

**“Tūrangawaewae: Whānau wellbeing for all”**  
**Authors: Dr Lily George, Paul Gilberd, Anthea Napier, Rev’d Dr Paul Reynolds, Rev’d Jolyon White**  
**Anglican Church in Aotearoa, New Zealand, and Polynesia**

---

*For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.... Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.*  
(Matthew, Ch. 25, V. 35-36, 40)

Central to this article is the premise that **we do not have a housing crisis, we have a crisis affecting whānau wellbeing**. Housing is just one of the many factors that impact whānau health and wellbeing. The complexity of whānau wellbeing is clearly apparent in the scripture in Matthew, Chapter 25 – it is about having enough good food, quality and warm housing, and enough money to survive and thrive in life. It is about being well, physically, mentally, spiritually and emotionally, and caring for those in need – a society of compassion and care. It is about having purpose and worth and knowing our identity, rather than the fast-track to imprisonment that is mapped out for too many in our society of punishment. It is about truly loving our neighbour and ourselves.

A Church Leaders statement delivered to the Prime Minister in May 2017 outlines the faith communities focus on housing:

As church leaders, we share a vision of fairness, wholeness of life and commitment to the common good along with New Zealanders across all faiths and cultures. Secure housing is central to this vision and essential for people’s wellbeing. We believe it is the responsibility of Government to ensure the wealth and resources of Aotearoa New Zealand are shared justly and fairly. Ensuring all citizens can access safe and affordable housing – whether as renters or home owners – is a critical way to maintain our collective health and prosperity.<sup>1</sup>

To answer the current housing crisis requires a change in perspective from one that focuses on physical and financial aspects of ‘housing’, to one that acknowledges and seeks to answer the larger problems of deprivation, marginalisation and inequality. This paper offers the Māori concept of ‘tūrangawaewae’ as a useful way in which to understand the ‘housing crisis’ in New Zealand. The elements of tūrangawaewae are defined well in a recent Te Runanganui motion, wholeheartedly supported by all five Amorangi (Māori

---

<sup>1</sup> See Anglican Taonga website article, “Safe and Affordable Housing for all,” <http://www.anglicantaonga.org.nz/Features/Social-Justice/housing-may17>.

Anglican Diocese in New Zealand) at its biennial Synod meeting in Nelson in September 2017:

We uphold the centrality of tūrangawaewae as the foundation for whānau life. It is the space that gives us the best opportunity and environment from which to learn, grow and contribute. It is essential for the wellbeing of our tamariki (children), whānau (family) and ngā uri whakatipu (future generations). Tūrangawaewae creates accountability for ensuring resilience and living sustainably in balance with the world and others. At present our tūrangawaewae is under threat, whether it be from child poverty, homelessness, climate change or the ongoing marginalisation of our reo (language) and mana Māori motuhake. We encourage all political parties to review their policies and aspirations to ensure tūrangawaewae is upheld and enhanced in this land.<sup>2</sup>

Outspoken critics on homelessness and housing, Professor Philippa Howden-Chapman (Professor of Public Health, University of Otago) and Major Campbell Roberts from the Salvation Army, stated at a recent conference<sup>3</sup> that there has been a massive market and government failure in the current housing crisis. Marama Davidson from the Green Party identified three steps we need to agree on to resolve our present housing crisis in New Zealand: 1) that everyone deserves a warm, safe and affordable house; 2) to acknowledge that there actually is a housing crisis; and 3) to make a commitment to end homelessness for the next generation. What exacerbates the problem is that, despite political posturing, we do not currently have a national social housing/affordable housing plan to resolve this issue.

To understand the critical housing situation in New Zealand it is important to understand the housing 'continuum'. At one end is homelessness, and as one moves from homelessness along the continuum the next step is usually social rental housing. This segment is dominated by Housing New Zealand and the Crown monopoly. There are however faith-based and community housing providers (CHPs) that operate across homelessness and the social rental space also. The next step along the continuum is affordable housing. The New Zealand Housing Foundation offers affordable housing, where low-income households are offered financial and other support to have the opportunity to own a home. At the other end of the continuum is the open market with private home ownership.

Paul Gilberd from the New Zealand Housing Foundation identifies the key problem in housing in New Zealand:

Homelessness is a serious and highly visible problem. But it is a small problem when compared to the largely invisible and massive problem of

---

<sup>2</sup> See Anglican *Taonga* website article, "Te Runanganui on tūrangawaewae," <http://www.anglicantaonga.org.nz/News/Tikanga-Maori/Turangawaewae>.

<sup>3</sup> Community Housing Aotearoa Conference, "Building our Place: The impact conference," held at Te Papa, Wellington, 7 – 9 June 2017.

low-income households living in overcrowded, unhealthy houses (social rental and private rental)....The Housing system (continuum) is like all of God's creations, it is a system. Everything is connected. I would argue that the biggest blockage and failure in the system at present is the availability of stable, secure, affordable housing for low-income households.<sup>4</sup>

Hurimoana Nui Dennis from Te Puea Memorial Marae in Auckland, made a profound statement at the Community Housing Conference stating that, "our people needed help, not homes."<sup>5</sup> In 2016 Te Puea Marae opened its doors to over 130 homeless families in Auckland, offering them shelter and care during the winter months. He noted that while it was easy to find a home in Auckland, homeless families required help for a variety of need areas, including family violence, drug/alcohol addictions, budgeting, illiteracy, bail conditions/prison, physical and mental ill health, suicidal ideation, child abuse, and prostitution. Dennis also noted however, that the biggest problem facing homeless whānau were the agencies they had to deal with, and their lack of ability to engage with these complex and multiple issues that whānau were facing. Te Puea Marae's solution was to bring all the social service agencies to the marae to engage with each whānau. What they managed to achieve was "re-plugging these people back into community."

An anecdotal example of the immediate impact of financial stress and the resulting fall-out is of a family who shifted from an unhealthy situation to the city where the father worked fulltime, and the mother part-time in order to be home for the tamariki after school. All was well until the father loses his job due to restructuring, which immediately impacts on the household income. The mum gets another part-time job, which means leaving the 11-year old daughter to take on responsibility for the home. Dad is unable to get another job, impacting on his self-esteem and confidence, eventually resulting in his becoming depressed, shifting his once quiet and gentle nature to one of frustration and aggression as a result of his sense of hopelessness. He becomes withdrawn and unwilling to accept help from anyone because he felt profoundly ashamed.

With their now-heavily constrained income, household bills become overwhelming; mum becomes unwell but because she works part-time she is not entitled to sick leave. Because the bills are not paid, the car is repossessed (which meant she could no longer easily get to work), the phone and power were eventually disconnected. Then a good friend of their son committed suicide. This had a significant impact on him and he disengaged from everything but his parents did not see this because of their own problems. The son eventually tried to commit suicide himself. The result was that the Police, mental health services, Child, Youth & Family, and other agencies were now involved in their lives. Within a few short months, the wellbeing of this whānau had disintegrated, losing the strength of a tūrangawaewae and all that entails.

---

<sup>4</sup> Personal communication with Paul Gilberd, New Zealand Housing Foundation, 7 April 2017.

<sup>5</sup> Community Housing Aotearoa Conference, "Building our Place: The impact conference," held at Te Papa, Wellington, 7 – 9 June 2017.

A large majority of whānau impacted by homelessness are Māori and Pacific Island people. For Māori in particular, the greatest factor impacting on whānau health and wellbeing (tūrangawaewae) are the effects of historical and intergenerational trauma. Maria Yellow Horse Braveheart was one of the first indigenous scholars to write about historical trauma and defines it as:

cumulative emotional and psychological wounding over the lifespan and across generations, emanating from massive group trauma experiences; the historical trauma response (HTR) is the constellation of features in reaction to this trauma.<sup>6</sup>

For Maori and Indigenous people worldwide, 'trauma' is seen as historical and intergenerational because of the lingering effects of colonisation, including land confiscation, loss of language and identity.<sup>7</sup> In contrasting it with previous trauma research frameworks, Wirihana and Smith consider that:

The historical trauma framework provided a means for indigenous peoples to conceptualise the generational effects of colonial oppression on well-being and offered a process for understanding how it exacerbates post- traumatic suffering.<sup>8</sup>

Wirihana and Smith explore how traditional Māori healing practices can be utilised to deal with the effects of historical trauma. In George, et., al's article, "Theories of historical trauma are utilised as a way in which to comprehend the history of incarceration, and further understanding of the socio-political processes that have led to the over-population of our prisons with Māori men, women and youth"<sup>9</sup>.

In New Zealand, the effects of historical and intergenerational trauma are evident in high rates of addiction, poor health, homelessness, incarceration, family breakdowns, violence, suicide, neglect, physical and sexual abuse, all of which are disproportionately high across Māori and Pacific whānau.

Society itself also has a potential role to play in ensuring Tūrangawaewae for everyone. Professor Girol Karacaoglu believes in a society of compassion, noting that if people were willing to accept lower returns on their investments for the broader good, this would be a significant platform for wellbeing. There *has* to be

---

<sup>6</sup> Brave Heart, MYH. (2003). The Historical Trauma response among Natives and its relationship with substance abuse: A Lakota illustration. *Journal of Psychoactive Drugs* 35(1). For more information and research on historical trauma please see the work of Professor Karina Walters, for example: <http://www.healingcollectivetrauma.com/karina-walters-embodiment-of-historical-trauma-and-micro-aggressions.html>.

<sup>7</sup> See, for example, Pihama, L., Reynolds, P., Smith, C., Reid, J., Smith, L.T., & Te Nana, R. (2014). Positioning Historical Trauma Theory within Aotearoa New Zealand. *AlterNative*, 10(3), 248-262.

<sup>8</sup> Wirihana, R., & Smith, C. (2014). Historical Trauma, healing and well-being in Māori communities. *MAI Journal*, 3(3), p. 198.

<sup>9</sup> George, L., Ngamu, E., Sidwell, M., Hauraki, M., Martin-Fletcher, N., Ripia, L., Davis, R., Ratima, P., & Wihongi, H. (2014). Narratives of suffering and hope: Historical trauma and contemporary rebuilding for Māori women with experiences of incarceration. *MAI Journal*, 3(3), p. 184.

a society of compassion if we truly wish to address these complex issues, of which the 'housing crisis' is just one. Additionally, David Rutherford believes there is a need for all political parties to work together to resolve this issue as it will not be resolved by any one party alone. He also acknowledged that to resolve the housing crisis and provide 'adequate' housing, it would take longer than any one party's term of office.<sup>10</sup>

The Anglican Church's social service agencies continue to be overwhelmed with requests for emergency housing. In order to be proactive in addressing the issues of housing and homelessness, in the lead-up to the New Zealand general election, the 'Tūrangawaewae' project was initiated by the Church's Social Justice Advisory Group to highlight that a home is far more than just a roof over one's head.<sup>11</sup> The goal of this project was twofold: (1) To develop a variety of church and community-led activities to highlight the importance of 'Tūrangawaewae' for everyone in New Zealand; and (2) To continue the focus on housing issues post-election by making housing one of its social justice priority areas, inviting specialists on housing to be advisors to the Church.

Theologically, Tūrangawaewae is about encountering God's love through the shared human experience of home, identity and belonging in the world. As noted by Rev Katene Eruera:

God's act of creation of the world (Te Aoturoa) is where humanity claims the gift of creation as its Tūrangawaewae. Human communities embody Tūrangawaewae, when they acknowledge and live out of God's blessing for humanity, in the flourishing of personal and communal well-being through creation. Thus, the embodiment of Tūrangawaewae begins in a community's vision of the world where God blesses humanity to do on earth as in heaven – to be loving, to be kind, to be just, to be merciful, to be forgiving – to be God's agents in the world....For a community to claim Tūrangawaewae gives concrete expression to a spirituality that seeks to love God and love neighbour in the world through its place, its peoples and its resources. Such is the nature and purpose of the gift of creation to all humanity.<sup>12</sup>

Tūrangawaewae is a concept that encapsulates the importance of a comfortable and safe home as a strong foundation, essential for well-being, and the greatest environment within which tamariki and whānau can grow. There is hope that when people are able to find a pathway to move along the housing continuum,

---

<sup>10</sup> Professor Karacaoglu (Head of the School of Government, University of Victoria, and past Chief Economist at the New Zealand Treasury) and David Rutherford (Human Rights Commissioner) were both speakers at the Community Housing Aotearoa Conference, "Building our Place: The impact conference," held at Te Papa, Wellington, 7 – 9 June 2017.

<sup>11</sup> See Anglican Church Social Justice website. Turangawaewae Resources; see <https://www.anglicansocialjustice.nz/resources?category=turangawaewae>.

<sup>12</sup> See Anglican Church Social Justice website, "A Theology of Tūrangawaewae." This 'Tūrangawaewae' theology was developed by Rev Katene Eruera, St. John's Theological College, for the Anglican Church. See <https://www.anglicansocialjustice.nz/resources/2017/8/21/a-theology-of-turangawaewae>

that this will provide a way forward from dependence to independence and dignity. This will be a transition from being supported to being part of the support network of community, all of which is enabled and supported by Tūrangawaewae.

Tūrangawaewae creates accountability, not just for the whānau nestled within that environment, but also for the people and community which surround that home. In some ways, the 'housing crisis' is least about the physical buildings used to house people, and most about the ways in which we – as individuals, families, communities and a society – seek to care for each other, acknowledging the ways in which some of us struggle to achieve well-being, and in committing to the shared obligation of resolving these challenges in order to claim dignity for all.

Embodied in Matthew 25 is the importance of a compassionate, caring and loving society that looks after those with the least, and the most deprived. Therefore, this is about dignity. This is about a human right.<sup>13</sup> This is about Tūrangawaewae, whānau wellbeing for all.

---

<sup>13</sup> The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 25 (1), The United Nations website, "Universal Declaration of Human Rights," see <http://www.un.org/en/universal-declaration-human-rights/>.