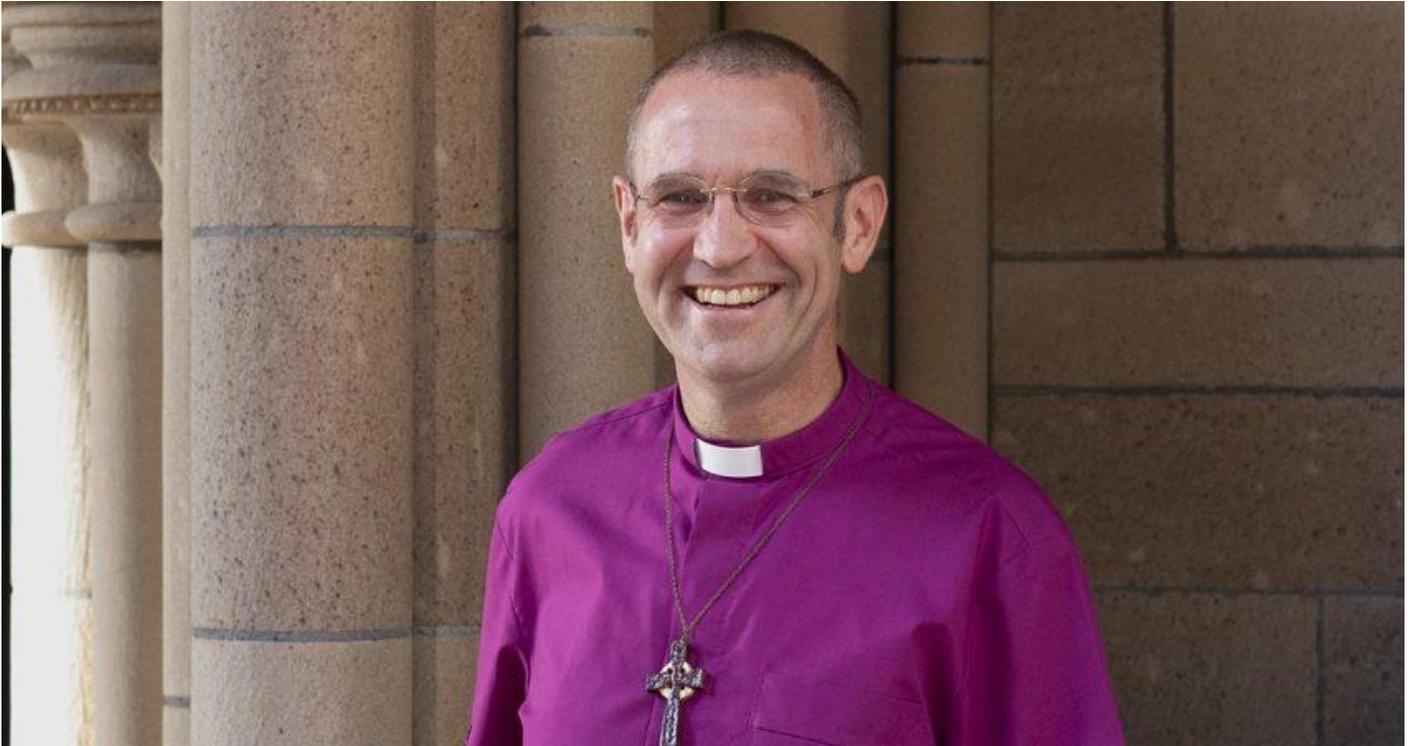


What title would you give our collective story?



What title would you give our collective story if you were to write humanity's biography? What word might best capture what the story is all about?

How about the word, "Failure"?

Many of us never thought we would see war in Europe again. My own parents grew up in the Second World War. Serious commentators are describing the current situation being the nearest to World War III since 1945.

Jesuit priest and chief military chaplain for the Ukrainian Greek-Catholic Church Andriy Zelinskyy wrote in last week's *Economist* magazine:

"We, intelligent and responsible citizens of the global village, must ask ourselves how such levels of inhumanity are possible in Europe in the 21st century. At this moment in our history we need answers—as does our common future. It may become even a new mission for today's intellectuals to seek and find out how we arrived at this moment. They may uncover areas of politics or sociology that we have forgotten in the decades since the great wars of the last century. Our institutions and organisations are weaker than we thought and this has cost human lives. A crucial question remains: "Where have we failed?"

He might give the story of the West the title, "Failure".

He then goes on to write, "The war in Ukraine uncovers a difficult question: "What do we really value?"

This is an important question for all of us in the Church.

To answer this question, I think we need to know our stories.

As a Church, our values have emerged from the Christian stories. So knowing our stories helps keep us grounded and consistent in our values. Do we know our stories as well as we know the associated values?

Western Christianity has just celebrated Easter over the weekend.

Easter is the foundation story for all Christians. It is the story of love winning in the most extraordinary of circumstances. It shows us that death does not have the final word in the book of life. The Easter story also shows us how God takes the initiative to restore our relationships with each other and with God.

It is much more than the story of an empty tomb. It is a big story that has impacted much of Western culture.

How does the Easter story shape you? How do you tell that story for yourself? What are your values?

These words from Cannon Hill Anglican College's hymn, which I sang recently with the school's community, are especially prescient at this time:

"Cure the world's warring madness,
bend our pride to your control.
Shame our wanton selfish gladness,
rich in things and poor in soul.
Grant us courage, grant us compassion,
lest we miss your kingdom's goal."

I pray that each of these may be granted.

If you looked up at the sky last week you would have seen a full moon. The date of Easter in Western Christianity is tied to the first full moon, known as the Paschal Full Moon, on or after the calendar year's first Equinox.

What was especially remarkable last week was that three of the world's major religions marked major observances. Jews celebrated the Passover festival, Muslims kept Ramadan and Western Christianity observed Holy Week. So all around the world, people of different faiths prayed for peace as each of these three traditions kept their own observance.

There can be a better world. And we need to work for it with courage and compassion. It, too, has a story – what name would you give it?

St Luke's, Toowoomba: \$200,000 eastern wall project



Gordon Lee (Centre Warden at St Luke's Toowoomba), Nicole Ham (ACSQ Senior Property Officer), John Compton (Parish Warden) and Stephanie Keays (heritage architect) in front of the recently restored eastern wall and windows of St Luke's, Toowoomba on 27 April 2022

"Lift high the cross, the love of Christ proclaim..."

Parishioners sang as the new cross was lifted into place on the eastern apex of the main roof of St Luke's, Toowoomba during the recent completion of our eastern wall project. The contract with Classical Stone Australia commenced in February after we received heritage approval for the scope of works proposed for our State Heritage listed building.

Construction of scaffolding 18 metres high to allow fixing the cross to the apex stone gives some indication of the work required across the eastern wall's central section.

Considering the wall and windows have stood since the extension was undertaken in 1953 to 1959, which included relocation of the Griffith family window (built in 1947), the maintenance required is unsurprising. Driving rains from the east take their toll. Thankfully, the Griffith window, a replica of part of a famous Chartres Cathedral window remains structurally sound, although requiring some repairs, re-puttying of the component section steel frames and cleaning.

The restoration work was in response to deterioration of sandstone hood and sill blocks (with one breaking and falling) and delaminating of sandstone surrounding the three windows. We also needed to remove the cross on the apex after discovering that the base was cracked, which presented a WH&S risk.



New sandstone cross on the eastern apex of St Luke's, Toowoomba

The mortar joints between the bluestones and sandstones fringing the windows and below the sill stone course were repointed to prevent water seepage into the building.

Three windows, including the large Griffith family window that had one section damaged, were repaired as necessary and cleaned after rusted metal screens were removed. These screens have been replaced with toughened glass screens that will better protect the windows and limit water penetration, as well as enhance colour and light in the church.

The new sandstone cross, crafted from a single block, is truly a work of art, which was unfortunately only sighted close-up by a few people, before being hoisted to the eastern apex of the main roof line on 15 March. Placement of the cross was a splendid event, as it was lifted into place against a clear blue sky.

A total of 22 indent stones have been replaced in the window hoods and sills. Other sandstone blocks in the window surrounds and sills, rubbed back to a clean surface, now blend with the replacement stones that were fortunately obtained from the same quarry at Helidon.

The cost of the project, about \$200,000, will be largely covered by parish bequest funds, assisted by other contributions. Considering that construction of the Warrior Chapel and eastern extensions in 1953 was budgeted at about the same amount, the ongoing challenge to preserve State Heritage listed buildings on the St Luke's site can be appreciated.

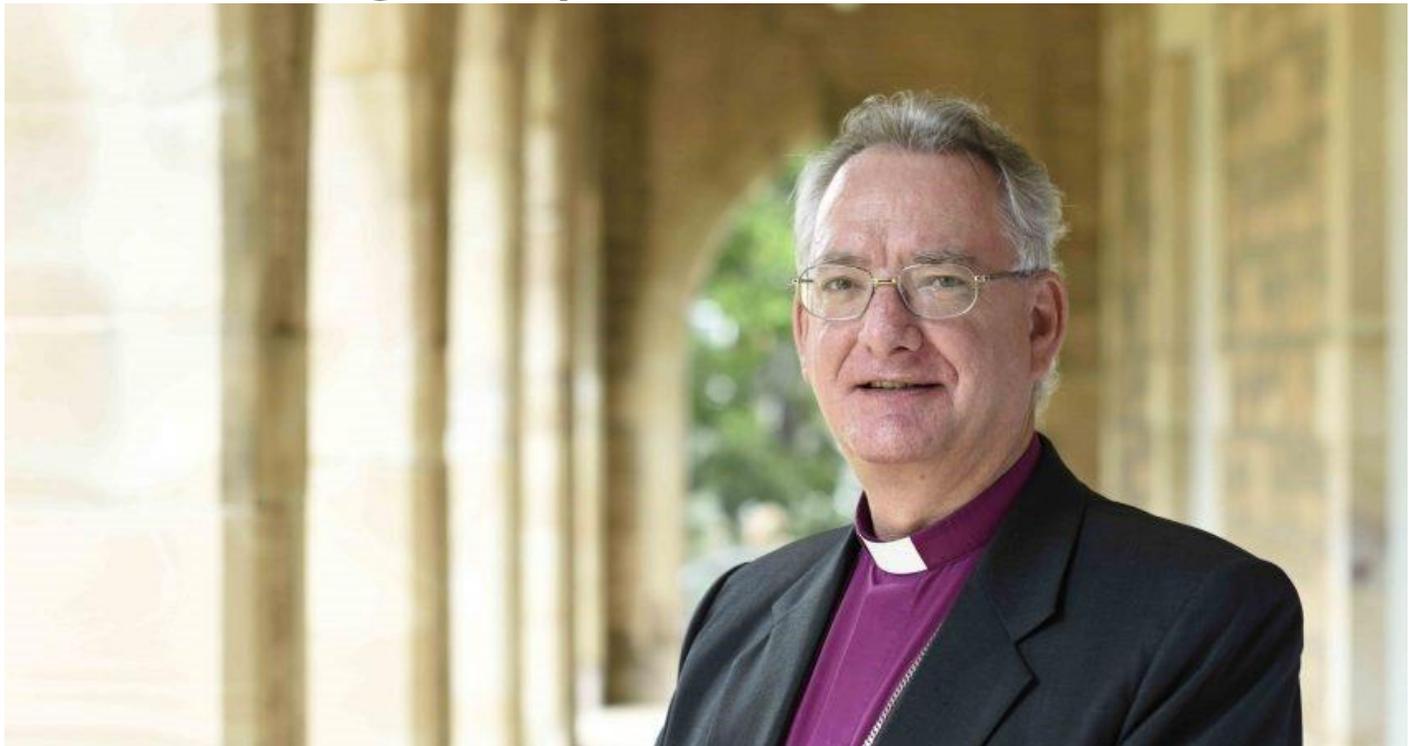
Classical Stone Australia, Kent Roxborough (with lead stone mason Blake Roxborough) and a team of artisans are to be congratulated on delivering high-quality work on time, especially in view of disruptive wet weather events. We give thanks for the skills of these tradespeople.

The parish also gratefully acknowledges the significant contribution of Nicole Ham, ACSQ Senior Property Officer. Working with ACSQ legal team members, Nicole organised and completed the contract and oversaw the project with the heritage architect, Stephanie Keays.

May the church be used to the glory of God for generations to come.

Reflections • Tuesday 26 April 2022 • By Archbishop Phillip Aspinall AC

St Francis College to explore co-location ideas



Our Diocesan community is blessed with some stunning sites, many of which include heritage listed buildings.

One of our community's most loved sites is St Francis Theological College, based in Milton.

St Francis Theological College is a landmark of ministry and learning. It's where our clergy train for ordained ministry, with the wonderful Roscoe Library and lecture rooms onsite for this purpose.

It also hosts a number of important ministries, including FormedFaith, which educates lay people; Anglican Youth Children and Families, which organises Ichthus camps; Community of The Way, which is an intentional community of young people; our spiritual direction formation program; and urban farm project, Baroona Farm.

The college's heritage listed Chapel of The Holy Spirit is home to the Parish of Milton community.

And, in the centre of our theological college sits Old Bishopsbourne.

Old Bishopsbourne is a beautiful heritage listed two-storey building that was originally built as a residence for Edward Tufnell, the first Anglican Bishop of Brisbane.

We've been gathering in and around Old Bishopsbourne for worship and learning since it was built in 1868.

And, we want to continue using this stunning setting to foster the Church's mission in the future.

Like other heritage buildings across our Diocese, Old Bishopsbourne needs extensive and expensive work to preserve it and enhance it.

I'd like to see Old Bishopsbourne, and other significant heritage buildings, preserved and enhanced. However, it is expected that millions of dollars will be needed.

As well as preserving the Church's heritage, the College needs and deserves more current facilities to nourish and form our people. And, the site's 3.8 hectares of land has space that could be put to greater community use.

We need additional income to pay for these works, so we and the wider community can make the most of the College's site.

While the Anglican Church Southern Queensland will continue to maintain ownership of the St Francis Theological College site, we will be exploring co-location ideas.

So over the coming weeks, we'll be seeking potential co-location opportunities for the College site through an expressions of interest process.

Any initiatives that are considered for co-location will need to fit the College and the College's site; the mission, values and financial needs of our Diocese; and, the wider community.

Nothing is expected to change at the site for at least three years while we explore and make decisions.

While seeking ideas from potential co-location partners via the expressions of interest process, we will be welcoming people both from within the Church and beyond to information sessions.

I believe that this is an exciting opportunity that we need to grasp, as we explore ideas and options.

In summary, it's important for you to know that:

- We're not selling the St Francis Theological College site. We're retaining ownership of both the site and the College.
- The planned expressions of interest process will aim to identify potential co-location opportunities.
- We want to see other community uses that will be in line with our values and provide an income source to preserve and enhance the College and the heritage site.
- Community engagement will form an important part of the process, and so information sessions will be held.
- We expect that things will remain the same onsite for at least three years, and that any co-location options we choose will have a community purpose and be in keeping with our values.

I would like to thank the Property Team and the St Francis Theological College commissioners and staff for their collaboration on this initiative. We are blessed to have such dedicated clergy and lay people serving our Church community.

We look forward to updating you when we understand our options more clearly.

Editor's note: An information session will be held for ACSQ community members on Monday 9 May at 6pm. The event will be held in Lecture Room 1 at St Francis Theological College, with a Zoom option available. For catering and Zoom link reasons, please register for the event by emailing luke@threeplus.com.au or phoning 07 3167 1200, advising whether you will be attending in person or online. St Francis Theological College staff, students and residents and Milton Parish community members will be directly invited to attend other meetings.

Reflections • Monday 2 May 2022 • By Dr Helen Lancaster

What is an examining chaplain?



"It's a great honour to share the vocational journey of a candidate," says Dr Helen Lancaster (pictured are our Diocese's 2021 ordination candidates)

Invited by the Archbishop to become an examining chaplain, I wondered "Why me?" Despite being a priest's kid and a Cathedral warden, I'd come across the title mostly at ordinations. I was to discover that examining chaplains are a piece of that great jigsaw puzzle that helps people discern their call to ordained ministry. If all the pieces are available, the resulting picture may be one of ordination, and if the pieces don't quite fit, the picture is one of lay ministry greatly enhanced by the discernment process.

This [vocation discernment process](#) is a multi-faceted journey from "Seeker" to "Enquirer" to "Ordinand". It is formalised by a period of vocational discernment, and possibly further explored through a period known as formation. No matter how long it takes someone to enter discernment, or

how long the periods of discernment and formation might be, anyone called to this journey is supported by a number of examining chaplains.

Examining chaplains do all the things any examiner might expect to do – review, assess, listen, inquire and report. But more than all this, they know and are concerned for their candidates, encouraging and helping them to explore whatever seems best for them at each stage of their individual journey.

The Archbishop appoints examining chaplains, both clergy and lay people, to work with the Director of Discernment and Formation to help discern those who express a sense of call to ordained ministry in our Diocese. Together with the candidate's individual parish priests and Regional Bishops, they assess the preparedness of each Seeker as they move into discernment, and possibly through to formation towards potential ordination.

Each chaplain brings different experiences, just as candidates come from disparate backgrounds. People responding to God's call do not always emerge from "obvious" church backgrounds – some have professional roles while others have more varied job histories and some are highly educated while others are commencing tertiary study for the first time. Very few are very young. It's almost as though God wants them out there experiencing the world before their calling becomes really clear.

It's a great honour to share the vocational journey of a candidate, to observe their growth as they move from one parish to another, one form of liturgy to another, all the time responding to different challenges. Among the candidates I've had the privilege to meet are marketers, musicians, miners, educators and office workers. Some are established lay people, others simply respond in faith to an undeniable calling that they may not yet understand. The discernment process helps them to better realise how they might respond to God's call.

Why did I accept the Archbishop's invitation? Call it blind faith. After 45 years working in universities, the term "examining" was pretty familiar, but "examining chaplain" took me into unfamiliar territory. We are asked to "test the knowledge and qualifications, etc of a person" for ordained ministry. The real test is not so much about the "formal qualifications" as it is about the "etc" – what I would term "holistic readiness". As candidates move through discernment and then maybe formation, that readiness takes different shapes. With each change comes the challenge for examining chaplains to stay mindful of how each shape, each candidate, might fit God's plan.

Our primary purpose is not formal testing, but ensuring that God's plan is given the best chance. As noted in "[God Calling](#)", there is *one* ministry – the ministry of Jesus Christ. Examining chaplains are part of the process that enriches that one ministry, whether ordained or lay. We recognise that the ministry of the laity is foundational – one that transforms the Church.

Regardless of how the journey proceeds, all candidates are supported and encouraged, so that the Church benefits from well-prepared deacons, priests, *and* lay members. And, it doesn't stop there because every member of the Church is called to Jesus' ministry. By encouraging potential Seekers, and supporting them as they live out their vocation, we all contribute to the mission of the Church.

Note from The Rev'd Canon Sarah Plowman, Director of Discernment and Formation: If you are an ordained or lay Anglican in our Diocesan community and you are interested in expressing interest in becoming a voluntary examining chaplain, please contact me via sarah.plowman@anglicanchurchsq.org.au.

Q&A with TSS Old Boy, Indigenous Liaison Officer, cricketer and proud Ngemba man, Matthew Dalton



"My family and me at my TSS graduation in 2019" (Matthew Dalton)

How long have you been a part of The Southport School community and in what roles?

I have been a part of The Southport School (TSS) community since 2017. I started off as a student in Year 10, graduating in 2019. I came to the school from Grafton, but my family lives in Brewarrina in NSW on Ngemba Country. I attended the school on a TSS Foundation scholarship. I returned this year as a staff member in the role of Indigenous Liaison Officer.

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

My role as Indigenous Liaison Officer is important for Reconciliation because I help connect First Nations students with non-Indigenous students and I work with First Nations students so they can connect more with their cultures and Countries.



TSS Indigenous Liaison Officer Matthew Dalton with First Nations boarding students Eli, Jay and Xavier at the TSS yarning circle on 27 April 2022

What projects and activities are you currently working on?

One of the key things I am currently involved in is the launch of the new yarning circle at TSS. Our yarning circle covers a large outdoor area. It contains a firepit in the centre and is bordered by boulders that also serve as seats. Surrounding the boulders is a native garden that was planted by First Nations students with the help of Mr Ken Brown, who is an Indigenous Mentor and Education Consultant. There are 29 students in total at TSS.

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

During National Reconciliation Week on 2 June, we will be holding the launch ceremony for our yarning circle. We also have ongoing initiatives planned. For example, I meet with the boys twice a week – on Wednesdays with Ken and on Fridays during a leadership period.

What has been one of the key highlights of your time at TSS in your role so far?

One of the main hands-on activities I do with the boys is a weekly cooking session. One of our shyer students started to open up more during these sessions. It has been great to see him come out of his shell. Every student is special. This student is special because he is courageous. He always gets in and has a go and he is a gifted athlete.

Why is it important to celebrate National Reconciliation Week?

From my perspective it's important because First Nations peoples can showcase their cultures, including cooking, dance and artworks to non-Indigenous people so they can learn more about our histories and ways.

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?

Yarning circles are a great way because there is a place for everyone in a yarning circle. Because the space is a circle shape, everyone speaks on the same level. People feel free to speak up about what's on their mind regardless of who they are.

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

I feel connected to Ngemba Country seeing traditional landmarks, such as the fish traps that date back thousands of years. The fish traps bring our community together – even though it is a popular tourist site now, my people gather along the river to catch fish. When I go home, I connect with the red dirt, as well as the river. My great-grandfather is from the Ngemba people and their totem is the sand goanna. My great-grandmother is from the Ualaroi people, and her totem is the long-necked turtle.

These totems connect me to people both living and passed and to the land.

What person of faith inspires you the most and why?

My great-grandmother, who was a Ngemba Country elder. She was born in 1926. She was the family matriarch who kept my large family in Western NSW together. She was a part of the Stolen Generations. After reconnecting with her family, she had eight kids of her own.

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

In Year 12 I played in the First XI cricket team at TSS. A few weeks after I bowled the winning wicket against another school's team, the TSS sport director Mr Steve Baker gave me the match ball. This gesture represents the significance of my cricket journey at the school.

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

When I first moved to boarding school at TSS I was quite nervous, especially given my impressionable age. My mum said that I had nothing to lose and to just give it a crack. She is very supportive.

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

In the afternoons, I go for five-kilometre run along the beach with my headphones in.

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

My Spotify playlist – I couldn't live without my music. A fishing rod to catch fish to eat. And, a Swiss army knife.

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

"Know your Country". It's important for First Nations peoples to know their Country so they can relate back to how their ancestors lived. It's important for non-Indigenous people to know the Country they live and work on so they can learn to respect rather than abuse it.

Where do you do your best thinking?

On my own when I am sitting and watching the sun set or rise.

What is your karaoke go-to song?

'Follow me' by Uncle Kracker.

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

I couldn't go past a good feed at KFC.

What makes you nostalgic and why?

When I hear old country music I think about being back out west in country NSW.

What is your earliest memory?

I spent a lot of time at my grandmother's as a young boy in Grafton. I used to follow my uncle, who was less than 10 years older than me, around. He took me under his wing and included me in footy games and cricket matches and golf.

What's your best childhood memory?

When I was 12 or 13 years of age, my family and I went to a One Day International between Australia and England at the Gabba. It was the game where James Faulkner scored a brilliant 69 runs off 47 balls, including fives sixers, to win the match.

What is your secret skill?

I am ambidextrous. This means that I can throw and kick both right- and left-footed.

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

My first day at TSS because at the time I didn't know how special it was going to be – that one day changed my life and brought me to where I am today.

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

Buffalo chicken wings. Yamba Shores Tavern makes the best Buffalo chicken wings.

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

My Gold Coast Titans jersey because they are not going so well this season – but I have to stay loyal.

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.

Features • Friday 29 April 2022 • By The Rev'd Adam Lowe

You are invited to join a free ACSQ digital learning cohort



"Last year St Bart's really benefited from participating in a national digital learning cohort with churches of different denominations and sizes involved" (The Rev'd Adam Lowe)

When COVID-19 first came to our shores, parishes frantically adopted and adjusted to different forms of digital or hybrid technologies. Now as we look ahead, many ordained and lay church leaders are intentionally considering what might be the best ways to use these technologies in their ministry and mission.

Last year St Bart's really benefited from participating in a national digital learning cohort with churches of different denominations and sizes involved. It was a great blessing to learn from others, wrestle with questions together, think intentionally about our own contexts and have great input from world-class experts on the subject.

Commencing in late May, we are beginning a similar digital learning cohort with churches across our Diocese. Resource Church St Bart's will be facilitating a digital learning cohort for ACSQ churches who are currently using digital or hybrid approaches.

The purpose of the cohort is to help enable churches to further engage and minister to people via online platforms. During the sessions, we will learn from each other's experiences and examples, as well benefit from the input of world-class speakers from around the globe.

Each month we will meet on Zoom for a session of about 90 minutes. During these sessions, each church will update the cohort on:

- How their digital ministry is progressing.
- What digital ministry goals they have set for the forthcoming month.
- How they went with achieving the previous month's goals.

Then we'll hear from a speaker on the session's main topic.

This is a highly contextualised model that will enable parishes to apply and test learnings in their own ministry settings.

So this cohort is really for churches who are looking to refine, improve and expand their existing digital ministry – not start anew. The senior parish leader, along with those primarily responsible for digital technologies in the church, should be involved.

The St Bart's, Toowoomba facilitators will include Jesse Adamson Paroz and The Rev'd Michael Calder.

Jesse Adamson Paroz works as production assistant overseeing various aspects of digital ministry at St Bart's. His parish responsibilities include online (hybrid) services and the production of digital content, as well as training volunteers in digital ministry.

The Rev'd Michael Calder is an Assistant Minister at St Bart's and, as part of his role, oversees Sunday gatherings. Michael has been deeply involved in the hybrid approaches in use at St Bart's, along with broader communications and digital ministry.

Along with Jesse and Michael, each session will draw upon a range of world-class facilitators to provide input into specific aspects of digital and hybrid ministry.

If you are an ACSQ church who is already engaged in the digital/hybrid ministry space and you would like to get involved, please register your interest by Friday 13 May via the [St Bart's Toowoomba website](#). There is no cost to participate.

Seafarer reunions, COVID-19 vaxing, a new partnership and centre and the passing of a beloved chaplain



"The request went out from the Captain of the small Bitumen tanker MV Lotstella: 'Can you help us vaccinate the 16 seafarers onboard?' Thanks to Christma and Kim of the Clara Street Day & Night Pharmacy Wynnum along with Agent Jude and our own wonderful team, the answer was a resounding, 'of course we can!'" (MTS Brisbane Facebook)

Our year at the Brisbane Seafarers Centre commenced with the necessary levels of enthusiasm and energy that are needed to provide care and support to the tens of thousands of seafarers transiting our port annually.

COVID-19, while making a notable impact, has ultimately left our mission in a stronger and more resilient position going forward. We have adapted our services to survive financially and enhanced the way we keep connected with seafarers. Our connections with seafarers, their families and our wonderful community of supporters are paramount.

In the first quarter of 2022, we engaged with seafarers in a range of ways that many of us take for granted. When you consider that less than 20 per cent of the world's shipping fleets have internet available to seafarers, you can understand that criticality of connectivity. We aim to connect seafarers in a range of ways that make their lives more "normal".

One of the most important activities we have undertaken this year is facilitating access to shore leave and vaccinations for seafarers in the Port of Brisbane. For two years, shore leave, which is a critical element of seafarer mental health, was prohibited due to COVID-19.

In late January, shore leave restrictions were lifted after 18 Months. So our doors reopened, and a welcoming message was sent out to all agents and ships inviting seafarers back to visit, play pool, connect with families via Wi-Fi or just enjoy the gardens, the birds and the local shops. In conjunction

with this, we have teamed up with a local pharmacy in Wynnum and Queensland Health COVID-19 Vaccination Program providers to facilitate vaccinations for seafarers. The first vaccination was undertaken in March for a seafarer waiting to join his ship. We are hoping to facilitate many more.

Our port has long had two seafarer welfare service providers, the Anglican Church's Mission to Seafarers (MTS) and the Catholic Church's Stella Maris. Our two organisations have consistently worked together in ports around the world to provide for the spiritual, mental and physical wellbeing of seafarers. Mostly these services have been offered through separate facilities. It was recognised long ago that the synergies of working more closely alongside each other locally could be enhanced by working from a common centre.

So in early January 2022, Mission to Seafarers and Stella Maris joined forces at the new Brisbane Seafarers Centre to benefit seafarers and our respective organisations. The Brisbane Seafarers Centre team of Heather, Barry and Wil are now collectively looking after the wellbeing of our seafarers.



Heather Turner (Seafarers Centre Supervisor), Barry Guest (Seafarer Support Stella Maris) and Wilmer Prada (Seafarer Support Stella Maris) in the grounds of the Brisbane Seafarers Centre on 10 January 2022 following the union of the two organisations

Connecting seafarers with their families and friends is one of our primary activities. For example, in February we helped one seafarer on *MV Parsifal* whose brother lives in Brisbane. We passed the locally living brother some macramé that had been lovingly completed over weeks at sea en route from Europe.

We also helped two people connect face to face again after years of being physically apart. Two lifelong friends from the Philippines – Victor and Julius – while separated by oceans, have maintained their contact through thick and thin, and COVID-19. It's always a joy to our staff to be involved in such reunions.

Recently when Julius' ship was scheduled to call into Brisbane, Heather and the team coordinated the delivery of a friends "care package" containing all those items any seafarer would welcome, including a baseball cap, Staminade (an electrolyte), books, magazines, DVDs and games. To see the smiles on the faces of these two friends was heart-warming.

Sadly, March also brought with it the passing of The Rev'd William Robert Pearson (Father Bill), Chaplain Emeritus for Mission to Seafarers. Father Bill was a well known and loved MTS chaplain who first connected with the Mission in Townsville in 1959. Having held active positions with the Royal Australian Navy Reserve and Mission to Seafarers Brisbane from 1996-2006, Father Bill was well versed in the life of a seafarer, which made his role of chaplain to these and several other seagoing organisations highly relevant. A requiem mass was held for Father Bill in early March at All Saints', Wickham Terrace and our love and sympathy for his family were clear as many of his Mission To Seafarers friends attended.

A quarter wouldn't be complete without a Bunnings' sausage sizzle. This quarter, Team Sizzle (Patrick Ringold, Peter Marchbank, Marcus Bochenski and yours truly) got together on Sunday 16 January at Bunnings Rothwell to provide hours of nourishment for the DIYers of the Redcliffe Peninsula. Over 40kg of sausages were cooked to perfection and devoured in under seven hours. We are very grateful to Bunnings for enabling charities to fundraise via sausage sizzles and, of course, to the wider community who never cease to demonstrate their kindness, sense of humour and generosity.

Anglicans Australia-wide commemorate the significant contribution of the seafarer on Sea Sunday, which is marked on the second Sunday of July annually. Please take the opportunity this year on Sunday 10 July to recognise the contribution that seafarers make to our lives. Should you like further information about Sea Sunday and the sermon notes that are prepared for this day, please contact Mission To Seafarers via tfa@mtsbrisbane.org.au.

An official component of the local Mission to Seafarers operation, our AGM, is held each March. The AGM gives us an opportunity to recognise our supportive community organisations and the wonderful caring people that make these organisations what they are. While the number of organisations and individuals is quite long, we have listed them to thank them publicly for their contributions to our Mission and to the lives of our seafarers. They put a smile on the faces of our seafarers and contribute significantly to their emotional wellbeing. From the bottom of our hearts, we thank them:

Port of Brisbane Pty Ltd
Maritime Safety Queensland
Seafarers Day Committee
Naval Association of Australia Sandgate Subbranch
Parish of Goodna
Southport Gospel Chapel
Parish of Gold Coast North
East Redlands Anglican
St Matthias, Zillmere
St Andrew's, Lutwyche
St Augustine's, Hamilton
Parish of Green Hills
Algester Mothers Union
Parish of Aspley/Albany Creek
Parish of Grovely

St Peter's, Wynnum
St John's, Bulimba
Parish of Kilcoy
Royal Australian Navy Communications Branch
QCWA Border Division
Krafters group – Lions Club of Griffith Uni
Parish of Toowong
Scope, Allora
Patrick Security
Mrs Edna Ginnivan, Chinchilla
Quota Wynnum
St Bart's, Toowoomba
Anne Braithwaite

Smooth sailing...

Features • Tuesday 3 May 2022 • By Vanessa Fowler OAM

“Let’s acknowledge the good news that domestic and family violence is preventable”



Allison Baden-Clay (née Dickie) in 1994

The month of May brings with it the joy of Mother’s Day when we come together to celebrate the achievements of mothers, grandmothers, carers and women everywhere.

Yet May is also significant in the domestic and family violence space because it is recognised as [Domestic and Family Violence Prevention Month](#). This dedicated month is not only a time when we highlight the lives lost each year, but it is also an opportunity to promote awareness, to educate the community and to reflect on how far we have come over the last decade while looking to the future

and the work that still needs to be done. This is also a time when women are calling for change, pleading to be listened to, and asking to be believed. I am a part of this movement for change and have been for many years.

My involvement in the domestic and family violence space began when my sister, Allison Baden-Clay, was murdered by her husband in April 2012. Her story shocked and gripped the nation. It resonated with people in the community and was in the media almost daily for months. At the time my family wondered why there was so much interest in Allison's story. We came to the conclusion that it was because she was "the girl next door", a neighbour, a kind friend. Allison was well educated, a high achiever, a successful business woman and a loving and devoted mother. Allison, like so many other women, suffered in silence until her death.

Growing up, Allison was always a quiet achiever, and achieve she did. She was deputy Head Girl at Ipswich Girls' Grammar School, Miss Brisbane in 1994 and graduated with honours in her Arts degree from the University of Queensland. However, her greatest achievement was her three daughters, whom she loved and offered every opportunity to succeed. Her positive attitude and desire to always strive to be the best that she could have been instilled in her children, whose lives were turned upside-down on 19 April 2012.

There is one very important thing that my family has learned over the last 10 years and that is that domestic and family violence can happen to anyone – to people of all ages, all classes, all religions and all income and education levels. Allison, like so many other women, suffered in silence until her death.

Domestic and family violence isn't just an "immediate family" problem. It's a crime with serious repercussions for extended family members (especially children), friends and the entire community. Family members and friends are impacted and live with the consequences for the rest of their lives. It has a "ripple effect" – other family members are victims, too. I know because I live it.

As a society, we are commonly told to "mind our own business" when it comes to other's family matters and to avoid intruding in other people's affairs. So in a domestic and family violence situation this can sometimes make it hard for us to determine what to do, especially if we are worried about the possibility of "interfering" with a personal relationship, such as someone's marriage. People are often reluctant to speak up if they suspect violence in the relationship of a friend, colleague or neighbour with the (mis)perception that "it's none of my business". Well, it is our business and we can break the cycle.

As a family, we now look back and realise that there were signs of abuse in Allison's marriage – there was a pattern of abusive behaviour that we now know as "coercive control". For example, the landline in their house was disconnected so that the only way the extended family could contact her was through her mobile phone, which her husband monitored. In addition, as a stay-at-home mum she had no personal funds to draw on and therefore relied on his income and his allocation of a weekly allowance. Bank accounts and credit card statements were checked and questioned by him. His emotional abuse led to her believing that she was overweight and ugly and she was subsequently discouraged from seeing family and friends, which isolated her. A final act of physical violence took her life. In hindsight, if we had known what to look out for then, Alison may still be alive and safe and the lives of Allison's three children and her extended family members may have been very different.

Allison's murder has changed many lives forever and it's important to our family that Allison's legacy is a positive one, and that by sharing her story we may help others.

It's important to understand that gender inequality is a key driver of violence against women. Gender inequality provides the underlying conditions for violence against women. It exists in many areas of our communities – from how we view and value men and women; to economic factors like the pay gap between men and women; to intimate partner and family roles and expectations; and, to how we choose to either include or exclude women from hierarchies, including in church leadership.

Violence against women has distinct gendered drivers. [Evidence points](#) to four factors that most consistently predict or “drive” violence against women, explaining its gendered patterns.

1. Condoning of violence against women occurs both through social attitudes and norms and through legal, institutional and organisational structures and practices that justify, excuse or trivialise this violence or shift blame from the perpetrator to the victim.
2. Violence is more common in relationships where men control decision making and limit women's autonomy, have a sense of ownership of or entitlement to women, and hold rigid ideas on what is considered to be “acceptable” female behaviour. Constraints on women's independence and decision making are also evident in the public sphere where men have greater control over power and resources. Such forms of male dominance, power and control and limits to women's autonomy collectively contribute to men's violence against women by sending a message that women have lower social value and are less worthy of respect.
3. Implementing, promoting and enforcing rigid hierarchical gender stereotypes reproduces the social conditions of gender inequality that underpin violence against women. In particular, reinforcing unhealthy stereotypes of masculinity plays a direct role in driving men's violence against women. Men who form a rigid attachment to socially dominant norms and practices of masculinity are more likely to demonstrate sexist attitudes and behaviours, and consequently perpetrate violence against women.
4. Male peer relationships (both personal and professional) that are characterised by attitudes, behaviours or norms regarding masculinity that centre on aggression, dominance, control or hypersexuality are associated with violence against women. In such peer groups, adherence to these dominant forms of masculinity increases men's reluctance to take a stand against violence supportive attitudes, and can increase the use of violence itself.

This highlights the unequal structures and practices that prevent women and girls from enjoying the same opportunities and privileges as men and boys. So we all must actively challenge inequality in the places where we live, learn, work and play. We also need to avoid using inappropriately gendered phrases such as “it's just boys being boys” or “it's okay – he just punched you in the arm because he likes you” to excuse unhealthy behaviours, or “don't run like a girl” or “don't cry like a girl”. From a young age, boys and girls start believing there are reasons and situations that make sexist remarks and behaviours acceptable. This is dangerous and has serious and long-lasting consequences.

We need generational change. We need cultural change. We need to change the way we think about gender. We need to change our mindsets. However, change can only be effectively achieved when each and every one of us takes a personal interest and engages in promoting healthy and non-violent relationships in our homes, schools, work places and the broader community.

We shouldn't have to raise our daughters to protect themselves against mistreatment from men, we should be raising our sons to respect and value them. As the mother of two sons, I am raising my sons to be strong, decent, generous and egalitarian human beings who treat others with kindness, integrity and leadership.

So during this month of May, let's acknowledge the good news that domestic and family violence is preventable as we all work together towards a positive, safe and equal future for everyone.

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

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

Reflections • Tuesday 3 May 2022 • By The Very Rev'd Dr Peter Catt

“Religion at its best is an expression of something that is deeply embedded in the human person”

If I were called in
To construct a religion
I should make use of water.

Going to church
Would entail a fording
To dry, different clothes;

My liturgy would employ
Images of sousing,
A furious devout drench,

And I should raise in the east
A glass of water
Where any-angled light
Would congregate endlessly.

'Water', Philip Larkin

Philip Larkin fascinates me.

During his life he didn't have much time for religious practice and yet some of his poetry captures deep religious truths.

His poem, 'Church Going', describes the importance of having buildings set aside for use by anyone who needs a place "to be".

The poem I quote above, 'Water', captures baptismal imagery in a most unorthodox, but compelling way.

When he died he left a substantial portion of his estate to St Paul's Cathedral, London, which he saw as a blessing to humanity.

People like Larkin remind me that religion at its best is an expression of something that is deeply embedded in the human person.

There seems to be an innate spirituality that has its origins in and expresses our essential humanity, which bubbles up when we get in touch with the source of our being.

For me this helps to explain why the use of water is to be found in a wide range of religious practices and why buildings like St Paul's in London, and St John's here in Brisbane, draw into a prayerful stillness people who claim to have no faith.

The Baru Beat • Thursday 5 May 2022 • By The Rev'd Sue Barker

"Will you tie it up with wire, just to keep the show on the road?"



Narelle and Margaret from The Ladies' Guild of St John's, Biggenden serving in the cattle saleyards canteen on 5 May 2022

When you are a hopeful new member of the clergy, you begin to think about where, in the fulness of time, your first parish might be. You read the vacant parish profiles in the 'Wednesday Weekly' e-newsletter, and wonder about what it would be like to be the parish priest of the Parish of Somewhere. And one of the things you read in most of these profiles is how many people you can expect to find sitting in the pews of St Someone's on Sundays, and how many dedicated Liturgical Assistants and support people you will have.

By the time you arrive in a new parish, especially one in the country that has been empty for some time, the parish profile may be somewhat out of date. And, when you do arrive, you may find that what you read in the profile isn't as important as you thought it would be.

Conventional wisdom suggests that the more people in the pews, the more the congregation does and the more they can contribute to the costs of running a parish. I arrived in a country parish, with congregations in five centres, to find that Biggenden, one with smaller numbers, has the most dedicated workers, the greatest involvement in the community, and the biggest income.

Biggenden nestles among the hills south of Childers and west of Maryborough, watched over by the spectacular Mt Walsh. Like many little towns it has lost people and businesses, and its churches and community groups are smaller than they used to be, but cattle sales are still a big part of its economy.

The Ladies' Guild of St John's has been running the canteen at the Biggenden cattle saleyards for over 40 years. No one still involved is sure of the start date, but we added up a "best guesstimate" based on which former parishioners (and in some cases, their mothers) worked the canteen and for how long. Small congregation numbers aren't about to change the Guild's commitment. The immediate past president of the Guild moved with her husband not long after I came to the parish to be nearer to family in Bundaberg. This would have reduced the Guild from three members to two, but a little thing like that wasn't going to stop them. I joined the Guild – I'm a woman and a member of the parish, and able to make sandwiches, as well as being a priest, and the Guild still goes on.

Margaret, who is also the Guild treasurer, does the shopping – a more dedicated bargain-hunter I have never met. If there is a special on something needed for the canteen, in Biggenden, Childers or Bundaberg, Margaret will source it and snap it up. The canteen is small, with not enough storage, so Margaret's bargains find their way to fridges and storage under her house. Her car boot is a work of art on a sale day, as everything is transported in its appointed box, esky and place – and then repacked and returned in the same perfect order. Do *not* attempt to rearrange the eskies!

Behind the scenes are more helpers who, even if they can't manage a shift in the canteen, can still cook like angels. You would have to go far to find better a tomato relish than the one made by Cleon Thompson from St John's for the canteen sandwiches. She also grates forests of carrots every month for the salad rolls. The home bakers faithfully produce sweet treats for every sale, including those must-haves at the canteen – home-made pikelets, scones and cupcakes (some with sprinkles, naturally, for those who still listen to their inner child), mixed sandwiches that have to be made just so, fat salad rolls and breakfasts for the early workers that barely fit on a plate. There was great consternation when plastic plates were outlawed, as the bamboo replacements were not considered big enough for the breakfasts the Guild likes to serve.

Working in the canteen is rather like making tea for the congregation after a service. St John's doesn't have a church hall in which to do that, but we do have the canteen kitchen. Most of the volunteers, staff, sellers and buyers on any given day will know each other, or each other's wife/husband/brother/sister/parents, and many people don't just buy a cup of tea at the canteen, they stop for a catch-up. The canteen once made "real" tea, loose leaf in a pot, and according to the exacting specifications of a former Guild member. We have descended to tea bags these days, but that doesn't seem to make the tea any less popular.

When parishes start to shrink, as many country parishes do, their social and outreach groups can dwindle and fold. But the Guild and the canteen keep running and keep serving. As Australian singer

John Williamson would put it, we “tie it up with wire, just to keep the show on the road”. I don’t know what we, or the wider community, would do without the Ladies’ Guild. It’s been part of the saleyards and part of people’s lives and memories for so long. We’ll find a way to keep it going.

Editor’s note: The new Bush Ministry Fund money boxes are a fun and easy way for individuals, families, parishes and schools to donate to bush ministry in our Diocese. Order your BMF money box today by emailing Helen Briffa in the Western Region office via hbriffa@anglicanchurchsq.org.au or by calling 07 4639 1875.

Features • Wednesday 4 May 2022 • By The Rev'd John Martin

Celebrating World Fair Trade Day: benefits and resources



"Gulshan’s work involves the finishing for organic cotton fashion items sold for Sinerji, an online and “bricks and mortar” store based in Forest Glen on the Sunshine Coast. The garments she finishes are soft, long lasting, chemical-free and durable" (The Rev'd John Martin)

Gulshan is 24 years old and she lives in India. She is well paid and works in a safe environment. This isn’t always the case in India. Gulshan is part of a long-term support network, which fosters long-term community development. A community bank has been established to financially support workers and their families to provide education, healthcare and extra support when needed.

Gulshan’s work involves the finishing for organic cotton fashion items sold for [Sinerji](#), an online and “bricks and mortar” store based in Forest Glen on the Sunshine Coast. The garments she finishes are soft, long lasting, chemical-free and durable. The organic cotton is grown and woven in the same area by people in several local villages. The cotton is rain fed to ensure minimal water usage and the thread is dyed using natural plant dyes and woven in the traditional way.

Sinerji is one of many Fair Trade fashion outlets that use plant dyes or 100 per cent eco-certified dyes, which are better for the health of those who produce the garments and for those who wear them, and better for the environment.

The stitching is also intentionally completed in the same area where the fabric is produced to reduce carbon pollution, thereby protecting the climate.

Fair Trade helps support small-scale farmers, artisans and producers, like Gulshan and her community, to cultivate safer, healthier and more sustainable communities around the world. So by buying Fair Trade certified products you are part of an effective movement for change.

[Psalm 148](#) is the Psalm listed in our Lectionary for reading in services on Sunday, 15 May. In this Psalm, the whole of creation praises God:

“Praise the Lord from the earth,
you sea monsters and all deeps,
fire and hail, snow and frost,
stormy wind fulfilling his command!

Mountains and all hills,
fruit trees and all cedars!
Wild animals and all cattle,
creeping things and flying birds!” ([Psalm 148.7-10](#))

We are all aware that damage to the climate is a serious problem that the whole world is facing. How can the whole of creation praise God when the life is being stifled out of it by ecological harm that is principally caused by damage to the climate?

Damage to the climate is affecting the world’s people unevenly, as explained in this [World Fair Trade Organization video](#):

“Let’s be fair: we are not all suffering in the same way. Those who are least responsible for the crisis are also most affected by its impacts...So, to be fair: this is not just about emissions. This is a matter of justice. Of climate justice.”

Working together, we can all help to reverse damage to the climate and care for those who work in the supply chains of the products we buy, including clothing, food, tea and coffee, and sports balls.

This year’s World Fair Trade Day [theme](#) is “Climate Justice. Let’s do it fair”. World Fair Trade Day is a global celebration held annually on the second Saturday of May, and so this year it will be commemorated on Saturday 14 May.

Three things we can do on World Fair Trade Day:

1. Check out the video, posters, web/email banners and Gif sticker resources on the [World Fair Trade Day website](#) and use these in your churches, schools and ministries.
2. Share this feature on your social media channels and in your e-newsletters.
3. Pray at home and in your faith communities, for example by using this prayer:

Thank you, Lord, for this beautiful world – your creation, so beautiful, intricate and interdependent.

Thank you that the whole of creation praises you.

Help us in the wealthy countries to better steward natural resources, so we can join in creation's praise.

And, help us to be more intentional about supporting artisans, farmers and employees who work in the supply chains of the products we purchase.

Amen

News • Thursday 5 May 2022 • By Philippe Coquerand

Lack of affordable rentals has thousands on brink of homelessness in Brisbane



"The January Omicron wave and February floods compounded what was already a tough situation for a lot of people, with surging rents, low vacancy rates and increased living costs" (Anglicare Southern Queensland's Director of Services Nick Hansen)

Anglicare Southern Queensland's annual Rental Affordability Snapshot has revealed record-breaking lows in both availability and affordability of properties in the Brisbane rental market.

Anglicare Southern Queensland's Director of Services Nick Hansen said that this year's findings were the worst in more than a decade of snapshots, even surpassing the first year of the COVID pandemic.

"We are seeing the impacts of a 'perfect storm' of adversity," Mr Hansen said.

"The January Omicron wave and February floods compounded what was already a tough situation for a lot of people, with surging rents, low vacancy rates and increased living costs.

"Anglicare staff are seeing a huge increase not only in numbers but also the range of people seeking help — former business owners who never recovered from the first COVID lockdowns and have now

lost their homes, retirees driven out of long-term private rentals by exorbitant rent rises, and families with children who have been blacklisted for being unable to pay their rent, now living in their cars.

“The situation has reached a tipping point where it’s no longer possible for just one level of government to address homelessness and the housing crisis.”

Mr Hansen said action needs to be taken now to address the crisis facing thousands of people right across Queensland.

“We need the Federal and Queensland Governments to commit to working together on real solutions to this problem through a national housing strategy, and to refuse to accept homelessness and poverty as inevitable facts of life,” he said.

This year’s Brisbane Snapshot found that:

- There is not a single household type out of 14, including working couples on minimum wage, in which median rent as a proportion of household income meets the 30% benchmark for housing affordability.
- For a young adult on Youth Allowance, aspiring to a one-bedroom home is out of the question — the median rent equates to 99% of their income.
- Not a single household type on Jobseeker spends less than half their income on housing if they are paying median rent in the private market.
- A single person on Jobseeker with one child would pay nearly four-fifths (78%) of their income for 2-bedroom accommodation in Brisbane
- A couple on the Aged Pension would pay 42% of their income on accommodation; and a single Aged Pensioner would pay more than 60%.

“Dire as these findings are, they are probably an over-estimate of what’s actually available for people,” Mr Hansen said.

“Appropriate housing isn’t just about the number of bedrooms.

“It’s also about the location of employment, transport, accessibility, connections and responsibilities to family, friends and local community, and the availability of services.

“In a tight rental market, landlords can also afford to pick and choose tenants, so often people on lower wages and income support don’t stand a chance.

“Now is the time for our governments to take coordinated action on two key priorities.

“As a nation, we must make sure every Australian has enough money to pay the rent, and we must provide enough affordable rentals for the people who need them.

“Ensuring people have an adequate income and investing in housing would be the most powerful ways we could tackle the housing crisis.”

Personal accounts tell a story of "abandonment and struggle" after state care in Queensland



Shania, Chair of Home Stretch Paul McDonald, and Marie and Jayke, who shared their stories of how they struggled when they had to leave care before the age of 18 at New Farm Cinemas on 29 April, 2022

Queensland's refusal to extend foster care for its most vulnerable young people is "bewildering" given most Australian states now offer care to the age of 21, national Home Stretch Chair Paul McDonald said recently at the launch of a new series of videos in Brisbane featuring the lived experience of those in the foster care system.

Mr McDonald said the "humbling and confronting" videos being launched were a direct message from the young people to the Queensland Government.

"Each of the young people tells a story of the struggle, the sense of abandonment they felt from care being ended when they were not ready, and the difficulties they had in starting life on their own after a childhood in care. The Palaszczuk Government should take a moment to hear the voices of these young people they are responsible for 'parenting', and the lives they were forced to live as a result of the government's decision to terminate their care at the age of 18," Mr McDonald said.

In Queensland, residential care is terminated when young people turn 18. These are Queensland's most vulnerable young people. Young people in foster care and kinship care (living with a family member) are not much better off, where their care is terminated at the end of their 18th year.

"The Queensland government is effectively sanctioning the abandonment of 500 young people in their care each year. Most young people still live with their parents past the age of 18, but in Queensland children under the care of the state have to go out into the world and fend for themselves – often with no responsible adults in their lives to give them any guidance. It's no wonder that about a third of this group ends up homeless and jobless within 12 months of leaving care," Mr McDonald said.

“Extended foster care to 21 years has now been adopted by five states and in the child welfare systems of every western country, because of the growing body of evidence that it works. It halves the homelessness rate among those exiting foster care, doubles their chances of finding a job and doubles their chances of going on to higher education as well.”

The series of two short videos was shown at New Farm Cinemas on the final morning of the [CREATE Foundation's Voices in Action conference](#). Eleven young people are featured talking about the immense challenge of having their foster care terminated at the age of 18. All were enthusiastic about the difference extending care could make to thousands of vulnerable young lives.

The young people featured in the videos talk about their experiences of needing to think about housing from the age of 15, living under bridges and feeling like no-one in authority cares about them.

One of the young people who appears in the videos is Jessie, who was placed in care at 14, exited care at 18 and has recently been studying human services.

“Leaving care was quite challenging to say the least. I know so many young people who exited care on the street and I watched that happening and it was really confronting,” she said.

“Not a lot of 15-year-olds that I have met outside of care are thinking about where am I going to live in two, three years’ time.”

Mr McDonald said the Palaszczuk Government has a fantastic opportunity of doing what a good parent does and supporting these young people till they are 21 years. By doing so they will expand the ambition for children at risk, including its expectations of what they can achieve as adults with the right support through to the age of 21.

“As the responsible parent for young people in the child protection system, extending care is the simplest and most effective reform the Queensland Government can make to transform these young lives for the better. It can be the difference between surviving and thriving, and it’s time the government got on with the job rather than giving us more talk,” Mr McDonald said.

“Extending care is a win-win-win. It’s a win for young people in foster care who have more time to get their lives on track, it’s a win for the Queensland Government because it will ultimately save them money, and it’s a win for the community because it helps reduce crime.”

Research by Deloitte Access Economics showed the following benefits of extending care to the age of 21:

- Every dollar invested would return \$5.90 in future savings.
- Homelessness among this group would be halved.
- Rates of higher education participation would increase by 2.5 times.
- Decreased arrests and hospitalisation.
- Alcohol and drug dependence would decrease, from 15.8 per cent to 2.5 per cent.
- Reduced costs of delivering additional government services.
- Improved mental and physical health outcomes, reduced intergenerational disadvantage and an increase in social connectedness.

More information about extending care for young people can be found on [the Home Stretch website](#).

Natallia Vasilevich: Christians in Belarus do not fear to be messengers of justice and peace



Natallia Vasilevich, Orthodox theologian and human rights lawyer, moderator of the ecumenical group Christian Vision in Belarus (Photo: Ivars Kupcis/WCC)

There's a reason why Orthodox theologian and human rights lawyer Natallia Vasilevich prefers to speak of the role of Christians rather than the role of churches in Belarusian society.

She prefers to speak about the role of Christians because, in the current Belarusian context, institutional churches often fail to stand up for human rights while individual Christians at the grassroots are bringing a prophetic voice with seeds of hope.

"Many Christians are more motivated, and are taking responsibility—and also take consequences for their lives—when they join the democratic movement...the movement for fair elections, for human rights, for justice and peace," said Vasilevich, who also serves as moderator of the ecumenical group Christian Vision, which unites Belarusian theologians, clerics and active laity of Orthodox, Roman Catholic, Greek Catholic, Anglican and Evangelical churches that promote respect to human dignity and rights, rule of law, justice, peace, and Christian witness in social and political life.

Given the high level of oppression by the Belarusian government, even so-called small voices make a big impact, said Vasilevich.

"People can go to prison just for saying a few words," she said, adding that Christians engaged in the human rights movement in Belarus "bear a lot of burden on themselves and they are ready to sacrifice."

From a small picture on Facebook to laying flowers at a rail station, from displaying a sticker on a vehicle to simply gathering in prayer—these are all manifestations of the voices of Christian human rights advocates.

“That’s why they are probably not always visible as Christians but I think it’s very important to give them this vocality because the small signs should be promoted,” said Vasilevich.

She lifts up the example of Orthodox priest Mikhail Marugo from Minsk who, after standing with flowers at a railway station in one of the days when the war started, was imprisoned for 13 days.

She lifts up priests who were imprisoned for posting profile pictures on Facebook with the Ukrainian flag, such as Catholic priest Aliaksandr Baran.

She lifts up Greek-Catholic priest Vasil Yahorau who had a sticker on his car that read “Forgive us, Ukraine”—and was imprisoned for it.

“In this shrunken public space, it’s very difficult to witness for churches,” said Vasilevich.

“Orthodox women, mothers came to pray together, to the Mother of God before her Minsk icon in the Orthodox cathedral, and while entering the cathedral they were filmed. Four women, after the service, were taken to the police station and asked why they were praying to the Mother of God against the war.”

Even if the message of institutional churches is unable to be strong, the message of the individual Christians is shining, insists Vasilevich.

“It shows Christians have this moral motivation inspired by the gospel,” she said.

“They do not fear. They try to be messengers of justice and peace in Belarusian society.”

Seeds of a prophetic voice

Too often, Vasilevich sees that religious leaders, instead of supporting their priests or their parishioners who protest, try to suppress them. She describes alliances between certain religious leaders with the oppressive government, very often based on manipulation of religion that tries to silence the prophetic voice.

Who needs the solidarity of the world? The Christians who “at grassroots levels, who find motivation, who find their voice and could try to speak as the voice of the churches and the voice of the gospel in the society.”

Vasilevich believes these are the Christians who can make a change, not only for society but also “for the churches to renew their commitment, to renew their mission, to renew their responsibility for justice and peace in a political crisis but also in the whole world.”

Therein lies the hope, Vasilevich said: “Small signs of hope, but hope is a seed which grows. It starts to grow and bear fruits.”

Helping their neighbor

Vasilevich believes we should respect seeds of peace and justice—not only fruits. “I hope that this will help us also in this Ukrainian crisis as something very specific for us because we share responsibility for the invasion,” she said.

“Belarusian society shares responsibility for invasion because a lot of military activity comes from our land.”

She urged showing solidarity for Ukrainian brothers and sisters who suffer, “and to help them, to compensate this damage which has been done by the government of Belarus which we do not recognize as a legitimate government but which still controls the country.”

Many Christians in Belarus now are not focused on their own problems but on doing their best for Ukraine, she added.

“This shift of focus given to something else—not for our own interests but our neighbor—is also very important for us, and it gives a new energy to the democratic movement and the movement for justice and peace,” Vasilevich said.

[Learn more about Christian Vision Group in Belarus](#)

[Ecumenical telegram channel “Christians against war” \(in Russian\)](#)

First Published on the [World Council of Churches website](#) on 28 April 2022.

News • Wednesday 4 May 2022 • By World Council of Churches

Visit to Sudan highlights importance of strengthening solidarity with churches



A woman carries the Bible into a Catholic Mass in Gidel, a village in the Nuba Mountains of Sudan (Photo: Paul Jeffrey/Life on Earth pictures)

The churches of Sudan – and especially the Sudan Council of Churches as their ecumenical forum – have suffered from a serious lack of attention and support by international ecumenical partners since the separation of South Sudan in 2011.

To begin to close this attention gap, a delegation comprised of representatives from the World Council of Churches (WCC) and its ecumenical partners undertook an ecumenical solidarity visit to accompany the churches and people of Sudan in the midst of significant changes and challenges in the country.

Together with the All Africa Conference of Churches and the Fellowship of Christian Councils and Churches in the Great Lakes and Horn of Africa, the solidarity visit to Sudan took place from 20-25 April.

The delegation committed to closer accompaniment of the Sudan Council of Churches and the churches of Sudan, and especially resolved to empower churches' participation in national discussions during this critical transitional period.

Dr Agnes Abuom, moderator of the WCC central committee, was part of the 12-person delegation.

"We will continue to journey together with the churches of Sudan as they seek sustainable peace and justice for all the people of Sudan," Abuom said.

"We both acknowledge and support the pivotal task of local churches in accompanying the people during this time of transition."

Among other specific initiatives in this regard, the delegation committed to promoting exchange with national councils of churches in other contexts, so the Sudan Council of Churches interim leadership can benefit from the experience and expertise of national councils of churches elsewhere.

Specialized ministries present in Sudan – including Norwegian Church Aid and the Catholic Agency for Overseas Development – have also agreed to help the Sudan Council of Churches re-establish essential systems and processes to effectively function.

The Sudan Council of Churches leadership and representatives of the churches in Sudan confirmed the importance and timeliness of the visit, and the encouragement it gave them for the work ahead. Government representatives affirmed their recognition of the Sudan Council of Churches as representative of the Christian community in Sudan, and as an essential participant in the national discussion in Sudan.

[WCC member churches in Sudan](#)

First published on the [World Council of Churches](#) website on 29 April 2022.