

Four essential qualities for serving, leading and sharing life in rural ministry



With recent heavy rains across southern Queensland and northern New South Wales, the news cycle has had many images of flooding. Retired ACSQ priest, The Ven. Laurel Raymond, lives on a property half an hour from Goondiwindi. She recently posted a video on Facebook showing her house as an island with water views on every side!

For grain farmers in the region, the rains were a blessing if you'd planted early and harvested, but a curse if you were halfway through harvesting or had not started. Unlike bush fires the significant rainfall has been a blessing, for not only have house tanks and property dams been filled but also many large dams. These include the Leslie Dam (105,893ML – now at 100 per cent), which supplies Warwick, Allora, and Yangan; and the Bjelke-Petersen Dam (134,000ML – now at 98 per cent) in the South Burnett. It has been 10 years since these dams were full.

This is not to say that flooding does not bring hardship. Sadly, some people have lost their lives trying to drive through flooded roads, stock and crops have been lost, and property and fencing have been damaged. I contacted someone at Inglewood to see how they were going because a news report indicated that the town needed to be evacuated. They assured me that they were fine and they were more concerned for people downstream at Goondiwindi.

The hospital and nursing homes at Goondiwindi were evacuated as the Macintyre River rose to 10.7m, with the 65-year-old levee ultimately protecting the town. I contacted one of the Churchwardens at Goondiwindi who assured me that everyone was fine, but they had great concern for people who lived downstream in places like Mungindi.

I was struck by the similarity of these responses to the responses given to offers of help in the years of drought. Consistently there was a concern for neighbour and a recognition that someone was worse off than themselves. The keys to providing effective financial assistance seemed to be working with people on the ground who knew who really had need, and partnering with local businesses for bills to be paid quietly.

Over the last seven and a half years I have come to call the Western Region 'home' and am deeply grateful for friendship shared with lay leaders, clergy, and congregations across a broad geography. I think there are at least four standout qualities demonstrated by many people I work with in rural and remote Australia – generally, they are resilient, creative, hardworking, and faithful.

In many ways you have to be resilient to endure the vagaries of life on the land, which can include prolonged isolation and drought, fire and floods...as well as seasons in which things go well. Creativity is not limited to good land and water management, machinery and digital innovation...but, also includes metal sculpture, painting, and poetry. Hardworking is a given...there are always things that need to be done and nobody else is going to do them! And, 'though faithfulness is a harder thing to measure, it underpins so much – people pray, people hope, people love, people trust that things will work out, and people keep going in circumstances that would overwhelm most.

The [Bush Ministry Fund \(BMF\)](#) helps parishes pay for clergy who will minister in rural and remote communities...and the ACSQ has some significant rural ministry opportunities in 2022. These include two full-time clergy roles based at Goondiwindi and Miles; an unpaid ministry role based at Charleville; and, a number of locum roles.

A filter I bring to those considering ministry in rural communities helps me to look for the four qualities I have mentioned, but considers them in a different order. In 2022 I hope God will call clergy who are **faithful, creative, hardworking,** and **resilient** to serve, lead and share life with communities in rural ministry.

Perhaps you know someone who could consider this invitation?

Editor's note: 23/12/2021: Updated with additional image (of The Ven. Laurel Raymond's property).

The Christmas truce of 1914



Many accounts of the informal and impromptu Christmas truce of 1914 involve soccer matches being played in no man's land between British and German troops (Image sourced from Wikimedia Commons)

On 28 June 1914, the assassination of Archduke Ferdinand of Austria-Hungary plunged Europe into what would become the First World War. Within months German forces invaded France and Belgium. Britain, through its alliances, was drawn into the conflict to support the French. To an extent, they succeeded, in that they stopped the Germans crushing France which, in turn, prevented the German forces from turning to the Eastern Front, and Russia.

Instead, the two armies held each other off in a stalemate. Both forces began to dig in, utilising what little cover they could find and digging, with small trenching tools that they each carried, in order to afford a few more inches of cover and safety.

These were not the 18-year-old conscripts that seem to be highly represented in modern-day cinema – they were professional or recently recalled soldiers. They were not all in the prime of their youth, nor in peak physical condition, but they knew, because they had been promised, that this war would be over by Christmas. By December 1914, the German advance had been halted at the cost of almost 90,000 British soldiers.

The digging led to small trenches being formed. Adjacent trenches eventually joined up to similar trenches nearby, forming a front line. And that front line was wet, muddy and cold – literally freezing cold. Snow began to fall. It was the most terrible of existences that the men on the front lines of both sides experienced, which helps us to understand what happened next.

On Christmas Eve 1914, temperatures plummeted. Frost formed. Mud hardened. British High Command believed an attack by the German forces was imminent and called for “special vigilance” to

be maintained throughout this period. And, the German forces *were* contemplating something – but not an attack. Instead they erected Christmas trees – with candles – in the trenches. The British forces could see them from their own trenches a mere 30 yards (25 metres) away. The Germans opened their post from home, including Christmas gifts from loved ones, since the German culture is such that they open their gifts on Christmas Eve.

And, then they started to sing carols.

At first, the British army was suspicious, until the strains of ‘Stille Nacht’ (‘Silent Night’), a carol from the early 19th century that was originally composed in German, crossed No-man’s-land. Soon British voices joined in the well-known carol. When it ended, words of greeting (rather than the usual words of insult) were shouted across the trenches. “Merry Christmas, Fritz” was called out. Many Germans could speak English and would call back “Merry Christmas, Tommy”. This led to banter between the two armies across one of the most dangerous areas on the planet. This badinage continued throughout the night of 24 December 1914 along the Western Front. Though not everywhere.

Some sectors still had hostility, notably those where the German forces faced the trenches of the occupied nations of France and Belgium, who had suffered invasion. However, almost all of the British/German sectors seemed to have a temporary cessation of hostility.

On Christmas Day, mist fell. The British received their post from home. Princess Mary had set up a gift fund to ensure that *every* single British soldier received a gift, the total value of which would be over \$20 million today. And, they noticed the silence. The artillery had stopped firing. Birdsong was heard over no-man’s-land. The soldiers began to call out words of greeting to each other. This was no ruse – this was humanity at its finest. Gradually, soldiers climbed out of their trenches, responding to each other as human beings, rather than as enemies. No-one was shooting. They walked into no-man’s-land, trusting each other and welcoming each other as they did so. This was the first time they had really seen each other – as people welcoming each other in the spirit of Christmas. Nobody thought of opening fire.

Temporary truces are not unusual – but they are normally planned by the senior officers to retrieve the wounded and bury the dead. This, however, was spontaneous and took place in many places all at once because of the nature of the day, and was initiated by the soldiers on the front line. The dead were buried. The sick were taken to infirmaries. In some cases, the German units even gave wooden crosses to the (somewhat impoverished) British to mark the places of burial. Both nations came together for possibly the most important religious services ever as joint funeral services took place for the dead *on both sides*.

And, then they exchanged gifts. Some gave gifts of cigarettes or chocolate. Some swapped buttons denoting rank. Others merely signed notebooks. Everyone tried to give something to their opponents of just a few hours ago. A few individuals, on each side, had cameras and took photographs of the events, which stunned the European press when they were sent back home. While people were settling down to eat their Christmas dinner, their loved ones were shaking hands with the very person they had been trying to kill just a few hours before. “Fancy shooting at the enemy and then going across to wish them ‘Happy Christmas,’” wrote one soldier. Another commented that “there was not one atom of hate on that day”. It was reported by a German soldier that “one of the [British] officers clasped his hands and raised them to heaven and said ‘my God, why can we not all have peace and let us all go home?’”

When the day ended, the men knew what had happened. They knew its significance. One day of peace in which people welcomed each other. The following day saw a return to hostility.

Sadly, the truce did not continue much beyond Christmas Day. Due to the changing of battalions, the edicts from High Command and the very nature of war, the truce ended – not simultaneously, but within a week.

Historians believe that such an event, with its iconic impact, made no actual difference to the course of the First World War. The Christmas Truce was never (apart from in very few places) repeated. Partly this was due to orders from above, but also because the nature of war changed significantly during 1915 – it became nastier with far more civilian casualties involved. In particular, the British army then became made up primarily of volunteers who joined because they had lost relatives in the early months of the war.

But, for those who were there, this was “a brief interlude of peace that we remember to this day”. It was a celebration that reinforced the central theme of the Christmas story: “Peace on Earth”.

Reflections • Tuesday 21 December 2021 • By Fenlan Miller

Development, service and adventure: The Duke of Edinburgh’s Award programme



**“The Border track through the Gold Coast Hinterland is one of the most gorgeous expeditions I have”
(Fen Miller)**

During my time in high school at All Saints’ Anglican School on the Gold Coast, my fondest memories weren’t created solving complex problems in maths class or when analysing poetry in English.

Instead, the memories I will cherish most were made summiting mountains and paddling down rapids with my mates as part of the Duke of Edinburgh's Award programme, which was facilitated by my school.

The Duke of Edinburgh's Award (DofE) is an excellent opportunity for young people internationally to develop themselves and learn a variety of skills and activities along the way.

Founded in 1956 by the late Duke of Edinburgh, Prince Philip, the programme motivates young people from all walks of life to become involved with a balanced mix of developmental activities, voluntary community service and adventurous journeys.

In order to complete the DofE programme, participants must participate in a chosen skill, physical activity, community service and adventurous journey across a three- to 12-month period, depending on the award level. There are three Award levels – bronze, silver and gold.

Across Australia there are a number of award centres that help eager participants fulfill these criteria, and I had the pleasure of completing mine through my high school, All Saints' Anglican School.

All Saints' has a team of exceptional staff who help facilitate the DofE Award, organise expeditions and help support participants, all on top of their regular workload.

The team is also comprised of four grade 12 student captains who serve a crucial role in mentoring and teaching younger students on the various expeditions throughout the year.

In 2018 I had the opportunity to serve as one of the DofE captains, a role that was fantastic for my personal development, leadership and confidence.

The year I spent as captain was certainly a highlight of the programme for me. I was lucky enough to attend all seven expeditions run by All Saints', including a four-day hike around Moreton Island, climbing to the summit of Mount Barney and a five-day paddling trip down the Clarence River in New South Wales.

The most rewarding part of captaining the programme and mentoring the younger students was watching their progression throughout the year. For some, their initial DofE expedition is their first time camping and hiking, which is naturally a challenging experience.

Watching a student grow from someone who can barely pitch a tent to someone who can hike and live out bush for five days with a smile is incredibly satisfying, and something that I believe to be one of the most valuable aspects of the programme.

I recall on one of my first expedition trips as captain through the Gold Coast Hinterland, one of the student walking group participants sustained a minor ankle injury in some particularly tough terrain. Without prompting or hesitation, the group of fellow students dove straight into action, dividing up the weight from the injured student's pack and helping the student through the undulating terrain. Despite being already challenged themselves, the resilience and willingness of other walking group members to assist a team member was so fantastic to watch, and the injured student with the help of mates was able to complete the final day of the trip in good spirits.

The programme has also led to me forming life-long memories and friendships during activities that I otherwise may never have had the opportunity to experience.

I will be forever grateful for the sense of adventure and commitment to service and development the DofE Award has instilled in me. These qualities have been incredibly helpful in my university years.

Since graduating from All Saints' in 2018, I have had the opportunity to return to the All Saints' DofE programme as a support staff member on expeditions. I look forward to continuing to work with the amazing students and school and DofE staff into the future.

News • Wednesday 22 December 2021 • By Philippe Coquerand

Anglicare Gympie thanks community for presents this Christmas



The Gympie Anglicare Children & Families team would like to thank the whole Gympie region community for the outpouring of presents this year for children living in care

The Gympie Anglicare Foster and Kinship Care service would like to thank the generosity of local community members associated with the Gympie Sports Club, the Gympie St Peter's Anglican Church and the Gympie community who donated much needed presents for children in out-of-home care as well as the biological children of our amazing volunteer carers, putting smiles on young faces this Christmas.

Anglicare appreciates the community support and wishes everyone in the Gympie community a safe and wonderful Christmas and New Year.

"We really appreciate the gifts that were donated for our children living in care so they can have a lovely Christmas," Service Manager Sue Mills said.

“We wish you all a very Merry Christmas and a happy New Year.”

Anglicare Foster and Kinship Gympie recruits, trains, and provides ongoing support to volunteer carers who open up their homes and hearts to provide 24/7 care to local children in need.

Anglicare Southern Queensland is one of Queensland’s most trusted community services and health care organisations.

First published on the [Anglicare Southern Queensland website](#) on 21 December 2021.

Spotlight Q&A • Wednesday 22 December 2021 • By Tapiwanashe Masvaure

Q&A with North Pine Anglican Church parishioner and Ichthus camp leader, Tapiwanashe Masvaure



Tapiwanashe with other camp leaders Emma, Eleanor and Aaron at Junior Ichthus Camp in 2021

Tapiwanashe Masvaure is a proud North Pine Anglican Church parishioner and AYCF Ichthus camp leader. Her family is originally from Zimbabwe.

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

I started as a kid’s’ church volunteer at North Pine Anglican Church in 2017 and have been an AYCF Ichthus camper since 2016, and an Ichthus leader since 2019.

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

One of North Pine Anglican’s core values is ‘Youth & Children’ – the intentional investment in children, young people and families to see them grow in their love of God. My current role in children’s ministry as an Ichthus leader and as a kids’ church volunteer enables me to advocate and practise this mission for children in the wider community. It gives me the opportunity to watch kids grow in their

relationship with Christ and, most importantly, learn from them to continue setting a Christ-like example to follow.

What has been one of your highlights as a parishioner of North Pine Anglican Church?

Often it is easy to fall victim to the commercialised side of Christmas, so my fond memory of our North Pine Christingle service in 2019 gives me hope that though we currently gather in smaller numbers, the presence of the Lord is very much felt, just as it was in Bethlehem on that holy night. Amongst the fragrance of a sweet citrus decorated in lollies and covered by cascading melting wax, stood a small group of people united in song celebrating the birth of a newborn who saved humanity. With the warm glow of both the candles and the fairy lights decorating the altar's cross, the unexpected feeling of peace I felt all around me made this one of the best memories I have had as a North Pine parishioner.

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

My parents' example in giving back to the community helped me learn from a very young age that putting others before one's self is the best way to adhere to and 'live' Christ's teachings. This has led me to volunteering at North Pine Anglican Church, participating in interstate service mission trips during school holidays and volunteering to lead at Ichthus camps.

What is your favourite scripture and why?

"He determines the number of the stars; he gives to all of them their names." ([Psalm 147.4](#))

This scripture fits North Pine Anglican Church's core value of "Together", especially the importance of celebrating how our community is diverse in age and cultural backgrounds and that though we are many and unique, we (like the stars) are wonderful masterpieces who are deeply loved by our Creator and made in His image.

What person of faith inspires you the most and why?

My mother is my source of inspiration – a modern day 'Good Samaritan'. Her dedication to working in non-governmental organisations back home in Zimbabwe and in Australia and her never-ending participation in her community, whether it be through Mothers Union or through her 'open door policy' to those in need, are what have inspired me to help. Without her nurturing care and passion to help others, I would not be doing what I am doing today, I am very grateful to have grown up with such a strong and God-loving woman as a role model.

2022's Diocesan theme is 'Being Together: Embracing Joy'. What are some practical ways that we can celebrate the way differences help to make us whole and the importance of diversity in our unity?

This theme is integral to one of my personal missions. To me differences are like puzzle pieces – only by uniting in our uniqueness's (like jigsaw pieces connecting), can God's full picture of love be portrayed. There is beauty in diversity, and unconditional love to those around you helps keep hope alive.

What are the primary strengths of the Anglican Church and what is the best way to make the most of these for the benefit of our communities?

One of the primary strengths of the Anglican Church is the importance placed on practising what you preach and praying in our everyday lives. This aligns with one of my favourite North Pine Anglican Church core values of 'Going Deeper' by seeking to encounter God daily through respectful honest conversations, authentic relationships and Biblical exploration. I believe that going deeper in one's personal faith allows one to be accepting and provides opportunities to reach out to others.

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

My parents left all they knew and their loved ones in Zimbabwe to seek a better life for their children. They instil in us traditional values and teach us about the importance of remembering our cultural roots and how far (as a family) we have come. They have taught us the importance of embracing differences and resilience through community and family support.

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

My great grandmother told me, "Tapie, in everything that you do and in everyone that you meet, love. No matter the challenges, no matter the hardships, no matter the anger that you may feel towards the person or thing, do all things in love. For in love, the Lord will keep you and bless you." Every day I aspire to live by that advice.

What's your best childhood memory?

Spending my school holiday breaks at my grandparents' farms, climbing and eating in mango trees with my cousins and playing with the animals.



Tapiwanashe and her family on the Masvaure family farm in 2017

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

In my free time I love to read and paint. I am currently reading *The Alchemist* by Paulo Coelho and I would highly recommend it! As for the painting, I live by the motto that the best artworks take centuries to complete.

Where do you do your best thinking?

I feel most at peace when I am drawing or painting. It is when I can truly express myself without the need to filter words.

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

Start a new art/craft project, without finishing my previous one.

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

My parents' wedding day in because I saw a plethora of different people from all walks of life and backgrounds come to support wonderful human beings as they wedded.

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

If not now, then when; if not you, then who?

News • Thursday 23 December 2021 • By Michelle McDonald

Dalby Anglican grazier rescues woman from ute roof in dangerous floodwaters



**"My nephew and godson, Scott, a good fella, came back later with me to take this photo with a drone"
(Doug Browne)**

A 75-year-old Dalby Anglican and grazier used a jet ski to courageously save the life of a young woman stranded in rapid floodwaters near Dalby recently.

Doug Browne took a shortcut when returning home via jet ski after checking on his flooded cattle station at Springvale, over 200 kilometres west of Brisbane, earlier this month and saw the young woman waving desperately from her ute roof.

The woman's ute was reportedly swept into the rapidly-moving floodwaters from Springvale Bridge mid-morning on Saturday 4 December.

Mr Browne said that the rescue was the most dangerous he has undertaken.

"I run cattle on river country and whenever the river floods, I naturally need to check on the cattle and I use a jet ski to do this," Mr Bowne said.

"It was a freak occurrence that I came along, as I took a shortcut home in the secondary river channel and I couldn't believe my eyes when I looked up and saw a girl on the top of a ute screaming for help.

"After her ute got tied up in my barbed wire fence, she climbed out the window because she couldn't open the door and tried to ring her family at St George, but that is 200 kilometres away.

"She was screaming 'help, help' and I knew that she was in big trouble because the water had reached the ceiling of the ute.

"I had several attempts to get close to her, but there was so much turbulence in the current it was quite difficult.

"I am an experienced rescuer, as I am a volunteer rural fire warden, and this was a life or death situation.

"Every time I approached the ute, the jet ski would be thrown one metre sideways when it touched the side of the ute.

"She did an unexpected flying leap from the ute and landed on the back of the jet ski.

"I asked her to sit on it properly and to hang on and I then took her to my place.

"I have two daughters myself. I don't want to be made a hero because anyone would do it – what sort of a person would leave a girl stranded like that?

"Her name is Hannah and she is very young – late teens, I think – and she had a little cry when she got rescued.

"When she was at our home, she gave my wife Lexie and me a hug and Lexie gave her lunch and took care of her until her mother drove from St George to pick her up.

"Her mother called in a week later and gave me a Christmas card with a scratchie and lotto ticket in it, a Christmas cake and a bottle of rum.

"I'll be texting Hannah tomorrow to check in on her again."

Mr Browne said that while he and his wife Lexie are unable to attend regular Sunday services, that they stay connected to the local Anglican church through dedicated parish priest, The Rev'd David Browne.

"The Rev'd David Browne dropped in a Christmas card yesterday," he said.

"We get on quite well – he is a good bloke and we are both former rugby players.

"He especially comes to see my wife Lexie because she doesn't get to church as much these days now that she has Alzheimer's, although we are going to a Christmas service together tomorrow night."

Priest for The Parish of Dalby The Rev'd David Browne said that Doug and Lexie Browne are quintessential Western Region Anglicans, who are well known for their dependability and hospitality.

"Doug his beautiful wife Lexie are salt-of-the-earth Anglicans and so I was not surprised to hear that Doug came to the woman in her time of need and that Lexie cared for her later so gently and warmly in their home," The Rev'd Browne said.

"People are asking me if Doug and I are related given we have the same surname – I wish I could say that we are related; however, I am proud that he and Lexie are part of our parish family."

Mr Browne's family has owned their two Springvale farms since the 1920s, with both farms holding 1879 original titles.

At the age of 75, he still works seven days a week to rear cattle and grow wheat, barley, chickpeas, sorghum and mung beans.

Mr Browne said that he took over the running of the farm when he was only 16 years of age after his father was diagnosed with cancer.

"I love doing what I do. I am never bored because it's always a challenge – at 75 and a half, I am always busy," he said.

"I have lived here all my life and I know the river country backwards and my father lived here before me.

"On each side of the river there is a channel that floods with heavy rains – it's called a secondary channel.

"The current is often more intense in the secondary river channels because the water is trying to escape.

"I got caught once myself in a monstrous flood in 2010 or 2011 – it was the first flood ever to go through my house and it went three-bricks high.

"I was checking on my cattle and the cattle had water up to their backs and some of the calves had washed away.

"I got snagged in the barbed wire fence, not knowing that the bottom wires were broken by debris going through.

"I was wearing soft rubber diving boots, which got caught in the barbed wire, and as I reached down to release myself, I got knocked over.

"I stayed calm, released myself before coming to the surface completely out of breath and then went with the current – it took me a few hours to reach dry land.

"Every now and then, I stopped to hold onto trees, which were full of ants and snakes.

"I was so tired when I reached land, I had to crawl home a couple of hundred metres because I couldn't get to my legs.

"A friend flew me via helicopter to the local hospital because I was cut all over my legs from the barbed wire and the water was full of manure and such."

Mr Browne said that he worries about people getting stuck in dangerous floodwaters and offers wise advice.

"If you do get stuck in floodwaters, my advice is not to panic, to stay calm and float with the current, keeping your head above water while getting your thoughts about the best way to veer off to dry land," he said.

"Don't fight the current, as it will exhaust you.

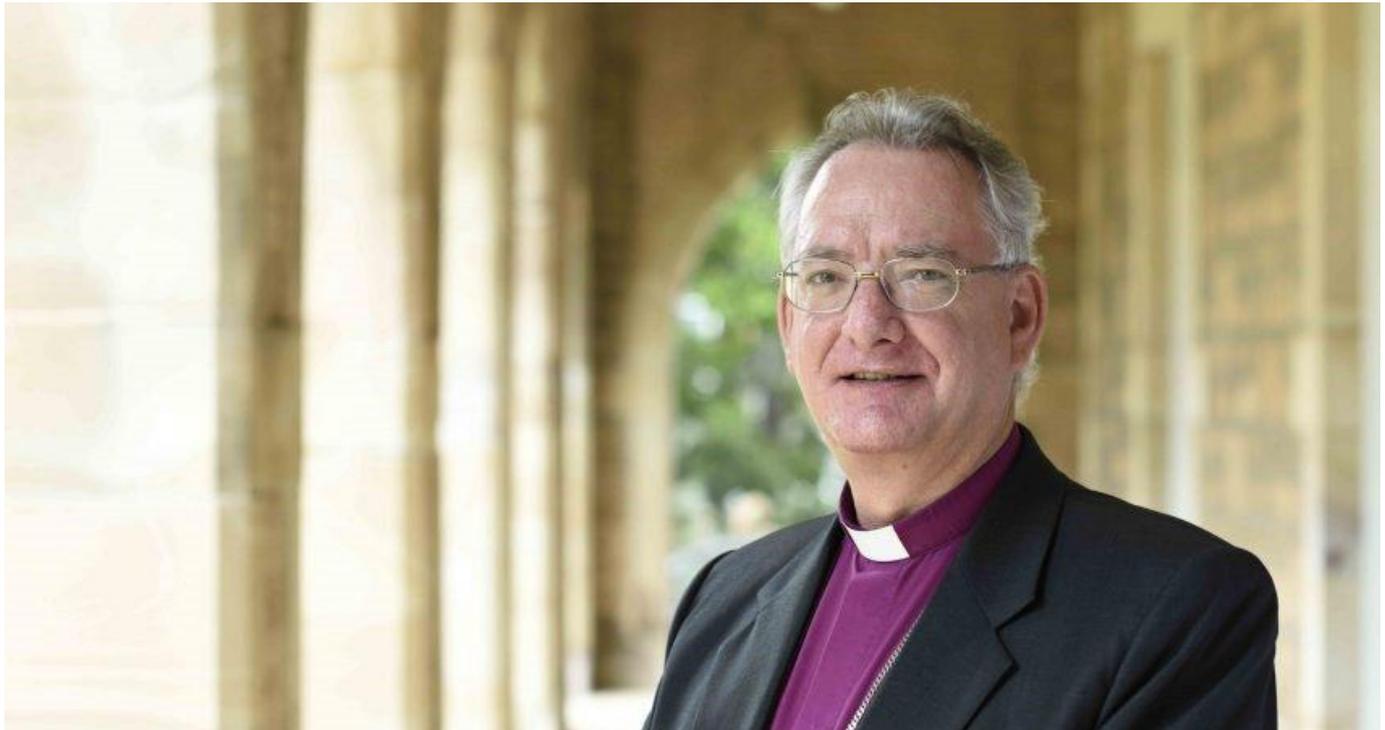
"Most importantly, listen to the warnings of the emergency services – if they say don't go into floodwaters, don't go into floodwaters.

"Even if the road seems open, it may be unsafe.

"Speaking from experience, just don't go into floodwaters."

Editor's note: Thank you to the somewhat reluctant Doug Browne for sharing his story. Out of concern for motorists, Mr Browne agreed to share his story as long as he was able to communicate the danger of driving in floodwaters. We are very blessed to have folk like the Browne family in our Diocesan community.

#ChangeTheHeart 2022: invitation from the Archbishop



Dear sisters and brothers,

Invitation to #ChangeTheHeart 2022

I have received the following message from Jane Kelly, Creation and Climate Justice Coordinator of [Common Grace](#).

Common Grace is excited to share with you an invitation from Aunty Jean Phillips, Senior Aboriginal Christian Leader, to the annual #ChangeTheHeart event.

Attached is your special invite to #ChangeTheHeart 2022.

#ChangeTheHeart is a nationally simulcast event with Common Grace and ACCTV on **Tuesday 25 January 2022 7.30pm AEDT**. Local times in each State and Territory are 7.30pm in ACT, Vic, NSW, Tas, 7pm in SA, **6.30pm in Qld**, 6pm in NT, and 4.30pm WA.

#ChangeTheHeart is led by Aboriginal Christian Leaders as we approach 26 January 26. It is a moment for our nation to come together in the spirit of national truth-telling, lament for injustices faced by Aboriginal peoples, calls to action, prayer, and reflection.

We especially invite you to join with others in your local electorate and community who will be gathering to watch #ChangeTheHeart together on 25 January 2022. Places hosting a screening #ChangeTheHeart 2022 are listed on the [Common Grace website](#) and are added weekly so please keep checking right up until #ChangeTheHeart for a place near you. Show your community you support Aboriginal peoples and are willing to listen, learn, and love.

You can also watch on your own, with friends or family, from the comfort of your own home. #ChangeTheHeart will be simulcast on ACCTV, [online](#) and on radio.

More details can be found on the [Common Grace website](#).

Please RSVP so we can let Aunty Jean Phillips know you will be watching and if you are attending a venue we can also let them know. Please also encourage your colleagues and staff to attend.

On the day, 25 January 2022, we would love you to share on your social media that you will be participating in #ChangeTheHeart and tagging Common Grace @commongraceaus. Please share an image of you and words along the lines of "Today I participate in #ChangeTheHeart and answer the call to our nation from Aunty Jean Phillips and Aboriginal Christian Leaders with @commongraceaus."

At our recent Synod we passed a resolution encouraging all ACSQ parishes, schools and other agencies to engage positively with the recently launched Diocesan Innovate Reconciliation Action Plan ('RAP'), including:

1. Growing our relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples locally;
2. Exploring local steps forward toward Reconciliation in line with the RAP;
3. Supporting Diocesan RAP activities; and
4. Sharing "good news" stories with the wider Diocese.

Participating in Common Grace's #ChangeTheHeart 2022 online event provides an ideal occasion in which to turn words into action and, as Anglicans, to grow our relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples locally and to explore local steps toward Reconciliation in line with the RAP.

I commend #ChangeTheHeart 2022 to you and ask you to invite community members in your local parishes and faith communities to join in the activities to demonstrate your support.

Yours in Christ,

The Most Reverend Dr Phillip Aspinall AC
Archbishop of Brisbane

Being guided by the Holy Spirit in everyday life



"I try and read the Bible while I eat breakfast so God's word is one of the first things I see when I wake up" (Lucy Dougherty)

I think that being guided by the Holy Spirit in everyday life means being actively and unashamedly involved in your faith. This can look very different for different people, as we all have different ways of best engaging with the Spirit.

For me, I try and read the Bible while I eat breakfast so God's word is one of the first things I see when I wake up. I also like to pray while I'm driving, as it is often a time when I am alone and am free to think.

I also think that being bold in your faith is important when being guided by the Spirit, and telling others about Jesus.

By intentionally growing in faith, taking time to reflect and discern before making decisions and sometimes choosing the less popular path are ways that we can be more open to the Holy Spirit guiding us.

I can see the Holy Spirit working through many people in my faith community, but my mum has always been a particular inspiration for me as she is always faithful no matter where God is leading her or our family. Other than her faithfulness, she demonstrates many of the other fruits of the spirit in her everyday actions, which always inspires me to be more loving, gentle, kind and peaceful.

Christmas is a really good time to slow down and take a step back to look at your faith. As we see the Christmas season becoming more and more secular, it is important for us as Christians to be Spirit-filled people and to show the world the meaning of Christmas.

As Christmas is also a season of joy and love, we can spread the love of Christ to our communities by being filled with the Holy Spirit.

Baptism book resource for churches: Welcome to a New Family



"So, no suitable Baptism resource? The Rev'd Mark Vincent is our senior priest and it was his idea for us to write and produce our own resource" (The Rev'd Paul Bland)

"When it came to pastoral ministry, I couldn't find a decent resource that I could use to prepare families for Baptism. The available texts were either unengaging or a poor cultural fit for the community we serve. When I couldn't find what we needed on the shelves of Christian bookshops, I decided that we could produce our own book – and share it with others."

The Rev'd Mark Vincent, Honorary Assistant Priest, St Paul's, East Brisbane

St Paul's is a small, lively parish on the edge of Brisbane's CBD. We have a beautiful church, albeit built for a much larger congregation than the one we now have, and a great record of service and witness in East Brisbane. At first sight, however, we have all the problems that parishes located on the city fringe confront. We have few families with small children. Many of our people are older, with most retired. While the members of our congregation are generous souls, we can't afford to pay a full-time stipend. We rely on the generosity of four very different non-stipendiary clergy who bring their unique talents to a team ministry.

Like all churches in this situation, we have spent many hours discussing the way forward. The single most important step in this was reframing the way we look at ourselves and the world. In a sense, it's just a matter of taking the Gospel seriously and counting our blessings. Our parish situation doesn't amount to a list of deficits – we aren't defined by what we once had and don't have any longer. In fact,

St Paul's runs on the same wonderful principle that the German educator, Dr Kurt Hahn, gave to the world in Outward Bound, the Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme and the Round Square schools: *plus est en vous*. "There's more in you than you think!" You start with what you have – the remarkable thing is that there's always more there than you can imagine.

So, no suitable Baptism resource? The Rev'd Mark Vincent is our senior priest and it was his idea for us to write and produce our own resource. Mark turned to me, an aging priest with "permission to officiate" (PTO), to manage the project. I'm a former teacher and school principal and also a writer of children's stories, which I [publish online](#). Could I produce the text for a book that a priest could use in multiple ways for baptism preparation – with families of small children and with adults as well? Could the book also double as a gift from the parish at Baptism? And, could the book be a sacramentally faithful resource that we could share with other parishes? I soon found that meeting these multiple demands was going to be the biggest challenge of the commission.

One of the greatest blessings in the project was the contribution by Tracy Beadnell, our illustrator. Tracy was a member of the wider community when the project began. She lived near the church and called in at times to use our hall. The relationship developed from there. Tracy turned out to be a person of deep spirituality, and she is also a highly-gifted, creative professional artist. Mark asked Tracy if she could take on the Baptism book as a professional project. This would be a formal commission, paying Tracy for her work. With wide experience in Australia, the UK and China, Tracy brought beyond her artistic talent to the project. She also brought a terrific intuitive gift for turning text and ideas into illustrations. This was to be the first book she illustrated, and from the start Tracy seemed to know what was wanted.

The first step, of course, was writing the text that ticked all the boxes that Mark wanted addressed. We settled on the idea of "parallel texts", with each page opening featuring text boxes on both sides. The text on the right-hand side (the side to which they eye naturally goes when reading a picture book) featured information written for a child. On the left-hand side of the book, the same information was presented in adult language. And, the illustration wrapping around the text through the two A4 pages would present that information or idea in visual form.

Tracy really shone at this stage of the book's development. She seemed to have an intuitive grasp of the best way to move from a theological truth or an abstract idea into a visual or concrete presentation. Tracy and I often met to discuss what the text needed. Her watercolour illustrations are stunning, insightful and intense.

Perhaps the best thing about Tracy's work was the strong sense of locality, with a sense of "this is our parish; this is our church; these are our people". Those in the know can identify individual members of the congregation, which is wonderfully affirming. After about eight weeks, we had the completed text and accompanying illustrations. *Welcome to a New Family* was ready for publication.

So far, we had used solely our own local people, but the next step was beyond us. It was time to involve someone with skills in graphic design. I called in the kindness of friends at St Aidan's Anglican Girls' School to help take us forward. The Chaplain, The Rev'd Gillian Moses, is a much better theologian than I am and kindly read the text for me. Then it was over to Ms Annie Fanning, a very talented (diplomatic) designer. She helped us in a number of ways to ensure that the final presentation of the book did justice to Tracy's wonderful artwork.

The response to our Baptism book resource project has been wonderfully encouraging. Bishops and Archbishops have been keen to endorse the book and school chaplains and Religious Education teachers have also been enthusiastic. Book sales are picking up nicely. The Parish Council was very keen to see the book distributed, so we could cover our costs or even generate revenue to seed other projects. We're on a roll!

However, above all, the book is a celebration of our own community – a little congregation that punches above its weight. It's our Kingdom building, COVID-19 collaboration project for 2021.

There have been some criticisms, of course. Someone didn't like the fashion worn by some women congregation members depicted in the book. A few people have prickled at the effort we have made to be inclusive and respectful of difference. Someone else has criticised the book as not being inclusive enough.

I courageously sent a copy to the Archbishop of Canterbury on the premise that lots of unhappy things must cross his desk and our book might remind him that despite the challenges we face as a Church, the Holy Spirit is working to build the Kingdom in local settings in ways that bless us most unexpectedly.

You can purchase *Welcome to a New Family* at the Cathedral Shop instore or [online](#) or by ordering a copy from the Parish Administrator at St Paul's, East Brisbane by emailing stpaulseastbrisbane@gmail.com. The book costs \$10, excluding postage and packaging.

Five top tips for producing your own book resource:

1. Take time to clarify the purpose and audience of the book.
2. Reach out to skilled people in your own faith community and beyond to source the writing, editing, illustration, design and print skills needed.
3. Draft the text first and work out how the text will be structured on the pages before illustration tasks commence, ensuring that the illustrations represent the appropriate diversity.
4. Allow decent lead times as creative church projects such as this require much discussion and collaboration.
5. Find ways to distribute your book so other parishes can use it as a resource, including Anglican Church channels and wider denominational channels.

A daily memorial to the costs of dispossession



The Rev'd Glenn Loughrey has supplied artwork for a website designed to remember the violent dispossession of Australia's First Nation peoples

AN ONLINE monument acknowledging the violent dispossession of Aboriginal people features a daily format, partly inspired by the Anglican and Catholic traditions daily reflective offerings.

So That We Remember provides a daily calendar of excerpts from historical sources and modern historians' work on Australia's history of colonialism and the consequences of this for First Nations peoples.

Its creators hope that the daily format will bring the painful history into the public eye.

Queensland-based Anglican priest Reverend Ray Barraclough has compiled the website, which features artwork from Melbourne Anglican priest and Aboriginal artist Reverend Glenn Loughrey.

Dr Barraclough said the project was partially spurred on by a line from historian Mark McKenna's Quarterly Essay, in which he noted there were no official state monuments commemorating the death and dispossession inflicted on First Nations peoples after white settlers arrived.

He said the format was partly inspired by the daily offerings of the Anglican and Catholic traditions.

"In compiling *So That We Remember*, we offer it as a daily memorial to the cost to Indigenous lives in the emergence of contemporary Australia," he wrote on the website.

"Those lives deserve to be remembered. The consequences of that colonisation process are still with us. There are no exits from the realities of this history."

Speaking to *The Melbourne Anglican*, Dr Barraclough said the goal for the project was to get this painful history into the public eye and hopefully reduce ignorance towards Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders.

He said he hoped fellow Australians could grasp that when they had a traumatised people as part of their national community, they needed to acknowledge their experience and their history.

“Most Australians have anecdotal understandings of Indigenous people,” he said.

“The main public consciousness is related to the individuals, the individualisation, rather than being aware of what are the consequences for a traumatised people.

“A community or a country needs to give attention to this, because it needs healing, and it needs hearing within the ears of the nation itself.”

Mr Loughrey said Dr Barraclough had approached him about using his artwork several years ago, when the project was initially slated to be released as a book. He said he was happy to open up his archive of paintings for the project.

“You don’t create art to keep it home in the cupboard. If it’s in synergy with the project and it can speak something new and different into that project, can enunciate something about the project, then I think it’s worthwhile doing,” he said.

“A lot of my art is about this story, so it’s easily taken and put into this place.”

Mr Loughrey said his work drew on these themes of violence and dispossession of First Nations people in Australia because his creativity came out of corporeal experience.

“For Aboriginal people the corporeal experience has been one of dispossession and violence,” he said.

“That’s what we all have carried because of damage to country, damage to people, people not being able to identify as Aboriginal, loss of language, all of that.

“This story sits at the bottom of our self-awareness and our self-expression and our consciousness about ourselves and how the western world sees us.”

Mr Loughrey and Dr Barraclough both agreed that creating the project as a website increased its potential to reach a wider audience, which made it more effective as a tool to further understanding and reconciliation.

“We can have truth telling exercises but they’re very limited in how they reach people,” Mr Loughrey said.

“If we want to talk seriously about doing reconciliation and writing the wrongs from the past, we have to know what they are.

“This document gives you 365 examples of what happened and that fact that it was systemic – it wasn’t just bad people doing bad things. It opens up a whole set of ways into the story who really want to do something constructive.”

Dr Barraclough said he was conscious that the project was entering the “history wars”, and that some might call the focus “passé”. But he said there was no such thing as closure when it came to historical trauma that shapes the future.

“Countries try to close it down, like Turkey with the Armenian massacre, Kampuchea, Indonesia closes it down in regards to the 1965 massacres,” he said.

“There is no closure on this kind of thing. Australian history is haunted by what we’re journeying into.”

He added that the project was a secular piece of work despite his and Mr Loughrey’s connections with the Church, but he hoped Christians would see how their faith had a role to play in this history too.

“We quote bits of religion in the excerpts: some of it is good, some of it is embarrassing,” he said.

“But for those conservative Christians who say Australia was founded on Christian values, I hope they might have a little time to read this history to realise how pretty hollow that runs in terms of real history, not rhetorical history.”

The website was officially launched at the start of December, with more than a month’s worth of daily texts to be added over the coming weeks. You can visit the site at sothatweremember.com.au.

First published in [The Melbourne Anglican](#) on 14 December 2021.

News • Wednesday 22 December 2021 • By World Council of Churches

Brother Alois: Faith in Christ means strengthening unity



Brother Alois, prior of the Taizé community, visiting the World Council of Churches on 3 December 2021. His message for next year, "Becoming Creators of Unity", includes six proposals encouraging unity at all levels (Photo: Ivars Kupcis/WCC)

Following the current health situation in the world, the Taizé European meeting at the end of this year will take place online. How has the pandemic affected the life of the Taizé community, and what are the main ways of your continuous spiritual support to young people all over the world?

Brother Alois: We have to be more flexible, like everybody, and adapt to the situation. Our European meetings, for example – we have been holding them for 40 years already, always in a different city and country. This year’s meeting should have taken place in Torino, Italy – but as it cannot take place due to the current situation, we have decided not just to cancel it, and not just to have it as an online meeting at the end of the year. For the young adults from all over Europe to actually meet the local people, we will have a second meeting, from 7-10 July in Torino—hoping that this will be possible.

In Taizé, first of all, it was not easy for our community to adapt to the situation of the pandemic—there were moments when we had to completely close our welcome. We could not have imagined this, that we would be only among ourselves, the brothers. It was a difficult time on different levels – spiritual, psychological, even economically, as we had to find new ways of earning our living.

We are glad that people could come back this summer, when we had quite a lot of guests for the weekly meetings in Taizé.

Taizé has always cared for young people, supporting and inspiring them on their faith journey. Do you see any changes in how easy or difficult it is to attract attention of young people today, when most of our interactions take place online?

Brother Alois: We were astonished to find out that online prayers have been a help for so many people throughout the world. But the question remains how to accompany young people today on their spiritual research. They are looking for a meaning in life. We see surprising things happening during the youth meetings in Taizé—for example, after spending a week with our community, quite a lot of young people say that silence has been so important for them. So, it is not the teaching first of all – but the silence. And that is astonishing in today’s world. We see a deeper longing coming up to the surface, and young people feel the spiritual thirst deep down in them. If we feel there is a spiritual thirst within us, we become open to listen to the Gospel.

Besides the Taizé prayers available online, you now have also other activities, like meetings and workshops held online. Do you see it as a useful addition to the spiritual support the Taizé community can offer?

Brother Alois: Yes, it is very useful in the current situation, and perhaps also beyond the pandemic—these meetings online could continue in some way. But of course they cannot replace the personal encounter – we see that people who are coming to Taizé now are so glad they can meet in person again, be together in the church, sing together. Faith and community life belong together – we cannot separate them. Faith in Christ means to strengthen community life and to strengthen unity.

I will soon publish my message for next year, *Becoming Creators of Unity*, six proposals for unity. It is about promoting unity at all levels – in our society, where there are more and more divisions, in our churches, but also in our families and in our heart. Unity is indeed important also within each of us personally. This will be the theme and the topic for us this coming year.

Do you see intersections between your message on unity for next year, and the theme of the upcoming WCC Assembly, “Christ’s love moves the world to reconciliation and unity”?

Brother Alois: They have the same focus, and I would like us to work more hand-in-hand in this regard. Taizé and the World Council of Churches share the same concern. We are looking forward to the WCC Assembly and hope to contribute to it.

The Taizé community carries on the ‘pilgrimage of trust’ started by Brother Roger over 30 years ago. What do you see as areas in the world today where trust is needed most?

Brother Alois: Everywhere, and in all our societies. What makes trust difficult is fear. And fear is more and more present and visible – fear of the foreigner, of those who are different, fear for the future, fear caused by climate change and ecological disasters. Trust is not just an easy answer – but rooting our life in the love of Christ always keeps a space open for hope. There is a horizon beyond: the resurrection of Jesus. There is a horizon beyond the end, or beyond what we see as the end, namely death. Faith in the resurrection of Christ opens up a horizon beyond the difficulties. It gives us hope and courage to face all difficult situations.

With so many divisions and so many people left on the margins today – what is your message to people in the world these Christmas?

Brother Alois: Christ came to be close to those who are on the margins, who are not privileged in life. This awakens in us a responsibility for sharing. Let’s start on our personal level, with sharing what we have. Also, our churches could become much more places for sharing, even materially, for helping each other and really forming communities of life together – not only communities for Sunday prayer, but communities of shared life.

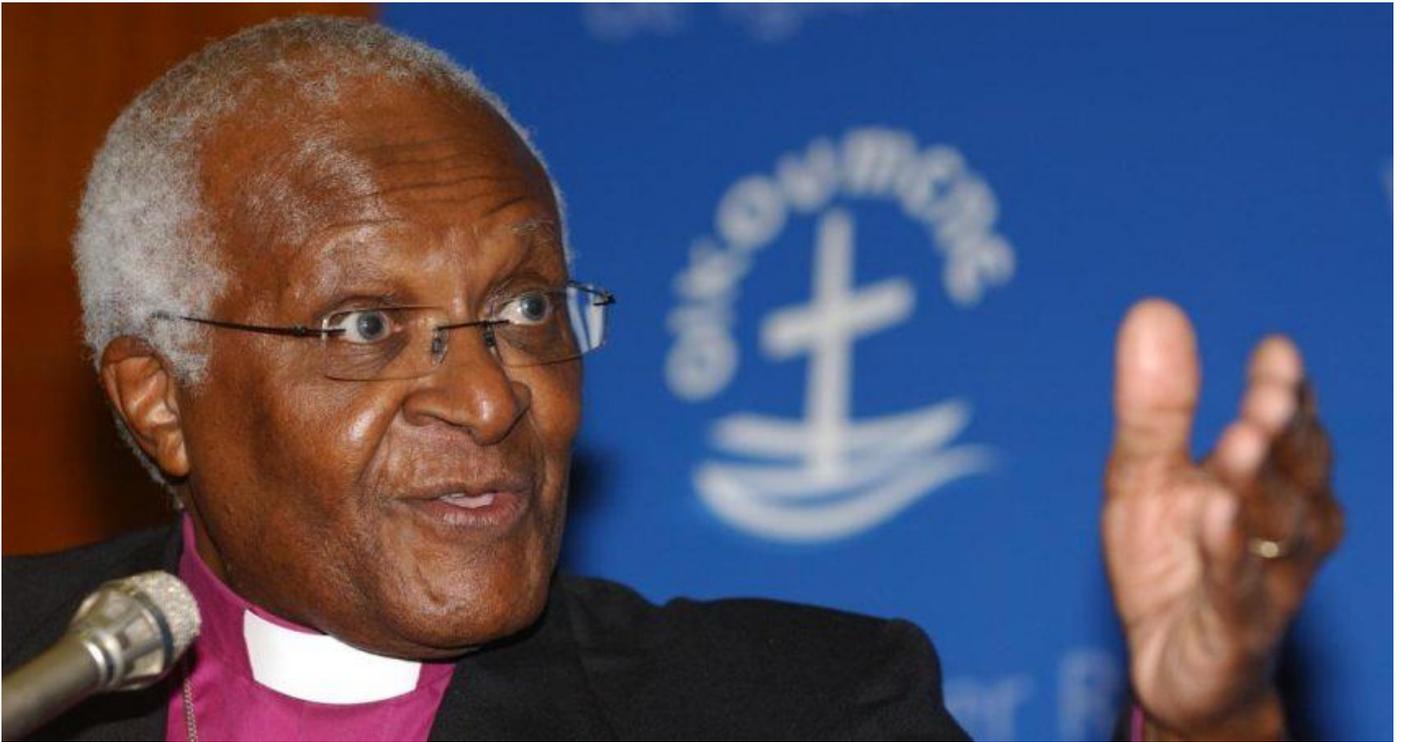
Finally, we are called to share between countries and continents, especially between Europe and Africa. As Christians we have the responsibility and also the means to introduce more partnership between our continents. That would be so important for the future of humanity.

Let’s celebrate Christmas as an encouragement: with the very little we have, we can start.

[Learn more about the Taize community](#)

First published on the [World Council of Churches website](#) on 21 December 2021.

World mourns loss of Archbishop Desmond Tutu



Archbishop Desmond Tutu (Photo: Peter Williams/WCC)

Archbishop Desmond Tutu, who has died today at the age of 90, was a key leader in the moral struggle against the apartheid system in South Africa, but the impact of his life's ministry and witness extended far beyond the borders of his own country and beyond that historical moment. Also in the post-apartheid era, his principled commitment and engagement for justice for all remained unwavering. Tutu believed passionately that the Christian faith is inclusive of all, and that Christian responsibility is for the good of all people. His leadership strengthened us all in that belief and continues to call us to action upon that belief.

World Council of Churches (WCC) acting general secretary Rev. Prof. Dr Ioan Sauca said Archbishop Tutu was a stalwart contributor to the ecumenical movement during joyful times and times of great challenge, and taught us all the value of persistence. "We thank God for giving us Archbishop Tutu for 90 years," said Sauca. "Through his life and works he has become an image of dignity and freedom for all human beings and inspired many to use their gifts and talents in the service of others and the mission and prophetic task of the church."

Rev. Frank Chikane, moderator of the WCC Commission of the Churches on International Affairs, paid tribute to his counterpart in the struggle against apartheid: "In Archbishop Desmond Tutu we have lost a great prophet of God who lived among us and stood for justice – the justice of God for all – here in South Africa, on the African continent, and throughout the world, including standing against injustices committed against Palestinians in Israel-Palestine, where others would not dare to. We thank God for his prophetic witness which is worth celebrating nationally and internationally."

As well as powerful and forthright voice against injustice, Tutu was also a prophet of forgiveness. In his role as chairperson of South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission, he became, as the former head of WCC Programme to Combat Racism Baldwin Sjollema recalls, "the pastor of the

nation.” Tutu stressed time and again that there could be no future without forgiveness. “You can only be human in a humane society. If you live with hatred in your heart, you dehumanize not only yourself, but your community,” Tutu said.

The years of 1972-1975, when Tutu served as WCC programme executive, contributed to a turning point in his theological thinking. When he joined the WCC’s Theological Education Fund in London, his senior colleagues – the Taiwanese Shoki Coe and the Brazilian-Armenian Aharon Sapsezian – were engaged in the promotion of theological education focused on the needs of churches and congregations in the “Third World”. This was the origin of the decolonial notion of “contextualization”. I have the deep conviction, Sapsezian wrote in his memoirs, “that his years with the TEF and our constant open theological conversations contributed to the improvement of his analysis and his perception of social injustices in the world and in his continent.”

Sjollema recalled Tutu’s impact on the WCC’s Programme to Combat Racism. “Back in the 1970s, Desmond and I were colleagues at the WCC,” wrote Sjollema. “He was working for the Theological Education Fund (TEF) based in London whereas I was working in the controversial Programme to Combat Racism (PCR) in Geneva which supported the liberation movement.”

The two were not always on the same wavelength, said Sjollema.

“At that time Desmond had to be careful not to be too outspoken against the Pretoria regime in order not burn his bridges at home,” he said. “But his attitude changed radically after his return to South Africa when he was appointed dean of Johannesburg in 1975 and one year later Anglican bishop of Lesotho, then General Secretary of the South African Council of Churches (SACC) and finally the first black Archbishop of Cape Town (1987).”

Archbishop Tutu’s impact on the life of the ecumenical movement and on the work of the WCC was pivotal.

Sauca added “Today, with Desmond Mpilo Tutu’s passing, the world is very much poorer. We join the people of South Africa in mourning this stalwart of the resistance against apartheid. We join the Anglican Communion and all members of the ecumenical fellowship in mourning the Archbishop who has so long been a leading voice for the Christian faith in witnessing for justice instead of injustice and inclusion instead of exclusion. And we join the Tutu family in mourning a father, grandfather and husband.”

Desmond Tutu’s convictions and witness especially against racism, racial discrimination and xenophobia continue to inspire our efforts for a world free from these ills.

Sauca concluded “We invite all member churches, ecumenical partners and all people of good will to celebrate a life well and faithfully lived in service to God and humanity, and to uphold his legacy of consistent solidarity with the marginalized communities of this world.”

In a visit to the Ecumenical Centre in 2008, Tutu thanked the WCC for its “costly solidarity” at the time of the anti-apartheid struggle. “We would not be free had not been for the steadfast support of the WCC, which cost the WCC a very great deal,” he said.

[Desmond Tutu: Pastor of the Nation – A Tribute | World Council of Churches](#)

[Desmond Tutu's address to the Fifth World Conference on Faith and Order, Santiago de Compostela, 1993](#)

[Desmond Tutu's address to the 9th Assembly of the World Council of Churches, Porto Alegre, 2006](#)

[A description of how Tutu arrived at midnight at the 1983 assembly in Vancouver during the Vigil for Peace and Justice having been just granted a passport by the South African authorities](#)

[Desmond Tutu: "Caring and compassion will prevail over evil and injustice" \(WCC news release 20 May 2008\)](#)

First published on the [World Council of Churches website](#) on 26 December 2021.