

# METHODIST MISSION AND ECUMENICAL NEWSLETTER

July 2020

## **THE REV. PRINCE DEVANANDAN BEGINS NEW MINISTRY AS VICAR OF PONSONBY**

The President advised the Church on 6<sup>th</sup> June that the Rev. Prince Devanandan had taken up a position within the diocese of Auckland. The General Secretary in a communication wrote: "Prince has been a wonderful champion for our partner churches in the Solomon Islands and Papua New Guinea. He has worked tirelessly to strengthen ecumenical links both in New Zealand and internationally. We pray God's strength and grace for Prince, Ramani and their family as he takes up his new appointment as vicar of All Saints Parish, Ponsonby in the Anglican diocese of Auckland."

On 26 May members of the board of Mission and Ecumenical were given an opportunity to express appreciation for the ministry that Prince has exercised during his time as director. There were some tears, and members spoke of Prince's commitment to the mission of the church, his determination to open opportunities of ecumenical encounter for young people, his enthusiasm for the Schools on Ecumenism and the leadership that he has provided in the formation of the National Dialogue for Christian Unity. Prince will be missed by the board and in the wider church.

Among the messages received in the office we share this from Eddie Pratt, who is treasurer of the United Church of the Solomon Islands: "I must say that you have done great things for our church and I will miss your friendship and company during your visits. I always carry with me memories of our working together in many areas of our church. The recent water supply project is a special one for the Kokeqolo community and I will remember you for that for many years to come. Thank you Rev. Prince for all your support and the special love you have for the Solomon Islands people, especially the UCSI. May I wish you and your family God's blessing now and in your appointment."

From Helena Goldie College of Nursing, Winston wrote: "Apart from saying a big thank you to you and Methodist Mission and Ecumenical for support of the college, let me say that your simplicity and easy to approach manner have contributed to the results in our areas of work. HGCON has started repair work on the dining hall and the principal tutor's home. The Project Task Force committee met yesterday and were informed of your leaving Mission and Ecumenical. The committee sends its best regards to you. I want to thank you and Mission and Ecumenical for support in accessing water. Our community and family members are enjoying the water now. Rev. Prince thank you. I wish you God's blessings in your new area of work."

## **WEST PAPUANS HAVE REASON TO HOPE**

"The global phenomenon that is the 'Black Lives Matter' movement has rejuvenated indigenous struggles and opened up a new dialogue about the impact of colonialism. In West Papua it sparked a campaign that may prove to be an important milestone in West Papua's long road to justice." (*New Zealand Herald* 30.06.20) These comments in an

article by Maire Leadbeater, long time organiser with West Papua Action, Auckland, suggest that the calls for human rights and independence may finally get a hearing.

After the Dutch left, West Papuans have had to endure Indonesian rule which has meant a flood of Indonesian migrants into the region. Security forces suppress legitimate aspirations with a brutality that is being challenged by the 'Black Lives Matter' movement. Violence against West Papuan students studying in Surabaya was filmed when the military laid siege to a dormitory hurling racist abuse at the students. This caused outrage not only among West Papuans but in the wider Indonesian society. A social media campaign insisted 'We need to talk about Papua.'

Protests have fallen on deaf ears in the past, but now there may be an opportunity for the claims of West Papuans to be taken seriously. Appeals to the New Zealand government to support the human rights and independence movement have not been responded to. In our forthcoming election, candidates might be asked what their position is on the legitimate longings of West Papuans for freedom and justice.

### **CHURCH LEADERS APPEAL TO ISRAEL TO REFRAIN FROM ANNEXING PALESTINIAN LAND**

The World Council of Churches News Service of 17 June has drawn attention to the many statements of church leaders imploring Israel to respect international law and not proceed to annex any parts of the West Bank. A strong consensus is evident.

Archbishop of Canterbury Justin Welby and the Cardinal Archbishop of Westminster, Vincent Nichols sent a joint statement to the Prime Minister and the Israeli Ambassador in which they expressed opposition to any move by the government of Israel to annex the West Bank after the 1<sup>st</sup> July.

The Council of Patriarchs and Heads of Churches of the Holy Land views such unilateral annexation plans with utmost concern and "calls upon the State of Israel to refrain from such unilateral moves which would bring about the loss of any remaining hope for the success of the peace process." The World Council of Churches and the Middle East Council of Churches have written to member states of the European Union appealing for a firm and principled stance by the EU against any annexation by Israel of occupied Palestinian territory in the West Bank.

Heads of Arab Palestinian Churches wrote that "the Holy Land is in a situation of war and needs to be restored to its holiness." The appeal reads in part, "All are equally God's children. We are deeply concerned with the sufferings and injustices imposed on our people."

The Vatican also expressed "concern about any future actions that could further compromise dialogue," reiterating that "respect for international law and the relevant resolutions of the United Nations, is an indispensable element for the two peoples to live side by side in two states, within the borders internationally recognised before 1967."

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