

A Covenant for Unity?

By K. Askin, Promise Keepers New Zealand

“Unity is not uniformity and oneness is not sameness,” says Sam Chapman, Director of Houhanga Rongo ministries in South Auckland. “Acts 17:26 says ‘He has made from one blood every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth, and has determined their preappointed times and the boundaries of their dwellings.’”

The Treaty of Waitangi is a national example of the truth that all persons are created equal in God’s sight. It unified two strong, proud people groups and gave our nation a unique heritage. As his Excellency the Governor-General commented a year ago, at Waitangi Day 2008:

“What is remarkable is that the Maori were not a defeated people, signing an agreement of capitulation, but a strong people who agreed to share this land... I would hazard a guess there are few, if any, other examples where such monumental change has occurred without a shot being fired.”

Sam Chapman has both a Maori and European heritage and is proud of each. He believes the Treaty of Waitangi was never a formula or a set of rules we were to live by.

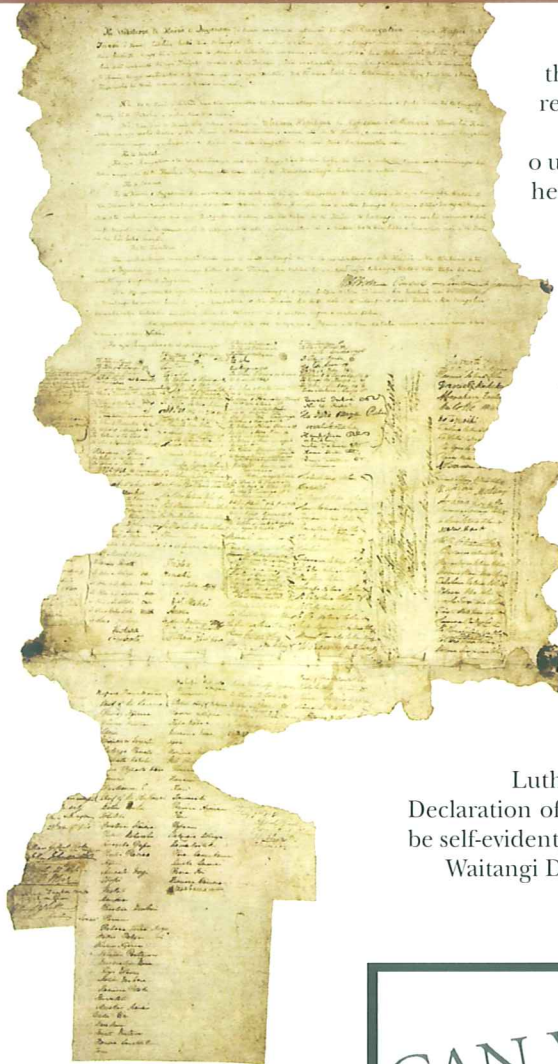
“It was a covenant that allowed us to make a commitment to designing and creating a future together as two peoples who both came from nations with great histories of success.”

He believes that when we enable our society to reflect the rich diversity at its core, we reflect the very nature of God.

It seems the most culturally segregated time of the week is Sunday morning in church. This is accentuated by the increasing numbers of ethnic churches being established. This presents Christians today with a challenge, as well as a great opportunity. But it also requires a desire to see cultural differences bridged. As Revd Mark Beale has noted, “You have to have an attitude to *want* to be united. You can’t legislate or force unity. Like love, it has to be given away by free will. It’s only when we start to understand that we have been united through Christ that unity really occurs.”

2 Corinthians 5:18-20 tells us God has committed to us the message of reconciliation.

“If you are searching for a bridge across cultures, it can be found simply in Christ and in our humanness,” says Sam. “People of all nationalities and backgrounds are searching for the same things – their Creator, their identity and a sense of purpose and significance. When we approach our relationships from that starting point we see we hold more things in common



than we may have realised.”

Sam affirmed our common heritage in Christ.

“It is God who determined the seasons and places for our habitation,” he said. “We have to start believing that.



Sam Chapman

We have the tremendous responsibility to create our future. What we do today creates our tomorrow.”

We needed to sit down together and listen to one another, he continued, knowing that God heard us and wanted to give us the desires of our hearts.


“God has blessed us as a people and we need to keep reminding ourselves of what that looks like.”

In his *I Have a Dream* speech, Martin Luther King Jr affirmed the words of the US Declaration of Independence: “We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal.”

Waitangi Day is our chance to prove it. ❖

CAN WE STILL BELIEVE THE BIBLE?

AND DOES IT REALLY MATTER?



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New Zealand Christian Foundation

P.O. Box 76-142,
Manukau City, Auckland, New Zealand
info@nzchristianfoundation.org.nz

www.nzchristianfoundation.org.nz

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