



The ANGLICAN PACIFIST of Aotearoa/New Zealand

Newsletter of the New Zealand Branch of the Anglican Pacifist Fellowship

From the Chairman

*Who would think that what was needed
to transform and save the earth
might not be a plan or army
proud in purpose, proved in worth?
who would think, despite derision,
that a child should lead the way?
God surprises earth with heaven,
coming here on Christmas Day.*

This is the first verse of a thought-provoking Christmas Hymn by John Bell and Graham Moule .

Who would have thought that the Prince of Peace would be born into a religion better known for its bellicosity than its pacifism? No doubt Jesus would have had greater support from His people had he shown more 'fighting spirit' thirty years later.

There are other heavenly surprises for earth associated with the birth.

The surprising conception which had not waited for the respectable camouflage of marriage. And then who would think

that so important a birth would be deliberately kept secret and happen in such humble circumstances?.. Royal births are usually very public events associated more with palaces than stables. In Bethlehem the only public announcement was to lowly shepherds

in isolated pastures. Yet another surprise for us was that although the birthplace was fitted neatly into prophecy by an inconvenient census, the census itself is undated and all documents lost so we only know it as the census that happened before one organized by Quirinius. Hence we do not know the birth date of Jesus.

We would think that priests would recognize Jesus, but in the Temple only two eccentric old people knew that Jesus was the Messiah. To everyone else in

that bustling centre of professional holiness God's surprise looked like a poor rural family.

Later the news of the birth did reach the palace and become public knowledge. Herod's response was predictable. Also predictable was the 'collateral damage' from his targeted violence. What was surprising, given that angels were still involved, was the death of the toddlers.

Unhappily the church is often known more for its bellicosity than

its pacifism and it has been more prone to use the violent methods of Herod than the non-violent ones of Jesus. However non-violent methods and pacifism have had some surprising successes. Who would have thought the Berlin Wall would fall

*'The Lord will settle disputes
among the nations....
they will hammer their swords
into ploughs,
and their spears
into pruning-knives.'*

Micah ch. 4



Advance notice for your 2011 diary!

APF ANNUAL CONFERENCE & RETREAT

April 1 to 3, Houchen House, Hamilton.

without bloodshed? But overall few wars have been prevented and since the fourth century there has always been an abundance of Christian soldiers. Therefore it is hardly surprising that the Executive Summary of the recent Defence Review takes for granted, as do most people, the need for armed forces and an economic equation that spends more in a day on 'the services' than the Peace Foundation spends in a year. The APF sent a submission to the review but there appears to be no room at the inn for our ideas. We are in the stable. However that other stable keeps hope alive.

There are many Anglicans who consider war an acceptable, though regrettable, way of solving difficult international problems; so this year I pray that God will surprise earth with heaven and make them all members of the APF.

Happy Christmas!
Jonathan.

PEACE & CONFLICT STUDIES CENTRE

from the November newsletter:

- Workshop on Enhancing Peace Education in NZ held in Dunedin on 29th and 30th October.
- Members of the Trust attend the Centre for the foundation year students' presentation of their work.
- The Trust and the University of Otago agree to fundraise for establishing a Lectureship in Peace and Education.
- Post Doctorate Fellow Karen Brouneus awarded Marsden Research grant to study the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in the Solomon Islands.

- Public lectures continue to pull in large audiences.

See the full newsletter on <http://www.peacetrust.org.nz>

THE ARMS CHAIR

Meg Hartfield

On our recent visit to the British Museum in London, our attention was riveted by a remarkable group of exhibits. Under the heading, 'Transforming Arms into Tools' stood an unusual chair, made entirely of rusting weapons – relics of the disastrous civil war in Mozambique which lasted from 1976 to 1992. The country was left littered with tonnes of military ironmongery, and Bishop Don Dinis Sengulane began the project, supported by Christian Aid and a group of artists in Maputo, of transforming weapons of war into useful objects. Hence the chair, depicted on page 1 (with one of my donkeys).

As well as a number of useful objects, there were beautifully designed creations. The most spectacular was 'The Tree of Life' standing about 15 feet tall. Every part of it, from each twig and leaf, birds in the branches, and a monkey climbing up the trunk, was entirely made from scrap-metal, including very obvious guns and ammunition.

This seemed to me a most appropriate application of Micah 4:3, and gave me the idea for this year's Christmas card – which comes to you, our friends of APF, with our love.

Meg and Jonathan

APF Christmas Cards

Meg Hartfield's coloured "Swords into ploughshares" Christmas cards are available now.

Enquiries to the Secretary, please.

Anglican Pacifist Fellowship New Zealand Branch

www.converge.org.nz/pma/apf or www.anglicanpeacemaker.org.uk

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