

Reflections • Thursday 20 December 2018 • By Bishop Jeremy Greaves

## Blessings for the New Year

The beginning of a New Year is, for many of us, the time to make resolutions that are meant to change us for the better in the coming year: resolutions that mostly don't last until the end of January. It is the time when people take out gym memberships, sign up to music lessons or enrol in any number of courses that will be abandoned long before they are finished. Despite this, I have not given up on New Year's resolutions because there is always important work that comes before choosing what new thing I am going to do 'this' year.

You see, no matter what becomes of our New Year's resolution, the process of personal reflection is incredibly important. The process of stopping, of reflecting on my life, on the relationships that sustain me, on the work I have done and all the work I still have to do is always what informs my New Year's resolutions. And yet, with every passing year, we become more and more distracted and give less and less time to this important work. Our time for reflection is being whittled away like never before — and we have no idea how that affects our wellbeing (although there is now significant work being done to assess the impact of Facebook and Instagram and mobile technology on our lives). After all, the awareness of our own thoughts and feelings and motivations, which we refer to as personal reflection, is what makes us human. If we sacrifice a significant amount of that, what do we become?

A good New Year's resolution might be to take time to escape social media and mobile technology on a regular basis — to regularly find quiet moments to just sit and think, or experience the simplicity of nature, or go to a restaurant with friends or family while leaving the phone in the car. Or, play a game that is not computer related. When you are with people, appreciate them with your undivided attention – do not take your phone to the dinner table...or to bed!

Even if we manage it only for a week, it might be the beginning of rediscovering a world that many of us have almost forgotten, a world of real people, of real beauty and of real life. We might even rediscover something worth persevering with for longer than just a couple of weeks.

Several years ago, John O'Donohue, one of my favourite Irish poet's wrote a New Year's blessing for his mother entitled *Beannacht (For Josie)*. It is a blessing that calls us to pause and be still, to notice what is going on and to receive God's blessing in all of that.

May you know the abundance of God's blessing in whatever unfolds for you in this New Year.

## St John's Cathedral link to Anzac legend



**Queensland Governor, His Excellency the Hon Paul de Jersey AC launching the book: St John's Cathedral, Brisbane and the Anzac Legend**

It's a colourful yet weathered piece of framed cloth affixed to the wall of St John's Anglican Cathedral, Brisbane.

Yet few people know the story behind it or that it rewrites Australian war history, most notably the final chapter in the famous and fateful Anzac campaign at Gallipoli in December 1915.

The embroidered red, blue and gold Union Jack flag was the last Australian ensign to be flown at Anzac Cove, with a new book outlining the sequence of events that led to a Brisbane Anglican chaplain flying the flag in the final hours of the evacuation.

The historic flag and national treasure had been taken to Gallipoli by Brisbane Anglican chaplain, Captain The Rev'd Alexander Maxwell, who at the time of his enlistment in 1915 was the parish priest at Sandgate.

The incredible story, told fully for the first time, is contained in a new book *St John's Cathedral, Brisbane and the Anzac Legend*, launched this week at St John's Cathedral by Queensland Governor, His Excellency the Hon Paul de Jersey AC.

The book, launched 103 years to the day from the Anzac evacuation, also portrays in glossy colour all of the memorials to Australia's service personnel and artefacts collected over more

than 100 years, housed within the walls of St John's Cathedral. These include mosaics, windows, a crucifix, many flags and a stone of remembrance.

New research in the book dispels the commonly-held historical view – as depicted at the Australian War Memorial – that Australia's official war correspondent and historian C.E.W (Charles) Bean, was the last person to remove the final flag from Gallipoli on 18 December. In fact, Bean's action was at least 24 hours before The Rev'd Maxwell took his flag ashore and brandished it throughout the cove.

During World War I, 22 clergy from the Brisbane Anglican Diocese served as chaplains in the First Australian Imperial Force (AIF).

The Rev'd Maxwell was the oldest registered chaplain at Gallipoli – aged 59 when he enlisted – which was highly unusual given that the age limits for chaplains was 52 if they were just staying on troop ships and not venturing ashore.

He packed in his war kitbag a flag he had used in 1903 to commemorate the centenary of European settlement in Victoria.

Tradition dictated that he use the flag as an altar cloth for Eucharist services and on 19 December, 1915, The Rev'd Maxwell had the flag with him at Anzac Cove while he was assisting to evacuate the sick and wounded in the most extraordinary retreat in Australian military history. It nearly cost him his life.

That afternoon, as 20,000 soldiers were in the final stages of implementing a tense but brilliantly executed withdrawal from Gallipoli, The Rev'd Maxwell was returning from Hell Spit Cemetery (one of 20 gravesites established by the Anzacs on the peninsula) when he was fired upon three times by the massive Turkish guns, which rained hell down upon enemy within its deadly reach.

The shells burst above Maxwell's head and a stray piece of flying shrapnel grazed one of his pockets, narrowly missing his heart.

The book's author and historian Denzil Scrivens said chaplains played a vital role during the war in providing support and comfort to Australian servicemen in the face of horrific wound, grief, despair and suffering.

"We think Maxwell must have obtained special exemption to enlist given his age, which was almost twice that of many other padres," Mr Scrivens said.

"The Turkish gunners were in the habit of shelling burial parties at Anzac Cove, so The Rev'd Maxwell took considerable risk in visiting the cemetery with his flag on that final day at Anzac Cove."

The Anzac pre-Christmas evacuation, was one of the most remarkable episodes in the Gallipoli campaign when troops were successfully evacuated under the nose of the enemy without any loss of life.

After The Rev'd Maxwell's return from the war, he showed the flag in 1920 to General Sir William Birdwood, who had been commander of the Anzac troops at Gallipoli. The General was visiting Brisbane and was so impressed with the flag and its story that he signed his name on its top right corner. The Rev'd Maxwell presented the flag to St John's Cathedral on Anzac Day, 1929 and it proudly hangs inside the Cathedral.

Past president of the United Services club, Brigadier Ray McNab (Rtd) said the research and story behind the Cathedral flag and its display in the final day Gallipoli evacuation was of "great historical significance".

"Until now, it was believed that Charles Bean carried the last flag by an Australian at Anzac Cove and this book adds greater depth to one of the most famous campaigns in our country's history," Brig McNab said.

"Chaplains are worth their weight in gold in times of war and The Rev'd Maxwell showed a great degree of personal courage and commitment to his men and his job in venturing ashore to tend to the wounded and dying.

"We are fortunate indeed to have the flag today as a reminder of those gruesome days and the courage and endurance of the troops and the chaplains who supported them."

*St John's Cathedral, Brisbane and the Anzac Legend* also documents the story of Lieutenant-Colonel The Rev'd David Garland, a Canon of the Cathedral and one of the architects of Anzac Day commemorations. He is also credited with initiating the Anzac Day march and the one minute's silence.

At the launch, Queensland Governor Paul de Jersey said he had not appreciated, until he read Mr Scrivens' book, the very rich acknowledgement and linkages within the Cathedral of the war efforts.

"This wondrous Cathedral houses many significant memorials to Australians, and their allies, involved in conflicts all over the world – artefacts, flags, regimental colours, plaques, and beautiful stained-glass windows," the Governor said.

"Denzil's book, published in the centenary year of the end of World War I, deepens this Cathedral's connection with the Anzacs even further. His words and illustrations guide us expertly around the Cathedral.

"His detailed descriptions tell us the history and deep significance of each of the memorials. They speak of the devotion to duty, selfless service and often selfless sacrifice that each one represents, without ever glorifying war itself."

Having discovered the provenance of the Cathedral's Gallipoli flag – the last flown on the Anzac peninsula – St John's Cathedral is hoping that it might become a place of pilgrimage for the many young Queenslanders, and others, who visit Anzac Cove and who wish to remember the sacrifice of Australians and New Zealanders in that fateful campaign.

Funding for the publication of the book, ***St John's Cathedral, Brisbane and the Anzac Legend***, was provided by the Queensland Government through the Queensland Anzac Centenary grants program.

Copies of the book are being provided to 190 high schools in south-east Queensland, with a 'flipping book' accessible to all on the Cathedral's website. The memorials can be viewed at the Cathedral between 9.30 am to 4.30 pm Monday to Saturday, and 11.00 am to 4.30 pm on Sundays.

### Spotlight Q&A • Thursday 20 December 2018

## Q&A with St Hilda's Year 7 student and star of *Matilda the Musical*, Izella Connelly



Izella Connelly with Lauren Phillips and Shane Crawford from Kids' WB (9GO!): Izella was on Kids' WB in September

Izella Connelly starred in the lead role of Matilda in *Matilda the Musical* and recently launched her singing career with several singles. She is a Year 7 student at St Hilda's, where she is part of the Athena Program. In this Spotlight she talks about her international plans and her career and school highlights so far.

## **How long have you been at St Hilda's School and what year are you in?**

I started in Pre-Prep at age four and have just finished Year 6, so that's seven years at St Hilda's!

## **What projects and activities are you currently working on?**

Currently I'm in Osaka, Japan, playing a lead role in Universal Studio's Christmas Spectacular *Voice of an Angel*, which incorporates projected video, fireworks, a 70 metre Christmas tree and angels floating 30 metres in the air! It has a cast of 50 from all around the world and has audiences of over 6,000 every evening.

In January, I'm making my fourth trip to the US to explore opportunities that are beginning to open up for me there.

## **What have been your highlights as a student of St Hilda's and a singer so far?**

My career highlight has been to play the complex role of Matilda in the Australasian tour of *Matilda the Musical*. At St Hilda's, my highlights are having a very special class teacher and, of course, lots of good friends that cheer me on!

## **How does your school support you in your endeavours and goals?**

The support given by the St Hilda's Athena Program allows me to do school work when I'm travelling and provides extra support when I'm back at school.

## **What are your plans and goals for the next 12 months?**

Make further progress towards being a famous pop star worldwide. Perhaps even be in my first movie, but that might be a bit further out.

## **Tell us about your latest single *If Every Day was Christmas***

*If Every Day was Christmas* was written a few years ago for an opera singer by two famous songwriters, but the song didn't take off. So I was given the chance to record the song in a different style and, even though it was released just a recently, it's already getting a lot of radio play and YouTube views of the lyric video.

## **What is your favourite line from this song and why?**

The song is about keeping the spirit of Christmas alive throughout the year, so the very special line for me in this song is, "There would no more wars, we wouldn't need them anymore".

## **Do you write your own songs?**

I'm a co-writer of most songs I record. I love the process of writing with leading US songwriters where I get to express my own thoughts and feelings. It's a real buzz to start off with a blank sheet of paper and be involved in writing and recording a song, all in the space of about four hours.

## **What do you do in your free time to recharge and relax?**

Making up new dance moves with my friends, making video clips for kids' social media and sometimes just being at home with my family.

## **What is your favourite book and why?**

Roald Dahl's *Matilda*, because I was in the musical and because it's such a great story about standing up for yourself – and for others.

## **What is your favourite movie and why?**

*The Greatest Showman* because it has such great songs and a great – and true – story.

## **What is your favourite travel destination and why?**

I love everything about Japan...the people, the food, the sights and it's such a safe place to travel around in.

## **Reflections • Thursday 20 December 2018 • By The Ven. Keith Dean-Jones**

### **The history and meaning of the Epiphany**

In Australia, Christmas celebrations begin in November and, as a result, it is often difficult to observe 'Christmastide', the twelve days between Christmas and the Epiphany. We do the same with Easter, and I suspect that chocolate eggs will appear in shops before the end of January!

The term 'epiphany' is Greek, and in the Book of Common Prayer the Feast is subtitled 'The Manifestation of Christ to the Gentiles'. It is older than Christmas (established as a universal observance by the fourth century), and in the early Church it was observed as a celebration of the baptism of Jesus. Eastern Orthodox Christians maintain this emphasis, but in the west it is observed as a celebration of the visitation of the magi (the wise men). Before the establishment of the Feast of Christmas, the Epiphany ranked in importance after Easter and Pentecost.

The only biblical reference to the magi is in the Holy Gospel according to Matthew (2: 1-12). Matthew links the good news of Jesus with Old Testament prophecy, and he states that King Herod the Great directed the magi to Bethlehem, the place predicted by Micah as the location

of the Messiah's birth (Micah 5: 2). Their number, three, is suggested by their three gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh, and the belief that they were kings is suggested by both prophecy in the Book of Psalms, "may the kings of Tarshish and of the isles render him tribute, may the kings of Sheba and Seba bring gifts!" (Psalm 72: 10) and the prophecy of Isaiah, "nations shall come to your light and kings to the brightness of your dawn...they shall bring gold and frankincense" (Isaiah 60: 3, 6). It is very unlikely that the magi were rulers.

There are three important aspects of the story.

First, that it is to non-Jewish people that the Messiah is revealed. The prophet Isaiah predicts that the people of God will be a "light to the nations that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth" (Isaiah 49: 6). Jesus is the "light for revelation to the Gentiles" (Luke 2: 32), and the tradition that one of the magi is represented with a black face suggests the universality of Jesus' saving work. In Old Testament times, Jewish people struggled with the tension of universalism and particularism, but the deeper tradition embedded in the Hebrew scriptures is that, as God's chosen people, they are responsible for all humanity, and not merely the biological descendants of Abraham and Sarah. In his ministry, Jesus broke out of the confines of particularism, and in the Parable of the Good Samaritan the true son of Abraham is an outsider (Luke 10: 29-37).

Secondly, the magi offered worship (Matthew 2: 11). Jesus invites us to worship God so that we may be set free. We live in a culture that is imprisoned in the worship of the false gods of money, status, materialism and selfishness. Writing to the Corinthians, Paul refers to 'idols' and then uses the term 'demons' (I Corinthians 10: 20). I think that he is making an important point. We all need to be liberated from the idolatry that drags us down and imprisons us with fear, despair and self-loathing. God wants us to be happy, to be men and women who experience peace and who recognise that life can be filled with purpose and joy. This goal is achieved when we offer our worship to Him.

Thirdly, the magi were overwhelmed with joy. Our deepest desire is union with God, and the cry of the psalmist, "As a deer longs for the flowing streams, so my soul longs for you, O God" (Psalm 42: 1), is the cry of all men and women. St Augustine of Hippo (354-430) expressed it in these words: "You have made us for yourself, and our hearts are restless until they rest in you" (*Confessions* 1). The second of the nine gifts of the Spirit is joy (Galatians 5:22), a quality that many Christians seem to lack. Frederick Nietzsche (1844-1900), a critic of Christianity, once observed: "I might believe in the Redeemer if his followers looked more redeemed". Life is often difficult, but as Christians we recognise that "there lives the dearest freshness deep down things...because the Holy Ghost over the bent world broods with warm breast and with ah! bright wings" (Gerard Manley Hopkins, *God's Grandeur* 1844-1889).

## The difference between sitting and sharing a meal with someone

When I still worked in schools. I came across a task that an English teacher had set, which I thought was brilliant. To pick a villain, an antagonist, and to write the person a love letter, explaining why you loved him or her. The idea was to help the students write better villains, and to help them to understand that no one is the villain of their own story. The goal behind the goal was to build empathy in the students, to help them see others as being more than just cardboard cut-outs, and to recognise that all people have a depth of experience to their lives.

The truth is, we are all the protagonists of our own stories, and mostly wish to be seen as the hero. Maybe a tragic hero who has been backed into an untenable position, the hard done by, misunderstood, mistreated hero, the misunderstood man or woman of conviction. The realisation is that we all want to see ourselves as good people, but sometimes the question of what is good in our circumstances is difficult.

In the Old Testament Scriptures there is a good word, a great word even, which unfortunately does not have a direct English translation, which might give us some guidance, especially in 2019's 'Year of Generous Hospitality'.

### ***Chesed***

It is a Hebrew word that seems to blend loving kindness, with acts of generosity and engagement. My favourite demonstration of *Chesed* is Ruth in her response to Naomi. If you haven't read anything from the Old Testament in while, that is a great book to read.

In the story we see care for Naomi as a person, rather than just abstract care. An analogy may help — think of the difference between sitting and sharing a meal with someone, or just giving him or her some food and moving on. *Chesed* calls us to care and engagement, to seeing the other as being of value for who they are

For Jews and Christians alike we see first that God demonstrates *Chesed* with us, and then we respond.

## Reflections • Thursday 20 December 2018 • By The Rev'd David Gill

### **A Stage on the Road: St John's Cathedral sermon**

It was 1948. Bitter memories of war were still fresh. Large parts of Europe, Asia and the Pacific had been devastated. The hearts, lives and hopes of millions had been shattered. And now there loomed a new threat. A cold war, that promised more fear, more enmity, more hating.

But something else was happening, too. Something that contrasted dramatically with the world's anguish. Representatives of 147 Protestant, Anglican and Orthodox churches gathered in Amsterdam to form a World Council of Churches. Since then, please note, the body's membership has more than doubled – from 147 churches to 348 – and while the Roman Catholic Church remains a non-member there are nevertheless close working relationships.

This was unprecedented. A World Council of Churches? There had never been anything like it. After centuries of religious conflict and after all the blood that had been shed, long separated churches were gathering, ancient hostilities were ending, enemies were becoming friends, reconciliation was happening. Christians, it seemed, were not just talking about unity. They were starting to do something about it.

The World Council's formation, of course, was not the beginning of the ecumenical movement. Much less was it, in any sense, the movement's goal.

The Council's founding general secretary Willem Visser 't Hooft, made that point very clearly to the Amsterdam delegates:

We are a council of churches, not **the** Council of the one undivided Church. Our name indicates our weakness and our shame before God, for there can be and there **is** finally only one Church of Christ on earth...Our council represents therefore an emergency solution – a stage on the road – a body living between the complete isolation of the churches from each other and the time...when it will be visibly true that there is one Shepherd and one flock.

An emergency solution. A means towards a much greater end. An organisation that like all ecumenical bodies would seek – *should* seek! – to work itself out of existence.

That was 1948. Today, we give thanks for that “stage on the road” towards Christian unity. But today, we must also ponder: where on that journey do our churches find themselves now?

Seventy years down the track, it is a curious situation. Where the churches are today, ecumenically, is very appealing. It is also, however, utterly unbearable.

Appealing? Yes. Denominational relationships have improved greatly. Old tensions have faded. Churches cooperate on so many fronts. A leader of the Conference of European Churches put it well. “The status quo,” he said, “is all the more pleasant when it is among friends”.

The trouble is, we are tempted to downgrade the ecumenical vision to fit. The influential journalist John Allen exemplified this when he argued, in the *National Catholic Reporter*, that pluralism is the way of the world, churches should rejoice in the cooperation thus far achieved, and nobody should expect Christian unity this side of the Second Coming.

In other words, what we have is as good as it gets. So forget what we thought was the goal of this journey. Put your feet up and relax. Enjoy this very pleasant status quo.

But, where we are today is also utterly unbearable. For two reasons.

First, our hearts cry out for more.

The late Aghan Baliozian, primate of the Armenian Apostolic Church, was a fine pastor, a dedicated ecumenist and a great friend. While serving the National Council of Churches, I was invited regularly to share in Christmas celebrations at his cathedral in Sydney and then, after the liturgy, speak to the congregation. The Archbishop's welcome was always "Father David, we welcome you to this church, for our church is your church too". Note the *your*.

In 2007 the Uniting Church marked its 30th birthday. The ABC ran a rather poor Compass program, which included a few seconds of me. Next morning my phone rang. It was Bede Heather, the former Catholic bishop of Parramatta. "David," he said, "it was good to see you on the box last night. But I thought Compass was a bit unfair to our Uniting Church." Note the *our*.

Then there was the gathering, a few years ago, of Queensland Churches Together. Some people were talking with Archbishop Phillip Aspinall about the tough time his church was having over something or other. It was a Uniting Church voice that said, with feeling: "When the Anglican communion bleeds, my heart bleeds too".

Isn't that where we are now? The days of 'us' and 'them' are, thank God, gone forever. We are all simply 'us'. Oh, we still have those denominational identities. But each label now has an unseen plus sign: 'Uniting plus...', 'Catholic plus...'

If ever a man embodied the invisible plus sign, it was Michael Putney – brother in Christ, father in God and inspiration in things ecumenical for all of us.

Some years ago, the Catholic Archdiocese of Sydney was facing the impending retirement of Cardinal Ted Clancy. Speculation ran wild about his likely successor. Michael Putney was my candidate. "If you get Sydney," I told him, "I'll have to give serious thought to becoming a Catholic". Well, Michael did not get Sydney – I suspect to his great relief, certainly to Townsville's – and I have not crossed the Tiber. Yet! But he was that kind of person. He lived the invisible plus sign.

Many have written about the profound implications of the churches' mutual recognition of baptism – implications that have yet to be adequately worked through. Michael wasn't content to write and speak about that subject. He lived it. That was his special charism.

We don't yet have the doctrinal formulae to express it or the organisational relationships to embody it, but in our hearts we know it is true: we belong to one another, because we belong to Christ.

Our hearts cry out for more.

Second, and more importantly, the heart of God cries out for more.

The Gospel is not about being enabled to tolerate our divisions. It's about the reconciling power of God in Christ that ends them. Our Lord's prayer was not that His people might be friends, or cooperate, or form councils of churches. It was that they may be one with an intimacy reflecting that of the triune God.

So, how are we to move forward along this road? Some years back, a former general secretary of the World Council of Churches was speaking about the role of the churches in a world of political and religious conflict. One sentence grabbed my attention: "Christians must develop the spiritual capacity to hear and see the grace of God in the other," he said.

Translate that to interchurch relationships. Christians must develop not the diplomatic skill to charm the other, not the political know-how to manipulate the other, not the worldly power to coerce the other, not the theological clout to convert the other. But the spiritual capacity to discern what is truly of God in the other, the gifts God may be trying to give us through the other.

Such 'receptive ecumenism' is a way every church can take further steps on this journey. It shifts the ecumenical problem away from the other – the denomination that's difficult to get on with, the church that doesn't think about sex the way we do, the bishop who won't play ball, the doctrinal stance that seems set in concrete – and focuses the initiative back on us. Not just the experts, the church leaders, the ecumenical bureaucrats, but us, each and every one of us, and on our capacity to discern and receive.

For Christian unity must never be seen as a mere exercise in ecclesiastical joinery. It's about the transformation of hearts and minds, nothing less.

Which sounds like a big ask. Too big?

Whenever the ecumenical task looks a bit daunting – and when has it not? – we do well to remember what drives it. Not some vague notion that it's nice to be nice to other Christians. Not some coterie of ecumaniacs with nothing better to do with their time than sit in meetings. Not even the strenuous efforts of things called 'councils of churches'. What drives it is not us, at all.

For, to adapt some words of George Bernard Shaw, ecumenism is not "a game which we play" but "a game played upon us". *We* are not gathering the churches. They are being gathered by our reconciling Lord, to whom in different and faltering ways they are trying to respond.

There will be times, like 1948, when the movement seems obviously successful, and times when it seems to stagnate. Times when it is popular, and times when it recedes into the background. But, in good times and in bad, whether in 1948 or 2018, the movement goes on. As it must, for it is of God.

This night, then, let our hearts be thankful. Yes, for the World Council of Churches. Yes, for Michael Putney. Yes, for all who have been guiding, inspiring, resourcing and supporting our churches for this wonderful journey.

But let us, above all, give thanks to the Lord. Who never abandons His people to their conflicts and failures, who is leading us onwards yet towards the day when there will be visibly one Shepherd, one flock.

**Books • Thursday 29 November 2018 • By Dr Marie-Louise Craig**

## **But what if she'd said 'No'? Backstories to the Bible**

For those who find large theological books daunting, this is the book for you. For those who enjoy reading large theological books, this is the book for you.

In this slim volume, full of short and very short stories, The Rev'd Dr Cathy Laufer has captured both the simplicity of theological questions and the unfathomable depths of theological answers, although in keeping with her Jewish heritage she admittedly does not actually give us any answers.

According to Jewish teachers, best practice is to not spoon feed the students, but to encourage the students to find the answer for themselves. Often a student's question is answered with another question or a story. Jesus himself used this method.

In a phone conversation with Cathy, I asked her how much the story-telling teaching method of her Jewish heritage had influenced this book. She answered my question by telling me a story within a story, so I gathered the answer to my question was 'significantly'. Cathy did explain, however, that the first story began its journey as an undergraduate assignment.

You do not have to be a trained theologian to engage with the content of this book. You only have to enjoy, for instance, the kind of story that starts seriously and ends with a punch line.

This is what the first very short story, "First Temptation", is, although it took me a few days of thinking about it to understand the punch line. I am a little challenged in that department. I won't say any more. Read it for yourself.

The second story is another engaging read. The story, "Meir and Khamet", tells the Exodus story of the plagues from the point of view of a young Israelite slave. I am still thinking about this one four weeks after reading it. I am wondering what Khamet decided to do and what that decision tells me about him. I am wondering about what the story of the plagues (biblical and according to Cathy) says about God. Then, when I reached the end of the book and read Cathy's postscript, I discovered there is another story of Jewish slavery being told in this narrative. Layers on layers! This is a story that keeps on giving.

The title of the book is the title of the fifth story, "But what if she'd said, 'No?'". You might guess from the title that it is referring to Jesus' mother, Mary, and you would be partially correct. Read the story to find out what I mean. I am still challenged by this one too. What if I say, "No", but believe that in doing so, I am making a good and loving decision? How can we tell?

Another favourite of mine is "Food for thought". This story retells the story of the loaves and fishes through the eyes of Andrew and Ariel, the boy who donated the bread and fish. After watching the whole process of feeding all those people with five little loaves and two fish, Ariel notices how tired Jesus is and comments: "I suppose making all that food takes a lot of energy." He then asks Jesus if he is Moses.

True to the Jewish idea of best teaching practice, Jesus answers with a question, "Why do you think I might be Moses?"

Ariel points out that Moses fed the people special food in the desert. Jesus confesses that he is not Moses.

Ariel has another question: "So who made the bread and fish? You? Or God?"

This time Jesus answers with two questions, "What do you think, Ariel? Who made the bread and fish?"

Well, dear readers, what do you think? Who made the bread and fish? Jesus? Or God?

Mmm. More questions than answers.

These four stories are tasters for the whole book. The book is only 114 pages long. It contains a variety of genres – short stories, plays, poems and diary entries – and covers a wide range of topics from the whole Bible and beyond. The book is easy to read and entertaining, but most of all it is thought provoking.

I invite you to read the book and then visit St Francis College for lunch one day, so we can enjoy discussing the questions Cathy's book raises about the nature of God and the nature of Jesus, about what sin is and how we can recognise temptation, about...well, you can find your own questions and we can all ponder the answers together.

**Catherine Laufer, 2018. *But what if she'd said, 'No?': Backstories to the Bible*. Morning Star Publishing, Reservoir, Victoria.**

**If you are interested in theological discussion at any level, there are opportunities at St Francis College. For more information on:**

- **Bachelor of Theology classes, contact Peter Kline, Academic Dean at St Francis College, on 07 3514 7418 or via [pkline@ministryeducation.org.au](mailto:pkline@ministryeducation.org.au)**
- **Research Seminars, contact Peter Kline, Academic Dean at St Francis College, on 07 3514 7418 or via [pkline@ministryeducation.org.au](mailto:pkline@ministryeducation.org.au)**
- **The book club, Reading with Spiritual Eyes, contact Eve James, Library Manager at Roscoe Library, on 07 3514 719 or via [ejames@ministryeducation.org.au](mailto:ejames@ministryeducation.org.au)**
- **Spiritual direction and spiritual direction courses, contact Dale Keenan, Director of Anglican Spiritual Direction Formation Program, on 07 3514 7429 or via [dkeen@ministryeducation.org.au](mailto:dkeen@ministryeducation.org.au)**

- Forming an interest group and meeting at the college with like-minded people, contact Stephen Clarke, Property and Finance Officer at St Francis College, on 07 3514 7402 or via [stephen@ministryeducation.org.au](mailto:stephen@ministryeducation.org.au)

Reflections • Wednesday 19 December 2018 • By Diane Thomson

## Raising awareness of gender-based violence



Some AMUA members and St Paul's, Ipswich parishioners involved in the '16 Days of Activism Against Gender-based Violence' campaign (L-R): June Suthers, Velda Chaplin, Pat Faint, Jenny Smith, Diane Thomson, Neville Buchanan, Greg Thomson, Juneau Limpus, Margaret Harris, Leanne Ferguson and Wendy McMahon.

Two of the mission statements of Anglican Mothers Union Australia (AMUA) are to promote conditions in society favourable to stable family life and the protection of children, and to help those whose family life has met with adversity. AMUA joins with other organisations and supports the International '16 days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence', which is a United Nations campaign to raise awareness about violence against women and girls worldwide and its impact on their physical, psychological, social and spiritual well-being. The campaign aims to raise awareness about domestic violence and human rights, with the goal of preventing future violence. It also encourages men to take a personal stance against violence. The colour theme is orange and purple.

The UN Women National Committee of Australia writes that "One in three women and girls experience violence in their lifetime...It happens in every country and every society. It happens at home, in schools, on the streets, at work, on the internet and in refugee camps. It happens during war, and even in the absence of war. Too often, it is normalised and goes unpunished." In the last year we have seen Hollywood actresses speak out against sexual harassment and sexual assault. The global #MeToo and other campaigns have exposed the

magnitude of sexual harassment and other forms of sexual violence that women over the globe have suffered. Breaking the silence has led to awareness and is a step to transforming the culture of gender-based violence.

Our church community at St Paul's, Ipswich has been participating in this campaign over a few years and has strong support from all our parishioners. The campaign ran from 25 November (The International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, for which the 'white ribbon' is the international symbol) to 10 December (Human Rights Day).

A banner advertising White Ribbon Day, with an accompanying orange woman and two white ribbon 'cutouts' were hung outside the church for all the passersby who traversed the main street of Ipswich to see. Working in conjunction with the local Zonta Club, a second orange lady was placed at the entrance of the church, supplying information about local domestic violence services. The colour orange is a key theme used to unify all activists and to help bring global attention to the plight of gender-based violence against women and girls.

Inside St Paul's, members of Mothers Union and friends made a display of examples of gender-based violence found in Australia and communities around the world. We invited our members, parishioners and visitors to read the information. White circles highlighting examples of violence against women such as domestic violence, stalking and harassment, cyber violations, forced marriages, rape, female infanticide, honour killings, female genital mutilation, trafficking in women and forced prostitution dotted our white Prayer Tree. Over the two weeks, as people felt led, we invited them to write a prayer for the victims on an orange or purple cardboard leaf and tie it to the tree with a white or orange ribbon.

On our last Sunday, during communion prayers, we prayed that our written prayers would join with other prayers offered around the world to end all forms of violence and abuse. We prayed for all who work with the victims of domestic violence and made a special mention of those connected to Women's Homelessness Services. At the end of our service, a free will offering was taken to support Anglicare Southern Queensland Homelessness Support Service for Women and Children.