

Accepting the challenge



Funeral eulogies often give insight into the life and character of the person who has died and there are potential gifts for all who are willing to listen. This was certainly true at the recent funeral of Fr Ross Cameron held at St Andrew's, Toogoolawah, in the Parish of Brisbane Valley, on Tuesday 20 July. The eulogy was prepared and read by Jocelyn Cameron, his wife of 50 years.

Jocelyn explained that Ross grew up in rural Queensland and imbibed there "the values which have made Australia great: love and loyalty to family, respect for all, hard work, self-sacrifice, thrift, with respect for education and religion."

He went to Boarding School at Southport and won a scholarship to study at the University of Queensland. With a Bachelor of Agricultural Science he went to Central Queensland and worked with the Department of Primary Industries at Biloela and Theodore and while there had a strong sense that God was calling him out of agriculture and into ordained ministry.

Apparently, "Ross did not particularly want to leave the agricultural work which he loved...but he accepted the challenge...something Ross had always done when he believed that God wanted him to do something."

God called Ross from a well-paid role in agriculture to a poorly paid role in the Church...and he accepted the challenge. In comparison ordained ministers are paid well these days, but there is still something deeply vocational about our role. It demands much of us and will take us to places that are physically, psychologically, and emotionally challenging.

Jocelyn affirmed that Ross “accepted the challenge” given to him by God...and I found myself wondering how many others God would call to take on similar challenge in our time and how we recognise this?

Ross studied, was ordained, got married and had two children. He did not serve in many parishes but gifted the parishes he served in with years: eight years in Longreach, seven years in Clayfield, 12 years in Oakey, and, if you include retirement, 19 years in Brisbane Valley.

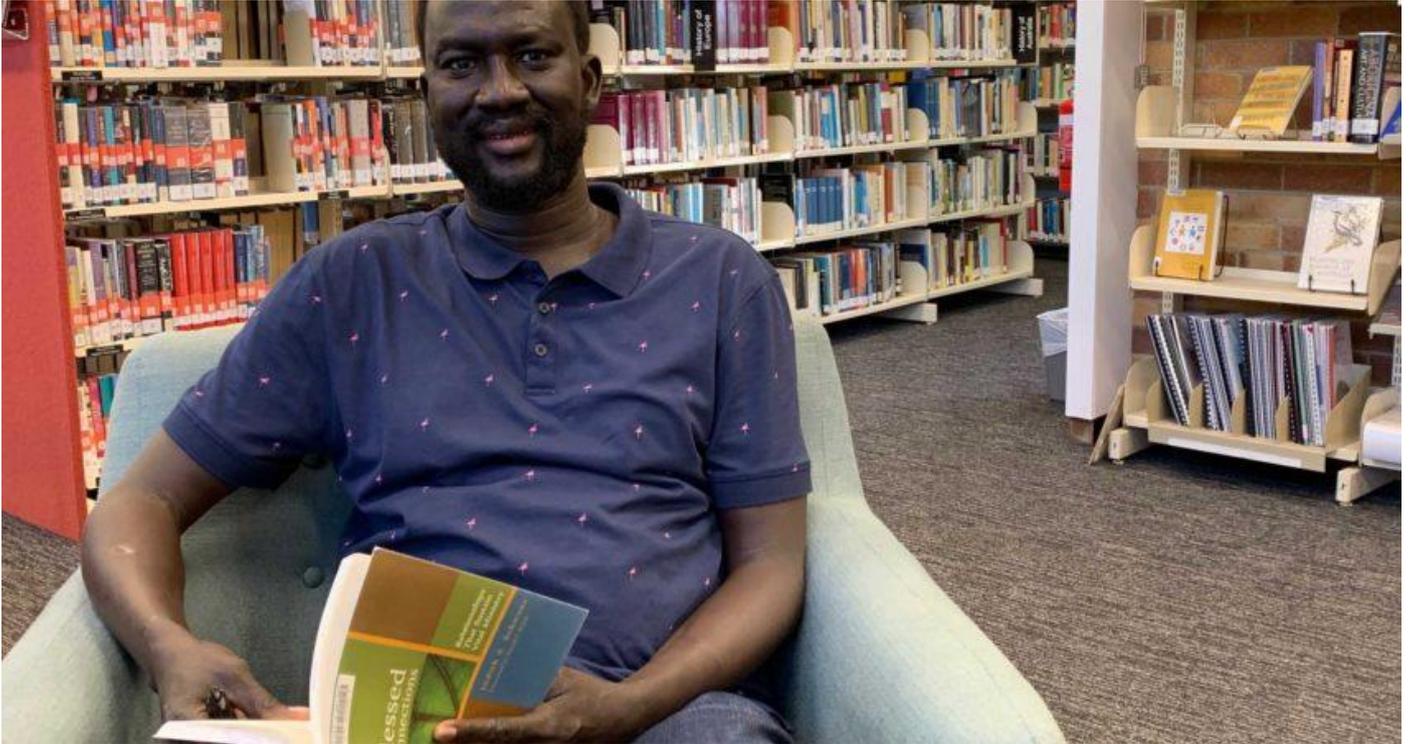
I likened Ross and Jocelyn to Gidyea trees (*Acacia cambagei*) who endured through difficult seasons while providing others with shade! I hope God will call others, who love God and rural life, to come and serve for similarly long seasons in Western Region parishes.

In her conclusion, Jocelyn affirmed that “Ross answered Jesus’ call and found power to live the life God planned for him as a priest, believing others could do the same in their lives and vocations. He spent his life willingly, joyfully and wholeheartedly sharing that Good News with as many people as he could.” Ross leaves, I think, a rich legacy.

The Western Region has opportunities for clergy to serve in Charleville/Cunnamulla (BMF supported), Leichhardt/Chinchilla (BMF supported), Quilpie/Diamantina (BMF supported), St George, Kingaroy, Highfields and Pittsworth. If you have a sense that God may be calling you to serve in any of these communities please get in touch so we can discuss that and pray together.

Please pray for all rural and remote communities in our Western Region, particularly those who are supported in some way by the BMF. If you, like me, are already supporting the BMF, please keep giving...in the knowledge that this is used by God to bless the lives of others. But, if you are not yet supporting and would like to find out more, please call Helen Briffa at the Western Region Office on (07) 4639 1875 or email her via hbriffa@anglicanchurchsq.org.au

My vocation story: from Lost Boy to finding God in the desert



"I also spoke to Bishop Cam and asked about the priesthood. Bishop Cam told me that I needed to have a call, the support of my wife, and the support of my congregation to become a priest. With the support of Mary and my congregation, I started studying theology at St Francis College in 2019" (Mamuor Kunpeter at Roscoe Library on 21 July 2021)

My parents and my grandparents didn't know about Jesus. They worshipped their traditional God's in what is now South Sudan. My local community's god' was named 'Ayuiu'. We worshipped Ayuiu by sacrificing bulls and singing.

I became a Christian after I left Sudan during the second Sudanese Civil War in 1987.

I fled South Sudan for Ethiopia when I was 11. The journey across the desert without clothing or shoes was very bad. We travelled for many days – we walked for more than a month across the desert to escape the persecution of the Khartoum government who wanted to abduct boys so they couldn't join the rebel groups once they became older.

More than 20,000 boys walked across the desert as unaccompanied minors. We are known as the 'Lost Boys of Sudan'. There were seven from my extended family and we walked with 13,000 others. I left my parents with only the food I could carry, which my mum packed for me, and a two litre container of water. My mum packed simsim for me, a sort of produce like peanuts which didn't need cooking so it was easy to eat. I didn't see my parents again.

We travelled at nighttime, mostly so the Khartoum government military in helicopters could not find us. We ran out of food quickly and ate wild animals, although not all of us would get a portion. It was a struggle.

The desert was very dry and it was dangerous. We could be abducted. Many were eaten by wild animals. Some children were eaten by lions. Most children who died just fell asleep and did not get up as they were too weak to walk any further.

Arriving in Ethiopia was another bad experience. We had no food at all and we arrived in Ethiopia with no place to go. So we had to sleep under trees. There was nowhere to go to the toilet so the children defecated anywhere, which spread cholera. Children also died of tropical diseases, which spread quickly because we lived close together. Many of us also died of malnutrition.

It took three months for the United Nations to come with food and medical supplies, although the strongest medicine they had was Panadol and hydration salts. They did not bring water so we had to keep drinking from the diseased river. There was no clean water until more than four years later in 1991.

In Ethiopia we had school classes under trees when it didn't rain. The teacher and students wrote in the dirt with sticks. It was at this time when I was 11 years old that I began to have a relationship with God. In Ethiopia there was a church that I went to. It was there that I found out about the Israelites and how they travelled a long way on foot. After hearing their story, instead of thinking so much about going back to my parents, I thought to myself that this is what I had to live with, that this is my life now. I thought about what I had experienced and decided that there had to be some kind of power – something that was sustaining my life.

Around 1991 we were forced back to the Ethiopian-Sudanese border to Pochalla. The United Nations moved us out because of the threat of the Eritrea-Ethiopian rebels' movement. Because there was no airstrip, the United Nations could not fly us in food. We left the Panyido refugee camp in Ethiopia in two groups, going in separate directions. It took me and my group three weeks to get to Pochalla on the border. It was easier the second time for me as I packed more food and was a few years older. Many of the children in the group that went in the other direction were shot at by rebels and either died in the gunfire or drowned as they tried to escape across the river Gilo. Some managed to get safely across the river.

We lived in Pochalla for a couple of months. The Khartoum government bombed the area from helicopters a few times and sent troops to attack us on the ground. Because of this, the United Nations decided it was an unsafe place for children so we had to move again, this time to Kenya.

The walk to Kenya was more than two months. It was bad. There wasn't much food. We walked at night to keep safe. The United Nations did not have enough vehicles to transport the children so we had to walk across Kothngor desert. They did not plan well.

We arrived in northwestern Kenya at the Kakuma refugee camp in 1992. Over 15,000 of us had travelled there. We were very weak when we arrived, but life was better in Kakuma.

The children went to Sunday services under the trees in the Kakuma refugee camp. A Sudanese Episcopal priest who ran our services trained a couple of older boys to read the Bible in our language, Dinka. That's when I began to fall in love with God.

In 1993 I chose to be baptised by this priest. In 1996 I was confirmed. I kept going to youth ministry in the camp and have since been faithful to God.

In 2003, more than 15 years after I first left my parents, I came to Australia. When I first came here, I went to Tasmania. But, the Tasmanian weather was too much for me. So – I went from Kenya which is extremely hot every day of the year and where I lived for over 10 years to Tasmania. As the Tasmanian weather was too much for me, after two months I moved to Sydney.

In Sydney I started going to Anglican services. I noticed that the way people prayed and worshipped was the same as in Kenya. I didn't know that being Episcopal and being Anglican were the same until then. I have stayed Anglican.

In Sydney when our congregation got bigger, we requested a special service in Dinka, our own language. This was good for people who couldn't speak English, especially for old people so they could stay engaged in their faith. We were also able to sing more and dance in our services. We are used to singing and dancing to praise God. Most Australian services don't have dancing. We find this a bit boring.

In December 2004 I got married to Mary. We first met through youth ministry in the Kakuma refugee camp where we were just friends. We met again in Australia after connecting on the phone while she was living in Perth.

In 2006 we had our first child and now God has blessed us with six children. In 2007 we had a daughter, Anna, with down syndrome. Because she has heart and lung conditions, the doctor suggested that we move to Queensland where the weather would be better for her health. So, we moved to Queensland in June 2009.

When my daughter was in hospital a few years ago, the doctors told me that her lungs were slowly dying. They told me that if a medicine didn't work that she would not survive. I went to the hospital to see my daughter with two older women from my community. One of the older women told me that my daughter wouldn't die and called us to pray. So, we bowed our heads and prayed right there. My daughter survived. I then realised that God had a plan for my daughter. This made me realise that God has a plan for everyone, including me.

This also showed me that God speaks through and works through people. Just as God guided the Israelites through Moses and spoke through Moses, God guided me through the older woman and spoke to me through her.

Pastor Phil from another local church helped me to bring my remaining brothers to Australia a few years ago after I finished my Bachelor of Business. He is a good man. Seeing the good he did, I prayed to God that I would help others as he helped my brothers and me. He is someone I want to imitate.

I have served in a number of church positions. In 2018 I was commissioned as a liturgical assistant. In this role, I organised church activities, helped the priest or Bishop with liturgical assistant duties, helped with church development and organised youth activities.

In 2018, Bishop Cam was doing child safety training in our church. I asked him why I couldn't preach. Bishop Cam told me that I needed to do some study to preach.

I then found out about Seekers Day, which is a day that people can find out more about ordained ministry. I rang Bishop Daniel Abot, as I knew him from the refugee camp, and he encouraged me to go to Seekers Day, which I did.

I also spoke to Bishop Cam and asked about the priesthood. Bishop Cam told me that I needed to have a call, the support of my wife, and the support of my congregation to become a priest. With the support of Mary and my congregation, I started studying theology at St Francis College in 2019.

The desert is a significant place where people can meet God. Even before Jesus, holy people used to withdraw themselves from their families and live in deserts to meet with God. I encountered God for the first time when I travelled the deserts and slept in deserts as a child – the desert is where my intimacy with him, before I became Christian, began.

I love being a Christian.

Editor's note: The Rev'd Canon Sarah Plowman, Diocesan Director Ordinands and Vocations, will be leading a pilgrimage walk for those wishing to discern a call to ordained ministry on Wednesday 11 August from 9 am to 4 pm. For more information or to register, visit the [walkLIFE Vocations Pilgrimage registration page](#). If you have questions about the pilgrimage, please contact The Rev'd Canon Sarah Plowman via Sarah.Plowman@anglicanchurchsq.org.au. Church and ministries can visit the Vocations page of the [ACSQ website for Vocations Month resources](#).

Features • Monday 26 July 2021 • By Beverley Perry

Mothers Union: so much more than cups of tea



Mothers Union: Listening, Observing, Acting (MULOA) workshop at the 2018 Auckland conference, with Beverley Perry bottom right (image courtesy of Mia Mia)

With the re-opening of a branch of Mothers Union at St John's Cathedral we have become aware some parishioners are unsure of who we are and what we do. The Archbishop of Canterbury Justin Welby declared, "There is only one Mothers' Union. It is the world's oldest and largest women's movement. It is a gift of God to Anglicans and is one of the Anglican Communion's greatest gifts to the worldwide church." However, a survey at General Synod concluded that Mothers Union is "the Anglican Church's best kept secret".

So, what is the story?

Mothers Union is a Christian organisation that has been supporting families since our founder Mary Sumner called a group of young mothers together in 1876 in her local parish to offer support and discuss the role of motherhood. Mothers Union has grown into an international movement with over 4 million members in 84 countries. In Australia, the movement has recently become known as Anglican Mothers Union Australia, or AMUA.

Prayer is at the heart of what Mothers Union does. Members commit to including prayer in their daily lives and to maintaining a worldwide fellowship with a focus on prayers for their communities, fellow members and for those in need. Members believe the power of prayer is transformational and supports their work around the world. Despite the name, Mothers Union is an inclusive organisation and very proud to have a growing number of men joining the ranks.

As a Christian movement, we work towards stopping poverty, inequality and injustice. We support families in all their forms to eliminate gender-based violence and abuse, to promote equality and build healthy relationships, and to support women in the key role they have in building communities and bringing peace and reconciliation. Members work alongside local communities at grassroots level around the world to bring hope and practical support to millions of people every year through parenting, literacy and community development programmes. By understanding the needs of individuals and communities, we are able to build effective policies which can have a real and lasting positive impact according to the specific needs of different communities across the world.

Mothers Union has consultative status with ECOSOC (The United Nations Economic and Social Council) which was established in 1946, in order to promote, report on and monitor issues relating to the political, economic, civil, social and educational rights of women. Each year, Mothers Union attends the Commission's two-week session in New York, where a delegation of members and staff work alongside other NGOs promoting the empowerment and equality of women, and influencing and advising Government delegations. Each year at UNCSW (UN Commission on the Status of Women) member states sign up to a set of agreed conclusions, which they will then implement with their own governments.

Mothers Union advocates and campaigns at local, national and international levels to see these changes become a reality. Members are passionate about issues of social justice, communicating with governments and decision makers, and collaborating with other charities and organisations to help bring a united voice for change.

Mothers Union has been active in the Brisbane Diocese since 1904 and currently there are 52 branches across the Diocese; each branch active within their own local community as well as supporting the work of Mothers Union locally and globally. Projects are many and varied but all with the aim of sharing Christ's love with others.

Some projects are carried out discreetly – panties supplied for victims of sexual assault whose underwear is retained by police for forensic testing. Packs of toiletries are provided in some hospitals to be given to patients admitted in an emergency. Some branches provide fiddle rugs and memory boxes to aged care centres in their locality, while other branches make rugs for the homeless or teddies for children in distress. Members attend the Court House to provide tea and biscuits to support families when the Family Court is in session. Children's activities, Mainly Music and Messy

Church receive strong support from members in some branches. In each case, these projects are tailored to the needs of the local community.

On a Diocesan level, Mothers Union supports the Women's Shelter, providing funding as required for children's equipment and playground, and supports Kids at Risk. 'Fresh start baskets' of household products are available for those leaving the shelter. Annually, three holidays are offered to families in need. Mothers Union helps in emergencies with funding available for relief for those affected by fire or floods or drought. Members campaign against violence, participating in 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence, and have campaigned for such issues as increased social housing, better conditions for aged and disadvantaged, and an end to modern slavery. Funds are provided to help support work in remote communities across Northern Australia.

Mothers Union awards three bursaries annually of \$1200 each to ordination candidates to cover cost of Clinical Pastoral Care unit of their studies, and a retiring collection supports Anglicare chaplaincy. Each and every day the clergy and ministry of the Diocese are upheld in prayer.

While there isn't room here to mention every project of Mothers Union, these examples demonstrate members are passionate about supporting families and caring for those in need. More details can be found on [the website](#).

God called Mary Sumner to work for the renewal of family life. When she gathered together a group of young mothers in 1876, she could not have envisaged how many lives would be touched by Mothers Union. Members today go forward in hope and confidence, encouraging and supporting families, ready to respond to new possibilities and new visions for the work of Mothers Union in our Diocese and around the world.

Vision: Our vision is of a world where God's love is shown through loving, respectful, and flourishing relationships.

Aim and Purpose: To demonstrate the Christian faith in action by the transformation of communities worldwide through the nurture of family in its many forms.

First published in the June 2021 edition of *The Eagle*, the magazine of St John's Cathedral (with image provided by *Mia Mia*). [Read the latest edition of *The Eagle* online.](#)

Q&A with Anglicare Cultural Support Worker and Ngandawal Minjungbal man, Ben Travers



"On Bundjalung Country with my daughter and partner before the NAIDOC March 2019 in Tweed" (Ben Travers)

Ben Travers has worked for Anglicare Southern Queensland for the last 11 months in the role of Cultural Support Worker. He is a proud Ngandawal Minjungbal man from Bundjalung Country.

Where do you currently live and what is your Country?

I grew up in the Tweed area in which I call home on Bundjalung Country, and moved to the Gold Coast where I currently live on Yugambah Country for easier access to work and employment.

How long have you been involved in the Anglican Church Southern Queensland and in what role?

I have been with Anglicare for about 11 months in the role of Cultural Support Worker, based in Underwood, where I work with the Children and Families Team providing cultural support for our young people in residential houses.

What is your current ACSQ role and how does this role contribute to the Church's mission?

My current role as Cultural Support Worker helps provide our young people with connection to culture and strengthening their identity within themselves. This contributes to the Church's mission by celebrating our young people's diversity and promoting inclusiveness of their cultures.

Why is it important for First Nations children in out-of-home care to be connected to their culture?

Our young people in out-of-home care have already lost so much and being connected to culture is a way for them to find some connection to their identity. It also helps in them finding their 'sense of belonging' and 'sense of self' in who they are as a person.

What does Reconciliation mean to you?

To me Reconciliation means working towards equality, equity and justice. It means working towards being able to work and live side by side as equals.

Why is it important for Christians to engage in Reconciliation?

Given our history and the Church's involvement in past atrocities with the removal of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children from families, community and Country, I believe that it is very important for the Church to be actively working towards reconciling with First Nation communities to break down the walls and stigma that surrounds the Church for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples so that healing can happen.

This year's Diocesan theme is 'Being Together: Nurturing Relationships'. What are some practical ways that we can communicate with each other when we are not in conflict and build trust so we have strong foundations when inevitable differences arise?

One of the most practical ways that we use is through yarning circles. We utilise yarning circles within our space to talk to each with respect and without judgment. It's a space where people have a chance to talk and be heard.

What projects and activities are you currently working on?

We are currently in the process of developing ongoing programmes for our young people in the houses. The programmes are based on connecting the young people to culture through art, storytelling, yarning and connecting with the land by learning how to look after it.



Anglicare SQ's Ben Travers (Ngandawal Minjungbal man) and Lania Tusa (Kuku Yalanji woman) play a critical role in ensuring that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children who are in out-of-home care keep connected to their family, kin, community and culture

What has been one of the highlights of your time as a Cultural Support Worker so far?

My highlight occurred during our [NAIDOC Week](#) celebrations this year.

We organised a day with activities run by [Deadly Choices](#) and had a BBQ lunch and finished off with some Dreaming stories and a yarning circle to finish off the day.

It was during the yarning circle, as we asked everyone about a highlight of their day and something they were grateful for, that one of the young people who are separated from siblings in another house said that they were grateful for being able to spend time with their siblings for the day.

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

Key challenges so far have been working out how to engage effectively with the young people. We have gotten around this by building our relationships and rapport with the young people and a lot of the young people are now engaging with us.

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

The kindest gesture that I have received recently that I can remember was a few weeks ago after my phone had died. I was consequently unable to transfer money into my account and a generous stranger offered to pay for my groceries.

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

I can't remember who gave me the advice, but it does stick in my head:

"The only person you need to make happy, and impress is yourself."

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

I go to the gym and play netball.

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

“Love to Live, Live to Love.” This has been a little motto that I have lived by.

Where do you do your best thinking?

The shower. Just a good place to do some thinking.

What’s your best childhood memory?

Playing footy every weekend.

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

I put my headphones in and go for a walk.

What makes you nostalgic and why?

Music. Certain songs just remind me of certain places and growing up. Whenever I hear ‘Khe Sanh’, or almost anything by Cold Chisel, I think of my junior league club at South Tweed as we would spend stay there after training for karaoke on Thursdays and it was a bit of a crowd favourite.

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

The day I proposed to my partner. It was just an amazing day in an amazing place: Uluru, where I proposed at the Field of Light.

Young Bundy busy bees build hotels for our native pollinators



Year 4 St Luke's Anglican College students with their hand-made bee hotels, with (back row) Amelie and Samantha and (front row) Parker, Jared and Joanna

Year 4 St Luke's Anglican College students and staff continue to be inspired by Year 4 teacher Mr Bigg (AKA, 'Beekeeper Barry') who has a love for Australian native stingless bees and is an avid beekeeper. Mr 'Beekeeper Barry' Bigg worked with the school to purchase some native bees to study and keep within the Primary School. The flow-on effect of this initiative has been significant for Year 4 students, who share their interesting and surprising insights and learnings in this special joint feature, along with teacher and Parish of Bundaberg parishioner Mrs Russo.

Hayley Russo – Year 4 teacher, St Luke's Anglican School

The bee unit is an integrated curriculum unit that encompasses elements of science, design and digital technologies. After studying bees and their life cycles in detail, the students are challenged to use an engineering design process to solve a particular environmental problem – in this case the destruction of bee habitats by humans.

Our students then follow a five-step process that challenges them to ask, imagine, plan, create and then improve their particular solution to this problem. The solution our students work through is the planning and construction of a solitary bee hotel.

Solitary bees play a vital role in pollinating our native flora, and they are vital in the pollination of our local agricultural crops here in Bundaberg. Students then make a prototype at home with the help of their families and bring it in to discuss with their peers.

Amelie – Year 4 student, St Luke’s Anglican School

The most interesting thing I have learnt about bees is that the worker bees push the drone bees out of the hive when they aren’t needed anymore. The drone bees die soon after they fall out of the hive. The second most interesting thing is that the Queen bee only eats royal jelly and the drone bees can’t feed themselves.

I loved all of the bee activities, but I think the bee hotel was my favourite. It was really fun! Making it was a bit challenging but when I finished, I was proud and I loved it. My bee hotel’s base is made out of a soda bottle. I put pen lids inside as a replacement for the hexagonal cells. I painted the outside of the bottle brown with flowers so the bees feel more at home. In the end I also added sponge and bamboo to the bottle. The bamboo was used because I didn’t have enough pen lids. The sponge was so the bees didn’t get stuck at the end of the bottle.

Bees are important because while they go about making honey, they also accidentally make flowers grow. It all happens when bees land on flowers – they collect pollen within the flower, then when the bees take off again and land on another flower they accidentally smear some of the previous flower’s pollen onto that flower.

I recommend that other schools bring native bee hives into their schools so that they get to learn a lot more about how bees live, and eventually the bee population will get bigger and bigger. As a bonus you can learn a lot more about bees.

Jared – Year 4 student, St Luke’s Anglican School

The most entertaining thing I’ve learnt is that bees cannot see red! One of the primary colours cannot be seen by bees! Another interesting fact is that when no more young are needed, the worker bees kick the drones out of the hive and leave them to die. Bees are probably the most interesting animals I’ve ever learnt about!

My favourite bee activity so far is building our bee hotels. Sure, it takes up some of your time, but you get to learn more about bees when you’re studying what they like best! You also get to help bees stay alive because your hives help keep them safe and reduce the loss of bees. Bees keep us alive, so we keep them alive.

Bees are important in life because without them, humankind and all animals would die in three years! A bee’s main job is to pollinate all the flowers. As they gather pollen food for the colony they mess it everywhere and it helps the flowers grow. If they help us, we should do something for them, too!

Other schools should implement a bee program so that we can see what the differences are between each other’s work! We can see how we can improve on our creations, share ideas with each other and chat about how we did it at home! Bonding with others can improve your build because they can give you awesome information.

Juno – Year 4 student, St Luke’s Anglican School

I find it interesting how there are around 20,000 different types of bees whereas only a certain amount are honey bees. I am also interested in bees’ roles in the hive. They need to be done right to keep the hive healthy and sustainable.

My favourite school bee activity was the creation of the bee hotel. It was fun because I got to practise my creativity skills and the process of the creation was a little hard, but the product was still quite nice.

Bees are important as they play a big role in ecosystems. They pollinate flowers, which is really important. Without them we would lose some of our precious plants and a significant amount of our fruits, vegetables and nuts. Pollinating is a hard job so we should respect bees and keep them alive.

I highly recommend that other schools should learn about, and participate in, saving the bees. Building a bee hive is one of the many ways to keep bees alive. Not only do you help save the bees but you also learn that bees are fascinating features. If you think you know all about bees there's still more facts out there.

Parker – Year 4 student, St Luke's Anglican School

The most interesting thing that I learnt is that food production relies heavily on bees. I also enjoyed learning about the bee life cycle and what the duties are of the Queen, drone and worker bees.

My favorite activity was planning and creating the bee hotel. I really enjoyed the process where I got to spend time with my mum and dad at home helping to build my bee hive. We used a design planning sheet where we had to draw a blueprint for the bee hotels, and then go home and build it.

Bees are important because most of our groceries stores rely on bees and without the bees our grocery markets will pretty much be empty. Which means that there won't be enough food to feed all of the families.

I think it is a good idea for other schools to study bees so we can all make bee hotels to help the environment to help the survival of bees.

Samantha – Year 4 student, St Luke's Anglican School

The most interesting and surprising thing I have learnt about bees this term is that after the Summer when no more babies are needed in the hive, worker bees (who really live up to their name by completing the gazillion jobs within the hive) push the drone bees out of the hive where they eventually die and turn into hummus.

I really enjoyed all of the bee activities that we completed, but my favourite would have to be the Bee Bandits activity. It was a really fun math activity where we had to figure out who abducted our beautiful bees. We had to decode a series of math clues that put our math knowledge to the test! We finally discovered who the big, bad and bold culprits were; they turned out to be the Hangry Hobgoblins.

Bees are important because, although not purposely, they are pollinators. Pollination is the process of bees accidentally spreading pollen from flower to flower and plant to plant, which helps to fertilise and grow our crops. Did you know that if bees were to become extinct, humankind would have less than four years left to live? These tiny critters may be small, but they play an enormous role in our world.

I would really recommend other schools studying bees and bee hotels because it genuinely teaches you to think outside the box. It also forces you to work with the materials that you already have, even

though sometimes it's not exactly what you want. It teaches you to be more flexible and resilient. Native bee hotels are a great way to learn about bees, a way that differs from others and a way that might perhaps be more fun!

Caitlyn – Year 4 student, St Luke's Anglican School

What I find interesting about bees is that there is one drone for every worker and they help produce one third of our food.

I enjoyed doing the bee hotel because it makes us feel like we are helping the bees survive so there can be a world to live in, which is good for everyone and everything.

Bees are very important because they pollinate plants, which feed animals. Without bees, animals would start dying and then lead to us dying.

I recommend that other schools make bees hives so that they can understand how bees are helping the world stay alive.



Year 4 St Luke's Anglican School students engaged in a number of bee-related activities this year, including (left to right) Hudson, Georgie, Sage, Ashton, Thomas and Amelie

The Order of Saint John of Jerusalem Knights Hospitaller



Investiture in the Albert Street Uniting Church on 11 June 2021 when 12 new members were admitted to the Order. Central figure is the Grand Prior of Australasia, Bailiff Adjunct Professor Victor Feros OAM GCSJ (Image by Philip Andrews)

The voice on the phone was that of Bishop Adrian Charles: "The Order of Saint John of Jerusalem needs music for some of their worship services. I wonder if you and your choir could help?"

I knew little of the Knights of [The Order of Saint John of Jerusalem Knights Hospitaller](#) in the mid-90s. I discovered that Bishop Adrian was the Prelate of the Order, that is, the chief cleric in Australia. I was the Director of Music at Holy Trinity Church, Fortitude Valley, with a choir whose members were willing to take music ministry beyond their choir stalls. So we did help, and after doing this for a few years I was honoured by being made a Serving Brother of the Order, and two years later (in 2002) being created a Knight of Honour. The rank of Honour is the basic rank from which one can advance in recognition of service given.

The full title gives a description of who we are – **Knights** and **Dames**: we are recognised world-wide as Heraldic and Chivalric; **St John**: our Patron Saint is St John the Baptist, also known as John of Jerusalem; and, **Hospitallers**: the Crusader Knights built the first hospital in Jerusalem in the 12th Century and many more at later times and other places. Our motto is *Pro Fide Pro Utilitate Hominum*, which means 'For Faith and for Service to Humankind'. Our emblem is the Amalfi Cross, also known as the Maltese Cross, the eight points of which symbolise the Beatitudes. We take vows at investiture based on the Benedictine Rule. We are about 300 strong in Australia, ecumenical and adhere to the aims of those original Crusaders to minister to "Our lords the sick and our lords the poor".

When, eventually, the Turks drove the Knights out of Jerusalem, they moved to Rhodes, then to Cyprus, and finally, in the 16th Century, to Malta. By far the greatest event in their long history was their defense of Malta against a siege by Suleiman the Magnificent in 1565. With 700 Knights of St John and 8,000 soldiers they repelled Suleiman's army of 40,000. The Knights remained in Malta for another three centuries. Most of the fine architecture, including hospitals and churches, in Malta today was built during that time.

The Order remained as one unit, consisting of *Langues* (national groups) relating to the countries from which the knights came, until Napoleon drove them out in 1798. Then some went to Italy and remained under the Pope. The Branch I belong to went to Russia under the protection of the Czars, and after 1917 moved to the Czar's cousin, King Peter II of Yugoslavia.

The English *Langue* eventually regrouped under Queen Victoria and is responsible for the well-known ambulance and life-saving services. The official branches of the Hospitaller Order around the world have their continuity guaranteed under a Constitution given by King Peter II in 1964.

We are an ecumenical Order, enjoying the company of mainly Anglican, Roman Catholic, Uniting Church and Lutheran members. The Order came to Australia in 1969, with the first investiture of new Members in 1974 in St Thomas Aquinas Catholic Church, St Lucia. There is a strong Anglican presence locally. The Prelate is The Rev'd Canon Emeritus Bruce Maughan OAM. A number of lay and ordained people in our Diocesan community are members, including Bishops John Bayton, Bill Ray, John Parkes and Jeremy Greaves, as well as some lay people, parish priests and senior clergy from other denominations.

Admission to the Order is by invitation only. In South East Queensland, the Queensland and Sunshine Coast Priories welcome new members in annual investitures in St John's Anglican Cathedral, St Stephen's Catholic Cathedral and the Albert Street Uniting Church in rotation. The Darling Downs Priory hold their own investiture independently, often in the Catholic Cathedral in Toowoomba or in the major Lutheran Church. Prospective candidates must have demonstrated service of benefit to the community and a potential to assist with the charitable work of the Order. They should also, of course, subscribe to Christianity through their respective Churches.



In Zephyr's office/store room (L-R) are Brisbane Commander, Dame Leanne O'Shea; Prior Charles Clark; and, Mrs Carmel Martin, Co-Manager of Zephyr Inc. which supports children impacted by family and domestic violence. Zephyr will be the charity supported by the Queensland Priory for at least the 2021 to 2023 period

The Charitable Fund is acquired through formal dinners, soirees, raffles and other community functions, sponsorships, and direct donations from members. From this, donations are made to charities, the whole being administered by the registered Company of the Order of St John. Mostly we, as an organisation, do not have direct contact with 'the sick and the poor' whom we say we support. We are one line behind the charity organisations that do that. But there are some examples of 'working at the coal-face', such as the Western Australian Priory preparing and handing out 'street bags' to people sleeping on Perth's streets; volunteers from the Brisbane Commandery working in the Holy Trinity Parish Pantry in Fortitude Valley; the Darling Downs Priory working with the Rural Fire Brigade to provide a \$20,000 water tanker; and, the Sunshine Coast Priory providing a car to transport renal patients to hospital.

There is a growing desire to work at the frontlines so that we will have more direct contact with vulnerable people on the margins. In this way we will relate more closely to the 'Vision for the Anglican Church Southern Queensland' announced by the Archbishop recently.

We are a Christian organisation. Together with the Churches and other Christian organisations we must continue to discern our way through the COVID-19 environment and be equipped for effective ministry.

How's the serenity?



The Pointro site is an affordable and peaceful retreat or pilgrimage place for groups or individuals – pray, reflect, walk and then rinse and repeat. Rod and Erica take a moment to chill and reflect in the open-air chapel

There once were three staff members from Milton
Who drove to Pointro Campsite in a Tucson
The three had a ball
The below pics say it all
They reckon it's even better than the Brissie Hilton

Ok, so it may not be worthy of a five-star hotel rating, but our Pointro Campsite offers affordable accommodation, spectacular views, lots of water activity options, hot showers, a friendly onsite manager...and "so much serenity".

Rod Mengel – Property, Finance and Administration Officer, Ministry Education Commission

I have been to our Diocese's Pointro Campsite half a dozen times in the last 18 months. My favourite aspect of the campsite is the peacefulness, as well as seeing how the site has developed between visits. One of my favourite spots is the open-air chapel. You can see the water from different directions from the pews. It is such a peaceful spot to sit and contemplate, to pray or to worship with others.

Because of the peacefulness, the campsite is the perfect place for parishes and ministries to enjoy fellowship time or go on retreat or pilgrimage.

The campsite and bunkhouse facilities are affordable, with camping from \$13 per night per person and the bunkhouse from \$20 per night per person. There are eight campsites in all, with the bunkhouse fitting 20 people during COVID-19 restriction periods and 36 people at other times.

Feedback from people who stay is always positive, as the site is lovely and Bill, the onsite manager is welcoming and has a great sense of humour. A Northern Region parish men's group, which books the bunkhouse annually, sent an email following their last stay, saying:

"We had a great time at Pointro on the weekend. Good Christian fellowship and learning. Finished with a chapel service."

Erica Skerman – Director, Anglican Youth Children and Families

There is something magical about silence when you encounter it surrounded by natural beauty. Maybe it's because I live in the heart of Brisbane, where general noise is your constant companion and it is only when you go out beyond the big highways and suburbs that you are reminded of just how loud and busy your life can be.

This was the thing that struck me the most about Pointro, to finally visit this site I've heard about and to encounter beautiful views and a stillness and silence that came along with it. It filled my soul and gave me new energy after just a day spent out there with Rod, Bill (the site manager) and Michelle.

It is my hope that working together and looking forward, that this place can become a well-known name among us here in Southern Queensland: that Pointro is one of our first choices to come to mind when asking where to spend a weekend away on a retreat for young adults or where we could run a youth group camp. It has all the infrastructure to become such a place, and is ready for groups to come and camp, head out on the water within the hills, spend time around the campfire, and to be reminded of God's presence in our lives at the outdoor chapel.

Pointro is a great position to become a beloved place for young and old alike – a place to encounter our God in the stillness and silence within nature.

Michelle McDonald – *anglican focus* Editor and mum

My highlight of our recent day trip was the lovely drive we enjoyed on the way back from our hearty lunch in Boonah. We stopped at an iconic farm road-side stall where I collected some just-picked produce for a vegetable soup. During this drive, I also chased after cows on the road to get an Out & About monthly album pic – given their head-turning stares, I think the cows and the quad-bike-riding farmer found me as quirky as I found them. We then stopped to explore a gorgeous swimming hole (sandwiched between rock faces) and its stunning waterfall, which are just around the corner from the campsite. The fresh air and stillness of the local area were really calming and centring.

Now that I know about this campsite and the beautiful surrounding area, I plan to visit with my son and a few friends for a camping trip soon. I noticed that there are eight well-spaced-out camping spots to choose from, all of which are clearly marked with names like 'Upper Lake View' (posher than 'Lake View'), 'Lake View' (posher than 'Dunny View'), 'Shady Camp' (under a lovely tree) and 'The Penthouse' (highest on the hill).

I like the fact that there is plenty of hot water for showers, running toilets, firepits, safe places to fish (with a stocked dam) and catch red claw, and lots of water activity options. From a mum's perspective, our Pointro Campsite is the perfect place to get away with family or friends – there is lots to do (or not do, depending on your mood) with all the amenities you need and an onsite manager a phone call away if needed.

Editor's note: For bunkhouse bookings, please email pointro@anglicanchurchsq.org.au. For campsite bookings, please call the campsite manager Bill on 0491 446 271.

Editor's note 23/07/2021: Two additional images added to showcase the serenity.

Features • Friday 23 July 2021 • By Deanna Misso

The Transfiguration of Our Lord



This painting is a mural behind the High Altar in the Chapel of the Transfiguration at the College in Colombo, Sri Lanka where my husband Karol was educated and where we have worshipped from time to time. With his choice of subdued colours, the artist, David Paynter intentionally seeks to convey this deeply spiritual experience in the life of Jesus. The painting speaks to me of the awesome otherness of God. I glimpse what the Gospel writers struggled to put into words. Here I see the God whose glory shines even through clouds of doubt and despair. When gazing at the mural, I am reminded that while the disciples were bewildered and puzzled, they were given a foretaste of God's purpose for them and their mission in the world.

A Prayer Book for Australia (APBA) observes the Transfiguration as a Feast on 6 August while also providing for its observance as an alternative on the Last Sunday of Epiphany or on the Second Sunday of Lent.

In all three Gospels, the Transfiguration narrative follows Peter's Confession at Caesarea Philippi ([Mark 8.27](#)) and Biblical scholars see it as a turning point in the Gospel narratives: Jesus has made up his mind that Messiahship involved suffering and death.

In [Mark 9.2-10](#), we read the amazing story of how Peter, James and John accompany Jesus to a 'high mountain'. What happened there is cloaked in mystery. Before the earliest Gospel assumed its present shape, the early Church had surrounded the story with mystery and illusion. We can only try to understand the symbolism of what the disciples saw and experienced.

We know that it was a regular practice of Jesus to go apart by himself to pray ([Mark 1.35](#)). Knowing that his death was imminent, he did what he had done throughout his life: sought to commune with the Father. Without claiming too great a certainty about our Lord's inner life, Jesus as he was praying, underwent a profound spiritual experience in which the disciples were able to enter, alas for a brief time.

The disciples saw him bathed in light, conversing with Moses and Elijah as representatives of the Law and the Prophets. They watched through the haze of sleep-filled eyes as clouds overshadowed the scene and heard a voice saying, "This is my Son, my Chosen, listen to Him"! ([Luke 9.35](#)). The three disciples now fully awake were aware that they had been privileged with a vision of our Lord's glory and presence, and Jesus had the assurance that three of his followers had a glimpse of who he was. However, from this mountain top mystical experience they had to follow him down into the real world.

Like Peter and the other disciples, we, too, are often tempted to linger, to be "lost in love and praise" (*Together in Song*, # 234) but like them we are called to ministry with head, heart, and hands to "go in peace to love and serve the Lord" (*APBA*, The Eucharist)

Several years ago when I worked among Vietnamese people seeking asylum in Hong Kong detention camps, I was faced with some of the most challenging situations in my life. Where proselytisation was banned, I had to strive to show God's love and care for each person in their particular situation. How was I to convince them that the Creator's will for all was life in all its fullness – in the concrete sheds that gave them shelter – and freedom – behind the six-foot high barbed wire fences that kept them imprisoned?

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, who largely overlooked the camps, arranged for us staff to travel to the mountains of the New Territories annually for a 'coming apart' in the quiet beauty of the hills. Here, we were refreshed and renewed, strengthened and transformed to return to face the bitter anger that often erupted among the unhappy, frustrated people who longed for a better life. I learned how actions and behaviour had to be my 'words' in order to show them how to tap into inner strength and find courage to make difficult choices, to look towards a future with hope and resilience:

"How good, Lord to be here!
Yet we may not remain;
but since you bid us leave the mount
come with us to the plain."

(*Together in Song*, # 234)

Young Anglicans to expose gender-based violence with 16-Days video campaign



(Canva stock image)

The Anglican Communion has launched a social media video campaign to mark this year's 30th anniversary of the annual international 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence campaign.

Young Anglicans from around the world are being invited to take part in the campaign by submitting a video which the Anglican Communion Office can release during the 16 Days, which runs from 25 November to 10 December. Entries for the campaign – “Exposure – Focusing the lens on gender-based violence” can be submitted until 31 October.

The Anglican Communion's Project Director for Gender Justice, Mandy Marshall, said: “sadly gender based violence is still with us 30 years after the campaign started, yet there is amazing work going on around the Communion to address it.

“We need to hear the voices and views of young Anglicans to challenge us into prioritising ending GBV in our churches.”

Young Anglicans – defined for this campaign as Anglicans aged 35 or under – are invited to submit videos of up to two-minutes duration by email or WhatsApp. The selected videos will be published by the Anglican Communion Office during the 16 Days of Activism. Full details of the campaign, and information about how to submit videos, are available at anglicancommunion.org/exposure.

First published on the [Anglican Communion News Service website](https://www.anglicancommunion.org/news) on 22 July 2021.

Joint Churches Domestic Violence Prevention Project: updated resource



(Canva stock image)

The [Joint Churches Domestic Violence Prevention Project](#) (JCDVPP) was established all the way back in 1991 with the specific aims of both informing and resourcing Churches on the serious social issue of Domestic and Family Violence (DFV) in its various forms.

My introduction to this dynamic and passionate group was in 2016, two years after my very acrimonious separation from my emotionally and financially abusive first husband. I was desperately trying to get through and over the aftermath of our failed traditional Christian marriage. I had moved parishes to escape all connection and knowledge fellow congregants had of my past. My new female parish priest was offering some one-to-one sessions and I very reluctantly decided to put my name down for one of these, having already sought some professional help; read a multitude of books and publications on this subject; and, listened to many well-meaning, but inadequately thought-out sermons on this complex subject matter.

During one of our subsequent one-to-one sessions she informed me that a previous mentor and friend of hers, The Rev'd Canon Richard Tutin, was in the process of revitalising a Commission of Queensland Churches Together (QCT) to review and help Churches to mitigate this most alarming and rising social issue. She gently suggested that I meet with him to discuss how my possible involvement with this re-emerging group could help to provide both healing and the prospect of future healthy relationships.

Little did I realise what that first meeting would mean for me and what a positive and powerful example of how the appropriate assistance I received from my Church would be to others. The effects

of DFV are often devastating to not only every member of the household directly involved but also to their extended family, friends and the wider community.

The Church is in a unique position of being able to offer practical, emotional and spiritual help to all who are impacted by DFV, from initial contact right through to the ongoing emotional and spiritual support often required long term by victims and reforming perpetrators, when the need for more specialised and emergency assistance has either passed or run its course.

The recently released findings from the [National Anglican Family Violence Project research](#) on DFV provides solid evidence of what we at JCDVPP have always known anecdotally: that DFV doesn't discriminate nor does involvement or identification as a Christian offer any protection from it. It is sadly all around us.

We are so pleased to announce that The JCDVPP has just released a newly revised and updated copy of their popular DFV and Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) booklet titled, *The Good, The Bad and The Ugly – Questions Women ask about Relationships and Christian Beliefs*. We have purposefully focused on updating the following: terminology and forms of DFV; significance of attempted strangulation; importance of a safety plan for the victim and children; and, emerging focus on coercive control.

It is specifically designed to assist victims and their families, clergy, pastoral carers and interested others through identification and emphasis on the importance of seeking professional and specialist assistance in order to help victims make sense of what is happening to them and make informed decisions about the kind of future they want for themselves and their children.

To purchase copies of this newly revised and updated edition of this vital booklet *The Good, The Bad and The Ugly – Questions Women ask about Relationships and Christian Beliefs*, please contact the Queensland Churches Together office by calling (07) 3369 6792 or emailing admin@qct.org.au.

Note from The Rev'd Gillian Moses, Chair of the ACSQ Domestic and Family Violence Working Group: The Anglican Church Southern Queensland (ACSQ) is committed to promoting and supporting a safe environment for all. Domestic and family violence is unacceptable. We offer pastoral care to victims of domestic and family abuse. The ACSQ is part of the Queensland Churches Together [Joint Churches Domestic Violence Prevention Project \(JCDVPP\)](#), which publishes resources for clergy and lay people.

If you are in immediate danger, call 000 for police or ambulance help. For a list of helplines and websites available to women, children and men, visit this page on the [Queensland Government website](#).

Anglican Aid Abroad: witnessing the love of Jesus for 50 years



Anglican Aid Abroad assisted two postulants of the Community of the Sacred Name in Tonga to buy sewing machines and attend sewing classes so the postulants can make their own habits and teach local women to sew

“Then he told them, ‘Go and preach the good news to everyone in the world.’” (Mark 16.15)

About 50 years ago, a young priest in the then Parish of Gin Gin, near Bundaberg, took these words to heart and thus began Anglican Aid Abroad (AAA). Fr Neville Nixon knew that he could not personally go to everyone in the world, but he could enable others in that task by financially supporting small religious orders to preach God’s word and show his love to those in their community. AAA grew from this vision and today supports around 60 partners in 25 countries in Africa, Asia and the Pacific.

Anglicans, mostly in Queensland, have given unstintingly to support small groups of Sisters and Brothers to educate themselves, start schools, care for orphans, provide healthcare and show leadership in food production. Br Daniel Mathews of the Society of St Francis remembers the joy of receiving some of the first funds for medical work and education in Papua New Guinea. In 2008, my spiritual life was radically and indelibly changed by a 14-week visit to the Sisters of St Mary in Tanzania on behalf of Anglican Aid Abroad. There I witnessed the profound faith and love of Jesus shown in schools, health clinics, support for the vulnerable, care for people who were maimed and outcast, and through the teaching of sewing and agriculture to improve livelihoods. With the support of AAA, these Sisters, and others like them, indeed preach the Good News in word and deed every day.

During the events of the past 18 months, AAA has been able to respond almost immediately to the food and medical needs of whole parishes, especially in India. As people lost jobs, and came to their local church for help, AAA responded with money to buy rice, lentils and vegetables. During the worst of the pandemic in India, we had a plea for prayer from unwell pastors and parishioners who could

either not get to hospital or who needed oxygen in hospital. AAA sent money immediately and a whole ward of the very ill received life-giving oxygen. This is a witness of the love of Jesus to people of different or no faith, as well as to Christians.

Although AAA has grown and changed over the years, it has remained true to the original concept, as it remains run by a dedicated band of [local Diocesan volunteers](#), including The Ven. Donald Campbell SSF as our Chair and The Revd' Daniel Jayaraj from All Saints', Chermside as our Treasurer, along with Archbishop Phillip Aspinall as our Patron. Because we have ongoing relationships with people on the ground, AAA can respond immediately to a crisis, and through the past generosity of God's people, a separate fund takes care of administration costs. Thus, all donated monies intended for our overseas partners are sent to them.

It is a privilege to be a part of God's kingdom work: to witness the joy on the faces of villagers who now have a well so that women do not need to trudge six kilometres every day for water from a muddy hole in South Sudan; to see the fields producing more food as a result of education for Christian leaders in Tanzania; to provide food and medicines for orphanages in South Africa; to assist self-sufficiency for pastors in Rwanda with the gift of a goat; to enable stateless Karen people to grow food in Thailand; to fund a small paediatric unit in a district hospital in Tanzania; to bring education and sight to people living in poverty through an eye clinic in Ghana; to enable HIV/AIDS and tuberculosis education in remote areas of Malawi; and, to give post-cyclone aid in the Pacific.

If you would like to learn more about such projects, receive a newsletter or arrange a visit to your Church, please contact Anglican Aid Abroad at contact@anglicanaidabroad.com.au or visit the [Anglican Aid Abroad website](#).

Features • Friday 16 July 2021• By The Ven. Tiffany Sparks

Collaboration as solidarity



The Ven. Tiffany Sparks (left) with best friend Sam and parents, The Rev'd Katherine Hammer and The Rev'd Jack Hammer

When I think about collaboration as solidarity, I often think back to the moment when I found out that I was pregnant with my wonderful son, Tom. I was 15 and what I thought my life would be, changed in an instant. I was left somewhat reeling at a time when teenage mums still experienced significant social stigma, in both secular and Christian circles. However, the solidarity of family members, friends and church people shielded and carried me, keeping me whole.

It makes sense in more ways than one that 'solidarity' originally stems from the French *solidaire*, meaning 'interdependent, complete, entire'.

I have been blessed with some incredible family and friends who believed in me. It was with their support that enabled me to finish my education, working in university theology and chaplaincy and then follow my call into ordained ministry. I was only able to complete two degrees and Honours as a young single mum because of their collaborating support.

In my experience, solidarity typically costs something, whether it be time, resources or how people may regard you. Solidarity can even cost you the solace of your comfort zone, as having the courage of your convictions to uphold the God-given dignity of others is often confronting.

Critically, the support of those who stood with me as a teenage mum reinforced my self-worth, empowering me to help others. Inspired by the solidarity of so many, in the early 2000s I started a mothers' group in St David's Anglican Church in Allora in Queensland's Southern Downs.

I have long regarded solidarity as a special and distinctive form of collaboration. This view was reinforced upon discovering that 'collaboration' stems from the Latin *collaborare*, which means 'work with'. By working with me, rather than against me, those who had my back during such a vulnerable time at such a vulnerable age, gave me strength and reminded me that I was not alone.

Ephesians 6.10-18 tells us to put on the armour of God – this being the belt of truth, the breastplate of righteousness, the shoes of peace, the shield of faith, the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit. Some scripture scholars say that the armour does not include a protective covering for the back because it is the function of fellow soldiers to collectively watch each other's backs. I like the idea that standing in solidarity with each other by having each other's backs complements this armour.

I also saw the incredible power of solidarity at work when I was the Rector of St Paul's Anglican Church in Ashgrove, Brisbane in the Repent4Lent movement, which I initiated in 2014. Every Lenten season for three years, people posted on social media images of themselves holding an "I'm sorry for..." sign.

The Rev'd Canon Dr (now Bishop) Murray Harvey posted an image of himself holding a sign with the salient and timely words, "I am sorry that I haven't done more to make refugees feel welcome."

A Facebook post that received considerable engagement was a message from the Dean of Bendigo (now Bishop) John Roundhill who wrote, "I am sorry that ~~the Church, we~~, I have let down the nurture and care of children. We should welcome the Royal Commission and its work."

Participating in this Facebook movement took incredible courage as fellow Christians' names, images, vulnerable thoughts and even political views were posted for the wider community to see, share and comment on. This was an especially brave act for church people who are often risk adverse and privacy conscious when it comes to sharing such personal thoughts online. It was encouraging to see their courage, vulnerability and openness respected in the comment threads.

It was also heartening and humbling to see dozens of other community leaders join with hundreds of parishioners in this movement, including Torres Strait Islander Aunty Dr Rose Elu (a National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Anglican Council member) who shared a message about climate and creation care; Torres Strait Islander The Rev'd Canon Victor Joseph (Principal of Wontulp Bi-Buya College in Cairns) who wrote about Reconciliation; Wakka Wakka man The Rev'd Canon Bruce Boase who expressed remorse for our nation's racism; Rockhampton-based Bishop Godfrey Fryer who wrote about the lack of support for farmers and graziers; and, Pennsylvania-based theologian Michael Hardin who repented for getting riled up about unimportant things.

In the first year alone, more than 10,000 people engaged with the solidarity movement's social media posts. I admit that I became addicted to monitoring Facebook Insights because I was so excited to see inspirational local and national people's posts being shared, even internationally.

These personal and ministry experiences have taught me that solidarity is about being together and supporting each other. It's about drawing upon one other's strengths and upholding one other's dignity.

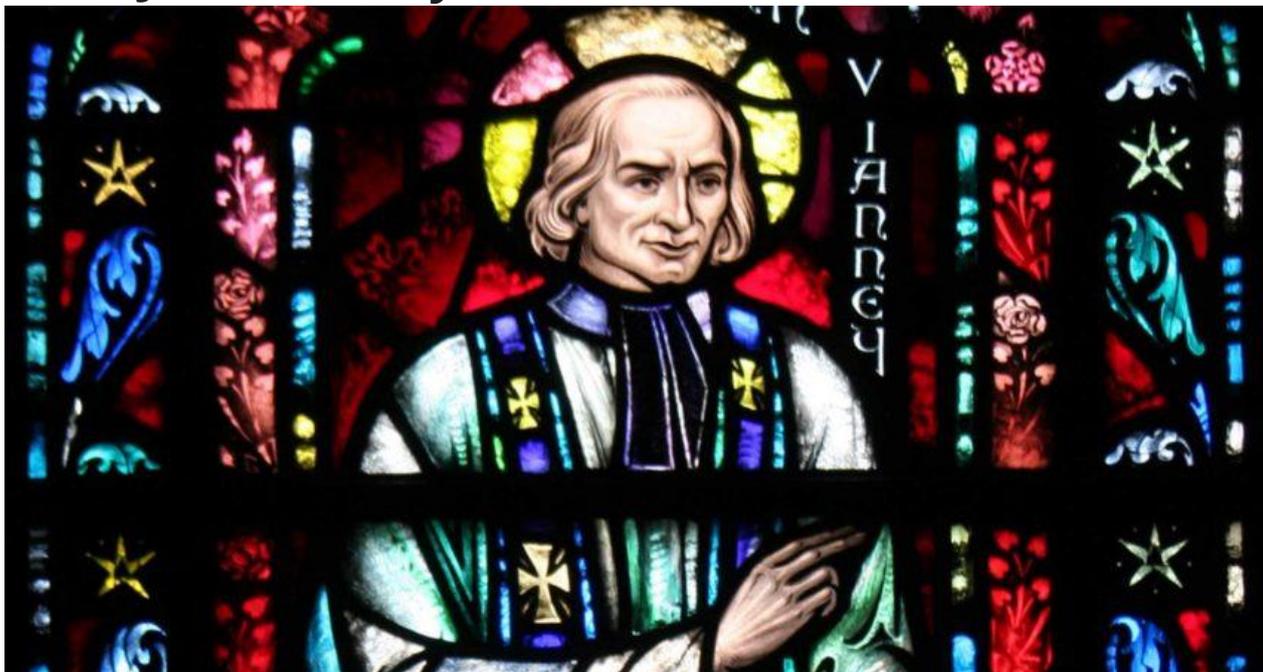
When the world gets hard and life loses its balance, solidarity makes a real difference in our lives, as it ensures the continuity of compassionate support.

Perhaps more than anything, our experiences of solidarity remind us that we are more than the sum of our parts and that by having each other's backs and working together, we are safer and stronger.

Written in May 2021 and first published in the [North Coast Anglican](#) in July 2021 (additional image added).

Features • Friday 23 July 2021 • By The Ven. Keith Dean-Jones OGS

Saint John Vianney: the Curé d'Ars



A stained glass window of St John Vianney in the Cathedral of St Paul, Minnesota (Image by Sharon Mollerus, Creative Commons Attribution 2.0,

[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:St._John_Vianney_\(896456693\).jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:St._John_Vianney_(896456693).jpg); image has been cropped)

Many French Christians are strongly attracted to holy men and women of humble birth. Two well-known French saints, Joan of Arc (1412-1431) and Vincent de Paul (1581-1660), were born into peasant families. The Italian saint Giovanni Bernardone (1181-1226), given the nickname 'Francesco' by his Francophile father Pietro, has always been popular with the French. St Francis of Assisi came from a wealthy family but after his conversion, he embraced the life of poverty.

The 19th century priest John-Baptiste-Marie Vianney (1786-1859) was born of poor parents, and his life of penitence, prayer and the practice of physical deprivation has continued to remind Christians that the Church is called to serve people living on the margins of society. Affectionately known as the Curé d'Ars (or the parish priest of Ars-sur-Formans), Abbé Vianney became famous throughout the Christian world, and his example has inspired people to recognise the presence of the holy man of Galilee present in the lives of people living in poverty. In the Roman Catholic Church, the Curé d'Ars is the patron saint of parish priests, and this great honour affirms that all clergy are challenged to re-discover the meaning of their vocation in humility and service.

St John Vianney was born at Dardilly, near Lyon, France. From childhood he sensed a vocation to the priesthood, but his inability to learn Latin delayed both his education and ordination. However, his piety and humility made a great impression on bishops and theological teachers, and in August 1815 the Bishop of Grenoble (acting on behalf of the Archbishop of Lyon) ordained him as priest.

He walked 94 kilometres from Lyon to Grenoble for his ordination and then another 116 kilometres to the Parish of Ecully, the place of his curacy. Ecully was an important time in his spiritual and pastoral formation, and the parish priest, Abbé Balley, received him as a friend. Abbé Balley recognised his extraordinary qualities and encouraged Vianney in the practices of prayer, teaching, preaching and pastoral care. After three years, he was appointed as the parish priest of the village of Ars, a remote village 29 kilometres to the north of Ecully where he remained until his death.

The world knows John Vianney as the 'Curé d'Ars'. He lived his entire life in a small corner of France and he never saw the sea or visited Paris. But his life was exemplary, and thousands of people visited Ars to see the holy man, to make confession of sin and to seek his counsel. It is estimated that in 1855 some 20,000 people visited Ars, and Abbé Vianney was required to spend 16 to 18 hours a day in the confessional. He was canonised in 1925 and appointed the patron saint of parish priests in 1929.

The Curé d'Ars was born into a world of change. Three years after his birth the French Revolution commenced with the storming of the Bastille. When John Vianney was 13 years of age, General Napoléon Bonaparte seized power with the intention of bringing stability and 'glory' to the French State. John Vianney had been conscripted into the army, but circumstances prevented him from joining his regiment and he was considered a deserter.

The years following the restoration of the Bourbon monarchy were a time of political and social reaction, and the Church in France was conservative. But it was also a time when many sought renewal in faith, and Abbé Vianney was very much part of a movement that drew French Roman Catholics into a new enthusiasm for prayer, penitence, mission and social justice. Twentieth century French Christian leaders Charles de Foucauld, priest and hermit assassinated in the Algerian Sahara in 1916, and Paul Couturier, priest, ecumenist and founder of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, were both inspired by Abbé Vianney.

Despite his difficulty with Latin, Abbé Vianney was not unintelligent. He was wise and hard-working, and living on a diet of little more than potatoes, as he devoted himself to the care of his people. Abbé

Vianney was inspired by the life of Christ, and his daily routine was marked with the three great themes of the Gospels: works of compassion, words of teaching and the practice of intense prayer. Many travelled to Ars to see him. For some, it was a matter of curiosity and for others it was to seek his counsel. For most it was to be near the holy man who would draw them closer to Jesus Christ.

It seems that Abbé Vianney shunned popularity. He was devoted to the almost forgotten cult of Saint Philomena. In 1802, bones were discovered in the Catacomb of St Priscilla, Rome. Three tiles sealed the tomb and the letters engraved on the tiles, when rearranged, formed the phrase 'PAX TECUM FILUMENA'. It was supposed that they were the relics of a second century virgin and martyr 'Saint Philomena'. Abbé Vianney was acutely aware that many visitors directed their devotion to him, and thus Saint Philomena provided an 'escape' from the cult of personality directed toward him. He saw himself as a simple priest who cared for his people.

Abbé Vianney was a traditional Roman Catholic, and his daily life was formed by Mass, the Divine Office, prayer and meditation. But he not only worshipped Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament. As a Franciscan tertiary, he had a strong sense of the presence of the risen Lord in those living in poverty and on society's margins, and his great respect for people was an affirmation of the mystery of God present in creation.

Features • Friday 23 July 2021 • By The Rev'd John Martin

Exploring Fair Trade through the Word, reflection, action and prayer



The picture of mother, Claudia, and baby was taken in Pitumarca a small village near Cusco, Peru. Claudia is part of the group that hand knits adult beanies and mittens

In the 1940s, Edna Ruth Byler was a wife and mother living quietly in Akron, Pennsylvania, USA. A member of the local Mennonite Christian community, she was known for her warm hospitality, creative spirit and cinnamon rolls.

In 1946 Mennonite Christian Edna Byler's life changed. She and her husband visited Puerto Rico. She was struck by the poverty of the people of the La Plata Valley, and, having herself lived through the Depression, was impressed by their dignity and their desire to help themselves. She wondered how she could help.

Edna was also struck by the fine embroidery the women of La Plata created, while lacking a marketplace to sell them. Edna appreciated the quality and beauty of the work and thought that her fellow Americans might be impressed, too. She brought some home to sell to friends and neighbours.

Demand for the products grew. The Mennonite Central Committee, an aid and relief agency, had the vision to see that these products would provide sustainable living wage income opportunities for people in Majority World (developing) countries. They supported Edna and facilitated her overseas travel including to places like India and Jordan. Edna travelled widely in the US, selling the products and sharing the stories of how people in distant places were receiving a fair income. The first Fair Trade business, Ten Thousand Villages was launched and blossomed into a global Fair Trade movement.

Businesses with similar aims sprung up across the developed world resulting in the multibillion dollar Fair Trade movement we see today.

However, it all began with a Christian woman supported by her Church.

Over the years a collective of Fair Trade business formed the World Fair Trade Organisation (WFTO) with the 10 Principles of Fair Trade forming the guidelines by which we can determine the legitimacy of fair trade claims.

Many Christians recognise the link between the Gospel of Jesus Christ and a fair go for people living in Majority World countries. One means of expressing the justice dimension of the Gospel of Jesus Christ and lifting people from poverty to dignity is via Fair Trade.

20th Century theologian Karl Barth was reported as saying:

"Take your Bible and take your newspaper, and read both. But interpret newspapers from your Bible." (*Time Magazine*, 1 May 1966)

Picking up this thought, we can say "take the 10 Principles of Fair Trade and the Bible and interpret the 10 Principles from your Bible."

The [Fair Trade Association has developed a set of Bible studies](#) which relate to the 10 Principles of Fair Trade of the World Fair Trade Organisation. We address questions such as 'What does the Bible say about how workers should be treated and paid?' and 'What about child or slave labour in the supply chain of the products we use?'

The studies bring together the foundational document of all Churches, the Bible, and the 10 Principles of Fair Trade.

Like Edna's ground-breaking initial steps into Fair Trade, we believe these studies are the first time the WFTO 10 Principles of Fair Trade have been linked to the Bible in a systematic way.

[Have a look at the Bible studies](#) and see if you agree about our choice of Bible passages for each of the 10 Principles.

Edna Byler saw a need and an opportunity and, under the guidance of God, enabled the connecting of people in a way that continues to enrich and transform lives through Fair Trade.

Reflections • Friday 16 July 2021 • By The Rev'd Andrew Schmidt

Can we prove that God exists?

Over the years the question of proving the existence of God has come up in different contexts. At high school as a student, at university and as a religion teacher, 'Can we prove that God exists?' was a regularly occurring question.

In some ways these days, this is far less interesting to me than some of the other questions, partially because it does not speak to character. If I could prove the existence of God, have I told you anything interesting about God? Nothing that is nearly as interesting as 'God is loving'.

However, one of the reasons it can be an interesting question is that it allows you to explore people's ideas about 'proof' and 'God'. How much evidence is enough? What would you consider evidence? What is your picture of God? As I said, it can become an interesting question with some collaborative digging.

I do wonder what would change if, in the face of radical doubt, the answer to the question was yes?

I think in some ways it would be harmful for a few reasons.

My experience is that those who have done the least work in struggling with the bigger questions in life can also be the same people who seem the least inclined towards compassion. Being completely certain in one area of life can lead people to feeling completely certain in others, perhaps wrongly so, and in that sense of self-righteousness they lose the ability to walk a mile in the shoes of someone wrestling with complexities and difficulties.

I would rather walk alongside a person who had questions about God, but lived a loving life, than walk alongside a person who was completely certain about God, but lived a life ignorant of the transformative power of love.

UNLEASHED: Stories from All Saints', Booval



All Saints, Booval youth camp participants in the early 1960s

UNLEASHED is a collection of stories recalling the years between 1955 to 1965 in the working-class parish of All Saints', Booval, and the remarkable group of people called into full-time Christian service from the church during that era, including seven ordained priests and 11 missionaries.

The book opens with the recollections of Judith Ware and Margaret Douglass, the widows of The Rev'ds Colin Ware and Don Douglass, parish priests at All Saints' during that decade. These are followed by 15 stories from former parishioners recapturing those days and their life journeys since.

Archbishop Aspinall well summed up the book in his Foreword: "Colin Ware and Don Douglass's ministries set the course for many people in dedicating their lives to Christ and serving Christ's mission. The seeds of faith were sown on fertile ground and a rich harvest of willing workers in Christ's name was the result. They heard the call to dedicate their lives to Christ and have continued to do so over the decades since."

From the time I moved to Brisbane in the mid-1970s, I kept coming across people who traced their Christian beginnings and subsequent Christian ministry back to All Saints', Booval. There seemed to be a whole series of disconnected dots that were begging to be joined. When my wife Diana and I were visiting Heather Wood, who was recuperating in a rehabilitation facility after an accident, we learned more about the individuals and couples who, like Heather and her husband Tom, had been launched into Christian service from All Saints'. The dots began to be joined and so an idea began to develop:

“Perhaps we could contact these people and compile their stories.” When we discovered that All Saints’ was to celebrate their 125th Anniversary in May 2021, we took this as a signal to turn the idea into a reality.

During the COVID-19 lockdown in 2020, potential contributors were contacted and invited to write and submit their stories by December. This they did with very little coaxing, and when some others heard about the project, they too submitted their stories. The stories provide a penetrating glimpse into a vibrant community of faith, served by hard-working priests, encouraged by committed laypeople, grounded in Biblical teaching, inspired by visiting missionaries, sustained by earnest prayer, and bonded by loads of faith, hope and love.

The young people knew how to enjoy life, but their greatest joy and desire was to know and serve their Lord. A number offered for missionary service in northern Australia, Peru, Tanzania and Papua New Guinea and the stories reveal their struggles and achievements along the way. The seven priests who came from All Saints’ all served for some years in the Anglican Church Southern Queensland, but also between them served in the Rockhampton, North Queensland, Grafton, Armidale, Sydney, Melbourne and Willochra Dioceses.

Editing the book was a joint undertaking. I had already edited a collection of stories by Pakistani Church leaders launched into Christian ministry from St Andrew’s Church, Lahore where I was vicar in the 1980s. I learned valuable lessons from editing that book which was published in Pakistan in 2015. Heather Wood’s participation as co-editor was essential for the project to succeed. Heather has an incredible memory and a sharp eye for detail, and her knowledge of all the contributors and All Saints’, Booval 60 years ago was invaluable.

Belinda Pollard, a publication consultant from the Parish of North Pine, put the finishing touches on the book, assisting with the layout, cover design and preparation for publication.

We decided on the title *UNLEASHED* because it conveys the overall message of the book: ordinary people from an ordinary church being released into God’s world in the service of Christ and his gospel. We considered several possibilities for a cover design but settled on the stark image of an empty leash. It is a very common household item and we felt that, like the parables that Jesus told using everyday images, it might jolt readers to think about what it means to be really free. That’s what the stories are all about.

UNLEASHED: Stories from All Saints’, Booval was compiled by John Arnold and Heather Wood. The [hard copy book version](#) (ISBN 9780645147308) and the [e-book version](#) (ISBN 9780645147315) are available through online booksellers and a limited number of paperbacks is available from John Arnold (please email jdarnold2@bigpond.com) for \$20 per copy, plus \$6 postage.

Anglicare Gold Coast staff celebrate a collective 60 years of service



Robina Anglicare Community Aged and Disability Administration Coordinator Margaret Pask, South Coast Community Aged and Disability Service Manager Nigel Aberdour and Home Care Worker Virginia Salaveria have each celebrated 20 years of service to the Gold Coast community. Recently they were recognised for their service with some flowers and a certificate

South Coast Community Aged and Disability Service Manager Nigel Aberdour, Administration Coordinator Margaret Pask and Home Care Worker Virginia Salaveria have proudly served the Gold Coast community for more than 60 years.

The trio celebrated 20 years of service each earlier this year and were presented with a certificate and flowers to mark the special occasion at the South Coast Regional Meeting.

More than 180 staff attended the event in Robina where additional staff were also acknowledged for their long service milestones – 11 staff were acknowledged for 10 years of service, 10 staff celebrated 15 years and Nigel, Margaret and Virginia celebrated 20 years of service.

Combined, this represented 320 years of service from 24 staff members which is an incredible achievement.

Margaret Pask

Over the past 20 years, Margaret has worked in several different roles going back to when the Gold Coast service was first established at St Margaret's Church, Nerang.

Margaret started with Anglicare, which was at the time called St Luke's Nursing Service, as part of a very small team of four people. Their goal was to establish and set up a new community service for the Gold Coast, which was no small feat and somewhat daunting at the time Margaret recalls.

It is commendable to now think back on that humble beginning and to consider the part Margaret played in growing and establishing a new community care service, basically from the ground up.

Today we have more than 200 staff along with two respite centres and our main office at Robina. Anglicare SQ is now a leading provider of community care on the Gold Coast and is respected and highly regarded – a reflection of what Margaret's commitment and efforts have made possible.

Margaret has been asked on several occasions over the years why she has stayed with Anglicare all this time. Margaret without hesitation always replies, "The people. I just love the people I come to work with every day".

"I feel proud when somebody asks me whom do I work for. I feel proud to say Anglicare because I feel like now there are a lot of people that know Anglicare because of our advertising on cars and so many people use our service and we have such a fantastic reputation," she said.

Nigel Aberdour

"Over the years I have been with the Gold Coast region of Anglicare it has grown from just a few hundred clients to around 3,500. Along with the growing client numbers our staffing numbers have also grown exponentially to over 200," Nigel said.

Nigel is a Registered Nurse and was a Clinical Nurse Consultant for HIV AIDS in Melbourne prior to coming to Queensland and St Luke's Nursing Service as the HIV Unit State Manager in 2000.

"I did that for about two- to-three years and then had an opportunity to come to the Gold Coast as the Community Services Manager in 2004. Nigel was full of praise for his colleagues, and he commended them for their outstanding work within the community for more than two decades.

"Once you're here, we seem to have all these people who want to stay with Anglicare and I think that's reflected in the organisational staff surveys. When we ask staff, is Anglicare a truly great place to be and consistently the response is emphatically, 'yes'," he said.

Nigel added that it all comes down to living by our values.

"I think we live by our values, and I know it's a bit of a cliché saying that, but for an organisation we are pretty good at living the values that we aspire to hold," he said.

"I think all Anglicare staff strive to uphold our values and live by them. That's why I have stayed for 20 years as it's about the people we serve and the people we work together with."

Virginia Salaveria

Virginia became involved with the organisation when she volunteered at St Luke's Respite Centre in Robina for a year. At the time Virginia didn't have her licence so she had to learn how to drive, and once she received her licence, she was then employed as a Home Care Worker.

As a frontline worker, Virginia deals with a range of clients from those in palliative care, people experiencing mental health issues, as well as clients living with dementia, Parkinson's Disease and Motor Neurone Disease, which can be quite challenging.

"I believe in working for the elderly because I am a very Christian person, so I think working for Anglicare it gives me the time and opportunity to help them," she said.

"If I am helping them, I am helping our almighty God.

"Anglicare has all the values and the mission of which I live my life by."

Virginia said it's great having a supportive team who look out for her and if she is having a tough day, they check in on her.

"I've had a lot of palliative clients who I have seen dying and that's very hard," she said.

"I feel like I do make a difference in people's lives. It's very rewarding for me as it feels like I am looking after my own family. It's why I am still here.

"Ups and downs I am still here. Nigel and the team trust me and even when I have a bad day, I still smile."

Looking back over the past 20 years, Virginia said there have been many highlights, but one in particular stands out the most.

"I still have two clients who have always been my clients for the past 20 years. They always tell me, 'It's you Anglicare ladies looking after us, that's why we're still here' and they still live in their own home," she said.

Nigel and Margaret said they were very fortunate that the Gold Coast team has continued to operate despite COVID-19, as they are all essential workers.

"The thing that was unique was that all these other businesses were closing down and sending their staff home because of COVID-19 and the shutdown. As a health care service, our job was not to go home and not to shut down because we were a life line for a lot of people who were now socially isolated and dependent on our help," Nigel said.

"We were out there when roads were completely empty, people like Virginia going around and seeing clients, caring for them and nursing them. It is very commendable."

Congratulations Virginia, Margaret, and Nigel for your extraordinary service to the community!

News • Thursday 22 July 2021

Anglicare Australia joins call for UN to stop charity attacks

Anglicare Australia says new rules targeting charities are an attack on democracy, joining a call for the United Nations to intervene.

Anglicare Australia and other leading charities, including The Fred Hollows Foundation, St Vincent de Paul and the Aboriginal Executive Council, have written to three UN Special Rapporteurs on democracy and freedom of expression, calling on them take urgent action to stop the changes.

The rules would mean that charities can be shut down for speaking out or for taking part in protests.

“Democracy is not just about voting every four years. It’s about everyone getting to speak up for their vision of a better society,” Anglicare Australia Executive Director Kasy Chambers said.

“And charity is not just about helping people in poverty. It’s about creating a country where poverty doesn’t exist. That’s why we need to be able to stand up for the people we work with.

“These rules are designed to stop organisations like Anglicare Australia from speaking up for our communities and our country by punishing us – and shutting us down for arbitrary reasons.

“They are not just an attack on charities. They are an attack on democracy.

“There is no shortage of lobbying and advocacy from businesses and corporations. They will not face any new restrictions. Instead these rules target those who can’t speak for themselves. They will shut out the voices of people in poverty and make it even harder for them to be heard.

“It is because these changes would silence dissent and shut down protest that we are calling on the UN to intervene.

“We’re also calling on the Government to withdraw these changes – and end these attacks for good.”

International • Monday 19 July 2021 • By World Council of Churches

Get involved in groundbreaking symposium addressing digital transformation

Participate in a public dialogue about digital communication, or submit a case study that sets an example for the world: expressions of interest are invited for active participation in a symposium scheduled for 13-15 September 2021.

The symposium, co-organised by the World Council of Churches (WCC) and World Association for Christian Communication, will focus on the impact of digital transformation on communities and societies. Co-organisers include Brot für die Welt (Bread for the World), Evangelische Kirche in Deutschland (Evangelical Church in Germany), Evangelisches Missionswerk in Deutschland (Association of Protestant Churches and Missions in Germany), and World Student Christian Federation-Europe Region.

The event will bring together research, experiences from different regions and marginalized communities, expert input on economic and political trends, and ethical and theological reflection as a contribution to the WCC 11th Assembly in September 2022.

The aim of the symposium is to explore the challenges of digital communication with a social justice lens, and to identify opportunities for concerted and collaborative actions with faith communities and among faith, civil society, academic, media and technological organizations.

How to participate

Many people will be able to follow the symposium through livestreamed and recorded sessions. But those who wish to contribute to the dialogue and action planning for the full event, or present a case study, are invited to express their interest.

The symposium will be primarily conducted online, with the programme adjusted for three different major time zones. The debate and action planning in the symposium will be built on thematic presentations and the contribution of three Working Groups working in advance, addressing the major themes of Digital Justice, Public Space and Vision for the Future.

Participation in the symposium will be limited and the intention is to ensure diversity as much as possible in terms of age, gender, geographical location, and different sectors of society.

If you wish to participate as part of the online dialogue and action planning, please fill out an expression of interest form. The deadline is 15 August 2021.

A key part of the symposium will be hearing how communities around the world experience and address digital opportunities and challenges. Organisations, churches, groups, community media and other community networks are invited to share their experiences. This could be in the form of case studies submitted in a variety of formats. Case studies will be included in the background for symposium participants, presented as part of the public resources of the symposium. Several case studies will be selected to be presented during the symposium itself.

To submit a case study, fill out a [case study form](#). **The deadline is 4 August.**

[Expression of interest form](#)

[Proposed Programme](#)

Click here for the Event: [Communication for Social Justice in a Digital Age](#).

First published on the [World Council of Churches website](#) on 15 July 2021.

South Hebron Hills families share stories of life under occupation



Olive trees grow on a plot in the Tel Rumeida area of Hebron, West Bank, March 2020 (Photo: Albin Hillert/WCC)

Jack Munayer, coordinator for the World Council of Churches Ecumenical Accompaniment Program in Palestine and Israel (WCC-EAPPI), recently visited the South Hebron Hills area with diplomatic delegates from eight different countries, as well as Israeli activists. The visit was organized by the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. The group visited families and listened to their stories with the goal of discerning the nature of hardship and trauma that the occupation continues to cause.

Below, Munayer shares his reflections on what he heard from communities and families.

How have children in the community of Tuba been affected by the absence of Ecumenical Accompaniers?

Munayer: WCC-EAPPI would normally accompany the children of this community to school past settlements in order to provide a protective presence. The absence of this protection has become a serious issue, with many children being forced to take alternative routes on foot, sometimes taking three hours to get to school. Some have to cross desert areas on donkeys in order to make it to exams on time. The community tends not to report incidents that take place, as they lack hope that anything good could come out of it. The Ecumenical Accompaniers would step into this role in order to document incidents.

What about economic hardship in Tuba?

Munayer: People we talked to in the community highlighted the expansion of a new settlement outpost and the further restriction on the community's herding grounds. As herding is their only source of income, they have been forced to purchase hay for their sheep. Settlers set fire to about 40 bales of hay (50% of what they own) and fired shots at community members who tried to put the fires out. Israeli authorities have refused to pave any roads to the community or connect people to water, so putting the fires out was an incredibly difficult task. They went to the nearest Israeli police station to make a complaint but were yelled at and dismissed. Oftentimes they are threatened with detention when they make complaints against settlers.

Can you describe your visit with one family in al-Raqeez?

Munayer: The family lives in a cave, as they are not given building permission and settlers are trying to take over that area. We met with Um-Harun, a mother whose eldest son, Harun, was shot through the neck by Israeli Security Forces and is now fully paralyzed in hospital. Harun's father had gone out of the cave and found Israeli Security Forces trying to confiscate the family's generator (like Tuba, al-Raqeez has not been connected to any electricity or water systems). Soldiers proceeded to beat Abu Harun for trying to interfere, and his son left the cave when he heard the confrontation and tried to stop the soldiers from beating his father. He was then shot through the neck.

The soldiers denied Harun medical attention for a couple of hours until the family found a vehicle to transport him to a hospital. Um-Harun also highlighted the refusal of the Palestinian Authority to cover his hospital bills, despite their promises to do so. There is further difficulty in returning Harun back to the cave in a wheelchair, as the Israeli authorities will not allow them to build a ramp.

Are people trying to help this family?

Munayer: Israeli activists who accompany the family stated that they have been trying to step into the role as accompaniers but their assessment is that "if we had international protective presence, Harun may have never been shot." The UN human rights officer in the area then gave an explanation of how the situation has quickly deteriorated in the absence of WCC-EAPPI.

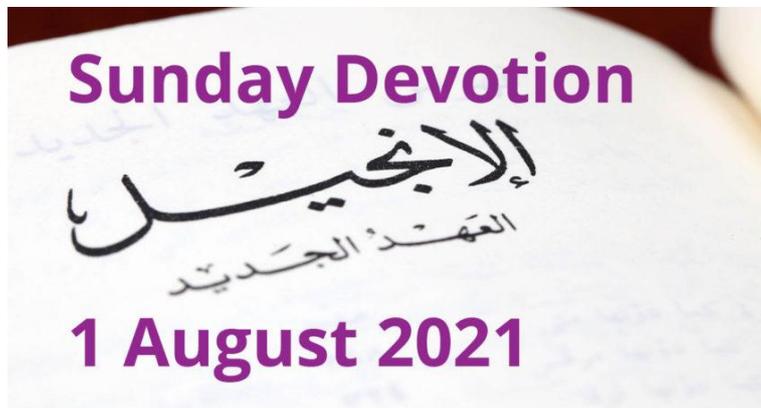
[Learn more about the WCC Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine and Israel \(WCC-EAPPI\)](#)

[East Jerusalem Initiative: accompanying families facing eviction and displacement \(WCC news release 08 July 2021\)](#)

First published on the [World Council of Church website](#) on 14 July 2021.

Sunday Devotion: 1 August 2021, Tenth Sunday after Pentecost

Transformed people transform people



Main Readings: [2 Samuel 11.26 – 12.13a](#); [Psalm 51.1-12](#); [Ephesians 4.1-16](#); [John 6.24-35](#) [[Exodus 16.2-4, 9-15](#); [Psalm 78.22-28](#)]

Supplementary Readings: [Psalm 147.1-11](#); [Acts 15.4-12](#); [2 Samuel 12.13-24](#); [Psalm 78.15-30](#); [Ephesians 4.17-24](#)

“(God) did not discriminate between us and them, for he purified their hearts by faith.” ([Acts 15.9](#))

I used to find it hard to forgive others. As a good kid I hated when the bad ones could ‘get away with murder’ when they said “sorry”. It wasn’t until I myself made a big mistake, repented, and got a taste of what it was like to be forgiven, that I started being less harsh on others.

In today’s passage the Apostle Peter responded to Jewish followers of Jesus who demanded that non-Jewish believers should practise all their laws also. He emphatically reminds the early Christians to remember that God loves everyone, including the Gentiles, not because of how good any of them are, but because of how good God is. God “made a choice” to accept all of us as we are without discrimination.

No one can follow the law perfectly. And, that’s the point of God’s love: while we were still ‘Gentiles’ God loved us first. It is only through Grace that any of us can know and be transformed by God. (v. 11) So when we seek to force upon others, especially those who are considered to be on the outside (such as people seeking asylum, people from the LGBTIQ+ community, First Nations peoples, the list goes on) the way we want them to live, are we not like those in Acts who fall into the trap of thinking that the law is what makes us God’s chosen people?

Lord, help us to be merciful and inclusive. May we extend the same grace shown to us in Christ Jesus to *all* others, Amen.