

## Justice: Reclaiming the Voice of Theology in the Public Sphere

At the beginning of this presentation I would like to acknowledge the traditional owners of the land, the Wurundjeri people and pay my respects to their elders and children of the present and future.

I would also like to place on record an acknowledgement of my peers from various Christian traditions, particularly those at the 'coalface' in faith-based agencies. They continue to uphold a passion, a voice and a flame for justice in both their practical wisdom and Christian perspective. The children, young people and families, who have shared with me their pain, disappointments and hurt, and have endured a lack of understanding of their life experiences by many in our community, has enriched my own commitment to justice both inside and outside the Church. Often the approach and public statements of the agencies and their leaders are expressed in words and actions that are different from traditional religious vocabulary, but they continue to be the voices of the voiceless in the wilderness of global free market ideology. Faith-based agencies provide numerous opportunities for personal growth and transformation and remind me that many who work with and alongside those in need act with compassion and care, while often cautious or reluctant to be engaged with the institutional church that they do not understand or because they as individuals felt rejected or excluded in the past.

I recall vividly the advice given to me in the early 1970s from a wise Josephite nun, when as a new graduate I expressed frustration when confronted with tragedy and brokenness in families and the lack of resources available to assist them: 'Ray, at times the only support you may be able to give them is to hear their pain, sit with them, offer them hope, and advocate on their behalf.'

It is important, however, to say from the outset and to acknowledge that, through successive governments, churches, not-for-profits and individuals, Australia has a long tradition of responding to the needs of the outcast and disadvantaged, with the exception of our indigenous people. Naming a few of the initiatives will illustrate the point:

1. The basic or minimum wage
2. Pensions and benefits as entitlements not charity
3. Active engagement in the provision of universal education, public health, housing and transport. These services were understood as the basic rights of everyone and necessary for a healthy democracy. It was the responsibility of the State to provide and govern for all.
4. Protection for workers through the availability of unions and appropriate legislation to ensure individuals were not exploited. {the origin of the Labor Day holiday}

Alongside these initiatives, over the years the churches have joined forces with groups with similar agendas, advocating for the 1972 Henderson Inquiry into Poverty, resisting the expansion of gambling, and protesting against the war in Iraq. Currently, a number of churches are engaged in seeking a just peace for the Palestinians, and a fair response to asylum seekers arriving in Australia by boat.

Many of these traditional entitlements are now being wound back and are under serious ideological threat. Increasingly, we are being told that the extent of current welfare provision in addition to the provision of public housing, health and education cannot be sustained. As a nation we are increasingly encouraged to purchase these services from private 'for profit' providers. The most recent concern relates to a further review, announced two weeks ago by the Federal government's Social Security Minister, on the eligibility and the level of payments for the unemployed and those on a disability pension. The reason given is financial sustainability. Before the review has even begun, we are told that those on a disability pension should find work and likewise the unemployed. It is forgotten that the unemployed do not create unemployment, and those with a disability cannot always find suitable work on account of their physical or intellectual challenges. Compassion and justice have been sidelined and the responsibility of the State shirked, the impact on individuals, families and communities discounted for ideology and so-called economic efficiency. The recent Federal government's Productivity Committee Report on SPC and the future of fruit canning in Victoria is a case in point. The impact of the closure of the plant on the local community is ignored. For the record, it should be remembered that the churches have helped shape these entitlements over the past 150 years and encouraged others by word and deed to do likewise. It is the responsibility of all to protect the vulnerable. The contribution of the churches in building and sustaining social cohesion, and in the promotion of a fair and just society based on the parables and teachings of Jesus, however, is no longer a prime source for service provision and justice. These values have been replaced by ideology that places economics and wealth creation at the pinnacle of social policy. Leaner and smaller government is promoted at the expense of universal service provision, such as health, education, housing and transport. Individualism and personal choice are applauded at the expense of universal and public provisions. It is assumed that we all have the resources to make choices, are resilient and have the capacity to pay. Christian resources and wisdom, on the other hand, value reconciliation and the restoration of broken structural and personal relationships, the healing of hopes trashed and unfulfilled. These values are now sidelined and considered irrelevant.

In the time allotted to me I would like to speak on four matters.

1. The context in which the Church and individual Christians in Australia seek to express and live out their faith.
2. The contribution that Christian faith, in particular theology, can offer to the secular world.
3. How as Church and as individuals we should behave in a multi-faith and multi-cultural society like Australia.
4. The priority issues on which the Church should engage with others in shaping the future.

The foundation or principle behind these issues is to ask ourselves the question, how do we as people of faith speak with integrity, transparency and in a prophetic way that transcends church politics, asks serious questions about our own privilege, and listens to the voices of the oppressed and marginalised, while challenging those with power and authority to act in accord with the words of the prophet Micah, 'to do justice, to love kindness and to walk humbly with your God'? This is important in the present when the Church is at a critical time in its own life, as a result of the mistakes of the past, and often denies or fails to comprehend or understand the impact of abuse. The Church, of course, is not alone. David Hall in his recent book challenges the Church to abandon its privileged position, to abandon

‘the spoils of seduction’<sup>1</sup> and to begin the reinvigoration of its own life. This needs, I would add, to involve a renewal of ecumenism at both the state and national level. Sadly, it appears to me that many church leaders today show a distinct lack of interest in ecumenism, working alone rather than together across the traditions on matters where agreement could be reached. Rowan Williams expresses the same thoughts when he says that the Church is:

...the trustee of a vision, the vision of a social order that is without fear, oppression, the violence of exclusion and the search for scapegoats, because it is one where each recognises their dependence on all and each is seen as having an irreplaceable gift for all.<sup>2</sup>

Speaking and participating in the public sphere is mission. It is mission to the world. At the heart of mission is wisdom, wisdom that St Paul reminds us is folly to the world, but stronger and wiser than all human endeavours. Wisdom is not to be understood only as acquired knowledge, but rather how we are called to live our lives in relationship to the whole of the created order. It is wisdom of the highest order, embracing all that is noble, self-sacrificing and devoid of self, that the Church has to offer to a broken and complex world. It is wisdom expressed in our relationships and service to the other as Christ served the world, wisdom that is not based on power, but on mutual trust and dialogue. Wisdom is the fullness of what it means to be human, created in God’s image. Wisdom, God’s wisdom, is the recognition of loss, of not knowing mystery, awe and transcendence, beyond the self. It is also a reminder to us not to confuse morality with wisdom. Archbishop Desmond Tutu reminds us in his book, *God is not a Christian, Speaking the Truth in a time of Crisis*, that the Church has no monopoly over morality. The Church’s participation in the public sphere should not therefore be limited to press releases and comments from religious leaders on social and economic matters, to name just two responses, but must be lived in its own life and the life of those agencies and organisations that claim affiliation. Put simply, we must practise what we preach. Wisdom speaks divine love and God’s dream for the created order that embraces all that is just, expressed in our deepest concerns for each other and for God. The words spoken must offer opportunities for personal and social transformation and the recognition of the Divine presence in all of life. Miroslav Volf speaks about this same idea when he says:

Christian faith is therefore a prophetic faith that seeks to mend the world... Faith should be active in all spheres of life: education and the arts, business and politics, communication and entertainment and more.<sup>3</sup>

One practical expression of acting differently from others could be in the way we treat staff and employees in our agencies or in the corporate life of the churches.

The question of whether or not Jesus was a moral or ethical teacher cannot be understood in terms of rules or clear and unambiguous answers that he gave or wrote down. In fact he did not always give a direct answer to questions and often sent his hearers into a frenzy, making them angry, confused and resentful. His teachings challenge us to reflect and think for ourselves, outside the box as we say. Jesus does not give pat answers, but his ministry, his life, death and resurrection embody the wisdom of God. This reminds us that Christ’s mission is our mission and his life the model for our engagement in the world.

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<sup>1</sup> David Hall, *Waiting for Gospel, An Appeal to the Dispirited Remnants of Protestant “Establishment”* (Eugene, Oregon: Cascade Books, 2012)

<sup>2</sup> Rowan Williams, *Faith in the Public Square* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2012)

<sup>3</sup> Miroslav Volf, *A Public Faith* (Grand Rapids, Missouri: Brazos Press, 2011), xv

Jesus embraces the wisdom of God as the foundation stone of his life. This is wisdom that embraces prophecy, grace, compassion, politics and sharing. This involves living the life God created us for, to love God and our neighbour.

The world we live in is complex, challenging and increasingly interconnected. The Global Financial Crisis of 2008 clearly demonstrated the extent to which we are all part of a global economy where the rules appear to be increasingly set, not by national governments, but by powerful lobby groups concerned with their own interests. The world we live in is complex and contested, with differing ideologies, religions and understandings of the role of government in shaping and influencing the machinery of government and equally of individuals. I repeat: this is a contested world of ideologies, religions, and viewpoints, all seeking to win the hearts and minds of their constituents. Central to each are issues that directly affect the planet's future, our future, the next generation's future and whether we can live in harmony with one another and the planet. Economics, human rights, multi-faith communities, the role and makeup of families, the environment, the distribution of wealth, and sexuality are some of the issues that are currently hotly debated in both the global and Australian community. The response of the Church to these issues is critical not only as part of a healthy civil society, but because it has something profound to offer. The response, however, must be more than five-second sound grabs and sets of absolute rules, and must not be left to the fundamentalists or the self-proclaimed moral authority of sects.

In his most recent book on the Church's engagement in an increasingly secular or humanist society on matters of economics and social order, Rowan Williams says:

The Christian faith is not a matter of vague philosophy, but of unremitting challenge to what we think we know about human beings and their destiny.<sup>4</sup>

In arguing for a robust, prophetic and visionary faith, that acknowledges how the Church itself has been seduced and sedated by its own power and privileged position, Williams further argues for a lesser emphasis on matters of sexuality, gender roles and family. Present debates around issues of human sexuality, gender and family are unlikely to gain consensus in the near future. He acknowledges how on these matters the Church has pursued a narrow moral agenda and a lack of interest in many other areas, such as population control, climate change and relationships. In recent times, Pope Francis and the Archbishop of Canterbury have brought a fresh approach to the voice of the Church on many of these issues, while challenging the Church to rethink its own power and governance structures, and calling for the world to stop exploiting the poor. This is not to say that others have not said similar things, including Williams and Tutu, but that these voices are new in language, speech and content and allow for further discussion and engagement. Their words appear to resonate with the media and public at large, despite seeming shallow in some reactionary religious quarters.

Religious leaders, like others, can be around too long with their words becoming predictable. New faces and voices are needed. New models of leadership that embrace difference and other stakeholders are required. The voice of those in need should be heard and the values of the Sermon on the Mount encapsulated in response to the burning issues of the day. Williams and others, like Miroslav Volf, Brian Trainor and David Hall, all speak in the same vein and confirm that the Church not only has a right to participate in the public sphere, but also has something profound to say about the human condition. The message

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<sup>4</sup> Williams, *Faith in the Public Square*, 1

is more than offering comfort and solace. It needs to energise and to rekindle the God question for today. It is fact today that the Church finds itself on the margins of most of contemporary Australian society and although it has sought to push back with new mission fronts, liturgies that appear relevant and new governance structures, it appears to be making little headway, especially among the traditional churches. Growth in the main appears to be with the mega-churches, what I describe as prosperity religion churches, such as Hillsong. Even recent initiatives to grow faith-based schools have had their traumas with financial difficulties and little evidence to support hoped for outcomes in influencing the next generation.

How then do we respond?

The first response is to name the context as it is and not try to hold onto some romantic view of a previous Christian era. It is to recognise that we are now not the only stakeholder in shaping values, but rather one of many. New working relationships are necessary and respect for other voices, including people of different faiths. Religious pluralism in Australia is now a reality. Part of the challenge, then, is to join with others to find a common good – the expression of love for God and the other. Shouting the loudest is not an appropriate response, nor is ignoring the voices of others. The answers to the issues of our time, those that define who we are as individuals and as community, require more than one-liners: they require a commitment to working together and sharing a common hope for the future. A future that will embrace tolerance, difference, a sense of awe, mystery, transcendence and purpose. In our multi-cultural and multi-faith society the challenge for Church and State is to enhance social cohesion and respect where difference is likely to be the order of the day. In this context how do we remain faithful to our God-given mission? As Anglicans we have a critical intellectual tradition that requires us to invest in theological education and leadership, not for the management of an institution that is struggling for an identity in the post-secular world and for survival in its present form, but for language and understandings of God that connect with the twenty-first century. This requires some risk-taking and dialogue. This further requires an approach to theological education that is intentionally mission in focus and that does not simply seek to accommodate the world, for as Volf says, ‘Today’s whims are tomorrow’s old hats’.<sup>5</sup> This is not an easy task, especially where our past record on the role of women, leadership in the church and other matters has been wrong or remains questionable. Theologians need to speak outside the safety of the academy, in the forums of the church and the broader community, and to work more actively with constituent stakeholders and those in opposition. (For instance, Science week at St Paul’s Cathedral and Conversations held during the 2012 Atheists’ Conference in Melbourne.)

In addressing this question, Rowan Williams discusses the dilemmas of the secular state by suggesting that, like monochrome religious regimes, the secular state is struggling to maintain an identity. He says that those who call themselves secularists speak about freedom and equality, yet seek to deny a religious contribution to the debates, while their own ideology or prejudice is acceptable at any level.<sup>6</sup> This same issue is discussed by Brain Trainor in his recent book, *Sacred Precedes Secular, Why the State needs the Church*, when he calls on the State to shift from being a neutral overlord on the sacred/secular distinction to a position of active engagement, even ownership of a faith distinction that

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<sup>5</sup> Volf, *A Public Faith*

<sup>6</sup> Williams, *Faith in the Public Square*

points beyond humanity.<sup>7</sup> The State's role is to adjudicate impartially between the various cultural and religious structures and beliefs, to seek common threads and create a society that recognises difference in belief, but also a common commitment to a sustainable and coherent community. Williams, like Trainor, also argues that the public and private interconnection is 'enriched in the context of larger commitments and vision, and if forgotten or repressed by a supposedly neutral ideology of the public space, immense damage is done to the moral energy of a liberal society.'<sup>8</sup>

Each of the Gospel writers spoke into the context and the culture of their day. Language, imagery, parables and testimonies would have resonated with those to whom they spoke. A second challenge then for the Church today is to find a way to speak. A fresh way that speaks into the culture and with the culture of Australian society, where increasing numbers are two to three generations away from any meaningful contact with the Christian faith or the Church and any understanding of how the Christian heritage has shaped significantly who we are today. David Hall sums it up with these words:

Christianity as faith centered in Jesus, as the Christ came to be called, got a foothold in the world, and a vital and vocal minority changed the world, because it proclaimed a message that wakened men and women to possibilities for human life that they had lost or never entertained.<sup>9</sup>

How then do we speak about salvation, redemption, and divine love into a community that does not speak the language of belief and faith? How does one speak about the Divine presence in Jesus without limiting Christian faith to the private sphere? Like the early gospel writers, the telling of the Christ event and the story of God's unending presence in the world cannot be separated or divorced from the institutions and principalities and powers that make up the secular context, a large number of which can be traced back to Christian principles and initiatives. It is important to note also that the secular world offers much that Christians accept, including many potential avenues and pathways for the good ordering of society. The church should applaud and acknowledge where advances in health, education and housing have contributed to improving the human condition, while not allowing itself to be seduced into embracing a non-critical approach when exploitation and abuse allows the powerful and wealthy to accumulate greater wealth at the expense of the poor. It needs to be remembered that 80% of global wealth is controlled by 20% of the world's population.

In Australia it has been Anglican agencies that have been the regular and constant advocates on matters of justice in recent years. They have engaged with governments, clients, business and the Church. Most have research capacities and a depth of professional expertise. On occasion, Archbishops have spoken on such issues as gambling, foreign aid, asylum seekers and similar matters, but it has been the agencies and a small number of socially active and prophetic parishes that have borne the responsibility for social comment, advocacy and action. Social Responsibility Committees and the Public Affairs Committee of General Synod have been the other sources of public comment, but in recent years most have been starved of funds and bishops appear often reluctant or reticent to use the advice of these committees and the resources of the agencies. A shared

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<sup>7</sup> Brian T Trainor, *Sacred precedes Secular, Why the State needs the Church* (Preston, Melbourne: Mosaic Press, 2013)

<sup>8</sup> Williams, *Faith in the Public Square*

<sup>9</sup> Hall, *Waiting for Gospel*, xi

voice on matters of justice and shared leadership with the agencies appear at times to be fragmented and often lacking coordination.

A distinctive Christian and Anglican response to the social, economic and ethical issues facing Australia today and in the future will require a more robust and rigorous attention to detail, and a vision that goes beyond the immediate to future generations. Engagement by the church should value-add and not simply repeat or restate other voices. It should involve a declaration of intent that justice is integral to the Church's mission as the ambassador of Christ in the world, and not an optional extra. Speaking into the public forum is mission, a commitment to reflect Christ's mission to the world. A mission that is vigorous, vibrant and prophetic. As Rowan Williams says, how do we recover a sense of 'convergent belief in the possibility of liberation from the systems of violent struggle, in a way that genuinely opens doors in our world?'<sup>10</sup> A prophetic struggle that draws from liberation theology a preference for the poor and excluded, the outsider and the prisoner. A struggle that rejects prosperity religion that says believe in Jesus and you will be rewarded. A struggle that should involve pain and sacrifice.

Given the diversity of the Anglican Church in Australia, it is unlikely that consensus on all issues will be possible, nor may this be desirable. How we deal with difference on matters of personal morality and with integrity in the different ways scripture is understood and interpreted will be critical. As a minimum, a vision of ministry and engagement with Australian society should include the following:

- An understanding that the sacred and the Divine are grounded in our very being, both as individuals and the wider creation.
- A commitment to love and service to others, understood and accepted as core Christian teaching exemplified in the Sermon on the Mount and the parables of Jesus.
- A recognition and affirmation that agencies and parishes are called to make a real difference to the lives of individuals and the communities in which they are located. The agencies are the church at mission, as are the parishes.
- A commitment to the value of research and community living alongside scripture and the traditions of the Church.
- A willingness to take risks and to acknowledge that our own salvation is diminished when we fail to heed the cry of the other.
- A preparedness to listen to the voice of the faithful and those without Christian faith as they journey through life.
- A willingness to share leadership on matters of justice with like-minded individuals and organisations.
- A recognition that good works, charity and benevolence, while admirable in their intent, are symptoms of disadvantage and brokenness. Challenging the structures of society that limit, diminish or exploit requires perseverance and advocacy.
- A willingness to share the pain and the brokenness of the world, acknowledging the presence of the Divine in the midst of human suffering.
- A willingness to be open to the disturbing spirit of God in the Church's own life and in the community.

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<sup>10</sup> Williams, *Faith in the Public Square*, 303

## The immediate issues

I have already outlined the challenges the Church faces in engaging with the world. It is the task of the Church to rethink and respond to the current context with greater integrity and to acknowledge the part it has played in its formation and design. On matters of justice, governance, transparency and prophetic teaching we need to speak to ourselves as well as to the wider community.

The church in Australia is one of the largest employers in the country, if not the largest. Through its network of schools, colleges, universities, welfare agencies, hospitals, and parishes, it employs many thousands of people from diverse backgrounds. How do we model best employment practice, given our role and responsibility? How do we safeguard or reconcile family life with our work practices? Why do we continue to discriminate against those with whom Jesus himself would have connected and engaged? Do we give preferential treatment to the disadvantaged in our schools, expressing a priority for the poor? Are our governance structures open and accountable? As mentioned earlier, other issues the Church needs to address include population growth, human sexuality, and climate change. There is the need, as Walter Brueggemann says in his latest book, *The Practice of Prophetic Imagination*, to re-engage and to redefine our role as a stakeholder in the community, not as the only stakeholder, but one of many. Do we live, as Church and as Christians, the vision of radical discipleship, of a society without fear and abuse? While recognizing there is no single way to respond to culture, Brueggemann identifies the following as a way forward:

1. The need to take the present seriously and acknowledge our part in creating the present
2. The need to identify the causes of the present challenges facing the community and to name them publicly
3. The need to accept that we may not be able to reverse trends in either the short or long term
4. The need to recognize our own loss of identity and acceptance
5. The need to immerse ourselves in the issues of the day and to equip ourselves with data and information for action, evaluating the options.<sup>11</sup>

He goes on to say that central to all these issues is the need to reclaim our passion for God and a voice to lead into a new realm where how we relate to one another and to God becomes core business of mission. This will involve a greater willingness to partner with others and to acknowledge that, although we are not the only stakeholder, we are a stakeholder who is not a community of self-interest seeking privilege, but a community meeting needs.

The second issue is to engage in an urgent discussion on the meaning and future shape of civil society. Many of the institutions of our times that have helped sustain and provide guidance are increasingly being shunned or challenged, not least the Church. Others include the professions, the parliaments, politicians and the law. Although the recent controversy in the United Kingdom concerning phone hacking has brought to the surface certain practices of media owners, the media in general reports to no-one, claiming immunity as a free press essential to a democracy. Lindsay Tanner, in his book, *Sideshow: Dumbing Down Democracy*, claims that the media is interested in a sensational quick word

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<sup>11</sup> Walter Brueggemann, *The Practice of Prophetic Imagination, Preaching an Emancipating Word* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press. 2012). I have summarised the thoughts of Brueggemann in these points.



and opinion, rather than reporting facts and engaging in bi-partisan dialogue and discussion.<sup>12</sup> Recent debates in the Federal parliament have been no more than personal attacks on the integrity of individuals, and since the September election distribution of details in key policy areas has been severely restricted. The growth in continuous television news coverage and the steady decline in print journalism is contributing to a further dumbing down of public discussion. While it is true that new forms of social media may help to address the challenge and improve discussion, there is little evidence to suggest that this is helping to modify the propaganda coming from major Australian newspapers. The time has come when our best intellects need to be released, harnessed and encouraged to speak with authority and without fear in the public forum and to take lay leadership more seriously. Christian experts must come out from under the bushel and use their professional expertise in mission. They in fact should be 'outed'.

The third issue for the churches and the agencies is to increase their own level of research in order to inform themselves, to differentiate when a Christian approach is likely to differ from the mainstream, and to engage in discussion that is about more than their own privilege or position. Building relationships with the universities and the think tanks, such as the Australia Institute, is one way of doing this, and in conjunction with the tools of economics and sociology will enable cheap criticism to be debunked and raise the level of the Church's contribution. A joint report in April 2009, titled 'Building financial health and wellbeing for disadvantaged Australians in the wake of the Global Financial Crisis', by Anglicare Australia, Catholic Social Services Australia, Uniting Care Australia and the Salvation Army, provided the necessary data for the Federal government to accept the advice of the networks for urgent funds to protect the most vulnerable in the community. The report highlighted the additional costs that would be incurred if support were not forthcoming. Clearly, the Global Financial Crisis affected everyone, some more profoundly than others. Our standard of living, however, is sustained by the losses of others. In many places infrastructure is lacking and moving forward restricted by the failure of those with resources to share them with others. The growth over recent years of unregulated financial transactions and free market economics championed by all political parties has seen many individuals across the globe become disenfranchised and lose savings. Corporate profits and share market prices have become the goal of the day. While acknowledging the complexity of global finances, it is worth remembering that the world's poorest still bear the brunt of wealth creation for others. Significantly, it is in the poorest countries that Christian faith continues to grow. (What does that tell us about the Church in those countries? What can our Church learn from this example?)

The Global Financial Crisis of 2008 identified major weaknesses in a free market approach without proper government intervention and engagement. While claims can be made that many have benefited from the free market, the Global Financial Crisis revealed the presence of enormous greed, inequality, and failure both of the system and of government oversight.

The fourth challenge is global urbanisation and the need to address growing income disparity and demands for energy. While Melbourne speaks about building an \$8 billion tunnel, the rest of the state misses out on infrastructure and more young people leave rural homes and move to our increasingly large metropolitan cities. In many places in rural Australia, it is the church that stays, although under great duress. Think how better education, health, housing, and transport could be if our approach to the future were less

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<sup>12</sup> Lindsay Tanner, *Sideshow: Dumbing Down Democracy* (Brunswick, Victoria: Scribe Publications, 2011)

about urban growth and instead more about rural sustainability. What are the key principles of a more just and humane society other than wealth creation? Let our churches and agencies engage in this discussion with rigour and together, as the body of Christ called to serve the world.

The fifth challenge is to recognise and acknowledge where the Divine presence is at work outside the Church and for the Church to seek help from beyond its own resources in order to strengthen its own mission and life.

Christian faith may not provide all the answers to the social and ethical issues of the day, nor should we assume the secular or humanist option is better. Similarly, our relationship with other faiths will be critical. As Church and Christians, however, we are called to engage in all aspects of life that impinge on God's creation. Nourished by our own tradition, the opportunity is there for the Church to be a robust and passionate advocate for a better world, while recognising the right of those who, although they do not share a Christian faith perspective, also seek the common good.

### **Conclusion**

Justice is the responsibility of the whole church. It is expressed in the charge given at the end of the Eucharist, to go in peace to love and serve the Lord. One of the stark differences between secular ideology and Christian faith is the outrageous and generous forgiveness offered by God to a broken and divided world. During a session of South Africa's post-apartheid Truth and Reconciliation Commission, one of the members of the Commission turned to a victim of torture and abuse and asked the question, 'How do you believe justice should be done to this person, who has inflicted such suffering on you and so brutally destroyed your family?' The woman replied, 'I would like this person to become my son.'<sup>13</sup> This might seem extreme. It is, however, I suggest, God's wisdom, God's justice in action.

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<sup>13</sup> Desmond Tutu, *God is not a Christian, Speaking the Truth in a Time of Crisis*. Tutu discusses the role of the post-apartheid Truth and Reconciliation Commission in South Africa.