



## Do Justice

*"Do justice, love kindness and walk humbly with your God." Micah 6:8*

Welcome to the seventh year of Do Justice as we continue to discuss issues of social justice from a Christian perspective.

### **Brexit and Neoliberalism**

By the time you read this, Brexit will have happened and the United Kingdom will no longer be part of the European Union although many significant details, particularly about the formal trading relationship between the EU and the UK, have still to be negotiated.

One of the great ironies of Brexit is that the European Union dream was originally driven by the desire for a free market throughout the continent. The origin of this concept was a group of economists, working initially in Vienna after World War I and subsequently in Geneva during and after World War II, who saw the breakup of the large European powers, especially Germany and Austria-Hungary, as limiting the free market in goods and services. With additional input from economists from the University of Chicago, this led to the concepts of neoliberal economics taking over from the Keynesian economic concepts prevalent immediately after World War II.

One of the most important proponents of neoliberal philosophy was the British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher from 1979 to 1990. She believed that the EU's role should be limited to ensuring free trade and effective competition but feared that the moves towards greater integration were at odds with her views on smaller government and deregulation.

It is ironic that the most adverse impacts of neoliberalism – de-industrialisation and globalisation – should be the apparent reason why so many voted in favour of Brexit. Boris Johnson's victory in the December 2019 election was built on the very people most adversely affected by neoliberalism despite Johnson's party, the Conservatives, continuing to support neoliberal policies.

It will be interesting to see if, over the next five years, Boris Johnson will have as much an impact on Britain's future as Margaret Thatcher did in the 1980s.

### **Bonhoeffer and Trump**

The International Bonhoeffer Society – English Language Section (IBS-ELS) is dedicated to advancing the theology and legacy of German pastor-theologian and Nazi resistor Dietrich Bonhoeffer

through critical scholarship, engaged pedagogy, and constructive readings of Bonhoeffer's collected writings.

The society recently raised concerns about the US President Donald Trump, seeing parallels with what was happening in Germany in the 1930s. They recently issued a statement about this situation which begins as follows:

*A hallmark of Dietrich Bonhoeffer's legacy is his insistence that we see the great events of world history from "the view from below" (1942). That is, he urges us to see from the perspective of those who suffer. The policies of the Trump administration both threaten and disempower the most vulnerable members of our society, including people of colour, members of the LGBTQ communities, Muslims and other religious minorities, immigrants, refugees, the poor, the marginally employed, and the unemployed. Moreover, Donald Trump has now taken ill-advised military action that raises the spectre of war. One of the greatest lessons learned from the history of the Christian churches during Germany's Third Reich is that it is crucial to respond to threats to human life, integrity, and community when they first appear, and to continue to challenge them.*

The Society sees a parallel between the support and language of significant numbers of evangelical Christians in the USA and the support of many German Christians for Hitler in the 1930s.

The statement also includes the following:

*We believe that one crucial step in this reckoning is ending Donald Trump's presidency. We do not make this statement lightly. Bonhoeffer's writings have been influential for Christians from a wide range of churches and political views, but we feel called to address the grave moral concerns we have outlined here that call every one of us to account. During this new year, debates and discussion will continue to be held concerning the best way for America to move forward. We believe that the United States has the human resources to provide capable and willing leaders, and that together a more just and respectful future can be forged. Acknowledging that all human community and leadership is a mixture of blessing and brokenness, health and dysfunction, we stand with all those who believe this country deserves and needs a constitutional and peaceful change in leadership. And we commit ourselves to listen to the call and obey the commands of Jesus as we enter the year 2020.<sup>1</sup>*

<sup>1</sup> The full text can be found at <https://bit.ly/2SaiuPC>

## The cost of climate change

There is a general perception that taking mitigating action to reduce and possibly reverse greenhouse gases emissions and halt climate change will come at a cost that the world community will find too great to pay. So it was interesting to read an article about the Global Commission on the Economy and Climate, which includes former heads of government, business leaders and economists that painted a very different picture in a report to the World Economic Forum 2020 Annual Meeting at Davos Switzerland.

The commission's study said, "Strong action to combat climate change could cumulatively add at least \$26 trillion to the world economy by 2030."

Their study included these further points:

*Smarter investments in cleaner energy, cities, food and land use, water and industry could generate 65 million new jobs in 2030, equivalent to the workforces of Egypt and Britain combined. A shift from fossil fuels to cleaner energies such as wind and solar power would avoid 700,000 premature deaths from air pollution in 2030.*

*The report recommended high prices on carbon dioxide emissions of \$40-\$80 per tonne by 2020 in major economies.*

*Subsidy reforms in the energy sector, coupled with higher carbon prices, could raise \$2.8 trillion a year in government revenues in 2030.<sup>2</sup>*

It is interesting that this report does not come from a group known for its strong advocacy for environmental issues but from a group that states that it is "the foremost creative force engaging the world's top leaders in collaborative activities to shape global, regional and industry agendas at the beginning of each year."<sup>3</sup> The theme of the 2020 meeting was Stakeholders for a Cohesive and Sustainable World.

## Rev'd Canon Grace Kaiso appointed senior adviser to Anglican Alliance.

The Anglican Alliance is grounded in the Church's mission to challenge and change the unjust structures of the world, and it has a mandate to bring together development, relief and advocacy work across the Communion.



Grace Kaiso is a Ugandan Anglican priest who spent some time at St John's College in the late 1970s. During his time in Auckland he successfully promoted a water project in his home area of Kampala. Since returning to Uganda, Grace has been involved in

social justice issues and has recently been the Vice-Chair of the Advisory Council of the Anglican Alliance.

The Alliance is very much involved in advocacy about climate change and arranged for young Anglicans from several countries around the world to attend the COP25 meetings in Madrid Spain last December. The delegation was led by Archbishop Julio Murray, Bishop of Panama and Archbishop of Central America,

who is a trustee of the Anglican Alliance and one of the spokespeople on climate change for the Anglican Communion. He said at the COP 25 meeting, "I call upon churches to create consciousness that there is a crisis which we are all part of.... I call upon the churches to work in a united way. As faith-based organisations we can make a difference working together. This is God's world. We play a very important role as stewards of this reality. God is still in the mix – we just have to get it right."<sup>4</sup>



## Housing – an integrated approach

Over the last few years housing has become one of the most important political issues in New Zealand. Much has been written about the very rapid increase in the cost of houses, which now appears to be spreading beyond Auckland to other parts of the country.

Housing for different groups seems to be looked at in isolation – emergency housing for the homeless, social housing for beneficiaries and the working poor, rental housing and owner-occupied homes. Governments and others appear to focus on each group as a separate issue, not realising that action in one sector can have a profound effect on others.

One example is the decision by the Key Government to sell state houses in the mid-2010s. The number of available state houses was reduced significantly and those who formerly would have got a state house ended up in the private rental sector usually with a "housing allowance". In turn, this impacted the affordable housing market as investors moved in to satisfy the demand for rental houses caused by the lack of state houses. This forced up the cost of affordable houses so that young couples on reasonable incomes could no longer afford to buy a house and had to continue to rent.

There are, of course, other reasons for house price inflation, but if the state house stock had been increased to keep up with population growth, rather than reduced, then it is very likely the pressure on affordable houses would have been significantly less.

The present government has reversed the downsizing of the state house stock and is beginning to build more state houses. It is a pity that they did not put as much effort and energy into rapidly increasing the state house stock and less or no energy into the failed KiwiBuild programme.

<sup>2</sup> <https://bit.ly/2GJNkt3>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.mastercardcenter.org/events/wef-davos-2020>

<sup>4</sup> For more on the Anglican Alliance, see [www.anglicanalliance.org/](http://www.anglicanalliance.org/)