

IAMS 2020/BISAM paper proposal

Reading Philemon in Ihumātao: discerning ways of mission by and with the wounded in a wounded place

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Ihumātao is an area of indigenous Māori land close to Auckland International airport, rich in historical, cultural and spiritual significance. It was illegally confiscated in 1863 as settler demand for land grew, and many of its indigenous inhabitants were forcibly removed. It is currently the site of non-violent resistance by Māori with ancestral connection to the land and other supporters to a proposed residential development. How might the *missio Dei* be discerned and enacted in that context? As mana whenua (indigenous people with stewardship connection to that land) and participants in the resistance movement at Ihumātao, Carey postgraduate students James and Natua Kaa-Morgan have been reading Paul's letter to Philemon with others on that land. Issues of power, inequalities and vulnerabilities have surfaced in the letter and have resonated with their own context and experience as Māori in a colonized land. Through a missional hermeneutic, a nuanced understanding developed of the character and operation of mission as reflected in the interactions of Paul, Onesimus and Philemon, and ways were discerned of faithful participation in the *missio Dei* in their own context, as and among people wounded by colonisation and continuing injustice. This paper will reflect on that experience of a contextualized missional reading of Philemon and discuss what may be learned about the practice of a missional hermeneutic, indigenous engagement with the Bible, and the *missio Dei* in contemporary Aotearoa.

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