

## **JOINT STATEMENT**

Friday 28 March 2008

# **Church leaders make call for more policies to support social justice and compassion in 2008**

Church leaders from the Anglican, Baptist, Catholic, Methodist, Presbyterian and Salvation Army churches announced their support today for the launch of a new programme to raise public awareness of issues of social justice and compassion in Aotearoa New Zealand.

At a meeting in Wellington, the Church leaders – Archbishop David Moxon, Rodney Macann, Archbishop John Dew, Reverend Brian Turner, Right Reverend Pamela Tankersley and Commissioner Garth McKenzie – have put their support behind a call for more action based on five issues they consider to be central to achieving a more just and compassionate society.

The call for more action is a challenge to all New Zealanders, including all public office holders and political candidates, to champion policies that will:

- Utilise our nation's prosperity to eliminate poverty.
- Support families and communities to nurture and protect our children.
- Provide older people with a range of choices for their homes, support and lifestyle.
- Enable access to good, affordable housing for everyone.
- Support community-based solutions to social issues in the community.

This set of messages, launched by the New Zealand Council of Christian Social Services (NZCCSS) earlier today, will be promoted under the title of '*Let Us Look After Each Other - Aroha tētahi ki tētahi*'.

It will be promoted to Church sites and congregations throughout the country from May until September with supporting information available via the NZCCSS website [www.justiceandcompassion.org.nz](http://www.justiceandcompassion.org.nz)

To support the adoption of this theme Church leaders have issued a joint statement titled "Towards a more just and compassionate society" and supporting messages (*see attached*).

To receive further information about **Aroha tētahi ki tētahi - Let Us Look After Each Other** please contact:

New Zealand Council of Christian Social Services  
Email: [media@justiceandcompassion.org.nz](mailto:media@justiceandcompassion.org.nz)  
Phone: (04) 473 2627 or (021) 266 4427

## **CHURCH LEADERS' STATEMENT:**

### **TOWARDS A MORE JUST AND COMPASSIONATE SOCIETY (March 2008)**

The Church leaders' statement made in support of the call for more action issued by the New Zealand Council of Christian Social Services, '**Aroha tētahi ki tētahi - Let Us Look After Each Other**', is:

*Issues related to poverty, families and children, older people and housing should all be big enough to transcend party politics. We believe the New Zealand public should be in a position going into the 2008 election where they know more about the commitment of individual politicians to just and compassionate policies on all of these issues across the MMP spectrum.*

*Our primary concern since the Hikoi of Hope held 10 years ago (in 1998) has remained constant. That concern is that the impact of all decisions taken by our elected public representatives and policymakers must be measured in terms of the quality of life of the most vulnerable in our society.*

*We know from the work of our social service arms affiliated with the New Zealand Council of Christian Social Services that many members of our society are still suffering from the effects of economic policies that were put in place by successive governments in previous decades and that lacked a sufficiently strong social conscience.*

*The period before an election is a unique opportunity to intensify discussion about the type of society we live in. From our shared Christian perspective our starting point for the type of society we want to live in is a conviction that our humanity is constituted most profoundly by our relationships with each other and a commitment to the common good. Decisions that are fuelled by self-interest serve only to perpetuate a society that is marked by a division into the rich and the poor, the haves and the have-nots. This results in a society that leaves little room to include those who have been pushed to the margins.*

*Any neglect of our responsibilities to our families and communities puts both our personal and societal wellbeing at risk. A broad view of who our neighbour is also encompasses our obligations as a member of the international community, and the continual seeking of new directions for the sake of future generations.*

*We hope and pray that we all strive more to put aside self-interest and to find a stronger collective social conscience in 2008. The message is simple: Let us look after each other - Aroha tētahi ki tētahi.*

Archbishop David Moxon, *Anglican Church*  
Rodney Macann, *Baptist Churches of New Zealand*  
Archbishop John Dew, *Catholic Archbishop of Wellington*  
Reverend Brian Turner, *Methodist Church*  
Right Reverend Pamela Tankersley, *Presbyterian Church*  
Commissioner Garth McKenzie, *Salvation Army*

## **SUPPORTING MESSAGES**

The following messages have been offered in support of the call for more action issued by the New Zealand Council of Christian Social Services (NZCCSS), “**Aroha tētahi ki tētahi - Let Us Look After Each Other**”:

### **Commissioner Garth McKenzie, Salvation Army**

In our state of the nation report, *What Does It Profit Us?*, published by the Salvation Army in February, the point was made that an increase in spending on social policies is not itself a cause for complacency. Now is the time to give a higher priority to measuring the impact this spending makes. To ask who are we leaving out? And to ask, how will this contribute to a more just and compassionate society? Dollars don't speak, people do.

### **Right Reverend Pamela Tankersley, Moderator, Presbyterian Church**

The issues being raised give an important forward-looking context for our Presbyterian communities. We support activity that encourages local churches to become involved in public issues and social action, to speak out in our communities, to respond to the call to serve those on the margins of society and to bring important issues to the fore. As a Christ-centred and community-facing church we bring our faith to everyday life.

### **Reverend Brian Turner, President, Methodist Church**

Promoting justice and social responsibility is a key mission of the Methodist Church. To do that we have to listen and respond in humility to the stories of the people, tangata whenua and tauiwi. We cannot support individuals, tamariki and whanau to reach their goals and build true neighbourhood if we do not heed the call to look after each other – aroha tētahi ki tētahi.

### **Archbishop John Dew, Catholic Archbishop of Wellington**

The Catholic Church supports the New Zealand Council of Christian Social Services in setting a just and fair society as a benchmark. If we are to live justly we should all be challenged to go beyond whatever market policies are in vogue in order to consciously examine the causes of social injustice and the causes of poverty. If we do not find a voice to resist the inequalities that are a feature of our society, who will?

### **Rodney Macann, Baptist Churches of New Zealand**

The harsh lesson of unsuccessful social policies in New Zealand is that they result in widening gaps and persistent disparities within our communities. Churches respond by actively engaging with local communities to create a mutual care and respect for each other. As Baptists we vigorously seek to identify with God's heart-beat of love for our world and commit ourselves to being bringers of hope and justice.

### **Archbishop David Moxon, Anglican Church**

All people in our diverse nation have the ability to discern ways to live just and compassionate lives and to exercise personal leadership to ensure the poor and the vulnerable are not abandoned. The challenge before our political leaders is whether they have anything different to say on the issues being put forward by the New Zealand Council for Christian Social Services. Those issues need to be considered as a whole, and they need to be part of a process of honest, frank debate. They are issues that we, within the Anglican Church, will continue to keep vigil over.

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