A Christmas call to revolutionary patience

“The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light” (Isaiah 9.2a)

Isaiah was speaking in his own day about the darkness of a foreign occupying military power that was oppressive and cruel. But a child was born who might one day become king. The birth of that child gave new hope to the nation.

The darkness persisted. The military power still occupied the land. The people were still treated harshly. But now there was something more. A light had dawned and there was something other than darkness, something that resisted darkness, something that refused to be shut out by darkness, something that gave people hope.

In our day we do not have to look far to find darkness. It does not take the same shape as in Isaiah’s day, but darkness is here nonetheless.

The darkness of drought is threatening lives and livelihoods and causing great suffering for families on the land. We are shocked that financial institutions we trusted have failed millions of times and exposed children to abuse. Aged care places fail and harm our frail elderly people. Corruption seems to resist all attempts to root it out. Domestic violence makes the lives of many women and children unbearable. Darkness in all its shapes and forms and guises – personal, institutional, cosmic – threatens to overwhelm and devour us.

But the people who walk in darkness have seen a great light. The birth of Jesus Christ 2000 years ago points us to a new and different kind of future. That future is not fully and completely here yet. The darkness has not been totally banished. That day is still to come. But for those with the eyes to see the future, it has dawned. It has begun. It is here. We have seen the breaking dawn of a new future, in the birth of a child, and the full light of day will follow.

This dawn gives rise to hope and joy, which in turn generate a special kind of patience. It is not passivity. It is a more active anticipation. Things might be dark and difficult at the moment, but something better is coming and we can be active in welcoming it, pointing to it, working for it.

The South African poet Breyten Breytenbach wrote about what he called ‘revolutionary patience’. He said:

It is not enough to rail against the descending darkness of barbarity.

. . . One can refuse to play the game. A holding action can be fought. Alternatives must be kept alive.
While learning the slow art of revolutionary patience.

‘Revolutionary patience’ is born of a deep joy that itself stems from a profound hope for a better future. That is why we refuse to play the game as it is now. Something better can be. A brighter future is coming.

“Wishful thinking” you might say. But this possibility is closer than you might think. This holding action is at your fingertips. The alternative is as close as your breathing. We can see the beginnings taking shape already.

Wherever we see love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control, we see the dawn which came in the birth of Jesus Christ slowly becoming the full light of day.

I hope that each time we see these signs of the Spirit of Christ we might feel a little stirring of revolutionary patience; might feel the thrill of deep joy and hope, even in the midst of darkness; that we might take up God’s invitation to live generously, gently, peacefully, and so make our contribution to the coming reign of Christ.

Spotlight Q&A • Tuesday 17 December 2019 • By Gillian King and The Rev’d Dr Graham Warren

Q&A with Climate Advocates Gillian King and The Rev’d Dr Graham Warren

Gillian King and The Rev’d Dr Graham Warren were recently Commissioned as Climate Advocates. In this Spotlight Q&A, they share about their work, faith, upbringings, hobbies and who inspires them and why.
**Where do you currently live and where do you worship?**

**Gill:** I have recently moved to Brisbane and was keen to try city living. I stayed in West End and have finally found long-term accommodation in the same area. I have been mainly worshipping at St John's Cathedral.

**The Rev'd Dr Graham:** After 20 years of living away, most recently in Roma, my wife Imelda and I have settled back closer to family and friends in West End. After the busy parish life in the Roma district, it is strange but beautiful to worship at the Cathedral. The congregations could not be more different. From country conservative to cosmopolitan diversity, it is nice to know that at heart we are one.

**How long have you been involved in the Anglican Church and in what roles?**

**Gill:** I am culturally Anglican and come from a family with a long history of being involved with the Anglican Church, including being largely responsible for building churches in places in which they settled, including one near Toowoomba. Immediately before coming to Brisbane I was living in Canberra, where I was a member of the Canberra-Goulburn Diocese's Public Issues Commission and at various times had been on Vestry, a Church Warden, and organised some parish fetes. I come from farming stock and grew up in the Snowy Mountains.

**The Rev'd Dr Graham:** I began worshipping as a child at St Stephen's, Coorparoo in the heady days of huge youth groups and vibrant church life, I have served the church as a Church Warden at St Paul's, Cleveland and worshipped for years with the Brookfield community with Fr David Binns. I have also served as a parish priest, most recently in Roma.

**What is the name of your current roles, including any voluntary roles, and what do your roles involve?**

**Gill:** Graham and I are working as Climate Advocates across denominations in southern Queensland. We are helping Christians to come together, to speak up and to take action against further damage to our climate and on the consequences of damage already done. The aim is to establish a distinctly Christian voice on these matters, thereby carrying out our special role in caring for God's creation.

**The Rev'd Dr Graham:** I currently have two roles. I am loosely attached to the Cathedral with a specific mandate to take the Gospel out into the public square. For the times as they are, the primary focus of this imperative is to awaken our church community to the responsibility to attend to the fifth Mark of Mission of the church, namely to care for creation. The imperative to address the climate situation is so great I have committed my primary energies to this task.

My second task is to support Imelda in her priestly ministry, and for the present that is to undertake an intentional transitional ministry in The Parish of Cooroora.

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

**Gill:** At the moment, I am concentrating on identifying and building relationships with key people and working out ways forward for our work.

**The Rev'd Dr Graham:** I have been invited to preach in a number of parishes and host a conversation about climate change for those gathered afterwards. Social science research has demonstrated that
the most powerful transformative activity in which we can engage is conversation around the kitchen table, or around the parish fellowship table.

Being outside the parish politics allows me to raise difficult or contentious issues that may inhibit a parish priest who sometimes has to juggle conflicting pastoral sensitivities. When people are free to speak their fears, it is liberating for many to know that they are not indeed alone in their distress at the way the world has changed and is being changed by our disregard for the earth systems. Being Anglican, we are often too polite and hesitant in raising the contentious, but obvious, issues that we share. Climate change is one such issue.

**What have been the highlights of your roles so far?**

**Gill:** I have loved working with people who are so supportive and positive about our role and the Church's place in our world and its role in effecting the changes needed for life as we know it to continue. I have experienced this from secular, as well as Christian, colleagues.

**What have been the key challenges of your roles so far?**

**Gill:** Starting a new role and being new to an organisation always brings challenges. In my case this is compounded by moving to a place that is new and quite different to me. I am settling into new routines and ways of doing things and wondering what Brisbane's summer will be like for me.

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

**Gill:** My goal is to have more people in Queensland speaking out and showing the way forward for taking action against further damage to our climate, on the consequences of damage already done, and for ensuring a fair ('just') transition for those whose livelihoods and ways of life are most affected by the changes needed – and doing so publicly and from a variety of Christian perspectives.

**Can you tell us a little about your personal faith journey?**

**Gill:** I came to the realisation a few years ago that I have been given life three times (birth, twice brought back from death) and so I must be here for a purpose. After a few years praying, I came to understand that my purpose is to bring together my broad knowledge, skills and experience to help engender deep cultural change so that people live in harmony with each other and with all creation and, in particular, take action regarding our damaged climate. A Canberra-Goulburn Diocese colleague's recommendation of this position to me, combined with the timing with respect to what had been going on in my life and the broader world, meant this is clearly God calling me into this service.

**The Rev'd Dr Graham:** I grew up in a family that had no connection to the Church. In fact, my grandmother, the family matriarch, was a communist by political persuasion, but a suffragette feminist by personal persuasion. They were good people, but antagonistic to the Church. At the age of seven I had a visitation from beyond saying deliberately to me,“ you belong to me.” Surrounding me were somewhat dysfunctional adults and family and so to know that I belonged somewhere was life changing. I asked to go to the local church and in spite of family resistance, I persisted. I always knew from that point on that “I belonged” and when one knows to whom one belongs, then all else is a footnote. Nothing since has shaken that sense that I belong and the grace that flows from that has kept me buoyant throughout life.
How does your faith inspire you and shape your outlook, life choices and character?

Gill: I follow the teachings and wisdom of Jesus because they are part of how I was brought up and they resonate with me and make sense to me intellectually. I try very hard to live my life with integrity, with my actions being consistent with my words and by showing respect and discharging my moral responsibilities to care for our common home, not harm others, to be fair, and to care for people who are vulnerable. It’s why I do what I do.

The Rev’d Dr Graham: Since an early age, I have been gifted with a faith that has rarely been shaken. My life in science and medicine only confirmed my deepest sense that we are children of God. The majesty of creation and the miracle of life are awe inspiring and my response to this is worship and service. I have always had an awareness that the Holy Spirit is as close to me as my own breath and so I am never alone in the cosmos. To know at this deep level that I belong and am loved grounds me in a way that allows me to be present as a witness to others. We belong in eternity. Eternity is not time going on forever, it is reality without time as a variable. We are spiritual beings enjoying a short, but beautiful, bodily experience and when that is complete, we return to our home in eternity. My life choice to be present in service in medicine was my response to the gift of life.

What is your favourite scripture and why?

Gill: I don’t know that I have a favourite scripture because what resonates can change with time and circumstance. If I really had to choose, then perhaps it would be a toss-up between Matthew 6:10b (because that sums up so much of faith teachings), “your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven” and 1 Corinthians 13.6-7 (because it is consistent with how I try to live my life), “Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.”

The Rev’d Dr Graham: I have always found great comfort in the parable of the Prodigal and his Brother, as recorded by Luke (Luke 15.11-32). No matter how far we travel to escape the loving arms of our creator, we can never be put outside the embrace of belonging. So, in spite of ourselves we are loved beyond measure.

I also like the book of Job, as Job’s life sometimes resonates with mine. Job never doubts for one moment that he belongs and has enough confidence in this to challenge God to keep his side of the bargain. The story only makes sense when at the end God asks Job where he was when the world was created and God held all in the palm of his hand. Job is reminded by this of his true place in the created order.

What person of faith inspires you the most and why?

Gill: Bishop Neville Chynoweth seemed to me to embody what being Christian is – and a highly talented musician to boot.

The Rev’d Dr Graham: In my teens, I found my way to the Brookfield Friary when it was alive with the witness and presence of the Franciscan brothers. They lived a life of service taking in ex-prisoners helping them to reintegrate into society. When the AIDS epidemic struck it was the brothers who stepped up to care for the dying when others fled in fear. Since then, the life and witness of Brother Francis and all who call him their spiritual father inspires me. Francis grounds me in my work as an environmental activist.
What are the primary strengths of the Church and what is the best way to make the most of these for the benefit of our communities?

**Gill:** The Church has a long-standing – and potentially still powerful – position in our society, with a traditional role in leading on ethics, providing support during crises, and an ability to draw on deep spiritual, intellectual, moral and social resources. Demonstrating clear faith leadership, re-establishing a distinctly Christian voice in the public arena, and restoring community by connecting people through relationship with each other and with God are, I believe, essential to restoring the long-term habitability of Earth so that life as we know it can continue into the future.

**The Rev’d Dr Graham:** As the Body of Christ, we are the hands and feet of God active in the world transforming the unjust structures and caring for the creation. Only the church has such a wide and effective mandate to do this. To remind ourselves of this mandate is my calling. The church is a community of the faithful and as such is in marked contrast to the world with its hyper-individualism and materialism. The church is counter-cultural in every way.

What are the primary challenges currently encountered by the Church and what is the best way to overcome these for the benefit of our communities?

**Gill:** I think a primary challenge for the Church today is relevance to people, especially in a social context that is uncertain and increasingly focused on the individual and business interests and in the wake of child abuse and other scandals. Coming together, building and strengthening relationships and community, is the basis of the Church and our work as climate advocates.

**The Rev’d Dr Graham:** God is active in all the world and it is our calling to simply get out and join in. We have spent too much energy as a church looking inward and bemoaning the loss of status we have endured by our failing to be faithful. The church needs to actively engage with the world and be a voice for peace, reconciliation and transformation. I am glad to be alive at this time in history and I believe that rumours of the death of the Church are greatly exaggerated.

What is the kindest gesture you have ever experienced or witnessed?

**Gill:** Another tough question! A family friend kept watch over me in hospital while I underwent major surgery and then recovered from it and from dying briefly post-surgery. As one of my sisters says, ‘She looked after us when we were sick.”

**The Rev’d Dr Graham:** I was taken by delighted surprise when after some considerable time, Imelda and I were accepted by the Aboriginal people among whom we lived and worked. In spite of their enormous life challenges they had room to allow us into their lives. I was taken aback by their open generosity and hospitality.

What is the best piece of advice you have ever received and who gave you this advice?

**Gill:** “Listen to your inner wisdom.” I came to this advice sometime after my first child was born and it has helped me in times of uncertainty, conflicting advice and information, and overwhelm.

**The Rev’d Dr Graham:** From an early age I was taught that “a gentleman is someone who never causes anyone any trouble.” The best piece of advice I have been given was from Imelda who told me to take that monkey off my shoulder. Since then I no longer look over my shoulder to see if I am doing
the right thing by everybody concerned. I now simply ask for the Spirit to be with me and guide my actions, choices and words.

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

Gill: Walking, gardening, singing (or making any music), being with ‘nature’. As my Twitter handle used to say, I am a ‘musical permaculturalist’.

The Rev’d Dr Graham: I am a sculptor and I make craft furniture. I have a violin I am making, although it has been put in mothballs for the time as I mourn the passing of my daughter Sarah. It was to be a gift for her. I know that I am healing when I find myself taking the violin out again to continue the creation. I can be totally immersed in prayer for a day at a time when I am in my studio workshop alone with God. I love wasting time with God in that way.

If you found yourself on a deserted island, what three things would you choose to have with you?

Gill: Hmmm – I have never thought about three things for my marooning before…

1. A knife that is perpetually sharp and easily useable.
2. A wok – stainless steel, so it could also be used as a reflector and solar cooker and wouldn’t rust.
3. A Bible – because it is a library in one book, so has a lot of material with lots of variety (and inspiration!)

If you could have a billboard with any text on it, what would it say and why?

Gill: “Survival tip: respect each other and our one-and-only common home.” It’s true and is the gist of the end of my daily prayers.

What book have you given away most as a gift and why?

The Rev’d Dr Graham: I have bought and given away to family multiple copies of Bruce Pascoe’s Dark Emu. This Christmas every household in our large family will receive a copy of Young Dark Emu, written for children. This book more than any other has been transformative for me as an Australian. It puts me in my place in this fragile land to know what we have done to ignore and maltreat both the ancient people of the land and the fragile yet beautiful land itself that supports us all. It is a book to remind me of our hubris.

Where do you do your best thinking?

Gill: In bed when waking up or walking or gardening. Sometimes in the shower – when I was in a very complicated and highly stressful job, I used to solve a lot of problems there (and wanted to find a waterproof writing system so I would remember the answers!).

If you are having a bad day, what do you do to cheer yourself up?

Gill: Sing. Singing is a great remedy for all sorts of things.
What's your best childhood memory?

Gill: I get nostalgic thinking about my childhood (particularly the places in which I grew up) – they were pretty care-free times and, as an adult, I have realised that I have a deep connection with the Snowy Mountains and Monaro. I am also nostalgic with anything that makes me remember or imagine our world as it used to be – and, as we see the consequences of damage to our Earth and society unfolding, this is a pretty frequent occurrence these days.

The Rev'd Dr Graham: We lived a life away from extended family for reasons I have never been able to understand. So, when as a child I went to visit my grandmother in Sydney and see a photo of me on her piano, I felt like I was part of something larger than the small nuclear family that had separated and lived apart. Needing to belong is a powerful human need. I was lucky that God intervened in my life at age seven and told me unequivocally that I belonged. That epiphany transformed my life and has remained with me ever since. When I know to whom I belong, then all else is a footnote to life.

Features • Tuesday 17 December 2019 • By Dr Robin Ray

Partnering to improve breast cancer survival in a conflict zone

Ahli Arab Hospital's Women's Health and Wellbeing program aims to increase breast cancer survival rates by addressing the barriers to early detection and improving support for women in Gaza

My interest in the work of the Anglican Church overseas began from my early life in rural Victoria, where we had an Anglican Board of Mission money box on the kitchen mantelpiece and regular mission newsletters. After completing my general nurse and additional midwifery training, life presented various opportunities, including a short period training in breast cancer with Cancer Council of Victoria.

Years later, while attending a Bishop's Spouses’ conference, I listened to a talk presented by Misha Coleman, the then CEO of Anglican Overseas Aid (AOA) — not to be confused with Anglican Aid Abroad. Misha described a new breast cancer partnership project with the Diocese of Jerusalem at the
Ahli Arab Hospital in Gaza. The project ‘Women Die Waiting’ was raising funds to enable women to access breast screening, train local facilitators to educate men and families, and assist with the permit paperwork required to leave Gaza for breast cancer treatment.

I asked Misha to contact me if there was any way I could help. A few months later, at the Diocese of North Queensland’s Synod, I was commissioned as AOA’s first ambassador and Synod moved a motion to support the project financially and in prayer. Since that time, I have taken an active role in promoting the wider work of AOA across North Queensland, occasionally in other Dioceses, and through Mothers Union. Two years ago, I was appointed to the AOA Board and currently serve on their Development Committee.

Recently I had the opportunity to participate in a self-funded AOA Board trip to gain first-hand experience of two programs we support in the Occupied Palestinian Territories — the Spafford Children’s Centre in East Jerusalem and the ‘Women’s Health and Wellbeing’ project (breast cancer) at Ahli Arab Hospital (AAH) in Gaza. This trip enabled the CEO, The Rev’d Dr Bob Mitchell, a few other Board members and me, to acquire deeper insights into the work and dedication of our partners, to gain some appreciation for what has been achieved, and possibilities for future work.

Gaza is a small strip of land, only 40km long and 6-8 km wide, in the Occupied Palestinian Territories. It is home to about 2 million people, 800,000 of who live in refugee camps. People experience chronic shortages of supplies of every kind, including 12 to 16 hours of electricity outages per day. Around 65 per cent of the population is unemployed, with many more under-employed, resulting in 80 per cent living on food parcels supplied by non-government organisations.

After negotiating the Israeli checkpoint allowing us to move through the wall that surrounds Gaza, we then walked a kilometre through security fencing to the Gaza checkpoint to be processed again before boarding a bus to Gaza City. The bus journey took us through small farm lots to housing areas where poverty and some destruction from recent missile strikes was evident. Amidst this bustling, oppressive and sometime dangerous environment is the compound surrounding the Ahli Arab Hospital. It is an oasis of peace and hope. How do these amazing people continue to work here? As one of the hospital staff members explained, “We the staff aren’t taking care of security, because God is taking care of that and this is how we function.”

We met the dedicated and energetic Director, Ms Suhaila Tarazi, the Medical Administrator, and several other staff, who outlined the work of the hospital, including the women’s health program. We visited the new breast screening facility, which enables culturally appropriate screening, diagnostics and consultation. We also visited other areas of the hospital and dropped in on a session where a group of women living with breast cancer were participating in an education and psychosocial support group aimed at rebuilding self-esteem and personal empowerment.

Suhaila Tarazi said that, “We are very happy to be in partnership with AOA. because of AOA, Ahli Arab Hospital is doing God’s work for the vulnerable and the poor. And, to all those who give to AOA for Ahli Arab Hospital, we say thank you!”

Breast cancer is the third highest cancer diagnosed in Gaza, with an expected 150 per cent rise in breast cancer mortality by 2040 (International Agency for Research on Cancer). When breast cancer is discovered early enough it not only saves the woman, but it also saves her family. In Gaza society, men hold the decision-making power, including attendance of breast screening. Women’s health, particularly aspects such as breast cancer, are commonly considered taboo topics. If a woman has
breast cancer she may be ostracised by her husband. The associated stigma will affect other women in her family, reducing marriageability and security, thereby creating further poverty.

Once diagnosed, mastectomy is the only local option for most women. While limited private chemotherapy is available, it is largely unaffordable. Difficulty with referrals and health system fragmentation means that follow-up services are underutilised. After mastectomy, radiotherapy therapy is recommended, yet this is not obtainable for women in Gaza. Women have to go to Israel or Egypt to receive this treatment. As Gaza's borders are controlled by Israel, women need a medical exit permit to leave Gaza. However, these permits are very difficult to obtain (requests are often rejected) in a timely manner. Therefore, survival rates for breast cancer in Gaza are only about 40 per cent, compared to 90 per cent in Australia.

In response to the health needs of the people of Gaza, the Diocese of Jerusalem established the Ahli Arab Hospital in Gaza City to provide affordable and/or free care locally and through outreach clinics. Apart from the usual workload of care needs found in any hospital, this hospital contends with military-induced trauma and the challenges of unpredictable or unattainable supplies. The hospital is also engaged in training and upskilling local people in social work, first aid and medical aid, as accessing training outside Gaza is not possible.

Financial support from Anglican Overseas Aid and other organisations is essential to enable the work of the Ahli Arab Hospital to continue. Funding is especially important for a health problem such as breast cancer with its wider implications for the survival of families. Yet, despite the high mortality rate, breast cancer is not funded by the local Ministry of Health. While we cannot prevent breast cancer, early detection and treatment is the key to increasing survival rates. Factors contributing to late detection, including lack of knowledge, fear and the common culturally-based responses of men, the challenges of accessing treatment, and the availability and affordability of treatment options, require a locally-driven, externally-supported and broad-based response.

The Women’s Health and Wellbeing program aims to increase survival rates by addressing the barriers to early detection and improving support for women. In the last three years the free breast cancer program at Ahli Arab Hospital has screened approximately 2,200 women. About 300 cases of breast cancer are diagnosed each year. The project is having a positive impact on women’s attitudes to breast cancer, improving health seeking behaviours, building trust and contributing to long term change. A recent report from our partner indicated that the community intervention engaging about 600 men annually is showing some positive signs of attitudinal change. Community education and psychosocial support sessions equip women to tell other women and men to tell other men, as well as providing intergenerational teaching through their families.

Nemah, one of the breast cancer survivors (called ‘challengers’), said that she and other Gazan women want to live in dignity, with fair access to medical care.

“Seven years ago, I was diagnosed with breast cancer. Because of your project, I was able to have my disease diagnosed earlier and so was able to recover more successfully,” Nemah said.

“We are a people who just want to live with dignity.

“One of my friends who has breast cancer has requested to leave Gaza for treatment four times, but she has been denied all four times. When she was first diagnosed, she felt like her life was falling apart. They still have hope in God and in good people that they will get the treatment they need.”
Anglican Overseas Aid’s work is inspired by the gospel of Christ, for example, in the Gospel of John 10.10b “I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly.” Through our partnership with the Ahli Arab Hospital, this project aims to enable women in Gaza to have life; to have greater opportunities to survive breast cancer through education, early detection and treatment; to be supported by the largely male decision makers in their lives; and, to be change agents in their communities.

The project aligns with several of the Anglican Marks of Mission. To achieve the aims of the program, AOA partners with the Episcopal Diocese of Jerusalem, and the Ahli Arab Hospital (AAH). The AAH is a faith-based organisation, daily showing God’s love in action. It proclaims the Good News of the Kingdom through its work in bringing health care to the poorest people of Gaza. In an environment of poverty, violence, insecurity and constant destabilisation, the team at AAH address a range of human needs with compassion and care, enabling women to feel safe to come there for breast screening, education and psychosocial support.

The program’s emphasis on supportive services and education about the rights of women to health care and the importance of breast cancer recognition and treatment, together with the men-to-men program, work towards transforming the unjust structures in the lives of women and society in Gaza.

While the project has made useful progress, work needs to continue to reach more women and men across Gaza. Further work is needed using a strengths-based approach and local capacity building to achieve greater gains for women’s rights and to increase participation in men’s programs.

During our visit to the Ahli Arab Hospital, a new five-year Partnership Agreement was signed between the hospital and Anglican Overseas Aid, continuing the long-term partnership begun in 1988 and the women’s health programs begun in 2009.

Director of Ahli Arab Hospital Suhaila Tarazi describes their work in this way:

“Living day by day with hands of God above our hands. God is leading our way; he opens the way to enable us to meet the needs with the love of Jesus.”

All faith-based agencies are experiencing a decline in their donor base as the worshipping population ages. We are looking at new ways to continue to support our partners. Connections with the wider community and younger donors are new avenues to explore. Continuing to prayerfully and financially support the Women’s Health and Wellbeing, and other, programs across the world will enable us all to work for “a peaceful, just and sustainable world free from poverty.”
To enable this work to continue in God's name, Ahli Arab Hospital through its partnership with Anglican Overseas Aid, requests your help. Previous support for the work of AOA has come from individual and parish monetary donations. In other Dioceses, some opportunity shops have periodically set aside takings for the work of AOA. A few years ago, I spoke at a Saturday breakfast meeting and Sunday services at St Andrew's Church, Lutwyche. I would be willing to speak at other functions or services if your church community would like to invite me.

Anglican Overseas Aid acknowledges the faithful support of parishioners over the last 30 years. Individuals and parishes can begin, or continue, to support this work through prayer and monetary donations via the Anglican Overseas Aid website. To help individuals and parishes to focus their intercessions, a downloadable prayer diary (updated every three months) is available through the AOA website.

For further information about this project, visit the Anglican Overseas Aid website and read how Iman and Maria fought breast cancer in a conflict zone or read the Women's Health, Women's Rights Program Evaluation report 2018.

News • Tuesday 17 December 2019

Lifesaving Medevac repealed

We are deeply concerned that today (Wednesday 4 December 2019) the Federal Government has voted to repeal the Medevac legislation.
There are still over 500 women and men in PNG and Nauru who remain there because the Australian Government refuses them entry into Australia. Some have been in this situation for six long years.

At the very least, it is our duty as a civilised country to provide the necessary health care for these people when it is unavailable to them in either PNG or Nauru. Doctors are the appropriate people to be entrusted with these medical decisions.

We do not believe that the Medevac legislation has been open to misuse. Instead it has been saving lives.

Having taken this action, the Government must immediately open a humane resettlement pathway for these people and guarantee that seriously ill people in PNG and Nauru will receive the appropriate health care.

—Ends—

The ACSQ's Justice Unit supports the ACRT and the NCCA's advocacy for the men and women on Nauru and in PNG, and encourages members of our Diocesan community to sign former Socceroo and human rights advocate Craig Foster's 'Game Over: get people to safety' petition, which he has launched with Amnesty International Australia.

“There has been no death in offshore detention while the bill was in place, compared to 12 deaths in five years. Chronic conditions, like post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), need to be treated immediately and without Medevac, there may be serious implications for refugees and people seeking asylum on Nauru and in PNG due to significant delays,” Justice Unit Coordinator Jen Basham said.

“We can pray for them and talk to friends and family to help dispel misinformation about refugees and people seeking asylum on Nauru and in PNG. We can also sign the ‘Game Over: get people to safety’ petition, and give to organisations advocating for the transfer of people with medical needs approved under the Medevac provisions and urgently find a long-term, safe solution for the 535 people still detained offshore.”

Features • Tuesday 17 December 2019 • By The Rev’d Canon Richard Tutin

Holy Innocents Day remains very relevant

There are two strands to Holy Innocents Day, which is marked on Saturday 28 December, for us to reflect on. They are the mass killing of all baby boys under two years of age in Bethlehem on the orders of Herod the Great, and the flight of Jesus, Mary and Joseph to neighbouring Egypt to escape the ensuing slaughter and violence.

St Matthew's Gospel is the only source in the New Testament that tells this story. It is reminiscent of Pharaoh's decision in the book of Exodus to kill all Jewish boys at birth. In that story, Moses escapes certain death through the actions of an Egyptian princess, while in Matthew's account Jesus and his family seek refuge in another country.

Coming as it does during the Christmas season, Holy Innocents Day is a serious reminder that among the celebrations and bonhomie, there are many whose lives have been turned upside down because of the actions of leaders and groups as they pursue power at all costs. This includes the slaughter of
innocent people, young and old. And, for those still living, their way of life and ability to live safely in their home country no longer exist.

People only seek asylum and apply for refugee status when forced to by circumstance. They have to leave their country of birth and family ties in search of a nation that will accept them and where they can live in safety and have the freedom to practise their culture and faith.

The story of the Holy Innocents and the Flight into Egypt by Jesus and his family shows clearly that things can occur at any time and in any place. Right now, the greatest movement of people in the history of humankind is occurring. People are fleeing countries where there is war, political upheaval or persecution and make their way, often entirely or partially on foot, to countries where they believe they will be safe. These include Europe, North America and Australia.

Here in Australia we have been able to assist many refugees and people seeking asylum over many decades. They are now part of our community, making great contributions to society.

There are refugees and people seeking asylum still being held on Nauru and in Papua New Guinea after seven years, having been refused entry by successive Federal Governments. The Australian Churches Refugee Taskforce, along with other groups and agencies, has been lobbying the Federal Government to secure a more humane approach to the way in which their right to live in peace, freedom and safety is being handled.

Holy Innocents Day serves as a reminder of the fragility of our peace and way of life in an age when events can change very quickly, often leading to the violent dislocation of people from their communities and cultures.

We are not immune from these events. And, our response as Christians is important. In another part of St Matthew’s Gospel we read the words, “I was a stranger and you welcomed me.” These words, and others like them, lie at the heart of our Christian theology of hospitality and care.

We are encouraged, through Scripture, to welcome refugees and people seeking asylum, while keeping in mind that Jesus himself was once a refugee, seeking safety in another land from violence.

**Features • Tuesday 17 December 2019 • By The Rev’d Steve McMahon**

**The man who would be king**

Many are the tales told of ‘Good King Wenceslas’ and his exploits on 26th December – the Feast Day of St Stephen and the second day of Christmas – when, as legend has it, he journeyed in the bitter cold to give alms. But who was Wenceslas? And, was he really ‘good’? Did he even exist? Where can we find out?

There have been a number of kings with the name ‘Wenceslas’, most notably Wenceslas IV, King of Bohemia in the 13th century, whom many erroneously believe to be the subject matter of the well-known carol. However, they (and we with them) need to travel back several centuries, to 911 in Prague (now the capital of the Czech Republic) when Wenceslas was born to a Czech duke.

Wenceslas’ mother, Drahomira, the daughter of a pagan chief, was baptised for their marriage – primarily to appease her in-laws, as her father-in-law had been converted to Christianity by St Cyril
and St Methodius). Following her husband's death, however, she became jealous of Wenceslas' grandmother, known as St Ludmila, who had begun to rule as regent. So, she arranged for his grandmother to be assassinated and began to rule as regent herself.

Drahomira reverted to her pagan roots and began a persecution of Christians. But there was still hope. When he turned 18, Wenceslas' remaining Christian nobles rose up and rebelled against Drahomira, exiling her and reinstating Wenceslas as Duke.

Wenceslas was a peaceful man, preferring diplomacy over conflict, and was often called 'Wenceslaus the Good'. It is said that on one occasion, his army was squared up against a rebel's knights. Rather than causing innocent blood to be shed, Wenceslas challenged his opponent to one-on-one combat. The challenge was accepted, but as he approached Wenceslas, his rebel opponent saw two angels standing by the duke's side and thought surrender to be a better option.

Despite his peaceful ways and his reintroduction of Christianity, Wenceslas was murdered by his brother 'Boleslaus the Cruel' in 935. Boleslaus was prompted to kill his brother by angry nobles who were furious at Wenceslas' decision to submit to the German King Henry I the Fowler who was planning to invade.

Almost immediately, the Holy Roman Emperor Otto I posthumously conferred on him “the regal dignity and title”, hence he is forever known as ‘Good King Wenceslas’. But it does not end there...

Disturbed by reports of miracles at Wenceslas' tomb, Boleslaus transferred Wenceslas' remains to the Church of St Vitus in Prague, which became a key site of prayer and pilgrimage in the medieval period.

It is also said that an army of knights sleeps under one of the Czech mountains, ready to bring help under Wenceslas' command when the Czech people are in grave danger. Legend also has it that at this time his (that is, a male rider's) horse will stumble, thereby revealing the location of a magical sword that can only be seen by men of great power and women – one might ask why they do not just ask a woman to point it out and spare the poor horse his stumble!

The carol which bears Wenceslas' name relates a story that originated only a few years after his death – that he used to rise from his bed every night to walk barefoot to give alms to people in prison and living in poverty.
Anglican Registrars gather in Coolangatta

‘Collaboration’ was the emerging theme when Anglican Registrars from around the nation gathered in Coolangatta recently during a three-day conference, co-hosted by The Diocese of Brisbane and The Diocese of Grafton.

The national network of Anglican Registrars meets annually to discuss economic, risk and regulatory matters, with 19 speakers presenting at this year’s event, including Senator the Hon Zed Seselja, Assistant Minister for Finance, Charities and Electoral Matters.

Mr Seselja, who was a panelist in a discussion on charity compliance, said that due to the way religious organisations and community connect and collaborate, churches have a unique and invaluable role to play in caring for people who are most marginalised.

“Religious organisations and the charities they run have unique links to their local communities and provide much-needed spiritual and emotional support for people doing it tough, alongside the practical support their charities deliver,” Mr Seselja said.

“Some of the most recognised charities in Australia are faith based, such as Anglicare or the St Vincent de Paul Society, and the services provided by these charities, large or small, are invaluable to our community.

“The highlight of the conference for me was hearing from dedicated and caring Australians who are working hard in the charity sector for their local communities to get the best outcomes for those doing it tough.”
Another key speaker of the conference was Perth-based organisational psychologist and consultant Dr Neil Preston, who has been working in the emergent design and collaborative leadership spaces for over twenty years.

Dr Preston said that healthy dialogue is essential for collaborative leadership in church organisations.

“Collaborative leadership in churches could look like a more dialogical process – where both ordained and laity come together to first find out what question they are asking of each other,” Dr Preston said.

“Secondly through rich, safe and robust conversation they may try small experiments that shift the Church into a new way of being that both attracts and gives life to the Church.”

Dr Preston said that Anglican Church leaders, including Registrars, face unique challenges in their roles, which can be addressed by embracing alternative leadership models and understanding how to identify and approach different kinds of problems.

“Contemporary church leaders are managing complex demands both within and without the church,” he said.

“They first need to know the difference between simple, complicated and complex problems.

“Not all problems are the same – the truth is you don't solve complex problems, you tame them by collaboration and sense making using the entire wisdom of your church.

“If you want to be a collaborative leader, you need to host conditions for collective intelligence, not just for your own effort and skills.”
The inclusion of professional development and wellbeing content in this year’s conference program was in response to previous conference delegate feedback.

Diocese of Brisbane Registrar and General Manager Tim Reid said that the professional development and wellbeing presentations and activities were key highlights for him.

“At the conference we endeavoured to address some personal development and wellness topics, as well as the perennial topics related to risk, compliance, finance and IT,” Mr Reid said.

“I particularly enjoyed the sessions on building resilience by Matthew Bates from sponsor LifeWorks and on taming complex problems from Dr Neil Preston, as well as a relaxing session of ‘chair yoga’.

“Identifying complex problems and dealing with complexity was a key learning – being able to identify complex problems, as distinct from complicated problems, and realising that complex problems can rarely be solved, but can be tamed with a mature approach to collaboration.”

Diocese of Grafton Registrar and General Manager Chris Nelson said that he was especially impressed by Neil Preston’s model of collaborative maturity and the parish accounting systems of other Dioceses.

“The 2019 Registrars Conference was full of interesting and engaging speakers and topics pertinent to the challenges faced by senior administrators in the Anglican Church; however, the highlight for me was the presentation by Dr Neil Preston on the nature of complex organisational problems,” Mr Nelson said.

“Dr Preston’s deep knowledge of the topic and passionate presentation were deserving of a conference on its own.

“As usual, the process of coming together with colleagues leads to a fruitful exchange of ideas and experiences, and in my case, I will be contacting some of my colleagues who have made some progress on parish accounting systems so that I can use their experiences in my Diocese.”

Among the more seasoned delegates at this year’s conference were newly appointed Registrars, who also benefitted from the conference’s collaborative networking opportunities and program activities.

Recently recruited Registrar for The Diocese of Riverina Louise Potter said that the conference helped shed light on the unique matters and functions of her role, and the importance of ongoing communication with other Registrars.

“The conference was invaluable for me. As a brand-new Registrar, it was great to be able to connect with other Registrars from around Australia and get some much-needed clarity regarding some of the more complex issues that Registrars deal with,” Ms Potter said.

“The conference confirmed for me that the role of Registrar is quite a unique role and that developing and maintaining a strong network amongst Registrars is critical.”

In addition to Mr Seselja, Dr Preston, Mr Bates, Mr Reid and Mr Nelson, conference speakers included Director of Fowler Charity Law, Mark Fowler; Executive Director of Anglicare SQ, Karen Crouch; financial markets experts from Ord Minnett, Alison Perrott and Geoff Malkin; risk expert from Marsh, Lyle Steffensen; Group Manager Redress and Claims from the Anglican Church Southern Queensland,
Claire Jenkins; Safe Ministry Officer from General Synod Office, Meenal Selvaratnam; General Manager – Technology at blueAPACHE, Michael Zuppa; Group Manager Digital Innovation from the Anglican Church Southern Queensland, Patrick Meuleman; Finance and Operations Manager from General Synod Office, Marianne Yacoel; General Secretary of the General Synod, Anne Hywood; CEO of Anglican Insurance and Risk Services, Neil Bull; and, Chair of the Long Service Leave Fund Board Bishop Allan Ewing.

Morning or Evening Prayer featured on each day of the conference, with Bishop John Roundhill from The Diocese of Brisbane, Bishop Murray Harvey from The Diocese of Grafton and The Rev’d Eron Perry from the Parish of Burleigh Heads variously presiding.

Mr Reid said that coordinating and co-hosting the conference with The Diocese of Grafton helped ensure that the program was relevant for all diocesan Registrar delegates.

“I was very pleased to work with my colleague Chris Nelson from Grafton on the conference,” he said.

“It was valuable having the two perspectives of a large metropolitan diocese and a regional diocese involved in assessing conference topics that would be of interest to the wide range of dioceses in Australia.”

The conference was sponsored by blueAPACHE, Citrix, LifeWorks, Ord Minnett and Marsh.

News • Tuesday 17 December 2019 • By Glenys Willocks

St Mary’s, Kilcoy supporting the Archbishop’s Emergency Relief Appeal

(L-R) Councillor Cheryl Gaedtke, Somerset Regional Council; Councillor Graeme Lehmann, Mayor, Somerset Regional Council; Mrs Ruth Blackburn, Bush Church Aid representative, Maleny; Glenys Willocks, Kilcoy/Woodford Parish Treasurer; and, Reb Jilee Chambers, Priest-in-Charge, Kilcoy/Woodford Parish at the Breakfast Under The Branches fundraiser at St Mary’s, Kilcoy in November
‘What can we do?’ That was the thought at St Mary’s Anglican Church in Kilcoy – what can we do to help people both in our own area and further afield to cope through this dreadful time of drought? The idea to try and bring the community together with a focus to instill hope and a shared need to pray for rain was born.

A beautiful fine November Sunday morning brought more than 50 people together under the branches of a lovely big tree near the church entrance, where we enjoyed a breakfast of homemade damper and scones, along with the wonderful taste of barbequed sausages and platters of fresh fruit.

The St Mary’s organising group was so very appreciative that Cr. Lehmann and Cr. Gaedtke were both able to attend. Both Councillors spoke about the need for, and importance of, reliable water supplies, and about resilience and the importance of ‘community’. They both spoke with sincere concern for our farmers and local communities.

Priest-in-Charge at Kilcoy and Woodford The Rev’d Jilleen Chambers offered prayers, which were backed up by great music provided by parishioners Stewart Koplick and Jenna and Nathan Haywood.

The Rev’d Jilleen also shared how the money raised at the breakfast would be donated to the Archbishop’s Emergency Relief Appeal and how the funds would be used.

Over $1000 was raised for the morning – every cent of which will go to the Archbishop's Emergency Relief Appeal. Jilleen made direct enquiries with parishes who had received funds from the Appeal. No administration costs are kept, as all donated funds are allocated to where they are needed. The funds are channeled to a number of areas, such as paying for doctor visits and medications; for children’s dental visits; for newsagent accounts for children’s school needs; and, many more things that are the hidden repercussions of drought.

The organisers also sought to have a representative from one of the many aid organisations supported by the Anglican Church. Mrs Ruth Blackburn from Maleny attended as a representative of Bush Church Aid (BCA). Ruth gave a wonderful testimony of the work done by BCA in rural and outback Australia. She also spoke about the power of prayer and encouraged everyone to continue to pray for rain and their struggling communities.

St Mary’s, Kilcoy is really buoyed by the great response to our breakfast, so watch for future ‘Breakfast Under The Branches’ events, which are a wonderful time to come together as a community to enjoy some homemade baking and good company, while raising money for a worthy cause.

The Archbishop’s Emergency Relief Appeal exists to make funds available to local parishes affected by drought, flood, fire or other emergencies in order to assist families in need with the purchase of groceries and other basic necessities, often from shops or service providers in their local communities. All money raised is spent on helping these families in need. You can make a difference by providing a gift to the Archbishop's Emergency Relief Appeal. Your gift will allow us to provide practical assistance and pastoral care to those who are struggling as result of drought or other emergencies and to show people that they are not alone.
Farewells and a Commissioning

The Anglican Schools Commission held its end-of-year Eucharist at St Augustine’s, Hamilton on Friday 29 November. During the service, The Rev’d Richard Browning was Commissioned Director of Mission for the ASC, also giving a heartwarming homily on what it means to be the Body of Christ. The Rev’d Richard is pictured with ASC Executive Director Sherril Molloy (left), Archbishop Phillip Aspinall and The Rev’d Canon Sarah Leisemann (right).

The Anglican Schools Commission celebrated the year’s achievements and highlights, farewelled long-serving staff and school council members, and Commissioned a new Director of Mission at an end-of-year Eucharist and dinner recently.

Chair of The Anglican Schools Commission (ASC) Bishop Jeremy Greaves said that he is proud of the achievements and engagement of our students in 2019 and of what our schools continue to offer.

“It is always such a joy to visit our schools and to see the remarkable variety and high standard of activities our students are involved in,” Bishop Greaves said.

“Magnificent music, wonderful art, sporting and academic excellence — all within some truly amazing facilities.

“More than anything this is what I love about being chair of the ASC, seeing the joy and enthusiasm of students engaged in all these things — it gives me tremendous hope!”

Archbishop Phillip Aspinall presided over the end-of-year Eucharist on Friday 29 November at St Augustine’s Church, Hamilton, during which he Commissioned The Rev’d Richard Browning as ASC’s new Director of Mission.
During the service, Commission and school council members, principals, chaplains and other Diocesan clergy and staff promised “to support and encourage” The Rev’d Richard, “welcoming him as a colleague in Christ’s service and supporting him in collaboration, friendship and prayer.”

Third generation Anglican priest The Rev’d Richard Browning, who joins us from Canberra where he has served as a school chaplain, said that he has long felt the call to serve in the education sector as an ordained priest and that he looks forward to his new role.

“There was a very real sense for me of welcome at the Eucharist and the anticipation that there is a deep and rich ministry I can participate in and be a part of,” The Rev’d Richard said.

“Pursuing ordained ministry in the school space was an accident of the grace of God and, once in, it became very obvious that ministering among educators and students is profoundly challenging and rewarding.

“I am looking forward to so, so much in my new role — the mischievous wind of the Spirit of God; being a part of a remarkable schools office team; and, following Christ deeper into the mission field of education.”

The Rev’d Richard was presented to the Archbishop by the Executive Director of The Anglican Schools Commission (ASC), Sherril Molloy.

Ms Molloy said that collectively giving thanks to God and being in the presence of many others during The Rev’d Richard’s Commissioning were particularly memorable for her.

“The highlight of the evening was so many people together giving thanks for the blessings we enjoy every single day in our schools and church,” Ms Molloy said.

“It was important and heartening to see so many people participating in Richard’s Commissioning and publicly and prayerfully committing to Richard’s calling as Director of Mission.”

After the Eucharistic service, a dinner was held, where Dr Toby Ford (Churchie), Mr Rob Law (St Paul’s), Ms Ann Marie Troutman (WestMAC), Mr Brett Nansen (WestMAC), Mr Michael Flanderka (WestMAC), Mr Glenn Powell (CAC), Prof Rowena Barrett (St John’s) and Mr Simon Gamble (St Andrew’s) were farewelled and thanks for their service on school councils.

The Rev’d Canon Nicki Colledge from St Margaret’s was acknowledged for her service as a teacher, boarding house mother and chaplain in various ACSQ schools since 1994.

And, long-term educator Brenda Suhr was honoured for 44 years of service to The Glennie School, with a heartfelt speech by Vanessa Gamack and the band playing LuLu’s 1967 hit ‘To Sir with love’.

Mrs Suhr said that she enjoyed working with Ms Gamack in her Glennie School role and that seeing primary students flourish was the highlight of her service at Glennie.

“In 1992 I was invited to move from Glennie Secondary Years, initially for just one year, to help re-establish the Junior Years, along with one other teacher, one telephone and old hand-me-down buildings,” Mrs Suhr said.
“We had no office, let alone office staff, but we had amazing parents, and with 26 children in total, we managed to participate in every competition and function we possibly could, including the Carnival of Flowers.

“I discovered my niche was in primary education, and since that time, I have enjoyed seeing our new buildings materialise, and thousands of Junior Years children blossom, becoming confident young ladies who are able to speak in public and live the values of our school.

“Another of the many highlights was taking Religious Education lessons with no training in that area, but with amazing help from Vanessa Gamack, I grew to love this newfound role.

“I had some wonderful role models during my school days and I knew I wanted to be like them, helping children to be the best they can be.

“I felt that as a teacher, I might be able to develop a culture of kindness, care and inclusivity, thus enhancing the lives of young people.”

The Anglican Schools Commission looks forward to another rewarding and enjoyable year in 2020 and prays that all members of our school communities have a blessed and joy-filled Christmas, returning in January refreshed for the year ahead.

**News • Friday 13 December 2019 • By The Rev’d Tania Eichler**

**A place to call home**

(L-R): Lorraine Peace, Jenny Tudman and Joyce Hansen serving up steak and vegies to Community Meal friends in the Church Hall at The Parish of Maroochydore in November 2019

Every Wednesday night, St Peter’s Anglican Church in Maroochydore hosts a free Community Meal for people who are homeless, isolated, lonely and in need of love and care, provision and social inclusion.
Our doors open around 5.00 pm, when we greet our guests and sit down with them for a chat in our Church Hall, providing soup, hot and cold beverages, biscuits and cake, along with a space for people to charge their phones.

Following grace, the main meal is served at 6.00 pm, after which there is a time of ‘Think Spot’ in which the Gospel message of love, hope, peace and joy is shared in an interactive way. Just like a family gathering, we also celebrate good news and birthdays!

This is a space where all are welcome. It is more than a meal — it is an extension of the family table with conversations and connections for all who need a hearty meal and some TLC.

One of our regular friends who comes to the Community Meal, Pat, said that the weekly gathering provides a home and family for him and others who come along:

“The Community Meal gives me, and us, hope. It helps me to stay connected and keeps me sane. I can connect and communicate and meet other people, my peers. This stops the isolation and segregation of being on the street. The good old-fashioned home cooked meals bring back good memories of family meals and gatherings. I value the community meal so much, as it gives me the family connection that I lack. It is like coming home for a Christmas or special occasion and having dinner, catching up with what has been happening, telling stories, and laughing and crying together. The Community Meal is my family.”

The Community Meal is a part of our Mission Plan as we aim to be an active and loving faith community of people who seek to live and be like Jesus. As such, we have a focus on outreach and service to the wider community. We seek to be welcoming and inclusive of all irrespective of age, race, gender, or ability, recognising that all people are created in the image of God. We aim to relate with respect and compassion to people who are in need, isolated or disadvantaged in the community.

Our Mission Plan also embraces our Diocesan Mission (The Mission of the Church is the Mission of Christ) of these two Marks of Mission:

“To respond to human need by loving service” (through the practical presence and provision at the Community Meal).

“To seek to transform unjust structures of society, to challenge violence of every kind and pursue peace and reconciliation” (through advocacy on behalf of people who struggle accessing government and not-for profit agency mental health, and other, support).

Our parishioner volunteers share with me that they see the Community Meal as a ministry that they feel blessed to be a part of, including Jenny:

“I enjoy it! I love our guests; the team and it is being with friends. I see it as a way of life, a ministry, not a job. I feel so blessed that I am able to do it and see and hear the love from all friends whom we welcome at the Community Meal.”

Our caring and loving presence through the Community Meal is often mentioned and personal thanks is given to the team. We have had many opportunities to grow relationships and spend time discussing pastoral and faith issues and requests for prayer. The impact of this has seen more people engaging with the Think Spot, sharing their life’s journey and taking steps in faith journey.
Through the Community Meal our parishioners disciple people, as they listen, engage and share stories, and we also have five Community Meal friends who have become regulars in our worship services and have begun to take up service to, with and for others. For example, Rob, helps care for our gardens and recently planted a vegie patch. Another, Greg, coordinates the packing up and clearing of tables.

Thank you to the many people who minister God’s love in this way.

**Top 10 tips for starting and coordinating regular Community Meals**

1. First, do enough research to identify whether a Community Meal (or another initiative) will meet the needs of your surrounding community and discuss the idea of hosting a regular Community Meal with parishioners to ensure there is enough support for the idea.
2. Make the Community Meal a regular day/time so parishioner volunteers can more easily commit to assisting and so guests have a regular event to look forward to.
3. Ensure each guest is warmly welcomed as soon as they enter the door.
4. Choose menu items that are healthy and easy to prepare in bulk, sourcing local fresh produce for regular donations.
5. Say grace and share the Gospel message in an accessible way that is free of jargon and centred on Jesus’ love for each person.
6. To help create a ‘home-like’ welcome, celebrate people’s birthdays and good news.
7. Actively find ways for parishioners to participate and contribute their unique talents (such as cooking, serving and hospitality skills) and gifts (such as warmth, ability to listen and enthusiasm).
8. Give regular guests appropriate opportunities to participate, so they also feel some ‘ownership’ over the initiative.
9. Use a variety of media to get word out about your Community Meal, such as flyers, social media, church signage and your church’s website.
10. Thank your parishioner volunteers for their specific contributions.
2019 ordinands a blend of traditional and unconventional journeys to faith

The Rev'd Danni Clark with her husband David and daughters Bibi, Saskia and Romilly after the ordination service

The Rev'd Danni Clark

The Rev’d Danni Clark freely admits her journey to ordination has been an unconventional one and that she breaks the traditional mould of an Anglican priest.

But, that made her ordination last Saturday so much more memorable and emotional when she was joined by family and fellow ordinands at their special service at St John's Cathedral.

The ordination service also reinforces and symbolises the broad church which is the Anglican Church of Southern Queensland.

The Rev’d Danni grew up in rural England as one of three children and describes her childhood as “chaotic”. Although drawn to music and prompted to join the local church choir at a young age by her piano teacher (“we weren't a family of church-goers”) she was a self-confessed “teenage rebel” and dreamed of a music career while playing in garage bands.

“I think my parents did the best that they could...but there wasn't an awful lot in the way of guidance,” The Rev’d Danni said.

“I left home when I was 16 – some time after my parents divorced, but I still stayed in school. I was working in a pub at night while attending school during the day and it was a case of just surviving for a few years there.
“I’m blessed because my life could have turned out very differently. I played hard, but I also worked hard to pay the rent and made sure I finished school.”

She attended theological college in the UK and became more involved with the church, while also working in theatre and with people who were homeless.

However, it was through her ‘church family’ that The Rev’d Danni said she found solace and direction.

“My Church of England parish family provided me with lots of friends and extra ‘aunts and uncles’,” she said.

“That’s where I found stability, although I became more deeply involved in my church after my first daughter was born when I was 24. My husband David and I had met when I was at school and started dating after school.

“When I had a new baby, I reflected on having survived the roller coaster of life, which I thought was all a bit of a miracle. I didn't want my daughter to struggle to find where her family was and to feel connected to family, so in the months after the birth I went back to my old church in Essex.”

She felt an immediate reconnection – “everything was still there in its place – the church was a constant. It hadn't changed. God hadn't changed.”

When her second daughter was born, The Rev’d Danni began to immerse herself in church and parish life and before too long she was being told by parishioners that she would make a good vicar. She enrolled in theological studies at Lincoln Theological College, despite her local vicar not being generally supportive of women priests.

“I had to do some soul-searching. I felt I was being called to faithfulness by God, but I thought: ‘They don't make people like me vicars’,” she said.

“But the pull towards faith was strong. It's an in-built, genuine calling inside of you. I tried several times over the years to run away from it, but kept getting pulled back.

“In England, it also got to the point where, despite attempts by my local vicar to suggest alternative pathways for me, my sense of calling to priesthood persisted. Eventually, David and I decided we were going to move to Australia in 2014 and by that time we had four daughters.”

Despite her English theological studies and having undergone discernment in England, The Rev’d Danni replicated the journey in Brisbane at St Francis College from 2016 to 2018.

In many ways, The Rev’d Danni breaks the mould of a typical Anglican priest with her brightly (and ever-changing) coloured hair, multiple piercings, along with a left arm filled with colourful tattooed artistic impressions of her four daughters and other personal artwork.

“People say ‘Crikey, she's in there and the roof hasn't blown off, so hopefully that might inspire others who are a bit different from the traditional Anglican priest,” she said.
The Rev’d Juliana Bate

Like The Rev’d Danielle Clark, The Rev’d Juliana Bate did not come from a traditional church-going family and her parents also divorced when she was young while growing up in New Zealand.

She was always “spiritually and intellectually curious”, which led her to become an altar server at her Catholic School when she was 10 and served in churches in various roles until high school. She stopped attending church in high school and only resumed after she had met her now-husband The Rev’d Chris Bate when they moved to Australia in 2006.

They were married in 2008 and joined the Parish of Waterloo Bay (after the birth of their children in 2012). Both Juliana and Chris had a sense of calling around the same time, but agreed it was impractical for them both to study conjointly at St Francis College, especially with young children. The Rev’d Chris Bate was eventually ordained in 2017 and Juliana was ordained a deacon last Saturday.

“Discerning the call on my life as a Christian has been one of the biggest challenges. Like a lot of people, my life has not been without its mistakes or regrets,” said The Rev’d Juliana.

“There have been poor decisions that affected the course of my life and the relationships that I have with others. There have been areas where reconciliation has occurred and other experiences where the damage and hurt cannot be undone. Yet each experience has brought me to where I am today. In each experience I have grown, learnt and become who I am.”

The Rev’d Bate has been working as a trainee chaplain across three schools – most recently at West Moreton Anglican College.

Juliana and Chris are among 23 ordained married couples in the Brisbane Diocese and The Rev’d Juliana says they have drawn strength and support from other ministry couples, including priests Zoe and David Browne.

“There is a unique quality in being married clergy, especially with young children (Connar is aged 10 and Victoria is aged eight),” she said.

“The family and the children make huge sacrifices for us to both go into ministry, especially when our study overlapped. The demands on our time are significant so we have to consciously allocate time with each other to just be a normal family and to strike a balance with our marriage and find some balance for our children.”

The Rev’d Juliana says she is called primarily to school chaplaincy, but also works collaboratively in a parish.

The 2019 ordinations continue the recent trend of women outnumbering men. Since 2008, there have been 47 women ordained as priests in our Diocese, compared to 37 men (women were first ordained in the Anglican Church in 1992).
The Rev'd Michael Calder

The Rev'd Michael Calder grew up in a Christian family and continues a long lineage of Anglican priests in his family. His grandfather on his mother’s side, The Rev'd Frank Copland, who regularly read him stories from the Bible as a child, served as curate at St Stephen's, Coorparoo before serving in the parish of Old Guildford, Sydney for 30 years.

Aged 24, The Rev'd Michael is one of the youngest ordinands from St Francis College in recent years and says a journey to ministry has been on his mind since he was 14. It was his work in youth ministry on the Sunshine Coast where his father, The Right Rev'd Mark Calder (who was recently appointed Bishop of Bathurst) served as Rector of Noosa (2009-2019) and Priest-in-Charge of Cooroora (2016-2019).

“My faith was tested when I was reaching the final years of high school and I guess I was forced to take ownership of my faith. God has always been in my heart, but that has grown as I grew older,” The Rev'd Michael said.

“There was never any pressure by any of my family – only ever love and support and it was great to be able to have more spiritually meaningful conversations about faith as I grew older. I did consider other career options – teaching, chaplaincy and being a pilot with Mission Aviation Fellowship Australia.

“I worked as a barista as well for a while after I left school, but that was only ever temporary while I undertook theological studies. Because of my conviction as an Anglican, I then decided to pursue the path to Anglican ordination in 2016 with my year of discernment and my conviction only growing stronger since then.”

The Rev'd Michael says with a big gap in parishes in our Diocese of people aged between 20 and 40, he wants to help to build a bridge between the generations. He believes that within people of faith, everyone's greatest need is their relationship with Jesus under an umbrella of faith forgiveness and freedom.

“I know there are many challenges ahead for me. One of the greatest challenges is to stay on a true path and to keep the Gospel at the heart of what I do in my ministry,” he said.

“The world needs good news amid all the selfishness, greed and turbulence in everyday life. I'm passionate about doing whatever I can to help people know and understand God's word through the Bible.”
Clergy aged 65+ wellbeing and contribution survey

Earlier this year a survey was sent to 305 clergy over the age of 65 in our Diocese seeking to understand issues relating to their wellbeing. The survey was developed through the Clergy Wellbeing...
Development Group under the auspices of the Parishes and other Mission Agencies Commission (PMC) and in consultation with clergy in this age group. The response to the survey was excellent, with 122 people letting us know what they thought, representing a 40 percent response rate.

Initial analysis of the data has provided us with some valuable insights into this group and their wellbeing. Further work is ongoing exploring the results and assisting the Clergy Wellbeing Development Group as they shape initiatives and responses to care for and support clergy in this age group.

One of the first things that should be recognised is the size of this group of clergy and how many hours of work they contribute. At a time in life when people usually wind back work-related activities, clergy aged over 65 in the Anglican Church Southern Queensland are making a huge contribution. We have to wonder what the church would look like if the thousands of hours of quality ministry they provide were not given. If you know a deacon, priest or bishop over 65, take the time to thank and encourage them. They are helping the mission of our church in amazing ways.

The following bar graph shows how many hours of ministry priests/deacons associated with parish, chaplaincy, or another ministry contribute in a typical week (showing age group in the vertical axis)

Another positive element standing out in the survey results is that this group generally feels valued, are satisfied with the type of ministry they are exercising and are largely happy with the number of hours they are working. Clearly there is still much work to be done in improving the wellbeing of clergy in this age group, but overall as a Diocese we seem to be in a good position. It would be valuable to learn from clergy in the over 65 group how they have sustained their own wellbeing in ministry over many years.
The following bar graph shows how satisfied (regarding enjoyment and match to skills and gifts) priests/deacons are with the type of ministry they are exercising (showing hours worked in a week in the vertical axis)

The following bar graph shows how cared for and valued priests/deacons feel at this stage of their life in the Church (showing hours worked in a week in the vertical axis)
The following bar graph shows how many priests/deacons would like to increase, decrease or maintain their hours of ministry (showing hours worked in a week in the vertical axis).

There were a number of results that point toward areas of consideration and work for the Clergy Wellbeing Development Group. For example, it was found that:

- generally, the younger the respondent the more likely they are to have a spiritual director.
- those working less than 30 hours per week were less likely to go on retreat.
- across the age groups, at least half of all respondents desired to be involved in ongoing professional development.

Ways of making retreats, spiritual direction and professional development more accessible and relevant to this age group will be considered by the Clergy Wellbeing Development Group.

There is more work to be done with the findings of this survey, and the initiatives developed from it will be shared in 2020.

It is important for all of us in the Anglican Church Southern Queensland to recognise that we all have a responsibility to foster the wellbeing of those we live, work and minister with, whether they be lay or ordained, volunteer or paid, young or senior. What are you doing to support and nurture those around you?

One simple, but powerful, thing you can do (if you aren't already) is to pray regularly for those around you — for giftedness, courage, faith and love.
Words, and The Word, exist in and for community

Words are not always easy. But sometimes they flow as if I am just the river through which some other water is flowing. I have been ordained for 30 years. The countless sermons produced during that time have sometimes been the product of a relatively easy drawing together of threads from the week that has passed, the world in which we are immersed, and the joys and tragedies played out on television screens and in social media streaming...all brought into patterns and images and an ongoing search for meaning by reflection on the passages of Scripture gifted to us in our Lectionary each week. At other times, sermons have been the grinding toil of wading through a swirling fog, a bog in which each step forward is fraught with the dual danger of slipping into a mess or striding into a meaningless, blank void. There are times when the gobbledygook on the computer screen is worth nothing more than the effort it takes to 'select all' and delete. And, then in silence and with patience I wait for my struggling words to be replaced with THE Word, my feeble attempts to be filled with THE Light, my eyes to be opened again by God.

There are many times across the years when I have written words which were more poetry than sermon, and some of these have even found their way into that space in worship when we reflect on what we have heard from the Scriptures. Some of these words have been shaped as hymns. Rarely original in every way, they always draw upon the wisdom and clearer sight of others who lend patterns and phrases and ways of seeing which in my kaleidoscope are turned around into new combinations. Words become patterns and draw pictures to invite conversations.

That is always the point. There is nothing more dispiriting than the deflecting compliment, “That was nice.” I don’t write or preach or BE so that there will be just gentle acceptance or polite murmurings in response. I AM so that there will be engagement, conversation, robust interaction. The occasional barbs and criticisms and confrontational phrases which find their way into words are never offered for insult or offence. They are always an invitation into conversation.

Poems, for me, seem to emerge at the ends of my experience. In the middle, when life bubbles along with few ripples and everything is calm, the creative light which makes meaningful verse and reflections worth recording rarely appears. It is when I am stretched that poems sometimes erupt. Sometimes by the inevitable pain of loss or grief or outrage at others’ unjust experiences. Most of those thoughts I hold to myself because they are too raw, though sometimes they find their way into expressions of the rawness of our shared struggling existence. I never feel, though, that I am stuck in a pattern of ‘quiet desperation’ (see Henry David Thoreau for his thoughts on this). I feel I am more like Oscar Wilde, sharing a gutter but looking upwards to the stars, and to God, for some brighter perspective than the one in which I am immersed.

And, then there are the times of sheer joy, when words find ways of encapsulating the sparkles and setting them into a glass of champagne which I can savour and hopefully share with delight as they rise.

Everything is to be shared. Trapped water becomes stagnant. Even the most delicious food, when it is locked away, decays. Love withers when it is not expressed. Words, and The Word, exist in and for community. At least for me it seems that this is so.

What do you think?
There was a man from Galilee
Poem by The Rev'd Paul Mitchell

There was the man from Galilee who struck Toowoomba town,
He wandered over street and park, he wandered up and down.
He loitered here he loitered there, ‘till it was nearly dark.
Until at last he found his way into our own Queen’s Park.
He found a group of weary men, all seated in the round
And there he sat, right down with them, the new friends he had found.

He spent the night, a borrowed rug, all tattered torn and stained
Was all the cover that he had, thank God it didn’t rain.
But lack of rain was a sore point, the ground was dry and hard.
And as he talked with His new friends they all let down their guard.
Life is tough out on the streets, ‘specially this time of year
When everyone else, all around, is celebrating with good cheer.

He sat and listened, his heart was touched, that man from Galilee.
He pondered all that he was told and wondered ‘how it could be?’
That in a world so full of wealth and food, with great stability
There were so many on the edge, shunned by community.
It brought a tear into his eyes, a pain into his heart
To see that all he’d taught, and lived, had sadly fallen apart.

He remembered well the joy and smiles with which his life began.
His mother’s love, his father’s pride, the heavenly Father’s plan.
Into that simple place of birth there were some other folk
Unwashed and simple, yet filled with joy, he saw them when he woke.
They simply came to share that joy, and wonder of his birth
And smiles and joking too of course, there was a lot of mirth!

The celebrations and the joy were shared with even more.
Those wise and present-laden visitors from a distant shore.
It was a time of sharing, gifting, giving from the heart.
That set the scene, made a pattern, right there at the start.
For in his birth, and life, the call was to discover generosity
To have an open willing heart is the gift that sets us free.

The man got up and went to leave, to see if he could find
Some people who would come and help the new friends he had found.
But then before he could depart to look for help elsewhere
Those simple, smelly, homeless friends said, “Stay here, we will share.”
And from their bags and pockets hearty treasures were released
Basic food, in cans and packs, a veritable feast!

I wonder as I think on this, a quirky Christmas tale
Just what the man from Galilee would find in town today.
There would be many homeless, lonely, isolated folk
And those in pain and grief and fear, including from the smoke.
Will generosity be found? And joy? Revealed for all to see
Reflecting love which comes to us through the man from Galilee.
Human Rights Day

“Recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world.”

So commences the preamble of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), proclaimed by the United Nations General Assembly in Paris on 10 December 1948 as Resolution 217A.

The 30 articles of the UDHR were drafted by representatives with different legal and cultural backgrounds from all regions of the world. The articles uphold freedom and equality in dignity and rights; fairness of treatment under the law; protections against discrimination; rights to citizenship and movement; freedom of thought, opinion, and faith; rights to participation in association and government; fair conditions of employment and rest; rights to education; and, rights to, and obligations in, an ordered society.

The 1948 Lambeth Conference – the assembly of Bishops of the Anglican Communion – resolved to endorse the then proposed UDHR in terms of full religious freedoms. Its caveat was that any limitations should be “internationally recognised as necessary to protect...the rights and freedoms of others.” Breaches of these rights and freedoms are at the heart of concerns over the Religious Freedoms Bills, presently before our Federal Parliament.

The Australian Human Rights Commission’s submission to the Attorney-General says as much. Not only does it warn that the Bills contravene Federal, state, and territory anti-discrimination laws, but also that they add layered protection of discrimination by being too broad in defining who may be a victim of religious discrimination, and too narrow in defining who may occasion it. The Public Affairs Commission of the Anglican Church of Australia also made a submission: in the context of human rights, likewise identifying how the Bills weaken and compromise existing anti-discrimination measures. This view was also reflected in the submission by The Anglican Diocese of Newcastle.

Human rights become legally binding on nations through treaties. Australia is party to the seven core treaties, such as on civil and political rights; anti-discrimination rights; rights against torture and degrading punishment; and, the rights of the child. Australia supports the United Nations (UN) Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, but not as legally binding. This is pertinent while the 2017 Statement from the Heart’s call for a national Indigenous voice enshrined in the Constitution remains unanswered.

Elements of Australia’s human rights record are significantly lacking. In late September, the UN’s Committee on the Rights of the Child advocated for an urgent Australian response to the protection of children from violence; mental health risks; climate change; inadequate asylum, refugee and migration policy; and, misadministration of justice [9]. The Committee also addressed issues specific to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.

The Committee further observed that climate change, care for the environment, and disaster risk management have strong potential for adverse impact on human rights, not least on those of the child.
This is not the only UN criticism of Australia's human rights records in recent years. Yet, in delivering the 2019 Lowy Lecture [10], the Prime Minister appeared to label the UN as an “unaccountable internationalist bureaucracy,” owing to its scrutiny of the country's human rights mechanisms and its naming failures of the same.

Regrettably, this stance distances Australia from its obligation to uphold the universal rights which it helped forge over 70 years ago.

Human rights are Godly. They are not merely a bureaucratic provision. The UDHR asserts human rights comprise the “foundation of freedom, justice and peace.” As Christians, we understand freedom, justice and peace to be founded on God-in-Christ – themes which resonate particularly strongly during Advent. How, then, does our faith inform our understanding of human rights? God made humankind in God's image; God blessed humankind; and, God saw that humankind (and all creation) was very good (Genesis 1.26-28,31).

Human dignity flows from our relationship with God. It is a divine character of our created selves. It is not somehow earned or externally awarded. It rests on our affirmation of God as source of all being; human freedom to respond to relationship with God upholds human dignity.

Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274) elicited the fundamental nature of human rights and freedoms as stemming from our capability to discern God and to love God freely. Our rights and freedom are grounded and exercised in community.

The life and ministry of Jesus are suffused with concern for and upholding of human dignity. In Jesus’ healing of the ten lepers (Luke 17.11-17), outcasts were restored to dignity amid the harsh standards of purity and acceptability exercised by community leaders. Jesus broke with racial and gender discriminatory practices in his companionship with the woman of Samaria (John 4.1-42). Jesus always upheld the inherent God-given dignity of the people he encountered.

The Collins English Dictionary defines social justice as the principle that all members of society have equal rights and opportunities. Breaches of human dignity are manifestations of social injustice.

When we promise in our Baptism to reject selfish living and all that is false and unjust, we commit before God to uphold and work for the dignity and rights of all people, and thus honour the foundation of God's freedom, God's justice, and God's peace in the world.

Sunday Devotions • Monday 16 December 2019 • By The Rev’d Jazz Dow

Sunday Devotion: 22 December 2019, Fourth Sunday of Advent

Fear not, God is with us

Main readings: Isaiah 7.10-16; Psalm 80.1-7, 17-19; Romans 1.1-7; Matthew 1.18-25

Supplementary readings: Psalm 72.1-14; 2 Corinthians 12.21-13.7; Ruth 4.9-21; Psalm 80.7-19; Matthew 1.1-6 (7-16) 17
“But just when he had resolved to do this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, ‘Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife, for the child conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit.’” (Matthew 1.20)

In the 2006 dystopian motion picture action thriller, *Children of Men*, the world is depicted devoid of children, laughter, joy and play, instead dominated by relentless war and humanity's impending extinction. Just as the viewer is exhausted by the violence and hopelessness, a child is born into the chaos. Gunfire stops. Silence. The audience takes a breath. A child is carried into their midst.

When Joseph realises Mary is pregnant and the baby is not his, he plans to dismiss her according to social custom, albeit quietly. But, in a dream an angel appears to Joseph and says, “do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife”. The passage goes on to speak of the fulfilling of the prophecy we read in today's Isaiah reading, “Look, the young woman is with child and shall bear a son, and shall name him Immanuel” (Isaiah 7.14). Today's readings proclaim that in the birth of Christ, God is with us (‘Immanuel’).

We are bombarded daily with messages of hopelessness through stories of violence in the digital and print media we consume. However, when the child is born into relentless bleakness in *Children of Men*, I am reminded of our Advent hope — the birth of the Christ child. In just a few days we will rejoice as Mary gives birth to Jesus, God with us, the Prince of Peace.

In the Christmas story we are invited as disciples of Christ to bear Christ, working constructively to bring hope and peace into a broken world.

**Sunday Devotions • Tuesday 17 December 2019 • By The Rev'd Helen Paget**

**Sunday Devotion: 29 December 2019, First Sunday after Christmas**

Hope and restoration

**Main Readings:** Isaiah 63.7-9; Psalm 148; Hebrews 2.10-18; Matthew 2.13-23

**Supplementary Readings:** Psalm 132.1-9; 2 Corinthians 13.5-13; Isaiah 63.9-14; Psalm 66.12-19; John 3.16-21

“Get up, take the child and his mother, and go to the land of Israel, for those who were seeking the child's life are dead.” (Matthew 2.20)

One day I received a call from my husband asking me if I preferred Darwin or Perth for his forthcoming Air Force posting. As we still had children at school, I chose Perth. However, as it happened, seven years later we then ended up in Darwin, and it was there that I first felt a call to ordination. Would the call have happened if we had gone to Darwin first? Probably, but my life journey during those years was a significant catalyst for identifying my call, which may not have otherwise happened.

This week’s Gospel reading reveals a God who cares for what happens to us as individuals — God who called Joseph to take his family away from ‘clear and present danger’ even if it meant settling in a
foreign land for a while. The reading also reveals a God who did not abandon them, a God who remained with them and then, when the danger was no longer present, a God who invited them to return to home.

During my married life, I have been in many ‘foreign lands’, both physical and spiritual, but God has always been with me. God has been my strength during such times, and when the invitation to return from those lands comes, I just need to respond.

Life can get messy sometimes. Life does not always play out the way we envisage it, throwing us curve balls at unexpected moments. But, if we trust in God’s love for us, we will always have the right swing to hit those curve balls for a home run.