

One of the foundational texts of the Christian faith is the *Magnificat* (Luke 1:46-55). Its words both inspire and challenge us to seek what seems impossible. The chorus of a 'Canticle of the Turning' by Rory Cooney says it all: "My heart shall sing of the day you bring. Let the fires of your justice burn. Wipe away all tears, for the dawn draws near, and the world is about to turn."

In Cooney's interpretation, and in the traditional words, it is clear that Mary's anthem is a bold song of liberation, not easily spiritualized or softened. It always strikes me that those who would portray Mary as the submissive vessel have not fully absorbed Luke 1: 46-55. Yes, there is a humbleness, even meekness or lowliness, but this can be understood as more of a description of her social status than her personal qualities. Out of her marginalized place, the Mary of Luke's gospel sings of her deep confidence in the transforming power of God to turn the world upside down—the power of God to bring justice to all poor and oppressed. Her voice, as essentially the first disciple, is even stronger when contrast in the text to the male priest, Zechariah the father of John the Baptist who ends up silenced. He can no longer speak while she proclaims God's promise. So unsettling are her words for ruling powers that at least three times in this last century governments or militaries have banned the public reading or singing of this gospel truth.

It's a woman's song, first originating in the scriptures in the voice of Hannah in Samuel 1. Neither woman's voice is glib nor a product of naiveté, but rather the voice of marginalized women who see the world as it was and as it is, radically unequal, stratified, violent, and still claim the possibility of transformation. When Luke takes this song from the lips of Hannah and places it on the tongue of Mary, he asserts that the promise of liberation is not only an Exodus story, a story of Yahweh and the Hebrew people, but a commitment that is renewed in the ministry of Jesus.

I imagine that it was also our Saviour's lullaby. I imagine a mother and child scene. I am sure it was one of his favourites. "God has shown strength with his arm; he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts. God has brought down the powerful from their thrones, and lifted up the lowly" (Luke 1:51-52). When Jesus stands in the temple a few chapters later in Luke, beginning his public ministry with those words, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives..." (Luke 4:18), when he connects his ministry, his

identity, to the task of liberation, I wonder whether he had his mother's song in his ear.

The Magnificat is a woman's song of confidence that, yes, the world will turn, the world must turn. It's our Saviour's song of promise, that in Christ, the world can turn, is turning. And it's our song of hope, but also of challenge: what does it mean for us, people with privileges, securities that the lowly will be lifted up? Good news for the poor, but what does it mean for the comfortable?? What does generous welcome and radical inclusion mean for those of us who are comfortable in the way things are?

That's the thing about the turning. There's an open, unsettling, free falling time, when the old comes apart and the new has not quite established its place, when the temptation to hold on, to hold back, is there almost as much as the momentum towards the unknown future. Could this be a little bit where we are now as a community of faith? How do we live into the turning, or even throw our weight forward and help God's wheel to turn? How do we put our hopes in the dreams which are coming upon us, confident that God's liberation is ultimately good for us all? How do we work towards a future we cannot see, we just must believe?

Movements like Black Lives Matter, Extinction Rebellion are new profound revitalisation of the push towards a truly just society which means ever aspect which maintains the traditional tools of power and control in or societies is to be dismantled, turned to ways which bring true partnership, true mutuality across all peoples, genders race religion, sexual orientation. This turning largely led by the younger generations we pray is coming and it means we will turn to, we will unlearn deeply held prejudice and be open to the new, unhooking ourselves from ideas, assertions, ways of thinking that fail to serve a hopeful future.

There is much to be hopeful about. In my time in Taranaki, really engaging with local iwi in a most vulnerable and honest way. The earthquake brought Maori, nga tahu to the table in way we had not seen before, and we go on unlearning our old ways, being open to the new. In our church life we know that the while we respect our past, the future is beckon and we need to brave, brave ,brave trusting in this God of surprises to take us into whole new territory.

Can we move into the kind of open and fluid space where new insights and learning and possibility can take root?

For us at St Lukes and the Community of the Sacred Name – learn from what has gone before, what has nourished and what has got in way of the magnificat gospel. Can we be willing and **act towards hope**, lurching towards that future we can't yet see. Because we believe God is good – all the time! Let us put our shoulder to God's turning wheel here, turning into what we say we believe in action in how we embrace and engage with the city and its issues, minister to its needs, and live out the Magnificat of Mary.

The *Magnificat* is an anthem of shared hope, ancient women's' wisdom passed down, When I feel weary in our shared commitment to justice, when I feel scared and discouraged by unimaginable violence, whether in one day or over centuries, I claim the passion of Mary, of those whose confidence in the power of our transforming God knows no bounds. We are here to help each other live out the impossible change of the resurrected Christ. We are here to help each other hold on to the hope that is at the heart of reconciliation. We are here to help each other put shoulder to the wheel, turning hearts inside out and lives and worlds upside down, until God's dream of justice and peace is fulfilled, here and now. *Wipe away all tears, for the dawn draws near, and the world is about to turn.*