



## Summary of Peace and Social Justice Activities Paul Henriques © 16 February 2020

Our Peace and Social Justice (PSJ) sponsorship of the Glen Taylor School, which enables their participation in the Duffy Books in Homes programme, continues to reward us with great satisfaction. The children are thriving with the supplied books. PSJ representatives will attend a role model assembly at the school in March and I'm sure Brenda and Gary will provide more details on that after we've been.

Sally asks me to remind you that the next Dances of Universal Peace gathering will be on the Autumn Equinox, Saturday night, 21 March from 7:30-9:30pm. It will be held here at the Church and all are welcome. Details are in our Church newsletter or you can speak directly with Sally.

Shirin reports that she has recently written to the Turkish Minister of Justice concerning [Ahmet Altan](#), a Turkish journalist and novelist who was first detained and remanded in prison in September 2016. He was prosecuted for his alleged support for the 2016 coup to overthrow the government. Ahmet was sentenced to prison for life solely for his journalist work critiquing the government. He was accused of attempting to *overthrow the constitutional order* despite an alarming lack of evidence of any internationally recognized crime.

He appealed the verdict. The Turkish Supreme Court of Appeals decided to overthrow the conviction and ordered a retrial.

Ahmet has subsequently been re-arrested and detained in prison. This action has all the hallmarks of being politically motivated and is incompatible with the right to liberty under [Article 5 of the European Convention on Human Rights](#).

The PSJ car rally fundraiser on 15 February went very well with around 15 people participating; three of the cars were electric. The rally had tricky and somewhat quirky questions – well done Kay. With such a strong northeast wind, the picnic afterwards planned for Narrow Neck Beach was held at Gary and Brenda's – an enjoyable afternoon for all.

I was in Nuku'alofa, the capital of Tonga on the main island of Tongatapu, from the 20<sup>th</sup> to the 26<sup>th</sup> of January. I was there to train teachers and staff from the Ministry of Education and Training's Inclusive Education Unit and also to meet with the Ministry's new CEO. The work with Tonga's Ministry is a new endeavour and complements our work with the Vava'u Library Trust, a non-governmental organisation in Neiafu, an hour's flight north of Tongatapu on the island of Vava'u.

The overall programme's aim, as many of you know, is to help Tongan and Samoan dyslexic children using the Steps dyslexia software and workbook programme developed by The Learning Staircase, a team in Christchurch. The new endeavour working with the Ministry is off to a great start due to strong support from the Inclusive Education Unit and the Ministry's new CEO. On the recent self-funded trip, I trained nine teachers from two primary schools and one high school as well as three Inclusive Education Staff. With a bit more training from me, the Inclusive Education Unit will take responsibility for training teachers in Tonga.

The meeting with the new CEO went extremely well. She is Tongan but has been working with an Australian University for some years and has taken two years leave to be back in her home country as the Ministry's CEO. I explained our programme in detail and she said she had a number of social

justice objectives she hoped to meet in the next two years, our programme supported several of them admirably and she would do everything she could to enable us in our work. What an encouraging thing to hear.

What we do need to supply though is refurbished laptops for the primary schools. The high schools have computers but the primary schools don't. I brought four refurbished laptops up with me, two for each of the primary schools I worked with. We can install the Steps dyslexia software in the high schools but the primary schools will require laptops. Hopefully I can bring some up when I return at the end of March.

The PSJ group desperately needs assistance in locating laptops, e.g. coming off lease, which can be donated to us to bring to Tonga. Please do help in this vital project by approaching any company contact you have to see if they will donate used laptops to help dyslexic children who otherwise will struggle with learning how to read and write. PSJ has put a lot of effort into this work both in Samoa and Tonga, but we desperately need wider support to procure donated, used laptops in reasonable condition. Please do help out.