**A summary of Bill Smith’s remarks**

**Changing Lives by Not Turning Away**

**Pilgrims 100 Event at Inparrila - 27th May 2022**

In Bill’s talk we entered the world of the Extraordinary Chambers in Courts of Cambodia (ECCC) and the prosecutions of 3 leaders of the Khmer Rouge for the atrocities committed during Pol Pots reign of terror in Cambodia from 1975 – 1979. The evidence of these leaders was both confronting and revealing. They physically distanced them selves from the pain “getting others to commit the crimes on their behalf” conscripting many Cambodians including young 15 – 20 year olds to commit the atrocities.

“The question we all ask, of course, how can such systematic brutality against our fellow human beings occur? The many poor educated Cambodians that joined the Lhmr Rouge did not get out of bed one morning and say I am looking forward to a mass execution of 50 people today”

So how did the leaders of the Khmer Rouge organise this reign of terror?

“They made anyone who had a different political, religious, social or economic ideology or back ground – an enemy of the state ---- obstacles to the supposed Utopia they told their conscripted killers they would be taken too”

The leaders of the Khmer Rouge created a fiction of “us” and “them”

Bill then reflected on organisations such as Pilgrims 100.

“So when members of Pilgrims 100 and others give financial and other support to education, infrastructure, immediate relief, health and other community projects it is for the benefit of “us”

“The more we turn towards each other in support (inside and outside of Australia) the less support there is for leaders wishing to create an “us” and “ them” society which has proven to have had tragic consequences”

It is “us” and never “us” and “them”

**A reflection following Bills talk**

These atrocities in Cambodia were carried out in the late 1970’s. What has our global community learned since? There is such a long list of atrocities happening all over the world. Just to start Myanmar Ukraine North Korea Afghanistan. We can feel so helpless that we are in fact “turning away”. Bill’s belief is that organisations like Pilgrims 100 are not turning away. Our hope is that more and more people get involved in organisations like Pilgrims 100. Then in every corner of the globe we build and build an “ us” society.

James Hill

Chair – Pilgrims 100