

# WORD ON THE STREET

URBAN NEIGHBOURS OF HOPE - NEW ZEALAND December 2017

## Word on the Street

*“To love someone is not first of all to do things for them, but to reveal to them their beauty and value, to say to them through our attitude: ‘You are beautiful. You are important. I trust you. You can trust yourself.’ We all know well that we can do things for others and in the process crush them, making them feel that they are incapable of doing things by themselves. To love someone is to reveal to them their capacities for life, the light that is shining in them.” Jean Vanier*

“Man, I love my job,” smiled Richard, “it’s a buzz, lawns mowed and, gee, the parks are looking good, so satisfying.” At first I thought Richard was being sarcastic, that kiwi-joking-around sense of humour. It had been a hot hard day working under the sun. But Richard wasn’t joking, he was dead serious and scolded me for not taking him seriously. I’ve watched Richard grow from strength to strength. Richard was made to cultivate and grow plants, a talent that God implanted and blessed him with. For years, this talent, this gift, stayed dormant, always existing, but never given permission to be expressed. Richard’s past home and social environment crushed his God-given-

gift, and was instead filled with terror and violence. But now we see him blossoming (excuse the weak puns) and, as he discovers abundant life, he has naturally been drawn closer to the Creator, with a deepening faith. His life has become a transforming miracle.

Maybe, just maybe, this is part of the salvation journey - to discover and name the God Image that is in every person. Naming the Image is powerful. Words create worlds. Maybe our role is to walk alongside our neighbour, helping to create spaces and places where the God Image can be safely expressed, acknowledged and developed. Through this process an abundance of life is discovered (John 10:10), that naturally connects people to Jesus, especially those that have lived on the margins.

UNOH NZ wishes you all a Happy Christmas as we celebrate the birthday of Jesus.

Merry Christmas

Dave Tims  
UNOH NZ Director



# Let Justice Roll Down

*But let justice roll on like a river, righteousness like a never-failing stream. Amos 5:24*

May 2017, published in stuff.co.nz - "Labour MP Louisa Wall and South Auckland youth group Warriors of Change took the company and The Press and Marlborough Express newspapers to the Human Rights Review Tribunal over cartoons published in 2013. The Tribunal ruled that no rules under the Human Rights Act had been breached." We were outraged!



Kataraina, from Warriors of Change, published this on Facebook, "Disgusted. Disgusted at the fact that our courts ruled that 'freedom of expression' is more important than 'freedom from discrimination'. It's time to say NO. NO to cartoons that negatively stereotype some of our most vulnerable Māori and Pasifika whānau. NO to media who shift the blame of inequality from the privileged and rich minority to those who experience the brunt of it. And NO to the courts who believe that images like these just aren't racist enough."



Names of people, from left: Kataraina Tims (Warriors of Change - WOC), Louisa Wall (MP for Labour and Manurewa), Lafoai Luaitalo (WOC) and lawyer Prue Kapua

In November, we supported Louisa Wall, who had decided that justice needed to be heard and that the Human Rights Commission and Fairfax Media, needed to be challenged in High Court. High Court Judge, Matthew Muir, acknowledged that the cartoons were offensive and inappropriate, and a final decision would be made sometime in the New Year 2018. If justice is served through this process, then it will be a groundbreaking event because, for the first time in NZ a precedence will be set for journalism, demanding that freedom of speech be made accountable, and is NOT more important than 'freedom from discrimination'. We will wait for the Courts decision in the New Year and pray that justice will roll down like a river.

## Bump Into - a reflection of youth work by Eric Mailau

For the last few months, I (Eric) have been volunteering in two youth programs running at the local High School and Intermediate. It's great to join in with some of the good stuff already happening in Wainuiomata. The programs are run by a Christian Sports-based Organisation called 'Ignite Sports'. Within these programs I get to 'hang-out', do character building and build relationships with a mixed range of kids. One of the programs called 'Oho ake' (to stand or rise) works with "at-risk" kids, and the other, works with the "future leaders"; a sad separation and labelling because both groups of kids are just as amazing as the other.

It's great making connections and getting to know the kids. Some live on our street or nearby streets, making it easy for our family to visit their families and to 'bump into' them. Sione's school and Anna's local play groups put us in connection with younger siblings, mums, and nanas of the same kids I work with. These nets of connections and presence, strengthen our relationships massively.

I have been asked by Ignite Sports to take over the 'Oho ake' program next year - with a special focus upon Wainuiomata Intermediate. This will involve overlooking its development

and also two other schools in the Hutt Valley. This is a great opportunity that I would like to take, and I'm praying that this is where God wants me to spend time next year.



# Postcolonial Theology by Denise Tims

For many indigenous people, colonial oppression has impacted their personal story and whakapapa for many years, as well as silenced their voice in particular settings. Growing up as a child and hearing my grandmother share, how she was strapped for speaking her native Te Reo Māori tongue at school, saddened me. I became very aware at a young age that New Zealand was a country of injustice. During the 1980s, I studied Japanese and French at High School and noticed then, that there seemed to be higher prestige given to these languages in comparison to Te Reo Māori. I later found, that during my years at school, the government had a scaling system that would lower grades for those who had chosen to take Māori as a language in Year 11 (5th Form – School Certificate). How unjust is this.

This year, at Laidlaw College, we studied postcolonial theology; “Postcolonial” relating to “post invasion” instead of “post independence.” We returned to the history of our own country to uncover truth, that now included an indigenous perspective. For many theological institutes, this is new ground. R.S. Sugirtharajah states that this move to look at postcolonialism has only become more prominent since the 1990’s.

I think postcolonial theology is an area of study that has the potential to be a prophetic tool that can lead to truth, repentance, forgiveness and reconciliation. It is certainly a topic that can be incredibly challenging and confronting. My hope

is that we have the courage to walk down this road together, so that truth from both sides can lead to wholeness. History reveals that every culture has not escaped the tangled web of colonisation. Author, Brigitte Kahl refers to power between different people where one feels and implements actions of superiority over another. Romans 3:23 reminds us that, we “all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.” It is this reminder that calls us to our knees and challenges us to reflect upon our human nature. “We are all made in the image of God” and it is this that we need to remind ourselves of. In God’s eyes, we are all valued, special and treasured.



## Mailau Family



We have settled into Arakura, Wainuiomata, and what a lovely place Wainuiomata is!

We have been so eager to show others, that we have had friends and family over many times! However we kept hearing a few jokes and comments such as - “Is it safe?”, “Do I need a bulletproof vest?”, “Be careful it’s Wainui”, “Can’t trust anyone here”, “That’s Wainui for you.” A light chuckle would follow such comments, although nothing seriously damning. To us it has showed an old underlying assumption of our new beloved neighbourhood. A neighbourhood that is proud of their community and their geographical location, a neighbourhood of mums and dads that keep track of each others kids, a neighbourhood of lonely older folks that are always up for a yarn with anyone, a neighbourhood that bends over backwards and forwards to assist local school programs and needs.

Anna is well into her second pregnancy, with our baby boy due mid January. She and Elsie have been enjoying connecting with a local play group as well as our Wainuiomata Baptist mainly music group! Elsie is now 2 years old and very much becoming her own person with her own unique personality and continuing to be a bundle of joy. Sione is now 11 years old (crazy!) and has finished primary school and is set to go to our local Wainuiomata intermediate.

We have recently added a boarder to our household who we met through our church. He’s a great guy and has been a real Godsend, helping increase our household income. He brings with him a wealth of knowledge and character and an unquenchable fire for God that is awesome to see.

Alongside our trusty dog Pepsi we have also accumulated some farm animals. We now have four chickens who provide us with plenty of eggs and two fun kid goats that we are bottle feeding.

# UNOH Common Devotions

Every day, across the countries that UNOH serves in, we share a Common Devotional reading. These can be accessed on our webpage at [www.unoh.co.nz](http://www.unoh.co.nz)

## Matthew 19:16-30 – The Rich Young Ruler

Today's reading begins with a man who comes to Jesus with a question—"Teacher, what good deed must I do to have eternal life?"—to which Jesus replies, "Why do you ask me about what is good? There is only one who is good." That this exchange is different to Matthew's source Mark (Mk 10:17-18) tells us that Matthew has something particular to say about what is good. In fact, it's a theme which emerged early in Matthew's Gospel and has run like a thread through the narrative: Matthew is inviting his hearers to consider what—and who—is good?

In reading this story, we need to remember just how wealth was gained in the world in which Matthew (and Jesus) lived. In short, the rich grew richer perpetuating the cycle of debt and dispossession which forced the poor into evermore desperate realms of destitution.

In his answer to the rich man's question, then, "Jesus offers him a program that, if followed, would dismantle the high-status world of the empire's powerful and wealthy."<sup>1</sup> The call to "go, sell your possessions, and give the money[c] to the poor... then come, follow me," is ultimately an invitation to switch sides, to align himself with those on the margins rather than the elite. Only in doing so will the rich man be able to be transformed, for only in standing with those on the margins will he be able to know the life of God that is present among them.

The disciples' surprise—"Then who can be saved?"—is borne out of the cultural assumption that riches are a sign of God's blessing. If someone was rich, they must be a "good" person enjoying the signs of God's favour. Of course, the opposite was also assumed—poverty, sickness or misfortune was assumed to be a sign or one's "sin". The disciples' response here indicates the depth to which they too have bought into these assumptions: "[t]hey seem to think that if the divinely favored and socially prestigious wealthy cannot be saved, no one can."<sup>2</sup>

According to the values of God's reign, however, the opposite is true. Transformation is found amongst those who are suffering, those on the margins, those who have known what it is to be on the underside of power. What is possible is not that those on the side of power, exploitation, and oppression might be saved, but that they might, against seemingly impossible obstacles, embrace the invitation to let go of their position of power and privilege and be found on the underside. For then they might know what is truly good.

*Written by Brad Coath (UNOH Melbourne)*

1. Warren Carter, *The Roman Empire and the New Testament* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2006), 102.

2. Warren Carter, *Matthew and the Margins: A Sociopolitical and Religious Reading* (Maryknoll: Orbis), 391.



## Living by Faith

*by Denise Tims*

"**Living by Faith in Troubled Times**," is the title of a podcast I have recently listened to by Timothy Keller. He speaks of difficult times, being a true test of our commitment and love for God. When we are facing struggles such as; economic scarcity, illness, persecution or loss of a loved one, it can be a test to continue to still give God our heart. We are not expected to rejoice in our circumstances but to remember God's son Jesus who had everything stripped away, yet rejoiced and trusted God, through costly Grace He gave His life.

This year we have continued to have incredibly generous, committed and caring young adults (WOC) give each week their time, energy and resources to invest into our young people through our youth clubs in Randwick Park. Two of these young adult leaders passed away this year. To us these two young adults; Jordyn and Liz, both battled with medical health issues and yet over the years we have known them, they had chosen to give of themselves to others despite their own personal battles. I am incredibly proud and thankful to have witnessed their selfless acts of love and care for others, when they could have easily chosen to look inward and feel sorry for themselves. Please keep Jordyn and Lizzy's families in your prayers as they spend this Christmas without them.



love God. love neighbour. love self

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