

“Burnout is terrible for clergy”



"Burnout is terrible for clergy. I found I was unable to be thankful for almost anything. Burnout robbed me of the very essence of my calling. I even felt like a fraud celebrating the Eucharist," (Bishop John Roundhill pictured at Synod in 2024)

The first I really knew of burnout was when I started a new role, and I could not for the life of me enjoy it. We had moved to Victoria, and I wanted to go back home (to either Brisbane or the UK) and even though I could see that the move South was good for other family members, I could not make sense of the work I was doing.

I would get up in the morning, work hard — seemingly harder than I had ever worked in the past — and return home around 5pm or 6 pm, feeling exhausted, flat, emptied. Upon returning home, I would sometimes go straight to my office and sit in a huddle behind a chair as if I were six years old. It was a mystery to me and distressing for my wife, Frances, and our children.

What was more difficult was that for the new people I was meeting, this was simply the John they had appointed. They had not (yet) met the more creative or happy me that I had once been. I suspect I was something of a mystery for those who had selected or appointed me. As I had no language for what I was experiencing, I did not know what to tell them — so I hid it.

I put what I was feeling down to just being overtired and that all I needed was a good break. Sadly, days off were not refreshing because we either stayed at home or went out, and either way I was exceedingly bad company.

My weight increased and my asthma got worse. It felt like the end of the world to me.

After about a year, and with some encouragement, a parishioner and I started running about 1km weekly in order to lose weight. It was the first time any activity had broken the dismal pall. I ended up seeing my GP and enquired about medication for depression. He was reluctant to diagnose or prescribe, but he did enquire about running and encouraged me to do more of it. This led to me trying "parkrun", which is a series of weekly 5km runs that take place all around the world.

I later spoke with my wardens about taking two hours off at lunchtimes to go swimming, which they thought a good idea. Running and swimming helped, and both activities brought me in contact with new people who turned out to be curious about the life and work I professed.

It took me years to come to terms with what I had experienced. Burnout is terrible for clergy. I found I was unable to be thankful for almost anything. Burnout robbed me of the very essence of my calling. I even felt like a fraud celebrating the Eucharist. I am grateful, beyond what I can easily express, to the folk who cared for me, some of whom I think knew better than me what was happening.

If I could give myself one piece of advice back then, it would have been to attend to the things that bring energy and joy.

Spotlight Q&A • Thursday 31 October 2024 • By The Ven. Rob Sutherland CSC

Q&A with Army chaplain, Archdeacon, Brigadier and parish priest, The Ven Rob Sutherland CSC



To mark his retirement, The Ven Rob Sutherland CSC was presented with an Aussie Hero Quilt by chaplains Cindy Waugh and Kerrie Frizzel at Gallipoli Barracks on 10 September 2024 — the quilt features the Royal Australian Army Chaplains' Department Badge, the Australian Army Badge and the Royal Australian Regiment Badge (because Rob was in The Royal Australian Infantry Corps for 20 years). In the background is an image of Bishop Frank Hulme-Moir (1910-1979), who was Chaplain-General of the Australian Army when Rob was at high school and going to church in Sydney

Where do you currently live and where do you worship?

Penny, my wife, and I live in Kenmore, which isn't where we were originally looking to live, but it's really nice and we worship in the neighbouring parish at St Michael's, Moggill, where I have been the locum Priest-in-Charge for two years.

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

I was born and baptised in South Australia into what was then called the Church of England and have been a part of the Church in Australia and around the world for as long as I can remember. I started being part of Sunday School and youth group and worked up to being ordained and serving as an Army chaplain and parish leader.

What do your main current roles involve?

I am in the last two months of being an Army chaplain. My final task has been running a pilot program re-introducing chaplaincy into the Department of Veterans' Affairs (DVA). As a chaplain, I have been overseas on operational deployments, doing direct ministry with soldiers, seven times.

As a locum part-time Priest-in-Charge at a small Anglican parish, I lead Sunday worship, including children's activities; lead Wednesday Morning Prayer and Bible discussion; pastorally and spiritually care for parishioners and their families; fulfill Diocesan compliance requirements; and, when there is time, undertake wider community engagement.

How, when and why did you become an Army chaplain?

After serving as an Army officer for 20 years I heard God's call to change direction, to become an Army chaplain. A Vietnam veteran Army chaplain, Les Thompson, tapped me on the shoulder one day in 1990 and said, "It's now time to become a chaplain." That year Les tapped three of us from 6th Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment (6RAR) on the shoulder — Ken Hopper, Ben Hall and me — and after study and ordination, we all became Army chaplains.

What do you enjoy most about being an Army chaplain?

The ability to bring God's love and presence and hope to soldiers wherever they are. I love seeing God at work.

What has been one of the single key memories of your time in your Army chaplaincy role?

There are many highlights — each place God has put me has been important. Being chaplain to a Special Operations task group in Afghanistan is something I will always cherish — each time we were there we all felt like we were "walking through the valley of shadow of death". I realised my whole military career, perhaps my whole life, prepared me to be God's minister in every situation.

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

I am working on the [Veterans' Chaplaincy Pilot Program](#), which looks at how chaplaincy can and should be re-integrated into the Department of Veterans' Affairs. I am also running Warrior Welcome Home, which is a Christian, faith-based, moral injury recovery program for veterans and their families.

What do current and former Australian Defence Force personnel look for in a faith community?

Soldiers and their families look for integrity, genuine-ness and relevance to them — they want to be part of a community and ministry that understands them and their families and their situation. They want understanding, acceptance, love and hope.

What does Remembrance Day mean to you?

Anzac Day is about remembering what happened in war — being grateful for those who are prepared to serve and when necessary, fight for us. Remembrance Day is about recognising the cost that this has for those who serve and their families and it is about bringing veterans home — it is about healing and re-integration of Defence members and their families back into our community.

Why is it important for parishes and ministries to commemorate Defence Sunday annually?

Commemorating Defence Sunday allows us, as the people of God, to connect with our veterans and families and shows that God and we within the Church care about the human and spiritual costs of war and Defence service. It also connects us with currently serving people and the chaplains who minister to them. It shows that we care for and value them.

How can parishes and ministries commemorate Remembrance Day on 11 November and Defence Sunday on 10 November this year?

Churches can do almost anything that is meaningful and authentic as a commemoration — simple or formal, big or small. Last year our children's group made a cardboard wreath with poppies and placed it in front of the altar. We also played "The Last Post" on Spotify. We've previously had "The Last Post" played on saxophone and on the organ and sang the Australian National Anthem.

I prefer rosemary (which is very Aussie) over poppies (which is very European), so I often have a basket of fresh rosemary for people to place in an offertory basket, which is carried forward, as our offering.

Inviting veterans or families to wear medals and asking them to name and share about the family member who is being remembered allows connection.

The Anglican Bishop to the Australian Defence Force, Grant Dibden, and Defence Anglicans have some good material that Archbishop Jeremy has distributed to all parishes, including a short [YouTube video](#) and [liturgical resources](#).

I like to keep it simple (which is authentically Australian) and consistent with who the parish is.

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

I can't remember a time in my life when I haven't been a Christian. My journey has had many changes. But God's call to me has always been the same as it was to Jesus' disciples — "follow me". As I have done that, wherever it has taken me and whatever has happened, God has looked after the rest. God has empowered this and delivered the results when and where God has wanted.

How does your Christian faith inspire you and shape your outlook, life choices and character?

For me, God has the plan and it's my task to follow this no matter where and what. I think [Psalm 23](#) describes my journey best — God is my shepherd, and life works best when I let God lead. You know the joke — "How do you make God laugh? Tell God your plans."

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

The primary strength of the Church is the presence of God. We are called to be the Body of Christ, and this means we sometimes need to stop being so *busy* doing and go back to *being*. Perhaps we need to stop being the busy Martha and remember Jesus commending Mary for listening to God.

What is your favourite Bible scripture and why?

[John 14.1-7](#) because when Jesus is being theological Thomas dares to ask the questions that we all long to ask: "Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?" For Australian soldiers, when their officers come up with a plan that they don't understand, they are pretty quick to say so. A Digger would say to Jesus, "Hey Skip, we have no **** idea where you are going, how on Earth can we know the way?" We don't need to understand all of the detail of heaven, but when Thomas asks, Jesus says that all we need to do is to follow him.

What person of faith inspires you the most and why?

St Thomas inspires me because when he didn't understand, he had the courage, he dared to ask Jesus. And, Jesus often gave some of the best answers when people dared to ask their honest questions. Thomas gets a bad rap — he is often called "Doubting Thomas". I call him "Honest Thomas".

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

"Let go and let God", but I can't remember who gave me that advice.

What advice do you have for those who might want to follow your example?

Don't even try to follow me — just listen to and follow Jesus.

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

I spend time with my grandchildren doing whatever they want to do, such as playing tag and reading a book of mum jokes — I'm great at building towers.

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

A Bible, insect repellent and something to play music.

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

“For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life” (John 3.16) because Jesus is all about life.

What book have you given away most as a gift and why?

Moral Injury: Unseen Wounds in an Age of Barbarism, which was edited by Prof Tom Frame, because it explains the predicament of veterans from lots of different perspectives. It has chapters by military historians, former soldiers, chaplains (including a chapter written by me) and psychologists.

Where do you do your best thinking?

Sitting outside with a cup of coffee (or maybe a glass of South Australian red wine).

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

I sit beside my pool or by the river or on the beach with my feet in the water, probably salt water in my hair and hopefully a cup of coffee in my hands.

What is your secret skill?

Making children laugh.

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

Sparkling water.

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

All my old Army stuff — I have bits of uniform from 50 years ago.

What do you want to do next?

Whatever God has planned for me to do.

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

Why?

Palestine: A land with a people



"It's important to speak and write about Palestine as a Palestinian. I am proud of my heritage and of the strength, faithfulness and resilience of my people — the Palestinians," Randa (Randa is pictured with her large Palestinian family and friends in Jerusalem in 1944 before the Nakba)

Please be aware that this account may be distressing for some readers.

It was December 1949. My family was waiting on the docks of Port Said in Egypt to embark on a journey as stateless refugees to Australia. We are Palestinian Anglicans who suddenly found ourselves stateless because our country of Palestine as we had always known it no longer existed. I was only eight years old at the time and from a very loving family, so I was yet to understand what had happened to my people and my country. It was night-time and the docks were floodlit and bustling as I waited with my father, mother, two sisters and brother. We boarded a migrant ship at Port Said, arriving in Australia about a month later.

We were a middle-class Palestinian family living in Jerusalem. We worshipped at a local Anglican church that no longer exists — when I last visited the church in the early 1990s it was shut and barricaded. My father was a businessman who managed a successful family-owned electrical retail shop. My mother was well educated. Both my parents spoke three languages — Arabic, English and French.

Residing in Jerusalem at the time, we lived peacefully under the British Mandate — Muslims, Christians, Jews and people of other faiths lived harmoniously together. My mother told me that the doctor who helped deliver me was Jewish. Our family had close Muslim friends. We were a multi-cultural, multi-faith and multi-lingual society living in peace. Indigenous Muslims, Christians, Jews and other Indigenous people of faith objected to the signing of the Balfour Declaration in 1917, which was about Great Britain pledging to establish "a national home for the Jewish people" in Palestine. This pledge led to the political Zionist movement's goal of establishing a Jewish state in Palestine a reality.

This 1917 pledge became a primary catalyst of Palestinians losing their homeland and identity in 1948 when the state of Israel was declared — the ramifications of which are still being endured to this day.

As a young girl, I remember the tank rolling down my street and a Zionist soldier in the turret announcing, on a cone-shaped loud hailer, "Leave or you will be shot". At that point, I was unaware that whole Palestinian villages had been massacred.

Dozens of massacres occurred in the creation of Israel. One of the most well-known massacres was at Deir Yassin, a village on a hill near Jerusalem. More than 100 Palestinians were killed in this tragedy at the hands of Zionist militias. I have learnt that most of the people killed were women, children and the elderly — they were intentionally targeted while their men were at work.

As news of massacres like that at Deir Yassin spread, thousands of Palestinians began fleeing their villages. [More than 700,000 Palestinians](#) fled in terror or were displaced during Israel's creation. The massacre at Deir Yassin was a horrifying turning point in Palestinian history because it put fear into the Indigenous Palestinian community.

I remember seeing the King David Hotel being blown up. It was blown up in 1946 by members of a Zionist terrorist group who posed as Arab workers to plant TNT and gelignite in the hotel basement. Over 90 people were killed, including civilians. Many British officers were based there because it was the British administrative headquarters. It was a strategic attack — the King David Hotel symbolised the British Mandate in Palestine. At the time, I was in a car that my mother was driving. I was seated in the front passenger seat and my sister was in a back seat. We were taking lunch to my father who was working in his shop near the Jaffa Gate, which is one of the open gates to the Old City of Jerusalem. We were stopped at barriers in front of the King David Hotel when suddenly there was a big, loud bang and the whole side of the building collapsed before us. We returned home immediately in shock. It is one of the clearest memories of my childhood. It has stayed with me until this day. I was only five years old at the time. I may be the last surviving eyewitness of the attack.

After the tanks rolled into our suburb in Jerusalem, my father decided it was safest for my mother, brother and me to join my two sisters who were living with my grandmother in Cairo while they were finishing their schooling. We expected our stay to be temporary in Cairo, planning to return once the school year finished. This was not to be. My mother tried to return home to Palestine — to Jerusalem — with us towards the end of 1948, but she was refused entry at the border and told, "This is now a Jewish state, and you are not a Jew. You are not welcome here."

My father eventually joined us in Cairo in 1949. By then our family's electrical retail shop and house had been possessed and occupied by Israelis. Our possessions were also stolen. There was no restitution. After coming to Australia, my father did everything he could to seek restitution — he wrote to many members of Parliament in Australia and in England and to Church leaders, but to no avail.

With the clothes on our back and a few suitcases, in December 1949 we left Port Said on a migrant ship for Australia via the Suez Canal, the Gulf of Aden and Colombo, surviving a typhoon. My father often said that he was "Like Abraham, going to a country he knew not where."

After arriving in Australia my father borrowed money to buy a milk bar and grocery shop. He and my older sister joined the choir in the local Anglican church, where I attended Sunday school, enjoyed youth fellowship and was later married. My father also served as a Diocesan lay reader. He was ordained a deacon later in life.

“A land without a people for a people without a land” was first said by Chaim Weizman, who later became the first president of Israel. This phrase, associated with the Zionist political movement, is widely recognised as a myth, including by the [United Nations](#). I show personal images of Palestinians on their land — a group photo of 50 or so family members at a gathering — and ask, “Does this look like a land with no people?”

Misunderstandings about Zionism and the state of Israel are a big part of the problem that Palestinian people face.

Judaism is a religion based on the Hebrew scriptures. Judaism is about knowing God and becoming holy.

However, Zionism is a nationalist movement — a political movement — started by Hungarian lawyer and political activist Theodor Herzl in the late 1800s. Zionism is not a religion. This becomes obvious when one understands that not all Jews (including not all [Orthodox Jews](#)) are Zionists and not all Zionists are Jews (there are Christian and atheist Zionists).

It needs to be understood that the modern state of Israel is not the same as the Biblical Israel. The conflation of the modern state of Israel with the biblical Israelites is an intentional mis-interpretation of the Old Testament.

Zionist Jews, Christians and atheists often contend that criticising both the modern state of Israel and Zionism is the same as criticising Judaism so that they can then claim the criticism to be “anti-semitic”. Many Christian leaders seem afraid to speak out publicly as a result, lest they are called “anti-semitic”. It is very disheartening that so many Australian Church leaders across different denominations are in effect complicit about the current genocide in Gaza through their silence or “fence sitting”.

Many [Jewish people](#) are [horrified](#) about what’s happening to Palestinian people in the Occupied Palestinian Territory (in both Gaza and the West Bank) and are bravely speaking out. More Christians need to speak out strongly for Palestinians — Christians are obligated as followers of Jesus to be compassionate to those who are suffering, and advocate for them.

I am against anti-semitism, as anyone I know is. However, I am not okay with anti-semitism being “weaponised” to crush conversations about Palestinian people and their very basic God-given rights to safety, freedom, peace and self-determination.

The mainstream media and many Australian politicians talk about the right of Israel to exist and defend itself even though Israel is the occupier — this was recently confirmed by the International Court of Justice determination, with a [UN General Assembly resolution](#) subsequently passed that obliges Israel to end its illegal occupation of Gaza and the West Bank within 12 months. Israel has [rejected](#) the resolution.

It’s important to speak and write about Palestine as a Palestinian. I am proud of my heritage and of the strength, faithfulness and resilience of my people — the Palestinians.

Out of God’s sovereignty I believe that good will come out of all this. God knows what is going on and he will bring about a just peace and something good, even if we as human beings can’t see it yet; and, even though Palestinians have been waiting for a very long time. A Palestinian friend living in the West Bank recently quoted Habakkuk 1 to me in an email: “O Lord, how long shall I cry for help...”

I'd like *anglican focus* readers to understand who Palestinians are and understand God's justice in all of this and his love for all people. I ask *anglican focus* readers to understand the history of both Zionism and the Palestinian people, so they will show compassion and act.

ACSQ Justice Unit note: Here are three ways you can help Palestinian people in Gaza and the West Bank:

- As Advent starts, join in a "Gathering to Pray for Gaza and all Palestinians" peace prayer vigil with the theme "Palestine: a Land with a People". The inter-faith vigil is co-hosted by the Anglican Church Southern Queensland and the United Nations Association of Australia Queensland Branch. See [ACSQ Facebook](#) and the *anglican focus* [Events page](#) for more information. This next inter-faith prayer vigil will be held between 6.45pm and 7.45pm on Saturday 30 November 2024 in Brisbane Square (at the top of Queen St). Thank you to the more than 80 recognised faith/community leaders who have helped lead "Praying for Gaza" inter-faith vigils in Brisbane since March.
- Contact your [elected representatives](#) asking for "an arms embargo and targeted sanctions" on Israel, in line with [United Nations experts'](#) calls and in line with the [Genocide Convention](#) (which calls for member state signatories to actively "prevent genocide").
- The Anglican-run Arab Ahli hospital in Gaza was bombed by Israel in October 2023, killing nearly 500 people. If you are able, please donate to the [Anglican Board of Mission AID Gaza hospital emergency appeal](#).

Media guidelines for youth reporting



"Anglicare Southern Queensland has proposed seven guidelines for media outlets when reporting on matters relating to young people and youth offending," (Leanne Wood, Anglicare Southern Queensland)

Media play an important role in influencing how safe people feel and how they respond to others in their communities.

Constant negative commentary directed at young people can have a significant impact on how the community views young people and matters relating to youth offending, and their willingness to support and engage with young people who've experienced tough times.

Discussions with young people

Anglicare Southern Queensland is proposing [a set of guidelines for media outlets to follow](#) when reporting on stories relating to youth-related matters. These guidelines emerged from discussions between young people from our youth homelessness and youth justice programs; our front line teams; Anglicare's Research, Evaluation and Advocacy team; academic [Associate Professor Renee Zanhov](#); and media professional [Barbara Haines](#), from BBS Communications Group.

The young people's comments reflected their views of media reporting as often telling one part of the story, and repeating stories and commentary over and over. Some of their comments included:

- "The media depict us as 'malicious,' 'evil' and label us negatively. They turn it into a story and think that's all we'll ever be."
- "Not accurate depictions of situations."
- "Make sure that they don't keep saying "this happened again." Focus on fixing and not blaming."

What are the youth media guidelines?

Anglicare Southern Queensland propose that the seven guidelines (below) be considered by media outlets when reporting on matters relating to young people and youth offending:

1. Persistently negative stories about young people stereotype everyone's children and shape a public discourse that diminishes all young people. Positive stories are needed to provide essential balance.
2. Journalists aim to be objective in their reporting. This is especially important when reporting alleged youth offences. Negative and sensational language (including headlines) relating to alleged youth offending damages the young people involved, their families and our communities.
3. Stories and images that are sourced from social media must be checked for accuracy.
4. Updated stories should be clearly identified as such. Stories that are constantly repeated with minor changes imply that young people are committing more crime than they are.
5. Statistics are powerful. Ethical use of statistics tells the complete story and does not seek to manipulate or mislead.
6. Children and young people should not be identifiable in text or images when reporting alleged offending. This includes their names, faces, families, clothes or other recognisable features.
7. Publications and media organisations should be held accountable when they consistently breach these guidelines.

Negative impacts on young people

Constant negative messages in the media position young people as outsiders in their own communities. Research shows that experience of being an 'outcast' is deeply harmful, particularly for teenagers, and young people are more likely to experience mental health concerns, disengage at school, partake in risky behaviours and experiment with substance use/abuse.

"Facebook vigilantism"

Facebook can contribute to that experience of alienation. 'Facebook vigilantism' names and shames young people, whether they're to blame for alleged crimes or not. When this occurs, everyday community members upload images of young people who appear suspicious to their Facebook pages and community groups. This often results in toxic commentary about young people that disempowers them when they can't share their side of the story. These stories and images, often, get picked up by the mainstream media, and continue a cycle that silences and stigmatises young people.

Changing the narrative around youth in the media

By changing the narrative about youth in the media, and in the community, we can work towards balance and fairness in reporting on youth-related matters. To give one of our young people from our youth justice program the last word:

Stop all the hating and try and spread positivity.

To learn more about Anglicare Southern Queensland's research, evaluation and advocacy projects, please visit the [Anglicare Southern Queensland website](#).

First published on the [Anglicare Southern Queensland website](#) on 16 August 2024.

Editor's notes: [Read](#) Anglicare Southern Queensland's May 2024 submission to the Community Safety and Legal Affairs Committee regarding the Queensland Community Safety Bill 2024.

At the 2024 ACSQ Synod, a related motion was carried that "Encourages:

1. a) individuals and ACSQ parishes and agencies to:
 - (i) be aware of negative and inflammatory reporting about children and young people and help to raise awareness of others in this regard;
 - (ii) explore actions they can take locally to encourage positive initiatives with and for children and young people, including those at risk and suffering disadvantage.
1. b) the Queensland Government to re-commit itself to the development of evidence-based policy, including effective prevention, early intervention strategies, and work with families, that supports the social inclusion of young people and their pathways into fulfilling and productive lives."

Homilies & Addresses • Tuesday 15 October 2024 • By Peter Branjerdporn

"Israel's genocidal campaign and occupation of Gaza must end"



Pharmacist and ACSQ Justice Unit coordinator Peter Branjerdporn speaking at a vigil for healthcare workers who have been killed or abducted in Gaza (Friday 11 October 2024 outside the Royal Brisbane and Women's Hospital)

Readers are advised that this content may be distressing.

Thank you to Dr Yassmin Khadra, a Muslim Palestinian doctor, whose family is from Hebron and Jaffa, for inviting me to speak today. I have had the pleasure of getting to know Dr Yassmin and [Dr Ahmad Abou-Sweid](#), a Muslim Palestinian whose family is from Hittin and Lubyia, at inter-faith vigils for Gaza this year. My employer, the Anglican Church Southern Queensland, has been co-hosting the vigils.

As mentioned, I am a pharmacist and the Justice Unit coordinator for the Anglican Church Southern Queensland.

In 2012 I served on the Thai/Myanmar border as an AusAID volunteer training Muslim Rohingya refugee medics in pharmacy. Due to the armed conflict happening nearby, it was difficult for medicines and other medical supplies to reach us. I saw firsthand the major impacts this can have on the health outcomes on an already vulnerable people.

Due to Israel's intentional [food](#) and [medical aid](#) blockade over the last year, it has been nearly impossible for medicines and other medical supplies to reach pharmacists and doctors in Gaza, many of whom have been killed in Israel's intentional targeting of hospitals and many others abducted. As of September 20th, as reported by independent organisation [Healthcare Workers Watch](#), 595 healthcare workers have been killed in Gaza over the last year. This includes more than 50 pharmacists. The names of another 420 healthcare workers are currently being verified.

As of September 20th, as reported by the same [organisation](#), 300 healthcare workers have been unlawfully detained in Gaza and the West Bank over the last year. This includes seven pharmacists. Some of these healthcare workers were killed by Israeli soldiers while they were detained, and other healthcare workers upon their release have shared about how they were tortured.

Because Israel is blocking medicines and medical supplies from entering Gaza, surgeons are performing [amputations on children](#) and [caesareans on women](#) without any anaesthetics or pain killers.

Because Israel is blocking medicines and medical supplies from entering Gaza, Palestinian people are dying from [treatable illnesses](#), both chronic and acute.

Australian emergency physician Mohammed Mustafa was compelled to provide support as a medic in Gaza. Upon his return to Australia from Gaza, he told [ABC News Breakfast](#) this chilling story in August:

"I went into the emergency department, and it was chaotic. There were hundreds of people. People that have chronic diseases that haven't been getting treated.

"There was a mass casualty event, so I rushed into the 'resus' room.

"They started bringing in bodies of children that had been hit by a drone strike in a playground. There were about 10 bodies of children on the floor.

"When the families bring them in, they bring them wrapped in blankets.

"I remember the first blanket that I opened up. It was a child with his head missing. And I remember just freezing for about 15 seconds.

“There were children on the floor bleeding out, and I had to pick which one I was going to focus my energy on.

“While I’m there, trying to resuscitate one child, I can see another child bleeding to death on the floor that I’m leaving to die.”

He then went on to explain:

“Just to put it into perspective for you, there was one thermometer for the entire Nasser hospital that I worked in.

“They have 1,500-odd presentations a day in the emergency department.

“We didn’t have any clean gauze to clean wounds with. There wasn’t even a sugar prick to test people’s sugar levels.

“We were getting diabetics in who were going into diabetic ketoacidosis, and we couldn’t manage them properly because we couldn’t even measure their sugar level.

“It was horrific.”

In July, [The Lancet](#) medical journal reported that more than 180,000 Palestinians have died in Gaza over the last year — this figure includes thousands of Palestinian men, women and children who have died because Israel is blocking their access to medicines as part of its genocidal campaign.

Earlier this year, the [International Criminal Court](#), after a first round of hearings, found it was plausible that Israel violated rights guaranteed to Palestinians in Gaza under the Genocide Convention. Israel must comply with the International Criminal Court’s binding order to allow humanitarian aid, including food and medicine, through unimpeded.

In the last 24 hours, [a UN commissioned report](#) was released accusing Israel of deliberately killing, detaining and torturing Palestinian healthcare workers, of targeting their vehicles and of restricting permits for medical evacuations from Gaza. These actions amount to war crimes and crimes against humanity.

This is all intentional. It is part of Israel’s genocidal campaign.

I think we all want to see civilians — wherever they are in the world — have the medicines and medical supplies they need to treat their illnesses and the illnesses of their family members.

I think we all want to see doctors and nurses — wherever they are serving in the world — being able to perform surgeries, like amputations and caesareans, with anaesthetics and pain killers.

I think we all want to see pharmacists — wherever they are in the world — being able to do their job and help make this happen.

In April, [UN Special Rapporteur Francesca Albanese](#) called for targeted sanctions and an arms embargo in her [Anatomy of a Genocide](#) report. She urged UN member states to enforce the prohibition of genocide in accordance with their non-negotiable obligations.

Six months later and the Australian government has failed to commit to targeted sanctions and a two-way arms embargo, while at the same time calling for a ceasefire. This is incongruent, making Australia both complicit and hypocritical.

As a pharmacist and as a Christian, I say not in my name.

I call upon all Australian healthcare workers and people of faith to contact their [Federal Members of Parliament](#) and urge for them to demand targeted sanctions and a two-way arms embargo immediately.

Israel's genocidal campaign and occupation of Gaza must end.

Palestinian people, like all people, have the right to self-determination and to live in safety, peace and freedom.

Editor's note: Since Peter Branjerdporn delivered this address on Friday 11 October 2024 outside the Royal Brisbane and Women's Hospital at a vigil for healthcare workers who have been killed or abducted in Gaza, an Israeli strike targeting Al-Aqsa Martyr's Hospital in Gaza burned alive at least four Palestinians and injured dozens, many of them wounded patients. Just hours earlier, 18 people were killed and scores injured when an Israeli strike targeted a UN school-turned-shelter. The [United Nations](#) Secretary-General has condemned both atrocities.

Justice Unit note 28 October 2024: As Advent starts, join in a "Gathering to Pray for Gaza and all Palestinians" peace prayer vigil with the theme "Palestine: a Land with a People". The inter-faith vigil is co-hosted by the Anglican Church Southern Queensland, the United Nations Association of Australia Queensland Branch and Queensland Program of Assistance to Survivors of Torture and Trauma, among others. See [ACSQ Facebook](#) and the *anglican focus* [Events page](#) for more information. This next inter-faith prayer vigil will be held between 6.45pm and 7.45pm on Saturday 30 November 2024 in Brisbane Square (at the top of Queen St). Thank you to the more than 80 recognised faith/community leaders who have helped lead "Praying for Gaza" inter-faith vigils in Brisbane since March.

Playing Jenga with the planet



"The 'poster children' for insects are honeybees because we appreciate that without pollinators, we could not feed the world. But insects are also a food resource, recycle nutrients, and control pests, among their many other ecosystem services," says Prof Philip Batterham

The game of Jenga starts with a tall tower being built with wooden blocks. Players take turns to remove blocks, one at a time. The player who removes a block causing the tower to fall loses the game. If I wanted to end a game of Jenga quickly, I would clumsily pull out a block from the bottom of the tower, causing it to topple.

That is what we are currently doing to life on this planet.

I became a Christian long before I became a biologist. As I contemplate care for the planet, I see my understandings of the Bible and biology intertwining like the strands of the DNA molecule that has been my preoccupation for my 45 years in research.

Our planet has a rare capacity to sustain life that comes from the composition of soil, an abundance of water, and an ideal combination of gases in our atmosphere. There are critical cycles that are elegant and so finely balanced. Plants take carbon dioxide from the air and convert it into sugars that provide energy for plants and the creatures that feed on them. Plants and animals respire replacing the carbon dioxide withdrawn from the atmosphere. Water is cycled through precipitation and evaporation. These are the foundations upon which the pyramid of life is built.

Just as all life on this planet is dependent on these chemical and physical elements, all life forms are interdependent as they live together in ecosystems. In nutrition, for example, plants are a resource for many insects and other herbivorous animals. Insects can be a substantial food resource for many small animals and birds which in turn are consumed by carnivores. At the base of this pyramid there are plants and insects. At the highest levels we have mammals, including us.

It stands to reason that if we erode the base of the pyramid, it could collapse like a Jenga tower.

My grave concern is that we humans are doing just that.

This has been the focus of my whole career in research as I study interactions between insects and the environment. There are about 5.5 million different species of insects on earth. The “poster children” for insects are honeybees because we appreciate that without pollinators, we could not feed the world.

But insects are also a food resource, recycle nutrients, and control pests, among their many other ecosystem services. It is therefore alarming that populations of land-based insects are shrinking by approximately 1 per cent each year.

Why are insect populations shrinking?

Collateral damage from insecticides used to control insect pests is one of many contributing factors. Low doses of insecticides that target the nervous system are known to impact the behaviour of non-pest insects in ways that will reduce the viability of populations. Research in my laboratory has shown that low doses of some of these insecticides also cause blindness and impact metabolism, reducing the capacity of insects to withstand other environmental challenges.

Global warming is also a factor. Insects are unable to control their body temperature. Hence, changes in temperature affect all aspects of insect life, from reproduction to metabolism and survival.

Land clearing, urbanisation, air and water pollution, and introduced species are among the other threats to insects. We are destroying habitats and changing the composition of the soil, the air and the water upon which they depend.

This all has consequences for those of us who live at the top of a wobbling pyramid. It also tells us that we need to reduce many other assaults on this planet that sustain all life, beyond just climate change.

There is an urgent need for radical change, based on a shared understanding of our relationship to life on this planet.

Genesis 1.28 quotes God saying that humans should rule over all other animals on the face of the earth, but this is not a licence to do as we please.

God did not declare us to be gods on this earth who could ignore his plans for the planet. Jesus modelled the humble leaders we should be by washing dirty, smelly feet.

We are deputised and have responsibilities to love and care for this planet as God does.

In Genesis 2 we see this fleshed out with God present in the garden of Eden, lovingly, joyfully, playfully rejoicing and celebrating his creation, bringing animals to Adam for naming. Adam and Eve are depicted as gardeners and caretakers of the extraordinary gift of creation that they are to love and cherish. Jesus said, to whom much is given, much is expected. It is noteworthy that indigenous peoples around the world have come closest to being faithful to this commission.

Conspicuously, there are permissions that are not given in the creation chapters of Genesis. There is no mandate given to tear down forests or to kill animals.

In looking at the earth in 2021, God must weep at what has become of creation and how we have failed as caretakers of the precious gift we have been given. In Genesis 1 we see God creating order from chaos. Humans have thrown that process into reverse.

Writing to believers thousands of years ago, the Apostle Paul says even then that the whole of creation groans (Romans 8. 22). How much more is creation groaning now as result of what we have done to it since then?

Jesus being the saviour of the world is a pillar of the Christian faith, but he is also depicted as the creator. In Colossians 1.15–17 Paul wrote these words about Jesus:

“The Son is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For in him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together.”

I am haunted by the question that if it is God in Jesus who holds all things together, what does it say about us if we actively tear his creation apart or passively stand by, refusing to intervene to stop it happening?

Colossians 1.19–20 goes on to say:

“For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross.”

Followers of Jesus are called to be part of that work of reconciliation and restoration because all life on this earth is precious to God, not just human life.

For too long, many of us have not heeded that call.

However, individual Christians and churches are increasingly joining calls for action to care for the planet. This is good, because the needs of the planet that sustains life must be addressed as a matter of extreme urgency. It is also a vital act of obedience to the call of God on our lives.

Realistically, this will require lifestyle changes and sacrifices from all of us, but this is what Jesus consistently asks of his followers.

Editor’s note: ISCAST (Institute for the Study of Christianity in an Age of Science and Technology) is a network of people, from students to distinguished academics, exploring the interface of the sciences, technology, and Christianity. Check out the [ISCAST website](#) for events, resources and how to get involved.

First published in [The Melbourne Anglican](#) on 22 November 2021.

Out of sight, out of mind?



"In writing about disability and the Church, I am immediately aware that there are many aspects of belonging to a faith community that I take for granted," (The Rev'd Canon Jess Grant)

In writing about disability and the Church, I am immediately aware that there are many aspects of belonging to a faith community that I take for granted when I reflect even on Sunday mornings alone: the ease of transport, the accessibility of church buildings, the format in which the words of the service are communicated, the extent to which it is possible to gather afterwards, just to name a few. It has been very humbling to learn from disabled members of my family as they have navigated access to the church, as both a building and a people. So, I write as someone who knows she has a lot more to be taught. Two particular lessons have stood out to me.

The first is how often non-disabled people (among whom I include myself) speak about the adjustments to our common life as though they are a gift to, or at least an accommodation of, a disabled person in our midst. By way of example, my family moved a lot when I was growing up. In each new home, the carpenters would arrive as soon as possible to install ramps and work on inaccessible parts of the house. Often guests would comment on "our lovely wide doorways", with their custom-made doors. On one such occasion, my sister (who has been in a wheelchair since her preschool days) responded that "the doors are so you can visit me, since I can't get into your house." That reframe has always felt very important to me — what is better for the person who needs that accommodation helps everyone thrive. Wheelchairs are by no means a new invention, but we have been making our doorways too narrow for a very, very long time. We have built personal and public spaces with a view to making adjustments for a disabled person later, rather than making them appropriately accessible and welcoming in the first place.

The second lesson is how readily non-disabled people assume a solution to an accessibility problem without asking first. I was in NSW and then the ACT during the height of the COVID lockdowns, in amongst the strictest of conditions. I was in military chaplaincy at the time, so was only on the edges

of the extraordinary amount of work that was done by parishes to make online participation in worship a possibility. I confess that at the time, there were aspects about navigating sacramentality at a distance with which I struggled. I hope I have come to know better since.

I was particularly aware as we began emerging from frequent lockdowns that many non-disabled people assumed that online worship would cease and we would “go back to the way things were”. That was, of course, until more of the voices of those attending online were heard — many were not people who had been worshipping in person and waiting to return to it, they were people who had begun to access Christian community for the first time in a long time, if not ever.

This Cathedral community has, of course, travelled that journey and has a thriving online ministry under The Reverend Jamee’s exceptional care and leadership. As one of The Rev’d Jamee’s community members has said “I have been waiting for online access to church since the internet began.” The wonderful example of Holy Hermits Online is a reminder to me of the importance of being attentive and listening to the experience of those who do not find their place within our existing models.

I am also reminded that we never reach a settled place of completing that work, but need to go on attending and listening, if we are to be the breadth and depth of community to which God calls us.

First published in the October 2024 edition of [The Eagle](#) — the magazine of St John’s Cathedral.

Resources & Research • Friday 25 October 2024 • By Angie Mooney

Getting the most out of your Sunday sermons using AI tools



"As well as assisting with other AI-related training, I can show parishes how to use AI to create content for regularly scheduled sermon-related social media," says Angie Mooney from Resource Church St John's Cathedral

Priests put a lot of thought, energy and time into crafting their sermons. When priests preach on a Sunday, their sermon's reach is generally limited to the people present.

So artificial intelligence (AI) platforms are being increasingly used by clergy to get more out of sermons so, for example, they can reach a wider audience and engage parishioners during the week.

Introduction to AI platforms

A range of AI tools can be accessed by clergy so their sermons can be re-purposed for parishioner and wider community benefit.

For example, using Sunday service video recordings and a tool called [Descript](#):

- Short one-minute sermon video highlights can be created more easily, with enhanced audio and captions and then posted on social media.
- The audio can be transcribed by AI using [Descript](#). Then [ChatGPT](#) can be used to create an interesting blog post (with headings and subheadings). An image generation tool like [Midjourney](#) can be used to create visually appealing images.
- Text can be translated into languages that are relevant for your congregation or wider community for your website and social media posts.

Why fresh and relevant content is important

By creating and posting "fresh" content regularly your parish website's search engine optimisation (SEO) will improve. This is because search engine "web crawlers" and algorithms rank websites in search engine results more highly if they implement SEO-friendly tips. For example, if a person who has recently moved to your area types "churches north Brisbane" into a search engine like Google, one of the ways that a given church will get a high "ranking" is if the web crawler detects fresh and relevant content.

It's also important for churches to upload fresh, relevant content to their websites because visitors to your site will likely be impressed by a website that is updated regularly — websites are key "doors" to your parish.

By posting sermon-related content (e.g. videos and blog entries) on your website and social media channels, a prospective parishioner can also gauge your parish's theological leaning; what missional and justice spaces your church is engaged in; and, the quality of your preaching.

It's also important from a user experience point of view for your website to look good.

AI platform uses

AI platforms, such as [NotebookLM](#), can be used as a researching tool to compile information from Bible commentaries. It can synthesise large quantities of information and extract relevant portions. The research results that are generated can assist with sermon writing.

[ChatGPT](#) can also be used to study passages of text in Greek and Hebrew. Clergy can use AI tools, such as [ChatGPT](#), to create reflection questions based on their sermon text.

Weekly Bible (or alternatively themed) studies can be created using [ChatGPT](#) and NotebookLM for group or personal reflection. NotebookLM also has a feature that automatically creates a realistic sounding podcast that could be used in a study group.

Copyright-free and easy-to-use image and iconography generation platforms, such as [Midjourney](#), can be used to create relevant, specific images and graphics for:

- websites (e.g. when the sermon is published as text)
- social media graphics
- event promotion
- flyers
- WhatsApp group “posters”
- pew sheets and service PowerPoint slides.

Social media content

It’s also important for social media channels to have fresh, relevant, aesthetically pleasing and engaging content — algorithms “like” this kind of content.

Social media channels use algorithms to determine what will appear in your feed from the incredibly vast content pool.

It’s easy to create content — both images and text — using AI platforms.

Posts can also be planned and scheduled in advance.

How Resource Church St John’s Cathedral can assist

As well as assisting with other AI-related training, I can show parishes how to use AI to create content for regularly scheduled sermon-related social media. For example, parishes could implement a weekly plan that looks something like this [weekly schedule](#):

- **Sunday:** Upload video of sermon to YouTube with reflection questions in the description.
- **Monday:** Upload sermon text to website with sub-headings and images. Post link to Facebook and Instagram with an engaging question to encourage comments.
- **Tuesday:** Gospel reflection posted on Facebook and Instagram: Post a link to the Gospel reading and add an image. Ask questions, such as: “How does the Gospel reading touch your life today?” and “What do you feel that the Gospel is calling you to do or be?” Respond to the “comments”.
- **Wednesday:** Post a vertical short-form video of a sermon snippet to Facebook, Instagram, YouTube or TikTok.
- **Thursday:** Choose an interesting Greek or Hebrew word from the readings and create a graphic explaining/defining it. Add a question and encourage people to comment.
- **Friday:** Post an image and text with the focus on social justice, advocacy, or evangelisation, with a call to action related to the sermon theme. Consider linking to a local outreach initiative.
- **Saturday:** Share an inspiring quote from the readings or sermon and create a graphic, along with a brief reflection. Encourage followers to share their thoughts in the comments.

Parish employees or volunteers can be engaged to help create the content from the sermon. This creates participation opportunities for community members in the parish, while also assisting parish clergy with their workload.

Editor's note: If you are interested in attending a workshop or Zoom session in 2025 to find out what AI tools are available and how to use them in your parish, please [email](#) St John's Cathedral Resource Church specialist Angie Mooney to register your interest. If you are using AI tools successfully, Angie would love to hear about your experiences.

Visit the [St John's Cathedral website](#) for resources, including the downloadable step-by-step guide: "Homilies Beyond Sunday: Repurposing Sermons for Social Media".

Resources & Research • Thursday 10 October 2024 • By The Very Rev'd Dr Peter Catt

It's not what you say, it's what people hear



"Earth Wisdom, Hope in Action" ARRCC (Australian Religious Response to Climate Change) Conference on Saturday 5 October 2024 in Sydney, with Saibai elder Aunty Dr Rose Elu (seated centre, front)

"It's not what you say, it's what people hear" (Frank Luntz, *Words that Work*)

On Saturday I had the privilege of being a workshop presenter at "Earth Wisdom, Hope in Action", the ARRCC (Australian Religious Response to Climate Change) Conference.

The conference gathered people of all faith traditions with the aim of seeking to build a supportive, focused, hope-filled community. Speakers concentrated on how we might use the wisdom of our faith traditions to assist the whole community to deal with the challenge of climate change.

My workshop was a reiteration of an offering that several of us have worked and reworked over the past few years as we have reflected on the art of communicating well, and how that can assist us to

deal with issues that are complex, emotionally charged and subject to influence by political and other powerful actors.

The purpose of the workshop was not so much to lecture people on how to communicate well, but rather to invite them into an ongoing journey that sees us observing, reflecting, experimenting, observing, reflecting, experimenting...as we seek to learn how to make a positive difference through the words we use.

Our approach is based on some work undertaken by the [Asylum Seeker Resource Centre](#) (ASRC) about 10 years ago that discovered that about 50 per cent of the population is open to being persuaded one way or the other when it comes to approaching an issue such as responding to people seeking asylum. They also found that the key to winning over the “persuadable” people was to use words that enable them to hear what you are trying to say. One has to use words that work for them.

The big learning for those of us who were active in that area at the time was discovering what people were hearing when we spoke. Often, they did not hear what we thought we were saying because of social conditioning, the framing provided by certain sections of the media, historical influences and so on.

The ASRC developed a resource called “[Words that Work](#)” that helped us get our message across. It made a huge difference to refugee and asylum seeker advocacy and eventually made for a more humane policy as public opinion shifted.

Our current work seeks to develop similar words for use by those who want to make a positive contribution towards dealing with climate change. If you are interested in the work, you can access our resource on the [Cathedral's website](#).

I think that Frank Luntz’s idea that we need to focus more on what people are hearing when we speak or write than on what we think we are saying applies to our wider life in general. Many of the conflicts that arise in daily life are the result of one person thinking that they are saying/writing one thing and the listener/reader receiving something entirely different.

One of the learnings that I am reflecting on is the need to check with the writer/speaker that what I think I am hearing is what they thought they were saying.

First published in the Precinct eNews on 7 October 2024.

Editor’s note: The “Climate and creation care communications — engaging Queensland Anglicans” resource is a Resource Churches initiative. The resource has formed the basis for Anglican and ecumenical workshops that have been held online and face to face locally, nationally and internationally.

Tough Questions: Should Christians celebrate Halloween?



Christian opinion on how best to approach Halloween is divided. Some avoid anything to do with Halloween, others join the festivities wholeheartedly, whilst others still, opt for some kind of Christian alternative. With the shops already full of pumpkins, witches' hats, and skeletons, let us explore the pros and cons of each of these approaches.

Halloween is often rejected by Christians on the grounds of its pagan roots; specifically the Celtic festival of Samhain, when people would make fires and wear costumes to ward off ghosts. In the 8th century, the 1st of November was designated "All Saints Day" by Pope Gregory III, and the evening before became known as "All Hallows Eve", which is where we get the name, "Halloween" from.

It should be noted that Christians are not required to reject everything with mixed or dubious beginnings. For example, the word Sunday comes from the Old English word '*Sunnandæg*', literally "Sun's day", in honour of the Sun, which was personified and venerated in Norse mythology. In a similar vein, Monday is the moon's day, and the other days of the week are named in honour of various Norse and Anglo-Saxon gods. Today, we recognise that those names have lost their original meaning.

Perhaps the main reason that some Christians reject Halloween is that it has become a major celebration for those who practice wicca, satanism, neo-paganism and the like. Christians should have nothing to do with these practices, nor should they celebrate that which is dark, macabre, or evil. In the book of Acts there are many instances of the Apostles encountering sorcery, which is roundly condemned on each occasion (See, Acts [8.9-24](#); [13.6-11](#); [16.16-21](#); [19.13-20](#)). Clearly, there are aspects of Halloween that Christians ought to reject. We should not be dressing our children up as ghosts, zombies or demons, or encouraging them to identify with evil in any way. For many Christians, that means avoiding Halloween altogether. Others would argue that there is nothing wrong with children

dressing up as superheroes and princesses and receiving lolly bags. The question is, does that kind of participation appear to give tacit approval to the darker aspects of Halloween?

Many Christians take the view that some aspects of Halloween can be redeemed or used as an opportunity to share the good news of Jesus, for example, by handing out gospel tracts along with lollies. Moreover, many churches run alternative celebrations with the intention of switching the focus from darkness to light (the light of Christ). This is the approach my own church has adopted.

Whatever one's view of Halloween, it should be understood as a matter of personal conscience. In [1 Corinthians 8](#), Paul addresses the issue of whether Christians are permitted to eat food that has been sacrificed to idols (admittedly, that is not a common problem today). He concludes that a believer should not go against their own conscience. However, the believer is free to eat such food, unless doing so would cause a brother or sister to "stumble". In that case, says Paul, it is better to refrain.

Christians should not "celebrate" Halloween any more than they should sacrifice food to idols. However, they are free to do things that are associated with Halloween, providing that they are not inimical to the teachings of the New Testament (for example, dressing up in innocuous costumes, or giving out lollies). Remembering, of course, Paul's exhortation to remain mindful and respectful of the position taken by other believers.

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

2024 Diocesan Synod reflections: further highlights and learnings



"To be able to bring the motion to Synod, and then to hear the universal support for Hope25 here in Brisbane was so encouraging," (The Rev'd Catherine Govan from St Stephen's, Coorparoo)

The Rev'd Catherine Govan — Priest, St Stephen's, Coorparoo

Before Synod, I don't think I could have guessed how amazing it would be to look out from the stage and see so many faces looking back at you. And, as this was my first time speaking at Synod it really was an exhilarating experience! That was how I felt as I seconded the motion asking for the support of Synod for the exciting initiative of [Hope25](#).

To be able to bring the motion to Synod, and then to hear the universal support for Hope25 here in Brisbane was so encouraging — encouraging that as a Diocese we could all partake in a combined initiative to offer one (or more!) outreach events between Easter and Pentecost in 2025.

It was wonderful to hear voices of optimism and enthusiasm following the resounding "yes" to the motion — to hear and see expressions of unity as people discussed how they could participate in their own settings. And, to get excited about how we here in the Anglican Church Southern Queensland would be uniting with every single diocese across Australia — one together, working together — to bring the gospel message of hope.

At this year's synod, I was proud of our Diocese rising to the challenge of Hope 25. I was proud to be a part of putting the motion forward alongside The Rev'd Michael Calder. And, I was proud that Synod recognised that bringing hope in an uncertain world is our core business.

Please check out the [Hope25 website](#), where there are ideas and resources for how you can respond in your setting. If you haven't already done so, sign up for the newsletter, too. I look forward to us all partnering together for Hope25 — breathing life into our Synod motion and joining together in a season of proclamation. Let's go, Brisbane!



“Before Synod started, the Archbishop told me that he will continue to support our people as we seek to reverse climate change. As a First Nations elder, I have taken the Archbishop’s words as an encouragement. Knowing we have an Archbishop who cares really means a lot,” (Uncle Milton Walit from The Parish of Laidley)

Uncle Milton Walit — Synod Representative, St Saviour’s, Laidley

There were many highlights for me at this year’s Synod. I had my photo taken with The Rev’d David Browne from Dalby — David then wrote a lovely message on Facebook.

Archbishop Jeremy Greaves’ address was also very moving, especially when he shared about his visit to low-lying islands in the Torres Strait in May this year so he could personally witness the impacts of a damaged climate on our shorelines, homes, ancestral resting places, fresh water and traditional food gardens.

Before Synod started, I spoke with the Archbishop and Bishop Cam. I shared about how the referendum result has impacted me and other Torres Strait Islander people. I explained that the vast majority of Torres Strait Islander people supported the Yes vote. We elders worked with our young people last year to help support them as they helped communicate the importance of the referendum. I wrote about the importance of the Yes vote for [anglican focus](#) last year:

“My island of Saibai is now sinking and overwhelmed with sea water because of terrible coastal erosion, the rising sea and king tides. We are worried that if things don’t improve that the bell tower of our church will be covered in water. Our ancestors built the church by hand. They used coral from the sea as a kind of lime plaster over the bricks. The church faces the sea, giving people arriving by boat their bearings — it’s like a compass point. Both the church and the sea are sacred to us. Parliament needs to hear what we have to say better because they tend to think about now and only as far ahead as the next election cycle — when we need them to think long term if we are to save our island.”

Before Synod started, the Archbishop told me that he will continue to support our people as we seek to reverse climate change.

As a First Nations elder, I have taken the Archbishop’s words as an encouragement. Knowing we have an Archbishop who cares really means a lot.



“A motion that was passed at Synod...addressed the unfair depiction so readily given of ‘youth behaving badly’, whereas most young people are living responsibly and with care for others,” (Margaret Compton from St Luke’s, Toowoomba)

Margaret Compton — Synod Representative, St Luke’s, Toowoomba

“How are you going?” we ask. “How’s your day been?” the hairdresser asks. “RUOK?”

These common enquiries need to be more than just conventional, especially for our younger generations, who are subject to bad press all too easily.

A motion that was passed at Synod addressed the unfair depiction so readily given of “youth behaving badly”, whereas most young people are living responsibly and with care for others. The motion called for the media to apply guidelines to reporting on youth affairs, such as guidelines issued by Anglicare Southern Queensland in collaboration with the University of Queensland and the media agency BBS Communications Group.

It is my highlight from Synod because I don't recall anything similar previously, and appreciate it being put forward for due attention. Negative representation of the younger people in our population is deleterious. Synod representatives from the Boomer generation will know we were not treated this way — the worst then was to be labelled “Bodgies and Widgies”. This motion points to the question: what has brought on this negative attitude towards some generations?

Younger people at Synod contributed constructively. The motion called on the Church to lead the fairer treatment and portrayal of our excellent youth. We can show our confidence in them by embracing their participation in Church decision making. There are many more fine young people in our wider communities, and plenty who would respond well to good support. The motion also encouraged our state government to re-commit to evidence-based policy for true support for and inclusion of our young people.



**“Bishop Sarah being made the Bishop of the Northern Region was a highlight for me for several reasons,”
(The Rev'd Canon Bruce Boase from The Parish of Green Hills)**

The Rev'd Canon Bruce Boase — Priest-in-Charge, The Parish of Green Hills

I was particularly impressed at this year's Synod by the way the debates were conducted and the friendly, civil atmosphere enjoyed by the speakers. This, I feel, was particularly fostered by Archbishop Jeremy in his first Diocesan Synod as Archbishop and President of Synod.

For me, however, the highlight was the consecration of Sarah Plowman as Bishop of the Northern Region. This consecration was conducted by the Archbishop as part of the Synod Eucharist on Friday night.

Bishop Sarah being made the Bishop of the Northern Region was a highlight for me for several reasons.

Firstly, Bishop Sarah and I were ordained by Archbishop Phillip together as deacons in 2004 and as priests in 2005. Our journey together began during our formation years.

Secondly, and to the delight of all, our Northern Region welcomes its first woman Bishop. Synod was the perfect time to do this as the Diocese gathered in strength.

Finally, Bishop Sarah is a local, from a Diocesan point of view, having been raised in Nambour.

2024's Synod was my last Synod as a priest in my current parish. I will, more than likely, not be a member of Synod next year because of my retirement.

I can safely say that the governing of the Church in our area is in good and godly hands.

Reflections • Thursday 31 October 2024 • By Ebony

"I can't hug all the kids in the hospital. So, I figured a First Nations teddy bear could"



Proud Waanyi Garawar and Kaurareg girl and Fraser Coast Anglican College student Ebony with Hervey Bay Hospital First Nations Team Manager Julianne, along with Ebony's Dreaming-design teddy bears in October 2024

As part of the Year 10 “Make a Difference” project at Fraser Coast Anglican College we students were challenged to create initiatives that positively impact others.

As a proud Waanyi Garawar and Kaurareg girl, I decided to blend compassion with my First Nations heritage by designing teddy bears for child patients at the Hervey Bay Hospital.

I want the children to feel as happy as possible in Hervey Bay Hospital.

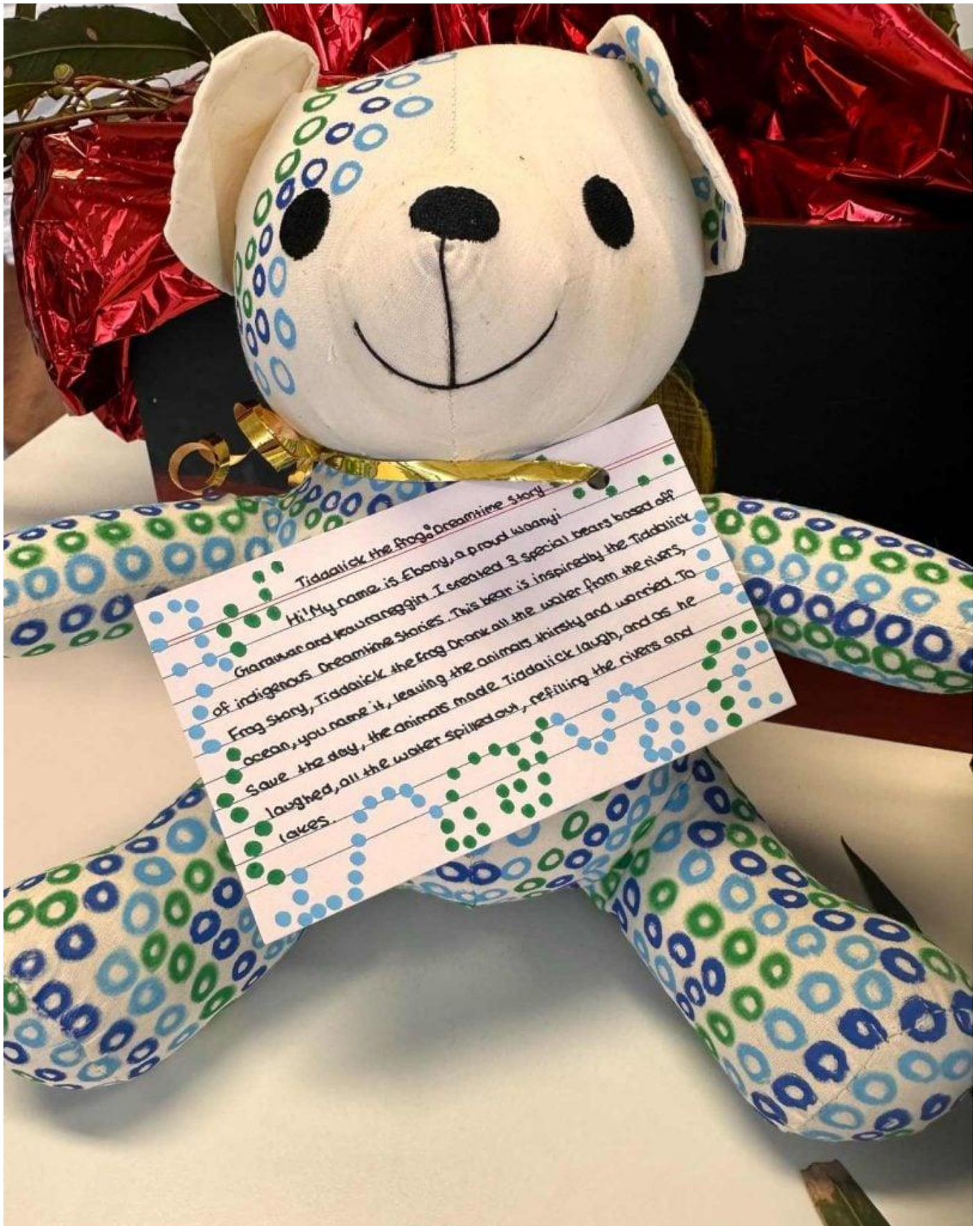
A hug can make the biggest difference, but I can’t hug all the kids in the hospital. So, I figured a First Nations teddy bear could.

Each of the three bears I created was uniquely designed to represent a Dreaming story from my culture, so I created Tiddalick the Frog, the Sun Woman and the Rainbow Serpent. I painted the bears with intricate designs and attached information cards to share the stories with the children who receive them. I also decorated a presentation box with the Aboriginal flag and gum leaves to symbolise connection to Country.

When I reached out to the Hervey Bay Hospital to donate the bears, I received a warm response. Kim, the Volunteer Services Coordinator, and Julianne, the First Nations Team Manager, were especially moved by the project.

They told me: “This is one of the most special donations they have received”, and noted how the Dreaming stories were presented in a way that young children could engage with.

The Tiddalick the Frog story explains that “Tiddalick the Frog drank all the water from the rivers, the ocean, you name it, leaving the animals thirsty and worried. To save the day, the animals made Tiddalick laugh, and as he laughed, all the water spilled out, refilling the rivers and lakes.”



Tiddalick the Frog design and story by proud Waanyi Garawar and Kaurareg girl and Fraser Coast Anglican College student Ebony in 2024

The Sun Woman story says that “when the world was still forming, there lived a magnificent being known as the Sun Woman. She lights a small fire each morning creating the first light of dawn and decorates herself with red ochre. Some red ochre spills onto the clouds, painting the sky with beautiful red and orange colours, which we see as sunrise.”

The Rainbow Serpent story explains that “the Rainbow Serpent slithers across the land creating rivers, mountains and valleys as she moves. Her colourful scales bring life and water to the earth, making plants grow and animals thrive wherever she goes.”

Reflecting on the experience, my mission was to educate the younger generation and pass down Dreaming stories. Knowing a child in need of comfort might pick up one of the teddies and feel a sense of happiness and inclusivity bring me personal fulfilment and joy.

The entire experience, from designing the bears to meeting with the hospital’s staff, has been a journey of personal growth for me.

[Acts 20.35](#) from the Bible guided me throughout the project: “In everything I did, I showed that by this kind of hard work we must help the weak, remembering the words the Lord Jesus said: ‘It is more blessed to give than to receive.’”

My Make a Difference project exemplifies the values Fraser Coast Anglican College seeks to instill in its students — empathy, service and a commitment to making the world a better place.

My project may have started with a simple teddy bear, but it has grown into something far more significant — a lasting message of love, inclusivity and the importance of cultural connection.

The book I have given away most and why: The Rev'd Sam Sigamani



"The cost of discipleship is a reminder for Christians of Jesus' invitation to follow him," (The Rev'd Sam Sigamani)

I encountered Dietrich Bonhoeffer's life narrative during my initial seminary years at the United Theological College, Bangalore. He became one of my role models in ministry as a pastor and a theologian. Because of Bonhoeffer's exemplary life, which is reflected in his writings, I was pulled to one of his great books, *The Cost of Discipleship*. To me, Bonhoeffer was a pastor, theologian, martyr and a prophet of the last century.

The cost of discipleship is a reminder for Christians of Jesus' invitation to follow him. The book's reflection on "costly grace" and "cheap grace" challenges both individual Christians and churches on how faith is to be practised in social life.

For Bonhoeffer "cheap grace" is adhered to by individual believers and churches who preach forgiveness without requiring repentance for their unjust, unrighteous, and oppressive attitudes and structures. In such situations, "Cheap grace is grace without discipleship, grace without the cross, grace without Jesus Christ, living and incarnate".

Bonhoeffer speaks of "costly grace" as being adhered to by those who respond to the call of Jesus to risk their identities, privilege and supremacy based on race, power, wealth, gender, and so on in order to identify Christ's solidarity with people who are poor, downtrodden and oppressed. As such, costly grace "is the kingly rule of Christ...is the gospel which must be sought again and again...Such grace is costly because it calls us to follow, and it is grace because it calls us to follow Jesus Christ. It is costly because it costs a man [sic] his life, and it is grace because it gives a man [sic] the only true life...Above all, it is costly because it cost God the life of his Son."

This book inspires me because it reminds me that being baptised and ordained does not fulfil or justify my status as a Christ follower. I am called to take up my cross and proclaim Christ's grace, and this costly grace must be lived in my daily discipleship.

Standing up to Adolf Hitler and the Nazi dictatorship, as well as assisting concentration camp prisoners in fleeing, cost Bonhoeffer his life:

"Discipleship means adherence to Christ, and, because Christ is the object of that adherence, it must take the form of discipleship."

Dietrich Bonhoeffer, 1937. *The Cost of Discipleship*. SCM Press, UK.

The Baru Beat • Wednesday 30 October 2024 • By The Rev'd Courtney Smith

"The Bush Ministry Fund is vital to supporting the people and parishes that live on and cultivate this land"



The Rev'd Courtney Smith, from The Parish of Allora-Clifton, standing in front of her favourite eucalyptus tree in October 2024

My introduction to The Parish of Allora-Clifton was a bit more exciting than expected. My husband, Ken, and I were sitting in the home of a parish warden waiting for our "interview" to begin. A second warden finally came in apologetically, stating, "I had to dispatch a red-bellied black before I could leave the barn."

Ummm...excuse me?!

Ken and I shared wide-eyed looks clearly showing our confusion and apprehension, because he continued, "...the snakes have been bad this month — this has to be the fourth or fifth one."

As an American expat, I already believed that all Australian wildlife was trying to kill me, but I hadn't actually seen a snake yet. Allora was as far west as I had ever been in the 14 years I've lived in Australia.

The conversation continued about the snakes, spiders and other creatures around the properties, including the parish rectory that we were hoping to move into. By this point, Ken and I were seriously reconsidering the calling to serve in our Diocese's Western Region!

Thankfully, we persevered despite our fear of snakes and as the story has been retold, the snakes get bigger and meaner! For months, parishioners would go out of their way to tell me stories of the meanest, scariest snakes they've ever seen. I like to think it was the Aussie way of welcoming and accepting me into their fold.

Even though I grew up in a very rural area of the United States, and Allora feels like home to me, I am reminded daily that this is a place like few others. Whether it's the awareness of weather and the real threat of drought, bushfires, or floods; the smell of the gumtrees after a rain; or the beauty of the sunrise over the fields, there is a deep spiritual connection to the land here that is contagious. Ken and I have both fallen in love with the view from our veranda and we take multiple pictures of it during the week.

Wednesday mornings are always an inspiring time for me as I lead a Morning Prayer service at St David's, Allora. Three faithful women parishioners, Mr Darcy the dog and I sit close together, discuss the scripture reading and pray for the world and for our community. Dorothy, Heather and Jean are there most weeks teaching me about love, perseverance and being a good neighbour. One week our reading was [1 Corinthians 13](#) and as I looked over these beautiful women aged in their mid-80s and 90s I realised that I was looking at the kind of love Paul was writing about. Their lives, friendship and faithfulness are love in action. It humbles me and inspires me to follow their example.

The Bush Ministry Fund (BMF) is vital to supporting the people and parishes that live on and cultivate this land. Our parish has been blessed to have the support of The Rev'd Ross Ellwood as my training priest, thanks in large part to the BMF.

The steady presence of Ross and his wife, Val, has been invaluable to my family in our first posting. They're even giving gardening tips to Ken as we attempt to plant our first veggie "crop". Fortunately, I haven't seen any snakes yet, but Mr Darcy and I are careful on our walks and prepared for that first encounter — and, I have my warden and other farmers on speed dial to come help!

The best part is the deep knowledge that these are good and faithful people who will come when their assistant curate needs a hand — even if she is a naïve American transplant!

Editor's note: The 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 helen.briffa@anglicanchurchsq.org.au or by calling 07 4639 1875.

40 years of national women's ordination advocacy to be celebrated at Brisbane conference



“A woman’s place is in the house of bishops”: The Rev’d Jeannette McHugh, The Rev’d Dr Ann Edwards, Archbishop Kay Goldsworthy, journalist Julia Baird, The Rev’d Sandra Kjellgren and The Rev’d Danni Clark at the 40th anniversary conference of Sydney MOW in 2023

Australian and international Christians are set to gather in Brisbane for the 40th anniversary of the national Movement for the Ordination of Women at a conference in November.

Conference committee chair and Rector of St Mark’s, The Gap Ann Edwards said that this conference will bring together women and men who value women’s leadership in the Church and who recognise that there is still much to be done to support them in their roles, whether lay or ordained.

“In many ways, women like me, who lead parishes today, stand on the shoulders of those whose prophetic voices and determination paved the way for women to be accepted and valued in leadership roles in the Church,” The Rev’d Dr Edwards said.

“Founding members, such as Dr Gwenneth Roberts, remember the days when Synod members thought women were best employed fetching the tea and biscuits.

“We’ve come a long way, but there’s always more work to be done.

“We are so pleased that this year three women have been consecrated as bishops in the Anglican Church in Australia.

“Nevertheless, there remain three dioceses in which women cannot be ordained and serve as priests or bishops, and in many cases are not permitted to preach or teach unless supervised by a man.”

The “Lead Like a Woman!” conference will be held from Thursday 28 to Saturday 30 November.

Subsequent conference sessions will be held at St Margaret’s Anglican Girls School in Ascot.

“Lead Like a Woman!” speakers and panellists offer Anglican and ecumenical insights into gender equality and bullying and violence against women in the Church.

President of the Movement for the Ordination of Women (MOW) Elaine Lindsay said that the conference will be particularly helpful for those who feel unsupported, isolated or ignored.

“We particularly encourage younger women and men — the next generation of leaders — to learn from the history of MOW and to support its ongoing work.

“Conservative forces are relentless in pushing to restrict the full participation of women in the Church and we are already seeing in some dioceses how easily the progress we have made over 40 years can be undermined,” Dr Lindsay said.

“Our speakers are outstanding people like Marg Mowczko, Tracy McEwan, Miryam Clough and Colleen O’Reilly.

“We encourage everyone who believes that the ministry of women is a Gospel imperative to join us for some or all of this very special conference.”

Speakers and panellists will also address the cultural, theological and organisational barriers women face as they seek to move into senior Church leadership positions.

In coming together, participants will witness their commitment to furthering the ministry of women and their willingness to call out violence and oppression, while hearing a diversity of voices and celebrating all that MOW has achieved.

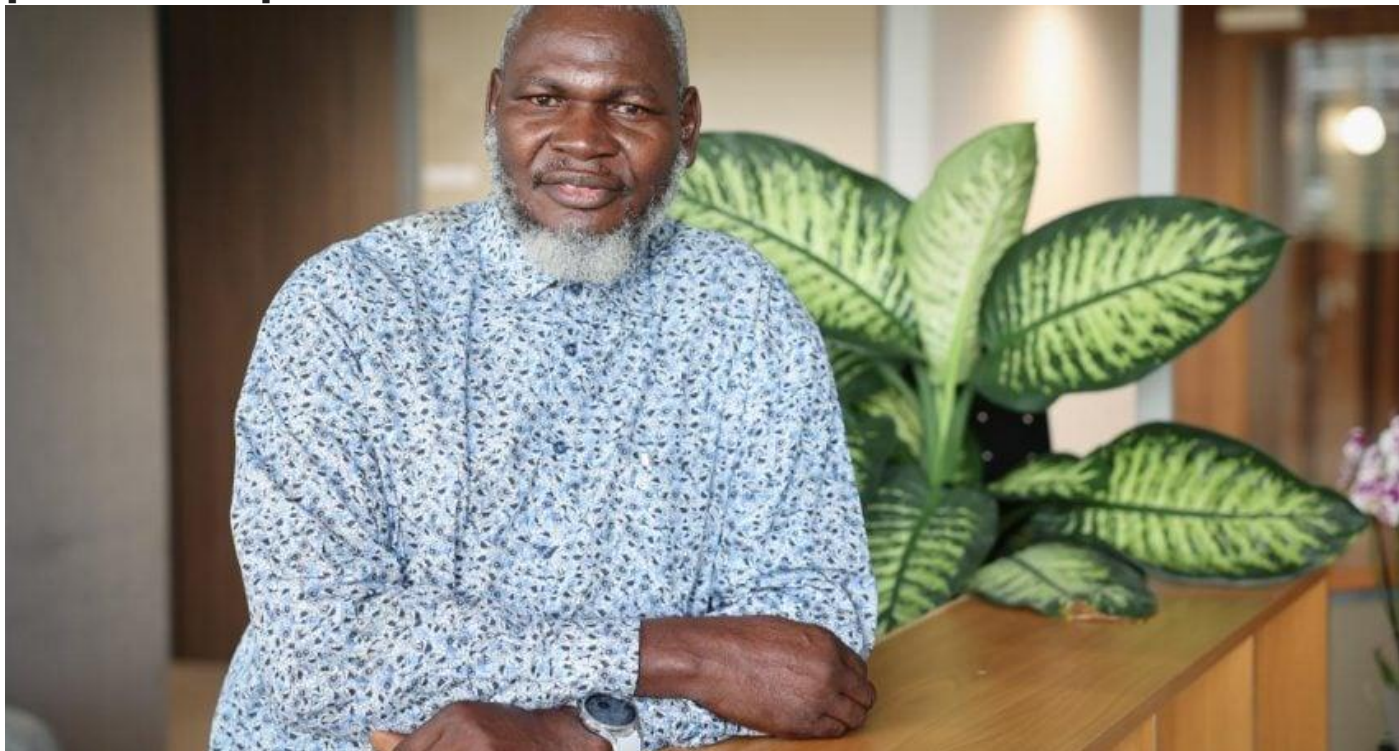
The conference will commence with a dinner and eucharist at St John’s Cathedral on the Thursday evening.

Bishop Sarah Plowman will preside at the eucharist and The Rev’d Aunty Di Langham will preach.

For more information or to register for the conference, visit the [Lead Like a Woman!](#) conference website.

Editor’s note: Please [register](#) for the “Lead Like a Woman!” conference by 5pm Friday 15 November. For registration options, please visit the conference [website](#). Attendance at the Thursday 28 November opening dinner and Eucharist is free of charge; however, [registrations](#) are essential for catering purposes.

WCC's peace-building work in Africa deepens in partnership with member churches



The Rev'd Dr Ibrahim Wushishi Yusuf, World Council of Churches programme executive for Peacebuilding in Africa (Photo: Ivars Kupcis/WCC)

Rev. Dr Ibrahim Wushishi Yusuf, World Council of Churches programme executive for Peacebuilding in Africa and coordinator of the WCC Africa Regional Programme Office in Abuja, Nigeria, took time to reflect on the focus for peace-building work in Africa in 2025, and why inter-religious dialogue is so important.

Would you please describe your current work in Abuja?

Rev. Dr Yusuf: To strengthen its peacebuilding work in Africa, WCC leadership decided to relocate the regional programme office from Geneva, Switzerland to Abuja, Nigeria. The relocation of the office took place in the first quarter of the year 2024. Since then, the WCC Regional Office in Abuja has been committed to providing the necessary mobilization and creating awareness on recent development among the member churches; it provides ecumenical accompaniment and support to member churches advocating for a nonviolent approach, promotion of social justice, and the transformation of structures that generate violent conflicts in the region.

The Africa regional programme office in Abuja, among other things, coordinates WCC peace-building in Africa with the goal of supporting and accompanying member churches and church-related institutions. The office also strengthens ecumenical collaboration with regional and sub-regional ecumenical organizations, ecumenical partners, specialised ministries, and other relevant stakeholders in the promotion of justice, reconciliation, peace and Unity in Africa. The Abuja programme office has been supporting and strengthening the capacity of member churches to be

voices for peace and stability in the region and to provide supports to other WCC programmes within the region.

As the program executive for peacebuilding and the coordinator for the African office, I have visited some member churches in Nigeria, Sudan, South Sudan, Ethiopia, and Ghana. I have also visited subregional ecumenical organizations and national councils in the region advocating for collaboration and solidarity with communities that have been suffering violent conflict in the continent. I am happy to inform you that the reception has been so amazing and well appreciated by the member churches and other stakeholders in the region.

What are your priorities and what is your focus as we approach 2025?

Rev. Dr Yusuf: As we approach 2025, the WCC Africa Regional programme Office is prioritising deepening engagement in peace-building work across Africa, focusing on supporting member churches in addressing the root causes of conflict and fostering justice, reconciliation, and unity through ecumenical collaboration and inter-religious dialogue.

The office will work closely with the member churches, national councils, and subregional and regional ecumenical bodies to promote justice, peace, and human dignity, especially in areas affected by protracted violent conflict such as South Sudan, Sudan, Nigeria, Ethiopia, and the Democratic Republic of Congo.

Also, the office will serve as a convener and facilitating intra-faith and interfaith dialogue among religious leaders to mediate conflicts and promote healing in divided communities and to support grassroots peace initiatives, advocating for the inclusion of women and youth in peace-building processes, recognizing their critical role in sustaining long-term peace.

Additionally, the office will deepen its advocacy for justice and human rights, expanding the role of women and youth in peace processes, and investing in capacity-building and leadership development programs and climate-related conflict.

What are the highlights so far in the peace-building work in the Africa region?

Rev. Dr Yusuf: The World Council of Churches has continued to be actively involved in peace-building efforts across Africa, addressing the root causes of conflicts and fostering reconciliation through its extensive network of member churches with a focus on the conflict-affected nations of South Sudan, Sudan, Ethiopia, Nigeria, and Cameroon.

In South Sudan, the WCC as a member of the Ecumenical Network for South Sudan has continued accompany the South Sudan Council of Churches and churches in their work for justice, reconciliation, and unity in the context of communal and ethnic conflict. Their work also involves engaging women and youth in supporting peace and reconciliation processes. Through the South Sudan Council of Churches, an ecumenical platform, the WCC is supporting the implementation of the Action Plan for Peace, which includes psycho-social support (trauma healing sessions) with violent conflict survivors, advocacy for justice, and the pursuit of peace at both national and grassroots levels.

In September 2024, the WCC, together with the Ecumenical Network on South Sudan Africa Hub, embarked on an ecumenical solidarity visit to Juba in the face of political transitional uncertainty and to support the South Sudan Council of Churches and churches in the ongoing ecumenical transition in

the council. The visit reinforced the commitment of WCC to support and accompany the South Sudan Council of Churches and the churches in the current challenges and provide pastoral accompaniment

In Sudan, the WCC's peace-building efforts have focused on supporting the churches' engagement in the country's political transitions. Since 2023, the WCC has collaborated with the regional and subregional ecumenical organizations and Sudanese churches to advocate for a peaceful resolution to the conflicts in Darfur, South Kordofan, Blue Nile, and other regions of the country. The WCC's work in Sudan also involves strengthening interfaith relations and supporting human rights advocacy, particularly through the Sudan Ecumenical Forum, a WCC-led initiative aimed at fostering peace and promoting justice through church cooperation.

In April 2024, the WCC organized an ecumenical solidarity visit to Port Sudan led by WCC general secretary Rev. Prof. Dr Jerry Pillay to provide pastoral support and accompaniment, to enhance ecumenical solidarity, and pray for the churches and people of Sudan who are devastated by the ongoing war. The visit had in participation the regional and subregional ecumenical organizations, ACT Alliance, General Board of Global Ministries, and other ecumenical partners and specialised ministries.

In Ethiopia, the WCC has been involved in addressing the tensions that have risen from the conflict in the Tigray, Amhara, Oromia and other regions of the country. The WCC African region has continued to facilitate and support the joint initiatives of the three main churches—the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, Ethiopian Lutheran Church, and Ethiopian Catholic Church on their joint initiatives including the proposed Ethiopian Christian Council formation. The WCC seeks to encourage dialogue, reconciliation, and humanitarian assistance to those affected by the conflict.

In Nigeria and Cameroon, the WCC's focus has been on mitigating the impact of insurgencies, kidnapping, and ethnic conflicts, particularly in areas affected by Boko Haram and other extremist groups and the environmental pollution in the Ogoni region. The WCC works closely with the churches in these regions to advocate for peace, protect human rights, and provide support to displaced populations. In Nigeria, through the regional office in Abuja, we are strengthening support to the WCC-supported interfaith centre in Kaduna with strong collaboration with other interfaith initiatives in Nigeria to promote interfaith relations for peace, bringing together Christian and Muslim leaders to foster cooperation and address the root causes of religious and ethnic tensions.

Similarly, in Cameroon, the WCC has backed peace initiatives in the Anglophone regions, encouraging dialogue between separatists and the government while emphasizing the need for humanitarian aid and reconciliation efforts. Through these diverse efforts, the WCC contributes to sustainable peace and justice in some of Africa's most conflict-prone regions.

What is the role of inter-religious dialogue in achieving mutual understanding and peace in the conflict areas in Africa?

Rev. Dr Yusuf: Inter-religious dialogue plays a vital role in fostering mutual understanding and peace in conflict affected areas across Africa where religious differences often intersect with political, ethnic, and social tensions. By bringing together leaders and communities from diverse religious backgrounds. Inter-religious dialogue creates a platform for shared values such as peace, justice, and human dignity to emerge as common goals. In regions where religion has been manipulated to fuel conflict, dialogue between faith groups helps to break down misconceptions and stereotypes, encouraging respect for diversity. This approach has proven vital in countries like Nigeria and the

Central African Republic, where religious and ethnic divides have often driven violence. Through dialogue, faith communities can become partners in peace-building rather than adversaries.

In conflict areas, inter-religious dialogue also facilitates trust-building and reconciliation, which are essential for long-term peace. Religious leaders often hold significant influence over their communities, and their involvement in peace processes can lead to more sustainable outcomes. By engaging in honest conversations about grievances and aspirations, religious leaders from different traditions help mediate conflicts and foster forgiveness. This was evident in South Sudan, where Christian and Muslim leaders, through ecumenical and interfaith platforms, played a vital role in advocating for peace and reconciliation among warring parties.

Moreover, inter-religious dialogue strengthens community resilience by encouraging collaboration on social issues that transcend religious divisions, such as poverty, education, and healthcare. When religious groups work together to address these common concerns, they create a foundation for peace that is rooted in mutual benefit and collective progress. In conflict areas such as Nigeria, interfaith cooperation has led to joint peace initiatives as seen in the case of the WCC supported interfaith centre in Kaduna, humanitarian efforts, and advocacy for justice, given the fact that dialogue not only reduces tensions but also contributes to rebuilding fractured societies. Thus, inter-religious dialogue is a powerful tool in transforming conflict into an opportunity for collaboration, understanding, and enduring peace.

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