

# Whāia te Tika

## *Seek Justice*

Justice & Peace Commission Catholic Diocese of Auckland

Autumn 2023



## **Pink shoes into the Vatican**

A special report on this year's event.



In this issue:  
Editorial,  
Page 2.

Budget  
submission,  
Pages 3-4.

End of Life Bill  
must be repealed,  
Page 5.

"We must not  
forget this: the  
Church is not a  
home for some.  
It is not selective.  
The holy faithful  
people of God are  
this: everyone."  
- Pope Francis

Pink Shoes into the  
Vatican,  
Page 6.

A lesson from  
Australia about  
pokies?  
Page 7.

Earth Day call to  
invest in our  
planet,  
Page 8.



## A Mission Focused Church

Our guest speaker at the March Commission meeting, was Fr Neil Darragh. His recent book *But What Is the Church For?* looks at mission as being the primary reason for the Church's existence. He says our old understanding of mission (sending people overseas to bring Christianity to those who had never heard of Jesus), is no longer relevant. We are all missionaries.

What does that mean? For him, it means bringing about the reign or realm of God. He states that the realm of God is our created world and all of us who live in it today.

The parishes and communities in the Church today are self focused, having good liturgies, welcoming communities, bringing more people into the church and thriving youth groups. All of these things are good, but are not mission-focused.

The Church is for, is in service to, the realm of God. Its mission is to play a creative part in the evolving realm of God. It means looking at ways to bring about peace and justice in our wider society, and ways to take part in the care of creation.

It means telling the stories of parishioners who are being missionaries by, for instance, volunteering in victim support, offering citizens advice, or working among Fono and kaianga, It means parish leadership looking out beyond itself to find a missionary project they can actively engage in, such as providing venues for other community groups, political activism, food support, emergency relief breakfasts, housing support, homework programmes or joining with local ecological projects.

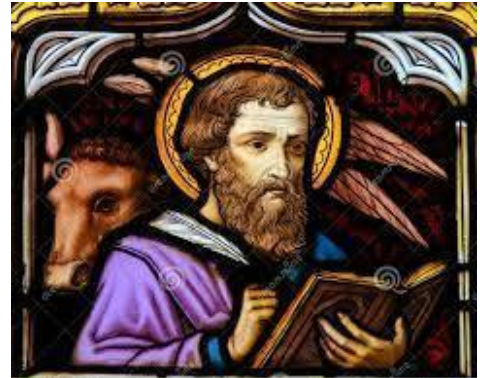
These should not just be one-offs, but a major part of the mission of the local parish or community in which they live.

How can we move from a self-focused church to a mission focused church? What area of mission can you take on?



**Pat Lythe**  
**Chair, Justice & Peace Commission**  
**Editor, *Whaia te Tika***

## St Luke's Gospel will be guide for retreat



Social Justice aspects of St Luke's Gospel will be the core of our next retreat.

The next retreat is planned for June 10. It will be held at the St Francis Retreat Centre at 20 Hillsbrough. It will be led by Br Kieran Fenn, FMS. Br Fenn is a Bible Scholar and has taught the Scriptures in New Zealand and overseas for more than 40 years.

The retreat is free for Commission members and \$30 for non-members.

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### For this edition

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# End massive injustice of child poverty now, Commission urges gov't in Budget submission

The Justice & Peace Commission has urged the New Zealand government to end what it calls the massive injustice of child poverty in its submission on the 2023 Budget.

The Commission's Executive Secretary, Peter Garrick, said the slashing of the base rates of Social Welfare payments to some of the country's most vulnerable families in 1991 had led to decades of intergenerational poverty, which had been identified in the Social Welfare Expert Advisory Report.

Garrick commended the government for the steps taken in the 2021 and 2022 budgets to redress this injustice.

However, more substantive action was needed.

## Support

"Families have to be able to support themselves with dignity, so New Zealand can reverse the march of child poverty that is so unnecessarily blighting so many lives," Garrick said.

"We ask that child poverty be addressed by including in the 2023 Budget sufficient funds to lift the wellbeing of families in need by enabling them to have a decent income."

The Commission called on the government to substantially increase the base benefit for families in line with inflation.

The government should increase the minimum wage and establish a Social Welfare Commission to ensure all families got the help they needed.



**ABOVE:** *The Budget submission says the march of child poverty must be reversed.*

The poorest and most vulnerable in society were unable to genuinely participate in building a decent society for all, Garrick said.

Māori and Pacific families were among those most affected. Their children's wellbeing would be immediately improved by implementing the key recommendation of the Social Welfare Expert Advisory Group.

The group recommended increasing the base benefit for families by between 12 and 47 percent.

Such a move would have a significant effect on lifting Māori and Pacific incomes, skills and opportunities.

"The Government has made some minor moves in this area, but this is way short of what is needed," Garrick said.

"The more substantive change is delayed, the more children are suffering and damaging their development for life."

## Quick and bold action needed in face of climate change crisis, says Commission

Quick and bold action is needed in the face of the climate change crisis. In its Budget submission the Commission pointed out that the planet was already three years into the critical period of 2020-30 and greenhouse gas emissions showed no signs of being curbed quickly. The Commission advocated for a sustainability yardstick to be applied to all long-term investments. This meant environmental and social sustainability had to be considered within both climate change and all other spending.

Allied to this was the need to establish a circular economy that provided incentives to encourage the re-use of materials and promote biodiversity before any more plant and animal species became extinct and more habitats were destroyed.

The Commission commended the establishment of the Climate Emergency Response Fund (CERF) "as an important feature of the annual Budget process to support our climate change objectives."

## Increase rehab grant and stop setting up prisoners to fail



**The Government could help reduce the number of prisoners re-offending by increasing the Steps to Freedom grant made to newly released prisoners.**

The Justice & Peace Commission urged the Government to take action in its Budget submission. It said the grant needed to be revised in line with Reserve Bank calculations on inflation, otherwise prisoners were doomed to fail.

Newly released prisoners are given \$350 to house and feed themselves for the first two weeks of their release.

“This has changed little since 1991 and has contributed to the high rate of re-offending by setting them up to fail,” Peter Garrick, who authored the Budget submission, said.

Because of administrative barriers many newly released prisoners could not even access this meagre amount.

The Reserve Bank inflation index calculator indicated the Steps to Freedom grant should be increased to at least \$1500 in line with inflation.

Investing in prisoner rehabilitation would have a profound effect on improving outcomes for many Māori families.

Māori made up more than 50% of all prisoners, more than six times their proportion in the population. For Māori women, the picture was even more acute: they comprised about 60% of the female prison population.

The Commission submission said a key way to help prisoners to rehabilitate was to adequately fund back-to-work schemes and provide sufficient funds to provide them with housing to start their re-integration into society.

### Struggle

Many prisoners upon release struggled to find suitably priced and safe accommodation and had difficulty finding support after long prison sentences. Losing contact with family and friends and movement among the country’s prisons magnified this requirement for many.

With over 60% of prisoners suffering from mental health and addiction disorders, there needed to be proper funding to provide significantly more beds for residential treatment for drug and alcohol rehabilitation as well as proven initiatives such as extending the number of courts dedicated to drug and alcohol related offences.

## *Housing key to addressing inequalities in society*

The Justice & Peace Commission has urged the Government to put large resources of land and money towards tackling the pressing housing problem.

“It is abundantly clear that there is a huge lack of public housing units to accommodate those who need them,” the Commission said in its Budget submission.

The number of households on the Register for public housing continued to rise in spite of apparent efforts to reduce eligibility.



**ABOVE:** *Housing remains beyond the reach of too many New Zealanders.*

The submission cited Jan Rutledge General Manager of De Paul House, who said:

“Affordable and sustainable housing is the key to addressing social and economic inequalities, and ensuring that children have a secure start in life.

“Government cannot do this alone and should focus on working with community housing providers, and resetting their funding parameters, so that housing stock reflects the aspirations of Māori and Pasifika.”

# Human Life Committee working to make End of Life Act election issue

**The Human Life Committee is working to make repeal of the End of Life Choice Act an election issue.**

Members of the Committee have been working with Euthanasia Free New Zealand and other organisations towards the same goal.

Politicians have already begun using the legislation as part of their election campaign, with the ACT Party's David Seymour saying he wants the law to be relaxed in order to allow the removal of a requirement that a patient had only six months to live.

Human Life Committee convenor Catherine Gillies said the Act should be repealed and the position go back to what was previously allowed.

This meant that suffering could be avoided without crossing over the line into euthanasia or assisted suicide.

## Criminal

She said some of the wording in the Act protected euthanasia practitioners from criminal and civil liability.

Polling had shown that many people who voted yes in the referendum did not understand that what they wanted was already legal, such as turning off life support, patients making "do not resuscitate orders", declining or stopping medical treatment and giving pain relief, even if it hastened death.



ABOVE: The ACT Party's David Seymour wants to loosen control on assisted dying regulations.

"If a person changes their mind and a doctor or nurse administers the fatal drugs anyway, who is to know?" Gillies said.

Under the Act, euthanasia could be provided to people with a terminal diagnosis who also suffered from mental illness.

She said there was a danger that older and sick people could be pressured into opting for euthanasia.

Doctors who had a conscientious objection to the process were required to tell the patient how they could get another doctor.

This requirement was a breach of conscience rights, and the requirement was regarded as unethical by the World Health Organisation and the World Medical Association.

## Euthanasia statistics

Assisted dying service data is published quarterly. From October 1 to December 31, 2022 there were 218 new applications for assisted dying.

Broadly speaking, the highest categories were Pākehā, men, people over 65, receiving palliative care or with cancer.

A total of 140 applications were accepted and 102 assisted deaths occurred. In all, 95 applications did not proceed due to applications being withdrawn, being ineligible, or dying.

<https://www.health.govt.nz/our-work/life-stages/assisted-dying-service/assisted-dying-service-data-and-reporting>

## History resources inadequate says Bicultural Committee

The Zealand History Curriculum does not teach enough about the Māori Declaration of Independence in 1835, according to the Bicultural committee.

Convenor Manuel Beazley said the curriculum was "inadequate in its provision for learning opportunities about He Whakaputanga."

Resources for Masses for Waitangi Day were sent to parishes and schools. The 'formal' diocesan launch of the Māori translation of the Children's Eucharistic Prayers for Mass was held at the Catholic Schools Mass on 15 February.

The Liturgy Centre and Vicar for Māori worked on a musical setting for the responses within the Liturgy of the Eucharist.

# Be the Change group marks Women's Day with Pink Shoes event outside St Patrick's Cathedral

## Special report by Mary Brophy

International Women's Day on March 8, was marked this year in Auckland by a 'Pink Shoes into the Vatican' event held outside St Patrick's Cathedral to coincide with the celebration of midday Mass.

The event was part of a continuing campaign by Catholic group, Be the Change, whose aim is to achieve greater justice and equality for women in the Church, not least by challenging the Church's exclusion of women from ordained ministries and senior governance roles.

In 2022 the group conducted similar events in Auckland and Wellington. While Bishop Lowe was unable to attend the Auckland event, he wrote a letter of strong support to its organisers.

This year's 'Pink Shoes' event was colourful and lively. Group members, many wearing pink or their 'pink shoes' t-shirts, engaged with people walking through St Patrick's Square or going into the Cathedral for Mass.

## Service

On display were pink-ribboned but well-worn shoes, accompanied by women's stories of their Church experiences, some expressing their owners' aspirations, others representing the tireless work done by women in service to the Church. Key rings with little pink resin shoes attached were handed out as a reminder of the group's journey for justice and equality for women.

This year a tent was set up with the words of Isaiah's exhortation to "enlarge the space of your tent" written across its entrance, a reminder of the Vatican document of the same name.



**ABOVE:** Supporters of Be the Change Aotearoa New Zealand gather outside St Patrick's Cathedral. Photo: Del Abcede.

## Enlarge the Space of your Tent

Released in October last year, *Enlarge the Space of Your Tent* echoes the voices of millions of Catholics across the globe.

It served as the framework for the continental phase of the synod process, ahead of assemblies in Rome.

The report dedicates significant attention to the role of women in church life.

It says women remain the majority of those who attend liturgy and participate in activities, yet most decision-making roles are held by men. The document quotes New Zealand's conference report, which says the "lack of equality for women is seen as a stumbling block for the Church in the modern world."

The text quotes from a report by the groups representing members of religious orders, which said that "sexism in decision-making and Church language is prevalent."

"As a result, women are excluded from meaningful roles in the life of the Church and discriminated against," they said.

## Where to get help

**Depression Helpline:**

**0800 543 354**

**Kidslife: 0800 942 8787**

**Lifeline: 0800 543 354; Free text 4357**

**Need to Talk? Call/text 1737**

**Victim Support: 0800 842 846**

**Rainbow Youth: 09 376 4155**

**Samaritans: 0800 726 666**

**What's Up: 0800 942 8787**

**Youth line: 0800 376 633; or text 2342**

**Shine (get-help):**

**0508 744 633**

**Safe to talk: 0800 044 334; Free text 4334**

**Better Blokes: 09 378 6812**

**Rape Crisis Centre:**

**0800 88 33 00**

**Sexual Abuse Help**

**Foundation:**

**09 623 1700**

**Youthline: 0800 376 635; Free text 234**

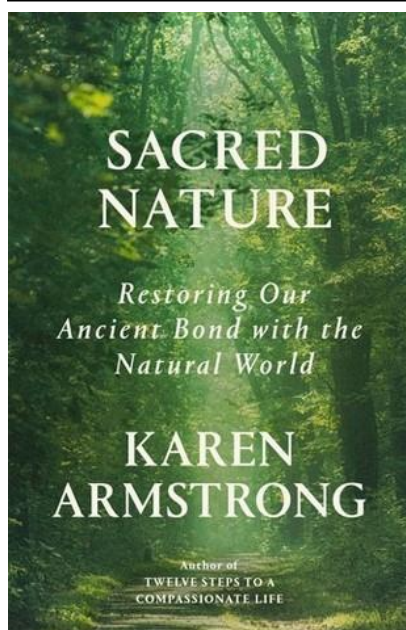
**Women's Refuge:**

**0800 733 843**

**Suicide Crisis Helpline:**

**0800 543354**

## BOOK REVIEW



## Wise, clear and accessible study of faith and nature

Karen Armstrong. *Sacred Nature*. London: Penguin/The Bodley Head. ISBN: 9781847926883.

Welcomed on its publication by both the former Archbishop of Canterbury, Rowan Williams, and the *Guardian*, Karen Armstrong's concise distillation of the relationship between religion and the natural world is as wise, clear and accessible as anything else she has written, which is to say it's thoroughly to be recommended to any reader on the subject. She details the approaches to nature described in and by Chinese, Islamic, Hindu, Jewish, Buddhist and Christian writers, finding and describing common approaches and how they relate to broader cultural streams. She also examines the directions in which Christianity has pushed

## Pokies – a lesson from New South Wales?

As this issue is being prepared for publication, voters in New South Wales are gearing up for a State election that is being fought, in part, around pokies.

Australians spend (and lose) more money gambling than anybody else in the world, an average of \$US1135 per head each year, including \$469 on pokies.

A Crime Commission found billions of dollars being laundered through NSW pubs and clubs and recommended a cashless gaming system.

Now, in the face of stiff opposition from NSW clubs and gambling interests, Premier Dominic Perrotet's government is planning to introduce the changes.

Research shows that cashless gaming cards, with a limit on how much a person can lose, could result in a 15-25% drop in the amount gambled each year. For more information, watch the ABC *Four Corners* report 'High Stakes':

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2023-03-13/high-stakes-exposing-the-political-games-of-one/102090136>

Western culture with regard to the natural world, noting that in contrast to other traditions we have decoupled nature and divinity, taking from Genesis the idea that nature is something to be used and dominated.

In so doing, we Christians have enabled destruction, to the point where we stand on the brink of destroying everything we have built. Other traditions see nature as a face of God and so have religious reasons for shunning practices which result in environmental disaster.

Armstrong says that we must take action on several fronts, arguing: "While it is essential to cut carbon emissions and heed the warnings of scientists, we need to learn not only how to act differently but also how to think differently about the natural world."

A former nun, Armstrong is one of the most readable of writers on religion, but is rigorous in her research – this essay of fewer than 200 pages has an eight page bibliography.

- Annemarie Cass

## More attendance officers funded



The government's announcement that it would fund 82 new school attendance officers was a welcome start, Social Hazards Committee convenor Peter Garrick said.

School attendance figures across New Zealand have fallen since funding for truancy officers was cut in 2015. Numbers of students attending school fell by 20-30% and was now about 50%.

The Education Ministry said last year there were 28,754 cases, 40 percent more than in 2021.

## Invest in our planet is the theme of this year's Earth Day



**Let us take action on Earth Day on April 22 - and every day until we live sustainably both individually and as a society!**

In October 2022, Kathleen Rogers, President of [earthday.org](https://earthday.org), said “In 2023 we must come together again in partnership for the planet. Businesses, governments, and civil society are equally responsible for taking action against the climate crisis and lighting the spark to accelerate change towards a green, prosperous, and equitable future. We must join together in our fight for the green revolution, and for the health of future generations. The time is now to Invest in Our Planet.”

We learned recently on TVNZ (*Sunday* on March 12) that the fashion industry worldwide is responsible for about 10% of global carbon emissions. It also causes massive amounts of waste that cannot be recycled and ends up being burned with air pollution to follow or it will fill up in our landfills. Much clothing is produced under totally unacceptable working conditions.

Predictions show that here in New Zealand our jet fuel consumption is predicted to continue to steadily rise into the future. Some fuel will be sustainable, but for now that is a very, very small fraction. Let us therefore not be greedy with our overseas travel, but only go for reasons of personal significance or work and not just for entertainment.

Our very recent experience of severe rain and flooding here in New Zealand reminds us of the dangers of not taking action.

Our emissions need to go down, not up. We need to produce less waste, not more.

Let us invest our time into learning how to live sustainably.

Let us invest our money in day-to-day products that are sustainable.

Let us reduce our transport emissions.

Let us reduce our waste, especially any harmful waste that cannot be recycled or decompose without harmful substances being produced.

Let us invest in our planet by being compassionate, prudent and cautious about our future - not greedy, not thoughtless or careless. Working for the Common good and not just our own interests is needed now more than ever.

If you need ideas to sustainable living here are 23 green Tips: <https://www.aucklandcatholic.org.nz/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/23-Green-tips-Small-Steps-Towards-a-Sustainable-Life.pdf> or go to [EARTHDAY.ORG](https://earthday.org)

- Susanne Rehder Montgomerie, Convenor Environment & Sustainability Committee

## Words matter in telling West Papuan news stories

Words matter when telling the story of West Papua's continuing struggle for independence.

Recently, New Zealand media carried reports of the kidnapping of a New Zealand pilot by a West Papuan group allied to the independence struggle.

Phillip Mehrtens, a pilot for Susi Air, was abducted by independence fighters from the West Papua National Liberation Army, the armed wing of the Free Papua Movement, at a remote airstrip.

Unfortunately, the language used by mainstream media reports fell into line with Indonesian government depictions of the Free Papua Movement.

While the *Guardian* and Al Jazeera referred to them as “independence fighters,” they also used the term rebels. So did RNZ and Reuters, which also used the word separatists. “Independence fighters” or “freedom fighters” should have been the preferred terms.

We do not condone violent action, but the West Papuans are fighting for their freedom from decades of brutal Indonesian occupation. They deserve recognition for what they are, not what Indonesia deems them to be.

- Philip Cass, convenor International Peace & Justice Committee.