

23 April 2015

### **Moderator's message ANZAC Day 2015**

ANZAC Day 1915 is a very special day in our history. It is this day that has shaped us as a nation. It is this day that the stories are told and passed from one generation to the next. It is this day that all agree "must not happen again", and yet the cycle of history turns and each new generation must grapple with the issues of the present day. Lest we forget!

Last year I visited the Jerusalem memorial for over one million children who died in the Holocaust. Our guide asked, "Why did this happen?"

We must wrestle with the question of why. Lest we forget!

As Moderator I have commissioned the Rev Dr Tony Martin to write the following contribution. Tony served 16 years in the British Army as a regimental chaplain to the Parachute Regiment and as senior chaplain in Northern Ireland, Bosnia and Kosovo. He was senior chaplain of NATO ground forces at Allied Command Europe Rapid Reaction Corp based in Germany.

I commend his words to you for reflection on ANZAC Day.



Andrew Norton

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## **We remember our fallen**

On ANZAC Day 2015 we remember those who have lived and died in the service of our country. Our act of remembrance is particularly poignant this year because it commemorates 100 years of the fateful landing of our army on the shores of Gallipoli.

We will remember our fallen and all those who served sacrificially, men and women, at home and abroad. At dawn parades throughout New Zealand and the world, with quietness and reverent silence, New Zealanders will, before God, remember our fallen.

At Gallipoli, we remember the confusion of the landings, the terrifying exposure to enemy fire, the relief and victory that never came. And for those who survived Gallipoli an even sterner test awaited several months later, the battle of the Somme and Passchendaele. The simple mention of these place names, even today 100 years later, still have the power to evoke strong feelings mixed with sorrow and pride.

It is impossible to walk on the battlefields where our soldiers, sailors and airmen served and not be moved to the core of our being. Amidst the anguish and sorrow arises the simple question, why? What caused humanity to collapse into such wholesale slaughter? Questions I have no doubt the Kiwi, the Digger, the Tommy asked as they slugged it out. Today we remember our fallen and the great challenges which confronted them.

## **We remember our duty**

A significant passage of Scripture (1 Peter 2) reminds Christian men and women of their responsibility to uphold their civic duties.

*<sup>13</sup> Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every authority instituted among men: whether to the king, as the supreme authority, <sup>14</sup> or to governors, who are sent by him to punish those who do wrong and to commend those who do right...<sup>17</sup> Show proper respect to everyone: Love the brotherhood of believers, fear God, honour the king.*

Of course, Peter is assuming the authority he is exhorting us to respect, and indeed to submit to, is acting justly for the good of the whole. I accept it becomes a little more problematic for the Christian when the authorities are unjust.

For example, Reverend James Chisholm, who wrote the magnificent book, Fifty Years Syne commemorating the life and growth of Otago, alludes to this difficulty. The pioneering Scottish colonists of this province fled the Disruption in Scotland of 1843 because of Church and State conflict. Chisholm recalls the stirring voice of Andrew Melville from an earlier age who took a strong stand against the State when he addressed the King saying:

*"Sir, I must tell you there are two Kings and two Kingdoms in Scotland. There is King James, the head of the Commonwealth, and there is Jesus Christ, the head of the Church, whose subject James the VI is, and in whose Kingdom he is not a King, nor a lord, nor a head, but a member. We will yield you your place, and give you all due obedience, but again I say, you are not the head of the Church" (p26).*

There are times when Church and State are on a collision course and the Bible never exhorts us to submit and obey in every circumstance.

And of course, irrespective of one's spiritual allegiance, public debate on matters of defence and foreign policy is fundamental to a healthy democracy. In this light it is so heartening to see the strong public debate on the Government's recent decision to deploy troops to Northern Iraq. It is not soldiers, sailors and airmen who go to war but it is the nation; our military are the instruments of political decisions. And the Church and Christian people have a vital and rightful place in any national debate on war and peace.

On ANZAC Day we also remember our duty: to support and honour good government, to engage in public debate on vital issues, to show devotion to duty, courage and sacrifice, which will include for some the profession of arms.

### **We remember the Lord**

Here in this beautiful land of New Zealand do we not marvel at the beauty of creation, noted particularly in the change of seasons? Or in the clear still night, look upward to the extraordinary display of planets, stars and galaxies? Our eyes must now lift from our fallen, and ourselves, to God our Creator who is eternal and almighty.

<sup>21</sup> *Do you not know?*

*Have you not heard?*

*Has it not been told you from the beginning?*

*Have you not understood since the earth was founded?*

<sup>25</sup> *“To whom will you compare me?*

*Or who is my equal?” says the Holy One.*

<sup>26</sup> *Lift your eyes and look to the heavens. (Isaiah 40)*

Nations rise and fall. Tyrants come and go. But it is my absolute conviction that if we live by God's law, are ruled by God's love, and trust God for our very lives, the Lord will come from eternity into time, from the realms of glory, and to the agony of the battlefield.

On ANZAC morning 2015 let us remember our fallen, remember our duty, and remember the Lord.

- Rev Dr Tony Martin