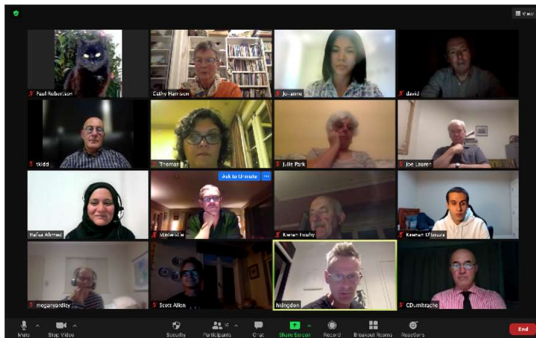


Edmund Rice Justice Aotearoa New Zealand Trust April 2022 Newsletter

Kia ora koutou, I'm happy to bring you the Edmund Rice Justice Aotearoa NZ Trust's first newsletter for the year. This issue will provide an overview of ERJ's foci and plans for the year.

With ever-changing domestic and global realities which include the ongoing pandemic and general unrest, the ERJANZ Trust has started 2022 with a spirit of adaptability and a determination to draw attention to the important issues of our times. The methods through which we are achieving this are through our Reflection Groups, Ethical Encounter Hui, Restorative Justice Services and the 2022 Conference. Please find an update on activities in this newsletter.

Ethical Encounter 1: 21 March 22



On 21 March we were privileged to have Dr Hafsa Ahmed speak to a group of Edmund Rice network friends and supporters from across the motu. Hafsa spoke to "The Importance of Interfaith Dialogue in Breaking Down Barriers, Building Bridges and Weaving the Fabric of a Cohesive Society". A valuable discussion took place after Dr Ahmed's kōrero.

Our next Ethical Encounter will be held via Zoom on 03 May at 7pm when Prof Jim McAloon will join us to speak to "The Three Waters Reform – A Catholic Social Justice Perspective". To join this hui please email Anna Kelly anna@erjustice.org.nz

Restorative Justice



Karen Currie, our Restorative Justice Administrator, has been busy working through an increase of referrals from Christchurch prisons. Although the current covid pandemic has impacted our ability

to hold and facilitate face-to-face hui, this period has provided opportunity to grow and strengthen relationships between Corrections, the ERJANZ Trust and other Restorative Justice service providers. It is hoped that the loosening of restrictions will allow for an increase in the number of Restorative Justice conferences that are able to go ahead.

Conference Update

The lockdown late last year meant that our September 2021 conference "Emerging Worlds – Tihei Wa Mauri Ora" had to be postponed. We are currently looking at suitable dates to hold the conference in the latter part of the year. Once a suitable date is identified we will share this with the network.

Governance Matters

On 03 April ERJANZ Trust Board (Br Paul Robertson (Chair), Kieran Fouhy, Cathy Harrison, Bernie Lee, Megan Yardley, Boris Baptist & Sam Wojcik) met in person in Christchurch. Unfortunately, outgoing Board Member Marty Taylor was unable to join due to illness. We sincerely thank Marty for his many contributions to the kaupapa during his time on Board.



Easter Reflection 2022

Below is a Justice Reflection from Fr. Claude Mostowik that was written for Palm Sunday 10 April 2022. It was published on the website of our Australian whanaunga organisation "Edmund Rice Centre". Fr. Claude MSC is a Catholic priest and member of the community of the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart who works to protect the human rights of many. He has given his permission for this reflection to be shared.

There is little for our comfort if we really try to accompany Jesus on his journey towards the Cross. His life was always a way of the cross. There are two processions: the one with Jesus on a colt and accompanied by poor people, women, and other 'outsiders' proclaiming the Good News and of God's Reign that is already amongst us. The other procession is that of Pilate representing Empire on a war horse accompanied by soldiers, the powerful and 'insiders.' Jesus comes with outcasts as a direct action against the occupying forces and the status quo. It is an in-your-face nonviolent mockery. We are asked which procession we choose to be part of. The kingdom of empire promises peace through weapons, military might, hoarding of resources and protection of the rich and powerful.

The reign of God promises freedom, justice and enough for all. These are very relevant questions today – as ever. Who do we line up behind? Political parties? Bankers? People in the pews who are self-righteous in their judgements against others? Or, do we work for peace in our communities? Support Indigenous and refugee rights? Support peace activists and conscientious objectors? Do we hoard what we have or share it? The consequences can be costly (Good Friday). For many, comfort and security become the highest aspirations. Governments can, by frightening people pass unjust and controversial legislation. People can be convinced that they are in danger and absurd laws are passed that deem people as bad characters to be deported or to oppose same sex marriage or the rights of trans people or of Indigenous people as possible threats to our culture and institutions. These are ways of protecting white privilege. Peter Marty in a Christian Century editorial recently wrote that 'Numerous political leaders seem willing to elevate comfort above truth, historical integrity, and even what's optimal for healing our nation's historic wounds.....(and)... I'm not aware of any good definition of either citizenship or faithful Christian living that treats comfort as a nonnegotiable entitlement. Do we really need laws to protect us from being uncomfortable? Learning both the good and bad of our nation's history is a splendid way to strengthen democracy and become deeper people.'

In 1989, an artist, Andres Serrano, generated controversy based on assertions that a piece of art he submitted was blasphemous. It was an image of the crucifix that had been immersed in a container of urine. Serrano was dismayed that his work received so much attention as he had no intention to be blasphemous or offensive. It was called Immersion or Piss Christ. It offended many people and attracted controversy for decades until it was vandalised and destroyed in 2011 by French fundamentalists in Avignon, France. Earlier, George Pell, sought a court injunction to have it removed from an art gallery in Melbourne, which failed. Serrano said that the crucifix is often worn as a fashion accessory and people are not horrified by what represents the crucifixion of a man who bled to death on a cross. Serrano said, 'So if Piss Christ upsets you, maybe it's a good thing to think about what happened on the cross.' It was not intended to be blasphemous, but something personal and serious. It seems much of the rage flowed from people being reminded or made aware we treat the image of Jesus in our sisters and brothers each day.

We are called again today to be participants, rather than be spectators, in the tragedy that unfolds each day. Some years ago, I walked past a recycling store in Newtown where a large Cross was installed in the display window with syringes where the nails would have been. Again, there was outrage. People did not want to be reminded that the Cross is superimposed on the lives of so many people. Jesus' crucifixion is an ongoing challenge to us: it reminds us that God cannot be separated from people who are suffering. Jesus could have walked away from all this and avoided the suffering. So many people do not walk away either.

We learn what abuse, abandonment, violence, loss of friends, family and failure means by sitting with them – people who, as Fr. Daniel Berrigan put it, 'touched the nerve of injustice.' Jesus' death reveals God's continuing identification with all victims through to the present moment. God's suffering cries are united to theirs. Through the crucified, God questions any form of worship that forgets the tragic world



where the weak, defenceless, continue to suffer and be 'crucified' – a world where some churches in the USA installed water sprinklers to deter homeless people from sleeping in the doorways.

A powerful theme in Luke is that God wills liberation for all of creation from unjust structures of power and to upend unjust structures of silence. We see God silencing those with power and giving a voice to those without power as well as ensuring that creation gets to speak justice into the world (cf. Luke 19:28–40). In the gospel, the religious leaders beg Jesus to silence his disciples (19:39), to which Jesus responds, 'I tell you, if these were silent, the stones would shout out.'

Jesus can do nothings else than speak of a new way of being together which is rooted in justice and upending power structures that silence the voices of the oppressed, the poor, the ill, and the marginalised. Mary led the way in her Magnificat! We see Jesus as truly Mary's child. God chose to silence those with power, and give voice to a prophetic child with no power, living in a society designed to ensure her oppression, who used her voice to proclaim that God will bring down the powerful from their thrones, will lift up the lowly, will fill the hungry with good things, and will send the rich away empty. Jesus' death is the consequence of the path he took to introduce God's reign, God's voice, God's mercy into the world which will try to silence anyone proclaiming something new.

We can contribute to this injustice by choosing to be silent in the face of injustice, oppression, and violence. Mary's voice will always speak the same truth spoken by the stones: God's justice for the world cannot be silenced.

God calls out to us through these victims. If we ignore them, we cannot see God. We cannot be spectators to this suffering or nourish a naive illusion of innocence. We must keep watch and not look away from Christ's continuing passion in the world. God is not indifferent to us. Jesus' entry into the holy city makes every place of suffering holy ground. When we look at the face of the Crucified One, we see God's reckless and extravagant love for all. We need to look at the face of the Crucified and find there the faces of many people who call on our compassionate love and solidarity. So where are we looking? Clearly, we are to find God in places of suffering, and stand with those who suffer.

Commemorating Jesus' Passion means we continue our struggle to transform our world into a more human world. This has a political dimension. But it also means being open, sensitive, and touchable for the person who lives next to me. It is to be able to open our hearts, our ears, our eyes, to be able to hear and to see, to live the 'mysticism of open eyes' in the face of the suffering of others and our Mother Home to recognise in them the mystery of Jesus' suffering and cross.

Jesus revealed a way of being political that many today consider impractical and naïve. Rulers continue to show off their power on their powerful war horses (or tanks) and cause great violence. Jesus came on a colt, a young horse that had never seen war and the politics of power and violence continue to be subverted by his politics of humility, service, forgiveness, and a nonviolent love that embraces all people, even those we call or designate our enemies. These alternatives are being acted out between Ukraine and Russia. His way is not based on violence, domination, and control but where everyone has food, housing, and their dignity acknowledged. It is both personal and political. Whilst Jesus seeks to influence our personal lives, he also seeks to influence our political lives. Wherever personal or political systems use violence, power, and coercion to be triumphant and victorious, he beckons us to follow him into a different kind of politics – into the Reign of God that lives and dies by love, service, and forgiveness.

Ngā mihi o Te Aranga ki a koutou katoa

In closing, and on behalf of the Edmund Rice Justice Aotearoa New Zealand Trust, I would like to wish everyone a happy and safe Easter. Thank you for the support shown so far this year. We look forward to engaging with you all further in the upcoming months.

Anna Kelly, Programmes Administrator, Edmund Rice Justice Aotearoa NZ Trust.