

## *A personal testimony*

As I was growing up in the small town of Murchison, 'mission' had two meanings for me: one associated with little boxes on our mantle-piece into which we put coins to "feed and clothe the little overseas children"; the second scarily connected with strange priests who descended on us periodically, friendly and smiling in the house but thundering hell-fire and brimstone from the pulpit.

Eventually, we left Murchison and I became interested in social justice work through association with Fr John Curnow and the *Young Christian Worker* programmes. Alongside some very good social events (dances, drama, seminars and sports) were programmes which raised our awareness of community and international inequities, of Gospel and Church imperatives relating to options for the poor, of the need to engage in contemporary and local issues to bring the gospel to life in our own community and day.

Marriage, four years teaching in the Pacific and a young family brought new insights, intensified by time spent with other young parents in the *Christian Family Movement*. This brought sharing of experiences, support in difficulties, new exposure to the Gospel through *See-Judge-Act* study programmes and more engagement with contemporary society. We studied social issues, planned actions (including active participation in election campaigns) and reflected on what was achieved or learned.

This was the '70s, when New Zealand was developing its nuclear-free approach, when the anti-racism movement was gaining strength. It culminated for me in the 1981 Springbok tour and involvement with associated activist groups, leading to my re-engagement with the Church's social justice movement and, in 1982,

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and mission. My spirituality calls for fresh imagination for mission, along with a readiness for prophetic dialogue. The prophetic element is crucial for missionary personnel like me, and all who feel authorised to belong, participate and make a difference.

with the *Evangelisation, Justice and Development* (EJD) Commission.

Another significant development over this time was a growing interest in long-distance running. I completed my first marathon in 1978 but as time went on, running became a regular part of my life and, together with membership of *Forest and Bird*, brought a connection with the environment not experienced since bird-nesting, river-exploring, eeling days in Murchison.

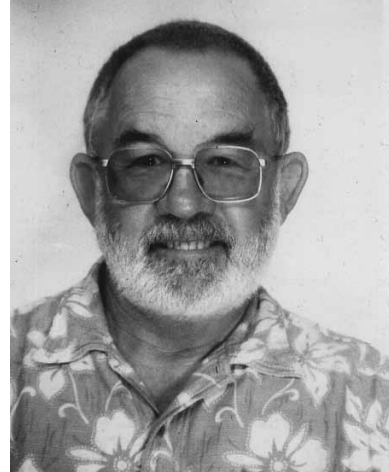
In the following five years, I gradually replaced my teaching work with a role in *Justice, Peace and Development*. I became involved nationally, and after 1984, internationally, with the JPD Commission and its links in Australia and the Pacific.

A highlight was a visit to Chile and Brazil in 1990 to attend a conference of the *International Association against Torture*. Experience of the barrios of Santiago and the favelas of Sao Paulo brought direct contact with heroic people and their struggle for justice, and clear insights into the connection between their suffering and the market-based policies being adopted at that time in New Zealand. In Brazil, I was deeply impressed by the commitment of church leaders like Cardinal Arnz and Bishop Helder Camara in openly supporting peoples' movements for liberation.

When the national and diocesan JPD Commissions were restructured in 1992, I became a self-employed contractor working to establish a NZ section of *Pax Christi* and take on other roles connected with the pursuit of justice and peace objectives.

In 1991, during a three-week course on missiology at the Columbans' Pacific Mission Institute at Turramurra, Sydney, the term mission came back into my vocabulary. For the first time, I was able to deepen the theological background to the journey I had begun in my YCW days in Christchurch. The practice of 30 years was contextualised in the framework Michael Gormly has outlined.

Between lectures and library sessions giving academic reinforcement for



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what I had come to devote my life to, I ran the tracks of the Kuringai Chase, imbedding the theory into my world-view. I discovered mission and myself as missionary. It was not difficult in such an environment to realise my part in God's desire to make Creation as fully alive as God is alive, not difficult to feel part of the vibrant celebration of life that is at the heart of Mission.

I was challenged to immerse myself in the processes of my living, seeking in the encounters of everyday life, in response, reflection and decision, a growth into the fullness of my being, the person God created me to be. This dialogue is both subjective and objective, personal and social, connected in such a way that what happens to others enhances or diminishes me. And such is my connection with the saving mission of Jesus through my baptism that, in its most profound form, what happens in me has an effect on the whole of Creation.

My response since then has been enhanced by the spirituality of the Tangata Whenua. The profound links between the four cornerstones of health and well-being (*Tinana*/physical; *Hinengaro*/emotional; *Wairua*/spiritual; *Whanaunga*/relational) echo the wholistic nature of the experience upon which we base our dialogue with creation. The same applies to the intricate and essential linkage between *Tika* (justice), *Pono* (truth) and *Aroha* (love).

So now, my life is mission, committing me to dialogue:

- with myself in my physical, emotional, spiritual and relational being
- with my family, in mutually supportive, life-enhancing ways
- with the society in which I live, seeking justice, truth and love for all
- among peoples of the world, leading to self-determination and human rights
- with the environment, the face of an abundant and loving God. ■