

Edmund Rice Justice Aotearoa - June 2019 Newsletter

Kia ora kotou, I'm happy to bring you Edmund Rice Justice Aotearoa's June Newsletter. This edition will cover two special events I attended as part of Edmund Rice Week in May, recap two recent Ethical Encounters hosted by ERJ, and will cover some upcoming events supported and run by Edmund Rice Justice Aotearoa.

Celebrating Edmund Rice Week

Throughout May, I was lucky enough to experience two celebrations of Edmund Rice – A Liturgy at St. Peters College, and a reflection run by Brother Robbo.

The liturgy at St. Peters College was run by their Edmund Rice student portfolio and shared the Edmund Rice story, explained the key values of Edmund Rice, the Edmund Rice network today, and some of the students own experiences doing Edmund Rice inspired work. The students, with the help of teacher and ER coordinator Luke Williams, did an amazing job at explaining why Edmund Rice's story and values were important in the past, and continue to be in the present. A big congratulations to Luke aka Mr. Williams, Keenan, Thomas, Jamie, Shay, Mario, Reuben, Reid, Joe and Jared for putting together such a good liturgy, and for presenting it so well in front of the entire school.

On Monday 6th May, Brother Robbo led a reflection to mark Edmund Rice Feast Day. A sizeable and diverse group attended, including Brothers Vincent and Bill Dowling, members of the Edmund Rice Camps Auckland Committee, the ER Justice Trust, the India Immersion Program, St. Peter's College, Liston College and long-time members of the network. The reflection focused on people's connections to the ER Network, what they thought was at the heart of Edmund Rice work, and what people see for the future of Edmund Rice inspired work.

This reflection uncovered a range of insights into these areas and we were all able to widen our perspectives on what Edmund Rice work is, what lies at the heart of, it and the direction it is heading into the future. Many thanks to Brother Robbo for running an insightful reflection, and to those that attended – it was great to see you all.



Attendees of the Edmund Rice Auckland Reflection Group on Monday 6th May, 2019 – participating in a special reflection run by Brother Robbo to mark Edmund Rice Feast Day.

Ethical Encounters in May

Throughout May ERJ hosted two Ethical Encounters – one in Auckland and one in Christchurch. Both were facilitated by exceptional guest speakers and generated insightful discussion around some complicated topics!

Auckland – Wednesday May 22nd “Unpacking the Ethical Complexity of Hemp”

On Wednesday 22nd May, Edmund Rice Justice Aotearoa hosted an Ethical Encounter which explored the complexity of hemp as a strategic resource in contemporary society. The guest speaker, Tadhg Stopford - co-founder and medical educator of the Hemp Foundation (NZ), covered the history of hemp and presented a range of possible ways it may act as a resource to combat the environmental, economic, political and social challenges of our times. The audience at this Encounter came from a wide range of backgrounds - the Auckland Catholic Diocese's Justice and Peace Commission, members of the Edmund Rice Camps Auckland Executive Committee, teachers from St. Peter's and St. Paul's College, students from the St. Peter's College Edmund Rice Portfolio, post-graduate students from the University of Auckland's School of Environment, and friends of the wider ER Network.

Through Tadhg's presentation, a number of points and issues were discussed - such as the restrictions placed on hemp despite its proven uses as a fibre, food and medicine, the misconceptions and stigma placed on hemp when it is conflated with 'recreational' cannabis, how it may be appropriately regulated, as well as a raft of other points related to hemp and social justice.

A big thanks to Tadhg for his passionate, well informed and interesting presentation, to Kieran Fouhy (Principal St Paul's College) for providing a fantastic venue in the St. Paul's College Boardroom, and to all the people that came out to participate in the Ethical Encounter.



Participants of the Auckland Ethical Encounter listening to guest speaker, Tadhg Stopford

Christchurch – Thursday May 30th “Caring for the Natural Environment in the Modern World”

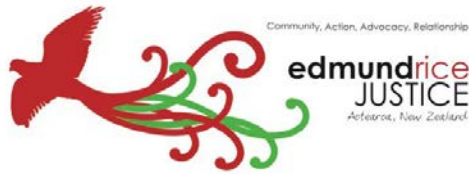
Just over a week after the Hemp Ethical Encounter, ERJ hosted another one in Christchurch – this time on the topic of *Caring for the Natural Environment in the Modern World*. Our guest speaker for this Encounter was Steve Lowndes, Chairperson of Canterbury’s regional council ‘ECan’. The audience for this Ethical Encounter was comprised of student leaders and staff from Villa Maria and St. Thomas’ College, Brother Joe Lauren, and other members of the Edmund Rice Aotearoa network.

At the beginning of the Ethical Encounter, Steve shared his background, information about his job, how ECan functions, and the values that drive his work with the audience. The Encounter became particularly powerful as the group started to discuss what can be done in the present in order to care for the natural environment. Although there are a raft of positive things being done in this area, as Steve said, the big “elephant in the room” is human driven (anthropogenic) climate change. Steve’s passion and depth of knowledge in this area really helped the audience engage with this topic. One of my favourite quotes and learnings from this morning was that “climate change is a whole society issue, everyone plays their part”, which I think was one of the main takeaway messages from this Ethical Encounter – that we are all powerful enough to enact the change we want to see in the world.

I would like to thank Steve Lowndes for kindly taking the time to meaningfully engage with our group. His knowledge and passion made this a special Ethical Encounter. Also, a big thank you to the staff and students from Villa Maria, and to Brother Joe Lauren for coming along and participating. Finally, a huge thanks to Cathy Harrison for your help with organising this Ethical Encounter.



Participants of Christchurch Ethical Encounter and Guest Speaker, Steve Lowndes (on the far right)



Upcoming Events and Important Dates:

Edmund Rice National Gathering 2019

Date: Saturday 14th September 2019 – 9:30am until 5:30pm.

Sunday 9th September 2018 – 9 am until 12:30 pm

Venue: St Thomas of Canterbury College, Middlepark Road. Christchurch, New Zealand.



Theme: Manaakitanga is a powerful concept with different possible translations: making someone feel at home, being a responsible host, showing kindness, hospitality, caring for the environment, treating people with respect, nurturing relationships, caring for others, and reciprocity of kindness, respect and humanity.

The idea of caring about others, uplifting each other, supporting and making all feel at home and loved is a central value of all the Edmund Rice groups and entities.

It is like family and having lot of friends in and around the family home – sitting together at the table filled with good food, for hours and hours, talking, laughing, just being together. But apart from providing nourishment for the body, this principle also means to provide food for the soul if it is needed. We need to talk when something is not going quite right in our lives, often it helps to see a bit clearer. When people come to us and ask for help or support. It's about sitting and listening, respect for others, taking them seriously and showing that we care by our actions.

So how can we make Manaakitanga an even greater priority in our Edmund Rice schools, communities, and organisations, especially when working with people who are vulnerable, when we aspire to such values as presence, compassion liberation as well as fundamental touchstones such as liberating education, gospel spirituality, inclusive communities, and justice and solidarity? This gathering is open not only to the Edmund Rice Network in Aotearoa – New Zealand but also to anyone else who wants to join in the conversations, listen to challenging keynote speakers, participate in focused workshops, build networks, and gain valuable insights to take back home.

Registrations are open now! Please visit: <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/edmund-rice-network-gathering-registration-62320899488> to register/

Upcoming Ethical Encounters:

I am in the process of organising a few more Ethical Encounters for 2019. The dates and details for these will be advertised via email and social media (the Edmund Rice Justice Aotearoa Facebook Page) once confirmed.

Auckland Reflection Group – July Reflection:

The Auckland Edmund Rice Reflection Group will have a reflection on Monday, July 1st from 6:45pm onwards at 34 Queen Mary Avenue.

The Auckland Reflection Group meets on the first Monday of each month, all are welcome and we would love to have you there.



Closing remarks:

That's all for now! Thanks for taking the time to read over this newsletter. I thought I would do an extra-long one this time round as it's been a while since the last newsletter, and there was a fair amount of content to share with you all.

Noho ora mai,

Jack Barrett

Project Officer

Edmund Rice Justice Aotearoa