



**The Archbishops and Primates  
of Aotearoa, New Zealand and Polynesia**

The Standing Committee of the  
Anglican Community of Saint Mark  
*By email*

18 May 2026

*“Hearing that Jesus had silenced the Sadducees, the Pharisees got together. One of them, an expert in the law, tested him with this question: “Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?”*

*Jesus replied: “‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbour as yourself.’ Upon these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets.”*

*Matthew 22: 34-40*

**Tēnā koutou e te whānau o Māka Tapu i runga i te Ingoa a tō tātou Ariki a Ihu Karaiti.**

Dear brothers and sisters in the Anglican Community of Saint Mark. Grace and peace to you in the name of Jesus Christ.

We write in response to your letter of 5.35pm Friday 16 May 2026 raising concerns about our 2026 Easter Message, “Let Love Lead”.

Thank you for your letter, written with deep doctrinal conviction, evident faith, and a sincere concern for the integrity of the Gospel. In such a fractured age even the act of believers engaging one another deeply and respectfully across difference is itself a sign of grace. We receive your reflections in that spirit.

Our Easter Message was offered as a reflection for that moment in time. Our purpose was not to be doctrinally comprehensive or exhaustive in the context of one message. Instead, for that message we focused simply on the Christ who taught us to love and to care for the marginalised and the oppressed. We do believe that this is at the heart of the Gospel. We seek to offer messages that are accessible to a wider audience, both churchled and unchurchled, while staying true to the heart of the message of the Gospel. Your concerns seem to have misapprehended the purpose and scope of our message, but they deserve to be heard respectfully, nonetheless.

Our reference to Jesus Christ as “the teacher” draws on the Gospels and on our own liturgical practice. The Gospels themselves refer to Jesus in many ways. Each of these designations in the Gospel is worthy of a thousand sermons. To focus on one or the other for the sake of one message is not to deny the rest.

In the Gospels, Jesus was called a variation of *teacher* or *rabbi* many times, because that is part of who Jesus was. The Pharisee Nicodemus understood this (John 3:2). The disciples understood this (Mark 4:38). Even Jesus himself knew this and approved when he said, “*You call me Teacher and Lord, and*



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*rightly so, for that is what I am.*" (John 13:13). Mary Magdalene, who was the first to encounter the risen Christ in the Easter story in John 20, called him *Rabboni* which means *my Teacher*. A common introduction in our own liturgical tradition to the praying of the Lord's prayer is "*As Christ teaches us, we pray*".

Referring to Jesus as the teacher is not a denial of his divinity or of his death and resurrection. Rather, we believe that it is one of many ways that can help lead us closer to the heart of Jesus' own mission. The resurrected Christ is our teacher, and he teaches us still.

You have cautioned us against the use of an "oppressor-oppressed hermeneutic," by reminding us that according to Scripture all humanity stands under the power of sin and death. That too is true. But sin and death are not abstract. Scripture shows them to be part of a larger fabric within which we must engage with a prophetic imagination. The prophet Micah told us plainly what the Lord requires of us, "... *but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God.*" (Micah 6:8). This prophetic tradition reaches its fullness not away from Jesus, but in him.

Jesus did not merely teach abstract truths about sin and salvation. He moved among and healed lepers. He sat and dwelled and ate with outcasts. He defended women condemned by pious and condemning men. He proclaimed blessing upon the poor and judgement upon the powerful and corrupt. He announced, as you noted, that the Spirit was upon him and had anointed him "... *to proclaim good news to the poor, freedom to the captives, recovery of sight to the blind, to liberty those who are oppressed.*" (Luke 4:16-20).

This was not incidental to his mission. It was his mission. Indeed, it was precisely this embodiment of divine compassion that led him toward the cross.

The resurrection of Jesus is therefore not only a promise of personal forgiveness, wonderful though that is. It is also God's declaration that death, violence, empire, and hatred do not have final authority over all creation.

Resurrection is God's "No" to crucifixion systems.

And because Christ is risen, Christians are summoned not merely to await heaven, but to participate even now in God's restoration of the world. That is to feed the hungry, welcome the stranger, defend the vulnerable, comfort the broken-hearted, and refuse the easy way of condemnation and indifference.

We humbly believe, therefore, that an "oppressor-oppressed hermeneutic" is a Christ hermeneutic, because Christ himself taught it, and Christ himself lived it.

Lastly, we would gently reject the suggestion from you that our Easter message insufficiently connected a Christian understanding of love to the historic events of Easter. The point of difference may be that we spoke in a pastoral and narrative voice, rather than in a doctrinal and confessional one. Nonetheless, our message was a simple and accessible meditation on the connection between love and the events of Easter.

In our message we did not speak of love as an abstract moral principle in detachment from Easter. Rather, we spoke of Jesus moving toward the suffering, the marginalised, and the oppressed despite the danger such love provoked. We then spoke of his arrest, crucifixion, and resurrection as the decisive revelation that love is stronger than hatred and death.



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The historic events of Easter are not disconnected from the love that Christ taught and that we see in Christ's own ministry. Those things together are the source from which we believe Christian love should flow. And perhaps this belief is especially urgent in the historical moment into which we as Archbishops were speaking.

We must acknowledge that we live in a world where wars continue to consume innocent lives in Gaza, Ukraine, Sudan, and elsewhere. Entire peoples live beneath the terror of displacement and bombardment. Here in the moana of the South Pacific we live amidst a worsening climate crisis that threatens creation itself and falls most heavily upon the poor and vulnerable. Here in Aotearoa New Zealand many experience profound suffering and duress amid a cost-of-living crisis that leaves families struggling simply to survive, let alone hope for a better tomorrow.

And we also inhabit a national moment in which Māori communities and new immigrants experience renewed hostility, suspicion, degradation and diminishment. Political and public discourse increasingly treats compassion and kindness as weakness. Obligations to uphold Te Tiriti o Waitangi are now despised as inconvenient. Diversity itself is seen as a threat. Our social covenant has become strained. Fear and disinformation have become the main political currency.

It is precisely into this historical moment that our Hāhi must speak back with the language of Christ, which is the language of justice, equity, and divine love. The prophets never separated love of God from the treatment of neighbour. Nor did Jesus.

Our Hāhi then must do more than merely repeat that Christ is risen. We must show what resurrection looks like when lived and embodied by beloved communities shaped by the teachings and commandments of the crucified and risen Jesus.

For many people today, the credibility of the resurrection will be encountered less through doctrinal argument than through beloved communities that practice aroha instead of cruelty, manaakitanga instead of fear, and kotahitanga instead of indifference. Without the cross, love becomes abstraction.

Yet perhaps a deeper question before us is this: What does the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ reveal about the very nature of God? We believe that the Gospel answer is not merely that God saves. It is that God is love. Not love as vague affection or love as private spirituality detached from the suffering of the world, but love that enters history. Love that not only crosses the boundaries that divide us but defies them. Love that moves not away but toward the wounded to heal them. Love that stands not apart from but beside the marginalised. Love that refuses to abandon humanity even when humanity abandons itself.

Jesus did not arrive as a neutral force in a neutral world. He was born among an occupied people living beneath Roman domination. He walked and lived among the poor, the indebted, the grieving, the sick, the marginalised, and the despised. He moved among and dwelled with those others viewed as the untouchables. He sat and ate and fellowshiped with those that so-called religious leaders had condemned. He announced blessing upon the poor and pronounced warning to the powerful. He wept over Jerusalem. He healed minds and bodies no less than souls.

And when confronted with systems built upon fear, violence, exclusion, and religious self-protection, he did not withdraw into abstraction. He loved anyway.



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That love led him to the cross.

This is why we spoke as we did in our Easter message.

**Kia tau tonu ngā manaakitanga a te Atua kaha rawa ki a koutou.**

Ngā manaakitanga,



**Archbishop Don Tamihere**

Primate & Archbishop



**Archbishop Sione Ulu'ilakepa**

Primate & Archbishop



**Archbishop Justin Duckworth**

Primate & Archbishop



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