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Public Questions Network News

January 2012

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Covenantal greetings for 2012! Parishes renew covenants in February . The heart of the Covenant Service is 'On one hand God promises to give us new life in Christ: on the other we pledge not to live with ourselves but for God.

The Covenant renews a spirit of reciprocity , and invites mutual trust, offering recommitment to bringing God's kingdom on earth. The Covenantal liturgy in Aotearoa, being in February, is time to bring a national focus to Te Tiriti – a covenant to benefit all, and still to be fulfilled.

This first newsletter for 2012 includes information for the Green Paper, issues of welfare, legislation on food, and international matters of public importance to Aotearoa New Zealand- TPPA and Rio+20.

Green Paper

The Green Paper on Vulnerable Children, "Every child thrives, belongs, achieves' is now on top for Government and Social Services with submissions due 28th February. Comments are invited from all people concerned with the vulnerability and wellbeing of New Zealand children. 'Every child thrives, belongs, achieves' is in Te Reo Maori, Samoan, Tongan and English at www.childrensactionplan.govt.nz . In Aotearoa NZ 15% of children are 'vulnerable'.

Meetings and Seminars

Minister Bennett is doing a road show this week!

Monday 23 January

- **Kaitia** 10am - Far North Community Centre, cnr Matthews Ave and Church St, 3.30pm
- **Whangarei** - Ngati Hine. Level 1, 5 Walton St,

Tuesday 24 January

- **Rotorua** 9.30am - Plunket House, 1436 Pukuatua St,
- **Taupo** 2pm - REAP, 73 Titiraupenga St, Taupo

Wednesday 25 January

- **Lower Hutt** 6pm - Little Theatre, 2 Queens Dr,

Thursday 26 January

- **Henderson** 9.30am - Waitakere Community Resource Centre, 8 Ratanui St, Manukau 1.30pm –
- **Manukau** Civic Centre, Kotuku House, Manukau Square,

Friday 27 January

- **Auckland** 2pm - Fickling Convention Centre, Hillsborough Room, 546 Mt Albert Rd, Mt Roskill,

Seminar Series on the Green paper by Social Service Providers Aotearoa

These will provide disucssion of the Green Paper, with the benefit of excellent contributors.

Dates, Times and Venues:

- Auckland 1 February, Waipuna Lodge, Derrick Cole Theatre, Mt Wellington, 10.30am to 4pm
- Wellington 2 February, St Johns in the City, at the corner of Willis and Dixon St, 10.30am to 4pm
- Christchurch, 8 February, St Albans Baptist Church, 64 McFaddens Rd, St Albans, 10.30 am to 4pm
- Dunedin, 9 February, Hutton Theatre, Otago Museum, 10.30am to 4pm

Cost: Free to SSPA members, \$20 for non-SSPA members to assist with catering costs.

All participants please register with Marama Jackson at info@sspa.org.nz

Further information: Contact John Dickson, info@sspa.org.nz ; ph 027 510-1517. www.sspa.org.nz.

Green Paper Information

We have already given some main points from Minister Paula Bennett's Green Paper. An overview of the Green paper and a **new short article with main points and questions** to focus on for your input are at http://www.methodist.org.nz/public_questions_network>

These are some of the questions being asked

- **How to we share responsibility** for the wellbeing of children in our communities? What are the strengths in your community that contribute to child wellbeing? (are there libraries and parks and pools? Are there school holiday programmes? Are these free or affordable for low income families? Do they support whanau? Do they provide activities for Pasifika families?
- **How can services work together?** Collaboration is a key to good practice. Do you know examples where nurses and doctors, care-workers and teachers, Work and Income case workers, employment agencies get together to provide joined up services for families? Or to share information so that support is brought to families early? Do you have any suggestions for how this could happen?
- **What do you think about the allocation of government money?** If there is no *new* money do you think the government could re-prioritize the budget? Could money come from sources that were found for 'The Hobbit' and for bailing out failed finance companies?
- **What is our commitment to Child Centred Policies and an Action Plan?** An action plan is to assist government decisions about funding, laws and policies to reduce the vulnerability of children.
- **New Zealand has very low commitment to child wellbeing** compared other OECD countries. Prevention of risk and vulnerability through early intervention is the most effective. At the moment our lack of commitment to child wellbeing is costing about \$6billion per year. Do you think we could change this and do better?

What questions are not being asked?

- How to solve child poverty? And unemployment with active employment and labour market policies?
- How does the Green Paper link with the new Government Commission on Poverty
- How does the Green Paper feed into the expected welfare reform and the new benefit structure under 'Jobseeker Support'?
- What values do we wish to give priority to? What responsibility do we wish to take for a Fair Society
- How is inequality contributing to the vulnerability of children and families?

Websites:

- <http://www.saysomething.org.nz/>
- <http://www.childrensactionplan.govt.nz/home/community-meetings>>
- <http://www.msd.govt.nz/about-msd-and-our-work/newsroom/factsheets/budget/2011/childrens-action-plan.html>

NZCCSS Future Wellbeing Conference. 18, 19, 20 April

Illustrious keynote speakers will bring the X factor to discussing New Zealand's social service future amidst policy, political and funding changes. An 'Auckland Day' on the 20th will bring a focus to Auckland issues. The conference will address questions such as: 'How do we maintain our commitments to responding to need in our communities, help whānau become stronger and New Zealand be a just and compassionate society? How do we ensure our services are effective and sustainable?'

This conference will provide **CEOs, managers, senior staff and board members** of community based (NGO) social services with vital information on the future of social service provision in New Zealand. This will be a challenging and thought provoking conference that explores the thinking behind government policy and practice and provides an opportunity for the sector to begin to develop an alternative vision for our whānau, families and communities.

Earlybird Registration open until 2nd March. Info at <http://www.socialservicesconf.org.nz/>

Climate Conference. 'Sea-level Rise – Meeting the Challenge' 10-11 May

A two-day Conference at Te Papa Museum in Wellington will examine the latest science regarding sea-level rise projections, discuss associated bio-physical and social impacts on the coastal environment and consider adaptation options via case studies from around New Zealand and internationally.

Please information at : www.nzclimatechangecentre.org/events

Wellbeing conference, 13-15 June 2012 <http://www.wellbeingandpublicpolicy.org/index.html>

Resources

Incase you missed:

'Inside Child Poverty', the TV showing of the documentary on child poverty you can listen to an interview with producer Bryan Bruce. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aosyR0zBSNs>

Russell Norman's Christmas speech in Parliament, Theology from an Athiest, see <http://www.greens.org.nz/speeches/address-reply-speech-21-december-2011>

Mining – Lignite and Fracking

Lignite is soft low quality coal. Of the three main fossil fuels natural gas, oil and coal, coal is the worst emitter of CO₂. World leader in climate science James Hansen is leading a campaign to phase out burning coal. Yet, Solid Energy and L&M Energy have exploration and mining permits for Southland where there are estimated to be 6 billion tonnes of lignite which can be mined. Proposals are under way for the production of briquettes and deisel from lignite and these will massively increase CO₂ emissions – together by 2.2 million tonnes per year.

For excellent information on plans under way for Lignite mining see the Anglican Social Justice Commission resource 'Just Lignite' at <http://www.justice.net.nz/r/img/uploads/2011/11/Just-Facts-Lignite.pdf> . For a booklet contact Anthony Dancer Justice@anglican.org.nz

For a resource on the extraction of natural gas by the use of toxic chemicals in high pressure water see 'Just Fracking' at <http://www.justice.net.nz/justwiki/just-facts-fracking/>

NZCCSS Vulnerability Report 2012 <http://www.justice.net.nz/r/img/uploads/2012/01/V.R-11.pdf>

Article on Poverty in New Zealand. 'Poverty Trap Set at Birth' is first in a series of articles by Simon Collins. This one gives the stark reality that children from poor families have much more limited life chances. It is not only that children have more health problems, do not do so well at school and have less opportunities than children in wealthier families. The effects of poverty go on throughout life, so that there are more teenage births, more crime, higher unemployment, more mental health and addiction problems. And these are costly. See <http://www.nzherald.co.nz/social-issues/news/article.cfm?c_id=87&objectid=10779433 >

Legislation : Food Bill - Alert

There have been a lot of emails about the Food Bill. A summary of the main points are below, and an edited version of a letter about the bill is on the Public Questions website. Certainly there is concern that the Bill, if passed could bring restrictions on growing food and on selling it. The bill to keep in line with NZ World Trade Organisation obligations under an international scheme called Codex Alimentarius, so it has to pass this bill in one form or another.

Jan Fogg mentioned possible implications for the many churches that sell pots of jam , preserves and vegies at garage sales and stalls, even Methodist Women's Fellowship. It would appear that no one will be allowed to sell any 'food' unless registered, or unless there is specific exemption. There's quite a lot of reading. There seems to be a link to the TPPA (see below) with implications that this kind of legislation comes with Free trade agreements.

In Summary

- It turns a right to grow food and share it into a government-authorized privilege that can be revoked.
- It makes it illegal to distribute "food" without authorization. It defines "food" in such a way that it includes nutrients, seeds, natural medicines, essential minerals and drinks (including water).
- By controlling seeds, the bill takes the power to grow food away from the public and puts it in the hands of seed companies. That power may be abused.
- The bill will push up mainstream food prices by subjecting producers to red tape and registration costs.
- Growing food for distribution must be authorized, even for "cottage industries", and such authorization can be denied.
- Under the Food Bill, Police acting as Food Safety Officers can raid premises without a warrant, using all equipment they deem necessary – including guns (Clause 265 – 1).

The Petition < <http://www.petitiononline.co.nz/petition/oppose-the-new-zealand-government-food-bill-160-2/1301>

Websites:

<http://www.legislation.govt.nz/bill/government/2010/0160/latest/whole.html?search=ts_bill_food+bill_resel&p=1#d1m3435700>

<http://nzfoodsecurity.org/>

<http://anh-europe.org/news/codex-misinformation-creates-public-confusion>

<http://gaia-health.com/gaia-blog/2011-11-26/new-zealand-becomes-codex-alimentarius-incarnate-food-as-commodity-not-nourishment/>

<http://blog.greens.org.nz/2011/09/13/food-bill-update-from-sue-kedgley/>

TPPA – Trans Pacific Partnership Agreement

President John Roberts signed up to the campaign to stop the TPPA last year. Public Questions will follow through with information and involvement in the campaign. An article is to be published in Touchstone and is posted on the Public Questions website. <http://www.methodist.org.nz/public_questions_network>

Rio+20 – The UN Conference on Sustainability June 2012

This year is 20 years on from the first Rio Earth Summit. This set the sustainability agenda to halt climate change by holding back carbon emissions and set in motion many international protocols and conventions on environmental issues. Loss of biodiversity, governance of oceans and management of fisheries are some of the major concerns and the basis for initiatives that have been taken. In reality biodiversity continues to decline with extra-ordinary extinction of species, and CO₂ emissions are increasing. There was an target of keeping to 350 parts per million of CO₂ in the atmosphere, we are now at 389.8 !

We will bring news of preparations for Rio+20, including New Zealand government priorities, and what the Pacific Forum have prioritized. How can this conference succeed – after so many failures to reach agreement on addressing climate change. A globalized world has brought remarkable interdependence between nations yet negotiations fall back on national interests. We will explore possibilities for ethical proposals to unify nations and achieve agreements on a global scale.

PQ News Clipping for Parish Bulletins

The Food Bill is raising a lot of concern. If passed could bring restrictions on growing food and on selling it. The bill to keep in line with NZ obligations to the World Trade Organization. Although the bill is about food safety it is also about regulations that will bring a lot of restrictions on growing and selling food, including from small local gardens.

It has been suggested that this could have implications for the many churches that sell pots of jam and preserves and vegies at garage sales and stalls, even Methodist Women's Fellowship. It appears that no one will be allowed to sell any 'food' unless registered to do so, or unless there is specific exemption. There's quite a lot of reading. There seems to be a link to Free trade agreements, and to the Trans Pacific Partnership (see article in Touchstone).

The Petition: <http://www.petitiononline.co.nz/petition/oppose-the-new-zealand-government-food-bill-160-2/1301>

Website: <http://nzfoodsecurity.org/>
