

Painting as a metaphor for ministry



"Let's focus on these three elements – canvas, paint, and brush – and use them to think about three elements of ministry: community, people and leadership," says Bishop Cam Venables (September 2019 Western Region Clergy Muster: clergy participants engaged in an Aboriginal dot painting activity led by Wiradjuri artist The Rev'd Canon Glenn Loughrey)

Why painting? Why not playing an instrument, or gardening or writing poetry or keeping bees? I think there are some things about painting that uniquely resonate with the work of ministry!

In the first chapter of Genesis there are two things I'd like to highlight and the first of these is that creativity seems to be a fundamental part of God's nature. We know the story well – the vision is stunning, for God is described as separating light from dark and land from water, and creating vegetation, stars, fish, birds, cattle, and creeping things.

We are fortunate to be more aware than the Genesis writer of the scale and complexity of God's creativity because physics and astronomy inform us that our galaxy is only one of more than one hundred billion galaxies, and entomology suggests that the "creeping things" mentioned in the text includes more than a million species of insect!

That first chapter of Genesis also suggests that each of us is made in God's image, which is a startling, but clearly stated assertion:

"Then God said, 'Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the wild animals of the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth.'

So, God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them.”([Genesis 1.26-27](#))

So if we agree that God is intrinsically creative and that each of us is made in God's image, is it too much to suggest that each of us is intrinsically creative? In this I mean more than the biological ability to pass on our DNA, but rather something within each of us that can make things – with food and drink; wood and stone; clay and paint; words and music; equations and formulae; and, images and digital code.

Let's consider three basic elements that we'd need if we were going to paint:

- A canvas or something to paint upon.
- Different paint colours, and maybe a palette to mix them in.
- A paint brush, or stylus or other tool, to apply the paint.

Let's focus on these three elements – canvas, paint, and brush – and use them to think about three elements of ministry: community, people and leadership.

If in art a canvas is transformed, and enlivened, by the way paint is applied and shaped by a brush, could we similarly say that in ministry *the canvas* of a community is transformed, and enlivened, by *the paint* of people using their gifts, and that this can be enabled by *the brush* of leadership?

I think this is helpful to think about, but it doesn't acknowledge the significance of ministry in the lives of individuals. If we were to have that focus we could say that *the canvas* of an individual life is transformed and enlivened, by *the paint* of another person's gift, which is applied in *the brush* of God's grace.

That gift could be some form of pastoral care or it could be some form of teaching – it could be many expressions of ministry...in the same way that there are many colours.

So our lives, the lives of others, and the community we belong to could be considered as canvases – as in that which is painted upon; that gifts and abilities, time and resources, can each be paint colours; and, that individual and community leaders can be brushes used by God or artists inspired by God.

When a painter uses a canvas there is some preparation necessary before the artwork can be created. It needs to be stretched and primed, and quite possibly have some base layers applied. I don't think any of us, or any of our communities, are a blank canvas. If you like, we are all works in progress – but, canvas preparation is worth thinking about. How do we prepare ourselves for ministry each day? How is the canvas of our lives stretched and primed so that God can paint upon the canvas of our lives, and paint through us? A bit like thoroughly cleaning paint brushes – canvas preparation is quite unglamorous work...yet vital.

Some sort of rhythm and discipline in daily prayer and Bible reading is important, for this stretches us and orientates us toward God's Spirit and that's really where we want to be. It also seems to be where Paul was when he affirmed to the Athenians, “'...in him we live and move and have our being' ” ([Acts 17.28a](#)). I don't think these practices are the only ways that God's Spirit can speak to us, renew us, and empower us, but they are a helpful foundation.

What about the canvas of our community? I think Paul's advice at the end of his letter to the Philippians is helpful in this, for he wrote:

“Finally, beloved, whatever is true, whatever is honourable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is pleasing, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things.” ([Philippians 4.8](#))

I love this, and yet it also make me uncomfortable...stretching and priming!

If you were a colour, what would you be today? Are you in the red, yellow, orange range? Are you blue, green, brown, or...are you gold? Are you in the background forming part of a blue sky, or green forest, or are you in the foreground like a yellow feather on the wing of a finch? Sometimes we give much of ourselves in the background and although this is essential to the canvas it can often be taken for granted. Pots and tubes of paint get used up as we paint, in the same way that we can become depleted in the work of ministry. That's where daily renewal is important trusting, “That the steadfast love of the Lord never ceases; his mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning...” ([Lamentations 3.22-23](#)).

Is it too audacious to think of ourselves as a brush being used by God or an artist inspired by God, blessing through ministry? I don't think so! When Jesus is remembered saying that he was the Good Shepherd and by inference we were the sheep, I don't think it precludes us recognising that sometimes we are called to be both shepherds and sheep – people called to lead and care for others, knowing that we are at the same time, led by and cared for by God. However, I recognise that Jesus did not say “I AM the artist and you are the brushes and paint”, I think there is value in the metaphor.

In your work of ministry do you think of yourself as a big brush filling in the background of a canvas or a finer brush attending to detail? Are you a much-used brush, with old paint stuck to it, or are you a shiny brush that has not been used much at all? Do you make long paint-laden contributions or do you make life-changing dots with a stylus?

What kind of “painting” (ministry) are you currently working on or giving focus to? Is it a landscape that seeks to depict buildings and gardens in a beautiful way? Or, a still life that is sometimes realistic and sometimes romantic? Does your gifting cause you to specialise in portraits where people are the focus? Who are you currently “painting” (ministering to), and how do you recognise God at work in this, and in them?

Landscapes, still life studies and portraits are easy to recognise, but there are painting styles and ministries that are less easy to understand. I don't have a good mind for abstract art and have stood beside people in galleries and learnt from them as they've talked about a particular canvas, for they have seen things that I could not see – in the same way that there are some forms of ministry used by God to bless, which appear to have come from more “left field” and “right-brained” creativity than I have! Sometimes I look at abstract art and am deeply moved, and at other times it doesn't connect at all, or even alienates me. What expressions of ministry connect deeply, fail to connect, or even alienate with you, and why?

Sometimes a good painting is spoilt because the painter didn't know when to stop, and I have a sense that it would be good to conclude this reflection soon! So, I'll leave you with an affirmation, some questions and a prayer.

In God's grace, I think we are each called to paint on the canvas of community and be painted upon – that we are each creatively gifted. Through creative activity we can be both a blessing and be blessed.

Similarly, in God's grace, I think we are each called to minister and be ministered to – that we are each gifted in some way for ministry, and through ministry can be both a blessing and be blessed.

Questions for further individual reflection:

1. How do you stretch and prime the canvas of your life each day?
2. In your work of ministry do you think of yourself as a big brush filling in the background or a finer brush attending to detail? How does this find expression in your current context?
3. What kind of "painting" (ministry) are you currently working on / giving focus to? Why is that?
4. In your experience, what expressions of ministry connect deeply, fail to connect, or even alienate? And, is there a key element in each of these?

Let us pray:

Creator God, we give thanks for the gift of our lives and your love, and for the work of your Spirit in the world.

We give thanks for the opportunity to think about ministry in a new way and offer to you the "canvas" of our life and community, asking for wisdom in how best to "stretch", "prime" and "paint", so that in your grace, what we chose to do this week makes the world a better place.

We ask in the name of the one who calls us to follow each day, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

Is beauty in the (he)art of the beholder?



"You wander around a gallery and suddenly find yourself frozen, transfixed by one work. You stare, drinking in the thoughtful, emotional connection the artist has made with you. God is there. In each scenario our minds (and hearts) are doing something, discerning something," says Jonathan Sargeant

How do you know a person or a thing is beautiful? What sense do humans have that enables them to detect beauty in front of them?

You awaken in your tent after a rainy night and stroll out to the headland to see the waves crashing majestically over weather-beaten rocks, mist rising with the golden sun. God is there.

You look to the people you love, noticing the line of their jaw and the history in their faces, whether three or 33 or 75 years old. God is there.

You wander around a gallery and suddenly find yourself frozen, transfixed by one work. You stare, drinking in the thoughtful, emotional connection the artist has made with you. God is there.

In each scenario our minds (and hearts) are doing something, discerning something. But is it an instinct, a gut reaction? Is it a process? Is it a mystical thing beyond comprehension? Or are there criteria hard-wired into humans that make this happen?

Humans have wondered about these questions for a long time. Once we start joining in on this wondering we're delving into the field of aesthetics. You might have heard someone describe a thing as "aesthetically pleasing". You know what this means – the thing looks good! But what are aesthetics?

German philosopher Immanuel Kant called aesthetics, “the science which treats the conditions of sensuous perception”. If an anaesthetic is something that dulls the perceptions, then you can use the term “aesthetic” to describe anything that does the opposite – it stimulates or enlivens the senses. Back in 1750, Kant’s contemporary, Alexander Baumgarten called aesthetics “the art of thinking beautifully” and even “the art of forming taste”.

If the use of the word “taste” raises questions for you, you’re probably not alone. When we invoke taste in the discussion, does it mean there are things that are objectively beautiful, from which there can be no disagreement? Are there, for instance, pieces of music that just *are* beautiful? Music is a good example to use here. Some might sit in the Cathedral hearing a particular choral setting and think, “This is undoubtedly beautiful.” But the person next to them in the pews might be wishing they were at a jazz club hearing discordant saxophones over elastic bass and skittering drums, because that is where true beauty lives for them.

Others have tried to list principles of beauty, hoping to ward off subjectivity. Eighteenth century artist and writer William Hogarth suggested six of these. According to Hogarth, to be ascribed as beautiful, there must be:

1. **fitness** of the parts to some design
2. **variety** in as many ways as possible
3. **uniformity, regularity or symmetry**, which is only beautiful when it helps to preserve the character of fitness
4. **simplicity or distinctness**, which give pleasure not in itself, but through its enabling the eye to enjoy variety with ease
5. **intricacy**, which provides employment for our active energies, leading the eye on “a wanton kind of chase”
6. **quantity or magnitude**, which draws our attention and produces admiration and awe.

It’s easy to look at that list and nod in agreement. There’s some thinking that human faces look beautiful when they are symmetrical – something we detect subconsciously. Yet when you take people’s pictures and flip one side to make them truly symmetrical, most note how odd the result is. Is that because we are just used to seeing people as they are, rarely truly symmetrical or because Hogarth is wrong?

Complicating our exploration are the clear examples we can draw about how notions of beauty change. Once powdered wigs and ruffles were considered the height of western beauty. Once the pale double-chinned Rubens models of the 17th century were the apex of beauty. In the 1980s, athletic bronzed super-models provided the standard few could reach. Once the genteel slim stature of Fred Astaire set the pace. Now the muscled figure of Chris Hemsworth lights up our screens more regularly.

Yes, certainly the body shapes people think of as beautiful have changed radically, for both males and females. We can argue here that this is the case especially for females. Film theorist Laura Mulvey has conceptualised something called “The Male Gaze”, which refers to the frequent framing of objects of visual art so that the viewer is situated in a “masculine” position of appreciation. That definition is from contemporary feminist aestheticist Carolyn Korsmeyer. Hence we see statistically that films are more likely to contain scenes of women in states of undress than men. The key idea is that ideas of beauty can be seen to be culturally influenced and transmitted by the products of culture: films, TV, and visual art of all forms. There’s much more to say about this, but we’ll leave this for another time.

One thing is for sure – no matter what our conceptions of beauty might be, no matter how different they might be from person to person or culture to culture, the idea that God is often detected in our appreciation of beauty is altogether uncontroversial. When I suggested the three opening scenarios – involving the beach, loved ones and visual art – and noted God’s presence could be discerned, you probably didn’t give that a second thought. At least, it seems obvious to those of us who identify with faith.

That there is overlap between aesthetics and religious experience is a time-honoured idea and seems true to us when we sense God’s presence while appreciating the beauty of a view, a painting or a piece of music.

What really interests me is that, given our notions of beauty might be different from person to person or culture to culture, the presence of God can be found in all kinds of situations, places, people, artworks, and music. For one it is in the symphonies of Bach, for another in the industrial soundscapes and metal scrapings of Japanese aural sculptor Merzbow. Along with much of scripture and our own experience that points to the wonders inherent in the appreciation of God’s created diversity, this exploration lands us with that thought as well. As 13th-14th century German theologian Meister Eckhart said:

“God is infinite in (God’s) simplicity and simple in (God’s) infinity. Therefore, (God) is everywhere and is everywhere complete. God is in the innermost part of each and every thing.”

Where there is beauty, God is there. And there is beauty everywhere if we have the eyes to see it.

Jonathan Sargeant is the Director of Lay Education at St Francis College where he also lectures in several Practical Theology subjects. Coming up next semester is ‘THL256 Theology and the Arts’ where ideas of aesthetics in the arts are deeply explored. You can find out more about [‘THL256 Theology and the Arts’](#) on the St Francis College website.

Editor’s note: If you found this feature interesting and you would like to know more about studying theology at St Francis College, come to the St Francis College Open Day and find out about the wide range of study options. Visit the [St Francis College website](#) to register or for more information. The Open Day will be held on Saturday 4 June between 10 am and 12 noon.

Have we shrunk the mystery of atonement into words?



The Ven. Dr Anne van Gend is Community Ministry Enabler in the Anglican Diocese of Dunedin, New Zealand

Deep at the heart of Christianity are mysteries: mysteries of love and death and time and space and worlds beyond our imaginings. Deep in the heart of many faithful believers has always been the conviction that the mysteries of God are beyond words, “unspeakable”.

If God is God and therefore infinite, how could the mysteries of God ever be contained in finite words, creeds and doctrines? It can only be done by shrinking them to a manageable, and therefore inadequate, size. The appropriate response, some say, should be awe and silence.

This – one of the great dilemmas of religious thought – could be a rather discouraging introduction to a discussion on atonement. After all, discussions tend to involve a lot of words. Yet we shouldn’t be too worried.

On one hand, yes, if we’re going to delve into something as mysterious as atonement, we do need to remind ourselves of the limitations of human words and human minds. Most of us are not mystics, and we are far more likely to fall into the trap of believing our particular expression of a Christian belief is the ultimate, complete Truth, than to fall silent before the inexpressibility of it all.

On the other hand, Jesus and his followers seemed content to use words to get their ideas across. His followers were even happy to commit these words to a written form – fortunately for us 2,000 years later. Maybe words are clumsy and inadequate tools when it comes to expressing great mysteries, but with such an example before us we should be encouraged to do what we can with them.

Why atonement? Mainly because it is the heart of our Good News. “Atonement” is about *what Jesus did* – what he achieved through his incarnation, life, death, resurrection and ascension. Unless what he

did was something remarkable, life-changing, *world*-changing, we have Fairly Feeble News, or One Inspiring Message Among Many.

Some are able to build their lives on this sort of foundation, but as our connectivity and education increase with the Internet and we expect abundant choice in all aspects of our lives, such ideas may be passed over, as they would the next inspirational Twitter meme.

Whatever has drawn centuries of Christians to lives of love and sacrifice, it was more than that. Whatever has given centuries of Christians hope and purpose through happiness and extreme suffering, it was more than that. Whatever transformed the first bewildered, then terrified, followers of Jesus into people with no fear of death, it was not Fairly Feeble News.

And yet, in many parts of the Church today, we often avoid talking about it. Atonement is a good example of a mystery that has suffered from being “shrunk” into words – or at least, into the style of words we have chosen in recent centuries. Things we know instinctively when we talk of, say, the mystery of love, are, for some reason, overlooked when it comes to atonement.

We know love is best expressed through stories, poetry, music and art. Yet we have insisted that atonement be understood as a logical, even legal, process. With love, we welcome a new story or poem that which allows us to glimpse another facet of the great mystery. Yet Christian history is littered with debates and arguments and wars over loyalty to one expression of atonement over another.

This has led to a certain reluctance on the part of many Christians to refer to atonement at all, except in very hazy terms. Not only do we want to avoid yet another painful debate that highlights our differences, but discomfort with the most common expressions of atonement may give rise to a disquieting, if unexpressed, question: is atonement still good news? This question can apply to descriptions of how atonement “works” from either end of the theological spectrum.

Are stories laced with ideas of judgement, punishment, sin and a father killing his son, still received as “good news” in our secular world? Or is holding up Jesus as one among many long-since-dead moral examples for us to follow inspiring enough that our young people would dedicate their lives to following him on his demanding path?

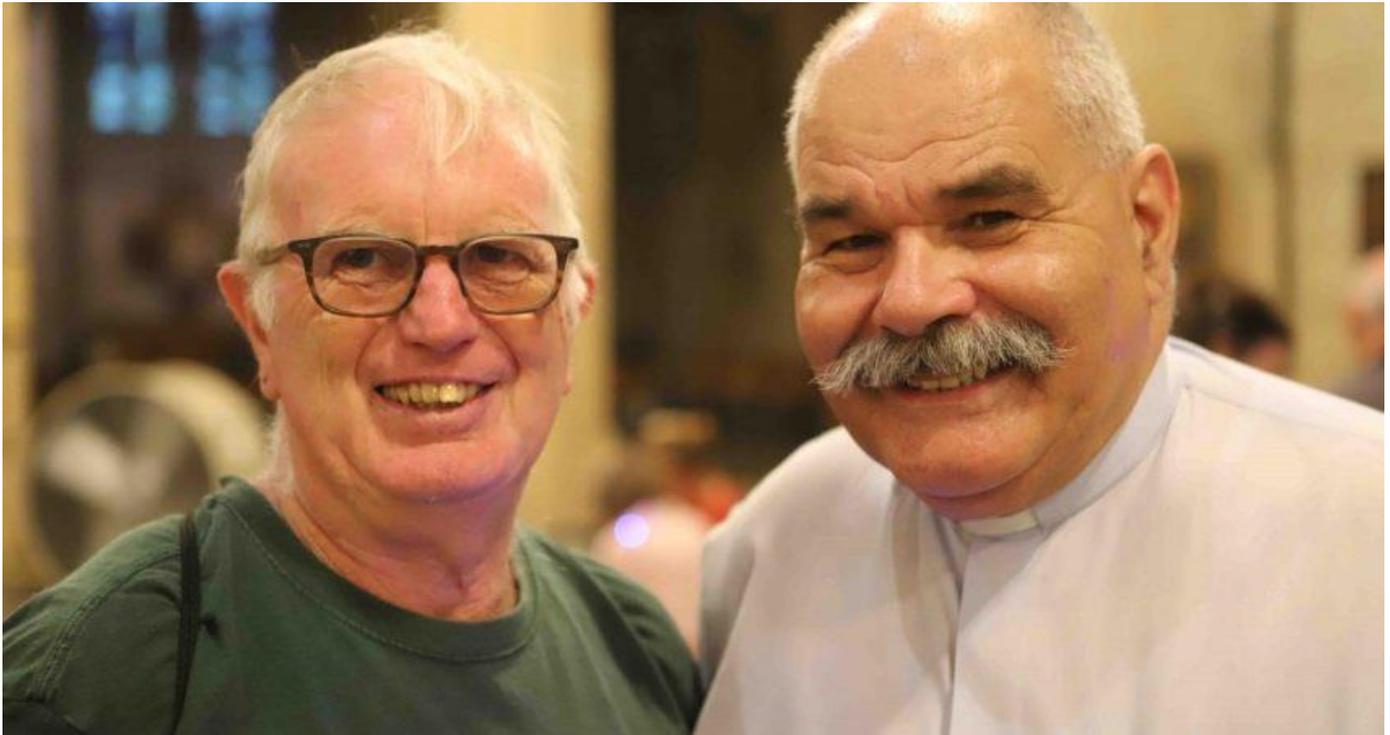
My work in recent years has been with school chaplains – people who deal on a daily basis with an audience who relentlessly demand authenticity. Unless the stories we tell “ring true” for them as genuinely good news, young people have no reason to bother with them.

Given the difficulties surrounding commonly-held atonement theories, then, perhaps we should quietly shove the whole thing under the carpet and focus on nicer aspects of our faith?

I believe we need to lift up that carpet, give it a good shake, and deal with whatever has been hidden beneath it. Perhaps we may discover a few dusty lumps, long pushed out of sight by all but dusty theologians, which, when polished, show gleams of gold.

Editor’s note: Join The Ven. Dr Anne van Gend at an atonement seminar at St Francis College on Saturday 28 May between 10am and 4pm. Register [online](#).

Week of Prayer for Reconciliation: “a coming together of hearts, minds and souls”



"National Reconciliation Week (NRW) and the Week of Prayer for Reconciliation are held between 27 May and 3 June annually. These dates mark two significant milestones in the Reconciliation journey – the successful 1967 referendum and the High Court Mabo decision respectively," says The Rev'd Canon Bruce Boase (The Rev'd Canon Bruce Boase is pictured with Tony Robertson in St John's Cathedral in September 2019)

A little while ago I was present at an encounter between an Aboriginal Woman and a non-Indigenous woman of European descent. The two knew one another, living and sharing in the same small community, and so their journeys often intersect.

Some years back the Aboriginal woman lost her son. He had died by suicide. This encounter was at the funeral of the other woman's husband. He had also died by suicide. Whilst some words came, both women knew that these were not needed. What was needed was an embrace. I am not sure if there were any divides between the women. If there were, they were broken down by their embrace, which said what words could not say, "I cannot know all you are feeling, but I am here beside you."

Their reconciliation was not with each other, but with their circumstances. The embrace was not arranged. The woman who lost her husband had to be there. The Aboriginal woman had to be there. I had to be there. God was there.

It is in the meeting of hearts like this where barriers dissolve and divisions heal – where we see the living Christ at work. Reconciliation is just so important in our relationships with one another. Only with this reconciliation can we be reconciled with God through Christ. Jesus' death and resurrection provide the ultimate healing for us – healing from sin and the pain of broken relationships. Reconciliation is the start of healing.

Whilst reconciliation is a necessary part of our day-to-day walk with Christ, it is good to be able to focus on this necessity. Putting aside the Week of Prayer for Reconciliation annually provides us with intentional space and time for this prayerful focus.

The focus on prayer during the Week of Prayer for Reconciliation will give us all an opportunity to pray specifically for a building up of the Body of Christ in a coming together of First Nations peoples and non-Indigenous peoples. The power of this is a coming together of hearts, minds and souls. Prayer is an essential part of this process. It ought to be each day, but for this week I urge all Christians to give that special focus to your prayers.

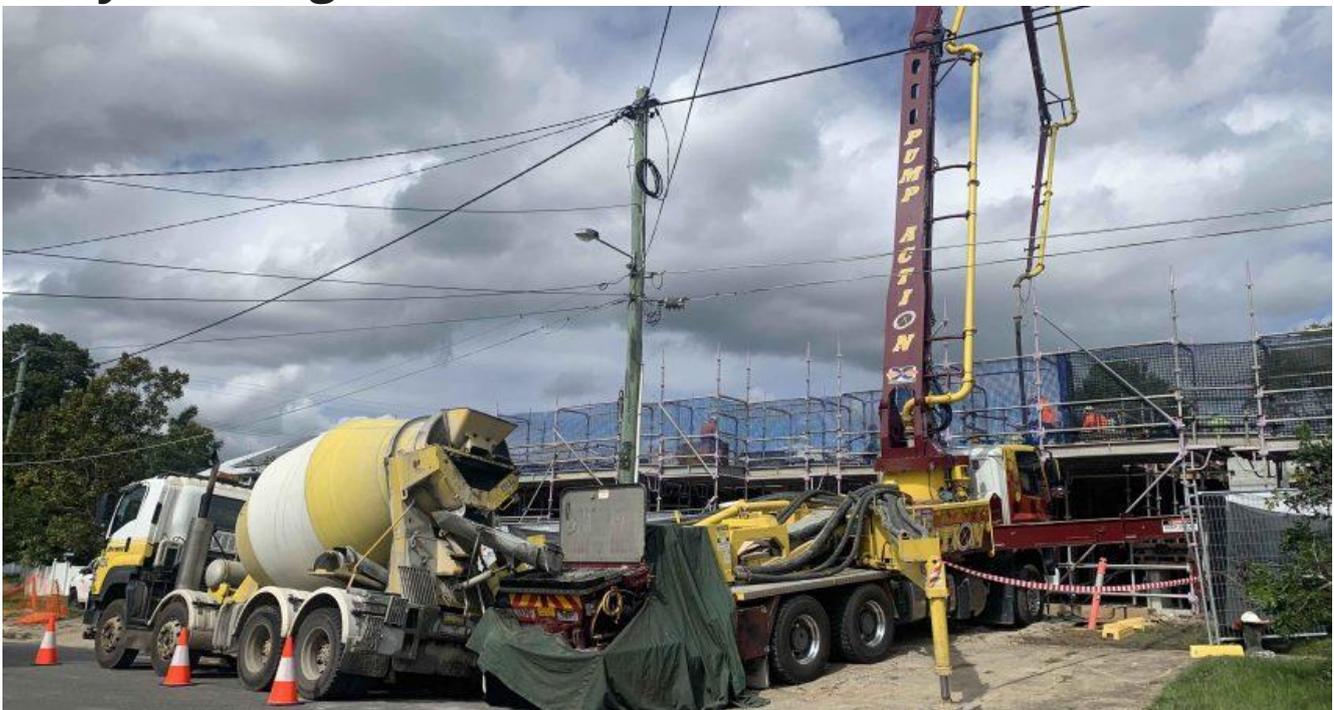
National Reconciliation Week (NRW) and the Week of Prayer for Reconciliation are held between 27 May and 3 June annually. These dates mark two significant milestones in the Reconciliation journey – the successful 1967 referendum and the High Court Mabo decision respectively.

This year's NRW theme is "Be Brave. Make Change." Visit the [Reconciliation Australia website](#) for posters and resources and to [register your NRW events](#). Find out about Diocesan NRW events by visiting the *anglican focus* ['Events'](#) page.

Editor's note: If you need or anyone you know needs help, call [Lifeline](#) on 13 11 14, [Kids Helpline](#) on 1800 551 800, [MensLine Australia](#) on 1300 789 978 or [Suicide Call Back Service](#) on 1300 659 467.

News • Wednesday 18 May 2022 • By Michelle McDonald

Major milestone reached in the first of the ACSQ's "Angel" early learning centres



On completion the first of the "Angel" branded ACSQ early learning centres will cater for up to 106 children, with babies and toddlers cared for on the ground floor and older children cared for on the upper level

The next major milestone in the first of the “Angel” branded Anglican Church Southern Queensland early learning centres was recently reached with 32 trucks delivering concrete to lay the upper-level slab, which was completed over an eight-hour period.

On completion the centre will cater for up to 106 children, with babies and toddlers cared for on the ground floor and older children cared for on the upper level.

The Anglican Schools Commission (ASC) will be overseeing the day-to-day management operations of the new Angel early learning centre (ELC).

ASC Manager of Early Years Sharon Mehan said that the “Angel” brand will reflect the Anglican Church Southern Queensland’s (ACSQ’s) identity and mission.

“The ‘Angel’ branding will combine the Anglican Church’s logo – ‘Ang’ – and the initials for ‘early learning’ – ‘el’,” Ms Mehan said.

“Angel Centres will foster and embody Christian values in nurturing environments, as well as learning, within a safe, shared community.

“Working with families to achieve the best possible outcomes for their children and being active in the community provide us with an ideal opportunity to build on the community work of the Church.”

Fine weather at the start of the month enabled the completion of the upper-level’s slab pour, assisting with the construction milestone.

Next week the builder, [Chapcon Design & Construct](#), plans to have the structural steel delivered for installation of the building frame to the upper level.

ACSQ Development Manager Shane Djordjewitsch, who is overseeing the major project’s delivery, said that the centre is on track for completion towards the end of the year.

“The project is progressing well with the consultant team, builder and other contractors working collaboratively in what still remains a highly-charged construction cost environment,” Mr Djordjewitsch said.

“To date the project has been a good employment generator, with sometimes up to 30 people on site, and its completion towards the end of the year will result in a functioning service for the local community.”

A full commercial-scale kitchen with an onsite chef will provide nutritious meals and snacks for the kids.

Ms Mehan said that she is looking forward to the families being welcomed at the new centre.

“We relish the opportunity to support the children and families of Salisbury and surrounds,” she said.

“Behind this sits recognition of children as co-participants in their care, their community and educational endeavours.”

A Project Board has been established to provide strategic oversight of the key elements that are needed for the successful opening and operation of the centre.

For more information, please contact ACSQ Group Manager – Property, Hiro Kawamata, via property@anglicanchurchsq.org.au or ASC Manager Early Years, Sharon Mehan, via smehan@anglicanchurchsq.org.au

If you would like to register your interest in enrolling your child at this centre, please contact ASC Manager Early Years, Sharon Mehan, via smehan@anglicanchurchsq.org.au

Spotlight Q&A • Wednesday 18 May 2022 • By Jean Anderson

Q&A with retired nurse, author, RAP Working Group member and Gold Coast North parishioner, Jean Anderson



Jean Anderson enjoying morning tea inland from the Stuart Highway on the way to Alice Springs in 2019

Where do you currently live and where do you worship?

Since 2016, when I moved from Victoria to be with family, my home has been in Upper Coomera on the Gold Coast. I worship at St Matthew's Anglican Church, one of three church centres forming The Parish of Gold Coast North.

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

I have been a part of the Anglican Church for six years. Here, my roles include Parish Councillor and Parish Council Secretary, Liturgical Assistant and Worship Service leader; leader of Prayer and Presence, our pastoral care small group; and, member of a PATSIMAC (Prayers for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Ministries and Concerns) small group, which includes being a parish representative on the Diocesan Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) Working Group.

How does your role contribute to the Church's mission?

My former professional roles in nursing, teaching and management have been practical expressions of my long-term commitment to encouraging and nurturing others in their journeys toward wholeness and wellbeing. I continue this through my church and RAP roles, which I hope are expressed in the [Anglican Communion Mark of Mission](#), "responding to human need through loving service."

What projects and activities are you currently working on?

In teamwork with others, I am working on establishing a support team to facilitate discipleship growth in our parish; negotiating wider parish recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander concerns; and, rebuilding our outreach service to residents in aged care following the lifting of COVID-19 restrictions.

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

Administratively in the parish, I am planning to update the parish office Policy and Procedure Manual.

Otherwise, I want to decide the direction I might pursue in a course of study for personal spiritual growth.

I am also busily making my way through a reading list of Australian authors in preparation for a literary heritage tour of central and western Victoria later in the year, visiting places I've lived in and loved, but seeing them from a different perspective.

What has been one of the best memories in your Anglican Church roles so far?

Last year our pastoral care team members pooled their talents to design and organise a parish-wide prayer workshop for a Saturday afternoon. Emceed by our priest, its theme was "Here, There and Everywhere" and our facilitators – including some of our retired clergy, a deacon and parishioners – presented their differing perspectives on how we might approach God formally and informally through prayer. People came from the three churches, and the afternoon is widely remembered as a refreshing time of supportive learning and sharing in unity during a time of trial. Notable outcomes have been increased commitment to prayer and the growth in the confidence of our pastoral group members to volunteer their talents in different forms of service.

Why is it important to celebrate National Reconciliation Week?

The Bible has much to say about reconciliation with God and with each other and our responsibility to be honest, respectful, willing to listen and willing to discuss in all our relationships. Celebrating National Reconciliation Week focuses attention on what we share as peoples made in the image of God, and as peoples sharing this country, and how we have to work together to remedy the negative impacts of our history on First Nations peoples and rebuild the trust that we let go.

**The theme for this year's National Reconciliation Week is "Be Brave. Make Change".
What is one way that *anglican focus* readers can do this?**

The courage to support First Nations peoples seeking justice and social equality comes from knowing the truth of our shared history and recognising the great losses sustained. Change can come by convincing others as well as ourselves, so we need to be reliably informed about issues and concerns, including progress on significant initiatives such as the Uluru Statement and the Aboriginal Tent Embassy.

Why is it important to commemorate the 30th anniversary of the landmark Mabo High Court decision?

First Nations peoples lived in all parts of Australia from about 65,000 years ago, yet it was only in 1992 that the High Court overturned the 200-year-old legal presumption of the first white colonisers that this land belonged to no-one. The landmark High Court decision was the result of the dedication of five Mer plaintiffs, including Eddie Mabo and several Anglicans. Twelve months after the High Court decision the Commonwealth Native Title Act 1993 was passed through Parliament. Native title and the Mabo Case anniversary call us to remember the trauma of dispossession experienced by Traditional Owners and the fact that many are still fighting for Native Title recognition through complex legal processes and active opposition.



Kuku Yalanji Traditional Owner Lalanja Tusa and Jean Anderson at a craft circle gathering in 2021 hosted by St Matthew's, which makes rugs and toys to donate to local organisations caring for vulnerable people

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?

I like that sharing food and fellowship brings opportunities for talking, learning and showing that we care about each other. Often stories and songs break down barriers and encourage shared laughter. Learning the skills of other cultures, especially when travelling, has helped me to appreciate how other people manage the practicalities of daily life and creatively add to it.

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

I remember a specific moment in my early life when the Holy Spirit breathed on me and my faith journey seriously began. Since then, my Bible has been my constant source of wise counsel; my friends have been God's gifts to treasure; and, I have been assured always of the love of Jesus even in the worst of times.

What is your favourite scripture and why?

"Be still and know that I am God!" ([Psalm 46.10](#)) is my favourite scripture because it calls me out of the busyness of life to stop, to rest and to consider God's creation, His plan and my place within it. Everything is wrapped up for me in that call to peace in the midst of turmoil and the assurance that God is in control.

What person of faith inspires you the most and why?

I have been drawn recently to the life of the German Reformer, Martin Luther. I am inspired by his dedication, courage, resilience and compassion in testing and teaching a life of faith at odds with the beliefs of his society. I do not understand all that he has written, but his words force me to consider my own responses to the Biblical Word in the light of his writings.

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

My father, who rarely spoke of his World War II experiences, told me once of marching in convoy through the burning Palestinian desert with a blinding migraine, wondering how he could go on, when an officer in a passing vehicle stopped and told him to climb aboard. This was an act of compassion that my father never forgot and his story has impressed me with the knowledge that such acts of random kindness may carry good will beyond the act itself.

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

I was told by a Christian minister in my youth that if I wanted to devote my life to God's service, I would need to be prepared and wholeheartedly committed, to be disciplined and not lukewarm.

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

On my own, I read and write for pleasure and insight, and I create useful, and often useless, things out of textiles. With friends I drink, eat and chat.

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

I would have my Bible, lots of blank-page notebooks and a supply of pencils, and a pen-knife.

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

I am going to have on my grave plaque “Raised to new life in Jesus” as a message of hope for those passing by.

What is your earliest memory?

I may have been aged two or three years, crawling along the hallway of our rented terrace in inner-city Sydney, tracing the texture of the frieze of autumn leaves that bordered the wallpaper above the skirting board.

If you could only eat one thing for the rest of your life, what would that be?

Probably dried fruit, being little packages of goodness with no cooking or washing up required.

What’s your best childhood memory?

My father took me to Sydney Art Gallery when I was about seven and said I could choose a print of one of the paintings to take home. I chose *Bailed Up* by Tom Roberts – an 1895 painting that depicts a stage coach being held up by a bushranger. I treasure it still, knowing that my parents could ill-afford to buy it and that it was an expression of love they were never able to show in a physical way.



***Bailed Up* by Tom Roberts: a gift to Jean Anderson from her parents in 1952**

What is your karaoke go-to song?

No-one ever wanted me to sing karaoke, but my choice will always remain 'On the Road Again' by Willie Nelson.

What item should you throw out, but can't bear to part with?

I have lots of things I should throw out, but each of the things I hold onto reminds me of the person who gave it to me, so I will leave it to my son who won't feel the wrench of separation that stops me.

What makes you nostalgic and why?

When I see photos of the red rocks and soil of central and western parts of Australia, I yearn to be part of those spaces again. And, when I see the box-ironbark scrub of Central Victoria, I yearn for the peace and independence of my life there.

What is one of your hobbies?

I love to research and write and have two publications to my name. One is titled *Thinking Management, Focusing on People*, which is a text published in 1996 for nurses. The other is *The Dunolly District Hospital: a goldfields hospital story*, which covers a 150-year period and was published in 2010.

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

Will Jesus return in my lifetime?

Editor's note: National Reconciliation Week (NRW) is held annually between 27 May and 3 June. This year's theme is "Be Brave. Make Change." Visit the [Reconciliation Australia website](#) for posters and resources and to [register your NRW events](#). Find out about Diocesan NRW events by visiting the *anglican focus* '[Events](#)' page.

“I want to go through life loving God with my whole heart”



"Being confirmed, I think, will give me a sense of identity as I become an adult. I want to grow up with a strong relationship with God. This is why I want to be confirmed" (Katie Free holding the crozier on her confirmation day at All Saints', Cambooya on 1 May 2022)

All my life I have been going to church every Sunday. At first it seemed like the most boring thing in the world, but then I started to listen. I started to sing the hymns, I started to read along with the Psalms and 'The Lord's Prayer' and the Creed. Everything seemed to make sense, and the more I learnt about it, the more I realised how great it was.

I was around nine when I really started to take it in. When I started to set up the credence table and when I had my first communion. I decided around then that this was who I wanted to be. Later, in high school, in Year 8, I was invited to go to CHARGE Youth at St Bart's, Toowoomba. I believe this has truly changed my spiritual journey – it was the first time in my life I realised you don't have to be 50 to be a Christian. Being confirmed, I think, will give me a sense of identity as I become an adult. I want to grow up with a strong relationship with God. This is why I want to be confirmed.

I have decided to put my trust in the promises of God and commit my life to Him; and I want to express that in front of the people in my life, in both the faith and non-faith aspects. I want to live my adult life in the faith and practice of the Church, I want to go through life loving God with my whole heart and my neighbour as myself.

I believe that God has brought me out of darkness into His awesome light. I want to live my life as in [2 Timothy 4.7](#), to live a life of godliness and righteousness, to put all my effort into proclaiming the gospel, and to keep my faith until my life's end. I want to live my life pleasing God in everything that I do and to do everything in the name of the Lord.

I know that being confirmed will not automatically enable me to accomplish this, but I believe that it will symbolise my decision.

Reflections • Tuesday 17 May 2022 • By Ken Willett

Opportunistic acts of kindness: “heroism in the daily rhythm” of life



"The value of attentive listening can't be overestimated" (Ken Willett)

Have you ever stood under a mature oak tree? Or seen one up-close? A mature oak tree is a majestic, awe-inspiring sight. Oak trees are national tree emblems in several countries, including Denmark, Croatia, England, Ireland, Poland, among others. Across millennia and cultures, oak trees have [symbolised](#) various God-like [qualities](#), such as kindness, protection, justice, strength, stability, endurance, wisdom and honour.

Opportunistic acts of kindness, which I call “OAK”, are a way of loving others, as set out in “the golden rule” of treating others as we would like to be treated ([Matthew 7.12](#)). The acronym “OAK” reminds us that oak trees have historically symbolised qualities underpinning kind actions.

Proliferation of OAK would help to positively transform the world, as Archbishop [Desmond Tutu](#) observed:

“Do your little bit of good where you are; it’s those little bits of good put together that overwhelm the world.”

An iconic example of OAK is found in [“The Parable of the Good Samaritan”](#). This is about a man from an apparently antagonistic people who rescued and paid for the rehabilitation of a stranger who had been robbed, bashed and left for dead.

Thousands of Good Samaritans, including members of local Anglican communities, engaged in OAK following the recent flooding in south-east Queensland and north-east New South Wales. They [cleaned-up muddy homes and businesses](#), [raised funds](#) and [collected and distributed much needed donations](#) to help strangers whose lives were shattered.

While the flood clean-up involved both individual and coordinated efforts, which were covered in the news, most OAK opportunities are not high-profile. OAK may be anything that lifts another person up.

OAK opportunities are prevalent – most people encounter these daily. Many opportunities may be undertaken by one person. Others require collective responses.

Alertness and agility are often required to undertake OAK because opportunities may not be glaringly obvious, may arise unexpectedly and may sometimes warrant immediate responses. The “Good Samaritan” and flood-response stories fall into the last two categories.

OAK may be material (such as cash, a cold drink or a warm blanket), relational or both. The appropriateness of the response depends on the contextual circumstances.

Relational opportunities are sometimes overlooked or avoided, whether out of shyness, fear or busyness. Yet, seemingly small relational OAK can significantly improve the wellbeing of others, and may include:

- showing interest in another’s wellbeing
- being available
- inviting people to tell their stories
- attentive listening
- not being judgemental about a person’s contribution to or handling of a problem
- empathetic reactions (for example, not dismissing the severity or impacts of a person’s negative feelings)
- spending time with [lonely people](#) and offering to join them in activities they enjoy
- a friendly smile, wave or other gesture
- a complimentary remark
- a sincere expression of appreciation
- helping with a clean-up, repair or flat tyre
- collecting and binning litter.

The value of attentive listening can’t be overestimated. It involves minimal interruptions. To ensure and signal understanding, it may include starting responses with empathetic summaries of messages received, highlighting positive aspects of responses to circumstances, and asking questions. In *The Kindness Revolution*, social psychologist [Hugh Mackay](#) (2021, p.83) highlighted the value of listening attentively:

“Listening is one of the most precious gifts we can give each other. It’s one of the most potent symbols of love and friendship. It’s one of the loveliest expressions of kindness. It’s one of the greatest sources of encouragement to the discouraged, confidence to the insecure, and comfort to the emotionally wounded.”

Undertaking OAK shows a caring attitude that can uplift people in distress and encourage them to be more receptive to further support.

OAK initiatives make givers, as well as recipients, better off. As noted in [Acts 20.35](#), “It is more blessed to give than to receive”. Support for this insight is provided by modern economic and psychological research.

For example, economist [Bruno Frey](#) (2008, p.86) summarised results of his econometric research with these words:

“In sum, volunteering is rewarding for volunteers in terms of higher life satisfaction...causally, volunteering makes people happy.”

And, psychologist [David Ludden](#) (2017, p.5) observed that:

“Research shows that giving benefits us under two conditions. First, we have to give willingly. And second, we have to believe our act of altruism will have a positive impact. When these two conditions are meant, we truly are happier and healthier when we give than when we receive.”

[Neighbour Day](#), [RUOK? Day](#) and [World Kindness Day](#) provide occasions to promote OAK within a church community. When individuals and groups initiate OAK, more OAK may be induced because helpers feel good and their example encourages others to join in, fostering a kindness culture. This was recognised by [C.S. Lewis](#) in *Mere Christianity*, which is based on Lewis' World War II radio broadcasts (2017, p.132). Psychology researchers [Jamil Zaki](#) (2016, p.1), [Afshan Mohemadali](#) (2020, pp. 2-3), and [Hugh Mackay](#) (2021, p.241) all confirm that kindness spreads.

For example, Jamil Zaki found that:

“...people imitate not only the particulars of positive actions, but also the spirit underlying them. This implies that kindness itself is contagious, and that that it can cascade across people, taking on new forms along the way.”

A growing kindness culture facilitates not only more OAK, but also larger-scale and more complex initiatives involving groups. This is analogous to an oak tree producing many acorns that then become acorn-producing trees, and so on.

In *Candles in the Dark: Faith, Hope and Love in a Time of Pandemic*, former Archbishop of Canterbury [Rowan Williams](#) (2020, pp. 24-26) acknowledged the importance of those who unobtrusively persist in undertaking OAK as part of their daily lives, and the contribution this makes in the lives of others and to the establishment of a kindness culture in a church community.

He described their activities as “heroism in the daily rhythm” of life.

Children's ministry resource boxes on offer



Bettrys and Amelia Lowe from St Bart's Kids with the Lego component of their children's ministry box resource (May 2022)

Through the broader role of St Bart's, Toowoomba as a Resource Church, St Bart's Kids is partnering with a growing number of ACSQ parishes to support their children's ministry programs. No two partnerships look the same, and each is focused on supporting in a way that is most helpful for that parish. This may be through sharing of curriculum resources, family discipleship resources or consultation advice – or any combination of these.

Currently, we offer two different types of resourcing:

1. Informal and ongoing (such as The Parishes of Springfield and Allora-Clifton).
2. Online self-service (such as parishes and ministries who discover our resources and then download whatever is useful for their own context).

We assist with enquiries from our Diocesan community and beyond, and we have had conversations with churches in the Philippines, Canada and the USA seeking permission to use resources we have developed. We are currently upgrading our curriculum template and website so that resources are more functional and accessible to others.

As a further outreach to help resource other parishes, St Bart's Kids has compiled and produced items for a series of resource boxes to help equip new or growing parish children's ministries. We currently have 10 free resource boxes to give to interested ACSQ parishes. It is hoped that these resource boxes will initiate new partnerships with parishes seeking to intentionally nurture their children's programs. A full inventory of included items is provided below.



"We currently have 10 free resource boxes to give to interested ACSQ parishes. It is hoped that these resource boxes will initiate new partnerships with parishes seeking to intentionally nurture their children's programs" (Caitlin Judge, St Bart's Kids)

These boxes are comprised of a combination of in-house produced resources, as well as purchased items that we use weekly in our Sunday program. Included are children's Bibles; prayer resources; family discipleship resources; a full curriculum program for the Gospel of Luke (chapters 17-24); and, language communication picture cards that are available in five language versions.

The importance of children's ministry programs is widely acknowledged. When considering the shape of such programs, it is helpful to consider the multiple ways that they can be executed, ranging from entertainment ministry to Biblical formation. However, if we're seeking children's ministry in our parishes that is intentional and effective, we must constantly re-focus our attention on the goal that we wish to achieve. That is, our goal is not necessarily numerical growth (although this is a wonderful thing to celebrate), but rather making and maturing the faith of each child as a disciple of Jesus.

Placing this goal at the centre of any planning for children's ministry fosters greater intentionality. It becomes less about activities and more about relationships. And, less about keeping kids occupied and more about encouraging them to deepen their understanding of God's love for them and how they can best serve Jesus in the world today. When children see the purpose and structure of what we do, not only do they want to be there, but they are often the ones in the family prompting and prioritising attendance and inviting friends along, too.

Serving in children's ministry and teaching about Jesus are incomparable joys. Time and again I am constantly amazed at kids' maturity of thought and capacity to consider the big questions of life and faith. It is humbling to be able to foster their faith and point them to Jesus in a ministry space.

For more information about the children's ministry resource boxes or to enquire about one for your parish, please complete [this form](#) or email Bettrys Lowe, Children's and Families Minister at St Bart's, Toowoomba: bettrys@stbarts.com.au

Children's ministry resource boxes contents:

Children's Bibles

- My first read-aloud Bible (x1 – for toddlers)
- Jesus Storybook Bible (x1 – for early years)
- NIV Adventure Bibles (x3 – for primary age)

Prayer resources

- Coloured prayer cube
- Wooden prayer cross
- Prayer sticks

St Bart's Kids resources

- Children's program curriculum for Gospel of Luke (17-24), with accompanying Lego Creator Devotional (curriculum appropriate for Lent)
- Gospel of Mark cards (x10 sets)
- Book of Daniel prayer cards
- 12 Days of Christmas discipleship cards
- Language picture cards (English and Dinka/Korean/Spanish/Mandarin)

Thousands raised for ABM projects through stamp donations



"The Diocesan Anglican Board of Mission (ABM) Committee collects mint-condition and used stamps, and then sells them at auctions around Brisbane to raise money for ABM' Sustainable Communities projects" (Sarah Gover)

I recently asked a couple, "Why do you buy stamps from Diocesan Anglican Board of Mission (ABM) auctions?" and they replied, "Because of a trip to the tip." I couldn't leave the conversation there. I had to know more, so I bought a cup of tea, and we sat down for a chat.

It turned out that the couple had been cleaning up during a lockdown and decided to take a few things to the tip. The person in a car next to them at the waste pit asked them if they collected stamps because he was about to throw out a suitcase of stamps. Despite not being stamp collectors, the couple accepted the man's offer. They have been keen stamp collectors ever since.

The Diocesan Anglican Board of Mission (ABM) Committee collects mint-condition and used stamps, and then sells them at auctions around Brisbane to raise money for ABM' Sustainable Communities projects. Last year well over 40kg of stamps were gathered at Synod and a further 20kg were collected from other collection points and around the Diocese. Most of these have been sorted and either sold or ready for sale in upcoming auctions. Last year over \$12,000 was raised and a further \$6,000 has already been raised this year.

There was great excitement in February when a specialised collection was donated. After some discussion, we decided to sell some of the unique stamps through the online Roxbury's Auction House. It was the first time we had used an online auction, but we felt we could reach more sellers – we raised over \$3,500.

At our last in-person auction, I spoke with a local woman, and asked her why she comes to the auctions. She replied:

"I am a runner and about 15 years ago I started helping a Paralympian runner with his stamp collecting. He persuaded me to start collecting. Unfortunately, he died last year at 102 years old. One of the things I look for at these stamp auctions is Olympic stamps. I buy two sets of all Olympic stamps. I give one to a local museum, and the other I sell to raise money for the Paralympians."

So I was pleased to tell her that some of the money she spent on the stamps went to a Disability Inclusion Project. In the Diocese of Eldoret, Kenya, ABM has a project that trains, mentors and provides short-term loans to people living with disability to help them start small businesses. The project also raises awareness about the human rights of people living with disability and the need to address stigma associated with disability among Anglican parishes, other churches, and local communities in the Diocese.

Another person I spoke to at the auction said he started collecting "when I moved to Australia when letters arrived from home, the stamps reminding me of familiar places and items. Collecting stamps has been good for my mental health." I agreed with him that stamp collecting, as an interesting and enriching hobby, can be good for our wellbeing.

Lately, I have been finding the news very overwhelming. That was until I learned about ABM's [Global Disaster Management and Climate Change Fund](#). Last year some of our stamp money went to this project, which supports ABM's partners in the Pacific region and beyond to address many critical issues through both education and practical action. The money raised helps ensure that the whole community is included in preparing for future disasters, not just a few key leaders.

This project, including women and men, people with disabilities, the elderly, children, and other vulnerable people, is a vital part of these disaster preparedness activities. Over 140 people from 42 countries in the Anglican Communion have participated in the course, which is offered online in six different languages and in four different time zones.

Knowing that the stamp money is going to projects like this reminds me that there is hope and that the world's problems can be addressed. I know that projects like this make a tangible difference, and the more money we can raise, the more people we can then empower, and the more significant the impact.

***anglican focus* readers can help by donating your stamps to ABM. The easiest way is to give them to your Synod representative to bring to Synod in Brisbane on 24 to 26 June. Stamps can also be dropped off at St John's Anglican Church, Burleigh Heads; St John's Cathedral, Brisbane; or, St Luke's, Toowoomba. If none of these drop-off options suit, please get in touch with me (Sarah Gover) via sarah.gover@anglicanchurchsq.org.au or 0430 082 865, and I'll find a way to get them to our dedicated stamp coordinators Brough and Margaret Warren.**

Talking circles: 8 tips for hearing the wisdom in the room



Parish of Kenmore-Brookfield Appellate Tribunal talking circle on 3 May 2022, with left to right: John Cuffe, The Rev'd Tim Booth, Jen Bradbury, Jeff Bradbury, Graeme Curnow and Deian Ping

I first encountered a talking circle at a Quaker Sunday service in a circular room on a rainforested hill in the Brisbane suburb of Kelvin Grove. I entered the room to find people sitting in silence in a circle of chairs around a small central table. Sometime after I sat down, someone stood up, and speaking to the centre of the circle without looking around, shared about an issue that was concerning them. Rather than having a conversation, occasionally with considerable pauses in between, each participant who was so moved stood to speak their truth concisely, before sitting down again. By the end of our time together it felt to me like we'd tapped into a deeper wisdom, by allowing space for God's Spirit to emerge amongst us.

A talking circle (or "listening circle") is an intentional space where participants respond to a particular question or topic, with the complete attention of others in the room as each individual speaks their truth rather than bouncing off each other in conversation. Talking circles are valuable for churches and ministries because they enable an important topic to be explored in a way that each person's perspective is clearly heard, without it being quickly judged or commented on.

With the recent shift back to in-person gatherings, talking circles are a great way to foster dialogue, with hybrid in-person/digital options also possible.

Here are eight tips to make your talking circle space suited for dialogue that matters.

1. Set an intentional talking circle focus

Set an intention for the circle that is relevant and of interest to those gathered. This may be a question that is written on a poster or PowerPoint and/or spoken aloud.

2. Use a talking piece

Use a talking piece (a small object that fits comfortably in your palm) to enable one speaker at a time and a pause between each person speaking. It can be passed around the circle so people speak in their seating order (“talking piece council”), or replaced at the centre of the circle after each speaker for people to self-select when they speak (“conversation council”).

3. Speak with intention and listen with attention

When you are holding the talking piece, speak with intention – that is focused on the question and topic. Others should sit listening attentively, rather than thinking about what they want to say next.

4. Embrace the Apostolic number

As a rule of thumb, when the number of people exceeds 12, start a second talking circle, if possible, rather than crowding the space – unless there is an important reason to do so. Let Jesus’ selection of 12 Apostles be a useful guide here.

5. Check-in and check-out with talking circle participants

Use a check-in to initially connect those gathered by inviting people to introduce themselves briefly around the circle. Close with a check-out by asking participants to summarise a learning or take-away message and/or involve a closing activity – like saying “The Grace” together.

6. Make an agreement

At the start, discuss an “agreement” for how your respectful listening space will be maintained. Often this includes details about keeping confidential what is said and listening compassionately and curiously.

7. Guard the process

Have a “guardian” allocated for keeping an eye on the process, watching the energy levels in the room, and ensuring that the talking circle agreement is maintained. A pause can be called for by the guardian (or anyone else in the circle), for example by using a small bell or other signal. Other than this role, the leadership of the group is shared.

8. Experiment with topics that matter

Tailor your approach to different topics. Try talking circles for discussing topics:

- Where there are strong views and emotions by using carefully structured rounds of specific questions (e.g. the [current Diocesan rounds of talking circle dialogue](#) on the implications of two 2020 Appellate Tribunal determinations and opinions regarding the blessing of marriages between two people of the same gender. For example, the above image shows the Kenmore talking circle dialogue round on 3 May 2022 (with, left to right, John Cuffe, The Rev’d Tim Booth, Jen Bradbury, Jeff Bradbury, Graeme Curnow, and Deian Ping).

- To promote sharing through a gentle open-ended question for peer support (e.g. ministry colleagues meeting to share about their practices and offer mutual encouragement).
- Or to connect people through hybrid dialogues, combining in-person and online formats (e.g. by using Zoom, with online participants each having a talking piece to hold up when they want to speak).

Talking circles enable participants to speak with intention and listen with attention to explore a topic, so that all voices are heard and so collective wisdom may be discerned. As my Quaker service experience at Kelvin Grove taught me, talking circles are a counter cultural way of listening, and are well worth the effort of exploring an alternative space for dialogue. If you want to engage all your people, rather than the usual few dominant extroverted voices, to find the collective wisdom of God's Spirit in the room, try using talking circles and see what emerges. Want to learn more about talking circles? Check out [The Circle Way website](#) and enjoy experimenting!

First published on the [faithful + effective website](#) on 9 May 2022. Check out the Parishes and Other Mission Agencies Commission [faithful + effective website](#) for more ministry resources and tips.

Editor's note 15/05/2022: Sharpen your talking circle facilitation skills and learn from talking circle expert The Rev'd Michael Wood [in this series of developmental events](#) for new and experienced facilitators.

What I learnt from an ancient coin incursion



Year 9 St Paul's School students Jessica Vickers and Hannah McDonnell enjoyed a recent Centre for Coins, Culture and Religious History incursion (2022)

Year 9 St Paul's School students recently enjoyed the opportunity to view and hold a variety of coins from the time of Jesus. The coins were brought to us by the [Centre for Coins, Culture and Religious History](#), which is a ministry of St John's Cathedral.

This experience was incredibly thought-provoking because we were able to learn about the coins' sentimental and historical value. Additionally, learning that people in Jesus' era used a currency much like what we use today made ancient history more relatable.

Personally, the coins that I was most curious about were the ones with human faces because it astonished me how much detail was included in the coins, despite the coin-making constraints of that time. Fellow student Jessica Vickers said that, "the coins are very intriguing and I like the concept and detail in the coins."

We learnt the symbols of each coin and how they represented hierarchy, valued objects and other meaningful imagery. Out of the coins shown in this incursion, my favourite was a small roughly-shaped silver coin with an eagle design. The eagle represented imperial power. This coin dated back to around 80 BCE, and it was breathtaking to think I was holding something so incredibly old.

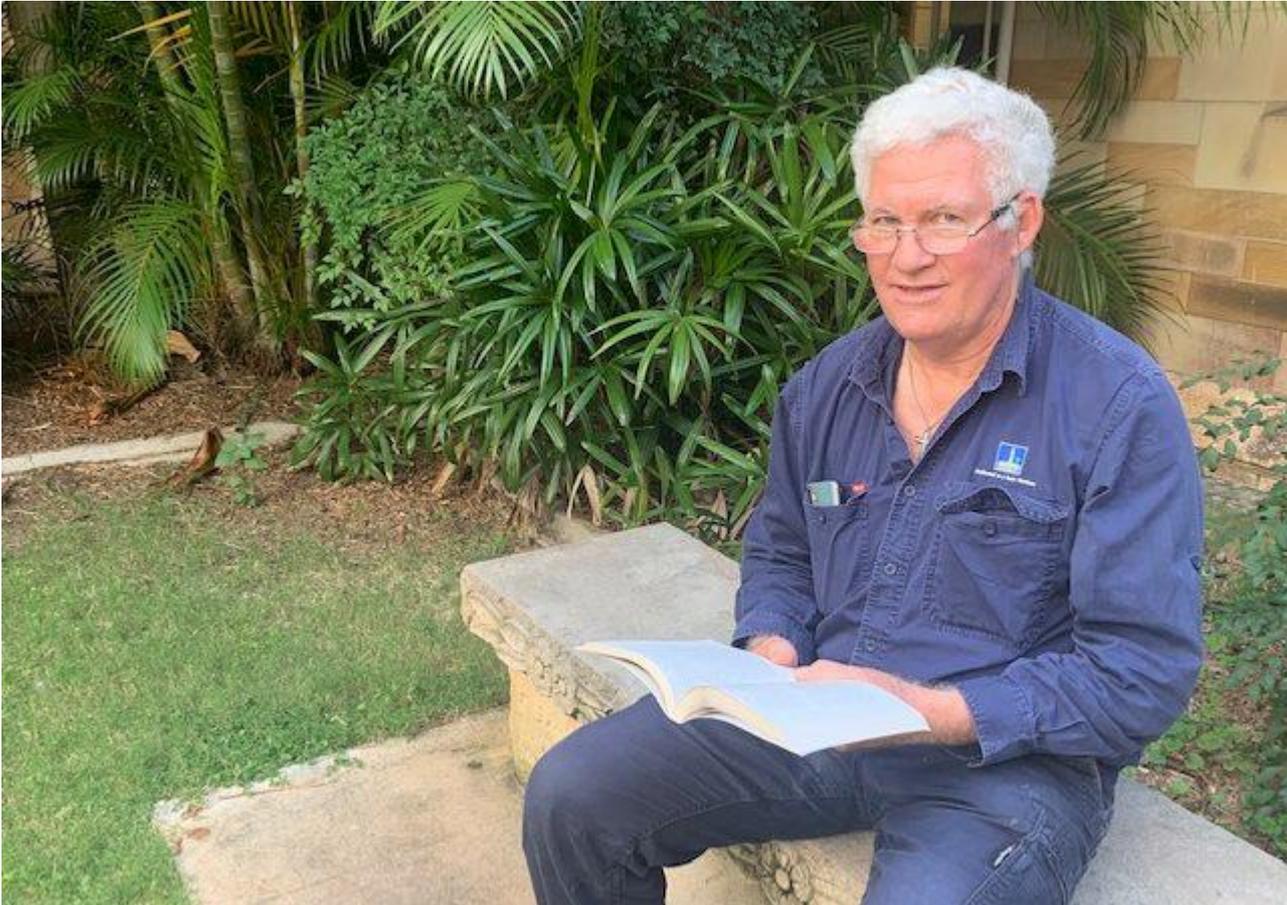
Many ancient coins from were cast with the head of a political leader on one side, with a symbol adjacent to the leader. Another common coin symbol was an anchor, which represented hope and salvation in Jesus.

It is vital that young people like me learn about ancient coins and other areas of ancient history because it provides a great deal of information on biblical times, giving us insights into Anglican beliefs and the history of humanity.

Thank you to the [Centre for Coins, Culture and Religious History](#) for hosting this special incursion. As fellow student Hannah McDonnell said, "I believe it is truly fascinating how well of a condition the museum has kept these coins in."

Faith book reflections • Wednesday 11 May 2022 • By Bob Randle

The book I have given away the most and why: Bob Randle



I first came across Eddie Askew's small books in the library of St Bart's, Mt Gravatt in the mid-1990s. [Disguises of Love: meditations and prayers](#) was the first book of his that I read. His books typically combine scripture, poetry, story and a reflection on different topics. *Disguises of Love* is a collection of prayers and meditations that he wrote for the Leprosy Mission's newsletter, with a particular focus on his time in India.

I recall a two-page chapter, titled 'Labels'. The author tells the story of a long bus trip to New Delhi. The tourists' tinned food was stored in the luggage compartment beneath the bus. So when the bus went through rivers, the tins became wet and their labels fell off, with the tourists never knowing what they were going to eat until the tins were opened. Reflecting on [Romans 8.14-18](#), he goes on to write that:

"Labels help, when it comes to food or other consumer goods, but not with people. It's so easy to label...Yet people are not stereotypes. We don't fall off the end of an assembly line...People are different, and similar only in their diversity – in the mixture of good and bad, in the richness of experience to which we are continually adding from birth. You and I realise we are made up that way,

and we hope that others will allow us the freedom to be what we are. Can't we do the same for them? Can't we accept people unlabelled?...Yet the most important thing is not that we can recognise others, labelled or not, nor that they acknowledge our labels, but rather that God recognises us. And the thing he recognises is love, not labels." (1983, p.76)

Disguises of Love is not heavy *War and Peace* reading – one or two pages on the topic you're looking for insight on and you can then park it on the bookshelf. It is written in lay person's language so it's very accessible. Eddie's words, like Jesus' parables, help me to understand how Bible teachings relate to us in our daily lives. The Bible teaches us that we should love each other and live in a peaceful manner.

I am a new member of Cursillo and we are about encouraging each other, led by scripture, so it's handy to have a go-to book when I'm struggling to find the right words.

A regular listener to Bishop Cam's Facebook 'Live at Five', he recently spoke of the Good Samaritan. So I shared with Bishop Cam's Facebook group about Eddie's 'The absent Samaritan', which is a retelling of the famous parable with the Samaritan omitted. After the priest and Levite walk past the beaten man, he dies. In his retelling, Eddie illustrates how God could be reaching out to you and me to be the Samaritan, and that help only comes if we respond.

Editor's note: Thank you to Bob for emailing me to about his most-given away book. If you would like to share with other readers what faith-related book, including those with theological, spiritual, ministry, Church history or justice themes, you have given away (or recommended) the most and why, please [email](#) the Editor Michelle McDonald and she will let you know what is needed.

News • Thursday 12 May 2022 • By Philippe Coquerand

Toowoomba local achieves nursing dream while on dialysis



Symes Thorpe Clinical Educator and Registered Nurse Sheryl Kupfer is one of many nurses being celebrated today on International Nurses Day (2022)

Today is International Nurses Day, which is celebrated all around the world to acknowledge the important roles nurses play in our communities.

Earlier last year Anglicare Southern Queensland's Symes Thorpe Clinical Educator and Registered Nurse Sheryl Kupfer completed her master's degree at the University of Southern Queensland while on dialysis.

"I was inspired because I had extra time and wanted to give back. The nurses I was surrounded by during my treatment were extraordinary and I felt I could give back in that way to the community," Sheryl said.

"I was inspired to do my masters in aged care because I wanted to learn more about what we can do for our residents, and it has given me a better insight into aged care.

"International Nurses Day is a day when our nursing colleagues take a moment to reflect on the importance of our roles."

Sheryl has inspired many of her colleagues with her determination and positive attitude as she completed her nursing degree while on dialysis for a kidney transplant.

From doing cleaning to working in the mines and then working at the newsagent, Sheryl has tried her hand at various jobs before finding her passion in aged care.

Sheryl encourages all those considering a change in career to "follow their dreams".

"I would tell them to follow their dreams. Start today because time goes away, and this has been a goal of mine since I finished school. It is never too late, but you get there faster, the sooner you begin," she said.

Sheryl said she found it quite a challenge finishing her degree while on dialysis as it often made her fatigued, having spent 18 hours a week hooked up to a machine.

"I was on dialysis for four years and three months until I had a transplant, and it was the nurses at the dialysis unit who helped me if I had any trouble with my study," she said.

"I was hooked up to a machine for five hours a day, three times a week and then one day for three hours a week.

"It was a challenging period, but I just considered that it was my treatment that I had to have until I had my transplant."

Working alongside Sheryl is Clinical Nurse Aman who has been in her role for the past 10 years.

To Aman, the day is very important because it acknowledges the challenging work that all nurses and others in frontline healthcare positions do each and every day.

"I love coming in to work every day and looking after our residents," she said.

"I chose this profession as I really wanted to make a difference and to help support our elderly when they can't do it themselves.

“To me being a nurse is all about teamwork and working together as a team to help one another.”

In celebration of International Nurses Day, we would like to thank Sheryl and Aman, and all of our incredible nurses right across the state, for their hard work, dedication, and the invaluable role they play in the lives of so many Queenslanders every day.

News • Wednesday 18 May 2022

Australians are desperate for real action on housing



Anglicare Australia is calling for an investment in 500,000 social and affordable homes to end the shortfall and provide a home for everyone

Anglicare Australia has called on the next Federal Government to boost social housing. The call follows the release of more election policies on housing, which will not do anything to make housing more affordable.

“Housing is the biggest living cost facing Australians. But in spite of the bluster, the major parties aren’t offering anything to help people with the cost of rent,” Anglicare Australia Executive Director Kasy Chambers said.

“Just weeks ago, our Rental Affordability Snapshot found that less than 2% of rentals are affordable for a full-time worker on the minimum wage. For a person out of work, it’s 0%.

“Voters are desperate for action. Instead, parties are promising more of the same. At best, they are ignoring the people who are struggling the most. At worst, they are proposing to make the market even more overheated.

“The most powerful and long-lasting solution is being ignored – we need a major investment in social and affordable housing.

“Anglicare Australia is calling for an investment in 500,000 social and affordable homes. That would end our shortfall, and provide a home for everyone.

“This investment is urgent. Without action, the social housing shortfall will only grow.

“It’s also popular. Social and affordable housing is more popular with marginal seat voters than any other solution, including band-aid options like first home buyer grants.

“The Federal Election is just days away. We’re calling on all parties and candidates to answer voters’ calls for action – and make sure everyone has a place to call home,” Ms Chambers said.

Anglicare Australia’s Rental Affordability Snapshot is [available online](#). Polling for the seats of swing seats of Bass, Longman, Gilmore, and Flinders are available from the [Everybody’s Home campaign](#).

News • Wednesday 18 May 2022

"We built hell and put your children in it": Archbishop Welby apologises to Indigenous Canadians



The Archbishop of Canterbury has apologised for the Church of England’s part in the “structural sins of racism and discrimination” committed against the Indigenous peoples of Canada over decades.

Speaking during his four-day visit to the country over the weekend (News, 22 April), Archbishop Welby, who heard testimonies from survivors of residential schools, also apologised for both the Church’s complicity in and direct responsibility for the “uninspected, unsupervised, uncriticised, unchallenged...cruelties they handed out indiscriminately to the most innocent and the youngest”.

Archbishop Welby’s apologies follow those of the Anglican Church of Canada given by Archbishop Michael Peers and Archbishop Fred Hiltz in 1993 and 2010 respectively. Between 1820 and 1969, the Canadian Church administered about 30 residential schools and hostels for Indigenous children. Since

the late 1980s, survivors have spoken of how the schools denigrated their culture, to the accompaniment of physical and sexual abuse.

Archbishop Welby told an Indigenous gathering in Prince Albert on Sunday: "I've listened to the stories of grief and humiliation...and structural sin — not just individual sin, which has been terrible enough. Structural in society and, worse still, in the Church. Sins of racism and discrimination. The greatest evils we can face."

He continued: "I wish again, truly and deeply, and with humiliation as well as humility, to apologise for the broken relationship between the Church of England and the First Nations, the Inuit and the Métis peoples of Canada. We did not fulfil our historic commitment to be an advocate, ally, and relative for you. Instead of standing with you, we abandoned you.

"Instead of advocating for you, we became complicit in, and often directly responsible for, residential schools — uninspected, unsupervised, uncriticised, unchallenged in the cruelties they handed out indiscriminately to the most innocent and the youngest."

The purpose of the trip was atonement and reconciliation. Archbishop Welby spoke of the "shaming and devastating" chasm between "what could have been — legally, culturally, intellectually, structurally, in infrastructure, in every area of life, in the experience of generations" and the legacy of the Church's failed promises.

"Never have I sat and listened to so many stories in which suicide is normative," the Archbishop said. He understood from his own experience (both his parents were alcoholics) "the attempt to escape from the horrors of memory and lived experience".

He continued: "History cannot truly be in the past until it has been fully healed. New atrocities continue to come to light. I know the past is deeply present in your lives, your memories and your expressions of life and culture. I know you carry the weight of generations of grief and trauma."

Archbishop Welby expressed his commitment to listening, learning, and taking action towards reconciliation, starting by addressing the rights of Indigenous peoples around the world at the Lambeth Conference in July.

"I am sorry that the Church was not there for you when we should have been your greatest friends...I am sorry that the Church belittled your spirituality, denigrated, and undermined your culture, traditions, and, above, all your languages, and abused your rights. And I am sorry that, in an eagerness to share the good news of Jesus Christ, we committed an indefensible sin of the arrogant assumption that we 'brought God to you' rather than understanding and seeking to listen."

Giving the example of his opposition to the Rustat memorial from the chapel of Jesus College, Cambridge, which a consistory court ruled in March should not be removed (News, 14 April; 25 March), despite its links to the slave trade, Archbishop Welby said: "I promise that, even where we cannot change things, I will support and encourage the support of the First Nations, the Métis, and the Inuit in seeking justice. I will stand with you while I am in post, even if we fail."

On Saturday, the Archbishop visited James Smith Cree Nation in Saskatchewan, where he met local chiefs and adults who had been sent to residential schools. The Archbishop also joined a "Gospel Jamboree" — an Indigenous expression of faith that nurtured communities when traditional practices were banned under colonial law.

Describing residential schools as a “bit of hell” built by the Church, he said: “For that terrible crime, sin, evil, of deliberately, consciously, stupidly — because evil is stupid — building hell and putting children into it, and staffing it, I am more sorry than I could ever, ever begin to express.” He said that he spoke “both personally and in my role as Archbishop of Canterbury...I am ashamed. I am horrified.”

On his way to Canada, on Thursday, Archbishop Welby visited the Virginia Theological Seminary (VTS) in the US, where he spoke of the environmental crisis in an address titled “The Hot War with Creation: Can we make peace?” The president of the VTS, the Very Revd Dr Ian S. Markham, told the Episcopal News Service: “The Archbishop’s visit and his remarks remind us of the incredible challenges that global warming presents to the wider Communion and to the world, especially in the Global South — and the sacrifices we must make, especially in the Global North, to save precious lives.”

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News • Wednesday 18 May 2022 • By World Council of Churches

“Injustice can never be a foundation for a secure peace” in Palestine and Israel, urges WCC

Recent events in Palestine and Israel have, tragically, once again underscored the critical need for a just peace in the region, for both Palestinians and Israelis, said World Council of Churches acting general secretary The Rev’d Prof. Dr Ioan Sauca.

“The World Council of Churches calls for an independent international investigation of the killing of Palestinian-American journalist Shireen Abu Akleh on 11 May, given the grave implications of this event,” said Sauca.

“Those responsible for Abu Akleh’s death must be held accountable to the full extent of the law.”

Saucu also urged US President Joe Biden to address this issue with Israeli officials during his forthcoming visit to Israel in June 2022, in order to promote accountability and to prevent such violations from occurring in the future.

“No fewer than 86 Palestinian journalists have been killed since 1967, the year in which Israel occupied the West Bank and Gaza – with 50 of them having been killed since 2000,” said Sauca.

“Ms Abu Akleh had reported on events in Palestine and Israel since 1997, and had earned respect among viewers worldwide.”

The killing caused shock and grief among many around the world who admired her, added Sauca.

“To them we convey our sincere condolences and prayers, as well as to her immediate family,” he said.

“Meanwhile, on 4 May the High Court of Israel dismissed an appeal by Palestinian residents of Masafer Yatta, in the southern part of the West Bank, enabling the government to expel residents from a large area that had been declared an army firing zone.”

Sauca said this decision threatens the forcible transfer of up to 1,200 Palestinians from their homes in the area, in which they have lived for decades.

“On 11 May, the Israeli Civil Administration razed 19 structures in Masafer Yatta, the first such demolition since the High Court decision,” Sauca noted.

“Nine of the structures were family homes, and the rest were used for storage and for housing sheep.”

International law prohibits an occupying power from forcibly transferring members of an occupied population from their existing communities against their will, Sauca further noted.

“The World Council of Churches calls on the government and authorities of Israel, and all people of good will, to take action to stop the forced displacement of Palestinians from their land and homes in Masafer Yatta, and for the army firing zone – the pretext for these demolitions and evictions – to be removed rather than the Indigenous population of the area,” Sauca said.

“Injustice can never be a foundation for a secure peace.”

[Read the full statement](#)

First published on the [World Council of Churches website](#) on 13 May 2022.

News • Wednesday 18 May 2022

How I found my voice — with the help of a beanbag frog



The Rev'd Dr Ellen Clark-King in costume for Gilbert and Sullivan's HMS Pinafore at the Coliseum (Image by Sam Shaw)

“ENO calls on world’s worst warblers to prove anyone can sing”: this was a headline in [The Guardian](#) in June 2021.

The piece explained that Sky Arts was working with the English National Opera on a project to show that anyone could sing. Six tuneless members of the public would be coached for 12 weeks by bona fide opera singers to prove the point.

Like many others, I had been told as a child that I could not and should not sing: “Go sit with the crows, not the larks.” At school, I spent music lessons mouthing along to the words, terrified that the teacher would call on me to sing alone. At theological college, our music teacher listened to me and said: “I’ll put you down as a non-singer, then.”

This — unfortunately — did not get me out of having to sing evensong in my placement parish, a painfully embarrassing occasion for me and equally painful for the congregation. I didn’t hit one right note, and could see the looks of pity, as well as the hidden wincing, that accompanied every versicle.

After the evensong débâcle, I resolved never to put myself or a congregation through that again. It seemed to be the antithesis of worship: the congregation were unable to relax into the service, and I was unable to hold the space for them as I should. Singing so badly did not help others to focus on God, but kept them miserably uncomfortable and earthbound.

As so often happens, a fear and inadequacy that lead to avoidance result only in greater fear. When I began my new job as Dean of King’s College London, in December 2020, I had no plans to address my singing phobia. So, why, just six months later, did I send in an application (including a short video of my mangling of “O Canada”, for which I should apologise to all fellow Canadians) to be one of the non-singers on *Anyone Can Sing?*

I was at a point in my life when I felt comfortable in my own skin. I have a well-hidden panic disorder, of which I had been deeply ashamed as a younger woman and, especially, as a younger priest. There had been many Sundays when I presided or preached and would be literally shaking, convinced that this was the occasion when I would faint or flee in the midst of a service.

Having done some hard internal work, however, I felt that this no longer had the grip on me that it had once had. I greatly wanted to be able to sing. This seemed the time to jump right out of my comfort zone, when the cameras could give an external commitment that would hold me to my resolve.

It also seemed fitting to me, as a university dean, to show that lifelong learning is a real possibility. Just as ENO wanted the series to show that opera is accessible to all, I wanted to show that the Church of England is accessible to all, as open to everyone as the God we worship.

I hoped that revealing my vulnerability might encourage other people to acknowledge and address theirs. Often, leadership is assumed to be for people who have their lives sorted, their thick skins in place, and their weaknesses overcome.

My hope was (and is) to be the sort of leader who allows their limitations to be seen as well as their strengths, and who accepts failure in themselves and others as a necessary and valuable part of the journey.

The experience of being part of the show was both hard and wonderful. After the first day, when they whittled ten finalists down to six, we were all set to work. We had one singing lesson a week with the mentor we had been assigned — the wonderful renowned tenor Nicky Spence for me — as well as a weekly lesson with Murray Hipkin, our kind, patient, and talented musical director.

There were challenges along the way to show audiences how we were doing and a finale when we sang arias from *La Traviata* and *The Merry Widow* on the stage at the Coliseum, the ENO's theatre.

The first challenge was to have the six of us as a group, but with solo lines, singing part of "Vissi d'arte" from *Tosca* at the Crystal Palace Bowl. This was in front of the cameras, but not in front of an audience. I bombed completely.

Appropriately for a priest, my line was "I always pray sincerely", but of the six of us I was the only one who was completely out of tune. I spent the rest of the day fighting back tears and cried on my husband's shoulder that night. It took all the courage that I had to return for the next day's filming.

I wondered at the time, and afterwards, why I reacted so strongly. As Nicky kept reminding me, the stakes were low: no one was going to die if I sang the wrong notes, and part of my reason for doing this whole thing was to show that it was OK to fail. But my emotional and rational responses were way far apart.

My head could say that it was all OK, but still I was heartsick at doing something so badly in public. The shame response is so deeply embedded, and so destructive, that it is crucial to challenge it theologically and in every other way we can. Learning to look on ourselves, as well as each other, with the deeply loving gaze of God is a vital part of moving away from shame to acceptance and hope.

One of the wonderful parts of the experience was sharing the journey with the other participants. The whole series was set up as "anti *X Factor*", with no competitive element and no elimination (other than the first episode, which didn't really fit this ethos). This is vitally important in a culture that is causing mental ill-being and anxiety in its younger members, who are increasingly made to feel that everything in life is a competition and failure is catastrophic.

Khadijah, Shirley, Chris, Rico, Luke, and I were able to cheer one another on wholeheartedly and share the wobbles and anxieties that we experienced along the way, with no fight for approval and recognition. They were people I would never have met otherwise, and people I deeply value having in my life.

This meant that when we came to be back-up singers for the soprano Katherine Jenkins at the Tottenham Hotspur Stadium, we were truly able to support one another. We were singing the alto, tenor, and bass parts of "God Save the Queen" while our soprano star belted out the melody.

We shared with each other the surreal blend of complete fright and massive buzz which came from singing in front of approximately 65,000 fans of American football (many of whom joined in).

By this point, I was also finally learning how to match pitch, by repeated practice and by finding ways of getting out of my head — which included Nicky's novel teaching technique of throwing a beanbag frog at me whenever I was about to sing.

And then, in October 2021, I sang evensong for the first time since theological college. The college choir and music director could not have been more supportive as I nervously rehearsed the Rose responses.

When it came to the service itself, I found myself surprised by calm, accepting that I could fail again — and very publicly — but that I was open to that as a step in a continuing journey. I didn't need to be

perfect: I just needed to offer to God the best that I could and trust that it would no longer offend the ears, and impede the worship of, the congregation. So, I opened my lips and sang.

That was the real turning point for me. It was a revelation to worship through my singing as well as hold the space for the congregation to worship. Nicky said afterwards: "I couldn't believe it was you making that sound"; and I really couldn't believe it, either.

More than that, I knew that this would be just the first time of many. I have since sung evensong several times, never perfectly, but always well enough, and always with deep gratitude that this source of joy has been opened up for me.

I began the series thinking that I might be the one participant who proved its central premise wrong — that, no, not anyone can sing. But, on the stage of the Coliseum, dressed for the set of Gilbert and Sullivan's *HMS Pinafore* in corset and massive hoop skirt, with ringlets and ridiculous blue bonnet on my head, I really did fill the theatre with my voice.

I am so thankful that I saw that article in *The Guardian*, and that I exchanged the claustrophobic confines of my comfort zone for an expansive space of freedom and joy.

Anyone Can Sing is available on Sky Arts.

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