit in Paris.

When the government held a public consultation on New Zealand's Nationally Determined Contribution there were groups all around the country wanting to give a clear message for a strong commitment from New Zealand. Public Issues hosted 3 discussions with groups and organizations we work with (including Gen Zero, 350.Org, church people, ECO, Enspiral) and expert advisors to prepare a submission. In essence the government focused on a target for reducing emissions and does not propose a pathway to achieving a target. The discussion document was framed only in terms of the costs to business of climate change responses in policy. It does not identify the costs of inaction, from economic and moral perspectives. At the consultations there was widespread disgust with the inaction and lack of planning for a low carbon economy.

At present NZ meets 4/5ths of our emissions target (currently 5% below 1990) by buying carbon units; not by reducing emissions. Indeed NZ is currently about 25% above 1990 levels, so we are dramatically failing to meet even a low 5% target.

When New Zealand announced our Contributions, these are

- A provisional post-2020 target of 30 per cent below our 2005 greenhouse gas emissions levels by 2030
- An unconditional target of five per cent below our 1990 greenhouse gas emissions levels by 2020

The rather convoluted language means that we have lowered the bar by going for a benchmark of 2005, which was when our emissions peaked at nearly 80 mega-tons of CO₂ (compared to 60 mt in 1990).

Public Issues worked with the Green Church Aotearoa Group to produce a Building Guide for the Church. This will be reported on under Green Church Aotearoa.

Freshwater

Public Issues attends key meetings in Wellington on Freshwater. It is an area of great importance to iwi Māori, to farmers and commercial users of water such as power generating companies, and is of great concern to environmental organizations and academic researchers who consider the National standards set for freshwater, as 'wadeable' level, are too low. The high stakes are linked to irrigation and NZ's growth Strategy to double farm exports by 2025.

We keep a watching brief and where possible engage with the Land and Water Forum, a coalition of environmental NGO's, with Iwi Leaders and with the Sir Eddie Durie and the New Zealand Māori Council visionary proposal for freshwater governance. It addresses commercial interests, restitution of Māori interests, and wider public good interests in Freshwater.

Principle of Responsibility

The far-reaching aspect of stewardship is expressed in a principle of responsibility alongside that of rights. Responsibility is a relational value, a foundation stone laid with God's inquiry to Cain and the response, 'Am I my brother's keeper'. It is a custodial value for contributing to sustaining the planet from every level of our capability and spheres of influence: personal, organizational, governmental and global. Rights are important for social justice; however social justice rights are expanded to refer to commercial rights which can outweigh custodial responsibilities.

Responsibility for earth as our home expresses a divine quality of creation and the interdependence between all forms of life, and it sits well with the world view of a 'woven universe' and the centrality of obligation in indigenous societies.

Responsibility is about the exercise of power at all levels including governance roles. It is intended to engage support for integration across sectors and disciplines, and to advance transitions to sustainable societies.

LET THE CHILDREN LIVE

Coalition for Children

Public Issues is part of the coalition for Children, which uses the name *Tick4Kids*, which was developed during the election. Collaborators include UNICEF, Ora Taiao, Public Health Association, Nurses Organization, Child Poverty Action Group, Child Poverty Network, Child Wellbeing Network, Every Child Counts, NZ Education Institute, Council of Trade Unions.

This group held meetings around the Children in Hardship Bill, the Vulnerable Children's consultation and the Family Violence consultation. A Strategic Priorities Session was held early in the year to keep momentum going on action for children. Child poverty and parenting were priorities for the group as a whole. It is very valuable to work with these groups.

Other Associated Let Children Live Activities

- Contributions to the Children in Hardship Bill.
- Family Violence Consultation
- The important programme of work by Sinoti Samoa, and other programmes by the church, including by Vahefonua, on family violence is valuable for feeding into the major work being led by the Ministry of Justice and the Minister of Social Development. We are in discussion about enabling this work to be documented and identify key contributors and barriers to successful family violence work and to improving safety for children and families.

SUBMISSIONS

- Children in Hardship
- Korea Free Trade agreement
- Climate consultation
- Strengthening the Law on Domestic Violence
- Vulnerable children (Treasury consultation)

COMMUNICATIONS

- Regular items to parishes for bulletins
- New style monthly PIN News & via
- Touchstone
- PIN items on website
- e-Messenger

Suggested decisions:

1. That the report be received
2. **Refugees**
 - (a) That the Methodist church supports doubling the annual NZ Refugee quota with an appropriate increase in funds to support settlement.
 - (b) That the Methodist church will continue take appropriate steps to advocate and support these increases.
 - (c) Conference asks Public Issues to clarify how parishes can contribute to supporting refugee resettlement.
3. **Climate**

Conference encourages Public Issues to continue involvement in:

 - (a) Climate responsibility and Green Church Aotearoa Initiatives.
 - (b) The work to identify practical steps the Church can take to move to Low Carbon
4. **Oversight Group membership**
 - (a) Public Issues thanks Rev. John Murray for his support for Public Issues.
 - (b) Membership of the PIN Oversight Group for 2016 to be: President Tovia Aumua, Vice President Arapera Ngaha, Tumuaki Diana Tana, Prince Devanandan, Soana Muimuiheata, Mataiva Robertson, Marion Hines, David Bush, Betsan Martin. Others may be appointed by the President.

GREEN CHURCH AOTEAROA

Green Church was given a mandate to work on pathways for the church to transition to low carbon.

The Committee for Green Church met in April 2015. The following items were identified for action in 2015:

1. Prepare a guide as a resource for low carbon building for the church.
2. Review the Gronkirke criteria <http://www.gronkirke.dk/english/> for recognition as a Green Church
3. Prepare 4 children's resources for the month of the Season of Creation
4. Engage with Te Taha Māori and representatives of all synods to host a workshop on Climate Change
5. Propose the church offers the opportunity for two parishes to become models of community building around initiatives for low carbon transitions.

1. Building Guide

With the assistance of an architect who works on low carbon design, energy systems and building materials we prepared a resource. The resource includes a theological introduction and engaging with parish community, sections on optimizing potential of the sight, making the most of space and materials, enhancing the indoor environment, energy systems, conserving water, and operations and maintenance.

We prepared a draft resource which was reviewed by the Methodist Church Property Committee. Following advice from Greg Wright, adjustments were made to bring the resource into line with Methodist Policy. The resource will be available on the Methodist church website on the Public Issues page.

2. Criteria for Recognition as Green Church

Mark Gibson has worked throughout the year with a group from his New Brighton Parish to consider the 48 criteria set out in the Danish Grøn Kirk programme. The working group came up with 46 criteria, a copy of which is appended to this report. The purpose of these criteria is to encourage parishes to become active on whatever scale is feasible, from theology, creation-affirming worship, community building, to planting apple trees and installing solar systems. It is proposed that Conference supports the principles of a green church programme, such as Gronkirke, and encourages parishes to engage and further develop action plans suitable for their parish during 2016. A Report to Conference in 2016 will incorporate further parish suggestions for activating the Green Church Aotearoa Movement.

3. Children's Resources

Work to develop these resources will continue in 2016

4. Methodist Climate Workshop

Rev. Aso Saleupolu has led an initiative for a Climate Workshop. The Workshop is to be Methodist hosted and ecumenical, and organized in reference to the Pacific. It is open to all, with a special interest in resourcing Topics are:

- (a) Update on the science and impacts for New Zealand and Pacific situations
- (b) Appropriate responses
- (c) Climate commitments and strategies for engagement
- (d) Theological considerations

The Pacific exposure to the impact of climate change is recognized through the eloquent and strategic advocacy of their leaders. As a church with strong connections to Pacific nations, we have a special interest in climate impacts for fanau. Nationally determined climate commitments of major powers and of neighbor countries for COP21, Paris December 2015, are not sufficient to turn the climbing graphs of projected emissions towards stabilizing at a 2 degrees Celsius rise in temperature.

The Workshop will be held 12 March, 2016. This will have the benefit of review of the COP21 agreements in Paris and a new year to mobilize the church's pathways for low carbon economies.

5. Model Parishes

A proposal was submitted to PAC for two grants of \$30,000 to resource two parishes (or collaboration parishes) to take the lead in becoming climate-just parishes.

Climate-just includes:

- (a) processes for engagement of parish and community in transitions to low carbon
- (b) decision-making that takes account of the health of ecosystems and the planet – ie acting at the local level by taking account of global interdependence, and in the interests of equitable global responsibility
- (c) purchasing decisions – such as fair trade goods, no plastic, recyclable materials
- (d) support for people displaced and impoverished by climate impacts

Our proposal is to put out a call for Expressions of Interest for such an initiative, with the parish community itself determining its priorities.

The idea is for both infrastructure and for community building, which are often overlapping. For example, a small fleet of free bikes available to the community as both energy and networking benefits. A choice to use parish grounds for food production is a visible message of food sustainability, sharing and hospitality. A solar installation is a visible sign of transition with positive benefits of using renewable energy and lower power costs.

Suggested decisions:

1. That the report be received
2. That Conference notes the building resource 'Guiding Light' as a reference for all decisions on building and renovations
3. That Conference supports in principle, proceeding with the Climate-Just model for parishes. This includes progressing the development of parish guidelines and initiatives for Green Church Aotearoa that contribute to low carbon and renewable energy use.
4. That Green Church Aotearoa continues to work with Council of Conference to identify a plan of action and consults with Synods, Hui Poari and Parishes in 2016 as it proceeds with Climate-Just with this initiatives.

Appendix

A Model Using Criteria and Certification for Green Church

The idea of developing criteria, such as these, is that they form the basis for developing an action plan which is relevant and effective in a parish. Discernment is needed in identifying actions which will contribute to transitions to low carbon. The Grønkirk model proposes a system of certification based on selecting items from the seven categories

If a certification system is adopted in Aotearoa with a list further developed, we might prefer to identify one significant area of activity which is of more value and significance than several activities.

New Brighton Points for becoming a Green Church

Church services:

1. Arrange four seasonal services, which celebrate the particular season, with creation, climate change or the environment as a theme.
2. Arrange or take part in an open-air service at least once a year.
3. Arrange or take part in an annual service focusing on climate and environmental justice.
4. Climate change, environment and justice themes regularly incorporated into services e.g. prayers and songs.
5. Arrange special offerings to support climate, environmental and humanitarian projects in the third world.
6. Acknowledge tangata whenua and relationships with place within your locality.

Education, Environment and Social Care:

7. Draw up a plan of action for working as a Green Church.
8. Integrate climate change, environment and justice into the church's educational programmes.
9. Promote material on climate change, environment and justice in the church magazine or bulletin; and on the church's website or facebook page, and in other appropriate channels of information.
10. Arrange at least one annual event focusing on climate change, environment and justice.
11. Participate in public appeals for the benefit of climate and environment projects in the developing countries.
12. Arrange fund-raising events for the benefit of climate- and environment projects in the third world.
13. Adopt a local waterway or beach, research issues relating to its well-being and degradation, educate the parish on what you learn, and then implement actions that contribute to restoration.

Church purchases:

14. In the spirit of "reduce, reuse, recycle" church purchases and disposal of items are regularly critically appraised.
15. Choose fair trade products where available.
16. Choose locally-produced foods where available.
17. Choose eco-labelled products where available.

18. Choose organic foods where available.
19. Limit the use of chemicals in cleaning by for instance using eco-labelled cleaning products.
20. Make eco-friendly and/or organic improvements on the church property such as gardens and the church grounds.
21. Carry out nature conservation such as tree planting to attract bees and native birds, securing open areas on church properties and/or securing organic farming on church farmland.
22. Use rechargeable batteries and make sure that these are disposed of appropriately, when they can't be recharged any more.
23. Choose local, environmentally-approved, organic or fair trade supplier of goods and services, when possible.

Church use of energy:

24. Undertake an annual energy-saving survey of the church buildings (worship centre, parish hall, parsonage, manse etc.).
25. Give priority to low energy consumption and good fuel economy when purchasing electronic devices, such as fridges, washing machines, computers and machines for the church property.
26. Investigate power company options in your region to identify where their energy supply comes from; and to contract a supplier that is as close to 100% renewable as possible.
27. Use energy-saving light bulbs and energy saving sockets where expedient; and switch off the lights, heaters, computers and other machines when rooms are not in use..
28. Install a solar panel or micro-wind turbine on a church building to supplement other energy sources; and to if possible produce enough power to sell back to the grid.
29. Reduce the use of meat, dairy products, and especially beef in parish meals.

Church transport:

30. Install user-friendly, bicycle-parking at the church for worshippers, volunteers, staff and the wider community
31. Purchase and hire cycles for local use.
32. Walk, or use bicycles, busses, trains where possible in preference to private cars and planes in the course of parish life. To support this measure implement a bicycle or public transport allowance for paid church workers; and provide one or several cycles for local transport of church personnel and volunteers.
33. Arrange vehicle-share transport on church outings.
34. Establish an accessible refuelling station for electric cars on your site.
35. Pay CO2 emissions compensation, when booking flights.
36. Implement where possible electronic meetings and training events to minimize travel costs and carbon emissions.

Church waste (reduction and management):

37. Use eco-certified or/recycled paper.
38. Copy on both sides of the paper sheet, when expedient.
39. Compost small organic waste, or utilise local organic waste services.
40. Fully utilise local-body recycling systems.
41. Take chemical waste and used toner/printer cartridges to approved receivers; and investigate options for refilling or recycling as a regular practice.
42. Establish collection, and/or exchange containers on your parish site, for clothes, books, or any other second-hand goods, to facilitate the sale and exchange of used goods. Sale goods could stock a church Opportunity Shop, or be given to local second-hand shops.

Water Use:

43. Install necessary equipment to harvest rainwater from church building roofs and use for watering church garden and lawns.
44. Create a rain-garden for the diversion of storm-water collected on site, in order to reduce pressure on the public storm-water system, and the pollution of local waterways.
45. Limit the use of water by installing an efficient dishwasher, using dual-flush toilets, and refrain from irrigating parish lawns from the main supply.
46. Regularly check all taps – internal and external – and promptly repair any that are leaking.

INTERCHURCH BIOETHICS COUNCIL



The InterChurch Bioethics Council (ICBC) is an ecumenical cross-cultural body supported by the Anglican, Methodist and Presbyterian Churches of Aotearoa New Zealand. ICBC members have between them, considerable expertise and knowledge in science, ethics, theology, medicine, education and mātauranga Māori (Māori knowledge). Biotechnology is the term that relates to biological, medical, environmental and agricultural technologies derived from science. Bioethics is an interdisciplinary category of ethics that provides the framework for policy and decision-making with regard to scientific research and resulting technologies; including future consequences, legal, political, commercial, theological and social aspects.

Our key tasks are:

- To increase our own knowledge and understanding of the interface between spirituality and biotechnology;
- To engage in consultation and dialogue with church members, community groups and specialists on the ethical, spiritual and cultural issues raised by biotechnology;
- To undertake and promote education on these issues within the community;
- To make appropriate submissions to Government and other relevant organizations on important issues of ethical and spiritual concern.

The Bioethics Roadshow, which was initiated by the ICBC now comes under a separate Trust and has extended its work with young people beyond Years 12-13 to Years 9-10 and Year 8. The Roadshow has gained recognition within both state and independent schools – and there is now competition between schools wishing to host the workshop. Feedback from participants is always enthusiastic. The significance of this programme is in raising awareness among young people of the importance of these biotechnical ethical issues. This is a group which, in general surveys, is notable for its absence; an indication that without being exposed to the issues they consider them to be ‘irrelevant’.

For Church members the most important part of our work will be found on our website. Every congregation should include <http://www.interchurchbioethics.org.nz/> as a resource. Find us on Facebook at www.facebook.com/InterChurchBioethicsCouncil. The website is continually updated. Among the most recent additions are reports on mitochondrial donation (3-parent babies) and perinatal ethics (where beginning and end of life issues can merge). The website has study guides, papers, and reports that can give a framework or guidelines for ethical enquiry that is separate from what appears in the mass media. In the coming months, this could be particularly relevant to discussions on end-of-life issues

The webpage is linked to the web pages for the three churches, and also has links to other relevant sites. It also has a complete list of the ICBC membership.

The ICBC would be happy to facilitate local meetings dealing with specific issues. We are there to help you!

Suggested decisions:

1. The Report is received.
2. The Methodist members of the InterChurch Bioethics Council for the next year will be: Rev Dr Barbara Peddie (Co-Chair), Shirley Rivers, and Filo Tu.