

just actions

Fairness for Maori in Aotearoa New Zealand



Caring for people, transforming lives, reforming society by God's power



'Why are you trying to make God angry by placing a heavy burden on these followers?'

Acts 15:10, commenting on placing Jewish cultural expectations on Gentiles

Maori have endured a history of injustice in Aotearoa New Zealand that has seen their land taken, by fair means and foul, their language and their culture pushed to the margins, and their ability to make decisions about their own lives and that of their communities taken from them in key areas.

And still today, despite much good endeavour, Maori find that government institutions, operating completely outside of a Maori cultural context, continue to control and invade their lives (eg, in areas of health, welfare and justice).

This social marginalisation is no different within the Church, a place where Pakeha cultural norms dominate and Maori frequently find their needs and aspirations overtly or unconsciously ignored. This creates a sense for Maori of being aliens in a foreign world.

Maori point to the failure of current efforts by largely Pakeha institutions to 'fix' Maori 'problems'. For instance, Maori suffer significant ill-health in comparison with Non-Maori New Zealanders, they are over-represented in welfare statistics and child abuse notifications, and experience disproportionately-high prison musters. Maori rightly call out for the opportunity to deal with these issues themselves from within their communities, in ways that draw upon the strengths inherent within their culture and among their own people.

For the Church (its worship and social service activities), along with other mainline social agencies, the challenge will be to operate in more culturally-sensitive ways and, more radically, to let go of power by supporting Maori to develop and run their own social institutions for their own people.

Re-thinking the stakes: get together and discuss

- 1 In what ways might Maori feel that life in New Zealand is weighted against them?
- 2 New Zealanders have sometimes boasted of the relative harmony and equality between Maori and Pakeha. To what extent and in what ways is this true or untrue?
- 3 When Maori seek to run health, justice and welfare services, are claims of separatism fair or unfair? How might such criticism be another mechanism of mainstream culture to curb Maori attempts to determine their own future and destiny?

Re-actions: what can we do?

- 1 Arrange a local or divisional visit to a marae or local Maori community organisation, or take a course in Maori studies to learn more about Maori culture and perspectives.
- 2 Consider giving corps/centre or personal support to Maori community initiatives that support Maori aspirations, goals and kaupapa.
- 3 Contact The Salvation Army Maori Ministry to find out what the Army is doing and to see what way you might support Maori Ministry nationally or in your region.

Resources for re-formative worship: take a fresh look

- 1 Encourage the singing of a waiata (song), or feature karakia (prayer) and Bible reading in Maori in your corps/church meeting.
- 2 Connect with Salvation Army Maori Ministry: www.salvationarmy.org.nz/maoriministry
- 3 Visit the Ecumenical Coalition for Justice Aotearoa New Zealand website www.socialjustice.org.nz and consider its articles on the Treaty, especially 'Seeing the Treaty as a Sacred Covenant'.



Te Ope Whakāora

The Maori translation for 'The Salvation Army' means 'the army that brings life'.

