

“Do Justice, Love Kindness and Walk Humbly With Your God”

Micah 6:8

A Newsletter on Social Justice Issues from the Social Justice Group, Anglican Diocese of Auckland

Welcome to the December edition of Do Justice for 2024 as the Social Justice Group continue to discuss issues of social justice from a Christian perspective in the tradition of Micah and St Francis.

Looking back to 2016

Eight years ago Donald Trump was elected president of the USA, and the UK decided to leave the European Union. Both events had a significant impact on New Zealand, but we have still managed to continue as a small prosperous state some 2,000km from our nearest neighbour, Australia. With Donald Trump's election again as US president will we also continue broadly along the same lines? But more importantly what will be the impact of a further four years of Donald Trump, and will it be only four years? The United States' Constitution limits a president to only two terms i.e. eight years but Trump has indicated that he may not adhere to this limit.

Looking back on what we wrote in Do Justice in December 2016 it is interesting to read

“Many commentators have commented on the large majorities of white middle class and lower-class men who voted for Trump (or Brexit). Many commentators have concluded that these votes were against immigrants. What is clear is that the so-called “rust belts” in both the USA and the UK voted very heavily in favour of Trump and Brexit, cities and districts traditionally strong supporters of the Labour Party in the UK and the Democrats in the USA.” We further went on and looked at the impact of neoliberalism and inequality, issues that are very much still with us today.

Trump's four years came to an end when his inability to address, in particular, the challenges of Covid became clear. He was replaced by the Democratic administration of Joe Biden who reverted to a more neoliberal economic approach and had to face significant conflicts in the Ukraine and Israel/Palestine.

Trump in his first four years did not appear to have made any real impact on the “rust belts”. He did, however, manage to give the very rich and corporations a significant tax break. The fact that a large number of the very wealthy endorsed him and some very publicly worked for his election in 2024 may

well be in expectation of further tax breaks. But what about the rust belt? They appear to have continued to support him despite his inability to actually do anything to help them.

Looking at the latest polling figures it is interesting to see that the votes for Donald Trump are slightly more than 2020 – 76,879,093 in 2024 and 74,223,974 in 2020. Whereas Joe Biden got 81,253,501 in 2020 but Harris 74,392,514 in 2024¹. So, it was not so much that Donald Trump gained votes but rather he did not lose votes whereas Harris lost some six million votes compared to Biden in 2020. However this is not the massive majority that the Trump camp is claiming but just 1.6%. But it is not the total number of votes that counts but the electoral college that decides, and here Trump won easily as Harris votes in the “marginal” states dropped to give them to Trump. This raises some interesting questions

- What impact did the fact that Harris was a black/Asian woman have?
- What impact did Biden's continuing strong support for Israel and its negative impact on significant numbers of Muslim, Arab, and Palestinian votes in some of these states have?
- What impact did changes to the rules in some key states have that potentially made it more difficult for some qualified voters to actually vote?

The next few years are going to be very significant. The next test point will be 2026 when there are elections of a third of the Senate and all the House of Representatives. Will this election go ahead? If it goes ahead and the Republicans lose either the Senate or the House, will President Trump try to overturn the result? What is going to happen in the Supreme Court and the whole of the Federal Justice system? How “democratic” will the USA be in some four years' time?

All the above issues are important, but for our children, grandchildren and great grandchildren the fact that Trump is a “climate change denier” is probably more significant. One of the first actions Trump took when he was president in 2017 was to pull the USA out of the Paris Climate Change Accord, and

¹ Ben Lowry: It is now clear that Donald Trump only scraped his presidential election victory

he has made it very clear he will do the same again. To have the federal government of the world's largest economy actively opposing all actions to reduce greenhouse gases and supporting further drilling for oil and gas in the USA will inevitably mean that world temperature rise will rush past 1.5°C and almost certainly mean that we will see an increase of more than 2°C in this decade. Four more years of Trump will probably mean that the rest of the world is going to have to re-evaluate its climate policies as storms increase, dry spells lengthen and record high temperatures in summer become the annual norm. Hopefully the rest of the world will continue with policies to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, maybe the rest of the world will tell Trump that if he does not change his policies then they will put a 20% tariff on all USA imports into their countries!

Te Tiriti from the perspective of Tangata Tiriti

Almost at the same time as Donald Trump was being declared winner of the US presidential election a bill was introduced into our parliament which will cause more anguish in Aotearoa than any bill for many years - The Treaty Principles Bill.

This Bill, introduced by Act Leader and Cabinet Minister, David Seymour, seeks to re-write the basic document that enabled settlers initially from Britain to come and live in Aotearoa in 1840.

Te Tiriti o Waitangi was the result of negotiations between some 400 Māori tribal leaders and Lt Governor William Hobson on behalf of the British Queen, Victoria. At that time there were some 50,000 Māori living in Aotearoa and around 2,000 foreigners, mainly from Britain. There was no parliament in Wellington and no police (even in England the concept of police was still some years away), but there were issues with the behaviour of the "settlers" and the local people that needed to be resolved.

In the 19th century European countries were colonising many foreign lands, and Australia was an example of being colonised by the British without any discussion with the indigenous people of the land. Aotearoa was different, there was an agreement, a treaty, between the Māori inhabitants who had been in Aotearoa for many centuries and the British Crown that enabled people to come from the British Isles and settle. All of us who have emigrated to Aotearoa, or whose ancestors emigrated here, have done so because of Te Tiriti. We are the Tangata Tiriti – people of the Treaty.

Some 14 years later, in 1854, one partner to the Treaty, without reference to the other, set up a "parliament" based on their method of government. Members of the

parliament were elected by males over 21 who owned property. This excluded most Māori as Māori property was jointly owned. This was dealt with in 1867 with the introduction of two "Māori" seats elected by all males over 21 years of age without any reference to property ownership.

The Act by the British Parliament, with no representatives from Aotearoa, that established our parliament, made it "*supreme over all other government institutions.*"

Over the years, usually ahead of the British Parliament, the New Zealand Parliament has been reformed in a number of ways including substantially widening the electorate to include any resident of the country, not necessarily a citizen, over 18 and without any property requirements.² None of this would have been possible without the Māori signing Te Tiriti Waitangi.

Now a small group in parliament, 11 members representing only 8.8% of the voters at the last election want to change Te Tiriti, not just change the wording but change the very intent of the original document.

Act's Principles of the Treaty of Waitangi Bill is asking parliament to pass it and then a binding referendum to ratify it. It seeks to change the original Treaty, something that was agreed and signed before parliament even existed.

Although Aotearoa does not have a written constitution in the form common in many other countries, we do have a "founding document" in Te Tiriti.

Te Tiriti has for the last 50 years been not just acknowledged but accepted by the majority of people living in Aotearoa who voted for successive governments as our "founding document" and also accepted that our judicial system, the courts, had the task of sorting out any issues with the application of Te Tiriti. As far as Act is concerned it is the judicial aspect that they do not like, they effectively want to take away from one of the Tiriti partners all their rights, rights that the British Queen accepted, and as Tangata Tiriti we accepted when we arrived in Aotearoa, or our ancestors arrived.

Once a treaty is signed it can only be changed by both parties discussing and agreeing to the changes. It is very clear that this is not the case with the Treaty Principles Bill, and the process does not allow for both "parties" Tangata Whenua and Tangata Tiriti to separately discuss and agree to the changes.

Basically, what Act is proposing is that Tangata Whenua should lose their rights under Te Tiriti despite the protections given them by the British Crown when Te

² [New Zealand Parliament - Wikipedia](#)

Tiriti was signed because so many people have emigrated to Aotearoa that Tangata Whenua are now a minority.

What is even more concerning is that the “rights” that Act want to take away, and the coalition government has been chipping away at, include rights around health and education. Overall, Tangata Whenua are much less healthy than Tangata Tiriti and less well educated. It is previous governments’ attempts to deal with these issues by giving Tangata Whenua different ways of health care and education that appear to have prompted this reaction by Act and its supporters.

Democracy is not just “one person one vote” but extends to equality in how we live as a people. It is very clear that Tangata Whenua do not enjoy such “equality” and they need to have more say in how government provided services, including health and other services, are provided to them. That is real democracy.