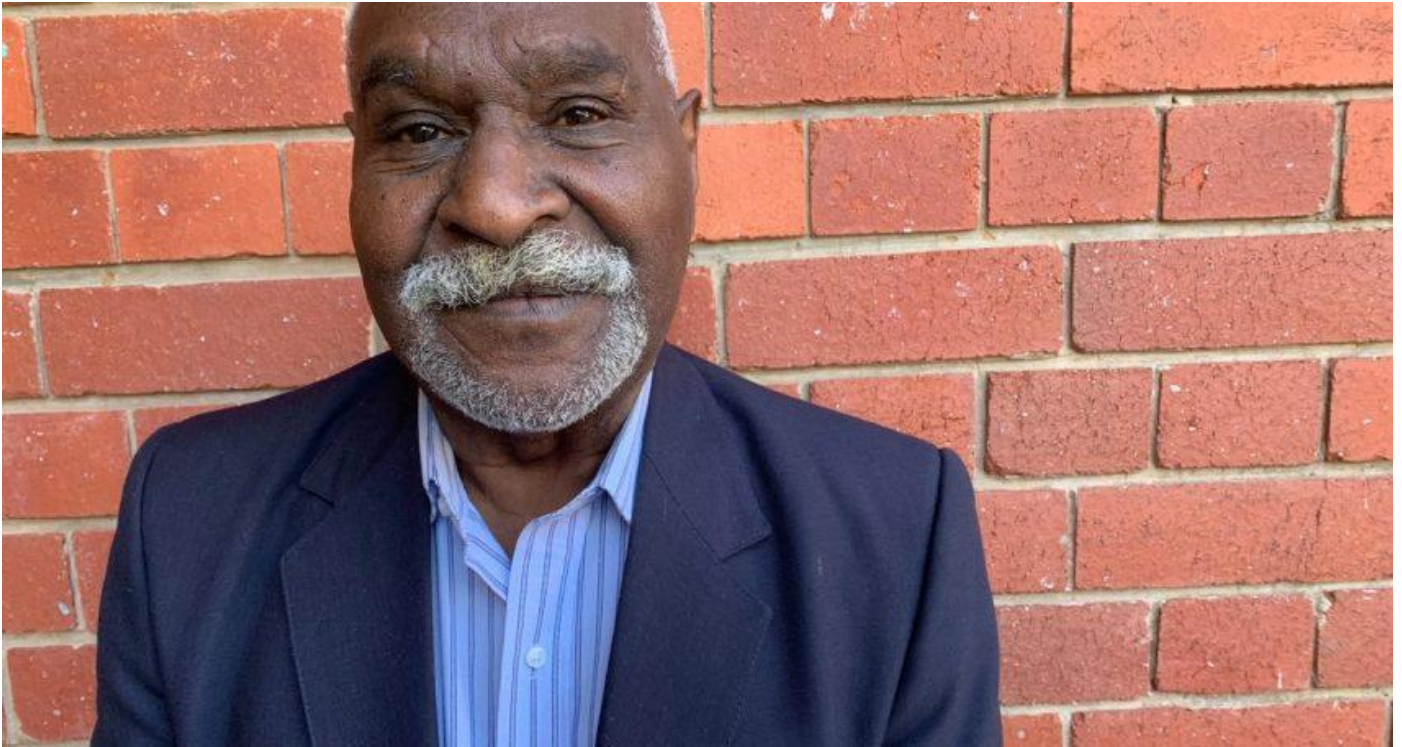


## "The first Easter I remember"



**"My uncle was chosen by Torres Strait Islander priests to act in the role of Jesus during the reenactment because he was light skinned. However, some of the local lay elders spoke up saying that it didn't matter what colour skin the person had who played Jesus — that even someone with fuzzy hair, a big beard and dark skin should be able to play him," (Saibai elder, NATSIAC Executive Member and Parish of Laidley Synod Rep Uncle Milton Walit)**

The first Easter I remember was in 1969 and I was in Year 5. I was very involved in church. I even served as an altar boy at All Souls' and St Bartholomew's Church on Thursday Island when it was still a Church of England parish. I remember it because I vividly recall the four-day reenactment of Jesus' suffering, death and resurrection.

It started off with Maundy Thursday when we gathered to do the washing of the feet. In the Last Supper reenactment, I remember the part where the person playing Jesus blessed the bread and wine and also said that, "The one who has dipped his hand into the bowl with me will betray me ([Matthew 26.23](#))."

We then removed the items from the sanctuary area, including the altar, from the church, and pushed the pews to the side before commencing a period of reflection and "keeping watch".

On Good Friday we did devotion services, which included the kissing of the wooden cross. Key parts of the church were covered in purple cloth. On the Friday night, I witnessed the reenactment of the crucifixion. It felt very real — making the stories they told us in Sunday School and that we read in the Bible real. We were told to sit up and stay awake, so we did. We leant on one another, taking turns to sleep on each other's shoulders as we sat keeping vigil.

My uncle was chosen by Torres Strait Islander priests to act in the role of Jesus during the reenactment because he was light skinned. However, some of the local lay elders spoke up saying that it didn't matter what colour skin the person had who played Jesus — that even someone with fuzzy hair, a big beard and dark skin should be able to play him.

I remember looking up and seeing Jesus — played by my uncle — dying in the moonlight. It was so amazing — I remember looking up with the other boys and thinking that he was really like Jesus. The Spirit touched us — and we all started crying when his last breath was taken. At that exact moment a cloud went over the moon. The elders then comforted us with kind words.

On Holy Saturday we assisted the Mothers Union members return the sanctuary items to the church and rearrange the pews. We then helped decorate the church with coconut palm leaves, which we cut down with machetes. We had to climb the trees to get to the palm leaves. Some of us cut into the tree trunk to create footholds, holding the machete between our teeth as we climbed. While some of us climbed with a rope attached to our wrists and once reaching the top we lowered the rope so a machete could be tied to it and lifted for cutting the palms. We also decorated the church with a full-grown banana tree that was potted in a large flour tin and stabilised with large rocks, and by placing sugarcane on the church walls. This was all in preparation for Sunday. We were very closely supervised by the Mothers Union members to ensure we did things properly. We had to learn to work well together as a tribal team, but we were too scared to complain about the aunties watching us so closely.

After that we had server practice for the Sunday services, so we knew what order to process in, before being allowed to return to the college where we lived on Thursday Island. The college, which was for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, was run by the then Aboriginal and Island Affairs Department as part of its assimilationist agenda. The college was formerly an army hospital before becoming a hospital for leprosy patients. The buildings were still the same. We were told not to go to a building at the bottom of the college near the jetty because it was previously used as a crematorium for patients who died of leprosy — their bodies had been cremated and their ashes released into the sea. But we boys would go down there anyway.

On Easter Day we woke up early and had a 7am breakfast. Some of us then jumped on the Department's truck so we could get to the church, while some of us chose to walk. The boys who were serving robed up for the service. We wore red robes with a white girdle. Because I was young, I carried a sanctuary candle, which I lit for the reading of the Gospel.

As a community, after the Easter Day service we celebrated the resurrection of the Lord Jesus with a big *kai kai* (feast). People from all over the Torres Strait Islands and Papua New Guinea (which was then still administered by Australia) came via sailing canoes rather than by motor boats, bringing seafood, taro, sweet potato, casava, sago and other traditional foods. We then had traditional dancing with men wearing headdresses made of emu feathers and women wearing grass skirts.

Holy Week and Easter Day are among the fondest memories of my childhood. The reenactment opened my eyes to Christianity, making me feel as though I was in the Palestine of Jesus' time and witnessing what really happened according to the Bible, from the Last Supper to the Resurrection.

## Being slavery free: tips and resources for Easter Day and World Fair Trade Day



**Peter Branjerdporn — Justice Unit coordinator, Anglican Church Southern Queensland**

The task of combatting modern slavery should be taken seriously, and it is achievable, as the Cathedral Dean, The Very Rev'd Dr Peter Catt, reminds us in [this video](#). By focussing on one practical area at a time and building from there, parishes, schools and agencies can make better choices about the products and services they use to make an immediate difference.

And, Easter is the perfect time to start getting involved — by buying ethically sourced and produced chocolate eggs, especially those that are certified fair trade. As we celebrate the hope of Christ's resurrection, we could pray for, and commit ourselves, to working together towards a world where all people are treated with dignity and fairness. The [Fairtrade Australian and New Zealand website](#) helpfully explains the supermarkets and other retailers that sell different kinds of fair trade products.

What if we then take the next step and carry out a modern slavery audit of other common items used in your part of our faith community to ensure we are collectively making more ethical choices? Any product that features the [Fair Trade mark](#) is guaranteed to be slavery free.

The Anglican Church Southern Queensland has adopted a [modern slavery statement](#), committing all parts of our Church to identifying and reducing modern slavery risks across our operations and supply chains. Please keep an eye out for the introductory modern slavery workshop, which is being developed for the second half of 2024.

**In the meantime, here are three things you can do to educate you and your faith community about modern slavery:**



1. Please familiarise yourself with Anglican Church Southern Queensland's Modern Slavery Policy and training on the [ARC](#). If you don't have access to the ARC and would like a copy of the current policy, please email me at [contact@doingjustice.org.au](mailto:contact@doingjustice.org.au).
2. Check out the video resources on the [Be Slavery Free website](#).
3. Check out the [Fairtrade Australian and New Zealand website](#).

## **The Rev'd John Martin — Parishioner, The Parish of Robina**

When confronted with global justice issues we can often feel overwhelmed. Conflict in places like Ukraine, Sudan and Israel/Palestine and global poverty are often included in our prayers and advocacy.

Beyond prayer, effecting change often seems beyond our reach.

Fair trade is an area where we have direct control. By purchasing fair trade products, we can be assured that those who grew or manufactured what we purchased were paid a fair wage and worked in a safe and healthy location with no slave or child labour and in environmentally sustainable conditions.

This year, I am suggesting "Nine ideas for faith communities to celebrate World Fair Trade Day". Why nine ideas? [The World Fair Trade Organisation](#) (WFTO) created the 10 Principles of Fair Trade that all fair trade certified businesses must adhere to.

Principle Nine is all about advocacy — about advocating for the fair trade system as a better and more equitable way to "do trade" generally.

Thus, in recognition of the importance of principle nine, we bring you nine ways to celebrate World Fair Trade Day on Saturday 11 May 2024.

## **Nine ideas for faith communities to celebrate World Fair Trade Day (WFTD) 2024**

1. Include reminders about WFTD on Sundays 4 and 11 May in your sermons, pew sheets, social media channels and notices (perhaps using the resources of the [Fair Trade Association](#) and [Fairtrade Australia and NZ](#)) encouraging community members to make a weekly difference through their purchasing decisions, as well as in your prayers, interceding for a more equitable trade system.
2. Hand out fair trade chocolates to everyone at church in celebration of WFTD (for example, Aldi do a range of Moser Roth chocolates, five to a packet at \$2.99, which are individually wrapped and ideal for this purpose).
3. Invite a local fair trade business to come and speak at a service or Bible study group about what fair trade is (please get in touch with me via [revj@aapt.net.au](mailto:revj@aapt.net.au) if you would like to arrange a speaker).
4. Invite a local fair trade business to hold a small stall at the conclusion of a service.
5. Play a short video explaining what fair trade is or highlighting how fair trade positively impacts the lives of producer communities during a service, such as [What is Fairtrade?](#) (less than two minutes) and [What is Fairtrade?](#) (less than four minutes). (There are other short videos available, so please get in touch with me via [revj@aapt.net.au](mailto:revj@aapt.net.au) if you need some suggestions).
6. Host a fair trade coffee/tea/chocolate tasting before or after the service.

7. If you are not already a Fair Trade Association recognised [Fair Trade Faith Community](#), check out the requirements and consider whether you could show your support for the movement by becoming one.
8. Share WFTO [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#) and Fair Trade Australia New Zealand [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#) posts about WFTD on your church's pages. Or create your own post, tagging us.
9. Talk about WFTD in your church newsletter.

**Editor's note:** Thanks to Peter Branjerdporn from our Justice Unit and to The Rev'd John Martin and Corinne Nash from the Fair Trade Australia Faith Groups Programme for compiling these tips and collating these resources.

**Spotlight Q&A • Wednesday 27 March 2024 • By Sarah Marris**

## **Q&A with Anglicare Time2Connect Project Coordinator, former competitive powerlifter, Guide Dog puppy boarder and procrasti-baker, Sarah Marris**



Anglicare Southern Queensland Mission, Research and Advocacy Team members Sarah Marris and Dr Stephen Harrison set to enjoy Sarah's Easter-themed baking in March 2024

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

I have been working with Anglicare Southern Queensland since September as Project Coordinator for Time2Connect within the Mission, Research and Advocacy Team, which is led by Dr Stephen Harrison.

### **What does your role involve?**

My role is so varied, which I love! A huge part of my role is about making connections and building relationships, with parishes, community members, schools and other ministries and agencies. Sometimes I spend the day in the office meeting with other teams to collaborate, checking in with

project partners or dabbling in Canva to create marketing material, and then the next I might be out in community hosting information morning teas or facilitating cooking workshops.

### **What projects or activities are you currently working on in your role?**

My current project is called Time2Connect. It is a free community program that creates friendly connections through local events and sharing skills. One of the ways we are doing this is through small group activities, including baking demos with myself, demonstrating my now famous lemon slice, and another is through the development of a “timebank”. Timebanking is essentially reciprocal volunteering — give an hour, receive an hour. Simple actions such as engaging in conversation, reading aloud, preparing a home-cooked meal, taking a dog for a walk or tending to a garden can make a huge difference to someone’s happiness and overall quality of life.

### **How can parishes, schools and ministries get involved?**

If your parish, school or ministry would like to be involved in Time2Connect, please reach out — we are always looking for new communities to partner with. More information can be found under the FAQ section on the [Time2Connect](https://www.time2connect.org.au) website or you can email me directly at [smarris@anglicaresq.org.au](mailto:smarris@anglicaresq.org.au).

### **What has been one of the highlights of your time in your role so far?**

To help people begin to understand what timebanking is, I usually incorporate an activity where we break into groups with some butchers paper and pens for a good old-fashioned brainstorm! Recently we did this with a wonderful group of op shop volunteers from one of the Sunshine Coast parishes. Christians are often reluctant “to toot their own horns”, so to speak, but collectively the group easily identified each other’s talents and gifts and what could be offered in the timebank. It is just so heartwarming to observe the conversations and affirming connections that take place in these initial information sessions.

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

One of the strengths I see of the Church is its ability to be a connector of people from all walks of life. I truly believe that every single person has something of value to teach one another and at the core of this connection is the building of relationships. The Church offers a place where we can build meaningful relationships, both inside the Church and in the wider community.

### **What person of faith inspires you the most and why?**

Since starting in my Anglicare role, I have met The Rev’d Sue Grimmett from Indooroopilly and The Rev’d Deb Bird from the Sunshine Coast. I think it’s fantastic that the Anglican Church Southern Queensland ordains women priests — I wasn’t expecting to ever meet women priests. I was struck by how caring, empathetic and strong they both are.

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

"Everything is figure-out-able," is advice from my almost 10-year-old daughter. I just love this so much — it reminds me that sometimes as adults, we really do over complicate things.

## **What is your favourite scripture and why?**

"The Lord is near to the broken-hearted, and saves the crushed in spirit" ([Psalm 34.18](#)) because for me it reflects that no matter how broken we are, God is always with us.

## **Why is it important for Christians to work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples towards Reconciliation?**

I think you can only have Reconciliation with acknowledgement and true understanding of what has passed, and in some cases, what continues to take place today — acknowledgement of a horrific history that includes land dispossession, violence, massacres and the forcible removal of children from their families, and associated inter-generational trauma. Part of that acknowledgement is owning the role that the Church played in some of these situations. Reconciliation to me, comes back to relationships. Authentic relationships take time. Authentic relationships lend themselves to genuine conversations and actions. And, genuine conversations and actions drive change.

## **What is something not many people know about you?**

I used to be a competitive powerlifter. I really loved it; there are so many lessons to be learnt from being consistent and disciplined with that style of training over a period leading up to comp days!

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

I enjoy taking time to be outside in nature, I spend most weekends bushwalking with my daughter. I also love to spend time baking and have been known to partake in a bit of procrastinating when stuck at the crossroads of a decision!

## **What's your best childhood memory?**

My favourite childhood memories are anything Christmas related. I loved how it was just this fun and beautiful time with family, with all these small traditions that felt so simple, but meant the most. Thankfully my daughter loves Christmas, too, and now we get to recreate some of these memories and traditions together.

## **What did you love most about Easter as a child or teenager?**

I grew up in New Zealand. Every year we used to go to a bach (pronounced "batch" — what Kiwis call a holiday house) near Hot Water Beach on the North Island. We would dig holes in the sand and sit in the hot water. There were rabbits everywhere near Hot Water Beach and as kids we used to think that they were the bunnies that delivered our chocolate eggs, so we left lots of carrots out for them on Easter Eve. I'm taking my daughter to Hot Water Beach in May, so she can experience the natural hot springs in the sand and see the bunnies.

## **What makes you nostalgic and why?**

Thinking about my daughter growing up makes me nostalgic! All of her “firsts” were also my “firsts” and “lasts” as a mother. She is my greatest lesson and my best teacher.

## **What is your secret skill?**

I’m not sure it’s really a secret skill, but I am very good at reading people and situations.

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

Lasagne — I am basically Garfield in human form!

## **What are you most looking forward to this Easter?**

This week I’m baking Easter goodies for my Anglicare team and I’m boarding a new Guide Dog puppy that is in training.

## **What item should you throw out, but can’t bear to part with?**

I have my nana’s old button collection, which is completely useless, but I just love it. There are so many random sizes, shapes and colours — it fascinates me as to where they all came from. Some have stories. I can remember sitting on the edge of Nana’s armchair as a child while she showed me the collection and reminisced about where a particular button was from.

**Editor’s note: Time2Connect is a wonderful social connection project, led by Anglicare working alongside parishes and other community groups to complement existing programs and further strengthen connections between everyday people, doing everyday things. More information for priests, schools and ministry leaders can be found under the FAQ section on the [Time2Connect website](https://www.time2connect.org.au) or you can email Sarah Marris directly at [smarris@anglicaresq.org.au](mailto:smarris@anglicaresq.org.au)**



## Tough Questions: Why do Christians fast?



**"A true fast will bring us closer to God, which will ultimately change us for the better," says The Rev'd Charlie Lacey**

Fasting is a Christian spiritual discipline and one that we particularly associate with the season of Lent, but what is fasting and why do we do it?

For many Christians in the modern West, fasting is giving up a luxury food item for Lent, for example, chocolate or coffee. Whilst this has its benefits, which we'll discuss later, fasting is more typically going without food for a specified period. Fasting is not distinctly Christian (Muslims fast), or spiritual (a growing number of people practise intermittent fasting for health reasons), nor is it commanded anywhere in Scripture. However, we know that Jesus fasted for forty days in the desert, and it would seem that he expected his followers to fast, too.

Matthew 6. 16-18

*"When you fast, do not look sombre as the hypocrites do, for they disfigure their faces to show others they are fasting. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full. But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, so that it will not be obvious to others that you are fasting, but only to your Father, who is unseen; and your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you."*

Notice that Jesus did not say, "If you fast", but "*When you fast*". Fasting is something that Jesus expected his followers to do. Moreover, he indicated that fasting should be done in such a way as to go unnoticed by all but God. This points to the entirely Godward focus and purpose of fasting. When we fast, we renounce something good (usually food), as a way of expressing our need for something greater. It is a way of accepting the fact that we need the Lord more than food, and even life itself. Experiencing the hunger that accompanies fasting reminds us of our hunger for God and our need to turn to him in prayer. If done with the right motives, fasting will intensify our prayer lives.

Fasting is not a means to impress others or show how pious we are; nor is it a formula to receive what we have asked for in prayer. Moreover, if our overriding thought when fasting is, "I can't wait to eat something", then we have probably missed the point altogether. A true fast will bring us closer to God, which will ultimately change us for the better. In Isaiah 58, God condemns Israel's days of fasting for being all show and no substance. Though they fasted, they continued to disregard the poor and the needy, and injustice and oppression persisted unabated.

Taking fasting seriously as a spiritual discipline, especially during this season of Lent, has the potential to change us forever, but only if we use it to intensify our relationship with the Lord.

There are of course some for whom fasting is not recommended: diabetics, pregnant women, those with a history of eating disorders and so on. However, going without specific foods or even abstaining from social media or gaming can help us draw closer to God if that is our motive. The most important thing about fasting is a heartfelt desire for God and his work in our lives.

First published on the [St Andrew's, Springfield website](#) in March 2024.

Reflections • Wednesday 27 March 2024

## "And a Good Friday Was Had by All"



**"One of the roles that liturgy, the worship services we attend, plays is to help us to learn how to attend more effectively to those things that really do need attention," (The Very Rev'd Dr Peter Catt on the Stations of the Cross)**

*You men there, keep those women back  
and God Almighty he laid down  
on the crossed timber and old Silenus  
my offsider looked at me as if to say  
nice work for soldiers, your mind's not  
your own  
once you sign that dotted line Ave*



*Caesar  
and all that malarkey Imperator Rex  
well this Nazarene  
didn't make it any easier  
really-not like the ones  
who kick up a fuss so you can  
do your block and take it out on them  
Silenus  
held the spikes steady and I let fly  
with the sledge-hammer, not looking  
on the downswing trying hard not to hear  
over the women's wailing the bones give way  
the iron shocking the dumb wood.*

*Orders is orders, I said after it was over  
nothing personal you understand – we had a  
drill-sergeant once thought he was God but he wasn't  
a patch on you  
then we hauled on the ropes  
and he rose in the hot air  
like a diver just leaving the springboard, arms spread  
so it seemed  
over the whole damned creation  
over the big men who must have had it in for him  
and the curious ones who'll watch anything if it's free  
with only the usual women caring anywhere  
and a blind man in tears.*

Bruce Dawe, "And a Good Friday Was Had by All"

A few years ago I walked a set of The Stations of the Cross that had been erected in a farm paddock in the Hunter Valley. The day on which we walked it was hot, dry and dusty. Many of the participants were quite elderly; some were very unsteady on their feet.

As the path trekked across the paddock it ascended a small hill. Somewhere around about the fourth or fifth Station, as we climbed that hill, one of the participants stumbled and fell. Several of us stopped to render assistance and then sat with the person while their spouse went to get the car to drive them home.

Meanwhile the main group continued walking the Stations, reflecting on Jesus' journey towards the cross, his falls, his encounters with Veronica, Simon of Cyrene, and so on.

Once the fallen participant had been safely placed in the car, those of us who had waited with them hurried to catch up with the main group of pilgrims and so the journey continued.

Later in the day as I reflected on the happenings of the day, I realised that our experience would have mirrored the experience of those present in Jerusalem on that first Good Friday.

The *Via Dolorosa* (The way of Sorrows) in Jerusalem, which is traditionally held to be the way Jesus walked while carrying the cross, winds its way through the busy streets of the city; streets crowded with people shopping and filled with the cries of vendors.

Jesus carrying his cross would have been part of a chaotic mix of humanity. Many would have hardly noticed the pathetic figure trudging past — crucifixions were common — as they tried to push through the crowd to do their business. Others would have been annoyed that the usually frenzied streets were further clogged by this criminal on the way to execution. The occasional one, one who was a bit more attentive to the politics of being a subjugated people, might have stopped to ponder the plight of this latest victim of Rome's methodical cruelty.

On the day we walked the Stations in the paddock in the Hunter several of us were distracted by life events from attending to the story of Jesus. On the day of his execution many thousands along the *Via Dolorosa* were also distracted by life from attending to the lone figure whose life, death and resurrected life would go to change the course of history.

Life can distract us from attending to significant happenings around us.

One of the roles that liturgy, the worship services we attend, plays is to help us to learn how to attend more effectively to those things that really do need attention. They take us out of the busy round of life and equip us with refreshed eyes and ears so that when we re-enter daily life we can be more attentive to the things that our busyness would have us not notice.

In the poem, "A Good Friday was had by All", Bruce Dawe captures something of that dynamic. The soldier narrator speaks of the mundane mechanics of crucifixion, but looking through those details sees some hint of the fact that this Nazarene is somehow different. He sees something that many on the street would have missed.

My fervent hope is that the liturgies of this Holy Week will equip each one of us to better see that which needs to be seen in our world today.

**First published in the Precinct eNews on 25 March 2024.**



## Bishop John walking with inter-faith leaders impacted by conflict on fourth biblical-worthy Holy Week pilgrimage



Anglican Bishop John Roundhill (far right) and Muslim leader and former refugee Dr Nora Amath (far left), pictured with The Rev'd Alan Moore (centre) at St George's Church in Beenleigh, look forward to walking together on Holy Saturday in 2024, as Bishop Roundhill continues his fourth Holy Week "Walking the Walk" pilgrimage

Bishop John Roundhill has embarked on his fourth biblical-worthy Holy Week pilgrimage, and is this year walking with diverse inter-faith leaders who have been impacted by conflict, covering over 170km across South East Queensland.

Bishop John's fellow pilgrims include Ukrainian Catholic, Greek Orthodox Palestinian and Burmese Christian leaders, as well as Cham Muslim leader Nora Amath who is a former refugee born in Vietnam.

Bishop John said that he has especially reflected upon the plight of ordinary people impacted by invasions and wars since embarking on Saturday.

"One of the things I've pondered during this year's Holy Week pilgrimage is that people of refugee background nearly always talk about walking as being a significant part of their journey seeking safety," Bishop John said.

"Nora, at the tender age of three, fled on foot and walked a long way with her family through the jungles of Cambodia to Thailand following the Vietnam War, even facing the barrel of guns at times.

"Every year, I meet the most courageous people on my Holy Week pilgrimage, and this year I have been especially struck by how fragile and precious peace is.

"I hope more inter-faith and multi-cultural folk reach out to me while I am walking, so they can join me before I complete the pilgrimage on Saturday evening."

The Christian season of Lent, which precedes the celebration of Easter, and the Muslim season of Ramadan, which precedes the celebration of Eid al-Fitr, happen to overlap this year.

Bishop John and Dr Amath, who will be walking together the day before Easter Day, said that they look forward to chatting about the commonalities between Lent and Ramadan.

"I believe that both Lent in Christianity and Ramadan in Islam share several theological and practical similarities, despite their distinct religious contexts," Dr Amath said.

"These include fasting and renunciation, self-reflection and spiritual growth, charity and generosity, community fellowship and worship, repentance and seeking forgiveness and reconciliation.

"I've integrated 'The Beatitudes' from the Christian Bible into my approach to service, while a close Christian friend has embraced the Islamic invocation *Bismillahir Rahma Nir Rahim* — "In the name of God, the most Gracious, the Most Compassionate" — into his theological perspective.

"Having navigated the tumult of refugee life from such a young age, I have become determined to work with different communities in response to the suffering of others, irrespective of ethnicity, political affiliation, gender or religious belief."

Bishop John said that his encounters with Muslims in both Australia and overseas have taught him much about the Christian imperative of "welcoming the stranger".

"A focus on hospitality — the warm welcoming of guests — is something that the holy seasons of Lent and Ramadan share," he said.

"When I was the Dean of Bendigo's Anglican Cathedral between 2012 and 2018, I often went to iftars, where I joined in the breaking of the day's fast with Muslim brothers and sisters and where I learnt so much about hospitality.

"My first experience of Ramadan was in Tunisia while holidaying as a young man with a friend in 1997.

"We didn't know it was Ramadan and were puzzled during the day by all the closed restaurants.

"When we arrived in the city of El Kef after a very long journey, we walked into a restaurant, but because it was daylight and people were still fasting, we were not served when we arrived.

"As a sound echoed across the city to signal the end of the day's fasting, the restaurant filled with locals ready to break their fast.

"Two men were sitting opposite us, and when their food was served to them, they pushed the plates in our direction even though they had not had anything to eat or drink for more than 12 hours.

"I tear up when I remember that gesture, knowing that this experience taught me what Lent is really about, and I still often tell that story when I preach."





**The Rev'd Dr Don Parker, law student and Burmese Anglican Sar Htoo and Bishop John Roundhill at St Peter's Church in Southport on Saturday 23 March 2024 during Bishop John's fourth Holy Week pilgrimage**

Holy Week is the final week of the solemn 40-day Christian Lenten period, from Palm Sunday to Easter Day, and is commemorated by different denominations of Christians worldwide.

Bishop John explained that the 40 days of Lent represent the 40 days that Jesus spent in the desert fasting before he commenced his public ministry as a rabbi.

"During Holy Week I also think about the Jewish roots of my faith," he said.

"This is especially true of Maundy Thursday, which commemorates Jesus sharing a Passover meal with the disciples — a meal that Christians call the 'Last Supper' because it was shared the day before Jesus' death on a cross.

"The Passover holiday commemorates the liberation of Jews from slavery in Egypt.

"Jews traditionally eat bread on Passover and Jesus' blessing of the bread at the Last Supper is where Christianity's belief in the Eucharist, or Holy Communion, stems from."

This is Bishop John's fourth "Walking the Walk" Holy Week pilgrimage.

Bishop John said that walking with people on pilgrimage helps build community.

“Walking in groups allows for conversations to come and go at ease — because people chatting can always walk more slowly, community builds naturally,” he said.

“Great conversations come from shared activities and who knows what solutions, plans or ideas we inter-faith folk will come up with while we’re on the road together?”

The [pilgrimage itinerary](#) involves walking up to 25km daily; however, community members are welcome to join him for whatever distance they would like to travel.

The remaining days of this year’s pilgrimage will be spent walking across Redland Bay and Brisbane’s south.

Pilgrimages are an ancient Christian tradition, with early Church theologian and ascetic Origen of Alexandria one of the first to comprehend and communicate the concept of the Church as a “pilgrim people”.

The first Christian pilgrimages were made in early times to places connected with Jesus’ life, especially to the sites of his crucifixion.

Bishop John said that Holy Week is seen by Christians as an especially fitting period to take time out for this ancient spiritual practice.

“I find that I encounter God in a unique way when I am simultaneously engaged in physical activity and conversation, and I hope that this walk is transformative for me and all the community members who walk with me,” he said.

**To find out more about Bishop John Roundhill’s planned route so you know where to be and at what time to join him (or to welcome him and fellow pilgrims in your suburb), you can read more about “[Walking the Walk 2024](#)” on his blog.**



## Canterbury College students tell Easter story through garden pots



**In Term 1 2024, Canterbury College's Prep to Year 4 students created their own Easter garden pots outside to help them tell the Easter story at home during the school holidays with help from College Chaplain Fr Dan Talbot**

Canterbury's Prep to Year 4 students have been creating their own Easter garden pots in Term 1 to help them tell the Easter story at home during the school holidays.

College Chaplain Fr Dan Talbot visited the classes during their Canterbury Kitchen Garden lessons, explaining that their potted gardens needed to feature:

- A mound to represent the Hill of Golgotha where the crucifixions occurred.
- Three stick crucifixes, including a larger central cross, for Jesus who died on Good Friday.
- A buried empty smaller pot to represent the tomb where Jesus' body was placed.
- A pebble path leading to the empty tomb, on which Mary walked and discovered that Jesus was risen.
- A rock representing the boulder that was rolled away from the entrance of the tomb, revealing the empty tomb.
- Green growth to remind us that God is still working and creating in our world today, just as we can still grow ourselves to be the person God wants us to be.

Canterbury's Year 3 classes used actual grass seeds, but the other students used a ready-grown sedum known as "Blob".

Fr Talbot said that the garden pot symbols are a great learning and discussion tool.

"The Easter Story is a message of hope and love, and these Easter garden pots are designed to encourage our students — with their parents and families — to discuss the story over this Easter break," Fr Talbot said.

"These living, growing gardens can work alongside other popular Easter symbols such as eggs — which are a symbol of new life — and even the chocolate — which reminds us how sweet it is to have Jesus in our life."

In line with Canterbury College's Anglican values, during these garden-making lessons, students and families of all faiths and religions were acknowledged as being very welcome at the school.

"I really liked making the pebble pathway that Mary walked to his tomb where he was buried," said Year 2 student William Sinclair.

"That and planting the 'Blob' around the crosses and the tomb and the pebbles.

"I really like Easter because I get to have chocolate Easter eggs and my whole family comes over.

"I get to see Pa, Grandma, Grandad, Poppy, Nanny, and all my uncles, aunties and cousins."

Fr Talbot said that students engage strongly with these innovative outdoor religious lessons, and really enjoyed hearing about the Easter story.

"There are so many Easter symbols, but it's great that this year, our younger students have an actual garden to take home with them," Father Talbot said.

"Hopefully it helps these Canterbury families celebrate the real reason we have Easter in our homes these holidays, and keeping the gardens moist and healthy, should bring some extra ongoing joy into each household."

Canterbury College wishes everyone a happy and holy Easter, and that the story of the Easter garden will help you discover the hope and love that is offered by this Christian story.

**Editor's note: The Easter garden pots are a great idea for families or ministries. Thanks to Fr Dan Talbot, young William Sinclair and Stephen Buckley from Canterbury College for sharing this great story.**



## Easter Day



**"In his relationship with humankind, God has been a gardener from the beginning"**

Way back in 1.38, John reported Jesus's question "What are you looking for?" On [Easter](#) morning, Jesus asks it in a new way, in a new world. It is no longer "what" but "whom" — "Whom are you looking for?"

Matthew (7.7) and Luke (11.9) recorded the same verb (*zetein*: "search", "look for") when Jesus promised: "Search and you will find." Augustine set their promise at the end of his *Confessions*, an exhortation for all who are searching, as he did, long ago, for wisdom.

That wisdom is not a quality. It is an identity. We know that Christians saw Jesus in these terms from early times. Paul calls Christ "the power of God and the wisdom of God" (1 Corinthians 1.21, 24). It may not be easy to see human individuals as embodying such identities. But, by the end of John's Gospel, we are used to thinking of Christ in terms of abstracts and symbols: the true bread; the way, the truth, the life; the vine. Jesus himself taught us to see him in this way. But we may not yet realise the full import of those apparent abstracts.

On Good Friday, I reflected on the Gospel-symbol of the garden. But that was only the beginning. John's garden symbolism comes to completion on Easter Day. Mary Magdalene, he tells us, came to the garden, to the tomb, while it was still dark. Then she went to tell the disciples, and they came back together. After they witnessed the empty tomb, the disciples went home, leaving Mary behind.

Like every mourner who has ever stood at a graveside, or where a loved one's ashes have been scattered, she knew that the one she loved was not "there". But this was still as close as she felt she could now come to him. If she wanted to feel that bond of love, this was the only place to be. In that sense, every Christian burial is a cenotaph, an "empty tomb". What lies within is earth, ashes, dust. The person is not there. But such is the power of human love that even earth, ashes, and dust have power to awaken in us remembrance and connection.

Surely every reader of John's Gospel has some inkling of this mystery, the presence of the absence of a loved one. But Mary was about to learn something further. It would change her mourning into

gladness. It can make our lives something that they could not have been before. In this Easter-morning garden, all three of Paul's "things that last for ever" are present: faith, hope, and love. Love shone in Mary: it found its reward in a blessing for her which also descends on all of us, who are her descendants according to the Spirit.

All this happened in a garden. Gardens, remember, are not natural. Let nature have its way, and you soon have scrubby bushes and rampant weeds. A garden is an end-product, not of a battle against nature, but of a nurturing of nature. Tending, trimming, supporting; giving light where required; suiting each planting to its environment — why else is God, before he is anything else to us, a gardener?

Gardens do not fight nature: they harness it. So, too, it is with God and us. Where we could go wild and choke all other growth, he checks us. Where we would shrivel and give up for lack of light and space, he gently promotes our ability to grow.

Now for the great change that is Easter Day. In his relationship with humankind, God has been a gardener from the beginning. What Easter Day reveals first is not unexpected: the true identity of the man Jesus, who turns out to be the Son of Man, God's anointed, and his eternal Word. But then it slips in a revelation, by means of a mere explanatory phrase: "supposing him to be the gardener".

Mary is not mistaken. Her perception is accurate. The being she encounters is, indeed, a gardener, like his Father before him. Anyone can work in a garden. But the gardener is the one who has responsibility for it, making it flourish, keeping it fruitful and in balance. Their sharing in being gardeners is one tiny pointer to the likeness of nature between the Father and the Son. It paves the way for the revelation of God's complete nature as Holy Trinity.

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## WCC publishes new materials for “Out of the darkness” series in Palestine and Israel



**The Easter Initiative is an annual activity of the WCC Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine and Israel. The materials — which include feature stories and prayers, as well as social media and advocacy resources — connect the stories of Easter with current realities in Palestine and Israel, and spotlight the challenges of a life marked by violence, war, and occupation**

The World Council of Churches has published online new materials related to the 2024 Easter Initiative: “Out of the darkness — Easter solidarity with the Holy Land”.

The Easter Initiative is an annual activity of the WCC Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine and Israel. The materials — which include feature stories and prayers, as well as social media and advocacy resources — connect the stories of Easter with current realities in Palestine and Israel, and spotlight the challenges of a life marked by violence, war, and occupation. The materials also nurture hope and highlight groups and individuals striving for a just peace.

Newly published are feature stories with the voices of Father Frans Bouwen, a priest in the Catholic church who has been living and working for ecumenism in Jerusalem since 1969; Nader Abu Amsha, executive director of Department of Services to Palestinian Refugees of the Middle East Council of Churches; and Robi Damelin, director of International Relations for The Parents Circle-Families Forum.

Also newly available is an advocacy outline, which offers a call to action as well as practical ways to help. The outline lifts up the call to roll away the heavy stone of violence, war, and occupation, pain, and suffering, and to remind the world of what is needed to bring about peace, and to transform swords into ploughshares.

All are also invited to share a new prayer by Monsignor William Shomali, Latin Patriarchal vicar of Jerusalem (Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem). It reads, in part: “Let swords be turned into ploughshares,

fear to trust, despair to hope, oppression to freedom, starvation to prosperity, occupation to liberation, and peace and justice could be experienced by all.”

More materials will be released as Easter approaches.

**Learn more:** [Easter Initiative 2024](#)

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