



Do Justice!!

"Do Justice, Love Kindness and Walk Humbly With Your God" Micah 6:8

A Newsletter on Social Justice Issues

Welcome to the November 2018 edition of Do Justice. This newsletter, prepared by the Auckland Diocesan Social Justice Group, looks at various Social Justice Issues.

Church Leaders can make a social justice impact.

Last month we included a very large extract from the Archbishop of Canterbury's speech to the UK Trade Union Congress at their 150th Annual meeting. Archbishop Justin Welby raised some very significant justice issues including the very low pay that workers for Amazon, in the UK, receive. A few days later we read in the Anglican Church New Service the following item:

Amazon raises minimum wage after pay-level criticism from the Archbishop of Canterbury:

The international online retailer Amazon has announced it is raising its minimum wage levels, just weeks after it was criticised by the Archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby, for not paying its staff enough to live on. In a speech last month to Britain's Trades Union Congress, Archbishop Justin criticised Amazon by name for not paying "a real living wage". At the time, Amazon defended its pay position, saying that it paid permanent employees in its UK fulfillment centres £8.35 an hour after two years service – a rate below the "real living wage" proposed by the Living Wage Foundation (LWF). Today, following weeks of coverage and debate about the Archbishop's speech, Amazon says it will increase all wages above the LWF's guidelines; and also said that it will campaign for a higher federal minimum wage in the US.¹

Over the last thirty to forty years the voice of the Church in New Zealand has fallen silent as far as Social Justice issues are concerned. As the recent Wilberforce Foundation report on Faith and Belief in New Zealand has indicated, the only subject that the Church receives any news coverage for is sexuality including sexual violence and homosexuality, and most of that news coverage is negative. The perception of Christians, and the Church in general, is more about what we are against than what we stand for. The real Gospel of Jesus - love, justice and peace - is lost and goes unheard by the majority of New Zealanders.

The time has come for our Church leaders to speak out against injustice, discrimination, abuse, poverty, inequality, racism and for love, justice and peace. Articles at Christmas

and Easter signed by Auckland church leaders are not enough and may actually be counter-productive. Unfortunately, there is no longer a strong ecumenical voice.

Archbishop Oscar Romero now a Catholic Saint.

Saint Óscar Arnulfo Romero y Galdámez was a prelate of the Catholic Church in El Salvador who served as the fourth Archbishop of San Salvador. He spoke out against poverty, social injustice, assassinations, and torture. In 1980, Romero was assassinated while officiating Mass in the chapel of the Hospital of Divine Providence. He was made a Saint of the Catholic Church by Pope Francis on 14 October 2018 thirty-eight years after his assassination. Oscar Romero challenged the Church and society and continues to challenge us today:

"A Church that does not provoke any crisis, preach a gospel that does not unsettle, proclaim a word of God that does not get under anyone's skin, or a word of God that does not touch the real skin of society in which it is being proclaimed: what kind of gospel is that."

What kind of Gospel are we proclaiming? When did we last get under someone's skin?

Tenants, Houses and the Law

Over a third of New Zealand families now live in rental accommodation with Landlords ranging from the State, to individuals, renting their house for investment or whilst away for an extended period. But it is not only families that rent houses, individuals particularly students, are also in the market for rental houses. And even within families there is a wide range of situations including elderly couples, families with two or three young children and intergenerational families.

Such diversity is covered by one act The Residential Tenancies Act. The Ministry of Housing and Urban Development is reviewing the Act prior to a major overhaul. The Ministry has asked for submissions on what we think should be done. The Social Justice Group has put in a submission following our motions at Synod. Some of the points we made include

- Law change to allow long term tenancies with protection in place to prevent unfair evictions.
- Elimination of rent bidding when a property is on the market.

¹ <http://www.anglicannews.org/news/2018/10/amazon-raises-minimum-wage-after-pay-level-criticism-from-the-archbishop-of-canterbury.aspx>

- Assistance to renters taking complaints to the Tenancy Tribunal.
- Regulation of Property Managers
- Renters to be allowed to make minor changes to the property without having to get landlord approval.
- Government to establish a Register of Rental Properties.

A copy of the full submission is available from David Hall dissnorfolk@gmail.com

Trade and Investor Agreements

Following the public debates around the various forms of the Trans Pacific Partnership Trade Agreement the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade has initiated a consultation - Trade for All.

The Social Justice Group made a submission on the original TPPA proposal and Synod has passed motions calling for the agreement to be referred to a binding referendum.

This month we made a submission for Trade for All drawing heavily on the work that the Anglican Communion and the World Council of Churches had undertaken over recent years on International Trade and Investment Agreements. Some of the points made in the submission include:

- An end to secrecy: open negotiations and regular release of draft texts;
- Democratic oversight: increased role of parliament & the public;
- Unrestricted right to protect the public interest and the environment; strong enforceable carve-outs;
- Regulation of Overseas Investment: government able to set own rules;
- Protection of international law: that it takes precedence to the details of any Trade agreement;
- No Investor State Dispute Settlement: other than those available to local investors;
- Honouring the Te Tiriti o Waitangi: a relationship in which Maori are the Treaty partner with the Crown not one among many stakeholders;
- Exclude Local Government: so they remain free to make their own decisions;
- Retain the role of the State: concerning economy, assets, public services, and commercial activities;
- Promote the free flow of knowledge and information: no new monopoly rights over the digital domain.

A full copy of the Social justice Group submission is available from David Hall at dissnorfolk@gmail.com.

How much is a life worth?

For those of us who occasionally watch Al Jazeera News the disappearance of Saudi Journalist Jamel Khashoggi after entering the Saudi Arabi Consulate General in Istanbul seemed odd but being a journalist working in the Middle East is a difficult task and some do "disappear". But what was different, in this case, was

Khashoggi had left Saudi Arabia because he feared his own government and had moved to the United States. The only reason he was effectively returning to Saudi Arabia, for by entering the door of the Consulate he was effectively "returning" to Saudi Arabia, was to collect a piece of paper documenting his divorce so he could re-marry.

It was only when the Turkish Government started to ask awkward questions that the world press started to take an interest. And other Governments woke up to the strong possibility that here was a human rights issue of importance.

After some time even President Trump became involved. After all Saudi Arabia is an important ally of the United States and has recently agreed to buy some \$120 billion of weapons from the US. According to President Trump that order represented jobs for thousands of American workers (millions of dollars of profits for the companies making the weapons). Whatever Saudi Arabia had done must not jeopardize that order. What is forgotten by President Trump and the advocates of the arms trade is that weapons are designed and manufactured to kill people and Saudi Arabia and its allies are killing thousands of civilians and children in Yemen using weapons designed and manufactured to kill by producers not just in the United States but the United Kingdom, France, Russia etc. Jamel Khashoggi said in his last column for the Washington Post:

The Arab world needs a modern version of the old transnational media so citizens can be informed about global events. More important, we need to provide a platform for Arab voices. We suffer from poverty, mismanagement and poor education. Through the creation of an independent international forum, isolated from the influence of nationalist governments spreading hate through propaganda, ordinary people in the Arab world would be able to address the structural problems their societies face.²

His message for the Arab World is just as important for the rest of us. We do need a media we can rely on and trust. Increasingly media around the world are being taken over by specific ideologies and the news they convey is increasingly becoming biased.

In the "west" most media are controlled by extremely wealthy men who are more interested in protecting their own wealthy and political interests than in providing an unbiased, neutral and informed news service.

We, in New Zealand, are dependent upon media in many different countries for our knowledge of world affairs. If news organisations like Al Jazeera had not taken the disappearance of Jemal Khashoggi seriously then his disappearance would have become just another disappearance.

²https://www.bing.com/search?q=aljazeera+news+breaking+news&form=EDG_NB1&mkt=en-gb&httpsmsn=1&refig=0d8ef3908f4d4d8c83c47e34d966a9c0&sp=6&ghc=1&

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