

Seeking peace in troubled times



By Anah Aikman

Tēnā koutou e ngā rangatira mā i tenei wā pouri rawa.

It is with the greatest respect that I greet you all in this unprecedented time of deep sadness. It is a time of great change for us in Aotearoa, New Zealand, as our country is rocked by last month's mass shootings at the peaceful Christchurch mosques.

This assault has deeply impacted our Kiwi communities and global citizens on the most human of levels – through spirit, mind and body. Our psyche has been disrupted, our foundations knocked out of alignment, put off balance, fractured.

There has been an incredible outpouring of love and generosity from Kiwis towards our Muslim communities, not only locally, but also on a global scale.

Values-based leadership

It reinforces for me that we have an incredible nation here at the bottom of the world, with a remarkable, young and empathetic leader in our Prime Minister, Jacinda Ardern. She embodies the concept of values-based leadership and emphasises the crucial importance of empathy and connectedness. She demonstrates to the world that we, as a nation, value who we are. It is evident her words and actions come from a place of deep humility and genuine concern for humanity.

This is not a time for political agendas. It is a time for redesigned conversations and empowering possibilities, for old ideas to be revisited, reheard and reflected upon.

We have an extraordinary opportunity, during this recovery period, to find collaborative solutions that will benefit our communities in unique and positive ways. We must be aware and we must be mindful.

The reality is that New Zealand will never be the same again. Across the globe, the seeds of negative rhetoric are growing and becoming normalised, creating a situation where respect and understanding for others are being pushed aside and ignored. The active, and often subtle, marginalisation of people through words, actions and policies is how fear is fuelled.

This mass shooting has caused direct harm and trauma to our peaceful Muslim communities. Often these communities already come from a background of trauma and war that is intergenerational and multi-faceted.

It has saddened my spirit deeply and questions arise – *What can I do? What can we do?*

Vicarious trauma is seen everywhere, as an outpouring of grief ripples through our country and around the world.

It is time to address the core of who we are, to reflect on our daily lives and how we may be negatively affecting others. Taking the time to understand and get to know people is what helps to demystify the concept of “other” – we have more in common than we know.

Through self-assessment, self-reflection and self-awareness, we can create change from within. Turning our viewpoint inwards and facing our own ways of being are very challenging tasks because they open up our vulnerabilities. We must ask ourselves how our presence

affects others when we walk into a room, what our first point of contact looks and feels like. Are we being welcoming or dismissive? Inclusive or exclusive?

As nurses, we are in a prime position to embrace diversity and celebrate uniqueness. Florence Nightingale epitomised health innovation with her visionary foresight. She believed nurses had the extraordinary ability to become agents of global change. Nurses have the capacity to be voices of human caring, reason and hope for communities across the globe.

By reshaping our worldview through self assessment, presence, deep listening and a genuine curiosity to connect with others in meaningful ways, a higher level of understanding, tolerance and trust is ultimately gained.

Now is a time for personal questions and deep reflections. Celebrating and sharing in empathy, compassion, connectedness, culture and kindness is my passion and hope for a better world.

Let's become more curious about the



world around us. Let's begin to change our lenses to see the world from different points of view. Let's harness this outpouring of love for humankind and become a more mindful, connected and inclusive Aotearoa, New Zealand.

Ka tuku aroha ki a koutou. Ngā mihi nui rawa.

Arohanui, Anah. •

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