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Jenny and Mike Kelly

Dear Friends

This is the first of (I hope!) many newsletters composed expressly for lay people who identify themselves as lay Dominicans, or have an interest in the developing lay Dominican operation in Aotearoa-New Zealand.

Some people may comment that there is already an occasional newsletter sent by the Dominican Family Mission and Justice Committee. This committee comprises representatives of the Lay Dominicans, the Sisters and the Friars, ie the wider family of Dominicans – the friars in New Zealand belong to the Australian Dominican Friars Province of the Assumption, the sisters to the Dominican Sisters of Aotearoa-New Zealand, and the Lay Dominicans. We lay people have always felt comfortable within the wider family group. However, as time goes on, it has become clear that Lay Dominicans need to have their own identity, and seek to be recognised within the official Order of Preachers.

Mike Kelly (Te Awa Rongopai)



Following the advice of Fr David Kammler, formerly Promoter for the Laity, who visited New Zealand in February/March 2013, the DomConsult group began the process to seek recognition by the office of the Order of Preachers in Rome. The photo shows a meeting with David on his last day in Aotearoa New Zealand on 23 March 2013. The first task was to draw up a statement of who we are and what we seek. This statement is called a Charter.

DomConsult member Willie Campbell, from Dunedin, has written the following introduction to the Charter. Any feedback, comments etc are most welcome and should be sent to Willie, alafair@kinect.co.nz



Lay Dominican Charter | an introduction

For lay members of the Dominican family in Aotearoa, New Zealand

Background to the Charter document being circulated to groups for endorsement

Last year, Teresa McNamara circulated a document that set out suggested essential elements for our lay Dominican movement. Teresa and Norman Gray had drawn up the document after discussion with a number of lay Dominicans, and the Sisters and Friars on the Dominican Family Mission and Justice committee. This document was circulated to all and feedback called for. The present Charter is a development of that document by the members of Dom-Consult – the present Dominican lay leadership group – in line with the feedback received. We are very grateful for the comments that came in and a lot of hard work has gone into putting together a charter that is true to our movement but not setting out a whole lot of legal requirements.

We hope the Charter will be embraced by lay women and men who wish to be committed to the Dominican life and mission – alongside the Sisters and Friars and other members of the Dominican family.

The idea of developing something in the form of a charter came from fr David Kammler, former Friar Promoter for the Laity. He understood that we wanted to retain a reasonably flexible movement and did not want to take on the international rule of the Dominican laity, which is quite prescriptive. He suggested that to be accepted as an authentic part of the Order of Preachers, we should prepare a statement of our aims and organisation, and seek formal recognition from the Sisters and Friars in Aotearoa - New Zealand. This would allow the voice of lay Dominicans to be heard at an international level.

It was fr David who spoke a great deal about the Order being made up of branches – nuns, friars, sisters and lay – each branch having its own character but all part of the same family tree. He very much appreciated the way that local gatherings of Dominican Family are very inclusive of people from different branches of the Family – religious and lay - some of whom are committed to living the Dominican charism while others come for various reasons of friendship and loyalty, and others for a mixture of all these reasons. These inclusive local gatherings are core to who we are as Dominican Family and not something we want to change.

We are asking those of you who are interested in being committed to the Dominican life and mission to read the Charter, see if you are happy to endorse it, and let us know if you think that there is something vital to be added or subtracted. We encourage you, where possible, to join with others to discuss the Charter and send in feedback as a group.

Nga mihi ki a koutou. Greetings to you all.

Willie Campbell, Norman Gray, Kay Price, Mike Kelly, Susan Healy, Mary Johnson, Moira Gallagher (members of DomConsult, May 2017)

(Willie Campbell is the contact person for DomConsult. Her email is alafair@kinect.co.nz)

Note: The Charter is attached to this newsletter in PDF format.

Name of the group | Susan Healy

The DomConsult group also had considerable discussion about the name of the lay Dominican group. It was considered important that the name reflect the New Zealand character, particularly our Maori heritage. For various reasons, the name first chosen – Lay Dominicans of Aotearoa - Te Waipounamu -New Zealand - was found inadequate. And so Susan Healy sought advice from people with wisdom in te reo. Susan's record of her discussions is as follows:

In our draft Charter, our Domconsult group had put up the name "Lay Dominicans Aotearoa - Te Waipounamu, New Zealand". We included Te Waipounamu at the request of members from the South Island.

Some have queried the appropriateness of this title, and this is a fair question.

As a result, we have consulted with Hana Maxwell-Mathias, who is Te Pouka, Ngati Manawa, Kaitutae, Te Mahurehure, Ngati Hau, Te Waiariki, Ngatiwai. Ngati Hine, Ngati Kahu O Torongare and Te Parawhau and who is one of our lay Dominicans in Whangārei. Hana is a former executive officer for the national Catholic Runanga.

Hana explained that the present title suggests to her that the organisation belongs to the South Island. She made a suggestion of a Māori term that would indicate reaching across the country and got me to check it with Bob Newson, a leading Catholic who is a te reo expert.

Bob says that "of Aotearoa New Zealand" covers the whole country but to show that more fully the correct way to put it would be "of Aotearoa New Zealand - Mai i Te Hiku-o-te-Ika ki Te Waipounamu".

You may well be aware that Te Hiku-o-te-Ika refers to the tail of the fish, ie, the Northern-most part of the country and the iwi from there. Te Ika-a-Māui (Maui's fish) is the Māori name for the North Island. Te Waipounamu is the name for the South Island, "pounamu" being the word for "greenstone".

If we take this advice, it means we would have a working name of "Lay Dominicans of Aotearoa New Zealand", along with the fuller title "Lay Dominicans of Aotearoa New Zealand - Mai i Te Hiku-o-te-Ika ki Te Waipounamu". This might appear in our charter as shown in the pdf attachment.

We do ask you to reflect on this. Susan (on behalf of DomConsult)

FINALLY, a special piece written for us by Katie O'Connor. Katie is a Lay Dominican who lives in Southland.

Mindfulness & Dominic | Katie O'Connor

Have you ever walked barefoot on a cold winters day? It's a great way to wake up. As I do this right now I feel the chill of the concrete on the soles of my feet, the tingling in my toes as they groan in protest at the cold, and the slight numbness in the balls of my feet.

The cool air hits my nostrils and brushes across my cheekbones. I can see the crisp outline of the Garvie Mountains looming varying shades of blue as I sit on the verandah at "Moyvane". I'm always in awe at how they are a constantly changing vista depending on the weather and season. Today they are walking towards me, like the sounds that carry close on a damp day. There's a pungent smell of the dying down of leaves on moist grass. I am aware of all that is happening inside of me and outside of me right in this moment. My Buddhist friends call this mindfulness. I might call it being in the presence of God.

For me it is prayer: a contemplative awareness of life, unfolding moment by moment. My God here and now. I'm simply watching, noticing, observing my thoughts, feelings and body sensations. So for me, mindfulness meets the first pillar of Dominican Life.

It requires study and the development of a level of attention: an ability to be interested in the moment and focus on how God is revealing God in my awareness. Like the second pillar of Dominican life, which focuses on study, mindfulness teaches us to pay attention on purpose using the senses (Jon Kabat-Zinn, 2013). It does have a language but not of written words. It is an experiential way of 'knowing' the world. A felt wisdom.

It would be easy to think that mindfulness has a quality of self-absorption, but to me it is much deeper and richer than that. To live mindfully requires living life, understanding that we are in community, and our connection is not only with other people, but also with all life. In knowing ourselves and being able to bring kindness and acceptance to ourselves we can also begin to reach outwards in true appreciation of the diverse gifts we can bring to others and others can bring to us. Sound familiar? Mindfulness meets the third pillar of Dominic – Community life.

It is in knowing who we are that we can become all that we can be. For me mindfulness helps to deepen that understanding. To use my gifts fully in the way that God calls me to use them in service of others. In doing that I am faithful, joyful and hope filled. Mission: the fourth pillar of Dominican life.

Mindfulness has been transformational in my life since I was first introduced to it 17 years ago. I have seen the benefits when I teach it to both children in schools in a programme called "Pause, Breathe & Smile", and to those that take part in the Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) programme in the community. While I have taught these programmes and also worked with mindfulness with individuals in a secular way, for me the work is sacred. I have much to thank my Buddhist friends for particularly the Zen Community in Auckland. Learning mindfulness has added a depth and richness to my prayer life and to my encounter with the one I name as God.

The day is drawing in as I walk inside. The warmth of the fire wraps its arms around me like a blanket. As I touch in with myself in this moment I feel content.

Kabbat-Zinn, J. (2013) Full Catastrophe Living: New York, Random House

Katie is a counsellor and mindfulness teacher