

The ANGLICAN PACIFIST of Aotearoa/New Zealand

Newsletter of the New Zealand Branch of the Anglican Pacifist Fellowship

From the Chairperson

Dear Friends

In this newsletter you will see a report of the one day symposium held recently in Auckland, organised by the APF in conjunction with the Auckland Diocesan Social Justice Council, entitled "Is Violence Inevitable? A Christian Response to our times".

Two things stand out from that day: the excellence and challenge of the programme and the small number who attended despite all our efforts to publicise it widely beforehand.



Reflection on this experience led the APF executive at its recent meeting (November 30th) to consider a number of initiatives which we would like to put before you all for your consideration. One is to enhance our profile and publicity for such events by the establishment of our own NZ APF web page (site?) which can be linked to other APF sites and to relevant local sites. Secondly we are considering a different format for next year's conference: a weekend retreat for APF members, and others interested, a conducted (not silent) retreat built around a theme of peace and non-violence, held possibly in Hamilton. And then a separate open day / symposium at a different date and in a different city, probably Auckland or Wellington. The APF executive will be meeting again on January 25th and we would welcome any comments or suggestions from you about these proposals.

The morning reading for today, for Thursdays in Advent in "Celebrating Common Prayer", is from Chapter 6 of Paul's letter to the Ephesians, (which might seem a strange text for peacemakers!) and includes this verse: "As shoes for your feet put on whatever will make you ready to proclaim the gospel of peace".

In this Advent season it can be so difficult, particularly here in New Zealand with all the end-of-year frenzy, to wait intentionally. Perhaps nevertheless we can find some time in all this busyness to focus on what it is we need so that we are prepared to step out as peacemakers in the coming new year.

I wish you all the blessings of Christmas.

In peace,
Margaret.
7th December 2006.



Theological Symposium

"IS VIOLENCE INEVITABLE? – a Christian response to our times – a day of focused conversation and discovery" was held at St Aidan's Church, Remuera, Auckland, on 4 November, facilitated by the Diocesan Social Justice Council and the APF.

Though the number of attendees was disappointing, those who came enjoyed a feast of cutting-edge biblical theology and intelligent discussion as well as good food and company in the welcoming venue of St Aidan's.

Dr Nicola Hoggard from the Bible College of New Zealand, gave a paper on "Whence comes Violence: a biological and evolutionary approach". This was a transversal dialogue between evolution and the Biblical story of the Fall showing that the inherent evil in the human personality may derive from both sources. Scientific history gives ample evidence of primate violence. Was the Fall a natural progression of increased intelligence combined with violent tendencies or was it this together with an alliance with evil powers? The tragedy in the Fall and in all violence is a combination of inevitability and responsibility. Redemption/incarnation is a straddling of human and divine worlds cancelling the violence of the human, absorbing it, and revealing a new way which resists violence and revenge.

Dr Anthony Dancer, Anglican Social Justice Commissioner, in his paper on "Nurturing our theological vision of violence and peacemaking" drew attention to the teachings of William Stringfellow about the principalities and powers. In the Fall principalities and powers, though originally created by God, work to and for death, and in working with them we also work for that purpose. One of the most common is the principality of "image" when we give up our own identity to follow a perception of our own individual or corporate image. Our life is then given over to the worship of the image. The outcome is always violence and dehumanisation. In Christ we are made free from domination by the powers. Our vocation is to live for the world where God is, free from the dominion of death in this world.

Archbishop David Moxon, in defining the issues, made three observations. The Biblical vision of

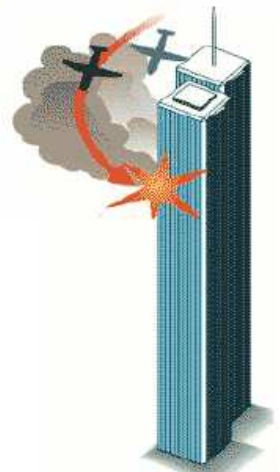
non-violence leads into peacemaking; the theology of violence needs to take account of the Fall but the kingdom of God means God working in our lives to bring peace. Secondly, Christ transformed but did not transmit what happened to him on the Cross; He transcended the cycle of blame and scapegoating. Thirdly, freedom from the principalities and powers is freedom from the power of death.

In the afternoon participants divided into small groups to discuss the morning's material, then met in plenary session to pool their ideas.

A late addition to the programme was a talk by Professor Marilyn McCord Adams, Regius Professor of Divinity at the University of Oxford. In her paper "Horrendous evil and the goodness of God" Professor Adams said that human beings have an ability to cause horror which is far beyond our ability to experience it. The human condition is not optimum because we are radically vulnerable to causing or experiencing horrors. The only thing that can defeat horror is God's goodness. God becomes part of the human race and in his crucifixion is in solidarity with us in horror participation. We realise what God has done and appropriate this meaning and weave it into our lives in our intimate personal relationship with him.

The day finished with worship led by Lucy Nguyen and John Marcon.

The full texts of Nicola's and Anthony's addresses can be sent by email, or posted, and a summary sheet of Professor Adams' address is available likewise. Please enquire from the Secretary about a recording on video or DVD of the whole day's proceedings.



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