



Do Justice

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

A Newsletter on Social Justice Issues

Welcome to the October edition of Do Justice for 2019 as we discuss issues of social justice from a Christian perspective.

Elected assemblies and prime ministers.

One of the most important elements of a democratic parliamentary system of government is that the executive needs to have the confidence of the parliament. Our Prime Minister would have to resign if she no longer had the confidence of the coalition partners and regularly lost divisions in the House of Representatives.

The British parliamentary system, which we have taken and adapted, is seen by many to be the "mother" of parliamentary democracy. Over the last three years the "model" that we so much admire has raised many questions about how the system is working.

After several failures to get her Brexit policies through the House of Commons, Prime Minister Theresa May finally resigned. The Conservative Party, which does not have a majority, is dependent upon 10 members of the DUP from Northern Ireland. Less than 0.01% of the population was involved in its leader's election. At least Theresa May had a General Election even if she did not get a majority of the elected MPs. But she did win a vote of no confidence in the House of Commons.

When Parliament is in recess at this time of the year, the major political parties hold their annual conferences, which usually take up to a week. As soon as they are over, Parliament resumes, usually at the beginning of October, but Boris Johnson has decided that Parliament should not resume until 14 October, leaving only three weeks or 11 sitting days to pass any agreement he may make with the EU. If no agreement is passed by Parliament, then the UK leaves the EU on 31 October, come what may. To protect the UK from the adverse effects of a no-deal Brexit, Parliament has passed a law (signed by the Queen) that requires the Prime Minister Boris Johnson to ask the EU for an extension to the

Brexit date if no agreement is reached by Parliament by 19 October. Johnson has said repeatedly that he will not ask the EU for an extension under any circumstances. In other words, he will knowingly disobey a law passed by Parliament. This could put him in contempt of Parliament and at risk of possible imprisonment. If he gets away with this, he will have set a precedent that could affect other countries with parliamentary systems that follow the Westminster model, including New Zealand.

The above was written a few days before the dramatic announcement by the UK Supreme Court on 24 September 2019 that Boris Johnson's advice to the Queen to prorogue Parliament was illegal. Parliament is now back in session, but Boris Johnson has not resigned, and he has been critical of the Supreme Court decision. This criticism is worrying as it raises questions about the independence of the judiciary and relationships with other branches of government.

A day later in Washington, the Speaker of the House of Representatives announced that the House will commence impeachment proceedings against President Trump. This raises similar questions about the relationship between executive, legislators and judiciary. More on this next month.

Climate change synod motions

The Auckland Diocesan Synod (5-7 September 2019) passed two motions on climate change.

The motions focused on action that the diocese and ministry units could take to help mitigate the adverse effects of climate change. This followed submissions made by the Social Justice Group and the Anglican Climate Action Network to the Environmental Select Committee on the Zero Carbon Bill.

One motion requested that: *"The Diocesan Council supports and funds the preparation of a Zero Carbon Plan by 31 March 2020 to implement the commitment*

set out in Standing Resolution 50; achieved by collaboration between the Anglican Climate Action Network Auckland, the Social Justice Group, ADJust, and the sustainability field worker.”

Anyone interested in contributing to the development of the Zero Carbon Plan is more than welcome. Please contact one of the following:

Richard Milne, Co-convenor Anglican Climate Action Group. richardmilne12@gmail.com

Sarah West, ADJust.
curate@holy-trinity.org.nz

David Hall, Social Justice Group.
dissnorfolk@gmail.com

The situation is very urgent. We believe that it is no exaggeration to say that we, individuals, the country and all the world, need to go onto the equivalent of a war footing if we are going to stop and reverse the relentless rise in world temperatures. During World War II Winston Churchill would not tolerate delay in action and many of his commands to his ministers and staff required “Action this Day.”

God gave us “dominion over the earth” and that includes protecting the earth from the abuse of greenhouse gases, global warming and climate change. Are we as a diocese prepared to take up the challenge? Are we going to “Action this Day?”

Why is the living wage important?

Before the great changes now commonly known as Rogernomics, government departments only contracted out the supply of goods and services that were not a regular part of their ongoing services. For example, the NZ Post Office did not manufacture telephones even though it ran the telephone network; they bought telephones from a telephone manufacturer. The management and servicing of the telephone network was done by the NZ Post Office as were a number of other services such as cleaning and security. Today the successors to the NZ Post Office – Chorus and Spark – contract out virtually all their work, including installation of equipment.

As we know, the whole of the telephone system is now in private hands together with many other parts of the old government structure. In addition, large parts of the old government service have been made into “independent” organisations such as the NZ Transport

Authority with its own “board”, while still being “owned” by the government.

As a reminder, the living wage is defined as: *“The income necessary to provide workers and their families with the basic necessities of life. A living wage will enable workers to live with dignity and to participate as active citizens in society.”*

The living wage is calculated to enable a working family of two adults and two children to be able to pay basic household bills, provide healthy food and pay for children’s school trips. It is based on expenditure items for a modest weekly budget. Wage movement is reported by Statistics New Zealand quarterly in the New Zealand Income Survey, and the living wage rate is set according to the wage movement for the year to the previous June.

The living wage is not the minimum wage, which is politically set and which all employers must pay as a minimum. The reason we need a minimum wage is because the old award system that served New Zealand for many years was abandoned as a result of Rogernomics, on the basis that the “market” would ensure that everyone was paid reasonably. The fact that governments have found it necessary to legislate for a minimum wage graphically demonstrates that the “market” failed.

About 10 years ago it became apparent that the minimum wage was not enough to provide a reasonable income for many; it was not enough for the necessities of life. In addition, organisations were “contracting out” basic services that they required to continue operating, such as cleaning and security, and those employed in these areas were having their wages driven down to the minimum wage. Hence the concept of the living wage, a wage that does provide the basic necessities of life and enables people to live with dignity and participate in society.

Prior to the forthcoming local body elections, the Living Wage Movement has held electoral forums in many towns and cities around New Zealand. The Auckland Forum was held on Wednesday 18 September at St Matthew-in-the-City. Mayoral candidates Phil Goff and John Tamihere both agreed to continue to support a living wage for all directly employed council staff and to ensure that contractors to the council and staff of council-controlled organisations were all paid a minimum of \$21.15 – the current living wage.