



## **Restorative Justice – Accountability and a fresh start.**

*Jim Consedine, a prison chaplain for 23 years, explains why the modern prison system is just warehousing the poor and urges that we take a fresh approach to dealing with those who offend. Below is attached brief exerts on his major points around a reformation of the prison system in New Zealand.*

Widespread use of imprisonment for crime is a reasonably recent phenomenon. Christians, notably the Quakers, promoted prisons in the late 18th century as a merciful reform of the excessive punishments that were being inflicted on offenders. The imprisonment of the worst offenders was intended to be a more humane way of dealing with criminals. The “prison” was modelled on a medieval monk’s cell. There the offender was expected to meditate on the crime and be reformed through solitude, work and penance, thus the name “penitentiary”.

Today more than 9 million people are in prisons around the world. In May 2016 New Zealand had 9,500 men and women imprisoned, considerably higher per capita than either Australia or Britain.

The poor continue to be over represented in prison populations. The profile of New Zealand inmates is male and mid-twenties. Three quarters of them are single, divorced or separated, two-thirds are beneficiaries and three-quarters are unemployed. Half the population has severe alcohol and/or drug problems and a half have had a psychiatric assessment. Half of them are from dysfunctional homes.

While those who have committed heinous crimes need to be imprisoned, many others do not. There are at least five alternative non-violent processes available. If they were better resourced and promoted properly they could reduce re-offending, help offenders take responsibility for their behaviour, produce healing for victims, make our communities safer and would be significantly less expensive.

Our understanding of crime - what it is and who does it - needs to undergo a paradigm shift. We can no longer settle for a punitive 19th century understanding to help us cope with 21st century advances which reveal the fundamental interconnection of all life on our planet and our relationships with one another.

We need an enormous effort now in New Zealand to change our criminal justice system. It is time to grapple with courage the complex social and global issues around crime and address offenders with more merciful, effective and transformative options than what is being offered now.

For the full article click [here](#)

## Introducing Boris Baptist – Project Officer



Recently, Boris Baptist was appointed as the Auckland based project officer for the Edmund Rice Justice Trust. Boris has been involved in the network over the past few years – he graduated from Liston College in 2014, is currently the treasurer on the executive committee for Edmund Rice Camps, and has been a regular member of the reflection group.

Boris is currently in his final year of study – a Bachelor of Commerce at the University of Auckland majoring in Accounting and Finance. As part of his role, Boris will be focusing on trust communications, ethical encounter events, street immersion programmes and acquiring funds for the work of the Trust. Boris will continue to be based at St Peter’s College thanks to the school’s continual generosity

## Post-Sentencing Restorative Justice: Labour Party

As part of our build up towards the election in September this year, we have asked the various parties involved in the election the same question: “What are your thoughts on post-sentencing restorative justice and is the program worthwhile or not.” Each month we will be including the response of one party – below is the response from Kelvin Davis, Labour Spokesperson for Corrections:

“We are very supportive of restorative justice generally. As a school principal we used it to great effect - as long as it was done properly. I haven't observed how it is done in the Justice sector, and my understanding is that there isn't a great uptake for post-sentencing restorative justice and i am not sure of the reasons. I suspect it is too intimidating for the victim to come face to face with the offender. Regardless, based on my observations of how we did it while I was still in education, when done well it is very effective and support its use in the Justice/ Corrections context.”

**“Mercy can open wounds and change history. Open your heart to mercy!”**

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