



## A Newsletter on Social Justice Issues

Welcome to the October 2023 edition of Do Justice as we continue to discuss issues of social justice from a Christian perspective in the tradition of Micah and St Francis.

### **Micah and Matthew, Justice and Love**

For nearly 10 years now we have had the verse from Micah as part of the banner for this newsletter. For many of us who have been concerned about issues of justice these words from Micah have been an important focus as we try to make sense of all the multitude of claims and counterclaims, information and disinformation that we are subject to through the media and, particularly, social media.

If you enter the words Do Justice into your computer search engine you will probably get the result below:

*To do justice to something or someone or to do someone or something justice is to treat or show something or someone in a way that is as good as it should be.<sup>1</sup>*

This definition appears to focus on the quality of justice and that is fine but if we put more emphasis on the first word DO we can see another side to what Micah was talking about. This brings a more active element to the situation. Don't just talk about justice, go out and Do Justice. Speak up for those who are denied justice, seek to change social and political structures that cause injustice.

But Micah does not end here, and neither should we. Micah goes on to link justice to kindness and the need to love kindness and this takes us to Jesus's response to one of the Pharisees in Matthew 22:37-40: *Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, and mind. This is the first and most important commandment. The second most important commandment is like this one. And it is, "Love others as much as you love yourself." All the Law of Moses and the Books of the Prophets are based on these two commandments.*

As Christians, followers of Jesus Christ, it is clear that love of neighbour is a vital part of Jesus's teaching as is doing justice. If, in doing justice we harm our neighbour then we need to look again at how we do justice.

Every three years in the weeks and months before the general election the "law and order" cry is usually raised, and this year is no exception. Get tough on crime, harsher sentences, boot camps, and so on. But the question "why" does not get asked. Why do they offend? Why are young people ram raiding? Why do gangs exist? It is so much easier to lock up the offenders, even if it costs up to \$195,000 per year for each

person in prison<sup>2</sup>, than it is to try to address the root causes of offending – poverty, lack of quality education, etc.

Overall, Aotearoa is a safe place to live in. How many of us have actually been impacted by crime in the last year? Yes, a number of small shop holders have been impacted by ram raids and that should not happen. The police have been identifying and arresting almost all the culprits who are generally teenagers or younger and this is a concern. There are some 22,000 small shops in New Zealand and there have been 208 ram raids up to the end of July (see New Zealand Police Statistics<sup>3</sup>). The easy solution to this issue is to lock up the ram raiders as punishment, after all this problem is sending them to the "university of crime" – prison, so they can be educated for their future career!! Get their degree in crime. But is that a real solution?

A single event gets media coverage, but politicians and other "law and order highlighters" amplify the publicity until it appears to many that we actually have a law-and-order situation that is out of control. The real justice issue is why crime happens, what are the underlying issues that cause a person to deliberately commit a crime. The main, but not only, reason is abject poverty, poor housing, not enough income to feed the family and keep it warm, etc, etc. Wouldn't it be good if the \$195,000 spent on keeping each person in prison each year (and that applies to both those convicted and sentenced as well as those on remand) were used to address the root causes of crime? That would be both Doing Justice and Loving Kindness.

### **The Impact of Immigration**

Covid and the closing of our borders had a very interesting impact on our society. Immigrants could not come here for some two plus years but now we are back to close to 100,000 net immigrants this year.

As soon as it seemed likely that the border would be partially and then fully opened the cry went up from businesses around the country for the government to let immigrants in, and quickly. We need more doctors, we need more nurses, we need more teachers, we need more bus drivers, we need more engineers and so on it went. And they were right, we do need more of these specialists but why? One of the reasons is that we do not educate enough of these specialists in Aotearoa because it costs money to educate them and over the last 40 years we have not been prepared to spend the money.

Just before Covid, the Government decided to make a very significant contribution to apprenticeship training –

<sup>1</sup> [Justice Definition & Meaning | Britannica Dictionary](#)

<sup>2</sup> David Seymour in interview on Q&A 17 September 2023.

<sup>3</sup> [Microsoft Word - Text mined operational offence Statistics - Stats as at 15 August \(police.govt.nz\)](#)

plumbers, electricians, carpenters, etc. Now we have some 60,000 apprentices under training.<sup>4</sup> In addition to providing a pathway to a useful job and life, the emphasis on apprenticeships has probably helped bring down unemployment to its lowest levels since the 1970s. Every plumber, electrician, carpenter, or other tradesperson we train in New Zealand is one less person we have to bring in from overseas.

One other impact of the border closure was on the demand for houses. Over the past two years the average price of houses has actually fallen as demand has dropped off. Part of the reason for this has the drying up of immigrants arriving in New Zealand and less demand for houses. Now with some 92,400 net new immigrants<sup>5</sup>, requiring around 35,000 houses, demand is going to increase and as the “market” worshippers will tell us, prices will go up.

Looking at Aotearoa’s population change it is estimated that there are 184 live births per day, 92 deaths per day plus 253 net per day of new immigrants. With no immigrants we would add only 92 to our population per day or 22,500 a year compared to about 125,000 including immigrants.

Where do many of these doctors, nurses, engineers, etc that immigrate come from? From countries that have educated them and probably cannot afford to lose them. They come because New Zealand can afford to pay them because it is cheaper than training them. Why should our unwillingness to fund our education system so that we have enough trained people to provide all the services we need as a society be at the expense of societies that are losing desperately needed people? Some people argue that too many of our trained specialists leave New Zealand for more pay, but those people go to countries like Australia, Great Britain, the USA and we do receive some immigrants from those countries but many of our immigrants come from other countries that can ill afford to lose them. That is one side of immigration, the other side is immigrants that come in for jobs that companies cannot fill locally, primarily because the company is not prepared to pay well enough. This includes many semi-skilled and unskilled jobs and results in keeping the pay for these jobs down. The “market” will not do it, so employers get the government to do it via immigration.

New Zealand is basically a nation built on immigration, initially from Great Britain and then from many countries. As New Zealand History <sup>6</sup> explains, Te Tiriti o Waitangi came about because *“Growing numbers of British migrants arrived in New Zealand in the late 1830s, and there were plans for extensive settlement. Around this time there were large-scale land transactions with Māori, unruly behaviour by some settlers and signs that the French were interested in annexing New Zealand. The British government was initially unwilling to act, but it eventually realised that annexing the country could protect Māori, regulate British subjects and secure commercial interests.”*

Certainly, commercial interests were secured, but the regulation of British subjects appears to have been restricted to regulation within settler communities with little regulation

where settler and indigenous communities interacted, particularly where land was concerned. The amount of “protection” Māori received was limited at best; ironically when Māori needed protection it was from the British settlers, not the French! In many cases it was the Christian missionaries that stood alongside Māori. But then as immigration accelerated and the immigrants from Great Britain continued to pour in, the British style colonial government focused almost completely on securing commercial interests at the expense of protecting Māori.

Although we now have one of the most ethnically and culturally diverse societies anywhere, and those who attended the founding assembly of Te Ohu Whakawhanaunga Tāmaki Makaurau last month will testify to this. We still have political parties who are prepared to “play the race card” in attempting to get an electoral advantage. There are those who complain when the Māori names of government bodies become the norm, even though Māori is one of our two official languages (the other is New Zealand sign language) – English has yet to be made official! There are those who object to road signs with two languages, who object when Māori, the indigenous people of this land, are specifically included on boards and committees and councils to ensure that their voice is heard. And when government departments such as health have demonstrably failed Māori, and a separate department is set up to ensure that Māori get equal access to health, there is a cry to shut it down as it is “racist”.

Has the time come when we need to seriously ask these questions:

- Have we the right number of people in Aotearoa?
- Do we need to stop importing people to fill gaps we have made by not educating people?
- By continuously increasing our populations are we adding to the greenhouse gases (GHG) we put into the atmosphere?
- Is increasing Gross Domestic Product the only measure of success for a country?

None of these questions are being asked in this election but we do need to ask them and answer them soon. If we continue to attract up to 100,000 plus people a year to come to Aotearoa, we will need to build houses for them using land previously used for agriculture or more significantly horticulture. If we fail to educate enough professional specialists, then we will need to import them. Increasing populations will inevitably increase GHG emissions when we have agreed as a nation to reduce them very significantly. Sustainability, not economic growth should and must be the measure of a successful society.

We regularly hear the cry from those opposed to actually taking action to reduce GHG that we are only a small country and we do not make any difference, but if all the “small” countries in the world take the same position then becoming a sustainable planet could never happen and immigration would not be important because there would be no one to come or place to go. No Planet B.

<sup>4</sup> [Rise of the tradies: Record numbers sign up as apprentices - NZ Herald](#)

<sup>5</sup> [Westpac economist: Record migration gain will boost economy- but balance is key \(newstalkzb.co.nz\)](#)

<sup>6</sup> [The Treaty in brief - The Treaty in brief | NZHistory, New Zealand history online](#)