**INTERCHURCH BIOETHICS COUNCIL, 2016-2017**

**REPORT TO the aNGLICAN CHURCH OF AOTEAROA NEW ZEALAND AND POLYNESIA.**

The InterChurch Bioethics Council (ICBC) is an ecumenical cross-cultural body supported by the Anglican, Methodist and Presbyterian Churches of Aotearoa New Zealand. ICBC members have expertise and knowledge in science, ethics, theology, medicine, education and mātauranga Māori (Māori knowledge). Biotechnology relates to biological, medical, environmental and agricultural technologies derived from science. Bioethics is an interdisciplinary category of ethics that provides the framework for policy and decision-making with regard to scientific research and resulting technologies; including future consequences, legal, political, commercial, theological and social aspects.

**Vision:**

*Faithfully exploring the spiritual, ethical and cultural dimensions of biotechnology and its consequences in Aotearoa, NZ.*

**Mission Statement:**

*To increase the knowledge and understanding of church members and the wider community have of the spiritual, ethical and cultural issues relating to biotechnology, and enabling and encouraging citizens to take action on these issues.*

Our key tasks are:

* To increase our own knowledge and understanding of the interface between spirituality and biotechnology:
* To engage in consultation and dialogue with church members, community groups and specialists on the ethical, spiritual and cultural issues raised by biotechnology:
* To undertake and promote education on these issues within the community:
* To make appropriate submissions to Government and other relevant organizations on important issues of ethical and spiritual concern.

For Church members the most important part of our work will be found on our website. Every congregation should include [www.interchurchbioethics.org.nz](http://www.interchurchbioethics.org.nz) as a resource. You can also find us on Facebook at [www.facebook.com/InterChurchBioethicsCouncil](http://www.facebook.com/InterChurchBioethicsCouncil). The website is continually updated. The website has study guides, papers, and reports that can give a framework or guidelines for ethical enquiry that is separate from what appears in the mass media.

**Recent Activities.**

Over the past two years the debates around euthanasia/assisted suicide have frequently surfaced, and the ICBC has been actively engaged in responding to this issue. The ICBC made both a written and oral submission to the Health Select Committee and is about to send in a comprehensive submission to the Justice Select Committee which is now considering the “End of Life Choice Bill”. Submission documents are available on the ICBC website and have also been circulated to the three contributing denominations. We expect – or rather hope – that there will be informed debate among the membership and that the resources on the ICBC website ([www.interchurchbioethics.org.nz](http://www.interchurchbioethics.org.nz).) will be found to be helpful. The site also carries a great deal of information on other bioethical issues including all our study guides and publications by ICBC members.

ICBC is working on new study guides and other material this year relating to organ donation and transplants and assisted reproductive technology (ART).

The ICBC has undertaken a survey, with a total of four hundred and three (403) respondents from Anglican, Methodist and Presbyterian churches expressed concern regarding Climate Change, Euthanasia/Assisted Suicide, Advance Directives and Organ/Tissue Donation in New Zealand. The data not only provide helpful direction for the work of ICBC but may also be of use to other entities requiring New Zealand communities’ engagement, debate and discernment of bioethical issues. For more information, visit <http://www.interchurchbioethics.org.nz>.

The ICBC webpage is linked to the web pages for the three churches and has links to other relevant sites. You will find here a complete list of the ICBC membership if you need to know who is around in your district. The ICBC would be happy to facilitate local meetings dealing with specific issues. We are there to help you!

As the ICBC, we remain eager to engage our supporting denominations and welcome any invitation to speak or provide resources. During 2016-17, members attended/participated in the following meetings:

* *Euthanasia: Wrestling in a Christian context,* Vaughan Park 2016
* Singularity University 2016
* New Zealand Bioethics Conference, Dunedin, January 2017
* *Euthanasia: a duty to die?*, Christchurch Cathedral, April 2017

**The Bioethics Roadshow**

The Bioethics Roadshow is an educational initiative that engages intermediate and secondary school students in the exploration of technological and social advances and the impacts these have on individuals and communities.  Involving several thousand students each year in age appropriate groups ranging in size from 30 to 300 students (average 120), the Roadshow seminars are highly interactive, enabling participants to think seriously about contemporary ethical issues, while enjoying lively debate and discussion.  Student evaluations completed at the end of each Roadshow indicate that students find bioethical topics including Artificial Intelligence; science and the criminal mind; ethics and other animals; social media and social responsibility; identity, sexuality and consumerism; environmental ethics; and ethics and sport; highly engaging.  Students report that these issues are not generally addressed in their regular classes.  Significant workshops for 2017 also included *What Matters to You?’*and‘*Building Community in Aotearoa: Reorient: Reconcile: Respect’*, a workshop exploring the relevance of He Whakaputanga o Te Rangatiratanga o Nu Tireni (1835), Te Tiriti o Waitangi (1840) and the Women’s Suffrage Petition (Te Petihana Whakamana Pōti Wahine) in contemporary New Zealand.

Facilitated by the Centre for Science and Citizenship, an independent charitable trust, the Roadshow has been supported by the ICBC since its inception.  Through external funding the Roadshow has been able to facilitate workshops with students in low decile and geographically isolated areas, and the ICBC has contributed $5,000 pa towards this effort.  In 2017 the directors of the CSC collaborated with Dr John Kleinsman, director of the Nathaniel Centre, to present a series of Teacher Professional Development seminars exploring technologies at the beginning and end of life.  These professional development seminars are scheduled to continue throughout 2018, with the ICBC offering financial assistance for youth workers and teachers from religious schools to attend these professional development workshops (please contact [deborah@nzcsc.org](mailto:deborah@nzcsc.org) for dates and details).

 In 2017 the Roadshow began a process of rebranding and will launch as *Enquiring Minds* ([www.enquiringminds.education](http://www.enquiringminds.education/)) in March 2018.

**Suggested decisions.**

We would welcome a discussion about how the ICBC and *Enquiring Minds* can be invited into Anglican Schools, as well as a discussion on resources we can provide through the Social Justice Commission.

1. The Report is received.
2. The Anglican members of the InterChurch Bioethics Council for the two years will be: Graham O’Brien (Co-chair, Nelson), Deborah Stevens (Wellington), Nicola Hoggard-Creegan (Auckland), and Paul Reynolds (Tikanga Maori, Wellington), Tania Stuart (Auckland).

We thank the Anglican Church of Aotearoa, New Zealand and Polynesia for their continued support of the ICBC.

Rev Dr Barbara Peddie and Rev Dr Graham O’Brien Co-Chairs.