

Franciscan Angles

A Newsletter of Anglican Franciscans in Aotearoa New Zealand

2015 - 1

Franciscans in Residence.

It was great to be back at Vaughan Whangarei companions. We stayed in Park Retreat Centre in Auckland for another "Franciscans in Residence" programme. We had two tertiaries (Dorothy Brooker and Maggie Smith) and two brothers (Daniel and Christopher John) there for a week. Dorothy is well known to most of us, but Maggie probably not so much. She lived on a farm in Canterbury (NZ) for a number of years but with her husband has recently moved to a rural property outside Masterton. On Sunday Daniel preached at St Alban's Balmoral where there are a number of people we remember from the old St Paul's Symonds Street. (Dorothy attended the 50th anniversary reunion of the St Andrew's Epsom youth group – a group which over the years contributed much to the church here). The focus of the programme was being around Vaughan Park as a visible Franciscan presence at the daily office and Eucharist, as well as informally being with the staff and guests. We led a quiet day, and also a study afternoon for Tertiaries, as well as visiting some of the more frail Tertiaries.

From Vaughan Park Dorothy, Daniel and Christopher John headed north to be part of the "Franciscan Prayerful Presence" in the Bay of Islands, stopping for a brief visit with the

premises owned by the Bay of Islands uniting parish. This Third Order initiative came from the desire to provide a Franciscan presence during Lent and Advent in Paihia, a town in what is often called "the cradle of Christianity for Aotearoa/New Zealand". This is intended to be a way of reflecting on the bicentennial of the first Christian sermon in this land on Christmas Day, 1814. We visited Oihi Bay (the site of that sermon) on Saturday and then preached in some of the nearby churches on Sunday. Monday December 8 we departed and returned to Auckland before heading back to our various homes.



Christopher John, Dorothy Brooker, Maggie Smith, and Daniel at Vaughan Park

Conflict in the church

Conflict in the church?
Is there such a thing?

Surely Christians all love each other and never have a cross word? The reality of course is somewhat different. Conflict has always been part of the church's life. The point is not in avoiding conflict but in how we respond.

One of the most widely known and respected figures in peace-making, with many years' experience as a peacemaker in a range of conflicts round the world and also as one of the leading academics in the field, is the Mennonite, John Paul Lederach. His book *Reconcile: Conflict Transformation for Ordinary Christians* (Herald Press, 2014) offers many useful insights drawn from his years of experience. Chapter 7, "Where Two or Three Meet" gives a reflection on Matthew 18: 15-20.

These verses address "sin" but the wider concern is whatever tears apart the fabric of the church. "Sin" is not just a wrong done by one person to another. This passage from Matthew offers four practical steps for working towards reconciliation.

Before he reflects on some positive ways of dealing with conflict in the church he offers a humorous reinterpretation of these verses as things often happen in reality.

"When you have a problem with somebody in the church, check it out first to make sure you are not alone in this problem. There is a good chance that if you have had a problem with this person, somebody else has as

well. Go and pick a good friend who is likely to understand and agree with you. If she agrees with you that this person is a real turkey, then talk to some more people to see if there is broader consensus. If money, land, or inheritance is involved, tell it to a lawyer, as lawyers were given by God to keep the church honest. If a friend, a small group, and a lawyer agree, then tell it to the church, preferably in private to the pastor and elders. When you tell them, say it is a concern that you have prayed about for some time and that there is a group of people who share the concern. Do not tell it openly in a congregational meeting since that is volatile and could get messy. Truly I say to you, from that point on, it is the responsibility of the pastor and elders to take care of the problem. Your task is to make sure they do it right." (p. 96)

Drawing from Matthew 18: 15-20 he gives four steps.

Step 1. **Go Directly**

The most difficult thing is to talk directly with the person concerned. This requires first, looking within myself at my feelings, anxieties, and perceptions and then turning towards the other. This self-reflection is important since we need to identify our own feelings first. "I'm right, you're wrong" is not a feeling but an opinion! How we respond is affected by our self-esteem. Defensiveness can suggest insecurity and result in blaming—projection on the other. As Lederach says, "We must move towards our fears and embrace them in an explicit manner". (p. 98)

Moving to the “other” can be difficult since the “other” is the source of our fears. It can be easier to act with defensiveness, accusation, or blame. Or to try to persuade by superior argument. None of these is constructive engagement. We need a “vulnerable transparency”, something described to Lederach by a Costa Rican grandmother as “going to my enemy with my heart in my hand”. (p. 99)

This needs training and the development of spiritual disciplines such as:

Prayerful vulnerability. This comes from looking within and seeking internal clarity, openness, honesty, transparency and self-understanding. “Instead of seeing myself as superior to the other person, I see myself reflected in the other, and I find God in both.” (p. 100).

Responsible discernment. Identifying the problem clearly and discerning how to respond. Seeking the medium between avoiding an issue, and trying to solve everyone else’s problems!

Interactive engagement. Neither retreating nor blaming creates the space where people can share their deepest feelings. This could be called a “non-anxious presence”—being engaged with others without anxiety or fear in the “perfect love that can cast out all fear” (1 Jn 4:18).

These form the basic ground of any attempts at reconciliation.

Step 2. **Take Along One or Two Witnesses**

This stage involves a few others. A body of people who begin working together to discern what is happening and what needs to be done. “The idea of witness carries an image of

someone who is present with the people and experiencing the difficulty” (p. 101). Witnesses are not to assess fault or judge, but to help create the holy ground of reflection, listening and understanding. Witnesses too need the spiritual disciplines mentioned previously. Lederach asks if Mennonites have always seen fostering these spiritual disciplines as one of their roles. I could much more ask the same of Anglicans! Righteousness doesn’t mean being right—it means being holy—creating the space for God’s presence.

The familiar words from verse 20, “when two or three are gathered in Christ’s name” is not referring to a magic number we need in order to get God doing things for us, but rather that when two or three are gathered they create the space between them where it is possible to engage truth. This becomes then the holy ground of encounter with the Divine. The goal of all this is not just reaching agreement or resolving issues, but deeper understanding and growth.

Step 3. **Tell it to the Church**

Working on conflict is spiritual work and the church is a proper place for such work. Reconciliation is the mission of the church. “It involves an encounter with ourselves, others, and God. Thus we begin to understand that reconciliation is about the transformation of people and their relationships. It means change, moving from isolation, distance, pain, and fear toward restoration, understanding, and growth.” (p. 104).

Again, we need the same spiritual disciplines already mentioned, combined with a range of practical

skills, in order to bring conflict into this wider forum.

"The church is a place of encounter. It is a place of Truth-discerning and Truth-telling. It is a place for vulnerable transparency. It is a place for interactive engagement. It is a place of accountability. It is, after all, a place where we journey toward each other and toward God." (p. 105).

Step 4: **Relate as with a Tax Collector**

Does this mean shunning or excommunication? Steps 1-3 have been moving towards conflict and toward the other. How could this step be different? Christians are to be followers of Christ, following in his footsteps. It's easy for conflict to lead to splitting, but how did Jesus treat the gentiles and tax collectors? He ate with them. This is step 4!

Eating with others implies relationship and connection; being together at a table (which is also a metaphor of coming together in meeting). This step is challenging. How do we maintain relationship with people who differ from us or are our enemies? Reconciliation is encounter both with ourselves and with others. How do our churches hold this in dealing with matters of church discipline, theological diversity, or ethical misbehaviour?

This act of eating together is connected with the previous steps as we follow in the way of Jesus who when he met others, showed them that perfect love casts out fear.

In conclusion the main points given by Lederach are:

Conflict is part of the church. Jesus expects that it will be there.

Move toward the conflict. Don't avoid it. We need conflict in order to grow and learn.

Move toward the other, with the attitude, skills, and spiritual discipline for this.

The church is a forum for expressing and handling conflict. "The church as envisioned here is not simply a glee club of harmonious voices. It is a place to interact with each other, express differences, and work through what may be painful theological and relational issues and concerns." (p. 152)

The goal of reconciliation is to heal the relationship. Reconciliation is understood in terms of relationship, "not as going back to what was, but rather as the image of healing, making a balance, and bringing about what should be." (p. 153)

God is present when the two or three gathered together form holy ground in their midst.

We can be tempted to remain with debilitating deep-seated conflict, or to attempt covering it over with easy attempts at problem-solving, but reconciliation—the sacred work of the Church—is much harder work than that. The work of encounter and healing and renewal is the very heart of our mission as Christians as we strive to be agents of Christ's loving and transforming presence.

Christopher John SSF

This article is adapted from a quiet day address given at the Friary of the Divine Compassion on 6 September 2014.

From the Library Desk



Work in the Friary Library is slowly progressing. Most of the books TSSF NZ Members, *The* have been processed and are being *Whisperings of the Holy Spirit* shelved as new spine labels arrive S Pitchford, *Following Francis* from Kinder Theological Library. R Rohr, *Eager to Love* You will see the Hamilton Friary I Cron, *Chasing Francis: A Pilgrims Tale* collection is available through John F de Beer, *We Saw Brother Francis* Kinder Library Anglicat search I Delio, et al *Care for Creation: A Franciscan* option. *Spirituality of the Earth*

Many thanks to Gordan Cooper, Ruth Martin and Richard Roberts for their recent donation of books. They are a most welcomed addition to our Library.

Some recent new books for our Franciscan collection include:

W Baderr, *The Prayers of St Francis*

C Berge SSF, *The Book of Vows*

M Galli, *Francis of Assisi and his World*

M Bodo, *Tales of St Francis*

R Rohr, *Falling Upward*

J Davis, *The Gift of St Francis*

V Martin, *Salvation: Scenes from the Life of St Francis*

H Noonan, et al *Francis of Assisi, the Song Goes On*



Franciscan Pilgrims in the Palestine of Jesus today.

Imagine yourself on St. Francis' Day, Galilee and Caesarea Philippi; the tiny 4th of October 2014, observing the Stations of the Cross in the last week of a pilgrimage in Jerusalem, on a day when all Jewish shops and businesses are closed for the holy day of Yom Kippur, while the streets are thronged with Palestinians celebrating the feast of lesser Eide; on a day when these groups are to come together briefly in a rare harmony on the Temple Mount / Haram Al Sharif. For us, a very special day in a very special programme.

The Palestine of Jesus is the title of a course run regularly as part of their missionary outreach by St. George's College, an Anglican foundation established in 1920, now in the heart of East Jerusalem. We were an ecumenical group of 29 who spent two weeks on what was essentially a pilgrimage around the sites of Jesus' ministry in the Holy Land from Nazareth to Bethlehem, the Jordan to Galilee, to Bethany and back to Jerusalem and then, as a coda, beyond to Caesarea. At each place we heard the Gospel read, joined in reflective worship and learned something of the history of the site and of those who, through the centuries, have made the pilgrimage there before us and why.

Everywhere stories were clarified, new aspects and layers revealed, in the very geography, in the churches and in the art: the shepherds "abiding in the fields" turned out to be in underground caves with a fire at the entrance to protect and corral the sheep; the utter barrenness of the road down to Jericho contrasted with the unexpected lush richness of

where the risen Jesus is said to have offered the disciples breakfast where the windows were rainbow bright without images; the mosaics nearby depicting the multiplication of the loaves and fishes; and all these places revealed as so close together to the modern pilgrim, with reminders everywhere of the Roman presence in first century Palestine.

Then there were the moments of more complexity, many with a Franciscan dimension; (the Franciscans are one of the three Christian groups with custodial authority in the Holy Land): our initial disappointing visit to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, which appeared noisy and crowded and full of historical and contemporary clutter



Mary Magdalene reaching out to Jesus at the tomb.

and rival church groups; contrasted with our return, just the two of us early on Sunday morning. The rival groups were still there, celebrating separately around the tomb but they seemed less contentious, the tomb itself less full of distracting ornamentation. In the small Franciscan chapel beside the tomb is a stunning modern bronze representation of Mary Magdalene reaching out to Jesus in the garden, like all of those Christian pilgrims who pass and have passed through this Church and through the Holy Land.

We have two other clear memories: on the last day we travelled to Caesarea to look out from the ruins of Herod's city across the Mediterranean, linking this reminder of the Gospel's spreading to our own resuming journeys; and on one joyous occasion there we were, singing "*God Defend New Zealand*" in a replica first century boat on the Sea of Galilee in the Year of Our Lord 2014.

It is impossible to be in Israel/Palestine without being aware of the contemporary political and social context, although we were warned at the beginning to be wary of becoming "two-week experts". But all that we saw brought home most forcefully the

one message, with which we are all too familiar. The terrible divide between Israeli and Palestinian reflected most dramatically those other divisions between Jew and Muslim and Christian, so starkly lived out on the Temple Mount and the Wailing Wall; between various Christian groups in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre and throughout the Holy Land; and between so many others in so many other places and contexts including in the Palestine of Jesus and here at home.

All brought home to us that clearest of Gospel messages: the imperative need for working for reconciliation, for all groups and all people within groups are special in the sight of God, **all** are "highly favoured", not one more than another.

Margaret Bedggood and Sue Liapis, two members of the Third Order from Auckland, spent two weeks on a course "The Palestine of Jesus" with St George's College, Jerusalem



A glaring reminder of the divide between Israel and Palestine

Is God calling you to be a Franciscan Friar?



Contact our Vocations Group
provincialsecretary@franciscan.org.au

The Ministry of Presence and 'Christ and the Bodhi Tree'

Recently I watched again the video, *Christ and the Bodhi Tree*"* It is a documentary film that tells of the experiences of Father François Ponchaud, a French Catholic missionary priest working in Cambodia, and Mother Rosemary, from the Anglican Sister's of the Love of God community at Fairacres, Oxford, UK. Both lead very different lives, and both speak of their encounter with local Buddhists and the enriching impact it has had on their life and spiritual practice.

I relate very much to the video because of a new piece of writing I am pondering over: *Pathways to Inner Peace – Jesus & Buddha: Guides for the Journey*.

In 2003 I had the opportunity to take study leave from my parish to attend a three month Buddhist retreat. I also found the experience profound and enriching. Much of what we were taught had a warm familiarity that resonated again and again with my reading of our Christian mystics, especially with Teresa of Avila and Meister Eckhart. For both also give us guidelines for our spiritual journey and finding inner peace, stillness, and personal transformation.

A keyword in all of this is the word 'Presence'. 'Presence' is about 'Being'. Of being here, now, in this moment, and that often involves risk. Risking the encounter; risking being misunderstood; risking putting aside anxieties and uncertainties; risking to remaining open and non judgemental. Risking that the other person, or spiritual tradition, may have something to give. Through risking, both Fr François and Mother Rosemary were able to receive, and also give in return.



One memorable comment I received from one woman at the end of the Buddhist retreat I attended, was by simply being at, and sharing in, the same Buddhist retreat she was attending, "*restored her confidence in the Church.*" It wasn't anything I said because the whole three months, except for our daily teaching session, was in total silence. It was because I was willing to be there.

Mother Rosemary spoke also of her sabbatical at a local Amaravati Buddhist Monastery, where one of her goals was to learn about meditation. In the hope that she might also find ways to persevere in prayer when prayer seemed to go dead, so she might maintain stability in prayer. She also learnt a posture in which to remain when she may want to flee, but also ways of enabling her mind and heart to stay when they might go off in all directions; to gain detachment from the worries of the mind that can become all consuming, and learn a way that might lead to greater serenity and ability to cope.

These are all gifts Buddhist meditation has to offer, and while St Teresa also teaches similar ways to

find stillness and detachment in both *for service*" and become the hands the *Interior Castle* and in her and feet and presence of God to autobiography, one has to dig a little others.
 deeper to find them. And yet these gifts are not only for our own comfort, or "salvation".

Phil Dyer TSSF

* (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X4wuKmsx7Wg>).

The ministry of presence is more than that. This became quite noticeable for me on retreat, when stood alongside the altruistic, and often expressed Buddhist vow, of deferring entering any concept of eternal rest, desiring instead to live with selfless compassion, wisdom and loving kindness towards all, until all beings can share in that state together.

I see Teresa, (and Mother Rosemary and Fr Ponchaud) being very 'Buddhist' in this regard. Teresa saw the purpose 'of finding God', is not so we might delight in our hard won inner peace; rather, so that we might "acquire strength which fits us



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Brothers and Enquirers at Stroud during the Vocations Enquiry Week in January 2015

Vocation Enquirers

After a fairly relaxed Christmas / New Year at Stroud things got busy with the Enquirers' Programme we hosted from January 9 – 15th. Daniel was able to come down from Brisbane for a good part of the programme too. We already knew each one of the participants, but this was the first time they had met together.

The programme was simple. As well as the daily office and Eucharist, we had a time each day for group based round biblical and Franciscan texts of call and response. We also had a time for group discussion each day. The first few days we talked about Francis and Clare and then living in community. One session was a brainstorming one to ask the participants what they wanted to discuss. A very challenging list emerged – questions about sexuality and poverty among them. We then discussed those topics over the next few days. The final discussion sessions were concerned with individual Rules of life as an aid to give some structure to an enquirer's or aspirant's life.

We decided also to include the participants in the brief time of sharing thanks and apologies we have most mornings as part of our normal day. This was a significant experience and it was good to see them join in very easily.

There was also time each day for some work

together or in small groups on some work in the grounds. Things are looking much tidier – thanks to some collective muscle power pulling weeds or removing other rubbish.

It wasn't all prayer, discussion and work. We had good times in the evening relaxing over leisurely meals together and enjoying the (slightly) cooler temperatures. And we deliberately structured Sunday as more of a rest day.

The programme was hard work but very rewarding. Among the positive feedback we heard was how much the participants valued the way we created the space where they could share their concerns openly and honestly. We were blessed to have these four men with us and look forward to seeing more of them soon.

For more information about vocations to our community contact our Vocations Group provincialsecretary@franciscan.org.au





New Bishops Protector Appointed

With the completion of Archbishop Roger Herft's term of office, and the move of Archbishop David Moxon we have the need to appoint new bishops protector. After deliberation our provincial chapter has asked Bishop John Stead to be our Provincial Bishop Protector. He has appointed Bishop Jim White as the Deputy Bishop Protector for New Zealand. Bishop Paul Kim continues to be our Deputy Bishop Protector in Korea.

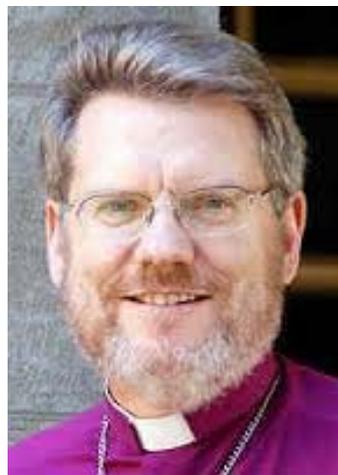
Bishops Protector provide our order with contact and liaison with the church both throughout the Anglican Communion and with the local church to which we belong. They encourage and support the life and ministry of the brothers and sisters in the friaries and houses.

Bishop John is the Bishop of Willochra (Australia). He was ordained and served in the Diocese of Canberra & Goulburn. In 2009 he was episcopally ordained as Assistant Bishop of Bathurst, and in 2012 elected Bishop of Willochra. He is married to Jan and they have two adult children.

Bishop Jim was ordained and installed as Assistant Bishop of Auckland in October 2011. He graduated from Otago University with a BTheol in 1986, was ordained to the priesthood in 1988, and served his curacy at St Luke's Mt Albert. He became Chaplain of Diocesan School for Girls in 1989, and then priest assistant at St Matthew's-in-the-City in 1992.

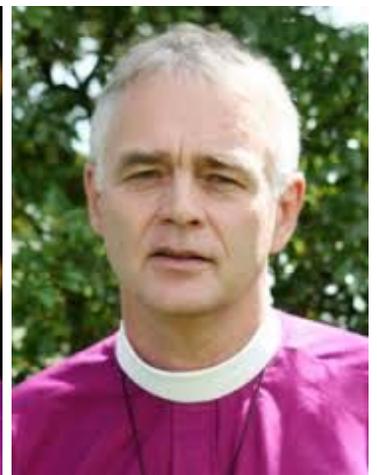
In 1993, he was appointed Vicar of All Saint's Ponsonby, where he served for 12 years. During his Ponsonby years, Jim White also completed his BA and then, in 2000, his MA (Philosophy 1st class Hons.) He did a ministry exchange with a New Jersey parish in 1996, and he returned to the USA in 2001, graduating from Yale University with his Master's degree in Sacred Theology in 2002.

In 2004 he was appointed a Canon of Auckland's Holy Trinity Cathedral, and in 2005 the Diocese of Auckland chose him for advanced leadership training. In 2006 he became Vicar of St Andrew's Epsom, and in 2008 he was chosen as Dean of the College of the Southern Cross at St John's College in 2008. Jim is married to Jane, and they have two children.



Bishop John Stead

*Provincial
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Bishop Jim White

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