

I get locked down, but I get up again



With all of the bad news that tends to dominate our feeds, the Tokyo Olympics seem a distant memory. For a couple of weeks, however, they brought plenty of moments of joy to so many people in lockdown or experiencing restrictions because of COVID-19.

There were a number of moments that stay in my mind from the Games.

The first was Australian [Nicholas Hough's semi-final](#) in the 110 metre hurdles. Hough got away from the starting blocks quite well, only to clip the first hurdle and subsequently knock over all nine obstacles that followed. I agree with one person who commented:

“Can I say, as someone who knocked over every single damn hurdle in Year 7 PE and was relentlessly bullied the rest of my high school life, Nicholas Hough is my new sporting hero.”

Hough is an unlikely hero whose determination to make it to the end of the race despite everything has become an inspiration to many.

There was another story that also caught my attention. On 2 August, 28-year-old former refugee [Sifan Hassan of the Netherlands](#) fell in the qualifying heat of her 1,500 metre race. However she scrambled back to her feet and ran on. One media outlet reported it like this:

“She was undeterred; she got back up and, now suddenly in last place, went on to pass 11 runners to finish first.”

She would go on to win the bronze in the 1,500 and gold medals in two additional races – the 5,000 and 10,000 metres. A reporter asked her what her strategy was for the races following the fall, Hassan replied:

“After what happened this morning, all the drama, I don’t care,” she said. “Step by step, I’ll do my best.”

She fell. She got up. She won three medals.

The two stories give us two very different examples of determination and resilience. “Step by step, I’ll do my best” speaks not just to the much hyped ‘Olympic spirit’ but to an inner strength that might benefit us all during these times.

Night after night as I watch the news. I feel a deep sense of dis-ease in the pit of my stomach. The unfolding sadness on my TV screen and my iPad and my computer feels overwhelming – COVID-19, the environment, Afghanistan... I am often left wondering what I can do to meaningfully respond.

“Step by step, I’ll do my best.”

Often my ‘best’ looks more like hurdle-clipping Nicholas Hough than medal-winning Sifan Hassan, but all I can do is take another step and then another. And, one beauty of being part of a community of faith is that there are always others alongside, ahead of and behind me cheering me on, encouraging me, offering me support and reminding me that ‘my best’ is enough.

News • Monday 6 September 2021 • By Michelle McDonald

ACSQ community members take out prestigious Gold and Bronze ARPA Awards



St Andrew’s, South Brisbane Youth Group leader Oscar Delaney won the 2021 Australasian Religious Press Association Gold Award for ‘Best Young Writer’ during an online presentation on Saturday 3 September 2021

The 2021 Australasian Religious Press Association Gold Award for 'Best Young Writer' was taken out by St Andrew's, South Brisbane Youth Group leader Oscar Delaney in an online presentation on Saturday.

In his compelling '[Slumdog takes on millionaire](#)' feature, Oscar, who was only 18 years of age at the time of writing it, reflected on growing up in slums in India, how climate change has hit the worst-off first and hardest and why he was consequently taking on mining tycoon Clive Palmer.

The judge's citation, which can be read in full on [the ARPA website](#), described Oscar's feature as "thoughtful and well-written" and that it "richly deserves its winning place in the competition":

"...Oscar was living a few years ago with his parents and older brother in the slums of New Delhi. Later he wrote this absorbing reflection about life in the slums with a family who was modelling incarnational ministry. Among the challenges faced by city dwellers today is the social and political strife caused by climate change...'One of the many things I have learnt from Jesus,' he writes, 'is that the personal and the political go hand in hand. Jesus did not just pray for the world, he went out and changed it. And, we are called to do likewise – in whatever ways we can.'"

Oscar's is the third consecutive Australasian Religious Press Association (ARPA) Gold Award for *anglican focus* since the news site was launched in October 2018.

The news site currently has 500 individual contributors from across our Diocesan community, with around 20 per cent of these aged under 25 years.

Oscar said that he is encouraged by the prestigious award win, noting that it is important for the Church to engage in climate and creation care discourses and for our nation's leaders to work alongside young people.

"The Church has a significant role to play in the climate and creation care conversation, at both local and national levels," Oscar said.

"As such, we need our future emerging leaders to nudge and inspire our elected representatives and business and community leaders to work with us towards effective and sustainable climate solutions.

"Thank you to ARPA for their hard work and kind words; these encourage me to keep writing, even when it can be hard to be sufficiently motivated when there are always other easier and more pressing things to do."

anglican focus intentionally offers an alternative to both mainstream media and other Christian news sites, with content targeted to a Southern Queensland Anglican audience.

Consequently, *anglican focus*, as part of the Parishes and other Mission Agencies Commission (PMC), launched two social media campaigns last year, which were collectively recognised on Saturday with a Bronze Award for 'Best Social Media Campaign'.

These two campaigns, '#BeingTogetherThisAdvent' and 'Supporting our parish clergy and lay leaders via the 4P's' were initiated to resource and connect our community during COVID-19 lockdown and restriction periods.

In acknowledging the two campaigns, the judge's citation commented favourably on both content and approach:

"Loved the content. The 4xP's approach to engaging your online audience, having that clarity of what you want to move your viewers to – a call to action is critical. Linking in the online virtual choir is a special touch, too. Video content helps to drive views also and increase engagement."

In total, 29 people contributed *anglican focus* content to the two campaigns.

The six clergy and lay people who submitted content to the 'Supporting our parish clergy and lay leaders via the 4P's' campaign, which encouraged support for our parish leaders as they cared for their communities during last year's extended lockdown, are:

- [The Rev'd Sue Grimmett](#), who wrote about participation.
- [The Ven. Keith Dean-Jones OGS](#), who wrote about prayer.
- [The Rev'd Deb Bird](#), who wrote about practical assistance.
- [The Rev'd Charlie Lacey](#), who wrote about Parish Direct and other giving options.
- [The Rev'd Michael Calder](#), who called people to participate in the St Bart's, Toowoomba virtual choir initiative.
- [Dr Stephen Harrison](#), who introduced the campaign as Executive Director of PMC.

Twenty-three members of our community contributed to the award-winning '#BeingTogetherThisAdvent' campaign, which was launched during Advent to help resource churches in the busy liturgical period of a very challenging ministry year.

'Being Together' is our overarching Diocesan theme for 2020-2022 and the '#BeingTogetherThisAdvent' campaign name seemed particularly relevant given the year's lengthy lockdown periods and associated physical separation.

Each week of Advent explored a given theme via *anglican focus* content and Facebook graphics, with the following people contributing news site content:

- Archbishop Phillip Aspinall (who provided a combination of [video](#) and [written](#) reflections).
- [Bishop Cam Venables](#), [Bishop Jeremy Greaves](#) and [Bishop John Roundhill](#), who provided video messages.
- The Rev'd Peter Mayen (a priest and former refugee), Len (a Cathedral 'camper outerer'), Elizabeth Mosely (a disability rights advocate) and The Rev'd Andrew Schmidt (who immigrated from South Africa), who wrote a [joint feature](#).
- [The Rev'd Tania Eichler](#), who contributed a feature.
- Margaret Thurgood, a centenarian parishioner who contributed a [Spotlight Q&A](#) and a [reflection](#).
- [The Rev'd Sue Grimmett](#), who contributed a reflection.
- Anneliese, Taswin, Nicolas, Lilli, Aziz, Isballea, Leila, Gurgeet, Ava, Thierry (10 Year 6 Springfield Anglican College students), who contributed a [joint reflection](#).
- [Frances Thompson](#), who contributed a feature.
- [The Rev'd Deb Bird](#), who contributed a reflection.

Content for graphics was contributed by The Rev'd Canon Linda McWilliam from Anglicare, Sophia Colledge from St Margaret's Anglican Girls School, Gubbi Gubbi man Tom Hammer and centenarian parishioner Margaret Thurgood.

This collaborative effort from generous community members reflects the mission of the news site, which is, "To deliver a free community-owned news site for diverse ACSQ members to proclaim the Gospel, reflect, inform, advocate and resource in order to nourish spirituality and unite community."

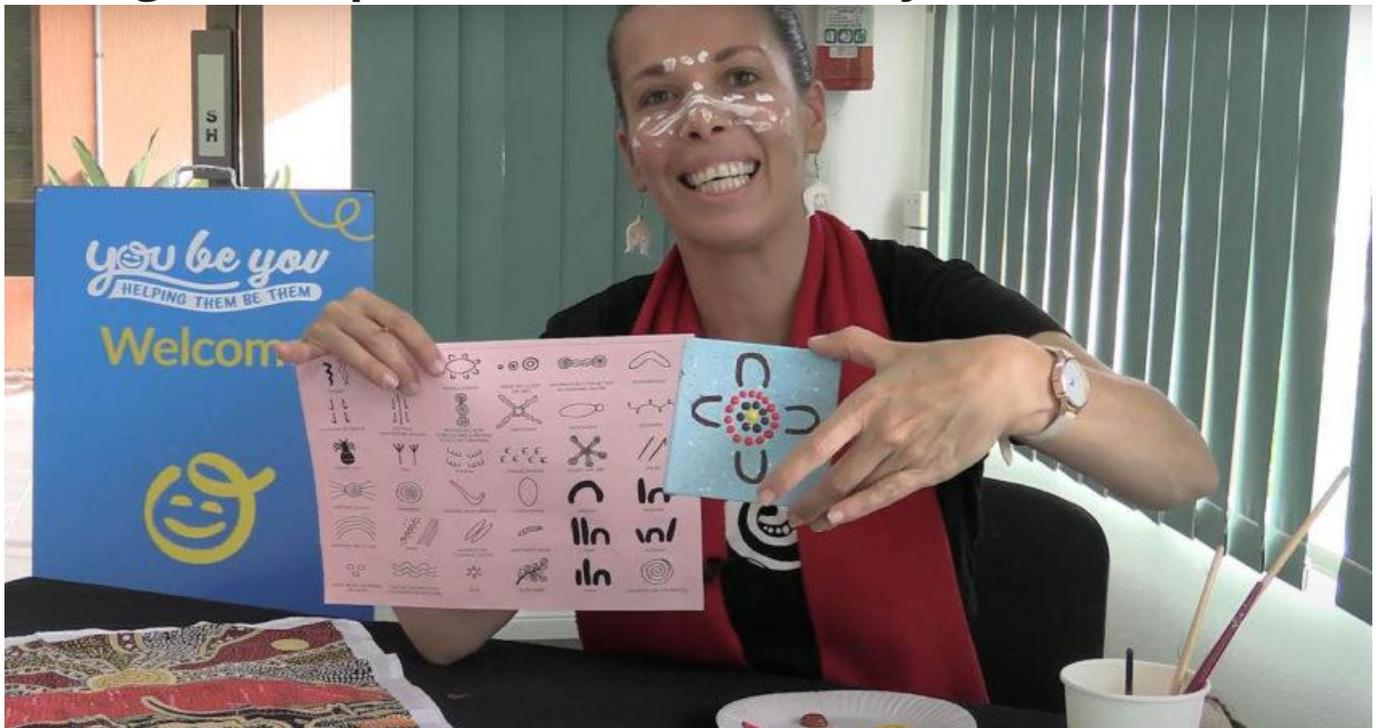
Congratulations to *Eternity* and *Soul Tread* for taking out the Gold and Silver Awards, respectively, for Best Social Media Campaign.

Thank you to all of the contributors who submitted the Gold and Bronze Award-winning content and to Dr Stephen Harrison, The Rev'd Dr Howard Munro and Kerry Smith for their assistance with shortlisting nominations and for their ongoing help and encouragement.

Thank you, also, to the Australasian Religious Press Association for supporting Christian media since 1974, and especially to ARPA President Sophia Sinclair who coordinated a highly engaging and polished online presentation on Saturday during lockdown in Aotearoa / New Zealand.

Features • Tuesday 31 August 2021 • By Lalanía Tusa Fa'aaefili

Aboriginal art practices, stories and symbols



"You are invited to join me at On Earth Festival on Saturday 16 October at St Francis College in Milton to learn more about First Nations art techniques, stories and cultures" (Lalanía Tusa, Anglicare, August 2021)

Australian First Nations art is the oldest ongoing art tradition in the world, with the earliest artworks, including rock carvings, body painting and ground designs, dating back more than 40,000 years.

There are several types of Aboriginal art and ways of making art. These include rock and cave art, stone art, rock engraving, dot painting, bark painting and etching, wood carving, sculpture, dilly bags, baskets, fish trap weaving, sand art, ceremonial art and body painting.

Rock art, for example, was traditionally painted with ochre rocks made of natural clay pigments and minerals found in the soil, as well as with charcoal from the fire. The ochre paints come in all different

colours and are obtained from the local land that produces specific colours, such as white, pink, yellow, purple, blue, red and black. Most ochre is found in caves and along the riverbanks of coastal Australia. Today we largely paint with acrylic paints, watercolour and oil paints.

There are no traditional alphabet equivalents in Aboriginal languages, so it is extremely important for us to continue the tradition of creating art that captures and depicts the stories and information passed down through the generations. In doing so, we can recount songlines (Dreaming tracks), sacred landmarks, borders and boundary markings of given Nations, ceremonies, dances and songs, histories, and hunting and gathering practices. Aboriginal art is closely linked to religious ceremonies and rituals based on totems and Dreamings. Symbols in Aboriginal art are used as a means of communication for people, and for documenting histories, ceremonies, Country boundaries and food sources.

In 1971, the Aboriginal art world changed dramatically. A young schoolteacher, Geoffrey Bardon, arrived at the Papunya settlement – 250 kilometres west of Alice Springs. The government town was home to many different groups of desert Aboriginal peoples, including Pintupi, Luritja, Walpiri, Arrernte and Anmatyerre, who had been forced to move there in the 1960s under government assimilation policies. While in Papunya, Bardon noticed that Aboriginal men, while telling stories to others, were drawing symbols in the sand. He encouraged them to put these stories down on board and canvas, thus nurturing what was to become the worldwide Western Desert Aboriginal art movement. He also encouraged the local children to draw and paint the stories from their cultures.

The Aboriginal people of Papunya developed their own painting styles and representations of their lands, cultures and ceremonies. Papunya Tula Artists Pty Ltd has been incorporated by the artists, with the Aboriginal art movement now well-known worldwide.

The recognisable dot art medium has become known throughout Australia and the world through this development. Dot art is used by many Aboriginal Nations to tell stories in different ways and is deeply symbolic. In my work as a Cultural Support Worker, I pass on to First Nations children many symbols so they can continue the tradition of creating their own dot art. While showing the children how to create dot paintings, I give the students a [take-home PDF handout](#) showing some of these symbols, which include representations of people, animals, tools, foods, and topography and weather features.

Aboriginal art has fostered cultural revival in an extremely good way for our people following the intentional harm done to our cultures during the implementation of former government assimilation policies. As the older artists teach the young, it has revitalised young people's appreciation and knowledge of their cultures. There have also been several other benefits, such as increasing First Nation self-esteem and cultural pride, building stronger bridges of understanding with non-Indigenous people and, most importantly, preserving the central function of Aboriginal art with the passing on of vital information for generations to come.

You are invited to join me at [On Earth Festival](#) on Saturday 16 October at St Francis College in Milton to learn more about First Nations art techniques, stories and cultures. You will be guided to create your very own inspirational piece and have the opportunity to ask me any questions you have about the traditional ways of Aboriginal First Nations art practices.

Editor's note: [Book online now](#) to join Kuku Yalanji artist Lalanja Tusa at the On Earth Festival on Saturday 16 October at St Francis College in Milton.

World record attempt: 195 anthems, 100 languages, two sisters, one day



As part of the International Day of Peace commemorations, Teresa (left) and Augnes (right) Joy will commence their world record attempt to sing the world's national (including two UN permanent member state) anthems at 9.30 am at St John's Cathedral on Tuesday 21 September

Eight years ago, we started learning the anthems of the 193 countries and two permanent observer states recognised by the United Nations in more than 100 languages. We were inspired to do this by our motivational film-maker father Joy K Mathew, who encourages us to pursue unique missions with vision and dedication. Our father has always supported us and the people that carry out missions aiming for world peace and a common humanity.

When we started to learn national anthems, Augnes was in Year 3 and Teresa was in Year 6. As well as learning the anthems, we spent seven hectic years researching the history and meaning of each national anthem. Japan has the shortest anthem and Greece has the longest.

We wake up at 5 o'clock every morning and spend the first two hours of our day studying and singing the anthems, before going to school and university. Augnes is completing Year 12 at Calamvale Community College and is also a member of the United Nations Association of Australia, Queensland Division. Teresa is studying a Bachelor of Psychology and Criminology at Griffith University, works as an assistant in nursing and volunteers for Earth Charter Australia.

When we started, our dad was the one who initially trained us before he arranged tutors from different countries to teach us the correct pronunciation of the words in each anthem via online lessons. We also compare our anthem singing to audio recordings to help perfect our pronunciation. We can now sing every anthem a capella style on cue.

We are the first to attempt to sing all of the world's national anthems and we tell our story in our book, *Inspiring Journey*, which we hope to publish in different languages. We hope that our book will be made into a film to inspire others.

We see each anthem as a paean to its nation, to its people's struggles and to their yearning for freedom and independence. By learning the anthems of the world's nations, we have developed a clearer understanding of various nationalities and built up a bond of humanity with them. When we sing the national anthem of another country or state, we connect with the people of that country or state. A unique oneness is created and the listeners from that country or state usually shed tears and hug us. They see us as their own and they even tell others about us and stay in contact with us.

With the support of the United Nations Association of Australia Queensland Division, Just Peace and Earth Charter Australia, we intend to conduct a series of international events singing all the national anthems, including at St John's Anglican Cathedral on Tuesday 21 September.

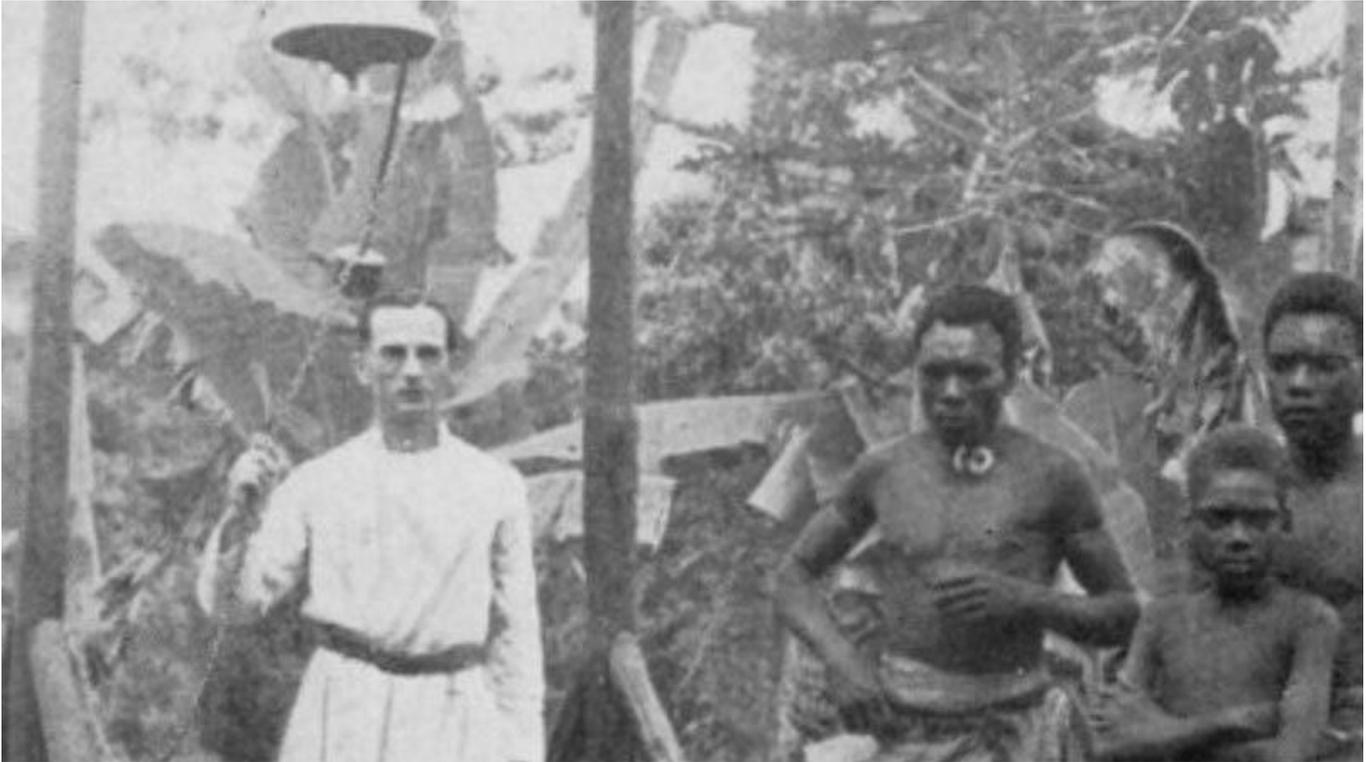
Judges from various World Record teams, including Universal Records, will be present. Some record organisations contacted us after hearing about the Cathedral event and others were contacted by us. We are going to sing the anthems at St John's Cathedral according to the rules and instructions of the record teams. So, we are going to sing all of the world's national and UN permanent member state anthems in 100 languages in approximately six hours, with a 10-minute break permitted every two hours.

Setting a world record is not actually our main intention. We are on a mission to sing the national anthem of every nation of the world to promote world peace, children's safety, women's empowerment, a common humanity and care for our common home and the climate. Funds raised through our various forthcoming events will be divided amongst charitable activities run by the United Nations.

Editor's note: Agnes and Teresa will commence their world record attempt at 9.30 am at St John's Cathedral on Tuesday 21 September.

The St John's Cathedral annual International Day of Peace Lecture will be given by Admiral Chris Barrie (RAN, Ret.) on Tuesday 21 September from 7 pm, with The Rotary Peace Centre from the University of Queensland recognising the 2021 Agents of Peace at the event. You are invited to [book your seat online](#) or watch the livestreaming of the lecture on the Cathedral's [YouTube channel](#).

New Guinea Martyr: The Rev'd John Barge



The Rev'd John Barge with locals on the island of New Britain, c.1937 (Image courtesy of anglicanhistory.org)

On 2 September this year, as we do annually, our Diocese will pause to remember the 12 men and women known collectively as the 'Martyrs of New Guinea'. While many of those in this courageous group had strong links to our Diocese, for St James', Toowoomba, it is The Rev'd John Barge whom they particularly remember. As a student at St Francis Theological College, and as a new priest engaged in Curacy at St James', given responsibility for the daughter church of St Thomas', North Toowoomba, The Rev'd Barge was remembered by many in our Diocese.

John Frederick Barge was born in Buckinghamshire, England, in 1897. He served with British Forces in Belgium during the First World War. He came to Australia in 1926, initially engaged in fruit picking at Stanthorpe. By 1928, however, he had become an honorary Catechist with the Church Mission in Brisbane and in 1929 he began studies at St Francis Theological College. He is said to have been a diligent student, and one willing to help new pupils when they came to the College.

One such pupil was The Rev'd H.E. Hunt. In the book *St. James' Toowoomba Celebrates 140 Years* (2009), edited by Lyn Hodgson, it is stated that The Rev'd Hunt, who became Rector of St James' in 1948, had been taken under John Barge's wing and was shown great kindness by him when he first entered St Francis Theological College. They became firm friends and were ordained on the same day in 1933 by Bishop Dixon at the Cathedral. The Rev'd Hunt even composed a poem in memory of his friend, produced in the history of St James' book:

In Memory of John Barge
*Cheerful and brave and true,
The Martyr's path he took,*

*Man's daily human needs he knew,
Also man's need of God*

*To palm fringed Islands far,
He took the news of Christ,
And following the Wise Men's star,
His life he sacrificed*

*Yet still his spirit lives,
And all his kindly ways,
And where God's sun its Glory gives,
He still shows forth Christ's praise.*

Barge's curacy at St James', Toowoomba began on 18 December 1932. As mentioned, he was given responsibility for St Thomas' Church in North Toowoomba. He established a firm affection with his parishioners in a very quick fashion. He established the Ladies' Guild and revived the Sunday School, as well as establishing other groups and encouraging improvements to the building and grounds. According to the parish history, he had a fine tenor voice and rode his bicycle everywhere until he could afford a second-hand car. However, his calling was elsewhere, and on 1 September 1936, a farewell service was held for The Rev'd Barge as he embarked on overseas missionary work.

The Rev'd Barge first went to Rabaul, New Britain, one of the New Guinea islands. While engaged in mission work there, he began to realise an overwhelming desire to help locals relieve their physical pain and suffering, as well as tend to their spiritual needs. So, he decided to embark on training in the Solomon Islands for the treatments of various tropical complaints and spent some time stationed at a medical centre. He was also, for two years, from 1937 until the beginning of the war, the Vice-Principal of the Theological College of St Peter in the Solomon Islands.

At the outbreak of the war, John Barge was back in New Britain and working with The Rev'd Bernard Moore, another New Guinea Martyr, and a group of Melanesian Brothers. After the bombing of Pearl Harbour many of the Melanesian Islands were occupied by advancing Japanese forces. In anticipation of this, both Barge and Moore were given the opportunity to leave; however, they both declined, preferring to stay at their posts. During these anxious times, the local Islanders took The Rev'd Barge to a cave where they believed he could hide if, and when, the Japanese forces invaded. It was a very snug space, needing Barge to crawl to get inside, and he is said to have remarked to the well-meaning islanders that he would rather die on his feet than as a rat in a hole.

As the location where The Rev'd Barge was stationed, Pomete on New Britain, was very remote, he was able to carry on his duties in secret for almost two years after the Japanese forces had taken over the Island. The local people kept his presence unknown and at no point gave up his position. The occupying forces regularly sent out search parties to look for Allied forces or people being hidden by locals, and on one of these searches, in October 1943, the mission house at Pomete was discovered. A Japanese Destroyer approached, and troops were sent into the area where they found The Rev'd Barge carrying on his duties as normal. In the book, *The Seed of the Church: The story of the Anglican Martyrs of Papua New Guinea*, the author Errol Hodge describes what happened next:

"The Japanese, who seemed friendly, took him aboard the destroyer, telling the local people they would help him get medical supplies and bring him back. But after the ship had rounded the next

point, he was taken ashore. Two local people hiding in the bush saw him executed 'with shot and sword' (1992, p.24)."

Because of the eyewitnesses, the exact spot where The Rev'd Barge was killed is known, and, once the destroyer had left, they buried him on that spot, marking his grave with a border of coral. Sadly, this occurred only months before American forces began to liberate the islands. A more permanent '[Grave of Anglican Priest Barge at Arung Bay](#)' was established later.

Unsurprisingly, The Rev'd Barge is perhaps remembered in the most prominent way by his old church. St Thomas', North Toowoomba closed in 2008, with the sale of the property essentially financing the building of a new church, St Anne's, Highfields. St Anne's maintains the legacy of their own New Guinea Martyr. John Barge's family donated altar rails, dedicated to their loved one, to St Thomas' after the war. These are now located in the walls of St Anne's in a prominent position. The left side of St Anne's has been designated the 'New Guinea Martyrs Chapel', featuring a banner dedicated to The Rev'd Barge. The colours and symbols allude to the arms of the Anglican Church of Melanesia, in which John Barge was technically stationed at the time of his martyrdom. The 12 stars or *estoiles*, represent the 12 martyrs.

In St James', Toowoomba, a stained-glass window behind the baptismal font is dedicated to his memory. It was here, under this window, in 1950 that Canon Frank Coaldrake placed a bamboo cross that The Right Rev'd Dr Light Shinjiro Maekawa, Anglican Bishop of South Tokyo, had sent to the parishes of all the Martyrs as an act of reconciliation and repentance. That original cross is now also in St Anne's, Highfields.



The inscription under the stained-glass window where the bamboo cross was originally placed in memory of The Rev'd John Barge (Image courtesy of [St James' Church, Toowoomba website](#))

In the Martyrs' booklet published by the Anglican Board of Mission, each martyr has a prayer dedicated to them, written by Bishop Denys Ririka, of the Diocese of Aipo Rongo in Papua New Guinea, in 2004. The prayer dedicated to John Barge has been inscribed on the window of the Martyrs Chapel at St Anne's, Highfields. It is a prayer that perhaps could be remembered this New Guinea Martyrs Day.

The Reverend John Barge

We thank you, Lord Almighty, for your servant John Barge who met you on a track near a village garden "with a shot and a sword" at Moewe Kandrian.

Clothe us with your peace and enrich us with your grace, that we, like John Barge, may face challenges and dangers with courage and love.

Films & TV • Wednesday 1 September 2021 • By Jonathan Sargeant

Respect



Jennifer Hudson as Aretha Franklin in Respect (Image sourced from <https://www.universalpictures.com.au/micro/respect>)

In the years before her passing, musical legend Aretha Franklin made a bold statement: if there was to be a movie made of her life, she had one choice for the actor to play her. Jennifer Hudson was given that 'imprimatur'. Now, a few years later, the film itself arrives and indeed, Hudson takes centre stage. Did Aretha choose well? The short answer is 'yes, she did', but there is more to the story.

Director Liesl Tommy has some experience with telling the stories of powerful women. Her work in the third season of Marvel's *Jessica Jones* was noteworthy. Previously known for stage work, including productions of *Frozen* and *Les Misérables*, Tommy's work here shows that she knows how to pull off big

musical numbers. In fact, the moments when *Respect* truly shines are when Hudson pulls up in front of a piano or steps onto a stage or walks into the recording studio. These moments are largely transcendent. Hudson certainly has a powerful voice and manages to perform well known numbers along the way with spine-tingling clarity. Her approximation of the Queen of Soul's style is flawless. Director of Photography Kramer Morgenthau captures the performances beautifully and with the class the songs are due. For such moments you can forget the occasional by-the-numbers nature of the narrative.

Probably most of us have seen enough musical biopics to guess the standard route we might expect. There'll be a rocky start, trials and tribulations, naysayers and setbacks, possibly problems with substances, and so on. *Respect* hits all of these notes. There's a certain comfort in the procession of these expected events, although at two hours and 25 minutes in length, some audience members might find their attention a little challenged. Of note, too, is the central animating nature of Franklin's faith. This is front and foremost, and a welcome note of distinction from many recent biopics.

As a sometimes musician myself, I also appreciated the instances of songwriting featured in *Respect*. Often musical biopics show a bandmember strumming a chord, someone humming and 15 seconds later the band is playing their biggest hit. *Respect* is a little truer to life in showing the creative process as a craft that can take time, experimentation and musical interplay. In the way that this highlights Aretha Franklin's artistry, *Respect* succeeds.

Despite the aforementioned clichés, there are certain revelations along the way (which I won't spoil here) that were news to me and carried an emotional impact that could be felt viscerally in the theatre. As a star, Aretha was a mostly private person, so the unexpected disclosures hit hard. That the film builds to the most emotional climax in its last few moments makes you forgive some arguably choppy pacing and disappearing characters. That is often par for the course when depicting big events and bigger lives; however, with the closing minutes, the film left nary a dry eye in the house.

When *Respect* soars, it *really* soars. That is its saving grace and makes the biopic truly worth seeing.

***Respect*, rated M and directed by Liesl Tommy, is currently showing in cinemas.**

Tough questions



The

Rev'd Charlie Lacey from Resource Church St Andrew's, Springfield

We are just over half way through our latest online Alpha course and it has been fascinating, as Alpha courses always are. I have participated in many Alpha courses and I am always amazed at the diverse range of perspectives, insights and questions – questions about life, faith, God, the Bible and so on.

I often come across people who grew up in a 'Christian' environment, but were always discouraged from asking questions. There is a popular misconception that Christians are expected to accept the Church's teaching unquestioningly, even when it seems obscure or strange. Alpha is popular because it gives people the opportunity to explore the Christian faith for themselves. Participants are encouraged to express opinions and ask questions. After all, thought is not the enemy of Christianity – quite the opposite in fact.

As I sat down to write this reflection, I found myself thinking about all the amazing unasked questions that people have buzzing around in their heads. Anybody who considers life, in anything more than the most superficial terms, will have serious questions about themselves, human nature and the world we inhabit. Regardless of one's worldview, be it Christian, Muslim, Hindu, Atheist, Agnostic, whatever, we all have deep questions.

Christians do not claim to have all the answers; however, the Christian worldview properly understood provides a framework that makes sense of the world we live in. Indeed, I would argue that it makes sense of the whole of human history. As C.S. Lewis put it:

"I believe in Christianity as I believe that the sun has risen: not only because I see it, but because by it, I see everything else."

The upshot of this line of thinking is that I have decided to invite 'tough questions' from the readers of our newsletter. Bearing in mind that this newsletter is distributed to a wider audience, I want to stress

that you do not have to be a member of St Andrew's, Springfield, nor do you have to consider yourself a Christian, to send in a question.

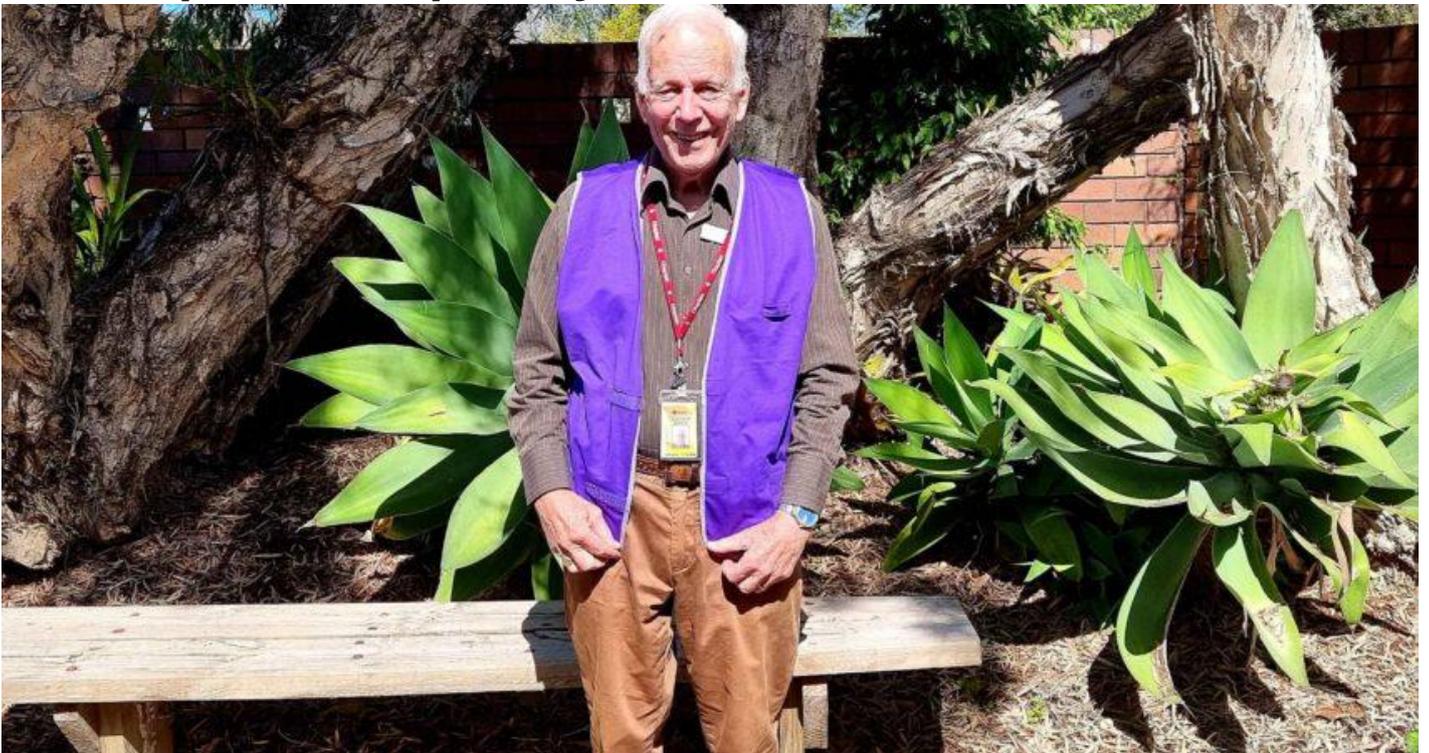
Each month, I will endeavour to research and answer a question that you, the readers, have posed. I do not claim to have all the answers, but I will do my best to shed some light on the subject matter from a Christian perspective.

If you have a question that you would like me to attempt to answer, please email me at charlie@standrewsspringfield.org.au. To sign up to receive our newsletter, please email us at office@standrewsspringfield.org.au

First published in the St Andrew's, Springfield September newsletter.

Reflections • Monday 30 August 2021 • By Ken Collins

On the prison chaplaincy frontlines



"I still recall those first couple of hours full of apprehension when my mentor, after showing her methodology in approaching and conversing with prisoners, encouraged me to proceed amongst the more than 60 prisoners in the secure unit to make my own connections" (Ken Collins, pictured in August 2021)

Stan* was a stoic and grumpy old inmate whose head was always downcast, reading, writing, or doing crosswords. Whenever I drew close to the table at which he sat (usually alone), he'd make some disparaging remark about the uselessness of what chaplains stood for. One day, I approached him from behind and saw that he was stuck on a crossword. I said to him, "Can't get it out, eh?" I then proceeded to help him fill in the blank spaces and, suddenly, the ice melted. I had gained his respect and confidence.

How grateful I am to God who, in seemingly inconsequential ways, provides inroads and opportunities to develop deeper conversations with those whose life actions have led them to be incarcerated, often

judged and rejected by family and society. Prison ministry is a privileged one, providing pastoral and spiritual care, irrespective of the prisoner's condition, faith background or belief, social position, strengths, weaknesses, ethnicity or crime. We respect who they are every day of their journey to assist in their development.

My calling to this ministry commenced when I retired. I accepted a part-time position at the Queensland Corrective Services (QCS) office in Chermside, employed on weekends to follow up and care for prisoners allowed weekend leave. This work was to be a great grounding for when I entered prison chaplaincy. After attending an information session and interviews, I then undertook the Diocesan and QCS security checks before finally entering the Wolston Correctional Centre for the first time.

On my first day, a QCS officer greeted and led me through the necessary orientation program, safety requirements, various codes, reportable offences and so on. Then my fingerprints were taken for biometrics, enabling my access both into the prison and to office keys. The officer showed me around the centre, through the various departments and many heavy steel doors monitored by cameras and operated electronically from a central position. Finally, I was taken to the Chaplains' Office and handed over to my mentoring chaplain and ready to engage with the prisoners – I still receive a warm greeting from that officer whenever we meet within the centre.

I still recall those first couple of hours full of apprehension when my mentor, after showing her methodology in approaching and conversing with prisoners, encouraged me to proceed amongst the more than 60 prisoners in the secure unit to make my own connections. I believe my prayers and those of my supportive parish family were answered that day, as suddenly I became deeply involved in a conversation with an inmate, all apprehension gone. Thank you, God.

As we moved through the various secure units, the cacophony of noise, from people's voices, rubbish bins being collected, people lining up for medication, and an officer pulling someone into line, was overwhelming. I realised later just how much of an effect this would have on the minds of inmates as they experienced such intrusive and constant noise every day. It was a relief when the first muster of the day was called at 10.30 am and we retreated to our office for a coffee and debrief about my experience of those first few hours.

Over the next seven weeks this would be the normal format as a probation chaplain. On some days I would be placed in the care of a chaplain from a different denomination, exposing me to another approach of ministry, and enabling me to formulate my own style and communication technique. My previous experience of visiting inmates in their homes helped immensely in my formation, realising early on that there was no 'one-size-fits-all' approach, as everyone I talked to is dealing with issues related to their own personal situation.

The twenty-second of September will mark five years as a prison chaplain, serving every Thursday from 8 am to 3.30 pm, whilst conducting three Chapel Services on every sixth Sunday. During these Sundays I have realised how many of the men have Christian backgrounds and are putting their faith to good use, including reading scripture daily and being involved in joint Bible study groups. During Chapel they all sing with feeling and passion and it is so heart-warming to be in their presence. All our services are of an ecumenical format, with an Anglican Eucharist celebrated once a month.

Prison chaplaincy extends within and outside a correctional centre. While we work among those incarcerated, there have been times when arriving at the centre, I have been confronted by crying or

anxious relatives coming to visit their loved one or friend for the first time. The experience is quite daunting, filled with mixed emotions about the impending visit, regarding both the person and the physical environment. Opportunities arise to express the Grace of God, comforting and helping to prepare the visitor for a positive visit.

Who benefits from prison chaplaincy? I ask myself this regularly as I witness the revolving door of inmates making mistakes after release and returning for another sentence period. When they are jailed after reoffending, many look at you as if having let you down. As chaplains, we do not judge people's actions. We provide encouragement to start again, amend acknowledged wrongs, seek to become better people, and take advantage of the opportunities to engage in the rehabilitative and other education or spiritual courses available in the centre.

The issue of reoffending is often in the media; however, if a person has been incarcerated for 20, 10, or even five years, the world has changed considerably by the time they are released, making them vulnerable to mistakes and breaking parole. Most need assistance in transitioning back into society and coping with those changes. We are embarrassed at the number of requests we receive for accommodation suitable for parolees, only to say we are sorry that we do not have any suitable placements available.

Another factor for reoffending is caused by their institutionalisation and associated inability to make appropriate decisions for themselves. There is a need when re-entering society for mentors to help guide individuals in making appropriate and wise choices. I wonder if your parish might consider a ministry to assist a prisoner during the transitional period in any of the above areas?

I ask our Diocesan family to pray for all involved in the corrections space, including prisoners, policy makers, guards, and chaplains. On tough days, the prayers of others helps to guide and carry us in our uniquely challenging and rewarding work.

Editor's note: If you would like to volunteer in the special ministry area of prison chaplaincy, please email pmc@anglicanchurchsq.org.au.

*Pseudonym used.

Misadventures of the kindness kind



Bishop Daniel Abot, Resource Church Specialist for Ethnic Congregations, in August 2021

A Bishop and former refugee, a WestMAC Indigenous Perspectives Learning Innovator, a Cathedral parishioner and St Francis College formation student, and the *anglican focus* Editor share their insights and learnings gleaned from gestures of kindness that went awry.

Bishop Daniel Abot – Resource Church Specialist for Ethnic Congregations, Parishes and other Mission Agencies Commission

In the first three months of living in Toowoomba after coming as a refugee from South Sudan, I was walking through the Grand Central Shopping Centre.

I saw an elderly lady pushing a loaded supermarket trolley up a slope. I immediately walked over to her, put my hand on the trolley handle and asked, “Hey, Mum, can I help you?” She looked at me quite shocked and said, “I’m NOT your Mum,” and pushed me away from the trolley. Once she was back in control and fast moving away, I felt very embarrassed and realised I had done something terrible.

In South Sudan, it is normal and respectful to call any older woman “Mum”. It is also expected that you will help, particularly a lady, to do any task someone is struggling with. I assumed that these norms applied everywhere.

I was felt embarrassed and ashamed that in a public place I had obviously done something well intentioned, but not acceptable here.

Looking back now, I can see it from her point of view. A strange man comes up to you suddenly, calls you “Mum” and tries to take over your shopping trolley. Of course she thought, “What he says does not make sense and the sooner I get can get out of here the better.”

Talking to friends later, I realised that she would not only have been startled, but possibly made to feel that she was not capable of doing things for herself, thus having her sense of independence undermined.

This was a hard, but important lesson for me to learn.



Phyllis Marsh, Learning Innovator – Indigenous Perspectives, West Moreton Anglican College in August 2021

Phyllis Marsh – Learning Innovator – Indigenous Perspectives, West Moreton Anglican College

I loved my role, many years back, on the elderly patient ward as a ‘Hospital Elf Recruit’, affectionately called ‘HER’. It was a wonderful way to spread cheer and show kindness by visiting patients, reading to them, and just generally being a cheerful and caring presence.

One beautiful sunny winter’s day, I was asked to go out into the sunroom and do a general tidy up. The ward manager wanted to say something to me, but at that exact moment there was a crash from a patient’s bed, and she went to assist. So, I headed out to the sunroom alone, and upon seeing a new patient, greeted him with a big cheerio, asking, “How are you doing today?”

“Help”, the elderly gentleman whispered in response. Noticing that he was struggling with opening a gate, which led out to the ward’s garden area, I didn’t think twice in opening the gate to let him descend the few steps so he could enjoy the flowers.

Returning to my duties, a good five minutes had passed when the ward manager joined me in the room. By the look on her face, I could tell immediately that something dreadful had happened. As she looked from me to the gate, I turned and could not see the elderly gentleman anywhere. Even though

there was no gate from the garden to the street, a determined escapee could climb over it, as it only stood about a metre and half high.

The ward manager ran to the phone and called the police, gave a description of the resident and locked the ward down.

Next time I respond to what appears to be a hapless elderly gentleman who seemingly needs assistance in opening a gate, I will remember that sometimes being kind means keeping the gate shut!



Angie Mooney, Cathedral parishioner and St Francis College formation student, at Old Bishopsbourne in September 2021

Angie Mooney – St John’s Cathedral parishioner and St Francis College formation student

Back in my 20s, I suspected that a good mate was living in an abusive relationship. So, when she called and said “I’m moving out”, I immediately dropped everything and drove over four hours to her rural property in western NSW. Helping her to move proved to be an adventure for both of us.

Apart from her household goods, she had two pet goats, with the only transport being the back of her Holden Torana hatchback. The goats were quiet, but unaccustomed to travel, proving to be incredibly wilful when it came to being led and herded. We bribed the first goat with oats and gently lifted it into the vehicle. The dilemma was how to get the second goat into the small car.

Needless to say the first goat jumped out in the process of getting the second goat in. This roundabout of goat in and goat out continued repeatedly for some time. We bribed and coaxed the

goats in vain before realising that we needed to lug them in. Wondering how I signed up for this, I was grateful when we eventually had them mustered into the Torana.

On reflection, the story of Noah's ark comes to mind. How on earth were all those animals so subdued and willing to be loaded into the ark? I now re-imagine the event to look like a cacophony of fur, feathers, squawking and snorting, with animals leaping on and off the ark and Noah tearing his grey hair out!

Today I wonder, "Have I ever been like those goats?" I can recall times when a new way of life was presented and I resisted the change and said, "No, that's not for me". I'm pleased God seems just as persistent with me as I was with the goats! Friends often comment on my journey with the Church in the last 12 months, especially on my commitment. My reply has been, that if God has you gently by the scruff of the neck, it's best to go with it!



***anglican focus* Editor Michelle McDonald cracking up at something outside the Roscoe Library in September 2021**

Michelle McDonald – *anglican focus* Editor, Parishes and other Mission Agencies Commission

A gentleman named James* sleeps under a Brisbane River bridge. On one August afternoon while chatting with him, I noticed how scant his bedding was. Knowing it was going to be a very cold night, I decided to walk back with some food and items to keep him warm.

Upon reaching home, I resolved to give him 'The Full Mum Treatment'. In hindsight, this was over the top and so no wonder it freaked him out.

I returned to James at 9.30 pm. He gladly accepted the new doona, the homemade soup and bread, breakfast food and other meal items for the following day. He refused the two-litre bottle of water, but I left it anyway because I am a mum.

I noticed his eyebrows raise at the five large mandarins in a zip-lock bag and he got a strange look on his face when I pulled the toiletries and towel out from what must have seemed like a bottomless Mary Poppins bag.

The thing that alarmed him though was when I pulled out the full hot water bottle. He shook his head with disbelief and told me he didn't need it, but I left it anyway because I am a mum.

At this point, something darted out from James' bedding and ran between my feet toward the river as I squatted low to the ground on my haunches. I let out an expletive starting with 's', asking "What the heck was that?" James said that it was a mouse and explained that there are three of them. Surprised that he had three mice living in his bedding, I asked for some stupid reason, "Are they related?"

"I don't know," he replied slowly with an understandably bewildered look.

As I started walking home, I remembered about my friend whom I had asked to stay on the phone while I was under the bridge so late at night. Upon reinserting the ear buds to recommence our chat, I discovered that he had been laughing throughout my conversation with James.

I visited James again three days later to check on him and he looked at me with outright suspicion. I think I'll leave it for a while before I see him again.

Maybe next time I meet Jesus in disguise, I'll go a little more gently so I don't overwhelm him.

* a pseudonym to protect his privacy.

Editor's note: If you have an amusing 'kindness caper' story to share with *anglican focus* readers, please email a brief 2-3 sentence summary of the story (including what you learnt) to the Editor, Michelle, via focus@anglicanchurchsq.org.au

Nurturing student-centred engagement with scripture



Churchie Religious Education Faculty Head, Max Condon

Twenty-first-century learners bring new challenges and various social contexts to their Religious Education classrooms. These challenges consist of the 'visible' and 'invisible' constraints of our schooling system. The 'visible' being timetable, time allocation, teacher availability, specialist teacher theological education or the lack of it, classroom space and the time of day.

Approaches to these visible challenges need to be considered with respect to the 'unseen', which include diverse student spiritual or religious experiences; student prior knowledge, literacy levels, degree of interest and perceived need; parental support; and, teacher expectations and educational objectives.

To cater to this increasingly complex and ever-changing educational climate, secondary school Religious Education programs tend to range from either a 'one-size-fits-all' program (which is high in content and able to be assessed using traditional teacher-directed formative or summative instruments) or a social pastoral care program in a youth group format (with a 'how we are feeling today' approach, focusing on group interactions without any formalised learning objectives, assessment or extending experiential methodology).

Many experienced educators desire an opportunity or device that encourages both authentic academic engagement and student-centred and directed interaction with complex scriptural writings, as either a catalyst or means of nurturing their journey of discovery. To this end, we have combined three known processes into a single lesson as a tool to teach deeper interaction using biblical texts and writings as the literature to be engaged with.

Consisting of three specific processes in a four-stage method, the secondary student is able to engage with the set biblical texts, resulting more deeply in student-centred and generated outcomes. The three processes we have blended into one are:

1. *Lectio Divina* (or 'divine reading') – a joint spiritual mediation exercise.
2. LAC ('Literacy Across the Classroom') – taught by librarian educators (a local school initiative across all curriculum areas).
3. Cornell Notes – with a faculty academic studies focus, as an across-faculty skill instrument (as explained in this [Cornell Note Taking](#) post)

Each of these processes has four distinct components that seamlessly overlap and are taught as part of the whole without diminishing the strengths of the different techniques.

This process occurs once a cycle in Years 7-9 with the literature determined by the Religious Education faculty, taught by literature experts and expanded upon within the Religious Education classes with student-directed outcomes.

Passages we have used to date with Year 8 Churchie students include:

- [Matthew 6.9-13](#), The Lord's Prayer
- [John 1.1-5](#), In the beginning...
- [Matthew 5.1-12](#), The Beatitudes
- [Romans 8.28-37](#), And we know in all things

Here is [a sample lesson](#) using this method, which may be downloaded for readers to use.

Features • Saturday 4 September 2021 • By Bishop Chris McLeod

Solidarity – in praise of 'wokeness'



Bishop Chris McLeod

After support rose for 'Black Lives Matter' in May last year, there was criticism made, mainly, but not exclusively, by the right-wing media, and their supporters, of 'wokeness'. Being 'woke' was seen by them as a negative thing, and an example of liberal left-wing do-goodism. Labels abounded for those who showed some solidarity with First Nations people in Australia and people of colour around the world – cultural Marxists, latte, chardonnay, champagne (take your pick) socialists, left-leaning liberals and elite, and so on. Some on the Christian right saw this as another example of secularization, and the infiltration of anti-Christian thought into Church and society. There was not a little paranoia being expressed, as well, and it seemed to me that some critics were drawing on conspiracy theories surrounding Q-Anon and the 'stealing of the US election' in America. Some right-wing leaning Christians were being seduced towards Gnosticism, in my view, as they were setting up an un-helpful, and ultimately non-Christian, dualism about secret organizations, motivations and clandestine goings on. It would have made for a good Dan Brown novel!

However, my thoughts were that it is better to have people for us, rather than against us, even if there was some difference in thought. People were standing in solidarity with us. Was being 'woke' such a bad thing? For those who do not know the term, 'woke' is an African-American term for being woken up to issues around injustice, particularly around racial injustice. It simply means being 'awake' rather than 'asleep'. It has now become a politicized term, mainly for those who don't like the people who are 'woke'. It seemed to me that the appropriating of an African-American term and turning it into an insult was not a little racist in itself. However, in the end it doesn't much matter whether you use the term 'woke' or not, but standing in solidarity with those who need it does.

I am reminded of a telling moment in the life of Jesus. It comes just after the section in Luke's Gospel, chapter 9 where the disciples are arguing with each other about who is the greatest.

⁴⁹John answered, "Master, we saw someone casting out demons in your name, and we tried to stop him, because he does not follow with us." ⁵⁰But Jesus said to him, "Do not stop him; for whoever is not against you is for you."

It would seem the unnamed exorcist was not part of the inner, or, perhaps, even the wider, discipleship group. Mark's Gospel makes the same point as Luke, but uses slightly different wording, bringing with it greater clarity. The disciples want to forbid him from exercising his ministry, because the unnamed exorcist '*was not one of them*' (Mark 9. 38-39). The unnamed exorcist stood outside the discipleship group.

My point is solidarity is not necessarily about being one of us, but it is about walking alongside us in the same direction. Those who showed solidarity with 'Black Lives Matter' may well not know what it is like to be a First Nations person, or they may be liberal left-leaning latte drinkers, or the academic elite, or members of a union, or members of the Liberal or Labor parties, or sincere and devout Christians (many are). Solidarity is about a journey into seeing how the world looks to those who are oppressed, and seeking to walk alongside those who are trying to shape the world into a place of equality and justice. Those who stand in solidarity seek to learn from those they walk alongside, and they are also challenged to see what role they also play in the oppression of others. This is as true for me as it is for others. I am also called to walk alongside others who are oppressed, and to consider my own contribution to their oppression. Solidarity can be a type of conversion where our eyes are opened to a world in need of liberation, redemption, and healing. I do not think there are too many Christians who do not have that hope, as well. We will differ about how best to achieve this, but solidarity helps us to learn from each other. It can even provide the opportunity for us as Christians to share with

those who walk alongside us why we think the good news of Jesus is actually good news for the world we live in.

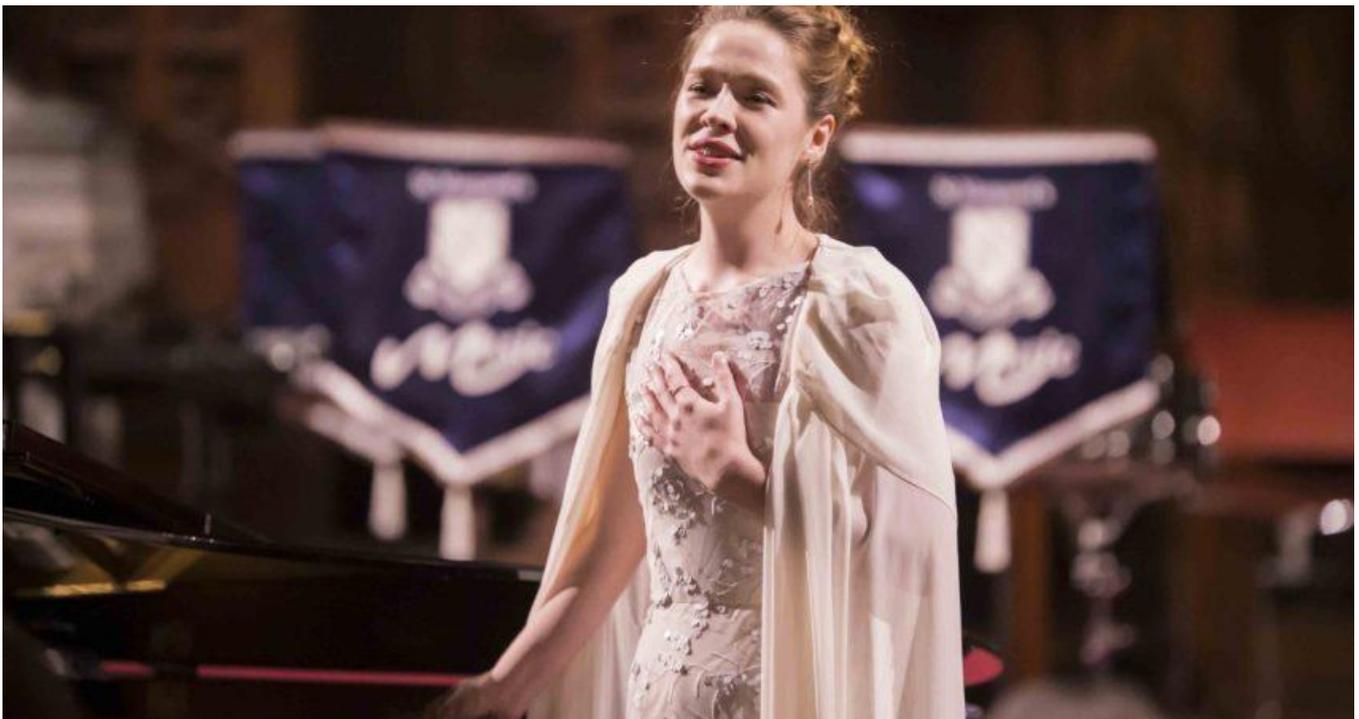
The Anglican Communion's 'Five Marks of Mission' include as number 3: 'To transform unjust structures of society, to challenge violence of every kind and pursue peace and reconciliation'. Whilst 'woke' might be a newish term, the Church has always been called to stand in solidarity with the poor, needy, and outcast. We were 'woke' before we even knew of the term!

So, being 'woke' is not such a bad thing in my view. I think it is a term that has much depth to it. I would rather have my eyes open than shut to the things that need our attention. However, what matters most is that we work and walk together, and care about the world we live in, rather than what labels we adopt. Being 'woke' is not a new thing. In former times it was called solidarity, having our conscience raised, or advocacy. Since March 2 this year there have been another nine First Nations' people die in custody. We all need to be 'woke' to this injustice, and continue to confront systemic racism and unjust structures together.

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.](#)

News • Saturday 4 September 2021

Classics in the Cathedral



Special guest performer, St Margaret's Old Girl Xenia Puskarz-Thomas, gave a magical performance at Classics in the Cathedral in June 2021

St Margaret's Anglican Girls School recently hosted its annual Classics in the Cathedral – an opportunity for the wider school community to come together in an intimate atmosphere to experience a vibrant and exciting evening of music performances.

From Mozart to Chopin, the audience was treated to orchestral, ensemble and vocal performances set beneath the lofty ceilings and towering columns of St John's Cathedral in Brisbane.

St Margaret's Head of Performance Brad King said Classics in the Cathedral was an opportunity to broaden students' performance experiences.

"The event gives students the opportunity to learn and perform classical repertoire, including classical music by contemporary composers, and perform within the spectacular setting of St John's Cathedral," he said.

"One of the joys of performing in St John's Cathedral is having the opportunity to explore the unique properties of the acoustics within the space. St John's has the distinction of having one of the longest reverb times for a cathedral in the southern hemisphere with delays in sound of approximately seven seconds. The acoustic thus can be both exciting and challenging for musicians. The soundscape created is certainly something that is unique and special for our students to experience."

For St Margaret's Year 12 student and Music Captain Akari Komoto it was her sixth and final performance in the Cathedral.

"The highlight of the evening for me was performing a solo piece in such an amazing venue."

The pianist and percussionist continued: "I think that having a background in classical music, especially from a younger age, allows students to understand music from its root base – an understanding that becomes incredibly helpful when exploring other genres of music. Additionally, performing in front of an audience helps develop confidence and individual performance style."

All in attendance were treated to many fantastic performances, ranging from the triumphant 'To Dance Among the Stars', to the moody 'Days of Beauty', a dazzling strings rendition of 'Pictures at an Exhibition' by Mussorgsky and a performance of Mozart's 'Divertimento in F Major'. Music Extension students Akari Komoto, Ashleigh Witenden and Meleia Richardson gave highly engaging performances as part of the program. The evening's finale brought all the student performers together for a combined ensemble performance of 'Tintinnabulum' by Welsh composer Karl Jenkins. This provided an opportunity for the students to participate in a large-scale mass performance and was an exciting conclusion to the event for musicians and audience members.



St Margaret's Head of Performance Brad King conducted the combined ensembles for the finale performance of 'Tintinnabulum' at Classics in the Cathedral in June 2021

The evening's special guest performer – St Margaret's Notable Old Girl and mezzo soprano Xenia Puskarz-Thomas – gave a magical performance of 'Morgen!' by Richard Strauss, accompanied by Jonny Ng on piano with music extension student Ashleigh Witenden on violin. Xenia also performed the classic operatic aria 'O mio babbino caro' from Gianni Schicchi. A dramatic, lyrical piece, it allowed Xenia to demonstrate her stunning vocal capabilities.

Xenia is pursuing her dream to become a professional opera singer, a passion first ignited while at St Margaret's where she was Arts Captain in 2013. Having completed a Bachelor of Music with first class honours, Xenia is now studying remotely with mentors at the Metropolitan Opera, Juilliard School and Curtis Institute of Music. Xenia is also a Young Artist with Opera Queensland.

The pursuit of artistic endeavours is encouraged as part of the St Margaret's experience. Creativity, teamwork and critical thinking are just some of the essential life skills students develop when they participate in the school's music program. Skills that, uniquely, are documented as part of St Margaret's Plus, a program developed to recognise the development of students' skills outside the classroom through participation in extracurricular and philanthropic activities.

Classics in the Cathedral is one of many highlights on the school's calendar serving as a wonderful opportunity for students to share their musical endeavours with family and friends and embodies the school's commitment to developing the whole student.

News • Tuesday 31 August 2021 • By Pat Ashworth

Palestinian Christian held by Israeli military is released on bail



Layan Nasir, a 21-year-old university student and parishioner of St Peter's Anglican / Episcopal Church, Birzeit, was arrested by the Israeli Security Forces on 7 July 2021

A [Palestinian](#) Christian Student, Layan Nasir, who was arrested last month has been released from prison on bail, the Dean of St George's College, Jerusalem, Canon Richard Sewell reported on Friday.

Miss Nasir, a 21-year-old student who is studying nutrition and dietetics at Birzeit University, and is a parishioner of St Peter's Anglican/Episcopal Church, Birzeit, was arrested by the [Israeli](#) Security Forces on 7 July. The 5.30-a.m. raid on her family home involved seven soldiers and 12 military vehicles. She was charged with membership of the Democratic Progressive Student Pole: a student union that the Israeli government has designated an "unlawful association".

She was interrogated at Ofer military prison, and transferred to Damon military prison, where she and seven other female students had been awaiting trial. More than 70 Birzeit students were being held in Israeli prisons for expressing their opposition to Israel's treatment of Palestinians — without the use of violence, it is believed. It is not known whether any others have been released.

The trial was due to take place on Tuesday of this week, but was put back for a further six weeks. According to the [United States](#)-based news source Mondoweiss, the indictment-document list includes assisting new students in purchasing low-cost stationery and leading students in environmental activities.

Canon Sewell wrote on Twitter on Friday morning: "Layan was released on bail last night to fight her case outside prison. The family are so relieved and grateful for prayers, advocacy and solidarity. The struggle continues."

Miss Nasir's church describes her as "a remarkable young woman with a calm demeanour, tender spirit, and incredible potential. Layan was raised in a devout Anglican family to live her faith in whatever challenges may come in life."

The trial delay was a further blow to the family, who were deeply upset, Canon Sewell said on Tuesday.

A petition to the US government on the website [change.org](#) has called for the release of Ms Nasir and all the other detained students. It declares: "The freedoms of expression and peaceful association are fundamental, universal [human rights](#). We call on our elected representatives and those in authority within our government, to demand and pressure the Israeli government and military forces to immediately release Layan and her fellow students."

Birzeit University reported the increased Israeli aggression against its students on 5 August, including the mass arrest of 14 students on 7 July. The violence was neither new nor unprecedented, it said.

It called for international organisations to "take a stand against these severe human rights violations and to raise awareness of them worldwide, exposing these practices that target our students and academics, and hold the occupation authorities accountable to ensure the sanctity of higher-education institutions and protect academic freedoms and human rights".

Miss Nasir's father had told the *Church Times* on Wednesday: "We are distressed and concerned at the way we have been treated when our daughter is completely innocent. We are deeply concerned for our daughter's welfare. But we will fight on for justice."

First published in the [Church Times](#) on 25 August 2021. Visit the *Church Times* website to subscribe today.

Walk the Talk: free toolkit for churches



A Toolkit to Accompany the 'Roadmap for Congregations, Communities and Churches for an Economy of Life and Ecological Justice'

'Walk the Talk' builds on '[Roadmap for Congregations, Communities and Churches for an Economy of Life and Ecological Justice](#)', a 5-step programme to change the way we deal with the economy and our ecological surroundings.

This [toolkit](#) aims to enthuse congregations and churches through concrete examples of communities in action as well as offer good practices and practical materials to "walk the talk" on economic and ecological justice, in each of the areas:

- Living in Accordance with the Covenant with God and Creation
- Renewable Energy and Climate Protection
- Just and Sustainable Consumption
- Economies of Life

Contributors: Louk Andrianos and Dennis Nonnast

'Walk the Talk' builds on the 2019 publication of the World Council of Churches (WCC) titled, 'Roadmap for Congregations, Communities and Churches for an Economy of Life and Ecological Justice', an invitation to discuss a 5-step programme to change the way we deal with the economy and our ecological surroundings.

Churches and other faith-based institutions hold significant resources such as land, buildings, and financial assets. Churches are also employers and consumers and users of all sorts of products and services. What if churches' resources were used to promote sustainable alternatives responding to the

climate emergency and to break the cycle of poverty by making reparations and providing opportunities for decent work, just wages, and fair prices? What if churches collectively applied their purchasing power to support products and companies that consider the wellbeing of communities and our planet? Wouldn't we be living out God's call to transforming discipleship? And wouldn't the world be a kinder, fairer, and more beautiful place?

This toolkit aims to enthuse congregations and churches through concrete examples of communities in action as well as offer good practices and practical materials to “walk the talk” on economic and ecological justice.

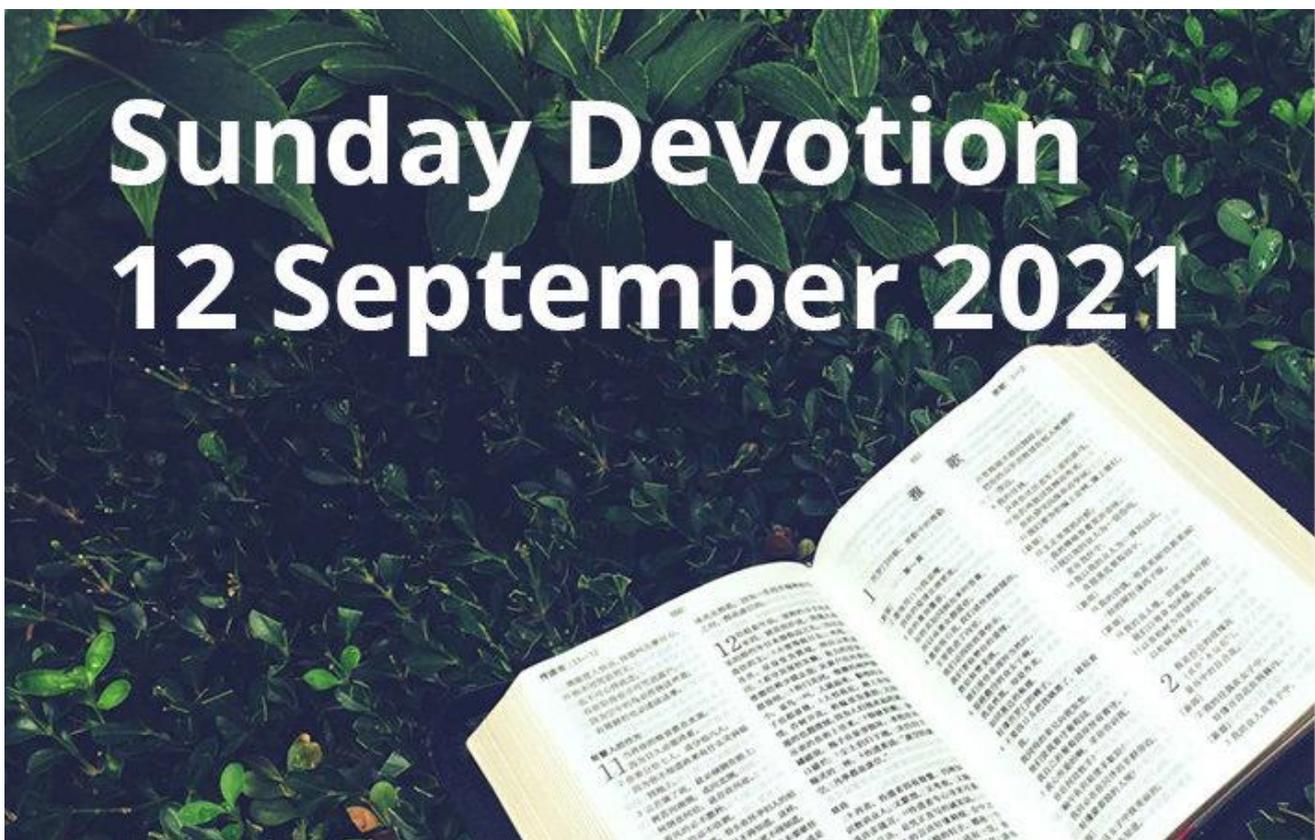
“We invite congregations, communities, and churches to join a pilgrimage for an Economy of Life and climate justice, to commit to make changes in the way we live, to share successful ideas, and to encourage one another.”

First published on the [World Council of Churches website](#) in August 2021 (the toolkit may be [downloaded](#) from the WCC website).

Sunday Devotions • Monday 6 September 2021 • By Levina Fuller

Sunday Devotion: 12 September 2021, Thirteenth Sunday after Pentecost

Are we listening?



“but those who listen to me will be secure and will live at ease, without dread of disaster.” ([Proverbs 1.33](#))

Main Readings: [Proverbs 1.20-33](#); [Psalm 19](#); [James 2.18-26](#); [Mark 8.27-38](#); ([Isaiah 50.4-9a](#); [Psalm 116.1-9](#))

Supplementary Readings: [Psalm 138](#); [Acts 16.6-15](#); [Esther 2.18-3.6](#); [Psalm 116](#); [Mark 9.2-13](#)

For some people, their everyday safety depends upon careful listening. Erik Weihenmayer suffers from a degenerative eye disease which caused him to lose his sight when he was 13, but this didn't stop him from reaching the top of Mt Everest in May 2001. Climbing a mountain where 90 per cent of climbers never make it to the top and where hundreds have died trying, Erik succeeded because he listened to guidance from members of the climbing group.

Erik Weihenmayer's story shows us what we can find and what we can achieve when we listen well. In today's Proverbs reading, Solomon tells us to listen to Wisdom as she cries out to us, calling us to listen to her counsel. In doing so, we will find God's safety, security and peace.

Listening to Christ is important for our Christian journey. The Gospels show us that Christ is wise and that he cares about wellbeing. What better way to listen to Christ than to read His Holy Word, The Bible?

Let us listen to Christ by diligently reading the Word of God.