

## IS THERE A NEW ZEALAND IDENTITY?

In October 2010, television presenter Paul Henry created controversy by infamously asking the Prime Minister John Key in an interview, whether the next Governor General of New Zealand was going to 'look and sound like a New Zealander'. Having already queried whether the current Governor General was 'even a New Zealander', Henry's implication – that Anand Satyanand, of Fijian-Indian descent though born in New Zealand, was perhaps not an authentic 'true blue' New Zealander – left Key momentarily speechless and created something of a national tumult. Soon thousands – via phone calls, emails, texts, blogs and tweets – were voicing their outrage at Henry. Accusations of racism flew, and the following day Henry offered a vague apology and then was suspended by his employer, TVNZ. Known as something of a provocateur, it seemed as though Henry had finally pushed the boundaries once too often.

Unfortunately, in the maelstrom of actions, reactions, personalities and politics, and with Henry a week later announcing his resignation, a deeper analysis of the event never eventuated within the New Zealand media. For Henry, the television version of a radio 'shock-jock', such questions gained the desired reaction, stirring the pot, and keeping viewer ratings up. When responding to complaints about the interview, a spokeswoman for TVNZ stated: 'The audience tell us over and over again that one of the things they love about Paul Henry is that he's prepared to say the things we quietly think but are scared to say out loud. The question of John Key is the same – we want the answer but are too scared to ask.'<sup>1</sup>

### What does it mean to be a New Zealander?

While many New Zealanders may have had very little interest in who would be the next Queen's representative (it turned out to be Lieutenant General Jerry Mateparae, who is of Māori descent), beneath Henry's less-than-veiled prejudice there are indeed important questions concerning the nature of cultural identity. What does it mean to be a New Zealander? What does the average New Zealander look like? Is a New Zealand identity determined by one's ethnicity, place of birth, or one's history of residence in the country? Or, does being a New Zealander depend more upon a set of shared values and a certain way of looking at the world? And if

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<sup>1</sup> Alice Neville, Paul Harper and NZPA, "Henry apologises to Governor-General," *New Zealand Herald*, 4 October 2010. < [http://www.nzherald.co.nz/nz/news/article.cfm?c\\_id=1&objectid=10678115](http://www.nzherald.co.nz/nz/news/article.cfm?c_id=1&objectid=10678115)> (13 June 2011).

this is the case, what are these shared values and world-views? Ultimately, is there any such thing at all, as a shared 'New Zealand' identity?

Such questions concerning 'identity' are, of course, not unique to New Zealand. While the world may now be construed as a 'global village' in which we are all interconnected by ease of travel, technology and media, the reality is that geographical boundaries and cultural and ethnic differences still exist. Other modern secular democracies face the same question regarding what it is that constitutes their national identity. In France, recent legislation was passed banning Muslim women from wearing the burqa. It was argued that such 'religious dress' ran in the face of the shared secular values of the French republic – liberty, equality, and fraternity. In the UK and other parts of Europe, politicians have recently announced the failure of policies of multiculturalism. Closer to home, Australia continues to agonise over what exactly makes Australians 'Australian'. In 2006, then Australian Prime Minister John Howard ushered through the Australian Citizenship Bill in which new immigrants would be tested to evaluate their knowledge of English language and 'Australian values', such as democracy, the rule of law and the equality of men and women.

In each of these countries, and in New Zealand itself, the sensitive nature of such questions ensures that political parties prepared to raise questions regarding race and identity will make headlines, generate controversy, and often win votes. Every three years in New Zealand, as the next general election approaches, this is exactly the pattern. Questions of cultural identity come to the fore as politicians voice their concern at the 'Asian invasion' and declare the need to control immigration, or announce slogans such as 'one law for all', or conversely, proclaim strongly their 'tino rangatiratanga – the right to self-determination'. But beyond the politicking, what do such slogans mean? Launching the Labour election campaign in 2005, then Prime Minister Helen Clark urged New Zealanders 'to reject the politics of division and fear'. While we might share Clark's scorn for electioneering politics, in which themes concerning race and culture are used as vote-grabbers, nevertheless issues of law and order, political representation, immigration and education, plus many others, all inevitably find themselves linked to the question of cultural identity. Who is a New Zealander and therefore whose rights should be protected? Whose values should be upheld? Whose dreams and ambitions should be advanced? Ultimately, questions of identity are closely linked to the question of what sort of society we aspire to be.

## **Possible Characteristics of a New Zealand Identity**

So what makes us New Zealanders? Is there a shared set of values or perspectives that is held by all? Some suggest that it is New Zealanders' close connection and affinity to the land which is a defining feature of New Zealand's cultural identity. The remoteness of New Zealand, the fact that for millennia the landmass was devoid of human habitation, has led to the unique flora and fauna and levels of endemism unlike anywhere else in the world, while our comparatively sparse human population has endowed us with relatively pristine landscapes. A spiritual connection to the land is very real for Māori, who for a millennium have practised the tradition of returning their newborn's placenta (whenua) back into the land (whenua). Likewise, for many New Zealanders who have grown up enjoying the 'outdoors' or engaged in horticultural and agricultural vocations, there is clearly a strong sense of affinity and connectedness to our environment. But what of urban-based New Zealanders? Do those living in box-sized apartments in inner-city Auckland perceive that their identity as New Zealanders stems from their relationship with the surrounding landscape?

Some suggest that it is our love of sport which is one of the defining features of a common New Zealand identity. Again, the passion of many of us for sporting achievements cannot be denied, but what of those who find watching rugby as much fun as watching paint dry on a wet day?

Others, locating New Zealand's cultural identity in certain cultural traits, give special mention to our egalitarianism, our pioneering/can-do spirit, our 'no worries'/'she'll be right' laid back approach to life, and our no.8 wire resourcefulness. Again, there is an element of truth in such reflections. Recently some United States university students visiting New Zealand made special mention of our egalitarianism, noting the ease with which New Zealanders were able to access prominent, powerful and 'famous' people. Having already had a conversation with an ex All-Black in a chance car-park meeting, the students were particularly struck by the television images of Prime Minister John Key being approached by a member of the public on the West Coast and offered a unidentifiable parcel (evidently containing whitebait) while Key's security men stood by without intervening! One can hardly imagine a US President or British Prime Minister in the same situation!

Again, however, while undoubtedly evident today, to what extent were such cultural traits apparent more among our historical forbears? Are they today more aspirational than actual? Certainly the statistics show that New Zealand has

become steadily less egalitarian during the last quarter of a century. And does the average Kiwi really have a laid-back, she'll be right attitude? If so, how does one explain the fact that New Zealand has the second highest youth (15-24) suicide rate of OECD countries?<sup>2</sup>

Perhaps part of the problem lies in the very attempt to give a universal all-encompassing definition of New Zealand identity. No matter how broad, ultimately such definitions often tell us more about the one doing the defining than enabling us to get any closer to locating a shared 'Kiwi' identity. Paul Henry and others may have a particular picture of what the 'average' New Zealander looks like – of European ethnic origin, nominally 'Christian', and probably male – but does such a portrait appreciate the kaleidoscopic nature of New Zealand?

### **Defining our Identity**

However, while recognising the dangers inherent in such a quest, is it possible to locate some features of a New Zealand identity? Ultimately, *personal* identity is a product of a range of factors including one's previous experiences: likewise, any meaningful attempt to define our *country's* 'identity' therefore requires an understanding of our previous experiences – our history. Could it be that our shared history has bequeathed to us important features that are critical to our identity as New Zealanders?

### **Te Tiriti o Waitangi - The Treaty of Waitangi – Covenant Partnership**

Since the first Waitangi Day on 6 February 1840, when Lt. Col. William Hobson declared 'He iwi tahi tatou' – 'we are all one people' – the history of our small South Pacific nation has been shaped by an attempt to determine whether such a statement is indeed true, and if so, how such a reality works itself out. What does it mean to be 'one people'? Does 'one people' mean 'one law' for all and only one way – usually the majority way – of doing things?

As with other contentious issues, the Treaty of Waitangi comes to the forefront at each general election as politicians make statements about deadlines for Treaty settlements. Unfortunately, such comments perpetuate the misguided notion that the Treaty is fundamentally about Māori grievances, the need for the Crown to provide compensation and redress, and the belief that once settlements are finalised

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<sup>2</sup> New Zealand has the second highest male youth (15–24 years) suicide death rate (after Finland), and the second highest female youth suicide death rate (after Japan). See Ministry of Social Development, '2010 Social Report – Te Purongo Oranga Tangata' <<http://www.socialreport.msd.govt.nz/health/suicide.html>> (10 June 2011).

we can put this troublesome Treaty behind us and move forward. Such an understanding fails both to appreciate what is at the heart of Māori grievances and also the nature of the Treaty itself. Māori who signed the Treaty one hundred and seventy years ago did not understand their actions as a handing over of their sovereignty (*tino rangatiratanga*). Rather, they believed the Treaty protected their rights and way of life, while giving the British government the right to establish a government (*kawanatanga*) to bring lawless settlers and sailors – unfamiliar with Māori customs and procedures – under control. From their discussions with the Christian missionaries who assisted in the translating of the Treaty, it is clear that Māori, drawing on biblical motifs and allusions, understood the Treaty as a covenant, being signed between themselves and the Crown.<sup>3</sup>

As Christians, particularly conscious of the significance of covenant relationships in the Bible, perhaps a helpful way of understanding the Treaty is to view it as analogous with another significant covenant – the marriage relationship. Marriage involves a genuine partnership where two equal partners work together to determine how they will live in a way that is mutually enriching while recognising and affirming their differences. As with all covenants, this is also an ongoing, life-long commitment. However, the reality is that the relationship between the Crown and Māori, for a good duration of its life, has been unhealthy and destructive. The Crown, rather than treating *tāngata whenua* as an equal partner, has ignored, mistreated, and at times openly abused its spouse. Treaty settlement can therefore be understood as a period of counselling, of dealing with the grievance and hurts that have come from this history of neglect and abuse.

As Christians, we understand that confronting and dealing with one's past is necessary if one is to move forward, and is an essential part of repentance. However, while reconciliation involves a putting right of the wrongs that have been done, genuine repentance goes further and fundamentally involves the developing of a new form of relationship. Similarly, rather than bringing an end to the Treaty

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3 Hone Heke – often remembered as the activist chief who four times cut down the British flagpole on Maiki Hill, Russell – was the first to sign Te Tiriti o Waitangi. On the day before the signing Heke argued in support of Te Tiriti telling the assembled chiefs, 'This, my friends...is a good thing. It is even as the word of God.' William Colenso, *The Authentic and Genuine History of the Signing of the Treaty of Waitangi New Zealand, February 5 and 6, 1840*, Wellington: George Didsbury, p.26. Likewise, drawing a comparison to the New Testament – *Te Kawenata Hou*, the New Covenant – which had recently been printed at Paihia, Ngapuhi chiefs regarded the Treaty as a 'sacred compact, a 'covenant'. Claudia Orange, *The Treaty of Waitangi*, Wellington: Allen & Unwin / Port Nicholson Press, 1987, p.150. Even Hobson's declaration 'he iwi tahi tatou' given to each chief as he signed the treaty, was undoubtedly the suggestion of missionary Henry Williams, drawing on biblical passages such as Galatians 3.

itself, the negotiation of Treaty settlements is just the first part of the journey. Having dealt with historical injustices, the challenging and arguably much more exciting part of honouring the covenantal Treaty relationship is the continuing journey of building a healthy partnership – of developing a new household that will treat all within it with care and dignity.

### **What shape Partnership?**

So, what might genuine partnership in Aotearoa/New Zealand between Māori and the Crown look like? How does one build a relationship that gives validity to different cultural ways of knowing and doing? Is it possible to construct the institutions of society (government, our justice and education systems and so on) so that the strengths of distinctive cultures are recognised and drawn upon? A *whakataukī*, (a Māori proverb) states: ‘*Nā tō rourou, nā taku rourou ka ora ai te iwi* – *With your basket of knowledge and my basket of knowledge all the people will thrive*’. A question worth asking is: what are the fruits from our respective baskets (Māori and Pakeha) which will lead to the nourishment and sustaining of all, and which are the rotten fruit that need to be discarded?

All genuine partnerships – whether marriage or business – will, at times, involve compromises to be made. Media reports do not always reflect the give and take of complex negotiations and the struggle to reach agreements under the Treaty. Issues pertaining to the Treaty are often painted in simplistic terms, in which people are led to believe that the only possible outcome is a winner and a loser. But does this have to be the case? The reality is that, despite failures and problems, there is much in New Zealand’s history of race-relations of which we can be proud. Many indigenous people from around the world look on with wonder at the levels of mutual respect and partnership that already exist within Aotearoa/New Zealand. The official recognition and encouragement of *te reo*, Māori representation within local, regional and national political structures, and the embracing of Māori beliefs and values in conservation and environmental policy, are aspects of partnership that we often take for granted and which indigenous people from other countries still long for.

Nevertheless, as in a marriage, the relationship must continue to deepen and mature. Important questions remain. What level of representation is required for genuine partnership? Are Māori seats in Parliament necessary or a historical anachronism? Should Māori representation be proportional or is a 50-50 balance more truly reflective of the original intention of the Treaty? Likewise, how genuine

partnership can be worked out structurally is a difficult question. Should structural partnership – an affirmation of our being ‘one people’, yet different – involve the establishment of different cultural institutions, as for example undertaken by the Anglican Church in Aotearoa, New Zealand and Polynesia with its three tikanga?

Within the education system there is already state funding for Māori learning institutions from kindergarten to tertiary – *kohanga reo*, *kura kaupapa* and *wananga* – as well as encouragement of *te reo* in the general curriculum. But could, and should, distinct Māori institutions be adopted into other areas of New Zealand society? The shift towards the privatisation of prisons offers the opportunity for separate Māori-run prisons<sup>4</sup> – but what of the justice system itself? Can we affirm one law for all and still have the flexibility for court proceedings to take place on a marae? What about so-called affirmative-action programs? Māori sit at the bottom of the rung on economic, health and education indicators (and the reverse on crime and justice system statistics). Should additional funding be targeted particularly towards Māori, or should all people regardless of ethnicity, be treated the same?

### **Multi-Cultural Diversity – A Hospitable Land?**

The recognition of the unique bi-cultural partnership that exists within Aotearoa/New Zealand between Māori and the Crown is also the basis upon which we can recognise another important element of contemporary New Zealand identity. A collection of islands at the furthest reaches of the South Pacific, New Zealand’s cultural identity is shaped by its isolation. While Māori were the first humans to settle these islands a thousand or so years ago, the reality is that our identity as a nation has been, and continues to be, shaped by the process of immigration. Currently, the government sets an annual quota of 45,000 (plus or minus 5,000) immigrants each year. On top of this there is an annual quota to receive 750 refugees referred through the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), while another 300 refugees can apply to come to New Zealand and join existing family members under the Refugee Family Support Category. Each year approximately 1,250 refugees are awarded residency in New Zealand through either the mandated UNHCR Quota Refugee programme or the gaining of refugee status as asylum seekers.

This immigration has resulted in the creation of a genuinely diverse and multi-cultural society. This is not a statement of ideology or an opinion, but rather is a

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<sup>4</sup> Though there is debate within Māoridom as to the ethics of Māori business making money from the imprisonment of their own people, with Māori comprising 50 per cent of our total national prison roll.

statement of fact. The New Zealand Census, in which participants are asked to self-identify their ethnic grouping with which they identify, gives an interesting snapshot of the multicultural and ethnically diverse nature of New Zealand society. The most recent census figures from 2006 (67.6% European; 14.6 % Māori; 10% Other; Asian 9.2%; 6.9% Pacific Peoples) are interesting in a number of respects.

While 'New Zealand European' continues to be the country's largest individual ethnic group, the number and proportion of people identifying with this group had decreased since the 2001 Census, due largely to the introduction in the 2006 Census of a new category, 'New Zealander', within the 'Other' category. Accordingly, in 2006, those who identified themselves as 'New Zealand European' dropped by 11.7 per cent from 2001 figures, while 429,429 of 430,881 people who identified themselves in the 'Other Ethnicity' category, identified themselves as 'New Zealanders'. Interestingly, of those who identified themselves in this new 'New Zealanders' category, 12.9 per cent identified themselves with at least one other ethnic group. This shift towards a more complex, almost hybrid understanding of cultural ethnicity, was also an overall trend, with 10.4 per cent of all people identifying themselves with more than one ethnic group (up from 9 per cent in 2001).

### **Religious affiliation**

Corresponding to an increasing number of New Zealanders whose identity is non-European, is the changing nature of religious affiliation within New Zealand society. Over the last forty years there has been a steady decline in those who identify themselves as 'Christian', while at the same time an increase in other religious affiliations and enormous growth in those who identify themselves as having 'no religion'. The percentage of New Zealanders who affiliate to the Christian religion (including Māori expressions of Christianity such as Ratana and Ringatu) has dropped steadily from 71% in 1991 to 65.2% in 1996, 60.6% in 2001 and down to 55.6% in 2006. Meanwhile there has been major growth in those who identify themselves religiously as Hindu, Buddhist, Muslim, Jewish or Sikh. From comprising only 0.31 per cent of New Zealand's population in 1966 and 0.64 per cent in 1986, increased migration from Asia, Africa, the Middle East and the Pacific during the last quarter century has led now to 4.12 per cent affiliating themselves with these religions in the 2006 Census. So too, the number and proportion of people indicating that they had 'no religion' has continued to increase in the 2006 Census. In 2006, 1,297,104 people (34.7 per cent) stated that they had no religion,

compared with 1,028,052 people (29.6 per cent) in the 2001 Census. Again this is a dramatic increase from 1986 (16.36 per cent) and 1966 (1.22 per cent).

Many see such statistics as evidence of New Zealand becoming less and less a 'Christian' country and decry the growing secularisation of New Zealand society. But what does it mean to refer to New Zealand as a 'Christian' country? How does one define 'Christian'? Does one's ethnicity determine one's religious affiliation? Does being of European descent make one 'Christian'? Throughout history, Christians have railed against a culturally-bounded understanding of Christian faith, recognising that while expressed through cultures, the gospel transcends cultural boundaries and that faith is determined not by one's ethnicity, but by the response of the individual to grace with faithful obedience. The reality is that the decline of those in New Zealand who identify themselves as 'Christian' is simply the result of the declining proportion of Europeans within New Zealand's population.<sup>5</sup>

Even if concerns over the declining 'Christian' identification are misplaced, the changing composition of New Zealand's society does raise important questions with regard to immigration. Do we want to maintain our current population growth rate of approximately 1.4 per cent per year or, bearing in mind the stimulus of population growth to economic growth, do we want to actively encourage higher levels of immigration? Can population growth be maintained while still safeguarding our environment from further damage? Are there particular backgrounds, skills and levels of equity that we want immigrants to have, or are all welcome? What about asylum seeker and refugees? Do such people pose potential security risks or should we lift our annual UNHCR quota?

Certainly over recent years concerns have been raised both with specific asylum seeker cases and in general with the new wave of non-European immigrants. But does this new wave of non-European immigrants without a 'Christian' tradition have to be seen as a threat? If the commission for Christians is to be witnesses to the good news of Jesus to 'Judea, Samaria and the ends of the earth' (Acts1:8),

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<sup>5</sup> Two important points need to be made here. Firstly, for those who do lament the declining 'Christian' affiliation it is important to recognise that while Census data provide a guide to an individual's religious identification they do not measure their practice, adherence or attendance in worship. In this sense, the 'Christian' Census data simply records those who 'culturally' identify themselves with the 'Christian' tradition. While exact figures are debated, we know that only 10-15 per cent of New Zealanders regularly (once a month) attend a Christian church service. Secondly, the number of people identifying themselves as 'Christian' has remained constant - around the 2 million mark - since 1966. The decline of Christians as a proportion of the population is both indicative of the immigrants who have arrived in New Zealand during the latest decades, but could also arguably be seen as an indictment on the Church's failure to engage in effective evangelisation.

should it not be the case that we celebrate ‘the ends of the earth’ coming to us? The Bible is full of ethical instructions to believers to offer hospitality and welcome to strangers from other cultures (Lev. 19:33-34; Deut. 10:19; Heb. 13:2; Rom. 12:13). Indeed, if, as some theologians contend, hospitality is one of the defining Christian ethical practices, then could it not be the case that the influx of people from all around the globe rather than being a threat provides us with a wonderful opportunity?

Nor is this action of hospitality a one-way relationship of charity. Prominent biblical stories remind us that it is the stranger, the one of different ethnicity and culture who often plays an integral part in God’s purposes, being used to bring blessing and redemption to the people and societies of the new land to which they migrate.<sup>6</sup> Genuine hospitality, therefore, as with our unique treaty partnership, necessitates a relationship of mutual reciprocity in which both parties give and receive from one another.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, these shared elements of partnership and welcoming also appear to resonate with New Zealanders. ‘Welcome Home’, the lead single from Dave Dobbyn’s 2005 album *Available Light* – a song inspired by an anti-racism march in Christchurch – won Dobbyn the songwriter of the year award at that year’s New Zealand Music Awards. The song has quickly become something of a patriotic anthem, played as the bodies of the Air New Zealand pilots killed in the Airbus crash were returned home, at the Christchurch Earthquake Memorial Service and other civic occasions. The music video comprises footage of Dobbyn walking down Mt Albert Road – one of the most ethnically diverse areas of Auckland, itself one of the world’s most ethnically diverse cities – greeting those he is passing. Interspersed with the footage of Dobbyn are images of the multicultural make-up of New Zealand – Indian shop owners, Polynesian factory workers, Chinese gymnasts, South African families and Algerian Muslim asylum-seeker Ahmed Zaoui surrounded by the Dominican brothers who hosted him on his release from prison – all while Dobbyn makes clear his sentiments singing ‘Keep it coming now – keep on coming now’. A prominent image in the video is the Kotahitanga flag – declaring our unity and the video ends with a written statement containing a fact and a prayer: ‘We come from everywhere. Speak peace and welcome home. Dave’. Is the popularity of Dobbyn’s song evidence that he has tapped into a shared aspect of

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<sup>6</sup> One need only think of Joseph in Egypt, (Gen. 37-50); Ruth the Moabitees (Ruth) and in the gospels, the Samaritan woman (John 4:1-42) and the Demon-Possessed Gentile man (Mark 5:1-20, Luke 8:26-39).

our identity and a common dream we together hold? What might it mean for Christians to foster this dream, to speak peace and provide welcome?

### **New Zealanders as Sojourners**

According to Census 2006 data, the number and proportion of people who were born overseas and are now living in New Zealand has continued to increase – from 17.5 per cent in 1991, to 19.5 per cent in 2001 and to 22.9 per cent (or 879,543 people) in 2006. Nor is the multi-cultural diversity of contemporary New Zealand society due solely to the influx of immigrants from overseas. While distant and isolated from the rest of the world, New Zealanders have always been well-travelled. The question for most New Zealanders is not whether one will head overseas, but when, and for how long.

It is estimated that 600,000 who identify themselves as New Zealanders live in other parts of the world (477,000 of these in our nearest neighbour, Australia). On any given day there are 80,000 New Zealanders who are on short-term travel outside the country, while 45,000 annually leave on a permanent long-term basis. The traditional OE, undertaken between the ages of 18-30, is something of a rite of passage. In recent years politicians have gained headlines by making statements about the 'brain-drain', but the fact is that each year 24,000 New Zealanders who have been overseas on a permanent or long term basis return to New Zealand, often with new families drawn from different countries and cultures. Meanwhile, the arrival of new immigrants off-sets the loss of New Zealanders choosing to stay overseas permanently and ensures a slow but gradual population growth.

With the highest rate per capita of both immigration and emigration, New Zealand is unique amongst OECD countries. But should this surprise us? From the earliest Polynesians who arrived 800-1,200 years ago on epic ocean waka, navigating by the stars, through to those of European descent enduring eight months of travel on crammed sailing ships, through to those today who disembark jet-planes, New Zealanders have all undertaken a brave 'migration' to the ends of the earth. Could it be that another element of our shared identity is our character as sojourners?

### **Conclusion**

Ultimately, we have suggested that perhaps three of the defining elements of a New Zealander identity are our commitment to partnership, our warm hospitable welcome to others and our sojourning spirit. These cultural traits, borne out of our shared history and experiences, resonate strongly with the biblical story, and are

particularly evident in the life of the Patriarch Abraham. Called to leave his homeland in Ur, Abraham leaves with his family and heads in search of a promised land. Arriving in Canaan, Abraham's life is marked by the relationships of mutuality he forms with the *tāngata whenua* – in which gifts and blessings are given and received (Gen. 14) – his welcome and hosting of strangers (Gen. 18:1-15) and his desire for the protection and prospering of his neighbours (Gen. 18:16-19:29). Could it be that Abraham's life, lived in response to God's promise to bless others through him, offers a model of faithful citizenship that contemporary Christians may learn from and emulate?

Undoubtedly, as we move towards a general election attention will be brought to bear on contentious issues such as Treaty settlements, race-relations, and immigration and emigration figures. As Christians, part of the global church with brothers and sisters in Christ drawn from every nation, tribe, people and language, we bring a distinctive perspective to the debate. For Christians, to live as 'aliens and strangers' does not mean an abandonment of the world and society of which we are a part. Rather, our lives should be lived to be a blessing to others and in such a way that others will glorify God (1 Peter 2:11-12). In what ways could the kingdom values of partnership, hospitality and sojourning, integral to Christian identity, but also perhaps our shared identity as New Zealanders, be lived out in our lives both individually and corporately? How may our lives as sojourning Christians, with a particular commitment to partnership and hospitality contribute to a more peaceful, stable and prosperous society?