

The Hope of Justice



"Here is my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen one in whom I delight; I will put my Spirit on him and he will bring justice to the nations." (Isaiah 42:1)

Amnesty Letter Writing for Lent

March 6—April 24 there will be weekly opportunities for you to speak up for the voiceless. Look for the Amnesty table every Sunday after the morning service to take one small step in bringing justice to the nations.

OSJ

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Social Justice News for Redeemer CRC Members

For me - and perhaps for you - the words of Isaiah 42:1 are more difficult than they seem. I can have a hard time seeing God's image in people not from my group - strangers, aliens. I resist looking for our shared humanity (much less the face of Jesus) in people who threaten my status or in those who evoke vague fear.

To treat my child, my family, or my friend with justice and kindness requires little effort. To see them left out, ignored, or treated unfairly by others brings my indignant intervention. To insist they be treated with dignity and equality especially by those with power is deeply rooted in my human nature.

To treat a stranger, an alien, or a prisoner with justice and kindness - and to stand up with them against the powerful in the public square requires a little more calculation. Still, we are often able to do so - if the cost is not too great.

But when I am confronted with a *requirement* for justice - a *claim* on me and on society from one of God's creatures who *insists* on their due portion of dignity and justice, my defences rise up.

In short, I am good at generosity but lousy at letting justice roll down over me; capable of condescending love but in need of God's power to accept and act on His requirement of fairness and justice for all no matter whose family they come from or how I may feel about them.

If you are a little like me, perhaps we must learn that we have no higher status in God's eyes than anyone else. Yes, we are special, unique, deeply loved. But we are no better, no worse, no more deserving than anyone else. We need a daily reminder that: "...all have sinned and fall short of God's glory" (Romans 3:23); "...we are saved by grace and not because we are entitled..." (Ephesians 2:8); "...God is patient with us, not wanting anyone to perish..." (II Peter 3:9).

In the end, the vision of God's desire for human kind His peaceable kingdom is evoked in Micah 4:4, and it is one of pure social justice: "Every man (family) will sit under his own vine and under his own fig tree, and no one will make them afraid, for the Lord Almighty has spoken."

Being an advocate for true justice in our communities and our world means knowing I am infinitely valuable in God's eyes and so are you -- and him -- and her. It means that *no one* not terrorists, arms dealers, child abusers, widows, street kids, orphans, Muslims *no one* has less value to God than any other. It means acting in the faith that His victory over evil is both necessary and sufficient to bring restoration and justice to all and for all.

And it means some very practical things about we think and act and live out our faith. It means that in the US and Canada we insist on immigration systems that treat all human beings as images of God with inherent rights and dignity. It means we insist on goals for development and poverty reduction that empower the poor as individuals loved God rather than faceless statistics.

Our hope is in a God whose amazing act of Grace restored the possibility of a just and righteous world. My personal hope and perhaps yours is that we in His Church be given a small portion of this grace and power to act out the radical message that in God's kingdom there is justice and peace *for all*.

Peter Vander Meulen serves as the Coordinator for the Office of Social Justice

Today, at work, on the bus, or in a public place, focus on one person who seems completely average and unremarkable to you. Pay attention to them for a few minutes. As you do so, reflect on the reality that God has intentionally created this person and cares for him or her. Can you see God's image in this person? Is it OK that this person has equal value in God's eyes? Then spend a moment asking God to fill his or her life with truly good things.



Kairos & Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA)

As many of you are aware, KAIROS has been at the centre of hundreds of national news stories over the last week. If you weren't aware, please visit <http://www.kairoscanada.org/en/who-we-are/cida-funding-cuts/> Many supporters and church members have contacted KAIROS, asking how they can be supportive and expressing a wish to contact their Member of Parliament about the Government of Canada's handling of the KAIROS' 2009-2013 CIDA application. On behalf of our Southern partners and KAIROS, we thank you for your solidarity and support during this challenging time.

Key Issues

- 1) **KAIROS and our 23 partners in some of the world's poorest and most violent regions remain without stable funding** because of the Minister's rejection of our CIDA proposal. Our partners have experienced the dramatic impact of the Minister's rejection of funding. For the most part our partners are small peoples' organizations. Some staff are having to continue their work as volunteers, some partners are having difficulty with operating essentials such as rent, and important life saving programs have been scaled back or put on hold. Without CIDA funding, KAIROS was only able to send 16% of what we would have sent with CIDA support.
- 2) **KAIROS is effective and gets results.** Access to information requests show that the experts throughout CIDA as well as in embassy posts around the globe attested to the strength of the KAIROS proposal. An independent evaluator (February 2009) spoke about excellence and effectiveness in our work. She reported on "positive and measurable progress towards the achievement of the results at the output, outcome and impact levels." CIDA recommended us for funding because our application not only met but exceeded CIDA criteria.
- 3) **Our re-application has been before CIDA and the government for one year this March**, with no resolution. KAIROS re-applied to CIDA in March 2010, encouraged by numerous government communications and the advice of many Members of Parliament.
- 4) **KAIROS and its member churches have two profound concerns: The state of democracy and transparency in Canada, and the direction being taken by CIDA and Canada's foreign aid.**

The KAIROS situation raises major questions about transparency and accountability in government decision-making. The issue is not the Minister's right to make the decision around funding, but her responsibility to act fairly and provide a clear rationale. When the Minister rejects the advice of her international development experts, appearing to take partisan, political advice instead, there are significant issues raised about the politicization of aid. We believe there needs to be a new debate about the direction of international development aid in Canada, a direction that must include effective and efficient people-to-people aid that addresses the root cause of poverty and war.

March

International Women's Day (8)
International Day for the Elimination of
Discrimination (21)
World Water Day (22)
Earth Hour (26)

"There is no theological reflection that does not take place in God's vulnerable world and in the midst of the joy and suffering of ordinary people. In the past year experience has reinforced his conviction that the churches are "called to be one" in their faith but also in their action on behalf of a just peace with dignity for all. "We are called to address those in power," he said, and to challenge world leaders "to listen to the cry for justice and for a better common future.

*Rev. Dr Olav Fykse Tveit
World Council of Churches*

Articles in this newsletter excerpted from "**The Advocate**" a paper and portal serving Christian Reformed social activists by the Office of Social Justice and Hunger Action of the CRC: www.crcjustice.org and **Kairos Times**, a monthly e-newsletter of KAIROS, the social justice organisation of eleven Canadian churches and church agencies. www.kairoscanada.org and of Citizens for Public Justice (CPJ)'s monthly newsletter **OLA** <http://cpj.ca/index.html> and the **Mobile Justice Newsletter** of the Committee for Contact with the Government (CCG) http://www.crcna.org/pages/ccg_mobilejustice.cfm

CRC Justice Seekers

let justice roll on like a river
JusticeSeekers.ning.com is an online community for Christian Reformed folks to discuss, inform, and share their thoughts on justice with others in the denomination.
<http://justiceseekers.ning.com/groups>

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