

## The need for new songs...



The first verse of Psalm 96 suggests that we should 'sing a new song' and that all the earth should 'sing to the Lord'. So, one of the COVID-19 restrictions I think many struggled with was the restriction to not sing together in public worship. That's not to say we haven't been singing at home, or in the car...and maybe over the last few months you've heard some new songs, and those songs have brought comfort and hope.

One song that struck me was 'One Day' by the American Jewish reggae musician Matthew Paul Miller, known better by his Hebrew stage name Matisyahu. The version I first heard was from an event in Haifa held in February last year. In this Matisyahu taught 'One Day' to a crowd of three thousand people which was made up of Muslims, Jews, and Christians.

They started in English by repeatedly singing 'One day! One Day! One day!' – which sounds a bit dry when said, but when sung the words well express longing and hope. In short, one day, one day, one day...we hope life can be better than it is.

The lyrics of the first verse are deeply personal and are sung initially in English, and subsequently in Arabic and Hebrew:

'Sometimes I lay under the moon and thank God I'm breathing;  
then I pray, 'Don't take me soon, 'cause I'm here for a reason.  
Sometimes in my tears I drown, but I never let it get me down,  
so when negativity surrounds, I know it'll all turn around, because...'

Then the chorus roars:

'All my life I've been waiting for, I've been praying for,  
for the people to say that we don't wanna fight no more,  
there'll be no more wars, and our children will play:  
One day! One Day! One day!'

It is deeply moving to watch three thousand people express their longing and hope that one day Israelis and Palestinians will be able to live in peace...and the video can be viewed on [YouTube](#).

The song is a gift for it gives voice to a longing and hope that a way forward can be found for all who live in the land that many call 'Holy'.

But as we think about the song and the Haifa context, which is very different to our own, I think it's helpful to think about what we long for. What are the challenges in Australia which we hope 'one day' will be successfully managed, or resolved, so that life can be better than it is?

Many of the songs we sing in church look forward 'one day' to resurrection and eternal life, but I wonder if there are enough songs which express longing and hope for this life. Longing and hope for...greater justice; genuine reconciliation; an end to COVID; and, better stewardship of this planet we call home.

Inspired by Matisyahu's song, and the affirmation of the Psalmist, I wonder if we could as a Church curate, create, and commission new songs for worship and community?

We CURATE when we glean from the thousands of songs already written – those that express our understanding of what God calls us to be and do. Then we use them, share them and...enable and encourage God's people to sing!

We CREATE when we encourage those are who gifted in song writing and composition to write new songs. I think the remarkable music departments of each Anglican school have huge unrealised potential in contributing to this need...but there are bush poets to encourage as well!

And, if we really think the Church and the world need new songs and anthems which express longing and give hope, then...could we choose to COMMISSION some new songs?

I'd love to hear what songs give you hope and why. And, what areas of life and society you'd love 'one day' to see more whole?

## Hildegard of Bingen



**Sculpture of Hildegard of Bingen by Karlheinz Oswald, 1998, in front of Eibingen Abbey (Wikimedia Commons licence: Attribution-ShareAlike 3.0 Unported CC BY-SA 3.0)**

To me, Hildegard von Bingen (Hildegard of Bingen) was just another nun. I'd heard of her, certainly. She was famous for something or other; probably for founding a religious community. I even remembered that she'd composed music, though I couldn't honestly say that I knew any of it. Beyond that, I knew nothing of her, until one day in 2018 she appeared in a list of 'women in science' while I was consulting for a potential book. Hildegard? A scientist? As I was to discover, she was far more than just a scientist – Hildegard was a renowned theologian, poet, composer, artist, playwright, naturalist, neologist and medical anthropologist, though she is probably best known as a mystic visionary.

There are many great theologians. Equally, there are many great scientists. But few achieve greatness in both fields. Hildegard was one such person, but she didn't stop there. After all, there were the arts to consider also. A true polymath, I was to find out that she was a fascinating woman whose interests and expertise touched on and expanded so many fields of human knowledge.

Hildegard was born in Germany in 1098, the tenth child in a reasonably well-off family. From a very early age, she claimed to see visions. These visions appear to have played some part in the decision of her parents to place her in a nearby Benedictine monastery where she was given into the care of a young noblewoman, Jutta of Sponheim (1091-1136) – herself the daughter of a friend of her father. Jutta had rejected marriage in favour of becoming an anchorite, and she accepted Hildegard into her care. As anchorites they were literally walled into their cell for life, meaning that communication with anyone else could only occur through three windows – one into the church to which their 'cell' was attached, one to the outside world and one to an adjoining parlour through which food and related waste could be passed.

As time passed, other women came to join Hildegard and Jutta. Additional rooms were built adjoining their cells (though still cut off from the outside world). However, over time, the number of women grew to the point that they ceased to be anchoresses and instead formed a Benedictine convent. Upon Jutta's death in 1136, Hildegard was elected as the leader of her community.

Though the community initially relied on the monks for administrative and financial matters, Hildegard realised that they needed to be autonomous. In order to achieve this, she corresponded with notable men whom she respected, in particular, Bernard of Clairvaux, who was a leading monastic figure in the Benedictine community. By securing his support, along with others, her writings impressed Pope Eugenius III who authorised her to publish her works.

Though Hildegard was reluctant to ever discuss her visions with others, five years later she received a vision that told her to have her visions recorded by the Provost of the convent, who did so and continued to do so for the next 30 years.

Many of her visions were gathered together into a magisterial illustrated work *Scivias*, short for 'Scito vias Domini', or 'Know the Ways of the Lord'. This was her first major visionary work and contains 26 visions with a theological explanation in each case. Covering such topics as the Trinity, baptism, the Eucharist and even the soul (which Hildegard likened to the sap of a tree, giving vitality and growth to the branches and leaves), Hildegard demonstrated a unique clarity of thought. The final vision, the Play of Virtues (*Ordo Virtutum*), blended both action and personification and, as such, is commonly regarded as the first morality play. Not content with this, or even the fact that she had invented new words as part of it, Hildegard went a step further and even set it to music.

She followed this work with two other collections of visions. *The Book of Life's Merits* looks at virtues and their corresponding vices. For example, regarding someone who decides to only help those who help them, Hildegard notes that even gemstones reflect brilliance for others to enjoy whilst gaining nothing themselves. It is mercy that lifts up the broken-hearted and leads them to wholeness. Her third book of visions, *The Book of Divine Works* is far more cosmological in its spirituality, dealing with the belief that humanity is actually called to co-operate in an active manner with God in the perfection of the creation.

Such a body of work would have been sufficient for most people. Whilst she was writing these works, however, Hildegard also wrote *Physica* which details the healing powers of plants, animals, metals, crystals and so on. *Physica* is also the earliest known work to feature the use of hops in beer as a preservative. She accompanied this with *Causes and Cures*, a medical compendium examining the human body along with its illnesses and remedies. These two works did not come from ecstatic visions, but rather from her experience in the monastery's herb garden and infirmary.

And then there is her music, which can be [listened to online](#). She wrote at least 77 songs – both the words and music. Starting with chants for the nuns to sing the Daily Office, she went on to compose more elaborate songs covering all the seasons of the year. She is regarded as one of the first identifiable composers of Western music (most of her contemporaries go by 'Anon').

And her text uses far more poetic imagery than similar music of that time. Take, for example, these lyrics:

## *Antiphon for Divine Love*

Love  
Gives herself to all things,  
Most excellent in the depths,  
And above the stars  
Cherishing all:  
For the High King  
She has given  
The kiss of peace.

Hildegard of Bingen is a rare example of someone who touched nearly every field of human endeavour, leaving her mark on all aspects of life. We sometimes get too preoccupied with one facet of living that we forget everything else that is going on around us. Like Hildegard, we need to take a broader view of the whole of creation – view it and marvel in it. God didn't create a small universe for us to become utterly absorbed in – Creation is far bigger and all of it deserves our attention.

Fiona Bowie & Oliver Davies, 1990. *Hildegard of Bingen: Mystical Writings*. Crossroad Publishing: New York.

**Features • Monday 7 September 2020 • By Jennifer Basham**

## **Who are the Uyghur people and what is happening to them in China?**



Recently, Rowan Williams the former Archbishop of Canterbury, along with five serving Church of England Bishops and dozens of other faith leaders, signed a resolute public statement highlighting the potential genocide of the Uyghurs and other Muslims in China, calling it: “one of the most egregious human tragedies since the Holocaust.”

The [full statement can be read online](#). It is succinct and shocking. The story of the Uyghurs is not well known, but cries out for our attention. Gul is an Australian citizen in her mid-20s. In 2018 her parents, who are Australian permanent residents, visited China to see family members. [Interviewed by The Guardian](#), she was alone, living in fear and desperately worried about her parents. She explained how her father had been suddenly taken into detention in China:

“I called my mum and she was crying. I thought my grandparents had died. She said, ‘Your dad is in the hospital.’ Immediately I understood, she can’t tell me he was captured.”

How could an Australian resident be detained for no reason in China? Because the family are Uyghur.

[According to the ABC](#), thousands of Uyghurs living in Australia are reportedly in similar positions, fearful for family who have disappeared, and enduring heavy intimidation by Chinese authorities.

## **The forgotten people**

The Uyghur (pronounced ‘we-gur’) people’s homelands are in the north-west Chinese province of Xinjiang. They are an ethnically Turkic and predominantly a Muslim minority. For many years they have been targeted by the Communist regime for their difference and their faith.

The Xinjiang region had various governance and rulers over millennia but was brought forcibly into the People’s Republic of China when it was founded by Mao in 1949. Since then, there have been occasional protests against Communist control. Very rarely did discrete groups of Uyghurs resort to violence.

In 2014 following a period of escalating conflict, President Xi Jinping ostensibly unleashed the ‘people’s war on terrorism’, reframing the Uyghur people as terrorists to justify the authorities’ gross human rights violations. Subsequently [leaked documents](#) showed a systematic campaign against the entire Uyghur peoples, led by President Xi Jinping, who exhorted the Party to “ ‘unleash’ the ‘tools of dictatorship’ and ‘show absolutely no mercy’ in its eradication of ‘extremists’.”

However, a number of sources have [reported](#) that, in addition to persecuting the Uyghur because they are people of faith, the oppression of the Uyghur people is coupled with Chinese a key economic and foreign policy goal, known as the ‘Belt and Road Initiative’. This initiative, [estimated](#) to cost *at least* \$1 trillion, is [described](#) as a “vast collection of infrastructure projects [that] seeks to connect China with Africa and Europe.” Xinjiang province is [considered](#) important for both its rich resources and vast borders with neighbouring countries. In this sense, oppressive security and economic development of the region are seen to go hand in hand.

## **Assaulting family and faith**

It is estimated that about one in six of the adult Uyghur population, over 1 million Uyghur people in total, is currently being held in detention camps. The Chinese Government euphemistically calls them ‘re-education camps’ or ‘vocational training centres’, but despite their stated intention to combat terrorism, it has become clear that [people are targeted](#) for their faith and family connections. The reasons for being detained are vast – teaching their own language, having ‘too many’ children, associating with foreigners, growing a beard, attending a mosque, or even simply praying.

As the [Faith leaders’ statement notes](#), over a million people are now detained in conditions “facing starvation, torture, murder, sexual violence, slave labour and forced organ extraction.” It has been

reported that guards exert [absolute control](#) over every minute of their day, from forced 'lessons' on Chinese language and culture, down to the timing and length of toilet breaks and [force feeding](#) of pork and alcohol products.

Children are not spared. As the [New York Times](#) reports, an estimated 500,000 children have either had their parents detained or been forcibly removed from families and placed in State-run schools and 'orphanages'. [The Atlantic](#) noted one instance of such a 'child welfare guidance center' where children as young as 12 months to 12 years, were in over-crowded conditions with children "locked up like farm animals in a shed." Separated from their family and culture, these institutions form a regimented environment of indoctrination, intended to rob children of their faith and identity.

## **Total control**

The campaign against the Uyghur people is comprehensive.

An [investigation](#) by the Associated Press revealed a pattern of [forced abortions and sterilisations](#) of women, with birth rates falling in Xinjiang by 24 per cent (compared to around 2.4 per cent nationally). As one expert [described it to the ABC news](#) "...it will sharply diminish their vitality...It will make them easier to assimilate into the mainstream Chinese population."

The regime is underpinned by sophisticated surveillance. Uyghur families in the community may have Communist Party officials assigned to [live with or monitor them](#), grooming their children for information, [sleeping in the same bed with the wives](#) of men who are detained, and dropping into the family home at any moment.

The streets are filled with cameras and check points, running advanced facial recognition software. The internet is monitored, 'nanny apps' are mandatory, and spyware infests web and telecommunications. Uyghurs also have their biometric data recorded. All these points of data feed into a [massive database](#) tracking people's movements and analysing communications for signs of 'suspect' behaviour, while deep learning systems attempt to predict who is 'unsafe' and should be targeted.

## **Oppression, forced labour and organ harvesting**

Under the cloak of surveillance and secrecy other human rights abuses have also flourished.

The Australian Strategic Policy Institute (ASPI) released the *Uyghurs for Sale* [report](#) in March of this year, which alleged that the Chinese Government was sending people from detention centres to factories scattered across China, in opaque circumstances that resemble forced labour. ASPI identified a range of [common brands](#) benefiting from this forced labour. Human Rights groups have [also highlighted](#) how extensively 'tainted' the fashion industry is with Uyghur forced labour.

Perhaps one of the most sinister elements is the allegation that prisoners are killed and their organs harvested. China [claimed](#) to have ended the practice in 2015. Yet in November 2019, a [Sydney Morning Herald](#) investigation raised concerns about discrepancies in practices, highlighting the growing business in foreigners paying huge sums for organs 'on demand'. This is an arrangement that would be impossible in a country where organ donation is completely voluntary. A week later researchers at the Australian National University also published [their findings](#) that Chinese data on organ transfers was clearly being manipulated.

## Australian Uyghurs and others living around the world

[The Guardian](#) has revealed how Australian citizens who are ethnic Uyghurs remain in great fear and Amnesty International has [documented](#) intimidation around the globe. The lives of family members remaining in China are threatened to suppress the voices and advocacy of those who have fled or are living abroad.

Encouragingly, the Australian Government has begun to recognise the issue. Our government was one of 22 signatories of a [letter](#) to the [United Nations Human Rights Council in July 2019](#) calling for an end to the mass detention of Uyghurs, and our Foreign Minister [publicly expressed](#) being “deeply concerned about the human rights situation in Xinjiang.”

However, the Chinese Government has [accused the signatories](#) of having “wantonly criticised and smeared China in total disregard for the truth” and said that by “blatantly politicising the issue of human rights, they have grossly interfered in China’s internal affairs.” The [ABC](#) reported on the response of China’s Ambassador to Australia, who dismissed concerns about the mass detention of Uyghurs as “fake news”.

### What shall be our response?

Dr Joanne Smith Finley, an expert on Xinjiang from Newcastle University in the UK, has [bluntly](#) described what is at play:

“It’s genocide, full stop. It’s not immediate, shocking, mass-killing on the spot-type genocide, but it’s slow, painful, creeping genocide.”

At this point in the Uyghur story, it might be easy to despair at their suffering, and to feel powerless in the face of such oppression and power.

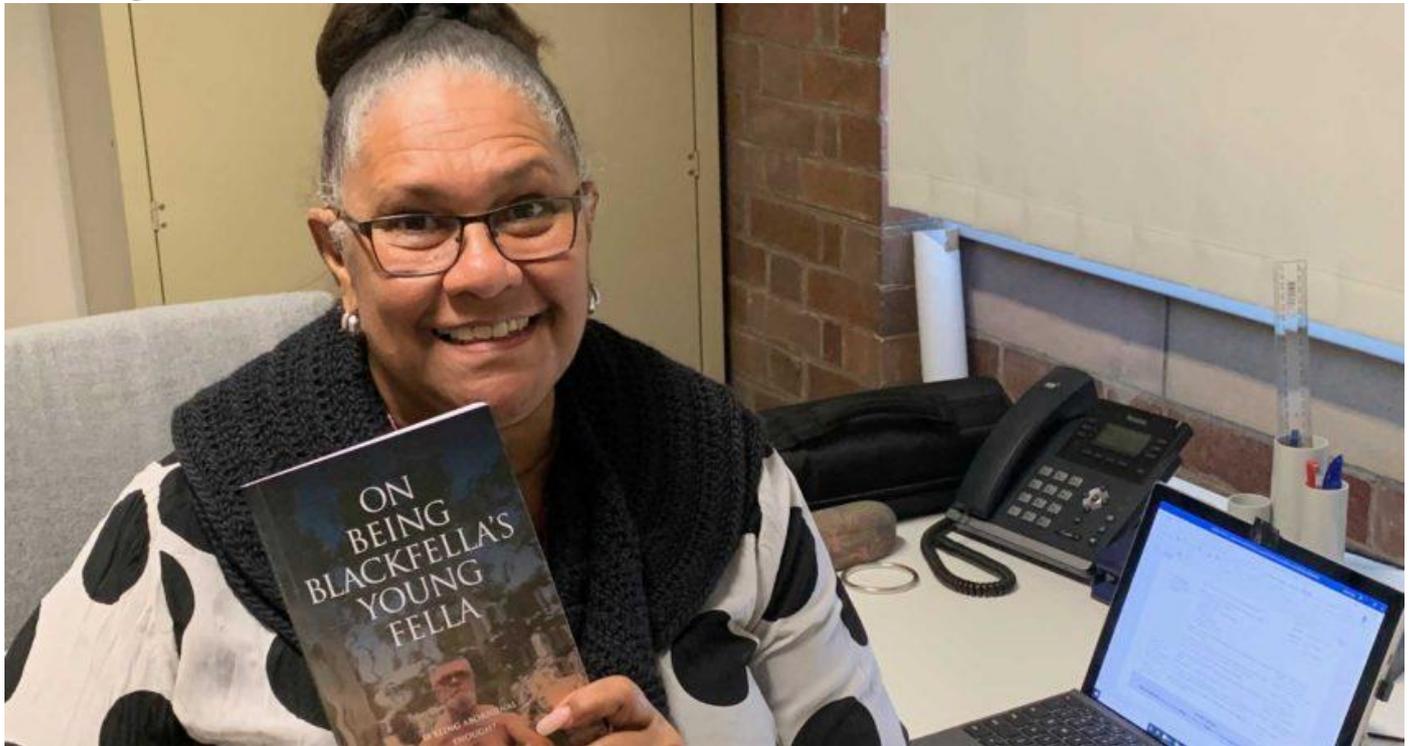
However, in their statement, Rowan Williams and the other faith leader signatories urge:

“people of faith and conscience everywhere to join us: in prayer, solidarity and action to end these mass atrocities. We make a simple call for justice, to investigate these crimes, hold those responsible to account and establish a path towards the restoration of human dignity.”

### Four simple things we can do to help include:

- **Praying** that people are released from detention centres, that children are reunited with their parents, and that Uyghurs are treated with dignity and respect. And for our world’s political, diplomatic and faith leaders that they may act effectively and swiftly in their advocacy.
- **Sharing the story** of the Uyghur people on your social media channels (such as this short video by [The Economist](#): ‘How China is crushing the Uighurs’).
- **Being more attentive** to the goods we buy, so that we are not complicit in the profiting from their misery.
- **Writing to** your elected [Federal representative](#) and asking them to advocate for Uyghurs in Parliament and within their respective parties.

## On Being Blackfella's Young Fella: Is Being Aboriginal Enough?



**"In my Reconciliation work, telling tangible stories that transcend culture is important and I will remember The Rev'd Glenn's and my stories in my Reconciliation conversations with people" (Sandra King OAM, Quandamooka and Bundjalung elder and ACSQ Reconciliation Action Plan Coordinator)**

In this special joint reflection, clergy and lay people each reflect upon a chapter of Wiradjuri man and Anglican priest The Rev'd Glenn Loughrey's recently published book, ***On Being Blackfella's Young Fella: Is Being Aboriginal Enough?*** In doing so, they discuss why their chosen chapter resonated with them and consider how the book's insights will shape their approaches to Reconciliation in the future.

### **Introduction – The Rev'd Canon Bruce Boase, Wakka Wakka man and Co-Chair of the ACSQ Reconciliation Action Plan Working Group**

I was drawn to the Introduction of Glenn's book by the sheer honesty of his writing. Glenn and I have had similar experiences growing up in country areas where our identity was ambiguous as we are descendants of both 'white' and Aboriginal peoples. The similarities resonated with me, but I was also drawn to our differences. Glenn has put himself, quite courageously I feel, just where he is. He makes no bones of the conflict in his life as an Anglican priest who grew up experiencing racism because he is Wiradjuri, a nation of Aboriginal people from central New South Wales. I also appreciate Glenn's close attachment to his people, his history and his land.

What struck me about the way Glenn introduced his book was his courage in acknowledging the struggles in his life. There, again, the similarities and the differences between us emerged. I, for such a long time, did not acknowledge the drunken abuse from my father. When reading the chapter, I sensed Glenn's love for his father, as I did mine. Still there is the struggle. One difference is that my

father was not Aboriginal. My mother was. My nanna was a Wakka Wakka woman from Ban Ban Springs. These two ladies were always gentle.

Glenn is on a journey that is defined by the struggle. I have already touched on the inner conflict he expresses between his Christian life as an ordained man and his Aboriginality. Again here is a similarity and a difference. I, too, am an Anglican priest and an Aboriginal man. I have not yet come to terms with the inner struggle and the tension that must be lived with. Glenn seems to be able to live in that tension. In beautiful and loving ways, Glenn paints the picture of the land he grew up in. He now knows the sadness of seeing that land pillaged for mineral resources. Struggle is always there, but Glenn learns from it and can make us think about our own struggles and journey.

When I encounter another member of an Aboriginal community, I recognise the need to acknowledge the struggle within myself. The 'whiteness', if you like, of my upbringing was driven by fear. Mum and Nana feared the loss of their children in a time when Aboriginal children were forcibly removed from their parents. Glenn helps me to get in touch with this part of my journey, respect it and to reconcile myself. Doing so will help me move forward and talk to others about Reconciliation.

**'In the Good Old Days' – Jean Anderson, parishioner of St Matthew's Anglican Church, Coomera and member of the ACSQ Reconciliation Action Plan Working Group**

Glenn Loughrey is an artist, and I am interested in art. In my years of outback travel, I made it a practice to bring back pieces of Aboriginal art, craft and fabrics and make them part of my life – as reminders of places I had been fortunate to visit, yes. But also because I loved the strong simplicity of their mark-making – dots, lines and patterns of nature re-imagined and defined with the tools at hand. I have also seen this trait more recently in the individual works of Aboriginal artists included in a few 'non-remote' and online exhibitions. But the subject matter can sometimes be uncomfortable for non-Indigenous viewers – particularly in the different interpretations of our shared history – and the opportunity to purchase such works much reduced by lack of exposure.

The Rev'd Glenn notes that, "Art is a way for the white western community to bestow identity on Aboriginal people, to mark who is a real Aboriginal artist or whose art is authentic or not. I know this personally for it's the question I answer when I enter a gallery – 'Are you traditional or urban?' 'Urban.' 'Sorry, only trade in traditional art.'" (p.42). Before reading this, it had not occurred to me that some Australians might view the only 'authentic' Aboriginal art as that which is created in remote communities, as such works convey what many non-Indigenous Australians might want 'Aboriginality' to be. But I am forced to consider this when The Rev'd Glenn suggests that, in our preferences for one over the other, we may be expressing a desire to reconstruct the 'good old days' and a simpler way of life when everyone seemingly knew their place within the dominant power structure and acted accordingly. Given the ignorance sometimes expressed by the descendants of the 'white' invaders of this country regarding First Nations peoples, it is not difficult to conclude that we – I – might want to remain comfortable in holding to existing beliefs and so devalue what others might wish to assert about themselves.

There is much I am forced to consider in this chapter focused on Aboriginal ways of seeing art and storytelling, and I am uncertain in my understanding of it. But the hope for me in my personal journey of reconciliation is encapsulated in The Rev'd Glenn's references to 'reflective nostalgia', which "looks back at the same period and compares it with now and works to divine truths from both places." (p.40). The Rev'd Glenn points out that being comfortable with uncertainty is a requirement for the collaborative and continuing work of finding truths in comparisons of past with the present which

might open a way to a better future. For me, that is a willingness to embrace opportunities which confront me with other ways of seeing. The Rev'd Glenn's book is one of those opportunities.

### **'The Rocks Speak' – Sandra King OAM, Quandamooka and Bundjalung elder and ACSQ Reconciliation Action Plan Coordinator**

When sister Michelle McDonald asked me to write a response to a chapter of Glenn Loughrey's new book *On Being Blackfella's Young Fella*, it only took a matter of seconds to pick a chapter. I scrolled past the chapters on 'Aboriginal Spirituality', 'A Little Bit of History', 'In the Good Old Days', 'On Being Aboriginal', 'This Ground, She's My Mother', 'Wiradjuri Dreaming', 'Repository of Sacred Texts' and there it was, there was the chapter that got my attention, 'The Rocks Speak'.

The first paragraph sums it up...the old stories we hear, like those that tell us that country is sacred and that we need to listen to it, learn from it and nurture it. As a child I was often told "throw it back" or "you go to Uncle or that ol' fella there [an Elder] and ask him if you can take the rock or shell!" Of course, I threw the rocks or shells back.

At my father's funeral, I realised I had forgotten to do one thing that I knew he would have wanted me to do for him. I looked up and saw my cousin and Elders from Tjerrangerri country (Stradbroke Island) walk in and there it was...my cousin Margie handed me a big tub with a lid. I was so relieved, tears just streamed down my face. Then my Elders told me something so precious, "Your father started this 'tradition' and it will continue forever." This 'tradition' is sacred to me as it relates to the burial of our Quandamooka people.

At the gravesites of deceased people of some cultures, family and friends grab a handful of soil and throw it over the coffin. For us, Tjerrangerri people it's a little different. The big tub handed to me at my father's funeral held something precious...it was the sand from Dad's country. We sprinkled the sand over his coffin – to symbolise that country was always with him while he was alive and remained with him when he 'returned' to country.

Even though Dad had never returned to country to live (due to the rigid rules of his mother's Certificate of Exemption, which he was listed on as her child), he was a proud Quandamooka man. He had a strong sense of cultural values and of a belonging, not only to his family members, but a sense of belonging to his country. Hence, 'The Rocks Speak'.

The experience of sprinkling my father's grave with sand, further strengthened my connection to country and family, and in a very tangible way. It is common across cultures for funerals of close family members to strengthen connection to family by respectfully filling the gravesite.

In my Reconciliation work, telling tangible stories that transcend culture is important and I will remember The Rev'd Glenn's and my stories in my Reconciliation conversations with people.

### **'This Ground, She's My Mother' – The Rev'd Dr Jo Inkpin, Co-Chair of the ACSQ Reconciliation Action Plan Working Group**

I was drawn to 'This Ground, She's My Mother' for several reasons. It was spiritually inviting, as understanding material existence as spirit is so limited in white western thinking, and female imagery for being is also rare, particularly from a male writer. More importantly, however, I wanted to see how far Glenn's understanding of 'country' differed from and resonated with my own. As someone with strong Celtic spirituality, I am interested in such connections. Having a topographic surname

specifically referring to features of another land (in Old English 'Inkpin' means 'people of the hill', specifically a location in Berkshire, England), I am also aware of my and my own ancestors' deep, but ruptured connections, with my/our country.

What struck me most in this chapter were the quoted words of an unidentified "Indigenous woman" who once said, "I carry my country in my body". This holistic understanding of identity importantly helps maintain life for First Nations peoples when off country. It also underpins the helpful distinction Glenn makes between sovereignty and autonomy. Too much he says has been made of principles of the 'sovereignty' of people, when it is the land itself that is sovereign, as it is the life-giver. People's sovereignty may therefore be a necessary legal use of a key term in the dominant culture. However true self-determination is based on the autonomy of country which is an embodied cultural reality.

Glenn's exploration of connection to country thus happily avoids sentimentality and grounds The Uluru Statement from the Heart and other First Nation rights to self-determination in the autonomy of country itself. Shared spaces and similarities may exist for acting and engaging with others. However, in the words of Sarah Maddison whom he also quotes, the autonomy of carrying country bodily involves "making mistakes, being accountable, and fixing those mistakes yourself" (page 70).

Carrying country bodily suggests to me a greater need for deeper grounding of my Reconciliation work in the particular experiences and cultures of First Nation peoples. Strengthening such connections, literally and metaphorically, is therefore essential. Whilst mediating language, such as 'sovereignty', may be helpful at times, supporting the autonomy of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples is central.

**Features • Monday 31 August 2020 • By The Rev'd Dr Jo Inkpin**

## **Did anything good come out of the Middle Ages?**



**King John authorising Magna Carta ('Great Charter'), Runnymede, England in 1215: it is one of the most important documents in history, as it established the principle that everyone is subject to the law, even the sovereign, and guarantees the rights of individuals, the right to justice and the right to a fair trial**

The 'Middle Ages', and the term 'medieval', is frequently used as a byword for ignorance and brutality. Indeed, many associate it with religious oppression and corruption. Anglicans, too, are often reluctant to affirm the value of the Middle Ages. We are not helped by over-significance sometimes given to the 16th century Reformations and the early Church (up to about 600 CE). This is unfortunate. For missing out nine whole centuries of Christian life not only creates serious gaps in understanding Christian development – it also risks failing to appreciate important Anglican features and spiritual treasures fully. Arguably, in the 21st century, in our so-called *post-modern* age, recovering these is vital as faith is reshaped afresh.

### **'Nasty, brutish and short?' – beyond medieval myths**

Many medieval myths undoubtedly need unpacking. Far from a hideous uniform time of darkness, the period 600-1500 was incredibly diverse and creative. Yes, levels of health, education and democratic life that we take for granted were lacking. However, those modern elements largely emerged in the 19th and 20th centuries. The Reformation era certainly brought no significant changes of this kind. Ordinary people's rights were actually eroded then, as the power of nation states headed by autocratic elites increased. This included the growth of the royal prerogative, centralised bureaucracy and standardised languages, which undermined local courts and laws and marginalised those with regional languages and dialects. Above all, with the enclosure of common lands, poorer people increasingly lost capacity legally to forage for food, graze animals of their own and collect fruits and firewood.

Heretical movements also endured persecution in the Middle Ages, yet the most horrendous Christian wars of religion occurred in the 17th century. The violence of the medieval Crusades similarly impacted the relationship between Christians and Muslims. However, the first destructive impacts of European imperialism, 'backed up' by Christian religion, began much later on the Reformation's eve, and still more in the 19th century. Care existed for the poor and otherwise challenged, if on a very paternalistic basis. Peasants were also not just revolting or unsophisticated – they were very aware of legal rights, or lack thereof, and customs. Punishments, if sometimes cruel, had clear proportionality. Anti-semitism, witch-hunts and oppression of minorities are also part of the medieval story, but the degree of such inhuman activity pales in scale compared to that inflicted later.



**Encaustic tiles (1250–60) bearing the images of King Richard I (1157-1199) and Saladin (1137/1138–1193) in mounted combat during the Third Crusade of 1191 (Battle of Arsuf). Saladin was a Muslim military and political leader who, as Sultan, led the Islamic forces during the Crusades**

Overall, therefore, if we could time travel, we would recognise much of our own humanity. Our greatest challenge would be sensory shock, not least that of smell and feel! Religiously speaking, we would also encounter a different age, but with some familiar, and, arguably, some refreshing features. Four particular aspects might help us: the physical and symbolic character of medieval ecclesiastical buildings; the variety and depth of medieval thought; the extraordinary panoply of prayer and spirituality; and, the order of the Church itself.

## **1. Christian faith like a cathedral**

Even before entering, as we approach a medieval city, we would recognise familiar cathedral and other church architecture. These amazing edifices, built as signs of God's presence, dominated the landscape. In contrast, tall towers of money-making are our dominant city symbols. Perhaps Australian Anglicans are less aware than Europeans of medieval contributions to our Church because so many of our ecclesiastical constructions are so very recent. Few of us grow up, as I did, in a church community worshipping in buildings with unbroken continuity back to the 12th century or beyond. However, St John's Cathedral in Brisbane is but one beautiful example of this medieval history into which Anglicans across the world are intimately linked. It powerfully expresses continuing medieval gifts: Gothic forms, stained-glass windows, side chapels, choir and music, sacramental emphases, and (after the removal of pews, which is very modern) spaciousness and flexibility for all kinds of gatherings.

St John's Cathedral's prominent site, like those of similar medieval-style cathedrals, is also highly symbolic. Humber churches in smaller settlements were also literally in the middle of their society. For the Church saw itself at the heart of its world and open to all around it. This was certainly linked to its power and desire for dominance. Yet it was also about seeing God in everything and being a source of community and healing for all. In contrast, in later centuries the Church often split into competing Christian factions, each tending to sell its own religious 'club' rather than explore the mystery of God in all of Creation.

## **2. Transcendent thoughts of God**

The French philosopher Étienne Gilson (1884-1978) also identified how the great medieval Christian thinkers created 'cathedrals of the mind'. They brought Scripture together with the best of wider thinking, forming systematic, often beautiful, structures of Christian doctrine. By the 16th century, these had become fossilised and new techniques of reading scripture helped bring Reformations of various kinds. Yet we are impoverished if we view the Middle Ages as backward in faith. Religious dogma was dominant, and superstitions were prevalent. However, there was tremendous discussion. This was, after all, the age of the creation of the great universities of Europe. A broad range of belief and practice also existed at the local level. Significantly, St Thomas the Apostle was popular, as a very human figure who encompassed doubt and other spiritual struggles.

Without the great medieval thinkers, the Anglican Church would certainly be much poorer. [Anselm](#), Archbishop of Canterbury (1093-1109), is one example. His outstanding work included the so-called 'ontological proof' for God and articulating the influential 'satisfaction' view of Christ's atonement. Other key theological ideas emerged from the Middle Ages, notably 'moral' or 'example' atonement theories, such as those of French scholastic philosopher and theologian Abelard (1079-1142) and the Italian Franciscan Bonaventure (1221-1274), affirming God as loving rather than offended, harsh, or judgemental. Meanwhile the greatest medieval Christian thinker was Italian Dominican Thomas Aquinas, who engaged with sources of ancient wisdom like Aristotle and the brilliant contemporary

scholars of medieval Islam, developing highly influential ideas of 'natural law', and subtle understandings of the relationship between grace and reason. For despite popular superstitions (of which our own age is hardly free), such medieval theologians can make some later Christian thinking look quite banal.

### 3. Plentiful pathways of prayer

Medieval Christianity also offered many different prayerful pathways. While, the Church's hierarchy did seek to impose its authority on all of life including prayer, in practice, however, a vibrant variety of spiritual flowers flourished under the same sacred canopy. Indeed, they were often broader than much that followed. As the Protestant Reformation swept away many less constructive expressions with its stress on the scriptural text, it also narrowed options, particularly for women. Most devastating was the destruction of monasteries and religious orders which had been powerhouses of prayer and welfare. Today physical ruins such as Tintern Abbey in Wales and Fountains Abbey in North Yorkshire are still hauntingly beautiful. Particularly from the mid 19th century, Anglicans have thus gradually renewed the best of what was lost at the Reformation. This has included the (re)creation of Anglican religious orders and designated retreat spaces, and life-giving patterns of spirituality.



**Fountains Abbey in North Yorkshire**

Some of the greatest works of Anglican spiritual inheritance are medieval. These include revived traditions such as the Franciscans and designated women's religious spaces, both highly significant within Anglican development in southern Queensland.

Profound prayer guides include the classic 14th century work *The Cloud of Unknowing*, written by an anonymous English monk. Women were also prominent, notably English mystic Margery Kempe (1373-1438). [Julian of Norwich's](#) work has been increasingly inspirational recently, helping to renew Anglican contemplative life. Anglicans have also begun to draw deeply again on other neglected medieval spiritual practices, including [pilgrimages](#) and [labyrinths](#), [rules of life](#) and [prayer](#), [art](#) and drama, and ways of developing sensibility to God in Creation.

Nor did the Middle Ages lack helpful approaches to the Bible. A significant feature, for example, was attention given by great teachers, like French Benedictine abbot Bernard of Clairvaux, to texts such as the Song of Solomon, which later Christians have often overlooked. They articulated vital themes such

as the humanity of Jesus, God in the senses, the intimacy of God's love, and God's presence in the public and ordinary life of the world.

#### **4. Anglican order and liberty**

To medieval folk, modern privatised faith would make no sense. As symbolised by the centrality of church buildings in the community, politics and economics were inextricably bound up with Christianity. Individualist spirituality, distinct from the community and corporate worship, would also have been incomprehensible. Church and State could consequently be intertwined unhelpfully, and church leaders might be corrupted by power and wealth. The costs of conscientious objection could further extend to exile and death. Yet this brought fruitful engagement with the whole of life. Church leaders, such as Carthusian bishop Hugh of Lincoln, were thus powerful providers and advocates for people who were poor, sick or marginalised (including English Jews).

The story of the martyred Archbishop of Canterbury Thomas Becket's (c.1118-1170) conflict with King Henry II is the best-known example of medieval struggles for Church liberty. However, it is but part of the medieval shaping of what we now know as Anglican order and freedom. For the Middle Ages, not Henry VIII, established principles of the independence of the *Ecclesia Anglicana*.

Another key figure was the great Archbishop of Canterbury Stephen Langton (c.1150-1228). Dispute involving him was central to the crisis which produced Magna Carta ('Great Charter') in 1215, a hugely significant legal definition which included as its first article, directed against both the monarchy and papacy, "that the English Church shall be free, and shall have its rights undiminished, and its liberties unimpaired." Langton is also important to Anglican foundations in other ways. He is, for example, credited with dividing the Bible into the standard modern arrangement of chapters. A distinguished scholar and prolific writer (not least on the Hebrew Scriptures), he also chaired the key English Church Council of 1222, whose decrees, known as the *Constitutions of Stephen Langton*, are the earliest provincial canons still recognised as binding in English church courts. For much of what was to become Anglican tradition has medieval origins, including the development of English canon law and ecclesial order, as well as key aspects of influential theology, piety, and architecture. Above all, this includes nurture of the English parish and episcopal systems, which have been central to Anglican development to this day.

#### **What fresh value for faith development does the Middle Ages have today?**

Recently, many Anglican foundations have been challenged, sometimes radically. These include the sufficiency of the traditional parish system, for we live in a very different age. Yet our times also have quite different dynamics to both Reformation and modern (19th and 20th century) Anglican reformulations. So, in responding to where God is calling us, the Middle Ages may help renewal. The elements briefly explored above offer some directions.

Today there are fresh influences which would confine the Church to a privatised chaplaincy role, retreating from the community at large. The examples of Stephen Langton, Thomas Becket and Hugh of Lincoln point us elsewhere. The Anglican tradition is not one of gathered communities, ideologically based and/or exclusive of others. Rather it seeks to stand, metaphorically if not always literally, in the centre, with others, in society. That is the parish's deepest significance. We can often feel pressured to narrow our identities, being overly self-concerned. In contrast, our medieval forebears support continued openness to the wider world, to what Anglican theologians call true 'catholicity'.

In being concerned both for our particular faith, and for wider society, the medieval Church also encourages us to learn from others' wisdom and to wrestle more deeply with our faith, not least contemplatively. We, too, live in an age that often values images over words, participation over received regimentation, diversity over narrow ideas of unity, and which longs for depth and peace in the midst of unprecedented activity and anxiety. In such a world, with its own balance of creativity and contemplative prayer, use of the arts and broad approaches to scripture, medieval spirituality might just have some fruitful pathways to explore.

**News • Friday 4 September 2020 • By Michelle McDonald**

## Let's get behind Fr Dan's Westfield Local Hero nomination



**The Lakes Anglican Church parish priest Father Dan Berris said that if he gets enough votes to win a \$10,000 Westfield Local Hero grant for his church that he will employ facilitators to expand the church's emergency food pantry (pictured) and the Music Box kids' programme**

Father Dan Berris from The Lakes Anglican Church stands out for his gentle-giant stature, sense of humour, love of motorcycles and tattoos, and most of all for the good he does in his parish and the wider community, where he runs vital programmes, cares for individuals and volunteers as a police chaplain.

Inspired by his parish priest's generous community spirit, North Lakes Anglican Church parishioner Chris Mundy recently nominated Father Dan as a 2020 Westfield Local Hero.

Westfield Local Heroes are nominated by their communities, and the outcome of the [online public vote](#) will determine the three successful 2020 nominees for every Westfield centre, with each of their affiliated organisations awarded a \$10,000 grant to support their work.

Mr Mundy said that he nominated Father Dan after witnessing Father Dan's strength, care and compassion since he began serving the parish community in 2012.

"I've seen firsthand how hard Dan works in the local community and the support he gives to individuals facing life's challenges," Mr Mundy said.

"Dan has a strong nature about him that gives people courage to face difficult times, yet is also compassionate and shows people care.

"He confidently interacts with all types of people from many different generations and is always looking for ways to respond to community needs in innovative ways."

Father Dan said that if he gets enough votes to win a \$10,000 grant for his church that he will employ facilitators to expand the church's emergency food pantry and the Music Box kids' programme.

"Other grant monies often only pay for items and resources to assist, but don't pay for the people needed to facilitate ministry," Fr Dan said.

"If our church receives the \$10,000 Westfield grant, we would use this money to pay facilitators to help our food pantry and Music Box programme have a greater impact in serving the local community.

"The grant money will also help provide employment at a time when so many people are out of work due to COVID-19."

The Lakes Anglican Church's emergency food relief pantry is open three days per week so people who are struggling to afford basic necessities can source food, toiletries and cleaning products from friendly and welcoming church volunteers.

Through the church's Music Box programme, children under five years of age have fun developing cognition and motor skills while their parents and caregivers are supported with some well-deserved down time and fellowship.

Long-term Music Box mum Amy Chalk said that she is grateful to Father Dan because the programme has blessed both her and her children and because Father Dan has been generous and welcoming.

"The Music Box programme has been great to teach my children confidence, coordination, and fine and gross motor skills," Ms Chalk said.

"I have been a part of the Music Box programme for about seven years and it has been a great way for my children to learn how to play alongside and share with other children and express their emotions, and for me to speak to other parents and get advice if needed.

"Father Dan is definitely deserving of this nomination, as since I have known him he puts everyone before himself and is always there for anyone that needs him and is always willing to help anyone.

"Father Dan is also very welcoming to everyone and loves supporting the local businesses, giving his all to the church and the people.

"He is not just our priest, but a friend."

Father Dan said he is humbled by the nomination and inspired by the thoughtfulness of his parishioners.

"I was working in the office and Chris let me know he'd nominated me. I felt quite encouraged, especially when I saw what he wrote," Father Dan said.

"I'm pretty blessed with awesome church members who often express their appreciation to me."

There are two primary ways our Diocesan community can get behind Father Dan Berris' nomination.

People can [vote for Father Dan online](#) by Monday 14 September and they can also share this Anglican Church Southern Queensland [Facebook post](#) or this news story (see social media sharing options below), encouraging others to vote for him so the two Lakes Anglican Church ministries can have an even greater impact.

*anglican focus* is proud to support Father Dan's nomination as a Westfield Local Hero and we look forward to hearing about the outcome of the nomination.

**Reflections • Monday 31 August 2020 • By The Rev'd Dr Cathy Laufer**

## **The potential Oxford vaccine and the transforming love of God**



Various church leaders in Sydney have written to the Prime Minister expressing concern about the ethics of accepting the potential Oxford vaccine, should it prove successful against COVID-19. This concern is based on the use of cellular material that can be traced back to a foetus electively aborted in 1973, which is a common practice in medical research. Anglican Archbishop Glenn Davies told ABC's [AM](#) programme, "to use that tissue for science is reprehensible". Meanwhile, Catholic Archbishop Anthony Fisher, in an interview with ABC Radio's [Religion and Ethics Report](#), said he believes it would be ethical for a person to accept the vaccine if there was no alternative. However, he added that he feels many people would be "troubled" because they could feel "complicit" in the abortion.

I understand the Archbishops' desire to address the possible crisis of conscience for some people of faith. However, in my opinion they have missed the theological crux of the matter.

An analogy. A child is killed by a drunk driver and the parents donate the child's organs. That child was 'innocent', died involuntarily, and as a minor could not give consent to organ donation. Do we refuse the organs? Certainly not! Through organ donation, other people can live because of the child's death. That does not deny the sinfulness of the driver's act, nor the pain and suffering of the child and parents. However, it can bring some level of meaning to a tragedy. In Gospel terms, that child has, involuntarily, been the Christ figure for those who receive the organs.

To the current issue. Yes, a foetus was aborted – decades ago. We do not know the circumstances, but we can say that the foetus was 'innocent' and did not give consent to the use of their tissue. But, through its use and the development of the cell line, countless lives have already been saved, including through the rubella vaccine of which there remains no alternative, as noted by Archbishop Fisher in his ABC Radio interview. Surely the Christian response is to see this in the context of Christ's death. The act of those who crucified Christ was wrong, but the result was and is life for countless millions. That is our faith.

The analogy is far from perfect. Christ died with knowledge, voluntarily giving his life. Neither my hypothetical child nor the aborted foetus had knowledge of impending death or the ability to give consent to the use of their bodies by others. However, that abortion has already occurred. We cannot give that foetus the life that was lost. Instead, we have a choice. We can either leave that abortion as a sinful tragedy or we can allow God to transform it into a life-giving one.

Refusing the Oxford vaccine, should it prove effective, is to allow sin, evil and death to triumph. Let us, instead, let God do what God does best – shine light in the darkness, bring good out of evil, turn death into life. Let us accept the vaccine as a product of both the God-given ingenuity of human beings, and God's own transforming love. And let us give thanks.

**Editor's note 9 September 2020:** The AstraZeneca-University of Oxford late-stage vaccine trial was "voluntarily paused" on 9 September 2020 after a study participant suffered a "potentially unexplained illness".

## Fatima



**Three shepherd children go to look after their flock at Cova da Iria in Fátima, Portugal on the 13 May 1917. What happened next? How you choose to answer that question might determine your feelings about this new film.**

The visions of Mary at Fátima, occurring over six months during the first World War, are a part of history that have garnered great attention. Filmed a few times before, this 2020 version brings a freshness to the tale achieved with sweeping camerawork and great attention to detail in production design. The Italian director, Marco Pontecorvo, is largely known as a cinematographer and this shows on the screen. The Portuguese countryside never looked so good!

Pontecorvo's straightforward version of this story features bright young actor Stephanie Gil as Lucia, the oldest child and the film's major focus. She brings an earnestness to the tale that it might not otherwise have achieved. And, earnest the film is. Some categorise movies like this as either informing the viewer *about* faith or urging the viewer *towards* faith. *Fatima* leans heavily into the latter type. The nature of belief is taken as a given, and anyone who might have another point of view is seen to operate from a stance of antagonism. For me, this blunted the film's edge a little; if you want to convince someone about faith it seems more effective to do so with gentleness and some acceptance, rather than through a brick wall of absolutism. In this sense, *Fatima* feels a little old-fashioned.

The nature of faith is treated in an interesting way, too. Because the children's visions are depicted graphically, both in their experience of Mary (a truly radiant Joana Ribeiro) and the revelations she delivers, the idea of faith is not really in question, at least not religious faith. Instead, the film probes the question of why the children might not be believed. They face opposition from their parents at first, then the Church and the local authorities who see the visions as a political manoeuvre to destabilise the mostly secular republic in its infancy at that stage. The script by Valerio D'Annunzio and

Barbara Nicolosi does a good job of giving a sense of place to *Fatima*. The political, religious and cultural zeitgeist of Portugal during the period of the first World War is captured in a way that brings a depth of understanding to the way these children are treated.

Of course, visions like these raise all kinds of questions. Why an appearance to small children aged 7 to 10 years? Why a monthly format? Why are the children told to keep the larger part of the visions' content secret? Why not appear to a larger group? Pontecorvo's film poses each of these questions and some receive answers, largely at the lips of an older Lucia (Sonia Braga) many years later. The film's framing device has a researcher (Harvey Keitel) interviewing her. Unfortunately, this might be the least successful component of the film. Keitel is a great actor but he's just phoning it in here, with little to get his teeth into. There's no space for any real fire between atheist and believer that might have ignited the rest of the film with passion.

So, will *Fatima* change the minds of doubters? It seems unlikely. More aimed at believers, the reverential treatment doesn't quite pierce the surface of who these characters are as people beyond what one might read on a Wikipedia page. Earnestness only takes you so far. Despite these limitations, the film as a window into the events at Fátima that might just encourage some to look a little further, Pontecorvo has found success.

***Fatima*, rated M, is directed by Marco Pontecorvo, is currently showing in cinemas.**

**Features • Monday 7 September 2020 • By Bishop Jeremy Greaves**

## **Donation-based crowdfunding: tips and resources**



**Bishop Jeremy and Josie Greaves with their family and Solomon Islanders during their December 2019 visit**

During a trip to the Solomon Islands late last year with my wife, Josie, and my three children, we visited a small clinic in the village of Taraoniara, which is staffed by one nurse/midwife and funded by the local church.

The clinic offers basic medical care and birthing services, and was doing so without a functioning toilet, shower facilities or running water, as there was not a large enough tank onsite or adequate plumbing.

This meant that patients had to walk down to the sea during the day or night to wash or toilet.

Upon returning to Brisbane, we contacted the clinic to identify what they needed to get the shower and toilet working and the best way to do the work using local expertise. The clinic nurse was able to tell us exactly what they needed and how much we needed to raise to fund the project.

Josie and I also chatted about the best way to raise the \$5,000 we needed to fund the project and ultimately decided upon online donation-based crowdfunding using the [GoFundMe](#) platform.

Online crowdfunding is a way to raise money for a project or other initiative from a large number of people relatively quickly using a digital platform. Individuals or organisations donate an amount of their choosing, with each donation pooled and (hopefully) adding up to the fundraising goal.

Individuals, churches, ministries, charities and companies can start crowdfunding campaigns and anyone can contribute.

Through our [‘St Claire’s Clinic Tاراoniara’ GoFundMe campaign](#), we raised \$5,627, with this money going toward two large water tanks and their installation, providing drinking water and sanitation for the small Solomon Islands clinic.

The first water tank was installed in July and is used by patients for drinking, washing and cooking.

The second water tank was installed in August and has been connected to the maternity unit.



**“The first water tank was installed in July and is used by patients for drinking, washing and cooking”**

At the time of writing, the nurse in charge of the clinic, Jackson Mekapi, said that they are still waiting for some pipe fittings and then the toilets and showers will be fully functional.

As the project unfolded, with the tanks arriving and being fitted one at a time, we kept those who donated to the campaign updated using the GoFundMe tool, as well as social media, ensuring that we included photos in our email updates.

The highlight of the crowdfunding campaign for us was being able to respond to a clear need with a project driven by a local community and funded by people from around the world, and being able to do it all in a relatively short amount of time.

While online crowdfunding is not always the best fundraising channel for every project and initiative, it was an effective and easy solution for our endeavor.

### **Top 10 tips for online crowdfunding**

1. There is a range of different crowdfunding platforms available online, and donation-based crowdfunding is just one of these, so it's a good idea to do your homework and pick the best option for your project or endeavor.
2. Begin with a realistic fundraising goal (adjusting your goal as time goes on if required) and ensure that you break down the costs for your potential donors so they can see where their money will go.
3. The title of your fundraiser is really important – aim for clear, catchy and inspiring.
4. When you launch your crowdfunding campaign, ensure that your fundraising message is clear and succinct (aiming for approx. 400 words), largely using narrative to engage your audience and covering the standard 'who, what, where, when, why and how' details. Check out how similar online fundraisers have structured their fundraising descriptions to get a feel for what will and won't work for your campaign.
5. Ensure that your fundraising message description includes a specific and clear 'ask'.
6. Ensure that you upload engaging, relevant and good-quality images and video when you launch your campaign, using your best landscape-orientation image as the feature pic. Check out [these helpful tips](#) for taking images on your phone.
7. Show gratitude by thanking people after they donate online.
8. It's really important to update your donors as your project unfolds so people who have donated can clearly see where their money is going (including additional images and video showing how your project is progressing and links to any media coverage).
9. Share your campaign and updates on social media channels, using relevant hashtags.
10. Try and get the media to cover your campaign by writing a media release (if you are an ACSQ church or ministry, you can [email](#) the *anglican focus* Editor, Michelle McDonald, to request an easy-to-use step-by-step media release template).

**Note from Risk & Compliance Coordinator, Nick Gentner: Any parish sending money, assets or staff overseas must comply with the [Australian Charities and Not-for-Profit Commission External Conduct Standards](#). These standards are intended to promote transparency and provide confidence that resources sent, or services provided, overseas reach legitimate beneficiaries and are used for legitimate charitable purposes. For details on how to comply with these standards please email the [Risk and Compliance Coordinator](#).**

## Birthday parties, sharks and the unsolved mysteries of teenage brothers



**2020 Prep to Year 3 Coomera Anglican College public speaking finalists: Back row, (L-R) Serena Marsden, Kainoa Schroeder, Callan McIlroy, Jaden Mhangami, Wynter Tiernan, Amelie Curtois, Christian De Marco and Front row (L-R) Sydney Leahy, Grace Coombs, Nardia Ristic, Evelyn Molyneux, Bayley Campbell, Harrison Green**

Each year Coomera Anglican College – Primary Campus presents a Public Speaking Competition as a Preparatory to Year 6 College event.

Speaking and listening activities are an integral part of the CAC teaching and learning programme and as such, all children prepare a short personally written speech to their peers.

With age-appropriate expectations and an exciting range of topics that encourage creativity and audience engagement, students take part in a ‘speak-off’ at the class level to determine who might move through to our final presentation at a Primary Assembly.

The public speaking competition was held in August this year and, of course, this year our finals were live streamed to both classrooms and families!

One of the Year 3 finalists, Grace Coombs, who spoke about the topic of ‘Birthday Parties’ said, “I was very nervous about speaking because I didn’t know if they would like my speech and even when I was up there speaking, I was still nervous. I did practise a lot in front of my family and even in my head and by myself.”

Callan McIlroy, also from Year 3, said, “I felt nervous and excited about performing my speech in front of the audience. I practised around six times per week. That is 18 times. I think all the other students did a wonderful job. I’m so proud that I got this far. My speech was about sharks because that is the name of my football team and I am really interested in sharks, too.”

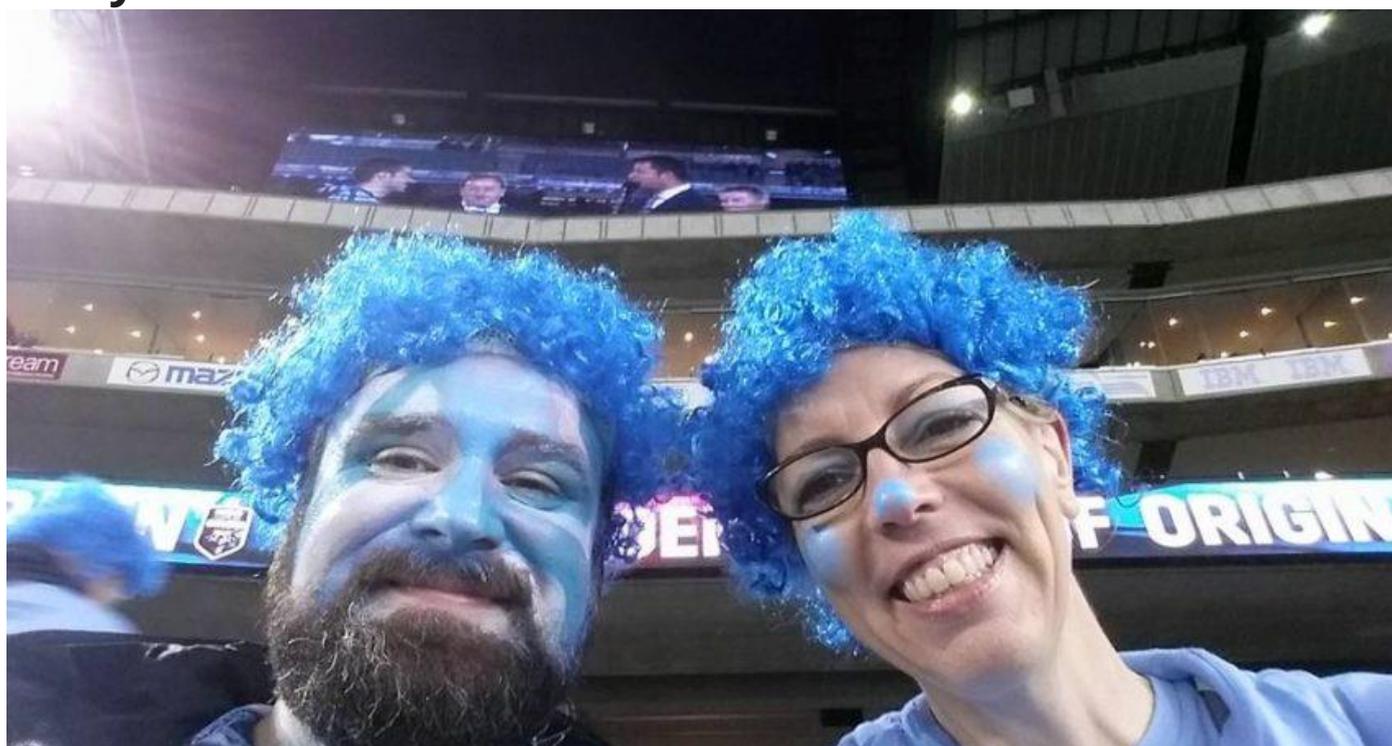
Nardia Ristic, another Year 3 finalist, said, "I was a bit scared when I got up to speak. I was persistent when I practised. I was very excited when I was chosen. I used expression when I spoke and I was calm when I made mistakes and happy with my achievements."

Lola Urech, Year 6 winner of the Public Speaking Competition, said, "When I was called up to the lectern to say my speech for all my peers, I was shaking and extremely nervous. Although I practised every day for about one week, I was worried I would forget everything! I tucked my fears beneath my skin and began entertaining the audience with humour and information. I have a teenage brother in Year 11 and I was intrigued by his behaviour. This led my research about teenagers and the 'Unsolved Mysteries' that they truly are."

Head of Primary, Ms Lisa Kraft said, "We heard stories of space, unicorns, silly sleepovers and talking dogs. What an eclectic and interesting cross section of topics. I was most impressed with the confidence, charisma and preparation that these students displayed, and I congratulate them all on their hard work and practice."

**Spotlight Q&A • Monday 7 September 2020 • By The Rev'd Eron Perry**

## **Q&A with former Army serviceman, parish priest and new chair of the local ABM committee, The Rev'd Eron Perry**



**The Rev'd Eron and wife Jane at the State of Origin, Sydney in 2015.: "I am a Rugby League tragic"**

The Rev'd Eron Perry is the Parish Priest at Burleigh Heads on the Gold Coast and has recently been appointed by Archbishop Phillip Aspinall as the new Chairperson for the ACSQ Anglican Board of Mission (ABM) Committee. Eron moved to our Diocese in late 2017 following 16 years in the Grafton Diocese. After serving in the Australian Army he studied Environmental Science and then Theology. He has served in parish ministry for over 18 years and during that time has refined his taste in coffee to such a level that he is proud to be called a 'coffee snob' by his friends.

### **Where do you currently live and where do you worship?**

I live and worship at Burleigh Heads on the Gold Coast.

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

I'm a cradle Anglican and am soon approaching 20 years of ordained ministry. Most of my ministry has been based in NSW, particularly in the Grafton Diocese. In my younger years I served as a youth leader and on Parish Council.

### **What are your current roles, including any voluntary roles, and what do your roles involve?**

I'm currently the Priest-in-Charge of Burleigh Heads Anglican Church on the beautiful southern Gold Coast. I'm also part of the national ABM Development Committee and recently the Archbishop appointed me as the Chairperson of the ACSQ ABM Committee.

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

Like many leaders within the Church I'm currently spending a lot of time trying to figure out what ministry looks like in a dramatically changing environment and how to best advance mission and ministry in a 'hybrid' model of church. Recently the Archbishop asked the ACSQ ABM Committee to facilitate a provincial Zoom event to update people who have been generously giving towards the Archbishop's November Appeal. It was exciting to see various contributors from around Australia come together to provide a seamless presentation looking at mission and ministry at Newton Theological College in PNG. If we think we are ministering under challenging circumstances here in Australia, our brothers and sisters in the Anglican Church of PNG are working with far greater challenges.

### **What have been the highlights of your ministry so far?**

I suppose the greatest joy and satisfaction in my ministry has been working with families over the long term. Seeing them grow in faith, life and love; meeting a young couple and working with them on their wedding, then having the privilege of baptising their children and at other times the honour of ministering with the same families through difficult times like a family tragedy. As a priest I am invited into pivotal moments in people's lives, and I don't take that lightly.

### **You were recently appointed Chair of the local Anglican Board of Mission committee - can you tell us about this role and what you hope to achieve?**

Yes, it is an exciting appointment. I'm still getting to know people across our Diocese, and this role is fast tracking my understanding of our Diocese and the wonderful people who make up our faith communities. ABM has been around for ages, as it's the chief mission agency of the Anglican Church in Australia and as such there is a significant history attached to the organisation. I see part of my role as supporting the ministry of ABM within the ACSQ and to engage with its supporters old and new, especially utilising modern means of technology and social media.

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

Stepping into the role just as COVID-19 emerged in Australia was enough of a challenge in itself. Trying to get to know people and organise meetings and events in such a challenging environment was a substantial undertaking. It's been difficult for everyone, but it adds an extra degree of challenge when you are new to a role. Fortunately, I was very blessed to be taking over the role from Bishop Bill Ray who did a sterling job as Committee Chair and handed over the leadership of a healthy and functioning committee. It also helps when you have some great committee members assisting and adding their talent to the mix.

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

In regards to the ABM Committee we are currently planning this year's November Appeal and shifting from a paper and pen presentation model (physically handing things out) to a direct digital model (providing digital resources to people and parishes that want and need them).

Within the parish I'm continuing to build our digital online presence and working towards an effective hybrid model of church. I'm also looking at building a 'wild play' or 'nature play' zone at the church to provide another way to connect to our local community.

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

I've never had a 'Road to Damascus' experience as I've always felt a connection with God. I grew up in the Church; baptised, confirmed and ordained Anglican. Growing up in the bush and on farms, I developed a deep appreciation of the natural world and for me it was a place I frequently encountered the Divine and to a large extent I still do. I think my connection to the natural world and being exposed to various expressions of Anglicanism, from High Church to Charismatic to Progressive has helped me form a deeply incarnational theology.

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

My faith, informed and expressed through incarnational theology, holds deeply to the idea of *Imago Dei*. The image of God can be seen in our brothers and sisters all around us. Furthermore, I hold that God's fingerprints are all over Creation. Perceiving the Divine all around inspires me and convicts me to work in a range of social justice spaces, including advocating for the environment, for people who are homeless and for gender and sexually diverse people. To me this is sharing the good news of Jesus.

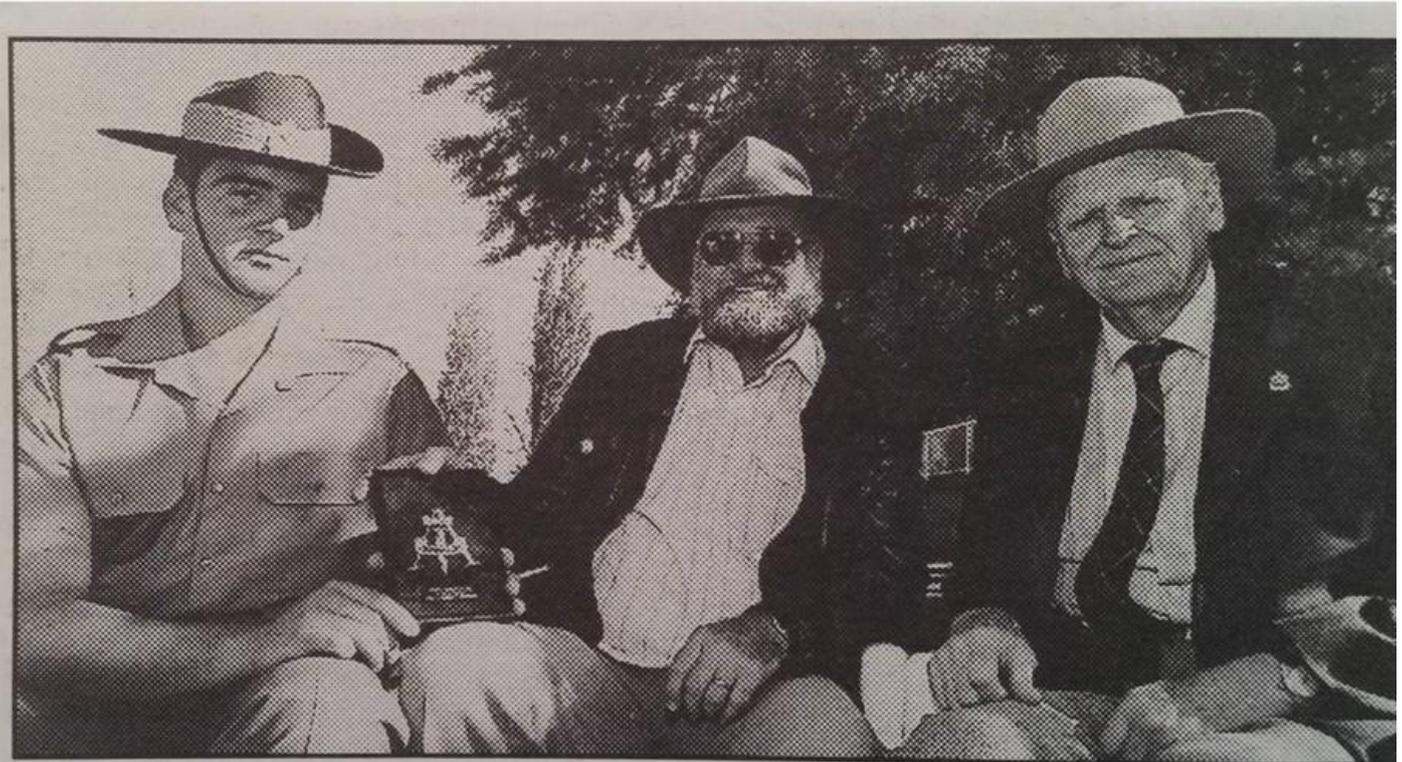
## **What is your favourite scripture and why?**

[Micah 6.8](#) – "What does the Lord require of you? But to pursue justice, love kindness and walk in humility with your God." This text is so deep. It moves us towards the 'other', it assumes community, it encourages faith in action and urges a deeper connection to the Divine. It is about faith in action – making the world a better place.

## **What person of faith inspires you the most and why?**

Two people, one Nelson Mandela and the other my grandfather Ronald Perry. Both were strong men of faith, both very self-contained, and neither fussed about. My grandfather was consistent and had a

strong yet gentle presence and deep faith. With Mandela I admire his perseverance through struggles, and his working to better himself and his world.



**THREE FORCES:** Private Eron Perry (left) holds his most improved award with the help of his father Don Perry who was a reserve in the 1970s. Eron's grandfather Ron Perry (right), who was in World War II as an airforce fitter, also came to watch him at the 5 Platoon 1st Recruit Training Battalion marchout.

**Three generations: Eron Perry, Don Perry and Ronald Perry – Marchout from Army basic training, 1995**

**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?**

Community. I think our faith is strongest and most robust when we wrestle and live out our faith with others. I think an exclusively individualised faith is fraudulent. Community allows us to bounce off each other and teaches us to see God in each other. I think that says a lot coming from a natural introvert.

**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?**

This is the question of this age isn't it? Our Australian culture and society have changed so dramatically in the last 20 years and the change is getting more intense. On the whole, I do not think the Church has done a very good job of adapting to stay relevant to the communities it finds itself embedded in. We are working hard, but frequently not smart. Massive change is afoot, and COVID-19 is only serving to quicken this inevitable change. Crisis provides opportunity for the agile and wise. I hope we can embrace new ways of doing church, including embracing digital technology and digital communities.

### **What is the kindest gesture you have ever received or witnessed?**

Within the community of faith where I spent my formative teenage years, I witnessed some amazing gestures of love and generosity. I remember there was one very generous couple who purchased a car and anonymously gave it to a young family in need. Even our family was blessed, as my parents were finding it difficult to make ends meet and several times people within our church provided meals and meat trays to help us out.

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

Many years ago, a wise parishioner who had spent her youth traveling to far off lands, such as Afghanistan and Iran, sidled up to me one day as she could see I was having a challenging day. In our conversation she shared the words of an ancient Persian proverb: 'This too shall pass'. The good times will pass away and the bad times, these too shall pass away. In many aspects it was the first time I had been introduced to mindfulness. Even today it reminds me to savour the good times and not to get lost in the difficult moments of life.

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

I love scuba diving, but I haven't been for a while with the COVID-19 restrictions. It is just so peaceful under the water and no one can telephone you there! I also really enjoy a good coffee. I'm a coffee snob actually. And truth be told, I don't mind playing a computer game or two if I get some time on my day off. I also tend my garden, but with no silver bells or cockle shells.

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

A very large sharp knife, insect spray and a hammock.

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

*Everything Belongs* by Richard Rohr. It's dripping with practical wisdom. And most people seem to find an insight or two that helps them in their everyday lives.

### **Where do you do your best thinking?**

In nature, be it gardening, bush walking or taking photos of the natural world.

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

Not just a bad day routine, but a regular self-care routine is to spend some time in the garden, take time to have a 'mindful' coffee, go to the gym to burn off some stress (and calories, as I love my food), and spend some time connecting with loved ones, especially my wife, Jane.

### **What's your unanswerable question – the question you are always asking yourself?**

It's not a question that I'm always asking myself, but it frequently arises as I prepare sermons and it is, 'What would the world look like if I and all followers of Jesus put into practice the things he said and did?'

## St Margaret's students raise more than \$82,000 for Queenslanders affected by cancer



**St Margaret's Anglican Girls School Year 12 twins Ruby and Olivia Howard cut their hair as part of the 2020 Ponytail Project fundraising campaign. The campaign, which was initiated by the school in 2015, was adopted by Cancer Council Queensland in 2019 who now encourage schools across the state to join the project**

Over 70 students and five teachers at St Margaret's Anglican Girls School participated in the Ponytail Project recently, raising more than \$82,000 for Queenslanders affected by cancer and donating their ponytails for wigs for people who have lost their hair while undergoing treatment.

St Margaret's Principal Ms Ros Curtis said the Ponytail Project initiative started five years ago when a group of students felt compelled to make a difference in response to a St Margaret's parent being diagnosed with cancer.

"The Ponytail Project is one of the biggest and best examples of St Margaret's culture of student philanthropy," Ms Curtis said.

"Each year, we see the girls motivated and inspired to genuinely make a difference in the lives of others through the very selfless act of cutting their own hair.

"The girls realise that not only are their ponytails going to be turned into a wig for someone who has lost their hair, but that through this campaign they are also making an important donation towards Queenslanders whose lives have been impacted by cancer.

"It's very empowering for them to know they are making a real difference."

So successful was the Ponytail Project concept, in 2019 Cancer Council Queensland adopted the project encouraging schools across the state to join the cause.

Cancer Council Queensland CEO Ms Chris McMillan commended St Margaret's students on their efforts and dedication to the cause.

"Each year the students at St Margaret's show their commitment to supporting those impacted by cancer, and we are incredibly grateful for their incredible fundraising efforts," Ms McMillan said.

"Not only does the Ponytail Project provide a way for students to raise funds for the work of Cancer Council Queensland, it gives them the opportunity to learn about the impacts of cancer, including ways to reduce their own cancer risk through making healthy lifestyle choices from early on in life."

Year 12 twins Ruby and Olivia Howard, like so many people, have experienced firsthand the impact cancer can have on loved ones witnessing close family members and teachers battling the disease.

"It's empowering as well as a great privilege knowing that I have the ability to help transform the life of another and the community around me," Ruby said.

"It's not every day that we get an opportunity to give and I believe that when chances like this arise, we should jump at the chance especially when it makes a difference to the life of another."

Olivia said she felt proud of the school community for igniting the initiative.

"It is a legacy I am so grateful to be a part of and to see take flight over the years," Olivia said.

While it was many of the senior students who took part in the hair cutting, St Margaret's primary students also had the opportunity to witness the older girls take part in the very important campaign and learn how, as an individual or a collective community, they too can make a difference in the lives of others.

The younger girls sported crazy hair styles and braids in a display of their support.

## NCCA call for further prayer and fasting

With prayerful greetings, can we encourage that 26-27 September be a further special time of national prayer regarding the pandemic?

We all know the continuing impact of this pandemic, overseas and here.

We are all aware of the suffering it is causing; the extent of the social and economic dislocation; the difficulty getting the virus under control; and, the level of many people's anxiety.

What we can offer again now are our prayers together, as we did on Sunday 2 August (albeit with minimal notice on that occasion).

It is comforting when we know we are all praying together to our Saviour. Some of our member churches have international partners who are also focusing their prayers on September 26-27, so we will be part of a global time of prayer.

As you know, we all share a strong belief in the efficacy of our prayers.

We make our prayers together for an end to this pandemic (with all this involves), trusting Jesus' word to us – God wills to “give good things to those who ask.” (Matthew 7.11)

From our various traditions, there are prayer resources, ancient and contemporary, which we are offering already.

Here is a prayer that might be helpful in the lead up to September 26-27.

**“Gracious God, trusting in your providence and presence, we bring our prayer for an end to this pandemic.**

**We pray for your strengthening of those offering costly leadership during this crisis.**

**We pray for all who are ill.**

**We pray for those anxious about getting ill.**

**We pray for those full of grief.**

**We remember those who have died.**

**We pray for your grace to sustain us as we do what we can in our context.**

**We ask these things, as you encourage us so to do. “Ask and it will be given you” (Matthew 7.7).**

**In resurrection faith, we offer our heartfelt prayer through Jesus Christ our Lord. AMEN.”**

We offer our prayers for all we need, including an end to this pandemic.

Bishop Philip Huggins

NCCA President

## An unusual church partnership tackles COVID-19 in the Pacific



**Anglican Church of Melanesia (Vanuatu) team (led by Fr Benjamin) on Pentecost Island, July 2020. The team is demonstrating hand-washing as part of hygiene and COVID-19 awareness sessions (Photo by ACOM Vanuatu)**

What links COVID-19, the churches in Papua New Guinea and Vanuatu, the Anglican Board of Mission and the Australian Government? Read on to find out more about an unusual, but successful partnership.

Fifteen years ago, the Anglican Board of Mission's (ABM) John Deane, with two other church-based development agency colleagues, suggested to the head of (then) AusAID that the Australian Government could provide an aid stream to Papua New Guinea through the established churches there. They argued that the government could support the churches' vital work in education and health through established Australian aid organisations. Now, in 2020, the Papua New Guinea Church Partnership, comprising seven PNG churches, their seven Australian church agency counterparts, and the Australian Government successfully provides health, education, social inclusion and other important programs in that country.

Meanwhile, in 2016, another ecumenical initiative was emerging. This time, eight Australian church agencies, including the Anglican Board of Mission, formed CAN DO – the Church Agencies Network for Disaster Operations. CAN DO, working with their church partners in the developing world, successfully applied for five years of government funding through the Australian Humanitarian Program. Years of working with churches in Papua New Guinea had given the government confidence to form this additional partnership. The funding has mainly been used to build resilience in the face of disaster among people in Vanuatu, the Solomon Islands, Fiji, Timor Leste and Papua New Guinea.

Fast forward to 2020. If COVID-19 were to spread across the Pacific, it would do enormous damage. The Australian Government was quick to realise the potential role that local churches could play in stopping the spread of the virus and has provided significant humanitarian funding for this purpose. Some of the funding comes through ABM to the Anglican Church of Melanesia (ACOM) in Vanuatu and to Anglicare Papua New Guinea (APNG).

### **What ABM's partner in Vanuatu is doing**

In Vanuatu, there are not yet any confirmed cases of COVID-19, but the tourism-dependent economy has already been decimated by travel restrictions and the threat of COVID-19 infection remains. There is a continuing need for information to reach remote villages, and to ensure people in those villages have access to a safe water supply and sanitation.

ACOM-Vanuatu has begun conducting COVID-19 awareness raising in dozens of communities across the provinces of Torba, Penama and Sanma where the Anglican Church is strongest. To strengthen community hygiene practices, ACOM also plans this month to start rehabilitating water supply systems in 20 communities and constructing model latrines in 25 communities. The model latrines will be built at community centres or in the homes of people living with disability.

ACOM-Vanuatu will also support 274 households to establish home gardens to increase their economic resilience. Economic tensions can also lead to tensions within households, so ACOM-Vanuatu will run gender and child safeguarding awareness sessions in at least six communities.

### **What ABM's partner in Papua New Guinea is doing**

In Papua New Guinea, the number of confirmed COVID-19 cases is still only in the hundreds, far below Australia's number of infections. However, PNG's rates of testing are very low so there are likely to be many unreported cases. Also, in August, the government lifted most of its restrictions, allowing schools to re-open and economic activity to be revived. So the number of COVID-19 cases is expected to rise steeply.

Anglicare PNG has begun conducting COVID-19 awareness raising. These sessions have already reached more than 20,000 people across all five Anglican dioceses of PNG. Anglicare PNG will install water tanks in at least 38 communities, as well as distribute masks and other personal protective equipment to at least 30 Anglican clinics and health-care centres.

Both ACOM Vanuatu and Anglicare PNG have also been distributing government-approved posters and pamphlets during their awareness-raising sessions. And prior to deployment in the field, the staff and volunteers working for ACOM Vanuatu and Anglicare PNG were trained in how to conduct COVID-19 awareness raising.

The role of the Anglican Board of Mission in Australia is to assist ACOM Vanuatu and Anglicare PNG with the planning and management of the response, and to assist with strengthening these organisations' capacity to respond effectively.

ABM gives thanks to the Australian Government-funded church partnerships in Vanuatu and in PNG for supporting its work with local Anglican partners.

The ordeal of Pacific countries in facing COVID-19 is only just beginning, but Anglican institutions in Australia and the Pacific are playing their part in fighting the spread.

## Understanding Worship

Physical distancing and necessary COVID-19 restrictions have led many of us to examine our routines. We ache without some of them – such as when Mum brought dinner over and babysat the kids once a week. Others we can do without – peak hour traffic anyone? Other routines have been adapted to suit physical distancing protocols. Church life has changed temporarily to keep everyone safe, which we're ok with because the need for physical distancing is clear. How much do we miss the routine connection and participation in communal worship though?

The Anglican community revolves around sharing in the Eucharist, common prayer and worship. Many communities have been finding other alternative ways to gather – over the phone, online or via 'hybrid church' during the COVID-19 period. Some remote communities have no doubt been thinking 'business as usual' as they continue to serve geographically-distanced members and engage in sporadic services. Some communities have discovered the beauty of the Daily Offices in the Prayer Book.

What's been your reaction to putting face-to-face communal worship temporarily on hold? Here are some responses:

'We're doing ok with church online, but I miss the community.'

'I love sleeping in on Sunday mornings! But I miss my community.'

'I miss my parish family – my kids are missing their church friends and I miss my pew time!'

'The reverence of a Communion service...I just don't get that anywhere else, even in my own quiet time at home. Yeah, I miss church.'

Have you enjoyed the time to yourself?

Have you missed the community?

Have you missed the sacrament of Holy Communion?

Whatever the situation of your parish community, this is a great time to reflect on who we are as Anglican communities and what is important about communal worship routines.

What is worship? Why do we do it? What is the Eucharist and why do we keep doing it after 2000 years? How many ways can we be a community of faith? Can we do faith by ourselves? Do we need people of faith around us? Where does our Prayer Book come from? Why do we use it? What's in it?

Throughout the new St Francis College short course, 'Understanding Worship', the FormedFaith team asks these questions and more – 33 questions, under six themes, in fact!

Here's one! Have you ever wondered what it's like for a priest to preside at a liturgy? Well, we were curious – after all, being a priest is not your ordinary day job – so we asked several priests (with 100 years of experience between them), and words like 'mystery', 'privilege' and 'humbling' came up again

and again. It seems that sharing in the ritual that Jesus started is a complex and wonderful thing. Have you wondered how Anglican clergy navigated their own faith journeys during the COVID-19 period when face-to-face communal Eucharistic worship was not possible?

Many of our Anglican communities have resumed some form of communal worship. The conversations in the new St Francis College short course 'Understanding Worship' remind us why generations of Anglican Christians have found communal worship so rich and valuable. They also might remind some of us about why we get out of bed on a Sunday morning to go to church!

Find all six themes and 33 questions here on the [St Francis College website](#). Use the discussion questions in groups or by yourself and revisit the ideas in the transcripts.

**News • Monday 7 September 2020 • By World Council of Churches**

## **National Council of Churches (USA): “Not too tired to continue to fight for justice”**



**In 2017 clergy took a stand by marching in silent protest through Charlottesville. Photo: Steven D. Martin/NCCUSA 2017 (Image courtesy of World Council of Churches)**

On 26 August, the National Council of Churches (USA) released a statement expressing outrage over still more police shootings of Black men.

“It is hard to believe that we are in the position to have to issue another statement on police shootings,” reads the statement. “Yet, here we are.”

Jacob Blake III was shot by Kenosha, WI, police on 23 August.

“Video evidence seems to show clearly that Blake was unarmed and walking away from white police officers when he was shot multiple times in the back at point blank range in front of his three young children,” reads the statement.

Trayford Pellerin was shot by police in Lafayette, LA on 22 August. “The news of these tragic events are disheartening and cause us to ask the question, when will it end?” asks the statement. “We’re weary but not too tired to continue working for change and fighting for justice.”

The text also emphasizes the need for police reform and increased de-escalation training. “Therefore, we repeat our call for full, transparent, and independent investigations of the conduct of the officers involved in both of these terrible shootings,” the statement reads.

“For these injustices to continue after months of robust protests following the deaths of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor and Ahmaud Arbery as well as too many others, is indicative of how deeply broken our systems are and how much work is yet to be done to end racism, white supremacy and unconscious bias,” reads the statement. “And, we pray for our nation to heal and to move swiftly and decisively toward justice.”

[National Council of Churches of Christ in the USA](#)

First published on the World Council of Churches [website](#) on 27 August 2020.

Features • Wednesday 9 September 2020 • By Dr Stephen Harrison

## Today is ‘International Buy a Priest a Beer Day’



Today is unofficially ‘International Buy a Priest a Beer Day’. On 9 September annually, people are encouraged to take their priests out for a beer and express their appreciation for all that their priests do for them and their broader communities. While this annual ‘day’ isn’t a formally commemorated day for any Christian denomination, maybe it should be – albeit with additional ginger beer or coffee options.

Priests often take the time to meet with their parishioners, as well as people enquiring about faith and vulnerable community members, over a cuppa or cold drink – with often life-changing outcomes. In

his recently published *anglican focus* reflection '[My pub call to the priesthood](#)' The Rev'd Max Lambourne from the Parish of Wilston shared that:

"The call to priesthood came quite out of the blue and at a very unexpected time – in the Kings Arms pub, in Cleobury Mortimer of all places. I was chatting with the then curate of my 'local' about possibly being more involved in church on a Sunday morning. I was thinking of maybe doing a reading or leading the prayers of intercession, something along those lines, when he suddenly commented that I should consider ordained ministry. Such was my shock at the suggestion, that I forcibly ejected my beer...and apologised to the bar staff before swiftly cleaning up.

As The Rev'd Max goes on to explain:

"It is amazing how God is able to work through the very ordinary, like a pub chat between two mates, to bring about the most extraordinary situations."

When was the last time you tangibly expressed your appreciation for the way your priest and deacon support you in your faith walk?

Everyone likes to be appreciated for their contributions and hard work. And, our clergy work extremely hard to respond to their individual calls to ordained ministry, fulfilling a huge array of tasks. So, perhaps today, or another time this month, each of us can make contact with our clergy to show our thanks for all that they do. This could be offering to take your priest out for a regular (or ginger) beer or inviting your priest over for a meal with your household members. In this somewhat hectic COVID-19 period and with Advent approaching, your priest may be too busy to meet with you in person for a drink or meal, so some suggested alternative ideas include:

- Giving your priest and deacon a 'thank you' card after a church service.
- Baking and delivering a cake, scones or biscuits to the parish office.
- Preparing a healthy meal for your priest to freeze for a busy day ahead.
- Asking parishioners to contribute an item each to a 'thank you' basket and sign an accompanying 'thank you' card.
- Organising a video to be made with parishioners thanking your priest for a specific thing and playing the video at the end of the church service and then uploading the video to YouTube or Facebook.
- Presenting your priest with a bunch of spring flowers.
- Praying for your priest and letting your priest know that you are doing so.

The Parishes and other Mission Agencies Commission team would love to hear about how you have thanked your priests and deacons, including regarding any creative ways that you as an individual, or your parish collectively, have thanked your priest. Please drop us a line via email at [pmc@anglicanchurchsq.org.au](mailto:pmc@anglicanchurchsq.org.au) or via [ACSQ Facebook](#) with your ideas, photos or videos.

**First published on the [faithful + effective website](#) on 9 September 2020.**

## Reducing JobSeeker payments would be dire for rental affordability

Anglicare Southern Queensland is calling on the government to raise the rate of welfare payments for good, with analysis showing that a return to the previous \$40-a-day Newstart rate would have a dire effect on rental affordability in Brisbane.

The call comes as Anglicare Australia releases a special mid-year update to its [Rental Affordability Snapshot](#).

The Snapshot Update surveyed almost 77,000 rental listings across Australia in August. It found that affordability for people on low incomes has actually deteriorated since March.

The Snapshot shows that:

- 808 rentals across Australia (1%) are affordable for a person on the new JobSeeker payment, which has been doubled for six months in the wake of COVID-19.
- If the government cuts JobSeeker by \$150 in September, 168 rentals (0.2%) would be affordable.
- If the government cuts JobSeeker to its old rate in December, just 13 rentals (0%) would be affordable.
- Pensioners and people with disability have been left behind with no increase to their payments.
- 8% of rentals (625 out of 76,962) are affordable for a person on the Age Pension.
- 3% of rentals (192 out of 76,962) are affordable for a person on the Disability Support Pension.

In Brisbane, the Snapshot found decreasing welfare payments would return a sizeable number of households back to the bad old days of choosing between food and rent, as:

- On the old Newstart rates, there would currently be only 258 (4%) properties in Greater Brisbane affordable and appropriate for households on government support.
- With the proposed decrease in COVID-19 supplements, only 271 (4%) of rentals would be affordable and appropriate for households on government support.

By maintaining the full Coronavirus supplement, a total of 405 (6%) Brisbane households on income support would find appropriate private rental sector housing more affordable in the current market.

Anglicare Southern Queensland Executive Director Karen Crouch said that maintaining the full rate of COVID-19 payments would make all the difference to those households.

“No one should have to make a decision between paying rent or putting food on the table,” Ms Crouch said.

“Keeping the COVID allowances at the current rate acknowledges that times are still tough for many, and that people and businesses will be recovering from this downturn for years.”

The August Snapshot figures show that even with the increased payments, overall rental affordability in Greater Brisbane continues to be dismal.

More than 85% of households on minimum wage also fail to find affordable, appropriate rental accommodation — a figure consistent with the national percentage of 13%.

“Over more than ten years, the Snapshot has shown us the extent to which Australia’s rental sector continues to fail people on low incomes,” Ms Crouch said.

“If income support rates are reduced in September — and if those who are most vulnerable continue to be left out — people will be pushed again or further into financial stress.

“As we said in March: These increases must become permanent, and they must go to everyone in need.”

Anglicare Australia Executive Director Kasy Chambers said that many renters are now out of work, and the new rate of JobSeeker is the only thing keeping a roof over their heads.

“For people on the lowest incomes, rentals are even less affordable than they were back in March,” Ms Chambers said.

“Most of the price drops are at the higher end of the market. At the same time, more and more people are competing for cheap housing. That’s squeezing out people of the market. With 1.6 million people locked out of work, the new rate of JobSeeker is the only thing keeping them afloat.

“Our Snapshot update shows that a person who is out of work can afford just 1% of rentals – and that’s with their payments doubled. If JobSeeker is slashed to the old rate, just 13 rentals (0%) across Australia would be affordable.”

Ms Chambers said that more must be done to help people on the lowest incomes.

“Rent deferrals and eviction moratoriums are ending soon, and some people are in arrears for thousands of dollars. Many are facing cuts to JobSeeker at the same time. This is a ticking time bomb,” she said.

“We must raise the rate of these payments for good. If the government goes ahead with planned cuts – and if age and disability pensioners are left out – renters will be pushed deeper into poverty and homelessness.

“We also need to invest in homes for people who need them most. Our shortfall is massive. We need 500,000 new social and affordable rentals across Australia.

“Investing in housing would be the most powerful way to tackle the rental crisis – and boost our economy.

“We’re calling on the government to end this shortfall – and ensure everyone has a place to call home.”

## Sunday Devotion: 13 September 2020, Fifteenth Sunday after Pentecost

Knowing our need for God



**Main Readings:** [Exodus 14.19-31](#); [Psalm 114](#) or [Exodus 15.1-13, 17-18](#); [Romans 14.1-14](#); [Matthew 18.21-35](#); [[Genesis 50.15-21](#); [Psalm 103. \(1-7\) 8-13](#)]

**Supplementary Readings:** [Psalm 122](#); [Matthew 19.1-12](#); [Exodus 15.19-26](#); [Psalm 103.8-13](#); [Romans 14.13-15.6](#)

"I will sing to the Lord...this is my God, and I will praise him." ([Exodus 15.1-2](#))

When I was about 10, I was sure that it was possible to walk across the Toorbul mudflats to get to a mangrove island. So, I left my friends and canoe behind, and strode off. As my feet sank ever deeper in the yabby-pumped mud, it became apparent that there was no way I would succeed. Not only that, the tide was coming in and I would require much assistance to return safely to solid land!

After Moses and the Israelites had safely crossed the Red Sea, they sang a song of great joy and adoration to the God who had saved them from the Egyptians. There is no doubt about the strength, might and victorious power of this God who brought the people to a place of sanctuary ([Exodus 15.17](#)). Moses could not have led the people out of slavery without God's help. The Song of Moses drips with praise, relief, and celebration. God's handiwork had been momentous.

Perhaps it is easier to remember to give thanks and praise to God when God's work has been most visibly obvious? Sometimes, however, the hand of God in our daily lives is as soft as breathing, as gentle as a butterfly's wing.

Sometimes our best prayers simply recognise our need for God, and that we cannot do this alone. God deserves our songs of great praise and joy! There is much to be thankful for each day.