



Waitangi Day
Rev Dr David V Williams
Isaiah 42:1-9
Luke 2: 9-14
Year B Ordinary 6
11 February 2024

- The sentence, collect and first reading are from Second Isaiah (chapters 40–66), which were written about 538 BC after the experience of the Exile in Babylon. The prophet’s disciples write of a ‘covenant people’ with a calling to ‘make justice shine on the nations’, and ‘to open eyes that are blind’.
- The theme of covenant relationships has featured on numerous occasions in the trifecta of hui at Tūrangawaewae, Rātana and Waitangi that have drawn many thousands of people over the last three weeks to discuss the state of the relationships between tangata whenua, tangata tiriti and the new three taniwha coalition government. I was privileged to hear some of the kōrero at two of those events. How very different the kōrero was at these hui compared to the chants and slogans of hui at Waitangi when I was first engaged with these issues in the 1970s. “The Treaty is a Fraud.”
- The gospel reading was from the Gospel of St Luke. St Luke’s gospel has a special place in New Zealand history from the gift of CMS missionary Alfred Brown to a young woman Tarore of Waharoa, and then by a circuitous journey that led to the mission of Tamihana Te Rauparaha and Matene Te Whiwhi as apostles of peace to places in Te Wai Pounamu/South Island which had been terrorised by war parties led by their father and uncle Te Rauparaha a generation earlier.

The gospel reading concluded with the angelic proclamation famous throughout Aotearoa as the three-feathered raukura of the Parihaka resistance movement in Taranaki:

He whaikororia ki te Atua i runga rawa

Glory to God on high

He maungarongo ki runga i te mata o te whenua

Peace on earth

He whakaaro pai ki te tangata

Goodwill to all people

- So, what might be the response of people in this congregation (and online participants) to these scriptural readings and to recent hui about the Treaty of Waitangi in our land?
- I would like to share some insights from an exciting Wānanga Symposium that I attended at Waitangi 16-19 November last year. The event was put on by a number of organisations including Laidlaw College, St John's College, Karuwā Trust and the NZ Church Missionary Society
:https://www.laidlaw.ac.nz/events/w%C4%81nanga-symposium/
- Alistair Reese, a farmer and elder/public theologian of Karuwā Trust, sponsored me to attend, for which I am most grateful. Alistair was the preacher at the Dawn Service at Waitangi on Waitangi Day this week.
- The mission statement of Karuwā Trust reads: "Karuwā seek to engage Aotearoa New Zealand in a conversation about identity and history in order to help people know the story they are a part of." The founders include a number of direct descendants of Rev Henry Williams/Te Wiremu Karuwā [the four-eyes Williams]. Dr Samuel Carpenter is one of them and he was a key person in calling together at Waitangi last year a wide range of theologians, historians, bishops, priests and people passionate about identity and history in Aotearoa.
- At Waitangi every year for about the last 15 years Karuwā people have camped at the lower marae, cleaned toilets and washed dishes to assist the tangata whenua of Te Tii marae in hosting those who come for most of a week every February. In the evenings they meet to discuss and to engage with the issues that Waitangi throws up each year. The people who gather are younger than this congregation – most of them under 35, and most of them from pentecostal and evangelical backgrounds with a desire to serve, to learn and to worship.
- One of the main takeaways for me from last November's Wānanga Symposium was a strong sense of a new willingness by participants to reclaim aspects of the inheritance of Henry Williams, and other 19th century missionaries in New Zealand. For many years there has been serious doubt and shame felt by many Christians about the early missionaries for their role in He Whakaputanga Declaration of Independence 1835 and Te Tiriti o Waitangi 1840. If the English text from 1840 indeed was a deliberate mistranslation by missionaries of Te Tiriti, then the Treaty was indeed a fraud, and the missionaries were deceitful men and women. And based on a seminal article by the historian Ruth Ross, published in 1973, that deeply negative

assessment of the role of missionaries in promoting Te Tiriti has long been standard orthodoxy both in academic circles and in popular perceptions.

- One thing Ruth Ross certainly got right was the primacy and paramountcy of Te Tiriti o Waitangi in te reo Māori as the language of all Treaty hui. But recent academic research on the English text of the Treaty of Waitangi has been a major reason for this renewed willingness by Karuwā, and many others, to engage more deeply with the history of the Treaty and the protective of Māori approach taken by the many missionaries who participated in hui all around these islands from February to September 1840 when about 550 rangatira from many hapū adhered to Te Tiriti o Waitangi.
- Dr Ned Fletcher's *The English Text of the Treaty of Waitangi*: <https://www.bwb.co.nz/books/the-english-text-of-the-treaty-of-waitangi/> has been a huge contribution to this reassessment of the Treaty text in English. It was my great privilege to have been the primary supervisor of the PhD thesis upon which this book was based. Ned agrees with the now orthodox position that te Tiriti o Waitangi in te reo Māori (the version signed by most rangatira) holds precedence over the English-language Treaty. But he disagrees that the two documents contradict one another. Instead, he daringly concludes that as at 1840 and the imperial context at that time, 'sovereignty' in the English text meant sovereign authority solely over British settlers, and therefore it is reconcilable with the guarantees to Māori of continued tino rangatiratanga. He finds this conclusion more hopeful than thinking the Treaty texts and te Tiriti are incompatible due to skulduggery. That conclusion "bases the nation on rotten foundations".
- So, the challenge for all of us now, especially in the light of events since the new government was formed last year, is to seek pathways towards firm foundations, not rotten foundations, for the constitution of this nation based explicitly on a good faith application of the Treaty to governance of peoples of this land now. We as covenant people are called, by the scriptural readings we heard just now, to seek such pathways. We are most particularly called to do that because there were three parties present at almost every hui to adhere to Te Tiriti o Waitangi. There were the rangatira of hapū, there were Crown officials, and thirdly there were missionaries at almost every one of the 39 Treaty-signing hui in 1840. Missionaries were often formal witnesses who signed the nine copies taken to those 39 locations. So, in 2024 we ought not to be bystanders as Crown ministers receive challenges from Māori orators, and from flag-waving and waiata-singing protestors. We have a duty to engage, each in our own way.

- One instance of engagement in covenant calling by our Anglican Church comes to fruition at dawn, 5.30 am on 21 February – in 10 days time. A ceremony will take place at the most infamous battle site of the Waikato Wars in 1864. The Church has bought land at Rangioawhia and, on this 160th anniversary of that battle, the land will be gifted to Ngāti Apakura, the hapū for whom the land is ancestral land despite the confiscations that took place after those battles. I will be there along with my friend Vivian Hutchinson who is a direct descendant of an Irish sergeant who was an imperial soldier in those Waikato battles.
- Another personal response to my attendance at the Wānanga Symposium arises from a talk by Bradford Haami, te reo teacher at Laidlaw College. He spoke about the missionary William Colenso and Māori Christianity in Hawkes Bay. He provided whakapapa evidence from 1889 linking himself to Waikopiro, a block of land south of Takapau and Ormondville in southern Hawkes Bay which Colenso walked through on a number of occasions. That is precisely where my grandfather and my father farmed, and where I was supposed to become the next Williams farmer on a farm called Hutiwai. On Hutiwai is a pā site all of whose inhabitants except one young woman were killed in inter-tribal warfare in the 1820s. My grandfather was a ‘landless labourer’ who won a Liberal Government ballot to farm this block of bush land in the 1890s. When he opened up the bush land as farm land, he interred human remains in a swamp below the pā of a number of those who had died those decades earlier. He also collected some pounamu and stone taonga that were lying nearby. Since then, these taonga have been kept in a glass covered box at home by my grandfather, my father and then my brother. After this talk by Bradford Haami, my brother and I have agreed that these taonga have never belonged to us as our own property. Their provenance is clear. Through the good offices of Bradford, we are now arranging to restore the taonga to hapū of Rangitāne o Tamaki nui-ā-Rua, the iwi for whom Waikopira was and is their ancestral land.
- As this morning’s collect bids us: ‘God of covenant and calling, you bind us together; keep us faithful to our calling and true to our promises. Amen.’