Do you remember the start of this year? It almost seems a planet away, a far-off place. There were bushfires here in Australia, protests in Hong Kong, the official withdrawal of the UK from the European Union and the commencement of President Trump’s impeachment trial. And that was just January. What a year that month seemed to be, with 11 months still to come!

Can you also remember the start of local COVID-19 restrictions, with the emptying of supermarket shelves as people hoarded toilet rolls? It has been a curious year.

But, remember, too, the ‘thank you’ billboards that sprang up here in Australia and around the world, stating “Thank you front line workers”, “Thank you first responders” and “Thank you healthcare heroes”. The billboards reflected one of this year’s key themes, which was “We are all in this together”. I even wrote about this idea back at the beginning of June for anglican focus.

It would have been great to see the billboards last longer. The billboards have gone, and other events locally and internationally have showed us just how much we are not all in this together. The Black Lives Matter movements in the United States and in Australia, along with the associated local #StopDeathsInCustody campaign, highlight the continued oppression and exclusion of people of colour.

And even with respect to COVID-19’s frontline heroes, we seem to have moved from “we are all in this together”. Around the world there was applause for health workers early on, as people would clap or bang pots and pans daily to say thank you. We were asked to “clap for our carers”. In the United
States, where COVID-19 is more out of control, someone cynically tweeted that all that applause was really just to demand an encore – that the healthcare workers had to do it all again as the second wave broke.

Many people suggested at the beginning of COVID-19 that this would be a wake-up call, but it looks (at least from here) that we are at risk of going back to the way we were. How will the world respond in 2021 with the mass production of a vaccine? Just who will get it first? When will vulnerable people in the developing world get vaccinated? As we draw to the close of this curious year, with the hope and anticipation of widespread COVID-19 vaccination in 2021, there is much opportunity for reflection.

My hope going into 2021 is that we continue to remember the ‘thank yous’ and the culture of gratitude we cultivated in the COVID-19 environment.

Reflections • Monday 14 December 2020 • By The Very Rev'd Dr Peter Catt

Embracing the emerging future

"To attend is to be present. It is also to notice what else is present” (The Very Rev’d Dr Peter Catt)

The Orthodox liturgy begins with some prayers and antiphons that signify the gathering of the people. There is then a ritual element called The Small Entrance during which the clergy, including the Deacon, carrying the book of gospels, enter through the doors of the iconostasis and approach the altar. Something similar to the way our liturgy begins. The Deacon then says words that can be translated, ‘Wisdom! Attend!’ Or ‘This is Wisdom. Let us attend!’

‘This is Wisdom. Let us attend!’

To attend is to be present. It is also to notice what else is present. The Orthodox expect the risen Christ to be present as they celebrate the Divine Liturgy. They expect to encounter Wisdom, Sophia –
the feminine, creative principle of the Divine. And they intentionally declare that they will attend to Wisdom and to Christ.

Let us attend. It is an interesting and revelatory first invitation. Let us attend.

When the members of a Benedictine community gather for prayer, they commence by standing still in silence for a full minute; a practice they call *Statio* – The Holy Pause. At the end of the prayer service they do the same thing; stand in silence for a full minute. The practice of *Statio* is designed to ensure that the nuns and monks stop doing one thing before commencing another. They acknowledge that they have stopped doing the gardening, preparing a meal, studying an interesting topic or having a heated exchange, and they become present to the time of prayer and to the presence they expect to encounter as they come to prayer. It is about being present to the present, and to the presence that inhabits the present. At the end of the prayer time, they take the time to become present to and for the activity that follows; even if the next activity is the eating of lunch. They seek to be present to the action of eating. To attend to eating. To notice the food. Its taste, its texture. How many of us attend to our lunch in that way?

Let us attend. *Statio*.

Life in the western world is often characterised by busyness and distraction. We can flit from one thing to another and so not attend to anything in particular. Meals are often snatched and bolted down. Multi-tasking is considered a virtue. This year the disruption, and resultant stress, caused by COVID-19, has exacerbated the dislocating, disabling effects of culture that many live with all the time.

And yet the study of history reminds us that crises can be situations from which opportunity emerges. As the old passes away or crumbles, new opportunities can begin to materialise.

However, for those opportunities to be grasped we need to be able to acknowledge them. We need to see them. We need to attend to them. We need to pause long enough to notice that which is there to see. We need to notice what God is up to. We need to notice what the Spirit is inviting us to see and to respond to.

These past few months the Cathedral community has been seeking to attend to that which is emerging as we live through this very different year. Like the Orthodox and the Benedictines, we have had to be, and will need to continue to be, intentional in our attending and noticing. On a number of occasions these past few months we have been invited to reflect on questions like:

- What am I finding difficult?
- What am I enjoying?
- What has surprised me?
- What am I noticing about myself?
- What am I noticing about my community?
- What am I learning?

To be in a position to answer those questions we had to pause, practise our own form of *statio*, attend to our feelings, examine our lives, and notice that which is emerging.

By attending to such things, we are beginning to see the emerging future and are taking steps to embrace it. In their book, *Presence*, Peter Senge and his co-authors suggested that the future is a field
that makes itself known when one attends carefully to what already is. Attend to what is. Attend to the people. Attend to the place. Attend to the Spirit. And the future will make itself known.

There are a number of conditions that, if in place, can assist communities to engage in such activities. These conditions all have to do with the capacity to enter into dialogue, to be collaborative and to be comfortable with working adaptively in response to emerging situations.

At St John’s we use techniques such as talking circles to ensure that dialogue is advanced. Each year we develop ministry priorities using Open Space technology. We also seek to develop the spirituality of paying attention; attending to questions so that we live into them; and seeking to use questions such as those listed above to invite community members to reflect on what is happening around us.


*First published in the November 2020 edition of The Eagle, the magazine of St John’s Cathedral. Read the latest edition of The Eagle online.*

**Hymns • Monday 14 December 2020 • By The Rev’d Canon Dr David Cole**

‘God, whose love is everywhere’: a Christmas song

Following a topsy-turvy year, as we approach worship in the Christmas season, we will certainly be comforted by the familiar carol tunes and traditional words that have accompanied our Christmas observance for generations. These are the tunes we find ourselves humming at home, when driving, or even when we are out shopping and hear them being played as shopping centre Christmas background music.
There will be a place for the traditional songs in Christmas services again this year. But as enjoyable as the well-known carols are, there is always a need for a fresh sound, for a different text that can help us think anew about the nature of our Christmas celebration.

One such congregational song is Timothy Dudley-Smith’s ‘God whose love is everywhere’ sung to the tune ‘Christingle Praise’ (* see Songs of Grace, #816). A retired bishop, Timothy Dudley-Smith OBE is one of the world's most inspiring and prolific hymn writers, with hundreds of wonderful hymns to his credit, including ‘Tell out, my soul, the greatness of the Lord’ which has become a regular favourite around the world.

The words of Songs of Grace #816 draw their inspiration from John chapter 1 and chapter 8. The first verse begins by announcing that the Creator of all things is the “God whose love is everywhere”, God's unique and all-pervading, universal love. The second verse invites us to sing with thankful hearts, reminding us that even with the limitations of a COVID-safe environment, we are still free to praise God with full and happy hearts. The third verse asks us to remember and value the love displayed by Christ, who holds the world in his hands. Finally, the message of the song culminates with the sign of love in the world – the light of Christ dispelling gloom and darkness: “See the sign of love appear, flame of glory, bright and clear, light for all the world is here; praise the God of love!”

The tune has a festive air, and a melody that bounces in sync with the text, enhancing the emphases of each verse. This simple, enjoyable, lively and interesting tune can be accompanied very successfully on keyboard or instrumental band, and easily taken up by a congregation for whom it is new.

This ‘great Christmas sing’ is especially useful on Christmas Eve (and at ‘Christingle’ services, of course), and for the Presentation of Christ in the Temple.

* Songs of Grace: Supplement to Together in Song, Australian Hymn Book II is published by Australian Church Resources and is available on the Australian Church Resources website in a paperback book and CD.
Margaret's musings: spiritual stocktaking

I am convinced the older one gets the faster time seems to fly. Here we are at start of December – the start of another Church year and only a few weeks to Christmas. As a financial year ends and a new one starts there is always stocktaking, so at the start of this Church year we should all do some spiritual stocktaking.

As a parish God has provided marvelously for our needs. He enabled us to carry on after Fr St John left us and answered our prayers for a choirmaster and Rector – "a shepherd after His own heart". A parish is always in a state of flux. God's people can be called to live elsewhere, and we do miss those who have left us. Many new families have joined us and for that we are thankful.

The past year for some has been sad as quite a few have lost loved ones. Many have borne illnesses bravely and some (myself included) have had operations. There are those who have struggled to bring up a family on their own and I expect many of you will have had family problems and trials of one sort or another. I hope that through these 'splinters' you have gained strength and a greater awareness of God's love. Some will have had the joy of living in Christian community at a Cursillo weekend – an experience that should not be missed and is open to all age groups (except children of course).

Now for a personal stocktaking. We should ask ourselves:

Have I grown closer to the Lord Jesus during the year? How much time have I spent in private prayer and meditation and Bible reading? Have I attended Holy Communion regularly? How has my witness been? Would strangers know by my attitude or demeanour that I am a Christian? Have I told anyone of God's love and grace? Have I been reconciled to anyone with whom I have been estranged? Have I
shown to others love, patience, good temper, forgiveness and am I showing in my life the fruit of the spirit (Galatians 5. 22-23)?

Maybe it is also the time for resolutions. Our resolve should be for spiritual growth.

I am convinced that you really only grow spiritually if you are prepared to set aside a short time each day to be alone with God. Have a special place where you can sit and read God's word and meditate on it and wait for God to speak to you. Jesus commended Mary of Bethany for sitting at His feet. Work has to be done but if we do it putting Jesus first, we will do it with joy in our hearts and it will make all the difference to the day. For years I stagnated as a Christian because I neglected a 'quiet time'. Do endeavour to do this and you will receive countless blessings “the oil of joy for mourning and the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness” (Isaiah 61. 3).

Using devotional aids can be helpful. I use Everyday with Jesus which is published bi-monthly and has a different theme each time. Other devotional aids were mentioned by our Rector in last month's 'News and Views'. Sharing with others in small groups is also a means by which we can grow spiritually. We were made for fellowship and Christian fellowship, where we can exchange thoughts and share our problems, read God's word and pray together, can be a very uplifting experience. Why not form a small group and try it?

Reading Christian literature can also be helpful. At St David's we have a library in the porch (seldom used now) with a variety of books which make enjoyable and helpful reading. Why not avail yourself of it? Perhaps you can take a book to read in the holidays.

Nothing is attained in this life without effort, perseverance and discipline. So, resolve to give God some of your time and you will grow closer to Him. It goes without saying that attendance at His banquet each Sunday or as regularly as possible is a 'must'. See you there! A happy and holy Christmas to you all.

Written by Margaret Thurgood in December 1989 for the St David's, Chelmer-Graceville newsletter's 'Thought for the Month' column. Originally published under the headline ‘Stocktaking’ – republished and slightly amended with permission).
From Australia to post-War Japan and back: the extraordinary life of Canon Frank Coaldrake

Fifty years ago, in late July 1970, our Diocese received the tragic news that the man they had elected to be their next Archbishop, Canon Frank William Coaldrake (1912-1970), had suffered a sudden haemorrhage and a heart attack, and had passed away at Royal North Shore Hospital, Sydney. All in our Diocese, including Archbishop Philip Strong, other clergy and laity, felt the loss of this incredible man of faith. At his funeral, the future Archbishop of Brisbane, Felix Arnott, reflected:

“I have said a lamp must be lit, but the lamp of Frank’s life was surely lit by God. He was convinced of it, for he was a man of deep personal religion and a sense of vocation that communicated itself to all his friends. Like John he was more than a prophet. He was truly a man of God, one who in his preaching and all his work and every department of his life proclaimed the way of the Lord.”

His was an extraordinary life filled with courage and conviction. A life that had its beginnings in Brisbane.
Frank Coaldrake was born in 1912 to a middle-class family. His youth was spent first at a state school and then at Brisbane Grammar School, before he embarked on training as a teacher. Throughout his youth, and his formative years in particular, Coaldrake had met and been fascinated by the Bush Brothers and their outback ministry. This led to him moving to Charleville in 1932 and taking up the post of Warden at the Bush Brotherhood-run boys' hostel there. The *Australian Dictionary of Biography* tells us that:

“There, for four years, despite meagre resources, his enthusiasm, talent for community work and rapport with the young turned the hostel into a hive of purposeful activity.”

It was at Charleville, and particularly in his conversations with Brother Cecil Edwards, as recounted by Felix Arnott at Coaldrake's funeral, where he became convinced of his vocation, and he set off to begin his university studies in 1936. It was here in Brisbane, residing at St John's College at the University of Queensland, that Coaldrake's mission in life really began to take shape. He studied moral philosophy, examined the campaigns of people like Gandhi, and determined that the only truly Christian course was to be a pacifist. This manifested itself at the start of the World War II when, in 1939, he founded the newspaper *The Peacemaker*, a monthly publication to inform and help those men who conscientiously objected to military service. He encouraged conscientious objection to the war, and through his time as a passionate member of the Student Christian Movement, sought to make social justice and peace the central tenets to his faith. He would go on to become the third President of the National Union of Australian University Students.

In 1939, an auspicious year for Frank Coaldrake, he was asked by Father Gerard Tucker to head down to Melbourne and become a part of the Brotherhood of St Laurence. Utilising the skills he had gained working in Charleville, he was stationed at Keble House, a hostel for youth experiencing homelessness. He was a tireless advocate for both his charges and broad social justice issues. He organised peaceful
protests against the injustices he felt existed in the housing system of Victoria, apparently even parking himself on the steps of the homes of people threatened with eviction by unreasonable landlords and refusing to move.

It was during his time in Melbourne that Coaldrake undertook his theological training and was made a deacon in 1942 and a priest in 1943. For a short time he was precentor of St Paul's Cathedral, Melbourne. It was in 1943 that Coaldrake first approached the Federal Government, specifically the Minister for External Affairs, to ask if he would allow him to go to Japan as a missionary. This extraordinary request, in the middle of World War II, was refused. He was resolute, however, and finally succeeded in June of 1947 in becoming the first Australia missionary to enter Japan during the post-war period. In the March 1945 issue of The Peacemaker, Coaldrake details his philosophy on how to reach out to and engage with the people of Japan.

“It is unrealistic to stand off from a neighbouring people and try to make friends from behind a barricade. It is unrealistic to stand over a conquered enemy and try to beat him into the shape of a friend...We must try and avoid that. The ‘good neighbour’ policy is the realistic one.”

He was supported in this work by the Australian Board of Missions. In August of that year, a delegation organised by the Australian Board of Missions and including Archbishop Reginald Halse of Brisbane, visited Japan to be met by Frank Coaldrake.

Frank Coaldrake's time in Japan is documented very well by his son, Bill Coaldrake, in the book Japan From War to Peace: The Coaldrake Records 1939-1956. A copy of this book can be found in the Reading Room Library at our Records and Archives Centre. Frank Coaldrake set about working to help rebuild the Anglican Episcopal Church in Japan, or Nippon Seikōkai, mostly in the Yokohama region, south of Tokyo, but also on the Izu peninsula, a mountainous locale with many remote and isolated villages. It was in this region that he founded St Mary's Anglican Church.

Coaldrake’s time in Japan was very rewarding for the young priest. He had spent over a year in preparation for his mission, learning the language and the culture, so he was well placed when he arrived to understand those he sought to help. The rewards, however, came at the cost of much hardship. The Japanese people had very little food after the war, and Coaldrake attempted to alleviate that by giving much of his own rations, sent to him from home, to the local people. This, combined with an almost ever-present lack of sleep, helped lead to him being diagnosed with rickets and beriberi only two years after arriving. A furlough to Australia was organised. In a newsletter written on board the ship taking him ‘home’, Coaldrake wrote of his hopes upon returning to Australia:

“The chief thing that hampers us in this is the lack of resources which can only be supplied by the Home Church – men, materials and money. When I am in Australia I am in the one place where it is possible to bring about more interest and practical help from the Home Church. No opportunity to do so must be missed. When there is no opportunity for such work, then we have a holiday, visit friends, seek better health and make preparations for return.”

Around the same time, while in Australia in 1949, Coaldrake and Tasmanian Maida Williams, a church youth worker, married in Christ Church St Laurence, Sydney. In his sermon at Frank Coaldrake's funeral, at the very same church, Felix Arnott noted his own part in this wedding and in Coaldrake's life:
“On his furlough from Japan on December 3, 1949, he asked me if I would marry him here on a Saturday morning in this church, and it was a great joy and privilege to do it, with Bishop Cranswick, of Tasmania, later taking the celebration of Holy Communion. By one of those strange accidents of history, I still have in my Prayer Book, and it has been there for a very long time, the Christmas card which he sent me that announced the arrival of Bill in Japan. It was probably put in as a convenient bookmark and it has never been removed.”

Coaldrake and his family ended up spending close to a decade in Japan. Frank and Maida welcomed two children into their lives while there and lived in everything from a 600-year-old farmhouse to far less comfortable abodes. He earned the love and respect of those he sought to minister to through his own self-sacrifice and his willingness to see the humanity in the Japanese people, a notion not shared by many Australians at the time due to the war-time experiences of POWs in particular.

Frank's son Bill shares that his father was the first Australian Archbishop to speak Japanese*:

“He was also the first (and so far) only Archbishop in Australia to speak Japanese – one for the trivia game – and was once accused by a delegate to a conference [overseas] of representing imperialism because he spoke only English. Dad's reply, and the rest of his discussion, was given in Japanese.”

It was perhaps his undoubted success in Japan that led to him being asked to become the Chair of the Australian Board of Missions (ABM) in 1956. This was too great an opportunity to pass up so, perhaps with a heavy heart, the family left Japan and moved to Sydney for the next stage of their lives.

For the next 14 years Coaldrake devoted himself to the work of the ABM. This included establishing a ground-breaking shift away from notions of 'assimilation' when it came to First Nations peoples, notions which he considered to be racist, toward 'acceptance'. Indeed, Coaldrake himself wrote the publication *Acceptance: The Next Step Forward. A new policy for Aborigines adopted by the Australian Board of Missions October 1967*, in which he states that:

“Acceptance is what Aborigines [sic] feel they need and acceptance without a demand for alteration and conformity is an idea which the European people in the community will need to accept.”

He also insisted that a First Nations person act as a policy advisor in 1969. By that point Coaldrake was Canon Frank Coaldrake, after the All Souls' Quetta Memorial Cathedral, Thursday Island, had given him that honour. During this period, he also initiated and fostered strong ecumenical relationships among many different Christian denominations, which was unusual in that era, in his roles with the National Missionary Council of Australia and the Australian Council of Churches.

On 10 July 1970 he was elected Archbishop of Brisbane. He would have been the first Brisbane-born, Queensland-born, even Australian-born Archbishop of Brisbane if he hadn't passed away only 12 days later. He suffered an intragastric haemorrhage and died of myocardial infarction on 22 July 1970. His funeral was held at Christ Church St Laurence in Sydney. He was survived by his wife, Maida, and their son and two daughters.

Canon Frank Coaldrake is remembered in many ways. A set of stained-glass windows commemorate him in St John's Cathedral, with the plaque reading:

“This window is dedicated to the memory of Canon Frank William Coaldrake, M.A., Th.L., Priest and Missionary
Born Brisbane 12th March 1912
Elected Archbishop of Brisbane
10th July 1970
Died Sydney, 22nd July, 1970.”

Every year a scholarship is awarded from the Frank Coaldrake Memorial Fund to the University of Sydney to support any post-graduate research students engaging in Japanese Studies or any other East Asian Studies in the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences. And in 2017 the ABM honoured him with the ABM Frank Coaldrake Award, given out each year to those who have served as a missionary, volunteer or staff member with the ABM.

Perhaps the final words on the contribution of Frank Coaldrake should be left to the man who was his dear friend, and who eventually was elected to take the office that Coaldrake would have taken as Archbishop of Brisbane, Felix Arnott:

“The early morning belongs to the Church of the Risen Christ. At the break of the day the Church remembers the morning on which death and sin lay prostrate in defeat and new life and salvation were given to mankind. In that same faith, on this lovely morning, and in the early mornings to come, we will remember Frank Coaldrake, and thank God that in him he gave us a shining light.”

Editor’s note: * additional content added on 10 December 2020.

Features • Friday 11 December 2020 • By The Rev’d Tania Eichler

Church, community, chicken, chalk art and Christmas cheer

Keith and John engaged in Advent chalk art at The Parish of Maroochydore
At the request of *anglican focus*, I have summarised how our church, the Parish of Maroochydore, will be ‘making room in the inn’ this Advent for people living on the margins, especially people who are experiencing homelessness and people struggling with their mental health.

On Wednesday nights our church hosts a community meal for people who are homeless or feeling isolated or lonely. On Wednesday 23 December we will host our final community meal for the year. It will be a special sit-down Christmas feast with ham, chicken and roast vegetables and pavlova and cheesecake served at tables decorated with tablecloths and Christmas ornaments. Each guest will be given Christmas gifts, including home-baked treats (presented with a Christmas motif and a loving incarnational message) to take away and a bottle and keep-cup to help people stay hydrated during the hot summer months. The meal will be followed by our usual ‘Food for Thought’ session, during which I will share message of Hope for Christmas.

As many people who come to our community meal struggle with mental health challenges or experience homelessness, they are often isolated from their families. For this reason, it is so important that we provide an atmosphere that is as warm and family-like as possible. This is why the hand-baked goodies, familiar welcome and other homely touches are so vital.

One of the most important ways that we will continue to welcome people to our inn is by greeting and introducing community meal guests by name, just as God calls each of us by name. People’s faces light up when they are welcomed by name, as doing so affirms their God-given dignity and uniqueness.

Building relationship and trust with the people who sleep on our church grounds and come to our community meals enriches our whole community. Recently, one of our community meal guests, Ron, shared some great news with us. Ron was regularly sleeping on our church grounds at night, knowing that he was welcomed and safe here. In the mornings, he would come in for a cuppa and some brekkie. One morning he shared with us that he had applied for government housing and was anxiously awaiting the outcome of his application. A few days later, Ron told us the wonderful news that his application for a home had been approved. We were absolutely thrilled for Ron.

During Advent we have also been continuing our increasingly popular pavement chalk art, which we commenced outside our church early in the COVID-19 period (when meals needed to be served takeaway style) so people continued to feel welcomed. These started off as someone sitting on the ground ‘being with’ people in their circumstances, as scribblings invited interaction with our community meal friends. One Advent chalk art work consisted of four sections (inspired by the four liturgical wreath candles), representing hope (symbolised by a star shining light into the darkness), peace (symbolised by a dove), joy (symbolised by Mary singing for joy with her baby) and love (symbolised by diverse people gathered around Jesus, as he came for all and not just for those who have a home and are well-healed and well).

Jesus, the king of kings, was born in the humble mess of a stable. The first Christmas centred around a soon-to-be refugee family, who fled political persecution and found safety in Egypt, after the very young mother had given birth in a stable because she was away from family support and had nowhere else to labour. So, during the Advent season, I ask myself, “How do we identify people who need a home and make room for them in the inn of our hearts?”
Four locals, four stories about finding room in the inn

"Worshipping together in a welcoming environment is healing for people from war-torn countries, like myself, and also enables us to serve and connect. It's healthy" (The Rev'd Peter Mayen, pictured with his six children Michael, Abraham, Sarah, Israel, Elizabeth and Ruth)

The Rev'd Peter Mayen – Assistant Priest at St Luke's, Toowoomba, father and former refugee

I arrived in Australia as a South Sudanese refugee from a camp in Kenya on 12 October 2004. I lived in the camp for 12 years from 1992 to 2004. A few Sundays after I arrived, a man from St Luke's Anglican Church, Ekibin, named Harry, welcomed me to the Sunday service and introduced me to parishioners after picking me up from my home. Harry also showed me how to shop and taught me how to drive and how to catch the bus and the train to TAFE, so I could learn English, and to work. The priest also warmly welcomed me into the worshipping community of St Luke's. The parish community made me feel welcomed and at home. As an Anglican, I was already familiar with the prayers – only the hymns were different.

I was very pleased to be safe from the threat of harm and the worrying about food security. Moving to Australia gave me a new beginning. While there were some initial adjustment challenges, especially with language and accents, my life transformed as I found work and a home in my new parish community.

The Church is a broad family. We are the Anglican community, with over 80 million people worldwide. We came out of Christ himself. For Anglicans, welcome is one of our gifts and one of our vocations.
Worshipping together in a welcoming environment is healing for people from war-torn countries, like myself, and also enables us to serve and connect. It's healthy.

Christ himself welcomes us into the Kingdom of God. ‘Advent’ means ‘arrival’ – the arrival of Christ. It is our job as a Church to reach out during Advent and let Christ be known as we embrace the people of God. We the Anglican community, with the authority of Christ, are Christ.

“I think camper-outerers should be welcomed by churches all the time. Things in Advent leading up to Christmas are no different to any other day in life for camper-outerers” (Len)

Len – Cathedral parishioner and camper-outerer

I first started sleeping in one of the entrances of the Cathedral just over three years ago. Before then I used to camp out at Anzac Square. I had a business partner who was a lawyer – we created two companies together. After something went wrong, we decided to de-list so I lost the value of all my shares. When I ran out of money, I started sleeping in Anzac Square and then on the Cathedral grounds in 2017.

I had previously met Dr Solari [The Rev'd Dr Ann Solari, Honorary Cathedral Deacon and a GP] at what was then called the 139 Club – a Fortitude Valley drop-in centre for people I call ‘camper-outerers’. I found out that I could sleep on the Cathedral grounds at night from an Anglican nurse who worked with Dr Solari. When I came to sleep at the Cathedral for the first time, Dr Solari gave me blankets. Dr Solari is first and foremost a very nice human being – she is strict but caring, and of course a very good doctor. One time I had an accident on St Paul’s Terrace crossing the road. I smashed up my foot
quite badly when I got hit by a car. I don't like hospitals, so Dr Solari took care of me by checking my foot regularly.

I feel welcomed at the Cathedral because most people say hello, including the lady priest with the glasses [The Rev'd Kate Ross], the male priest with the glasses [Fr Howard Munro] and others [Len, for example, pointed to Andrew Dowling from FDSC]. I feel welcomed because of that. Everyone makes me feel comfortable. I feel safe on the Cathedral grounds and I get a good night's sleep. Every morning I wake up and thank God for giving me a safe night, and then off I go. When you sleep you don't want to worry about drunks kicking you or coppers or security waking you.

It is important for churches to welcome camper-outerers because people need help. If more priests and others like Dr Solari were on the frontlines to meet these people, the camper-outerers would not get disillusioned and attracted to drinking and drugs. It would help them to keep faith, trust and hope in themselves, especially when bad things happen.

I started going to the Sunday night evening hymn service in 2017 – now I go every Sunday night. The first day I was able to attend the service after COVID-19, I started going and I have been going every Sunday since. I also like hearing them practise singing at night.

Dean Peter [The Very Rev'd Dr Peter Catt, Cathedral Dean] is always very polite. He always asks Dr Solari what our names are so he can call us by name. I never feel like I am imposing. I think camper-outerers should be welcomed by churches all the time. Things in Advent leading up to Christmas are no different to any other day in life for camper-outerers.

“Having an increasing level of disability means that I lean on my faith and support from my church more and more” (Elizabeth Mosely)
Elizabeth Mosely – Auchenflower-Milton parishioner and disability advocate

Our happy and small church community was shattered when a super storm wrecked our Milton-based heritage church in 2008. We were warmly welcomed to and integrated into the Chapel of the Holy Spirit community at St Francis College. From day one, I was relieved to find good wheelchair access and was also happy to be accepted as a valued addition to the congregation. In fact, I have never felt an outsider in this inclusive church community.

An invitation to read the lesson at a Sunday communion service on a regular basis was only stalled by COVID-19, and I am encouraged to read from where I normally sit. Serious health issues, including my own, are always sensitively covered by prayer and compassion. Being able to watch services in real time on YouTube means I am still included, even while I am in hospital. The smiles and welcome when I return to services in person are so good for the soul. I feel very blessed to be part of this exceptionally caring church.

Having an increasing level of disability means that I lean on my faith and support from my church more and more. Understanding and acceptance have given me a solid anchor in my day-to-day life. My strong faith and willingness to continue to sometimes struggle to get to church indicate how important it is to me.

My positive experience in a church community is unfortunately not universal. Lack of access is not the only problem for others who use wheelchairs or wheeIe walkers. A welcoming atmosphere is imperative because people with disabilities and their families can be sensitive to negative vibes. Instead of being able to enrich the community, they are lost to it.

Advent is a time of hope and new beginnings – a time to reflect on our faithfulness. A time to make new intentions and to broaden our horizons. A new and determined resolve to actively look for and welcome folk who have family members living with disability into our church communities could be an exciting and satisfying experience.

“As a white man who came from South Africa in my late teens and who has visited a number churches over the years, one particular welcome sticks with me” (The Rev’d Andrew Schmidt)
The Rev’d Andrew Schmidt – Priest-in-Charge of The Anglican Parish of Bundaberg West, who grew up in South Africa

As a white man who came from South Africa in my late teens and who has visited a number churches over the years, one particular welcome sticks with me. I was part of a group invited to St Alban’s Anglican Church in Yarrabah to worship there. After the church service, we went for coffee and raisin toast and as part of this morning tea we were welcomed to the community. In a very relaxed but paradoxically formal way, the Yarrabah people figured out which of the Aunties was the eldest, and she then told us a little of her connection to the Yarrabah region, and welcomed us to her land. After that there was a time of storytelling, making each other coffee and toast and laughter at the children who were running around.

At the time it felt very warming to be invited to a place that was sacred, both as a place of Christian worship and as the country of the Yidinjdji people. The worship we shared, which was very similar to the worship in the church services I grew up with, as well as the services that were a part of my regular Bundaberg West church life.

Part of what made that day stick in my mind is that it had people from many walks of life, singing together, praying together, sharing bread and wine, sharing coffee and raisin toast and telling stories. In that diversity, we shared more fully in the experience of being the body of Christ, something that I think each church community should be seeking.

During Advent, the time of preparation for Christmas, the time a young family welcomed the Christ child into their arms, I think it is particularly important that we be welcoming to all whom we might get a chance to meet, for in that way we might, as with Mary and Joseph, open our arms to Christ.

News • Friday 11 December 2020

National win for Glennie girls

Rheanca Lincoln, Zoe Waters and Sophie Fleming celebrate their National win in The QUEST
Three gifted Year 9 students from The Glennie School have won the coveted BRAINways Education The QUEST National competition for 2020.

Rheanca Lincoln, Sophie Fleming and Zoe Waters used their abilities in creativity, problem solving and teamwork to achieve some outstanding results at The QUEST.

Six teams from co-educational, all-boys and all-girls schools competed in the three learning areas of Science = Neuroscience of imagination; Humanities = Philosophical, psychological and economical theories of value; and, Mathematics = Correlation and causation, network theory and correlation networks.

At the conclusion of The QUEST, hosted by Central Queensland University, Rheanca, Sophie and Zoe, our Year 9 team, won convincingly, taking out the first-place win in Mathematics, second place in Humanities and fourth place in Science.

The girls would normally qualify to progress to the International competition; however, due to COVID-19 this competition will not take place.

The three Glennie students said that they drew upon creativity, collaboration, hard work and positivity throughout the duration of the competition.

“The QUEST was an incredible experience, and we are so glad that each of our strengths could combine to achieve a rewarding win. In the Humanities challenge, we had to create two new civilisations with conflicting values. We invented cultures, landscapes, economies, governments and society rules, all in an hour and a half. Despite the short timeframe, our creativity and collaboration helped us to produce something incredible that we are very proud of,” Sophie said.

“In the Science session, we had an hour and a half to complete a plan for our own science museum, including eight different exhibits. The challenge was all about explaining how the brain imagines and dreams for our civilisations from humanities. Even though the science concepts were hard to grasp, we all powered through the challenge and completed all the given tasks with a smile on our faces,” Rheanca said.

“For the Mathematics session, we had to complete scatter plots to investigate relationships between the two civilisations and draw conclusions as to whether causation or correlation was evident through correlation networks. Due to our light-heartedness and ability to find something to laugh about we got through this task in a very positive manner and came away with the win,” Zoe said.

Deputy Principal – Head of Curriculum Tonia Gloudemans said that she was proud of the girls' collective accomplishment.

“This is a fantastic achievement for the girls and the first time students from The Glennie School have won at the National level,” Ms Gloudemans said.
Reflections • Monday 7 December 2020 By Anneliese, Taswin, Nicolas, Lilli, Aziz, Isabella, Leila, Gurgeet, Ava, Thierry

Prayer Tree helps students to practise peacemaking

"In Term 4, The Springfield Anglican College (TSAC) Year 6 Leaders met with Head of Learning Mrs Williams to discuss what we could do for the College during Christmas. We talked about the ‘Giving Tree’ that we do every year and from this discussion we decided the gift of prayer would be a great way to spread the message of hope, joy and peace. So, we decorated our tree with prayers wrapped in ribbons" (Anneliese)

Anneliese, Year 6 student – Prayer Tree introduction – ‘Being Together: Practising Peacemaking’

In Term 4, The Springfield Anglican College (TSAC) Year 6 Leaders met with Head of Learning Mrs Williams to discuss what we could do for the College during Christmas. We talked about the ‘Giving Tree’ that we do every year and from this discussion we decided the gift of prayer would be a great way to spread the message of hope, joy and peace. So, we decorated our tree with prayers wrapped in ribbons. The students and teachers could take a prayer with them – this was a way to bring people together.

This Prayer Tree project was part of a Prayer Space that we designed and created for all students. Head of Learning Mrs Williams and the Year 6 Leaders met each Friday to discuss the two connected themes of ‘Practising Peacemaking’ and ‘Being Together’. We created this prayer space so all students could post a message or a prayer of peace. The leaders wanted to communicate ‘being together’ by students writing these prayers on hands. We displayed the prayers in the shape of heart to symbolise love and togetherness.

Taswin & Nicolas, Year 6 students – Why is it important to pray for people who are alone or lonely at Christmas?
Taswin: It is really important to pray for people especially in this COVID-19 year so that no one feels alone. I know that because of the travel restrictions and border changes that people may not be able to come together as a family during Christmas. Praying for all the lonely people is really important so we can give them hope. We need to inspire the kids at TSAC to have hope and we can do this through prayer.

Nicolas: I wanted people to feel connected through prayer even if they can't be together during Christmas. Taking a prayer from the tree and sharing it with others will help to spread hope and care.

**Lilli & Aziz – Why is it important for people to think about others and care for others during Advent and the Christmas season?**

Lilli: For many people, especially in this COVID-19 year, Christmas may be different as people have lost loved ones, jobs and money. They don't have the extra money to buy presents for their children, family, and friends. Many will be sad when they think of their loved ones who may not be with them. It is important that we all remember that Christmas is a time of great joy and when Jesus came to us. We need to share this with others, so they remember they are not alone and that God is here for us.

Aziz: Christmas is when we celebrate the birth of Jesus. God sent His Son, Jesus, into the world to be born. His birth brought great joy to the world. This is the true message of Christmas – it's about His presence NOT presents.

**Isabella & Lilli – Why would you recommend other school students to create a prayer tree rather than a Christmas tree?**

Isabella: We would recommend other schools create a prayer tree as it has been a great to help others. A Christmas tree makes me think of the presents I will receive. By having a prayer tree, students think about the real message of Christmas and that God gave us the best present, the birth of Jesus.

Lilli: We worked together as a team to create our Prayer Tree and it gave us time to reflect about what is happening in our lives and what other people are also going through. By writing our prayers, we could also feel grateful for things in our lives and not focus so much on bad things that have happened this year. We could also feel compassion for others and celebrate what God has given us.

**Leila & Gurgeet, Year 6 students – Can you tell Anglican Focus readers about the prayer you wrote and whom it is for?**

Leila: I wrote my prayer for all the emergency workers like nurses and doctors. These people have been working so hard to care for all people during COVID-19. We have also had very bad storms in Springfield and many students at the College had to move out of their homes so they could be repaired. The emergency workers had to work through the day and night to help these families.

Gurgeet: I wrote many small prayers for our younger students at The Springfield Anglican College, as I wanted them to understand that prayers are for everyone and it is easy. We can all pray to God and we can pray for others.
Year 6 students – What have you learned from this special College project?

Aziz: “One prayer can make a big difference to someone.”
Lilli: “Prayer spaces can bring joy and hope to others.”
Gurgeet: “Students of all ages can find a prayer for them.”
Isabella: “It is great to help others.”
Anneliese: “Little things like a prayer tree and prayer space can give students a place to pray and time to reflect.”
Ava: “It is important to share prayers and hope with everyone.”
Thierry: “We need to share God’s love with everyone.”
Taswin: “Lonely people need hope and a message of joy.”
Nicolas: “Prayer can bring people together during good and hard times.”
Leila: “Prayer spaces can help spread the message of being together and peace.”

News • Monday 14 December 2020

St Andrew’s students to revolutionise use of shark nets

Year 9 St Andrew’s Anglican College students Kiavesh, Ethan and Byron have developed ‘AquaShield’, a prototype and business model to replace shark nets with a new alternative and a sustainable design that is reliable, easy to maintain and built with quality materials that last a lifetime.

It all started with a simple video clip that became a major obsession. Now three St Andrew’s students plan to revolutionise the use of shark nets after winning the national final of the young entrepreneurship program, Future Anything.

The Year 9 students, Kiavesh, Ethan and Byron, have developed ‘AquaShield’, a prototype and business model to replace shark nets with a new alternative and a sustainable design that is reliable, easy to maintain and built with quality materials that last a lifetime.
When tasked with their Year 9 problem solving ideas project earlier in the year, the trio decided to use their passion for helping the environment as the driving force to create a product that would help tackle a major environmental issue.

“I've had a great passion for helping the environment ever since I watched my first David Attenborough documentary; it made me realise how amazing the planet is that we're living on today,” Kiavesh said.

“I remember sitting at the desk on a Sunday afternoon and thinking about how we seem to take so many things for granted in this world and have very little positivity to look at.

“That's when I came to the true realisation that we are not taking any consideration for the environment and decided that our main focus would be on protecting the environment.

“I was watching an episode of Shark Week on the TV and saw these terrible images of sharks, rays, turtles, and dolphins tangled in shark nets. I then realised that the oceans needed more help environmentally than the land.

“I sat down with the team and discussed the problem with them and after doing loads of research and analysis we all agreed that this was going to be the more interesting of the two problems to solve.”

The innovative design of AquaShield uses magnets, similar to those used in personal shark repellants on the market, by interfering with the sharks' senses.

After researching, building their prototype and developing a business plan, Kiavesh and his team pitched their idea along with teams from over 40 schools, in Future Anything's Activate program, which challenges young people to research, develop and prototype scalable business solutions that make the world a better place.

The team progressed through the rounds and semifinals, eventually pitching their business idea in the grand final, live on the Future Anything YouTube channel.

After a series of fast and furious pitches, some super tough questioning by the judges, and a live People's Vote, the team members were crowned the winners, with a $2000 kickstarter fund and a suite of support to launch their business into the real world, which they hope to increase through further business and research backing.

“We plan to follow our proposed timeline by first receiving support from local conservation groups, such as Australian Zoo and the Mooloolaba Sealife,” Kiavesh said.

“We're going to do a fair amount of work during the holidays, and hopefully install this product in Australia and eventually the world.

“We are also hoping to expand our market in order to be as successful as possible, but in summary we are hoping that AquaShield will be a fully functioning business that will help the environment and improve safety standards to a whole new level.”

Students at St Andrew's are immersed and actively engaged in creative design and entrepreneurship programs from Year 4 and continue to build these skills as they progress through the years.
These programs recognise that many of the jobs now may not exist in the future and that students need to develop entrepreneurial, design and creative thinking skills to be prepared, while balancing the need to live and work sustainably.

“Entrepreneurship as a subject gives me opportunities to learn new skills and possibly to set up a company of our own,” Kiavesh said.

“We’ve certainly seen the potential for what we can do in the future, and we’ve realised that most of these opportunities come once in a lifetime. St Andrews has given us a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for which we are grateful, and we are proud to have such great support at the College.”

**Features • Wednesday 9 December 2020 • By The Rev’d Dr Daniel Rouhead**

**Advent and clergy wellbeing**

GP and Honorary Assistant Priest The Rev’d Dr Daniel Rouhead, from Resource Church St Bart’s, Toowoomba, encourages all clergy and lay ministers to take care of their physical and mental health during Advent

“KEVIN!!!” A family arrives in Paris for their Christmas holiday only for the parents to discover one of their children has been left behind in New York. Their stress levels are immediately off the scale. This is the plot of *Home Alone*, but a familiar feeling for many parents who have lost sight of their child, if only for a moment.

In a similar way, the disciples wake up one morning and become anxious because they can’t find Jesus *(Mark 1.35-37)*. They rush around trying to find him. Eventually, they find him – alone and praying. The crowds place constant demands on Jesus. His response is to withdraw for a time and rely on his Father’s power and strength.
The challenges of 2020 have been a combination of both these situations. When COVID-19 came to Australia, Church ministry was unexpectedly forced to change to keep our communities safe, as places of worship needed to shift how they conducted services and connected with parishioners, and with very little notice. Suddenly, online ministry became mainstream. Clergy and lay ministers had to grapple with adapting their many and varied ministries to the appropriate online platform to remain connected to their communities. The ongoing effects of COVID-19 have resulted in chronic levels of increased stress as churches have shifted in response to Government requirements, while the usual demands on ministers have remained. It has been absolutely clear in the COVID-19 environment that self-care is vital for all those in ministry, as for all in the caring professions. This learning is an important one for clergy and lay ministers to take into the Advent season.

According to Bishop and New Testament scholar Tom Wright, Advent is a time during which we prepare to “celebrate Jesus’ first coming and use that sense of fulfilment to fuel our hope for his second coming and to strengthen us to work for signs of that kingdom in our own day” (from *Advent for Everyone*). It is a time to pause and reflect…to ask: “How have we contributed to God's kingdom, 'on earth as in heaven', which Jesus launched?” It is also a time to act…to ask: “How can we bring light to situations of darkness, injustice and brokenness?”

There are two common approaches to Advent which can have negative consequences for those in ministry. The first is making the most of every possible opportunity by filling the calendar with as many events as possible. The second is trying to exceed your own and your community's expectations by working as hard as possible. Both approaches result in a level of busy-ness and fatigue which is not conducive to personal wellbeing or the time and space needed for reflection and action.

The following 10 tips for Advent are based on the principle that we ultimately rely on God in all things, with steps we can take to maintain our wellbeing.

**10 tips for clergy and lay ministers in the Advent season:**

1. **Pray:** Following the example of Jesus, ground your community's Advent and Christmas plans in prayer, as well as seeking God's guidance, sustenance and protection during this busy time. When we pray, we rely on God's strength and wisdom rather than on our own.

2. **Build a team:** Spread both the workload and stress by building a team to support you in your ministry and the ministry activities and events themselves. Unlocking the gifts and talents of your people will also enrich the ministries of your community.

3. **Prepare (and be adaptable):** Preparing for events well in advance will reduce stress and help ensure all COVID-19 SAFE requirements are met. Of course, this year has demonstrated that flexibility and adaptability are equally important, as circumstances, restrictions and requirements can change at any moment.

4. **Use technology wisely:** Technology has enabled many church communities to connect with vulnerable members of their community, as well as people who wouldn't normally attend church. Using technology to live-stream services, events and activities can help to reduce the workload while even increasing our connections within and beyond our communities of faith.

5. **Build an invitational culture:** When members of your community actively invite people on their frontlines to your community's services, events and activities, it will lift a burden off your shoulders.

6. **Be hopeful:** When we approach Advent with hope, we trust that God will work through us (and our community), drawing people closer to Jesus.
7. **Rest:** Make rest a priority, maintaining a regular sleep pattern and your day or days off. It can be tempting to work extra hard through Advent and Christmas, relying on a forthcoming time of holidays or a quieter period after Christmas to recover.

8. **Exercise and recreation:** Maintain your usual patterns of exercise and recreation as they are vital for physical, mental and emotional wellbeing and managing stress. Remember, if you are starting a new exercise regime, see your GP first.

9. **Moderate food and alcohol intake:** Moderate food and alcohol intake during the many social events in Advent, as overindulging can adversely affect your interconnected physical and mental health.

10. **Connect:** Maintain connections with the people who are important to you – your family, friends and parishioners. Offer opportunities for new people who attend your events and services, in-person or online, to connect with you providing a launch pad for 2021.

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**News • Thursday 10 December 2020 • By Sally Belford**

**Jarjums Connect gets Totally Wild with Ranger Stacey**

Recently the Jarjums Connect Group had a very special visitor when Ranger Stacey and the Totally Wild team came to join in the fun!

The Jarjums Connect Group is a fortnightly event designed to nurture individual self-expression and offer cultural support in a safe environment for children in our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

Every Jarjums Connect Group event is special, as the group does activities to foster learning around topics like song and dance, art, language and storytelling and making food.

Recently the group had a very special visitor when Ranger Stacey and the *Totally Wild* team came to join in the fun!
Lalania and the Jarjums showed Ranger Stacey traditional face painting, then Caleb taught them all how dilly baskets could be used to make black beans safe to make flour for damper.

After watching the Jarjums do some traditional singing and dancing, Ranger Stacey was hoping to be impressed by some boomerang throwing, but unfortunately Alara thought the windy day meant the boomerangs would be too dangerous in the small park.

Everyone agreed that the highlight of the day was getting to try witchetty grubs – and watching Ranger Stacey’s taste test!

The Jarjums went first, biting down on the traditional food with relish and describing the taste to Ranger Stacey.

Witchetty grubs are a good source of protein, and Caleb showed Stacey the best way to eat them. But Ranger Stacey wasn’t so sure, and when she bit down on her witchetty grub she couldn’t quite manage to swallow – “why did I get the juicy one?”

You can watch the 5-minute episode here.

Led by our Cultural Support Worker Lalania Tusa, the Jarjums Connect group’s primary focus is on creating cultural connectedness, so that children and young people begin to develop and feel a strong sense of identity and belonging within themselves and the wider Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. Jarjums is the Yugambeh word for ‘children’.

First published on the Anglicare Southern Queensland website on 7 December 2020.

News • Friday 11 December 2020

Government gives jobseekers a cut for Christmas

Anglicare Australia has condemned the Government’s decision to cut the JobSeeker payment over Christmas.

“Out-of-work Australians have woken up this morning to find that Parliament has voted to cut their payments yet again,” Executive Director Kasy Chambers said.

“The old rate of JobSeeker was frozen for almost three decades. It became a poverty trap, locking people out of work and forcing them to turn to agencies like ours just to get by.

“Just this week, we released research showing that people out of work were skipping meals because their payments were so low. Many were left with as little as $7 a day after paying their rent. Others were forced to couch-surf.

“When the Government lifted JobSeeker it righted that wrong. People out of work were finally given a path out of poverty. These cuts will take that hope away – and push people back into poverty and hardship.”

Ms Chambers said the Government was contradicting itself on JobSeeker.
“Just this week, the Government admitted that there aren’t enough jobs for those need them. It’s also trying to convince workers to take pay cuts because of weakness in the economy. But when it comes to JobSeeker, it insists that the economy is strong enough for cuts.

“The Government is disregarding the evidence it doesn’t want to hear. It’s ignoring near-universal calls for an increase, and it passed these latest cuts with no debate in Parliament. That’s not good enough.

“After years of ignoring calls from experts, economists and the community sector, the Government is now failing to listen to its own citizens. Many families will be forced to move over Christmas or skip meals as they get ready for the next round of cuts.

“This shows that it’s time to take these decisions out of the hands of politicians and create an independent body to set payment rates.

“If the Government won’t listen to its own MPs, experts, and inquiries – or respect the evidence – then it’s time to hand the power over to someone who will.”

News • Friday 4 December 2020 • By Nils von Kalm

AOA supporting women and children’s rights in Kenya

A grandmother holds her grandson in Lekiji, Kenya. Her daughter-in-law died in childbirth, unable to access medical care in time, so the grandmother is the child’s primary carer

The story of Jesus’ mother Mary, who became pregnant at a young age and faced potential stoning, while very different in context, resonates with Anglican Overseas Aid’s (AOA) work in Kenya, where they partner with the Anglican Church of Kenya (ACK) to protect the rights of women and children.

Often women and girls find themselves in powerless positions, subject to the will of their family, and unable to direct their lives or access education. Many find themselves abandoned and living in poverty.
AOA’s program in Kenya is educating communities about the rights of women and children so they can advocate and negotiate for themselves. The program helps them access education and find ways to earn a living, supports networks for women who have experienced domestic violence, and helps community leaders promote respectful treatment of women.

Many women and girls in Kenya face extraordinary difficulties and uncertain futures. Teenage pregnancy and child marriage are significant problems in certain areas of the country. Anne, one of the teachers at a local primary school, explained that girls as young as 13 are becoming pregnant.

She says, “At first it used to give me a lot of stress when I came to this school. I would be with the girls, I walked with them all the way through, and just as a child is about to go to class 8, or is already in class 8, she drops out of school.”

Parents arranging for their children to be married at a very young age is also something that has troubled Anne.

“I felt so bad,” she explained.

“I didn't want to see the parents...I realise now the culture needs to change itself slowly. And I need to take the parents through slowly, and show them the essence of education.”

The Anglican Church of Kenya's work with teachers like Anne is proving invaluable as it is strengthening the mechanisms in schools that protect students.

This year, however, COVID-19 has increased the vulnerability of women and girls, placing their health, security and livelihoods at risk. This year has seen an increase in teenage pregnancy and child marriage coinciding with the shutdown of schools as the safety and protection mechanisms provided by the school environment have been removed.

Despite the challenges of COVID-19, positive change is slowly taking place. AOA's program in Kenya is bringing renewed hope through just and resilient communities with improved self-reliance, reduced vulnerability and improved quality of life for all – particularly those who are most vulnerable, despite the immense challenges faced at this time.

You can donate to Anglican Overseas Aid’s ‘Lifting Up The Lowly’ Christmas Appeal by visiting their [website](choose 01.2020 – ‘Lifting The Lowly’), calling 1800 249 880 or sending a cheque made payable to Anglican Overseas Aid to:

Anglican Overseas Aid  
PO Box 389  
Abbotsford, VIC 3067
Immigration detention concerns deepen

The Australian Human Rights Commission has recently released a report that details increasing concern for the human rights of people held in Australia’s immigration detention facilities.

The report contains findings and recommendations arising from the Commission’s most recent in-person inspections of Australia’s immigration detention facilities, including ‘alternative places of detention’ (APODs). These inspections occurred before the COVID-19 pandemic.

“We can and we must do better to protect the human rights of people in immigration detention,” Human Rights Commissioner Edward Santow said.

“Over many years, the Commission has identified a large number of individuals for whom closed detention is not justified under human rights law. Especially given the COVID-19 pandemic, anyone who does not pose a significant security risk should be released into community detention.

“In 2019 the average period an individual was held in immigration detention was close to or just above 500 days. In September 2020 the average period of immigration detention was 581 days – the highest ever recorded, and much higher than any country comparable to Australia.

“This report shows how human rights problems are frequently made worse the longer an individual is detained. For example, at the time of inspection, 196 refugees and asylum seekers were in immigration detention, after being transferred to Australia for medical reasons from Papua New Guinea or Nauru. The Commission holds grave concern for the physical and mental health of a large number of these people, who have been in closed detention for long periods.”

The report makes a number of practical recommendations to improve the health and wellbeing of people whom the Government determines must remain in closed detention.

These recommendations would enable genuine risks in immigration detention to be managed safely, while also protecting the human rights of all people held in immigration detention.

The Very Rev’d Dr Peter Catt said that the plight of refugees and people seeking asylum is heightened in the consciousness of Christians during Advent and Christmas.

“The message of Christmas reminds us that we are to look for the presence of Christ in the ‘little ones of God’. The face of every refugee is the face of Jesus. When you did or didn't do it for one of the little ones you did or didn't do it for me (Matthew 25),” Dr Catt said.

“At the heart of the Christian message is the idea of enabling people to flourish. This includes setting the prisoner free (Luke 4). Often times, we think of those in prison only through the lens of those imprisoned by the legal system after being legitimately tried for criminal activity.

“There are many people throughout the world who are held in prison-like conditions despite being innocent and without the benefit of legal processes.
“The Australian Government is one of the regimes that carries out this destructive practice. It amounts to torture. Those held in such conditions not only do not flourish, but are slowly but surely destroyed. Innocent people destroyed.”

The Department of Home Affairs has issued a response to this report, and that response is included alongside the report. The Department agrees, in whole or in part, with nine of the 44 recommendations in the report.

The Commission has urged the Government to give further consideration to all of the report’s recommendations.

You can read the report on the Commission’s website here.

News • Wednesday 9 December 2020 • By National Council of Churches in Australia (NCCA)

Pacific open letter to PM Scott Morrison

Political and religious leaders in Australia have come out in strong support of an open letter from 15 Pacific leaders to Prime Minister Scott Morrison, asking him to take urgent climate action ahead of the United Nations (UN) Climate Ambition Summit on 12 December 2020.

The open letter, signed by high-profile Pacific political and religious figures, including His Excellency Anote Tong (former President of Kiribati), the Rt Hon. Enele Sopoaga (former Prime Minister of Tuvalu), Her Excellency Hilda Heine (former President of the Marshall Islands), Sir John Cardinal Ribat, Archbishop of Port Moresby and The Most Rev’d Peter Chong, Archbishop of Suva, calls for Scott Morrison to double Australia’s current Nationally Determined Contribution, cancel the controversial Kyoto credits and commit to net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050.
Hon. Kevin Rudd AC, former Prime Minister of Australia, said: “Climate change remains the greatest moral challenge of our generation and poses an existential risk to our Pacific Island family. Today’s letter demonstrates just how much the Australian Government’s failure to act is a slap in the face to the Pacific, especially at a time when the government is trying to step-up its own engagement in the region. The Government’s failure to act also flies directly in the face of the commitments Australia made under the Paris Agreement. This includes to increase our 2030 emissions reduction target, to set a long-term vision to decarbonise our economy, and to mobilise additional climate finance for the region through the Green Climate Fund. No amount of crab walking by the Government away from its insistence on using dodgy accounting tricks to meet its already lacklustre target will make up for this.”

Dr John Hewson AM, former Liberal Opposition Leader and professor at the ANU Crawford School of Public Policy added: “Australia's foreign Ministers of all political persuasions often claim that the first line of our foreign policy responsibilities is to our neighbours in Asia and the Pacific. It is about time that they gave real substance to this rhetoric. There is no more important issue, especially to our Pacific neighbours, than an effective and urgent response to the challenge of climate change. It is time for the Australian Government to recognise its responsibilities and commitments, and to provide the essential leadership on this issue. I strongly support this letter to Prime Minister Morrison.”

Archbishop Mark Coleridge of Brisbane said: “Climate change in the Pacific is a matter of life and death. That’s why it’s important for Australians, including our political leaders, to hear the voice of the Pacific peoples. As Pope Francis has said in his new Encyclical Letter, ‘We are all brothers and sisters’. The fate of the Pacific is our fate too.”

The Right Rev’d Professor Stephen Pickard, Executive Director of the Australian Centre for Christianity and Culture, also supported the open letter: “The peoples of the Pacific are our neighbours whom we are called to love as ourselves. When they suffer from the rising tide of destruction due to climate change then eventually, we all suffer. It’s time for our political leaders to promote policies that show we really care for and hear the voices of the Pacific peoples.”

Anglican Bishop Philip Huggins, President National Council of Churches in Australia, concluded: “Love God, love your neighbour” (Matthew 22.36-40). We hear the call of our beautiful Saviour Jesus in this Open Letter of our Pacific neighbours. We appreciate the sincerity of our PM’s personal faith and his affection for the Pacific. A perfect Christmas gift is for our PM to now announce, in love of God and neighbour, Australia’s commitment to net zero emissions by 2050.”

List of Australian political and religious leaders supporting the open letter by Pacific leaders to Prime Minister Scott Morrison:

- The Very Rev’d Dr Peter Catt, Dean, St John’s Cathedral, Brisbane
- Bishop Philip Huggins, President National Council of Churches in Australia
- The Right Rev’d Professor Stephen Pickard, Executive Director, Australian Centre for Christianity and Culture and Assistant Bishop Anglican Diocese of Canberra and Goulburn
- Hon. Kevin Rudd AC, Former Prime Minister of Australia
- Dr John Hewson AM, Former Liberal Opposition Leader Professor ANU Crawford School of Public Policy
- The Most Rev’d Mark Coleridge, Archbishop of Brisbane
- Father Chris McPhee MSC, Provincial of the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart
- Father Peter O’Neil, Columban Leader Australia
• Father Thomas McDonough, C.P. Provincial Superior, Holy Spirit Province, Australia, Papua New Guinea, New Zealand, Vietnam
• Sister Monica Cavanagh, Congregational Leader Sisters of St Joseph
• Sister Philipa Murphy, Provincial of the Daughters of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart, Australian Province
• Brother Gerard Brady CFC, Provincial Christian Brothers Oceania

Read the open letter, published in The Sydney Morning Herald on 1 December 2020. Pacific leaders urging Prime Minister Scott Morrison to take urgent climate action to ensure that Australia meets its international climate commitments ahead of the upcoming United Nations Climate Ambition Summit on 12 December 2020.

Published on the National Council of Churches website on 1 December 2020.

Sunday Devotions • Monday 14 December 2020 • By The Rev'd Owen Strong

Sunday Devotion: 20 December 2020, Fourth Sunday of Advent

We each have a contribution to make

Main Readings: 2 Samuel 7.1-11, 16; Psalm 89.1-4, 19-27 or ‘Song of Mary’ (APBA P.9 or 425); Romans 16.25-27; Luke 1.26-38

Supplementary Readings: Psalm 72.12-21; Hebrews 1.8-2.4; 2 Samuel 7.18-29; Psalm 89.26-38; Mark 12.35-37
“Then Mary said, ‘Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word.’” (Luke 1.38)

Having been encouraged, quite unexpectedly, to think about leading a parish youth group in the late 60s, I somewhat hesitantly attended a leadership training course. Feeling like a fish out of water, I found myself wandering the grounds of the training venue in a sea of uncertainty contemplating, “What on earth have I gotten myself into?” At that moment I was overcome by an overwhelming sense of peace and belonging.

We can but wonder what Mary experienced as she contemplated the enormity of being asked to bear Jesus. She was faced with casting aside all the normal pathways of a young Jewish woman in her time and would have anticipated and embraced a future that was full of uncertainty. It was beyond anything anyone had ever been, or is likely to be, asked. That Mary was able to agree with, “Let it be with me according to your word”, suggests to me that she had a profound sense of the presence of God and experienced the peace that comes with that.

Each of us has a contribution to make, perhaps not as dramatic as Mary's but significant none the less. This might be something for which we feel ill equipped or an area where few have ventured before – an area we are able or could be upskilled to handle.

If we are prepared to follow God's call as Mary did, it ought not surprise us to find that we are able to fulfil God's will and experience a sense of rightness in doing so, as it appears Mary did.