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# Kokanee Concerns

We are reminded in the Gospels and in the Baptismal Covenant that we are called to seek and serve Christ in all persons, loving our neighbour as ourselves. We are reminded also to strive for justice and peace, respecting the dignity of every human being, and strive to safeguard the integrity of God's creation, respecting, sustaining, and renewing the life of the earth. *Kokanee Concerns* is a weekly publication from the Anglican Parish of Kokanee that identifies items of concern in both the local community and the wider world, for which we can advocate, act upon, pray, and learn on a weekly basis. Consider the local community, the wider world, and your place in both as you reflect upon the topics each week. This week, please consider these thoughts in relation to our responsibilities as peacemakers and as carers of creation and of the community around us. How do we act as agents of Peace? How do we care for Neighbour?

Peace,

*David*

## Concern in our Neighbourhood . . .

This week I have continued my meeting and connecting with individuals and various agencies in the Nelson area, finding more about what people need, and how the community provides support and care to those who would ask for help. In sitting and listening with individuals, I have witnessed the pain and hurt that some people have experienced, through trauma, abuse, addiction, and neglect. These visits are hard in that they evoke so much despair and pain within me at

times. I wish I could take away the negative experiences and memories that people hold, and yet I recognize that this can be addressed through the Holy One, through supportive, caring faith communities, and through specialized agencies that support those in need. This week I would like to highlight information from ANKORS.

ANKORS tagline is *Individual and Community Wellness for All*. This is a wonderful vision, and through their explanation of their mission, philosophy, mandate and values, they are focussing on those living with and affected by HIV/AIDS, Hepatitis C and other blood borne pathogens, to foster healthy, informed communities. ANKORS works from a wellness model, through support and advocacy; harm reduction, prevention and education; delivery of programs and services that are client-centered and focused on the whole person; and partnerships with others.

## ANKORS Philosophy

- ANKORS' programs are guided by a belief in holistic care, the right to dignity, respect, personal and community empowerment.
- We believe in services provided in a non-judgmental manner, without prejudice.
- Individuals have a right to anonymity and confidential service.
- ANKORS will actively address the social determinants of health and risk factors that contribute to the spread of HIV/AIDS, HCV and other blood borne pathogens.

## ANKORS Values

- Respect for all and the provision of barrier free service.
- The physical and mental health of our clients, staff and volunteers.
- The primary, secondary and tertiary care of those most at risk for HIV/AIDS, HCV and other blood borne pathogens.
- Consumer engagement and involvement in decision-making, program development and service delivery.
- Professionalism; best practice; cross- sector partnerships and community networking and development.
- Harm reduction as a tool to reduce the harmful effects of a behaviour that places an individual at risk. Harm Reduction means taking action to reduce

the harmful effects of a behaviour, without requiring people to abstain from (stop doing) the behaviour.

- Diversity, compassion, inclusion.

Learning about our neighbours that take time with vulnerable populations are important so we can find out how we as a faith community can form our prayer and mobilize into action and advocacy so as to support those who are in need beyond our ken. Consider ANKORS in your local prayers this week, and pray for all who may have experienced stigma, trauma, abuse, addictions, and neglect. Pray that our learning will help to address injustice, and provide much needed care.

## Concern in the World . . .

In any given moment and place, war is an unrelenting tragedy. We know this, even at our distance of safety. But what of the aftermath? What about the destruction and surprises left behind, abandoned without further care, or thought of responsibility? That, to me, is a crime against humanity, against creation.

This has been the situation for a community of peoples in the Western Sahara. There is a maze of 10 million landmines lurking beneath a deadly stretch of land there. It's the longest minefield in the world, and it's killing one person almost every single week.

This area is now believed to have the densest landmine contamination in the world, with an estimated 2,500 unsuspecting people having been killed by these cruel weapons of war. And the Saharawi community, caught up in decades of territorial struggle over Western Sahara, have had to live in terror.

Called the "Berm" it is a massive sand wall built by Morocco shortly after its forces occupied Western Sahara in 1975. It spans 2,700 km from Mauritania through Western Sahara to Morocco, isolating the Sahrawi people.

The Sahrawi community has for decades had to live in this treacherous land, built by years of armed conflict – but now that could change. Against all odds, a brave group of local women are hard at work de-mining the area, helping families of those who've been killed or injured, and training the community on how to keep safe. It's incredibly dangerous, life-saving work. But in just a few years, they've trained nearly 10,000 people!

The Saharawi Mine Action Team works tirelessly to keep their community safe. Four of its staff are former de-miners, specially trained by international operators to find and remove landmines. The team also comes to the aid of mine victims and their families.

Efforts like this are so vital as the sheer number of mines means that current efforts by international bodies to de-mine the area fall far short of what's needed. Too few people have even heard of the landmine crisis in Western Sahara, I know that I hadn't until this came into my view from Eko.org.

These are the actions of prophets, of those of us standing up, speaking out truth to power and walking the talk and actively working for bettering their world in whatever ways they can. What can you and I do in the face of such resilience; such courage; such prophetic action? Individually and together, we can speak out with compassion and empathy about these shameful issues, helping the world to see, inviting action, and showing the communities there that the world is watching, and wants to help.

Together, we can make a difference. We can listen; we can ask how best to help; how to power their work to remove more mines from the area and shine a light on what is happening in conflict zones around the globe. It takes righteous anger and compassion for justice and the common good, and the courage to risk our own comfort zones.

More information:

[Demining the Sahara](#), Plough, 22 August 2023.

<https://www.plough.com/en/topics/justice/environment/demining-the-sahara?amp%3Bakid=127727.2364813.VI3PC0>

[Western Sahara's struggle for freedom cut off by a wall](#), Aljazeera, 5 June 2015.

<https://www.aljazeera.com/features/2015/6/5/western-saharas-struggle-for-freedom-cut-off-by-a-wall?amp%3Bakid=127727.2364813.VI3PC0>