COVID-19 chrysalis

In the last week, I’ve heard a couple of people use the phrase ‘when things go back to normal…’ and I’ve asked them what they mean. Will the huge number of unemployed people in Australia quickly find work? Will we be able to fly overseas for work and leisure before Christmas? And, will those aged over 70 and other people deemed ‘high risk’ be able to gather with others again in their communities before a vaccine is developed?

In the Church we can helpfully wonder what the new normal for us will be as restrictions ease, and if there will be a number of stages that need to be worked through! Whatever happens, I don’t think it will be possible for us to go back to being the way we were before and that is both unsettling and exciting.

For while we have been unable to physically gather we have learnt many new things and this includes an increasing capacity to use digital communication technologies for worship, Christian formation, and care of others. Both large and small parishes have found that more people are engaging with what they are offering online than when their churches were open and we can rightly thank God for many emerging opportunities.

An example from the far west of our Diocese is that some congregations well used to the limitations of monthly worship have had new opportunities to go online each week for worship and teaching. This experience has been so positive that many in those congregations have expressed the hope that these online opportunities continue each week in the new normal.

I think it will be helpful to ask important questions in this strange and demanding liminal time. As we care for people who have lost their jobs and are not sure about how to pay their bills. As we support those who are struggling with illness, isolation and grief. And, as we provide worship and formation resources to those who are online and those who have no internet access.

What are the new things we have started that need to continue, and what are the new things we have started that we need to cease? What are the things we used to do that we long to do again, and what are those things that now seem irrelevant or unhelpful?

Having clarity about our core business will help to shape and guide our responses to these questions and I think they are worth taking into prayer and wrestling with.

We know that when a caterpillar wraps itself in a chrysalis it starts to radically change and I wonder if God’s Spirit is enabling radical change in the Church during this time as we stay in our homes as much as possible to keep our communities safe? For in this time we are developing competency with new tools to gather, teach, and build community; new ways of telling stories and creating music; and, new awareness of the digital landscape where many people live and work.
Some years ago, I read an article which suggested that if you cut a chrysalis open to help the emerging butterfly get out easily it will not be able to fly because it is in the process of struggling that the wings get the necessary blood flow to function. I think that's a helpful reminder for us as we work together to create the new normal.

We are to wrestle with the uncomfortable questions and answers, recognising that in the struggle we will in all likelihood find new potential to fly.

What do you think?

News • Friday 1 May 2020 • By Michelle McDonald

Ancient Aboriginal practice meets Divine Christian call

Kabi Kabi, Koa and Yuin artist Stevie O'Chin introduced her ‘Being Together’ dot painting to Archbishop Phillip Aspinall on 24 January 2020 in St Martin's House, Brisbane in the lead up to the Archbishop's 2020 Diocesan annual theme 'Being Together: Practising Peacemaking' launch

A stunning Aboriginal dot painting has been commissioned by the Parish and Other Mission Agencies Commission (PMC) to commemorate Archbishop Phillip Aspinall's 2020-2022 Diocesan theme, fittingly upholding our community's commitment to Reconciliation and our Christian call to seek unity and holiness.

The painting, entitled ‘Being Together’, was created by talented emerging artist Stevie O'Chin, who belongs to the Kabi Kabi and Koa peoples on her father's side and the Yuin people on her mother’s side.

Stevie O'Chin said that she was particularly inspired by the seventh Diocesan Mark of Mission 'to live as one holy catholic and apostolic Church', which is represented by the intricate circle in the centre of the artwork.
“Each circle has ‘U shapes’ that surround the symbols – these symbolise people gathering together to worship, and the blue dotted rings around each symbol in the circles mark the spiritual healing power of God,” Ms O’Chin said.

“What inspired this piece of artwork is what the mission stands for...the mission’s holistic approach...and wanting to make a difference for the betterment of humankind in this country.”

Ms O’Chin said that she carefully considered all elements of the ‘Being Together’ work, which evolved organically during the process of its creation.

“Much thought went into this piece, from design, pattern and the colour scheme, and I find that while reflecting on the piece of art I’m designing, it constantly changes and evolves once I start applying paint to the canvas.”
Artist Stevie O'Chin said that she was particularly inspired by the seventh Diocesan Mark of Mission ‘to live as one holy catholic and apostolic Church’, which is represented by the intricate circle in the centre of the artwork: “Each circle has ‘U shapes’ that surround the symbols – these symbolise people gathering together to worship, and the blue dotted rings around each symbol in the circles mark the spiritual healing power of God”

Archbishop Phillip Aspinall said that ‘to live as one holy catholic and apostolic Church’ harks back to an ecumenical creed with an emphasis on unity and holiness, and he encourages us to share our ‘Being Together’ stories with him.

“One of the marks of mission of our Diocese is ‘to live as one holy catholic and apostolic Church’, which is based on the Nicene Creed,” Archbishop Aspinall said.

“‘Catholic’ comes from the Greek kata meaning ‘according to’ and holos meaning ‘whole’ or ‘all’. So, part of our mission is to live in unity and holiness in accordance with the whole church.

“John 17.20-24 tells us that Jesus desires unity among his disciples, just as he and God the Father are one, so that the world will believe that the Father sent Jesus.

“To be one is our divine calling and goes to the heart of our mission. This is so regardless of real or perceived differences among us.

“As we explore ‘Being Together’ over the next three years, I hope that we embrace the call ‘to live as one holy catholic and apostolic Church’. Christ’s mission to the world, our mission, depends on it.

“I look forward to hearing about how you explore ‘Being Together’ and the fruit it bears.”

Dot painting is one of the most internationally recognised forms of Aboriginal First Nations art.

It is an ancient and deeply symbolic practice of the world’s oldest continuously living culture that started with sand, soil and body ‘canvases’, with First Nations artists commencing dot painting on framed stretched canvases in the 1970s.

Ms O’Chin said that she carries on a family legacy of Aboriginal dot painting.

“My paintings are inspired by my surroundings and stories told to me by my parents and family elders,” she said.

“I hail from a large family, many of who are artists, from both my parents’ sides, and I was influenced from a young age and was self-taught from watching my family.

“I am very happy with the result of each artwork; I feel like everything is positioned in the right place and tells the story perfectly.”

The Anglican Church Southern Queensland’s Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) states that:

“Reconciliation is specifically identified as a key imperative within the Fourth Mark of Mission of the Anglican Communion, as part of God's Transformation of our lives and all of Creation. Indeed, within Australian contexts, it is hard to see how justice can be done to any of the five international Marks of Mission without adequate attention and will being brought to Indigenous reconciliation issues (p. 3).”
PMC Executive Director and RAP Working Group member Stephen Harrison said that Aboriginal dot painting was chosen as the medium for the artwork to, both, tangibly commemorate the 2020-2022 Diocesan theme’s richness and to uphold the principles and ‘Actions’ of our RAP, which our whole Diocesan community is committed to.

“The timeless practice of Aboriginal dot painting symbolically communicates the depth of the 2020-2022 ‘Being Together’ theme in profound and multi-layered ways,” Dr Harrison said.

“By commissioning dot paintings for the commemoration of our 2020-2022 annual theme, the RAP’s ‘Actions’ to ‘engage diocese, schools and Anglicare staff in understanding and appreciating Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, histories and achievements (p.13)’ and to ‘incorporate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander supplier diversity within the Church (p. 16)’ are formally embedded in our Diocesan-wide strategies and practices.”

Dr Harrison introduced the intricate ‘Being Together’ dot painting to our Diocesan community at the launch event for the Archbishop’s 2020 ‘Being Together: Practising Peacemaking’ theme in February during a moving service in St John’s Cathedral.

News • Thursday 23 April 2020 • By Ian Eckersley

CAC students use 3D printers to help medical personnel on the COVID-19 frontlines

Teacher Beth Claydon enlisted the help of Year 3 students Grace Coombs, Jacob Arfuso and Jett Spriggs to make the lifesaving equipment for Queensland Health workers

Students and teachers at Coomera Anglican College have stepped up to the mark to help their community in its hour of need amidst COVID-19’s challenges by making desperately needed protective equipment for the state’s frontline medical staff.
The biofabrication unit at Brisbane’s Metro North Hospital and Health Service put out a community SOS late last month, as they scrambled for protective equipment for Queensland nurses and doctors – most notably 3000 face shield headbands, which were needed within a three-week timeframe.

The hope was that people who owned 3D printers would be able to help fulfil this need – and the Coomera Anglican College (CAC) community responded swiftly to the challenge.

CAC Technologies and Innovation Specialist Beth Claydon said that the whole process was achievable and openly welcomed by everyone at Coomera Anglican College.

“We jumped at the opportunity to be able to print as many as we possibly could to support our health workers…and the students were very willing to get on board as well,” Mrs Claydon said.

“The design file was created by University of Melbourne MSD Robotics Unit and disseminated by Metro North Health and Hospital Service. The file to make the face shield headbands was downloaded from the Internet and then sent to our 3D printers.

“It has been taking each printer around half an hour to print one headband.

“When the print is finished, we collect it with gloves and place it in a plastic bag, as aseptically as possible to prevent any transfer of germs or infection.

“This is then posted off to the Royal Brisbane and Women’s Hospital. There are all sorts of people and companies around Queensland who are taking this opportunity to help…and it is so great to see everyone working together.”

The 3D printers are located throughout CAC, including in the Primary School innovative learning hub, called ‘The Pod’, which quickly attracted a team of young helpers.

The school dedicated all of its 3D printers to the task before the Easter break and produced 200 face shield headbands. With the collective community effort, the Queensland Health deadline of three weeks for the PPE equipment was reached in just five days.

For eight-year-old student Grace Coombs, the project was especially personal, with both of her parents frontline health workers.

“I think it’s really good that the school and the students and teachers are helping to print 3D masks for the doctors and nurses to keep them safe from the coronavirus,” Grace said.

CAC Principal Mark Sly said that he was delighted to see the school embrace a real-world challenge.

“It is wonderful for our younger students at the college to know that what they learn about each day in their technology lessons is something that is actually going towards solving a problem and keeping health workers safe,” Dr Sly said.

The Coomera Anglican College 3D project was featured on Channel 9 news on Sunday 5 April, with the story showing on Gold Coast and Brisbane news bulletins – shining a light on the innovative efforts of CAC’s teachers and students.
I first encountered English mystic, theologian and anchorite Julian of Norwich (1342-c.1417) as a literature student through her line quoted in TS Eliot's 1942 poem 'Little Gidding':

'Sin is Behovely, but
All shall be well, and
All manner of thing shall be well.'

I was intrigued enough by the footnote to remember the name when, a few years later, I was sent on pastoral placement to Norwich and on a day off sought out her 'cell'. I found myself embraced by its deep and tender silence. There I bought a small anthology of her writings and was immediately drawn to her emphasis on love, her acknowledgment of the feminine aspect of God and her sheer common sense. She has been a spiritual companion ever since.

Since the 20th century, Julian of Norwich has become perhaps the best known of all the medieval mystics writing in English. Indeed, her *Revelations of Divine Love* (or *Showings*) was the first book to be written in English by a woman. We know very little of her personal life, but her teaching on the contemplative life and her meditation on her experience of God's love continues to resonate today. In particular, she lived through two periods of plague, in which she nearly lost her own life and experienced the deaths of those close to her. Hence Julian's well known phrase that 'all shall be well, and all shall be well and all manner of thing shall be well' comes from a place of great depth that assists us as we, too, face serious global health challenges in the COVID-19 environment.

We do not know her real name and must assume that she was known as 'Julian of Norwich' because her anchoress' cell was attached to the Church of St Julian at Corniford in the city of Norwich, where it can still be visited today. Norwich in the Middle Ages was a great centre for trade, especially in wool
and textiles, and hence, like ports today, also a great entry point for plague, carried then by rats on boats from continental Europe.

It was not uncommon in the 12th and 13th centuries for women to choose the life of an anchoress. The term comes from the Greek word *anachorein*, meaning 'to go apart' and such people would withdraw from the world entirely in order to contemplate God without disturbance. Such folk certainly understood the value of social isolation! Their 'cell' would be attached to a church and would generally have two windows, one opening onto the church so that they could receive the sacraments and the other onto the street, so that they could receive food and water and converse with those who visited them for counsel.

It was a life of withdrawal, but not especially ascetic, and it is likely that Julian had a maid to tend to her needs – it is also thought that she had a cat, presumably to keep the mice at bay! If you are interested in the life of an anchoress, the Australian novelist Robyn Cadwallader has written an excellent book *The Anchoress*, obtainable from the Roscoe Library as well as from good book stores.

Before she became an anchoress, 30-year-old Julian had a ‘near death’ experience in 1373. She records that the lower half of her body had already died and the upper half was about to do so when she experienced a series of sixteen visions of Christ, after which she recovered. She became an anchoress as a result and recorded her experience in the *Shewings or Revelations of Divine Love*. This text exists in two versions, the short version of 25 chapters written soon after her experience and a longer, 86-chapter version, which records her 20 years or so of meditation upon her visions.

Julian’s 16 revelations, or showings, reveal her to be a sensitive, sharp and grounded woman, who maintains trust in God’s faithfulness while addressing uncertainty, fear and profound theological themes.

Julian describes herself as an ‘unlettered creature’, perhaps because she does not write in Latin. Certainly, her style is uncluttered and accessible, but she shows a high level of theological acuity, and it has been suggested that she might have received her early education at the nearby Benedictine monastery at Carrow. As a young woman she asked for three gifts from God – contrition for her sins, compassion and longing for God – gifts that might indeed serve us well in this time of uncertainty.

Her visions always return her to God’s love, and this is particularly comforting to us in times of distress. She describes God’s love as ‘so tender that He may never desert us’, and as enfolding and clothing us. She especially reflects on her experience of Christ as Mother, following the teaching of Anselm, whose Canticle on the motherhood of Jesus we find in our Prayer Book on p.428. She writes for example, ‘Our Saviour is our true Mother in whom we are endlessly born and out of whom we shall never come.’

Recent icon of Julian of Norwich by Romanian Orthodox Icon painter, Christinel Paslaru, commissioned by Fr Christopher Wood, Rector of St Julian's Anglican Church. The icon was used on occasions at St Julian's, including at a festival in 2014 when Archbishop Rowan Williams carried it through the streets of Norwich (Image courtesy of The Julian Centre)

Julian reflected that ‘God wishes to cure us of two kinds of sickness; impatience and despair’. These are certainly sicknesses of our own times, and as we learn through days of confinement to be more patient and to retain hope, we would do well to turn to her teachings. She writes famously, ‘He said
not, “thou shalt not be tempested, thou shalt not be travailed, thou shalt not be dis-eased;” but He said “thou shalt not be overcome.” This is a promise to hold close as we journey through these days.

Julian of Norwich is commemorated by Anglicans and Lutherans on 8 May. While not officially a saint, she is popularly referred to as ‘Saint Julian of Norwich’, and remains an inspiration in the modern era. Stained glass featuring her is found, for example, in Mary Sumner House, the London headquarters of the Mothers Union.

The focus of Julian upon contemplative prayer and longing for God has continued, too, through organisations such as Julian Meetings, which encourage small groups and individuals to gather together for periods of meditative prayer. Often, they begin their time of silence with these words of Julian’s, with which I shall conclude:

‘God of thy goodness, give me Thyself;
For Thou art enough for me,
And I can ask for nothing less
That can be full honour to Thee.
And if I ask for anything that is less,
Ever shall I be in want,
For only in Thee have I all.’

News • Friday 1 May 2020

St Andrew’s Anglican College ready for stage two of online teaching and learning

College Principal Chris Ivey said his staff were committed to providing as much normalcy as possible for students and families who are facing challenging times.
Students at St Andrew's Anglican College have jumped back into online learning after the recent holidays, with a refined comprehensive online teaching and learning program.

After trialling online learning successfully in the last week of Term 1, the Peregian Springs based school transitioned to stage two, which has a strong focus on increased connection and support for students and parents.

Parents praised the College's swift transition to online learning in the fast changing and unprecedented environment in a survey released at the conclusion of Term 1.

Supported by multiple online platforms including the College's dedicated Online Teaching and Learning website, the week provided students and staff a great insight into how online learning could be sustained if needed over a longer period of time.

Feedback from parents has now been implemented to ensure students continue to learn in a connected environment and eases the pressure of parents working from home.

Students have transitioned well to the online environment, with Year 12 student Faith saying that she is proud of her whole school community and the way in which teachers, students and parents are collectively navigating their way through COVID-19's challenges.

“From a technological standpoint, St Andrews has been ahead of the game the entire way,” Faith said.

“The flexibility and agency in online learning has challenged me at times and has been an incredible opportunity in others.

“The camaraderie, support and uniting of my community have been so evident in a tangible, raw way.”

College Principal Chris Ivey said his staff were committed to providing as much normalcy as possible for students and families who are facing challenging times.

“The health and wellbeing of our students remains a top priority for St Andrew's, even in this online teaching and learning environment,” Mr Ivey said.

“We take great pride in being a relational school that encourages and nurtures connections between students, teachers and parents, and will continue to strive for this in the online space.”

Faith said that she has appreciated the one-to-one pedagogical and emotional support of St Andrew's staff.

“The pastoral care for students, parents and staff alike is unprecedented, both in the formal vehicle of support expected from the school, but also in a manner that demonstrates a genuine and personal level of interest in each student,” she said.

Stage two of online teaching and learning at St Andrew's focuses on three main areas:

- an increase in teacher and student interaction online
- a greater focus on our pastoral care
- opportunities for live discussions with teachers and fellow students.
For Primary students, this means an increase in live contact with teachers and classmates to four times per day. Teachers will teach an explicit numeracy and an explicit literacy lesson each day from Monday to Thursday, combined with activities for students to complete offline in an effort to create less screen time.

Specialist lessons including art, music languages and physical education will also be taught.

Additionally, every Friday, each classroom teacher will contact every child in their class for a ‘check in’ to see how they have been going in the week and to answer any of questions.

In Secondary school, teachers will commence all lessons with a live check-in and be available for students in a live capacity for the entirety of each lesson. Half of all lessons will also include a 20-minute teaching session for the delivery of new content.

In a move to ensure the overall wellbeing of all secondary students members of the Teaching and Learning Team, Deans of Students and Heads of Faculty will be checking in with students and parents at random about the level of student engagement in their subjects, as well as 20-minute individual catch ups with mentor teachers on a Friday.

Additional opportunities both academically and in the co-curricular space have also been planned and will launch this week.

“Student involvement in co-curricular opportunities is a big part of what makes St Andrew’s so great,” Mr Ivey said.

“So, I’m pleased that we will be offering a range of exciting co-curricular opportunities online this term that I’d encourage all students to get involved in.”

The first of these opportunities includes an open microphone session using ‘flipgrid’ and a stay-at-home art recreation challenge.

Bands across the music department will also be meeting weekly for online rehearsals.

As per the direction from government, St Andrew’s will remain open for children of essential workers.
Anglicare SQ Maintenance Coordinator David Lefrancke literally went the extra mile recently when he flew his two-seater 2007 Czech Sport Aircraft to deliver much-needed supplies to Anglicare’s Roma office: David is pictured here with Service Coordinator Tracey O’Brien.

David Lefrancke was a builder for 40 years before commencing work with Anglicare in 2017. He is married to Svetlana and lives in Caboolture.

**How long have you been working for Anglicare and in what role?**

I have been working for Anglicare for nearly three years – it will be three years in June. Before I started working at Anglicare, I was a builder for 40 years. I was working for big construction companies and I wanted to do something different in the latter stages of my career. The Anglicare role came along and I felt that I wanted to help people, such as elderly people in aged-care homes and vulnerable children and families.

**What is the name of your current role and what does your role involve?**

I am the Maintenance Coordinator for Anglicare Southern Queensland. I maintain Anglicare’s leased and owned buildings, offices and infrastructure. This include repairs, improvements and refurbs. I work across all three Regions as far north as Bundaberg, to Roma in the west and down to Southport on the Gold Coast.
What projects and activities are you currently working on?

The main thing I am currently working on at present is coordinating the moves of the Community Services Offices from Nambour to a new building, also in Nambour. We are also moving an office in Caboolture to another bigger office in Caboolture. I manage major projects like these alongside day-to-day maintenance requests for lawn mowing, air-conditioning servicing and fire safety compliance checks.

What have been the highlights of your role so far?

Recently, I delivered personal protective equipment, masks and hand sanitiser to our Roma office, which is five hours’ drive from Brisbane. Fortunately, I co-own a light plane, so instead of driving to Roma, I flew the gear to the Roma airport. We were met at the airport by Service Coordinator Tracey O’Brien who said that the Anglicare nurses were really looking forward to receiving the supplies.

Visiting aged-care homes is also a highlight for me. I love walking through the homes and chatting to the residents – it is very enlightening. Their faces light up when they show you family photos on their walls and tell you their stories. I visit aged-care homes when I do annual building audits.

I was chatting to one bloke in his late 80s early last year and he showed me photographs of his motorcycle travels around Australia before the second world war. He and a friend navigated their way around the country on dirt roads using old Norton-like bikes.

What have been the key challenges of your roles so far and how have you worked through these?

Having worked in the building industry for 40 years, I have pretty much seen it all. I am an outdoorsy type and I have needed to get used to spending so much time sitting in offices in front of the computer.

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

I see things getting busier as Anglicare takes more adolescents into their care and we purchase more properties to house the kids.

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

I am a Christian and I follow Christian beliefs. I like to follow the commandments and the old adage that we should treat people the way we would like to be treated.

How does your faith inspire you and shape your outlook, life choices and character?

I try and help people out as much as I can. For me, being a Christian is about how you treat people every day in your life and not about ticking boxes. I have met many Christians who go to church faithfully every Sunday, but when it comes to helping their neighbour, they develop a sudden amnesia.

What is your favourite scripture and why?

“In everything do to others as you would have them do to you” (Matthew 7.12). This is the way Jesus wants people to act. This Bible verse has a timeless message.
What person of faith inspires you the most and why?

I don't think he was a churchman, but in World War 2 a Polish factory owner and business man named Oskar Schindler used his influence in the Nazi Party to save more than 1000 Jewish men, women and children by recruiting them to work in his factory, even smuggling some out. The story was made famous in the 1993 film Schindler's List.

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?

The church has always been a refuge in times of need historically. You can even see this now with the challenges of the coronavirus. It is pretty cool how the Church has adapted, and so quickly. The live streaming of services and the Easter telecasts show how forward thinking the Church has become. Even though church buildings are closed, people are still able to seek refuge and connect online.

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?

I think the Church globally needs to be more open and welcoming, including to gender and sexually diverse people, and even more transparent. This will help to make the Church more relevant to, and understood, by the broader community.

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

No matter what you do in business or at home, be honest and straightforward to people. This is the best advice my mother ever gave me.

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

I am a bit of a homebody. I like to potter around my garden. When I am not at home, I like flying my aircraft or going out bush with my wife, Svetlana.

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

“Parents: love your kids!” next to a big picture of a family spending time together. If more parents took better care of their children, there would not be such a high demand for adolescent homes or teenagers with such serious issues.

Where do you do your best thinking?

Probably in the shower where it is nice and quiet.

What's your best childhood memory?

Going up to my Auntie's place with my four brothers and sisters to her property outside Warwick at Christmas time. My Auntie had a high-set home and we would play under the house in the dirt with our cars for hours on end and help milk the cows and separate the milk from the cream in a hut. We also used to go down to help harvest the wheat in the back of a ute.
If you are having a bad day, what do you do to cheer yourself up?

I go for a walk and sit on a bench under a tree. Nothing seems so bad when you take time to reset and sit in nature.

What is the funniest thing that has happened to you recently?

My wife is Russian and she tells me funny stories about how her colleagues tease her good-naturedly about how she pronounces certain words, such as “work” and “walk”. She sees the funny side of it and has me rolling around laughing with her stories.

What makes you nostalgic and why?

Christmas is always nostalgic for me. I think back to my childhood and all my Christmases spent with my family on my Auntie’s Warwick property.

What day would you like to re-live and why?

My wedding day. We married around 10 years ago in Centenary Lake, Caboolture.

What’s your unanswerable question – the question you are always asking yourself?

What happens after life? Whether you are religious or not, you wonder about this, especially as you get older.

Reflections • Thursday 30 April 2020 • By Captain Ross Nicholls

MTS Brisbane navigating unchartered waters
Like thousands of other Australian charities and other organisations operating in these extraordinary times, Mission to Seafarers (MTS) Brisbane has also had to close its brick and mortar doors, although our ministry continues.

In its 127-year history these measures are unprecedented, and it is particularly difficult for a charity of any type to have to say, “sorry, we’re not open”. This concept is contrary to our values and the principal reason why we exist – to provide human contact and face-to-face care and love to international seafarers. Many of the nearly 70,000 seafarers that visit our port alone each year also rely on Mission to Seafarers Brisbane as a hub to communicate with their loved ones.

Shipping has continued despite the coronavirus leading to the closure of borders, as it is an essential industry for the purposes of global trade – the lifeblood of countries and communities. Sadly, the people behind this global trade, albeit at the sharp end of the delivery process – our seafarers – have been further isolated with the additional restrictions placed on them, both locally and internationally. To be working under marginal conditions, in an already isolated and often hostile environment for up to nine months, is not a role many of us would consider.

These conditions are further exacerbated by border restriction measures required to manage the spread of COVID-19. Today the seafarers are confined to their ships, with little or no communication with the outside world and many have been unable to travel home, extending their contracts beyond the usual nine-month period. Only recently have certain relaxations been made to allow some of them to travel from or to the ship under strict Border Force controlled guidelines.

Our services down at the Port of Brisbane are underpinned by our people – our supervisors and volunteers. Physical distancing measures and the need for many of our people to shelter in their homes due to being high-risk, as a result of age or pre-existing health conditions, since mid-March have meant insufficient people to provide our seven-day-a-week 12-hours-per-day service. As a result of current physical distancing measures and the need for many volunteers to stay in their homes, the human contact element of our role is marginalised, and our usual services curtailed. While this was initially perplexing, it has made us think more laterally and creatively, so our important ministry for seafarers may continue.

We have subsequently developed an ‘Online Shop’ for seafarers to order essential items before they arrive in Brisbane with free delivery to their ship. Two wonderful Chaplains The Rev’d Stephen Briggs and The Rev’d Ian McGilvray have commenced bi-weekly ‘reflection’ videos, which are posted on our Facebook page. With the assistance of Maritime Safety Queensland and other local industry leaders, a ‘care package’ donation campaign was also rolled out, in conjunction with the Catholic Stella Maris Seafarers’ Centre in Wynnum, to provide seafarers with activities to help alleviate their isolation. These small measures have increased the contact we are making with our seafarers, bringing them closer to our Mission via technology and alternative means of ministry.

We are blessed that our Chaplains, who are utilising their newfound online ministry skills, are ensuring our faith-based services remain available to our seafarers and by extension to our staff, volunteers, supporters and social media ‘followers’.

We also continue to connect regularly via online conferencing with other MTS centres around Australia to provide support and share ideas, while receiving guidance from international MTS offices on what is happening globally.
In these extraordinary times, we are responding to and meeting the challenges that come our way. That is the nature of our dedicated and generous people.

If you are interested in donating to the seafarers ‘care package’ campaign, please email us via tfa@mtsbrisbane.org.au or message us on Facebook.

News • Friday 1 May 2020 • By The Very Rev'd Dr Peter Catt

A deacon, a dojo and a dentist

“St John’s Cathedral has a strong commitment to community engagement and working in partnership with like-minded organisations, which helps us to be more effective in the delivery of much-needed services”

Cathedral deacon The Rev'd Dr Ann Solari joined forces with a local martial arts dojo and dentist recently to collect supplies and monetary donations for people doing it tougher on our streets in the wake of the temporary closure of many emergency homeless outreach services.

Under the auspices of the Queensland Government’s ‘Care Army’, members of the Brisbane Aikikai aikido dojo in Newstead donated $700 in cash, as well as emergency care packages, grocery items, infant supplies and blankets.

Brisbane CBD dentist and Churchie dad David Hogan also donated dozens of toothbrushes and toothpaste tubes for the emergency care packages, adding to the cans of tuna, fruit juice, UP&GO breakfast drinks, protein bars, cutlery and toiletries provided by the dojo.

The Rev'd Dr Ann Solari said that connecting with other organisations to collectively help care for at-risk people in our communities is especially necessary in periods of such critical need.

“At times like this, it is important for community groups, businesses and religious organisation to come together and stand in solidarity with the most vulnerable,” The Rev'd Dr Solari said.
“St John’s Cathedral has a strong commitment to community engagement and working in partnership with like-minded organisations, which helps us to be more effective in the delivery of much-needed services.

“As Anglicans, we are called ‘to respond to human need by loving service’, and one of the best ways we can do this is by consistently interacting with and growing our network of supporters.

“The food and toiletry items provided by the Brisbane Aikikai dojo, along with the toothbrushes and toothpastes donated by Dr Hogan, will enable us to assist 30 additional people with everyday essentials, with the blankets arriving at the perfect time as the nights are starting to get cold.

“The $700 in cash donations will be put to good use and will be used in the coming months for emergency supplies, probably canned food and socks.

“We really appreciate the thoughtfulness of the Newstead-based Brisbane Aikikai dojo members and Churchie parent Dr David Hogan.”

In early April, a few dojo individuals connected to the Cathedral asked if other members wanted to donate non-perishable food and toiletries for care packages, as well as blankets, for people who sleep on the Anglican Cathedral grounds.

Brisbane Aikikai dojo cho (‘dojo chief’) Chris Seto-Payne Sensei said that his dojo members responded promptly and generously to the call, with dojo Care Army volunteers coordinating the collection, purchasing and delivery of items.

“In less than a fortnight, dojo members gave enough items for 30 care packages, a week’s worth of groceries and toiletries, including baby food and wipes, for a young family, blankets and $700,” Seto-Payne Sensei said.

“Our aikido members are open spirited and caring, so they were very happy to help.”

Approximately 20,000 Queenslanders experience homelessness at any given time.

Yesterday Anglicare Southern Queensland released its Brisbane Rental Affordability Snapshot, which shows that people on low incomes and government payments are at risk of homelessness, with the private rental market out of reach.

Key findings of the Anglicare snapshot include:

- 1% of rentals are affordable and appropriate for a couple on the Aged Pension.
- 0% of rentals are affordable and appropriate for a person on the Disability Support Pension, a single parent on the minimum wage, or a single person on Newstart or Youth Allowance.
- A single person earning minimum wage would spend more than 50% of their income on rent.
- A young person on Youth Allowance would need to spend 109% of their income on rent, or 70% for a room in a shared property.

Frontline workers have also observed that women aged over 55 are one of the fastest growing groups of people experiencing homelessness in Brisbane.
People experiencing homelessness have been especially affected by COVID-19, with supermarket panic buying impacting the ability for emergency food pantries to purchase food supplies and toiletries leading to an increasing reliance on community members to donate items.

Advocates are concerned about the associated health impacts, with an increasing number of rough sleepers needing to dig through bins after going days without food and unable to access basic hygiene items.

Brisbane CBD dentist David Hogan said that he was happy to assist with the Cathedral and dojo’s joint efforts, explaining that it is important for people sleeping rough to take care of their teeth, as dental hygiene and general physical health are interrelated.

“I have been a private practitioner dentist for many years now, but I certainly do not forget my roots having assisted many disadvantaged people, including university patients when I was a dental student in the 80s, public patients at Nambour Hospital in the 90s, NHS patients in London in the early 2000s and flood victims in 2011,” Dr Hogan said.

“It is well documented that dental health and overall general body health are closely linked.

“It is far easier and less expensive to deal with preventive measures early than dental disaster subsequently.

“Brushing teeth, some flossing and an awareness of minimising sugar intake whilst keeping well hydrated, really shouldn't be complicated or costly and is vital for all members of society in maintaining good long-term dental health.

“People are people and their teeth are just that – everyone appreciates a helping hand and I am glad at times I can provide it.”

As well as a deacon, Dr Solari is a general practitioner who provides medical care to people who are homeless, at risk of homelessness or vulnerable in other ways.

For 10 years, she has been coordinating the Cathedral community’s ministry for people experiencing homelessness who visit the Cathedral during the afternoons for food or sleep overnight on the Cathedral grounds.

The Cathedral community welcomes rough sleepers and aims to help them with food and toiletries, as well as clean blankets, shoes and clothing.

Cathedral clergy, staff and parishioner volunteers actively seek to connect with like-minded businesses, community organisations, faith groups and other bodies to help those who need it most.

**Top 10 Tips for effective community engagement in service delivery and social justice spaces**

1. Ensure that your church’s community service or social justice initiative is aligned with issues that are ‘widely and deeply felt’ by your parishioners in order to support the spaces where your congregation genuinely wants to make a difference and to sustain volunteer resources.

2. It is usually best to start with small and simple community engagement activities and initiatives, making it easy for those who want to help, and growing at a sustainable pace.
3. Delegate tasks among your parishioners to share the workload and according to their skills, abilities and preferences, always respecting people’s respective time constraints and other commitments.

4. Partner with like-minded organisations (and especially like-minded individuals within these organisations), who share your values and goals, as effective partnering community engagement models rely on understanding what the different alliance members want and collectively working towards this.

5. Be open about the kinds of organisations you may possibly partner with to achieve your service delivery, social justice or advocacy goals, such as community groups; charities and not-for-profits; businesses; health practitioners; professional associations, guilds and unions; schools, childcare centres and universities; cultural associations; sporting teams; neighbourhood centres; governments; and, other faith groups.

6. Grow your networks organically by initially tapping into your existing parish leader and parishioner connections.

7. For more complex and long-term alliance goals, together map out your shared objectives and associated timelines and your collective resources, facilities, skills and communication channels, as well as additional opportunities, including potential grants (note: grant providers often prefer supporting collective group initiatives).

8. Support the additional initiatives of partner organisations (e.g. by attending their events, sharing their social media posts, advertising their initiatives in your communications channels where appropriate, offering to provide your church hall as a free venue, lending equipment, etc).

9. Celebrate ‘your wins’ together with representatives from alliance organisations and publicly acknowledge and thank your partners for their contributions.

10. When communicating your collective initiatives to the media, seek consent from the partner organisations, use narrative, quote people from the different organisations involved and use ACSQ-branded media release templates*.

*If you would like a copy of ACSQ-branded media alert and media release templates that clearly and effectively show you how to structure the documents in a ‘paint-by-numbers’ approach, please email your full name, church name and church role to anglican focus Editor Michelle McDonald via focus@anglicanchurchsq.org.au.
I sometimes find myself doubting the reality in which we find ourselves, preaching to a video camera and praying together where the only gathering is faces on a computer screen. Certainly, Easter with empty pews was both poignant and surreal for everyone, but perhaps especially for those who lead congregations at this time where the people are scattered in their own homes and hidden from view. When physical presence is denied to us, how can we be present to one another, supporting the leadership and mission of the church?

It is said, worship is not worship if it is done alone. Like everything in Christian faith, worship in its many and various forms, is fundamentally relational, just as the very being of God is relational. In the weeks of COVID-19 physical distancing, I found it initially disorienting to reimagine Sunday worship without physical gathering, followed then by a deep sense of loss in the absence of the community.

Of course, this sense of loss reveals in sharp focus what matters most, providing a guide for how we need to negotiate these times as a worshipping community. We are the Church, and we are not on hold until better times, but actively in mission. For both clergy and congregations to thrive in this time, there needs to be continuity of connection. This is being achieved in countless creative ways across parishes, such as through recorded and streamed worship services, Bible studies, small group gatherings and coffee mornings via online meeting platforms, telephone conversations and letter writing.

The change of the ministry environment has been rapid, and clergy everywhere have reported how much encouragement has been provided by those in their congregations who have found ways to keep community connection vital and strong. I know when I am leading a worship service to rows of
empty pews, there is enormous strength gained by knowing, as I stare into a camera lens, that our church family is there with me, from their lounge rooms, bedrooms or verandas, and actively participating in the liturgy as they follow the guide to worship. When we gather online for a fellowship morning tea after the service, we have time to collectively reflect on the readings or the music, or just to share what matters most to us at this time.

The wrong choice I believe would be to think, “I will return to church when this is over, and things are back to normal.” Relationships are the lifeblood of community and when members of a church are absent in this way, vitality is lost and the clergy’s task of leading a community that is not only connected but missional, is so much more difficult. The Spirit is always moving in the life of the Church, and now more than ever the world needs sacred communities held together with tender and strong ties of unity and peace. Our vocation in the family of God is always and eternally grounded in the present moment.

Every weekday early in the morning, I settle in the side chapel of our church in front of my laptop to welcome the group that gathers on Zoom. One by one their faces appear, and with each greeting my heart lifts. Every morning we say, “The night has passed and the day lies open before us; Let us pray with one heart and mind,” and every time I am strengthened by the knowledge that though we are apart, we are one heart and mind, unified by the Spirit and called into the mission of God.

This mission is not for when things return to normal, but is for this time, this ‘now’ in which we live. Nothing can more surely sustain our clergy and lay leaders in this time than the people of God active and engaged in the sacred relationships that are the birthplace of God's kingdom on earth.

Vital and loving missional communities with the courage to engage in new and creative ways of being together are what will strengthen the Church and its leaders to realise their vocation in the COVID-19 environment.

After all, it is only through relationship that the Church is sustained, underlining the importance of participation in all those parish activities which nurture connection in these times; through online services, fellowship gatherings and Bible studies, telephone conversations, and letter writing.

Reflections • Friday 24 April 2020 • By Fiona Hammond

A Bible reading tool kit

Many people approach Bible reading with daily discipline and passion. Some of us, though, have a rubber band relationship with Bible reading – springing into a New Year’s commitment to daily reading and reflection, only to find that by March we’ve let it stretch away, to bounce back during Lenten discipline! There are plenty of resources available to demystify the texts and inspire understanding. Recently, I heard a term that really appealed to me and gave me a renewed enthusiasm for living daily with the Bible.

Just before physical distancing really kicked in, the FormerFaith team at St Francis College filmed several very talented people talking about the Bible, what it means to them, and key points about how it was produced, and how we can understand it. That’s when The Rev’d Canon Sarah Plowman talked about our ‘Bible reading tool kit’. Sarah meant more than a Lectionary, a study guide and a notebook! When I heard that term ‘Bible reading tool kit’, I listened and reflected on the additional tools I can add
to my own personal Bible reading tool kit, and it turns out there are a whole raft of ideas we can use to enrich our reading of scripture.

Awesome tool number one

Approach scripture with an expectation of grace. Many of us have times when we just want to hear what's right and what's wrong about the world. There are so many uncertainties in life that it's tempting to expect faith to iron them out, blanket our insecurities and provide some answers for God's sake! Ever found that a dogmatic approach to reading the Word is counterproductive? What can happen is that readers look for their own agenda and inevitably find it, but in doing so miss out on other spirit-led ideas.

Approach scripture with an attitude of openness and trust, with an expectation that God will be loving, gracious and good to us, and the scriptures may provide an encounter with grace. The wonderful thing is that no matter what your expertise, this blessing is open to all. When God is at work, people can be touched by it. Approaching the Bible with an expectation of grace means that we don't have to have a degree in Biblical literacy to be blessed by interaction with scriptures, and that those who do have such qualifications can be surprised by what they find there.

Awesome tool number two

Understand the genre. Genre is something we apply to a Netflix list, or use to identify styles of music on Spotify. Turns out it's a crucial tool when reading the Bible, too. For starters, it's a great idea to consider the Bible as a library of books, rather than one big book. The Bible library contains many types of literature: law books, books of prophesy, letters, sermons, apocalyptic literature and so on. Identifying the type of writing is crucial to understanding what's said in it. As Canon Sarah Plowman suggests in these St Francis College Short Course videos, how frustrating and confusing would it be to open an Aldi catalogue expecting a novel?

Director of Lay Education at St Francis College Jonathan Sargeant takes a look at chapter one of Genesis to illustrate the importance of genre. Here is the first account of creation: Genesis 1.1-31. It has recurring lines like a chorus. It has rhythm. It also has rhyme and when read aloud, it sounds like poetry. Perhaps this was a song used in early worship – we can imagine it sung around a fire, it is a beautiful poem from an ancient people singing of their God who creates and creates well.

Poetry traditionally uses metaphor and imagery (among many other devices) to evoke emotional responses in readers. When we understand that Genesis chapter one is a poem, we also know what it is not. It is not meant to be a manual or textbook with definitive answers about the scientific structure or creation of a biological world. Reading the poem with awed adoration of a great creator allows us to become caught up in the metaphor and symbolism along with those who sang it thousands of years ago. Canon Sarah Plowman suggests that an understanding of genre is an idea that we can all explore every time we approach a new chapter or book.

This new St Francis College Short Course: ‘Exploring the Bible’ is currently presented as a series of short videos, each responding to one burning question about the Bible. There are so many more tools for a Bible reading tool kit! There are ideas about new discoveries, how translations are made, how the Bible is relevant to a modern audience. Each video has a set of reflection questions, and a transcript to check out. It's a great way to learn more from the comfort of your couch! Let us know which tools you'll add to your kit! Find the course on the St Francis College website.
COVID-19 welfare increases must be made permanent

"Barbara can afford 62 (1%) 1-bedroom properties in Brisbane on the Age Pension. Very few of them are in walking distance to a supermarket, and Barbara is no longer able to drive" (ACSQ Rental Affordability Snapshot, p.6)

Anglicare Southern Queensland is calling for the Australian Government's temporary COVID-19 welfare increases to be made permanent and extended to aged pensioners and people with a disability.

The not-for-profit charity's call comes with the release of its annual Brisbane Rental Affordability Snapshot, which found the private rental market remains out of reach for people on low incomes and government payments.

Key findings include:

- 1% of rentals are affordable and appropriate for a couple on the Aged Pension.
- 0% of rentals are affordable and appropriate for a person on the Disability Support Pension, a single parent on the minimum wage, or a single person on Newstart or Youth Allowance.
- A single person earning minimum wage would spend more than 50% of their income on rent.
- A young person on Youth Allowance would need to spend 109% of their income on rent, or 70% for a room in a shared property.

Executive Director Karen Crouch said the increased COVID-19 payments were welcome, but must be made permanent to stop Queenslanders being pushed out of secure housing and towards poverty and homelessness.
“The private rental market is dire for people on low incomes and renters are at the frontline of this pandemic. Many are losing their incomes and some are scared of being forced out of their homes,” Ms Crouch said.

“Over recent months we’ve seen many things previously considered not possible or not a priority happen almost overnight.

“We’ve all seen the evidence that Australia’s welfare payments were out of touch with reality, and we’ve all heard the calls from charities, leading businesses and industry groups for payments to low-income earners, job seekers and pensioners to be increased to at least match the cost of living.

“Now, after more than two decades of resistance, the Australian Government doubles the rates of Newstart (now the JobSeeker Payment), Youth Allowance, Parenting Payment, Austudy and Abstudy, among others, with a $550 per fortnight increase for six months in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

“While only temporary, it is a clear acknowledgement from the Government that the Newstart/JobSeeker rate of $40 a day or less was completely inadequate to live on.”

Ms Crouch said the increased payments were expected to make a positive difference to housing affordability in Brisbane, and for some people would mean the difference between eating and not eating.

This year’s Rental Affordability Snapshot found that in the Brisbane metro area, more than 200 additional families would find appropriate private rental sector housing more affordable, if the increases were made permanent.

“It would reduce the tension they face between paying rent or putting food on the table, and it would have generational benefits, as their children grow up carrying fewer experiences and effects of poverty,” Ms Crouch said.

“Despite the recent increase in benefits however, the situation is still dire for many. There are still few household types in Brisbane in which median rent, as a percentage of household income, comes close to meeting the 30% benchmark for housing affordability.

“The Snapshot shows the extent to which Australia’s rental sector is still failing people on low incomes.

“The worst scenario is for a young person on youth allowance, the median rent is 109% of their income and even a room in a share house is 70% of their income.

“And for those on the Age Pension and people with a disability, there is no change at all, so they are still in a very difficult situation.

“Our frontline workers see the flow-on effects of this, with women aged over 55 one of the fastest groups of people experiencing homelessness in Brisbane.

“We know that people and businesses will be recovering from this downturn for years, and low-income earners and people relying on welfare to survive will be the hardest hit.
“If income support rates are halved in six months — and if those who are most vulnerable are left out — people will be pushed even deeper into poverty and homelessness.

“These increases must become permanent, and they must go to everyone in need.”

Download the full Brisbane Rental Affordability Snapshot report.

Reflections • Friday 1 May 2020 • By The Rev’d Canon Sarah Plowman

Snail mail, solidarity and spiritual sustenance

The Rev’d Zoe Browne (with son Jude) delivering a care pack in April to a parishioner in The Parish of Dalby. The pack includes a pastoral letter from Priest-in Charge, The Rev’d David Browne, a prayer booklet for the season and a candle to light while watching the service online

While creating and curating ministry resources and having conversations with people in various parishes recently, I have heard some heartwarming stories about how churches are keeping community connections strong. Parishes are reaching out and living the love of Christ in simple and effective ways, demonstrating that physical separation need not be a barrier to caring. Here are three things I observed with a grateful heart.

Firstly, our parish clergy and staff are continuing to do what they do best – pastorally care for their parishioners and the people of their community. They are not doing this in the ‘usual’ way, but are finding new and creative ways to connect and show the love of Christ.

Fay Nolan, from The Parish of Green Hills, shared how her parish has been engaging in ‘old fashioned’ activities like the writing and delivering of pastoral letters from their priest, The Rev’d Canon Bruce Boase. These letters have been variously emailed or delivered by hand to letterboxes and are a key connection between priest and people. Parish of Green Hills leaders have also combed through the Parish Roll, name by name, to make sure that no-one missed out on receiving some kind of pastoral call or contact.
“Fay Nolan, from The Parish of Green Hills, shared how her parish has been engaging in ‘old fashioned’ activities like the writing and delivering of pastoral letters from their priest, The Rev’d Canon Bruce Boase (pictured)”

Out in Dalby, The Rev’ds David and Zoë Browne have been delivering ‘care packs’ with a liturgical twist. In their Palm Sunday care pack, as well as a prayer booklet, they included a tea bag and a small packet of biscuits, so that their congregation members could have their normal morning tea together, but apart. In this month’s pack, there is a small LED candle, which every person can light in their home during the live-streamed services, knowing that everyone else in the congregation will be doing the same thing, with Zoë saying: “We went out on a road trip and did a letterbox drop. It took a few hours because people don’t live close together out here!”

Secondly, our clergy continue to feel deeply the call to ‘journey with’ their community and stand in solidarity with them. The Rev’d Dan Talbot, from The Parish of Jimboomba, shared with me his decision to not celebrate the Eucharist during this time of physical distancing, saying “If my people can’t, then neither will I.” He is looking forward to a time when he can celebrate the resurrection of Christ together with his gathered community when they emerge on the other side of the coronavirus challenges. “We are on this journey together. We are still a strongly connected community,” he said. Despite being physically distant, in places where there is deep sense of a shared life within a community, that connection – social and spiritual – is evident in spite of not being able to gather in person.

These three examples are merely a small reflection of the great good being done in our parishes to maintain a normal sense of Christian community. Many hundreds of people are working across our Diocese, in person and online, to connect and encourage the people of God.

Finally, I am struck by a sense that we are returning to a life more closely resembling the Early Church, when believers met for worship and prayer in their homes, and were diligent in caring for one another and those who were vulnerable in their community. They relied on the goodness and generosity of the people of God (the Church) for their spiritual sustenance, just as we are today. I encourage everyone to continue to uphold their clergy and leaders in prayer, to reach out with kindness, and to continue to financially support their parishes if you are able.
May we know the blessings of Christ in community in the Easter Season, from Easter Sunday to Pentecost.

Reflections • Monday 27 April 2020 • By The Rev’d Dr Cathy Laufer

Zoom Church: discoveries and tips

On Holy Saturday, that most reflective of days, I was pondering the situation in our parish in Coolum Beach on the Sunshine Coast. Holy Spirit Anglican Church in Coolum has no access to the internet. We don’t even have a phone line to the property. So, we decided to hold Zoom Church from the rectory – and it is wonderful!

In our Zoom services, we have a mix of the familiar and the new. I have set up my study in the rectory with our processional cross and I robe. We use Ante-Communion (i.e. Holy Communion, second order, ending the Prayers with the Lord’s Prayer, blessing, dismissal) so the words people say are familiar. Others read and lead prayers as normal. Music includes well known hymns sung by choirs on YouTube. Prior to the Zoom gathering, I email an order of service with readings, prayers, hymn words, and other relevant text.

Much to my amazement, the result is joyous, positive and encouraging.

Here are my discoveries:

- People absolutely love this! I am getting more positive feedback about church now than in all of my 20 years of ministry put together. People love the fact that they can say the familiar words, see their friends and sing their hearts out. It’s a bit of normality in the midst of the strange new world we now inhabit.
• People are discovering their ministries. Some who have never gone on a roster are volunteering to read. Turns out they are good at it. Ministries of encouragement are emerging in unexpected people. Regular visitors can offer their gifts, which is difficult when they are only in Coolum for a week or two each year.

• Zoom Church has broken down barriers that physical church could never overcome. People who haven't been able to get to church for years are coming to Zoom Church. A couple who were regulars moved to New Zealand in February and they are joining us online. A woman from the UK who used to visit every year until travel became too much joins us when she can stay up till midnight. Other ‘regular visitors’ are now coming to Zoom Church.

• Zoom Church is providing a way of dealing with social isolation for those who live alone. Having learnt how to use Zoom, even elderly community members are now able to connect with family and friends.

• The NBN connection we have means that only one microphone can be on at any time. The result is that people are finding community, and God, in shared silence.

• This is not a panacea for all problems. Some have chosen not to take part in Zoom Church, and some cannot. But this is true for physical church also. The two congregations largely overlap, each with its unique members.

Some of the comments I received after Palm Sunday’s service:

_I was just amazed. I was sitting outside with butterflies and dragonflies all around. It was like a service in a glade with the sun shining in on me. So fortunate._

_For a first timer, me, it was quite a learning experience, but I figure I have it all sorted out... it was a delight to see familiar faces once again [from a man of 86]._

_It was such a joy to see everyone's faces this morning. I wanted to talk to each & every one of you. It makes me realise, yet again, how much our church family is a reality._

_I appreciated church this morning. It reinforces the fact that church is us!_

_What a privilege to join our church community this morning. Different and yet very heart warming. We are so fortunate to have this chance to connect. Thank you for being so positive, motivating and fun! We must all keep laughing and embracing change._

In short, Zoom Church has given us a way to love one another that we could never have imagined. It is a gift. We at Holy Spirit, Coolum Beach are learning to give thanks, even in the midst of COVID-19’s challenges. I have learnt a whole new way of being a priest which is exciting and life giving for both me and my people.

God truly draws straight with crooked lines or, in the words of St Paul, “All things co-mingle together for good for those who love God and are called according to God’s purposes (Romans 8.28).”*

**Top Tips for hosting Zoom Church**

1. Mix the familiar (e.g. robes and hymns) with the new (i.e. digital tech).
2. Email an order of service prior to Zoom Church, which includes readings and hymn words.
3. Ensure community members are supported with tech help, if required, before their first Zoom Church.
4. Ensure only one microphone is turned on (to avoid accidental audible interruptions, such as from late comers).
5. Encourage new people to volunteer for the reading roster.
6. Use breakout rooms for ‘fellowship’ time after the service so people can chat with their friends.
7. Ask parishioners to provide feedback and follow up the feedback.

* The phrase ‘God draws straight with crooked lines’ comes from the novels of Andrew Greeley. The translation of Romans 8.28 is based on that by Susan Howatch in her novel Absolute Truths (HarperCollins, 1995).

National • Monday 4 May 2020 • By Peter Branjerdporn

Remembering the forgotten in the COVID-19 environment

Our Diocesan community is being called upon to support a national campaign asking the Federal Government to implement measures that would protect refugees and people seeking asylum from the health and socio-economic impacts of COVID-19.

The call comes from the National Council of Churches in Australia and the Australian Churches Refugee Taskforce who are both backing the Refugee Council of Australia’s #NobodyLeftBehind campaign.

The Federal Government has recognised the health and socio-economic effects of the coronavirus for most members of our communities and is responding effectively.

However, the measures implemented by the Morrison Government have so far forgotten refugees and people seeking asylum who are significantly at risk, including men, women and children.

The safety and wellbeing of our communities can only be protected if we collectively do everything we can to ensure the safety and wellbeing of all, and this includes refugees and people seeking asylum.

Currently, thousands of people seeking asylum in Australia have no access to Medicare, no work and no social security safety net.

Furthermore, a breakout of coronavirus in any of the crowded detention centres in our cities would have a devastating effect on the people detained there, and consequently detention centre staff and the broader community.

This is why the National Council of Churches in Australia and the Australian Churches Refugee Taskforce are supporting RCOA’s campaign, which asks for the following:

1. Moving people urgently out of crowded onshore immigration detention facilities.
2. Ensuring a financial safety net and Medicare access for all in Australia, including people seeking asylum and refugees.
3. Preventing people losing legal status and access to support.
4. Moving refugees and people seeking asylum from PNG and Nauru.
5. Ensuring that refugees on temporary SHEV visas are not penalised in light of COVID-19.

These measures would help prevent COVID-19 outbreaks in crowded detention facilities.
They would also prevent more people from becoming homeless and ensure that people seeking asylum and refugees have the medical treatment they need to stay healthy and to avoid getting others sick.

The best way we can help support this call is for people across our Diocesan community to contact their Federal elected representatives.

The Refugee Council of Australia is making this easy for people to do. Please visit the Refugee Council of Australia’s website today and simply add your name, postcode and email address to an electronic form and an email will be automatically sent to your Federal elected representative.

Every person has the right to health care and to live in safety with their family.

To keep everyone safe and well, we must all work together to protect the health of all.

Reflections • Friday 1 May 2020 • By The Rev’d Canon Dr Jim McPherson

Eucharistic companions on a digital journey

Parish of Maleny parishioner Cathy Blackburn watching a digital Eucharistic service in April 2020 (Photo by Robin Blackburn)

After vestry prayers for the three of us robed for the impending Sunday service, we enter the sanctuary in the customary manner. I greet the techno-producer and, if there is one, the organist. They are the only others I can see in the church building; ‘digital church’ is being celebrated in an amazing variety of places. While I cannot see or hear our congregations, I still greet them via the camera in usual fashion with, “The Lord be with you”.

The building echoes audibly without physical bodies present to absorb the sound waves. I can hear the answering responses of my two robed assistants and the techy, but no one else.
Digital church has been a reality for many years, but the concept of a live-streamed Eucharist requires some theological and pastoral reflection.

Eucharist is a material sacrament of bread and wine, consecrated by prayer for the spiritual nourishment of the faithful. In a live-streamed Eucharist, only the celebrant, and perhaps those with direct physical access, can consume the consecrated elements.

Under normal circumstances, Communion is for sharing physically. Nevertheless, one of our binding historical formularies (Book of Common Prayer, 1662) made provision for such special circumstances as “times of plague”.*

The rubric declares that one of conscientious faith and spiritual thankfulness may receive the sacramental benefit “profitably to his soul’s health, although he do not receive the Sacrament with his mouth”.

This means that “in times of plague”, devout engagement in the Eucharistic rite online, as if physically present in the congregation, will by God’s grace provide the same sacramental benefit as if there present and receiving. In effect, the Eucharistic grace is still received by ‘going to church’ via digital means and participating devoutly – by ‘being church’ as faithfully as contingencies allow. I find this remarkably reassuring. A companion is one with whom you share bread, so this constitutes Eucharistic companionship.

There is another dimension at play, too. With a camera and tech person present, I feel like an actor on a set somewhat, speaking to the camera with words from a script, along with accompanying actions. That is the baptismal commissioning of every Christian: to be so comprehensively immersed by grace in the Gospel story, as to embody it authentically and credibly in the contemporary context of family, friends, workmates, sporting activities, whomever. All the baptised are commissioned actors, today’s gospel embodiments.

Going physically to a church – dedicated space – highlights the difference between the everyday and the sacred. Church at home need not blur this distinction if your ‘venue’ is well-prepared and maintained. This could mean dedicating your own worship space, either for yourself alone or for all family members, in an area free from distractions like the noise of heavy traffic (if possible) and set up with Bible, Prayer Book, flowers, and comfortable seating. Some may like to use candles as well – dig a baptismal candle out of the drawer, maybe. You may not need a hymn book, because words will often be provided on the screen. Though if they are modernised and you prefer the old words, such as ‘Thee’ and ‘Thou’, you can sing them as loudly as you like at home without putting the rest of the congregation off.

As a priest, I find it strange to be addressing the camera in a church that echoes for lack of people present. Stranger still to have a power outage mid-sermon and having to wait until it is restored before resuming. But such things happen in gathered church buildings as well. A parishioner once collapsed in her pew during a service, so we called the ambulance; everyone went into a prayerful, if somewhat, anxious suspended animation. These are the exigencies of ‘real’ as well as ‘digital’ Eucharist.

I am confident the grace of God will see us through this awkwardly unfamiliar and challenging time. Let us learn from this, so we emerge the better for it. As will all those who engage with digital church,
and find themselves so drawn in by grace, that they eventually yearn to meet any new faith companions face to face.

Top 10 tips for celebrating a live-streamed Eucharist:

1. Priests and assistants are encouraged to engage in vestry prayers prior to the commencement of the service.
2. Test the video quality and composition before live streaming.
3. Test the audio before live streaming, especially given the tendency for churches to echo with few people in attendance.
4. Email pew sheets to congregation members prior to the service.
5. Reassure those in ‘digital attendance’ that they will receive the sacramental grace of the Eucharist as though they were physically consuming the consecrated host and wine.
6. Provide the service and hymn words on the screen or white wall.
7. Encourage your parishioners to set aside a special space, with a Bible, Prayer Book, flowers and candles.
8. Ensure that any new faces are collectively welcomed during the service and that a regular parishioner connects with new congregation members following the service.
9. Allow a fellowship time after the service for parishioners to chat, if appropriate for your congregation and if technologically enabled.
10. Encourage congregation members to provide feedback and share ideas with you via email, Facebook messenger or phone.

Editor's note: find out what ACSQ churches are offering live-streamed Eucharistic (and other worship) services by visiting the Anglican Church Southern Queensland website.

* In The Communion of the Sick, the rubric advises the priest to instruct the sick person who for “just impediment” (such as “extremity of sickness”) cannot receive the consecrated elements, that:

“...if he do truly repent him of his sins, and stedfastly believe that Jesus Christ hath suffered death upon the Cross for him, and shed his Blood for his redemption, earnestly remembering the benefits he hath thereby, and giving him hearty thanks therefore; he doth eat and drink the Body and Blood of our Saviour Christ profitably to his soul's health, although he do not receive the Sacrament with his mouth.”

In other words, genuine faith and intention allow for a spiritual Communion with all the benefits of partaking of the consecrated elements, which would normally be the case except for the communicant’s present circumstances.

Sunday Devotions • Friday 1 May 2020 • By The Rev’d Charlie Lacey

Sunday Devotion: 10 May 2020, Fifth Sunday of Easter

Going against the flow

Main Readings: Acts 7.55-60; Psalm 31.1-5, 17-18; 1 Peter 2.11-25; John 14.1-14

Supplementary Readings: Psalm 116; Revelation 21.1-2, 9-14; Acts 8.1b-13; Psalm 135.1-4,13-21; Revelation 10
“Jesus answered, ‘I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.’” (John 14.6)

I once hired a tuk-tuk, a kind of automated rickshaw, in New Delhi and spent the first part of the journey travelling the wrong way up a busy main road. It didn't feel very comfortable and was probably quite dangerous!

Jesus said, ‘I am the way’ and the first Christians were said to belong to ‘the way’. Today’s readings make it abundantly clear that ‘the way’ of Jesus goes against the flow of the world. The stoning of Stephen, the first Christian martyr (Acts 7.55-60), emphasises the level of persecution endured by the early Church, a persecution still experienced by many Christian communities in the world today. From 1 Peter 2 we glean that the early Christians were accused of ‘doing wrong’. Indeed, since they had no temples or priests and made no animal sacrifices, they were accused of being godless.

Choosing to go against the flow of the world by following the way of Jesus can be uncomfortable, and in many places it is an extremely dangerous thing to do. Here in Australia we are unlikely to face serious persecution, but we may experience social awkwardness, scathing remarks or even ostracism. However, If we find ourselves counting the cost of going against the flow, today’s readings offer tremendous hope. For example, Psalm 31 reminds us that we can “take refuge” in the Lord and that “the Lord preserves the faithful”.

We may be going against the flow by following Jesus' way, but our trajectory is towards God and his eternal kingdom.