

Restoring a broken church - Restoring a broken world

When a church is broken it needs to be restored. Just like the Japanese art of Kintsugi mentioned in the Anglican Korero article "Beauty in the breakage: The Abbey 2025 points to restoration - God is restoring a broken world" (Korero, 27 Aug 2025) the broken pieces deserve some golden glue to be united and restored.

Is our church broken? Is a church broken when the suggestion to help starving people in Gaza is slashed by a premature and not thought-through verdict claiming that it would be too political for the church to support this? Is a church broken when just a week later and even in prayer someone declares that our faith is only about our love for Jesus but not about our deeds? Sadly, in this situation the prayer was misused as a substitute for a lack of communication. We should communicate open and honest in direct contact with each other, not indirect via "prayer-messages". And is a church broken when such a "prayer-message" is seconded with additional prayers by many in the fellowship gathering? Either the group was not aware of Jesus' teachings, or even mislead and manipulated by the sudden and unexpected first prayer; both truly not what we want in a Christian Church.

At another church, recently a video from NZ Family First had been circulated, which (*even based on a reply from an artificial intelligence*) praised companies in the US who stopped or changed their sponsoring to be in line with their new leader, their new president. By that, these companies actually did just about the same as had been done by too many almost 100 years ago in Germany; results well known. These companies showed that they have no ethics at all, just marketing and profit-making (*some are well known for that*). This video showed that NZ Family First is neither ethical nor faith-based, but a rather strong lobby organisation for Christian Nationalism and such political parties. No wonder, that video included some climate-change bashing too. It's sad to see such propaganda being circulated in our churches. Don't we realise that this organisation is mostly misusing some ethical issues of our time for their misleading and manipulating propaganda? Well, that's my view anyway.

It could have happened at any church, soup & bread wonderful, healthy and delicious, the message by our vicar thoughtful, faithful and to the point as usual, but then at the end someone from the group spoke this unexpected yet intentional prayer about faith being only about our love for Jesus and not about our deeds. It felt to me this broke our church, sudden but unnoticed and subtle. So first we need understanding, then we need restoration.

Can helping starving people be political? Or, in case it is political, how much more political is it then not to help? I don't think the people in Gaza are interested in any such questions. When Jesus was healing on a Sabbath, it was political too, indeed it was illegal at the time, and the same applies for example when they harvested and ate grains from the field at Sabbath. So, the question of a potentially political cause really doesn't apply, because indeed everything Jesus did was very political, in fact it was so extreme that just by the worldly standards of his time and culture his crucifixion was no surprise. Much more important however, is that we are explicitly called by Jesus to love our neighbour and to help those in need, and we are called to do so without judging the needy. **If people are starving, we have to feed them!** Jesus was crucified not only to forgive us our wrongdoings but also to help us waking up and to follow his teachings. I feel that is much needed. Any love for Jesus, any faith in Jesus, any following of Jesus needs to be reflected by deeds, no matter how small or large. We are all different and we all have different possibilities and talents gifted to us by God, none achieved by ourselves.

By remaining silent regarding actual deeds (*and the only deeds possible and realistic for us in situations such as Gaza are donations*), our church does act like the priest in Jesus' **Parable of the Good Samaritan**, while some small groups out on the streets actually act like the **Good Samaritan**. They try to do what they can, they show compassion by their deeds, they try hard and creative to raise some funds to pay the parable's innkeeper to take care and help the needy. Therefore it is important that our church returns to the basics of faith such as Jesus' **Parable of the Good Samaritan** to make clear we are here to help. That is our calling. Indeed, our God-given vocation to take care of the paradise we live in, God's Creation, the very first commandment in the Bible, does include all humans and can't be separated from our call to love our neighbour. And both are an intrinsic part of loving God, of loving Jesus. All three commandments are inseparable. See SolarPeace.org for details on that.

« **Not everyone who calls me 'Lord, Lord' will enter the Kingdom of heaven, but only those who do what my Father in heaven wants them to do. »**

Jesus' teachings are very clear regarding our deeds: «**By their fruit you will recognize them.**» also translated as «**You will know them by what they do. ... So then, you will know the false prophets by what they do. Not everyone who calls me 'Lord, Lord' will enter the Kingdom of heaven, but only those who do what my Father in heaven wants them to do. ...**» (Matthew 7:16, 7:20, 7:21, Good News Translation)

and

«**My friends, what good is it for one of you to say that you have faith if your actions do not prove it? ... "Show me how anyone can have faith without actions." ... it is by our actions that we are put right with God, and not by faith alone.**» (James 2:14, 2:18, 2:24, Good News Translation)

or for example

«**Who is wise and understanding among you? Let him show it by his good conduct, by deeds done in the humility that comes from wisdom.**» (James 3:13)

Just like the recent Korero article “Working for reconciliation between Israelis and Palestinians” (Korero, 21 Aug 2025), we need reconciliation in our churches as well. I think whoever was reading this Korero article and the linked resources is well prepared and ready for a next step to help, for example a good deed via donation. This Korero article was concluded with “**Let us be a people who, grounded in Christ, seek peace, pursue justice, and extend grace – here in Aotearoa and to the ends of the earth.**” – what a wonderful phrase by Simon Martin.

So please – let us reconcile our faith according to Jesus' teachings. Let us be a good example for other churches, let us be a **Good Samaritan**, let us call all churches and people throughout the Diocese and throughout New Zealand for generous donations to support the starving people in Gaza. That will also display a strong message to help stop the evil blockade around Gaza on a political level. That is exactly what Jesus would do today. We are called to do more than the reflecting priest in Jesus' **Parable of the Good Samaritan**. Yes, we can be the **Good Samaritan** and make a huge difference, if we want to and if we take Jesus' teachings serious. Apparently, the situation in Gaza commands, that there's no time to be wasted. The Diocese might be helpful in pooling our donations and selecting trustworthy aid organisations in Gaza.

Just like the churches throughout NZ joined up to sing “**The Blessing Aotearoa**” so wonderfully, we can now join together in the name of Christ and help with our donations where it is currently needed most. Thank you very much indeed.



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eZQPifs2kjo&feature=youtu.be>

May the Lord bless you and keep you ... and give you peace,
Wolfgang Rehfus

See also «**Archbishops speak out on Gaza**»

<https://www.AnglicanTaonga.org.nz/news>

https://www.anglicantaonga.org.nz/news/common_life/archbishops_gaza

“Anglican Archbishops of Aotearoa, New Zealand and Polynesia have called on people of good faith throughout Aotearoa, New Zealand and Polynesia to stand up for the innocent suffering in the Holy Land – as more than half a million people in Gaza face famine.”

«**Reflections ... Taking Care of Paradise**»

<https://SolarPeace.org>

https://SolarPeace.org/e/20200412_Taking-Care-of-Paradise.htm