

Draft material for St Aidan's newsletter 2006 - approx 520 words

QUESTIONS OF JUSTICE

QUESTIONS OF JUSTICE are all around us, every day. They arise in family relationships, criminal law, international dealings, business, Church councils, and in our own personal lives. Here are a few:

HOW should we judge others?

WHAT is the role of punishment, and of prisons?

WHEN should victims be involved?

WHERE does retribution fit in?

WHOSE side is God on?

WHY should I care?

St Aidan's is soon to host a series of three Wednesday night seminars on highly topical issues of justice affecting our community today. This is our opportunity, as individuals and as a community, to enter into discussion and debate about some very topical issues, and then perhaps to do something to promote justice ourselves.

Prison Fellowship NZ and the Salvation Army have challenged politicians to stop treating crime as a bidding war for harsher punishments. That is also a challenge to us, the public. But what are the alternatives, and how can we be involved?

The first seminar will feature Dr Chris Marshall from Wellington, a profoundly influential writer, teacher and practitioner in matters of justice. Chris previously taught New Testament Theology at the Bible College of NZ and is now the St John's Senior Lecturer in Christian Theology Religious Studies, at Victoria University of Wellington. He will lay the foundations for what follows by examining the biblical view of justice, and relating this to contemporary issues such as terrorism and retribution.

The second seminar addresses issues of community, victims' interests and restorative justice. NZ has played a leading role in the development of restorative justice, which is now an international movement supported by the European Union, United Nations and numerous State and national governments. Judge Fred McElrea has been closely involved in this work for 15 years. Revd Douglas Mansill is a Presbyterian Minister and former Prison Chaplain who trained the first restorative justice facilitators in this country. They will explain the meaning and operation of restorative justice in today's setting, and show how it gives victims, offenders and their community a meaningful role in dealing with the effects of crime. Examples and results will be discussed. Secular and Christian views of restorative justice will be compared. We will be challenged!

Kim Workman leads the third seminar. Kim is National Director of Prison Fellowship NZ, but he has also worked in Maori Affairs and was once head of NZ Prison Service. From this wealth of experience he will show how a Christian organisation can transform our penal system and the lives of both prisoners and guards. He will describe the current work of Prison Fellowship in prison visiting, victim-offender reconciliation, faith-based prison wings, and community mentoring of offenders.

Although St Aidan's is pleased to host these seminars, they are a community initiative open to all Churches and indeed to those with no church connection. Mark your diaries now, and invite your family members and friends. This is our chance to discuss the essentials of justice, and be part of its growth and development in our community. Mark your diaries now!

Where – etc

When - etc

Entry – free.