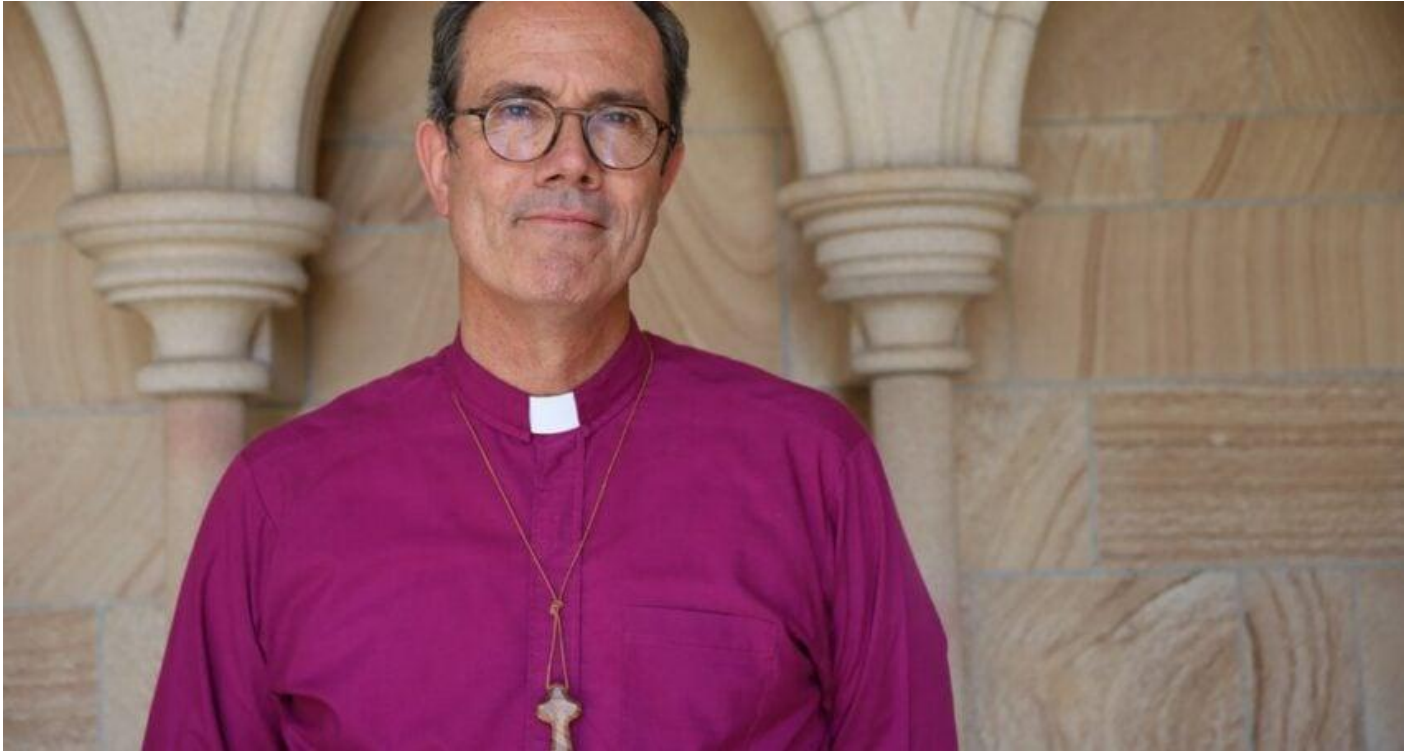


"Western Region parishes have a long history of innovation in ministry"



When I began the great privilege of serving as a bishop in 2014 there were 33 parishes in the Western Region — 33 parishes with 92 churches, in a land area of about 495,000 square kilometres.

Eleven of these parishes had no priest, and had no way of affording a priest, so in these parishes worship, pastoral care and community outreach were run by volunteers.

This continues 12 years later, but we are all 12 years older. In a few of these parishes it is hard — or impossible — to find people able to serve as wardens and treasurers, so we have had to develop other ways to enable these functions.

When I started, a further 11 parishes were able to pay for a partial priest stipend, so they had communion most weeks; however, 12 years later a good number of retired priests, who have faithfully served in part-time roles, are no longer able to do this and have moved from a Permission to Officiate (PTO) licence to an Archbishop's Certificate.

The remaining 11 parishes in 2014 were able to pay for at least one full stipend, but 12 years later the number of clergy available to serve has greatly declined. There are currently four parishes seeking full-time incumbents in the West — Dalby, Roma, St James' in Toowoomba, and St George. If any clergy would like to discuss a possible call to any of these parishes, please let your Regional Bishop know and then give me a call.

In 2014 I arrived in the Western Region in the middle of a long drought, and I saw first-hand what a blessing it is to have trained clergy living in community — praying, gathering, visiting, encouraging, teaching and simply being present.

And the truth of that has stayed with me.

At a national bishops meeting eight years ago it was acknowledged that there are significant challenges for Anglican ministry in rural and remote communities around Australia. I was asked to lead a group of eight bishops to survey the National Church about rural and remote ministry — this was the first time this had been done.

Four of the bishops identified as Evangelical and four as Anglo-Catholic, so it was perhaps a “comprehensive” survey. Each bishop was engaged in providing and overseeing ministry in rural and remote contexts. Together we constructed a survey — I will share some questions here that emerged from the data, which I think are helpful for us.

Of the 1331 parishes in Australia, 414 were identified by their Dioceses in 2019 to be in a rural or remote context.

This is a stunning insight: 31.15 per cent, or just under one third, of all Anglican Australian parishes are in a rural or remote ministry context. It is stunning because 89.55 per cent of the Australian population is identified by the Australian Bureau of Statistics as living in an urban area.

This means almost one third of Australia’s Anglican parish structure serves one tenth of its population.

This provokes, at least, the following questions:

- Does our current number of parishes help or hinder us in ministry?
- What alternatives are there to a traditional parish model?

Before leaping to quick solutions, it’s worth noting that unlike parishes in urban settings where there is often one church with multiple congregations, rural and remote parishes usually have multiple church centres, and the distances between these can be hundreds of kilometres.

In the survey we asked: how is ordained leadership financially supported and sustained? And, there was a great variety of response to this question, which included locally generated funds and funding through external partnerships.

We asked: how is sacramental ministry provided? And again, there was a great variety of responses to this question.

Last year’s initiative of the Archbishop to authorise a service of extended communion for congregations without a priest has been greatly welcomed — but there is an ongoing need for training and resourcing those who lead these services.

In the survey we asked: how are people recruited, trained, supported and supervised in rural ministry? And: how is lay ministry leadership encouraged and enabled?

We asked: how are digital technologies being used in rural and remote ministry, and how child safety compliance, work health and safety compliance, and building maintenance are enabled?

We asked: what theological and ministry training is being used? And: whether there are collaborative approaches between Dioceses within a Province or of churches working ecumenically?

Western Region parishes have a long history of innovation in ministry. Before there were parishes in the West, [Bush Brothers](#) would travel to rural and remote communities and homesteads to take services, baptise, marry and bury. Churches were built and in some western churches the little bedroom at the back, where Bush Brothers used to sleep, remains. The Bush Brothers were largely paid for externally from England — though meals and accommodation were provided locally.

The rural economy thrived. Parish churches were paid for on the back of the wool boom, and let's not leave it at sheep! We've also got cattle, chickens, goats, horses, camels, wheat, sorghum, maize, chickpeas, sun flowers, wine and cotton.

Important, also, to remember that in the West we also have oil and gas and various forms of mining.

However, there are many less people needed to sustain agriculture and oil and gas work, than were needed years ago.

For example, when St Paul's Church was built in Talwood — as a memorial after World War II — there were 120 people working on the nearby Talwood station. Now there are six. And when Quilpie celebrated its Centenary as a town in 2017, the mayor explained that 50 per cent of the population had left the district over the previous 20 years. These are significant demographic changes.



"In 2014 I arrived in the Western Region in the middle of a long drought, and I saw first-hand what a blessing it is to have trained clergy living in community — praying, gathering, visiting, encouraging, teaching and simply being present," says Bishop Cam Venables (Image of Quilpie taken by Bishop Cam in 2018)

In our Diocese, over the last 12 years we have adapted and tried different models in the Western Region, including Mission Areas, Mission Districts, ecumenical covenants and MOUs, visiting ministry teams and Parish Partnerships.

It would be helpful to review what we've done and what we're doing in the Western Region — to recognise effective initiatives and models in other places and learn from them — and, in God's grace to recognise new missional opportunities.

While this is the main purpose of the motion that Archdeacon Lizzie and I put forward at our [Diocesan Synod](#) in June, it's also helpful to engage our whole Diocese in both [rural](#) and remote ministry. That's why we want to come back to next year's Synod with some clear recommendations.

Editor's note: The following motion, moved by Bishop Cam Venables and seconded by Archdeacon Lizzie Gaitskell, was carried at our recent Diocesan [Synod](#), which was held at Churchie on 25-26 June 2026.

The need for priestly ministry in rural and remote parishes of Western Region

That this Synod:

1. acknowledges and gives thanks for the faithful ministry of clergy and lay leaders in the life of rural and remote parishes of this diocese;
2. gives thanks for the work of the Bush Ministry Fund in financially supporting rural ministry in this Diocese, and for enabling partnership between rural Parishes, urban Parishes, and schools within ACSQ;
3. notes with concern the number of parishes in the Western Region without a priest;
4. acknowledges that this issue is not unique to our region, but is also a reality for other regions within our diocese, and in other parts of Australia;
5. requests that a working group be established to:
 - a) explore the complexity and extent of the problem;
 - b) learn lessons from past and present practices of Anglican ministry that have served rural and remote Australia (in this Diocese and more widely);
 - c) identify new models of ministry for rural communities;
 - d) explore pathways that would enable clergy to better consider God calling them to rural ministry;
6. requests that a report on the findings of the working group, with recommendations, be presented to Synod in 2027.

Bishop Daniel Abot returns home to Toowoomba from the UK with prestigious Lambeth Award: “At first I thought the award was a hoax”



Bishop Daniel Abot being congratulated by fellow Toowoomba local Bishop Cam Venables after receiving the prestigious Cross of St Augustine from the Archbishop of Canterbury on 11 September 2026 at Lambeth Palace, London (Image supplied)

Australian South Sudanese Anglican bishop Daniel Abot has returned home to Toowoomba from London with a prestigious award, which was presented by the Archbishop of Canterbury, after initially believing notification of the accolade was a hoax.

Bishop Daniel Abot was recently awarded The Cross of St Augustine for Services to the Anglican Communion by the Archbishop of Canterbury, The Most Rev'd and Rt Hon Dame Sarah Mullally DBE, at Lambeth Palace in London.

He received the award for his groundbreaking unpaid peace work in South Sudan over eight years and for his continuing ministry to South Sudanese and Sudanese diaspora communities in Australia and internationally.

Bishop Daniel Abot said that when he was notified about the award via an email from the Archbishop of Canterbury's office he assumed the email was a hoax and sought help from his manager.

“This was an unexpected honour — when I first received the email from Lambeth Palace saying that I was a recipient of The Cross of St Augustine I thought the email was a scam or hoax because the sender knew too much about my family and me,” Bishop Daniel said.

"After I received the email I met with Bishop Cam Venables, who also lives in Toowoomba, and said, 'Bishop Cam, I've been scammed terribly and I think I need to change my email address.'

"After he read the email Bishop Cam laughed, assured me the email was genuine and congratulated me, explaining that the award is very highly regarded.

"I found out soon later that Archbishop Jeremy Greaves, our leader, nominated me for the award.

"When my name was called at the ceremony and I walked toward Archbishop Sarah Mullally, my wife Rachel came into my heart because she cared for our family while I was away for many years and accepted the risk of becoming a single mother to our seven children if I was harmed.

"I also thought of Darling Downs people who have supported me, especially Bishop Cam Venables, The Rev'd Adam Lowe and the St Bart's, Toowoomba community and friends, who cared for Rachel financially and pastorally while I was serving in South Sudan for eight years.



Bishop Anthony Poggio (Secretary General of the Anglican Communion), The Most Rev'd and Rt Hon Dame Sarah Mullally DBE (the Archbishop of Canterbury), Bishop Daniel Abot and Rachel Jimma (Bishop Daniel's wife) at Lambeth Palace in London after Bishop Daniel received The Cross of St Augustine on 11 September 2026 (Image by Lambeth Palace)

Former refugee and "Lost Boy of Sudan" Daniel Abot was this year one of four Anglicans who received The Cross of St Augustine, which was the highest Lambeth Award presented at the 2026 ceremony.

Bishop Daniel's Lambeth Award citation said that he was awarded The Cross of St Augustine after he left his Queensland Government job in 2014 to serve as an honorary bishop in South Sudan, where he worked with the United Nations in often dangerous conditions.

“Daniel served as the Bishop of Duk for eight years in an unpaid capacity — often sleeping in the bush — while serving over 60,000 internally displaced people and refugees,” the citation said.

“While undertaking peace-making work alongside the United Nations, Daniel rescued infants following massacres; protected children from being trafficked and from child marriages; helped with planning guesthouses to generate revenue; led clergy development; facilitated health and nutrition initiatives; and, risked his life to accompany aid trucks to conflict zones.”

“Daniel now serves as the Ethnic Congregations Specialist in the Anglican Church Southern Queensland, ministering to culturally diverse communities.

“He also serves the wider South Sudanese and Sudanese diaspora internationally as a mediator and pastoral leader, visiting South Sudan during times of renewed violence and famine to assist with peace-making and relief efforts.

“Daniel is beloved for his prayerfulness, gentleness, servant leadership, integrity and courage.”

During the Second Sudanese Civil War in 1986 12-year-old Daniel fled 1,000 miles on foot to Ethiopia and then to Kenya in 1992.

He spent 15 years in refugee camps, meeting his wife, Rachel Jimma, in Kenya’s Kakuma Refugee Camp where he was ordained a priest.

Daniel and Rachel moved to Toowoomba with their first three children in 2003.

Archbishop of Brisbane and Metropolitan of the Province of Queensland Jeremy Greaves said that he nominated Bishop Daniel for the award because of the bravery he and Rachel have shown.

“I am delighted that Bishop Daniel’s work has been recognised in this way because Daniel is a person of resolute faith, whose love for God is evident in all of the work he has done over many years, and a man of grace and humility,” Archbishop Jeremy said.

“He is softly spoken and despite everything — the long hours, the travel, the heartbreak — he has a smile that can melt even the hardest heart.

“His work as an international reconciler and peacemaker has been undertaken quietly and without regard for himself, so I was unsurprised to hear that when Daniel first heard about the award that he thought it was a ‘hoax’, rather than something he deserved.

“Rachel’s courage has sustained Daniel in his efforts — she took on extra work to pay the mortgage so that Daniel was free to do the work he felt called to do in South Sudan.”



Bishop Daniel Abot on a United Nations peacekeeping mission in South Sudan (Image supplied)

This year's Lambeth Awards were [the first](#) to be presented by Dame Sarah Mullally, the first woman Archbishop of Canterbury, after she formally took office as the 106th Archbishop of Canterbury in March.

The Archbishop of Canterbury, who presented the Lambeth Awards on 11 September, said that the awards recognise people who bring hope, compassion and justice against all odds.

"The Lambeth Awards are an uplifting testament to the inspiring work being done across the Church of England and the Anglican Communion, by theologians and scholars, and by peacemakers and community advocates beyond the Church," Dame Sarah said.

"It is such a privilege to meet some of these individuals who have gone above and beyond in their fields, responding to the call to show compassion to our neighbours in the pursuit of a more just world.

"Each recipient of an award demonstrates love in action, bringing healing and hope to communities."



The Archbishop of Canterbury, The Most Rev'd and Rt Hon Dame Sarah Mullally DBE, presenting Bishop Daniel Abot with The Cross of St Augustine at Lambeth Palace in London on 11 September 2026 (Image by Lambeth Palace)

The Archbishop of Canterbury is the [ceremonial head](#) of approximately 85 million Anglicans spread across 42 autonomous Churches, known as Provinces, in more than 165 countries.

Archbishops of Canterbury have long recognised Anglicans and other individuals for outstanding contributions to the Anglican Church and wider society.

The current form of the [Lambeth Awards](#) was developed in 2016.

[The Cross of St Augustine](#) was founded in 1965 by the 100th Archbishop of Canterbury, Michael Ramsey.

Named after the sixth-century Benedictine monk and the first Archbishop of Canterbury, [St Augustine](#), it is a circular medallion bearing a replica of the ninth-century Cross of Canterbury and decorated with blue enamel.



First awarded in 1965, The Cross of St Augustine is a circular medallion bearing a replica of the ninth-century Cross of Canterbury and infilled with blue enamel (Image by Lambeth Palace)

The Cross of St Augustine is the second highest international award within Anglicanism after the Archbishop of Canterbury's Award for Outstanding Service to the Anglican Communion, which has only been awarded twice.

South African Anglican Archbishop and anti-apartheid human rights activist Desmond Tutu was the first recipient of the Archbishop of Canterbury's Award, which he received in 1996.

Other Lambeth Awards recipients have included Her Late Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, who received the Canterbury Cross for service to the Church of England in 2022, and Pope Francis, who was presented with the Lambeth Cross for Ecumenism in 2023.

National • Tuesday 13 October 2026 • By Matthew Nicholls

Anglicare Southern Queensland wins national recognition for specialist dementia care



Anglicare Southern Queensland's Kane Singh (Chief Operating Officer, Aged and Community Services) and Belinda von Bibra (Group Manager, Home and Community) with the Future of Ageing Award for Neurological Care, which was received by Anglicare Southern Queensland in Sydney on 8 October 2026 (Image supplied)

Anglicare Southern Queensland has won the Future of Ageing Award for Neurological Care, recognising its innovative approach to supporting people living with severe dementia who have complex care needs.

Presented by Inside Ageing in Sydney on 8 October, the award celebrates the impact of Anglicare's Specialist Dementia Care Program (SDCP), supported by the Commonwealth Department of Health, Disability and Ageing, which provides highly specialised, person-centred residential care for people whose needs cannot be safely supported in mainstream aged care.

Since opening its first unit at St Martin's Residential Aged Care Home in 2020, Anglicare has expanded the program to three locations across South East Queensland, with a fourth unit planned for Symes Thorpe Residential Aged Care Home in Toowoomba.

Anglicare Southern Queensland Chief Operating Officer of Aged and Community Services, Kane Singh, said the award recognised the profound difference specialist dementia care can make to people's lives.

"This award is a powerful recognition of what can happen when we put the person first and give people living with complex dementia the specialised care, environment and support they need to thrive," Mr Singh said.

"Behind this achievement are dedicated teams who work tirelessly to understand each resident as an individual, support their wellbeing and help them reconnect with everyday life.

"We're incredibly proud of what our teams have achieved, and we're committed to extending this model of care so more people and families can access the specialist support they need."

The program is delivering measurable results. Across Anglicare's three existing units, 34 residents have successfully transitioned from specialist care back into mainstream residential aged care, with no readmissions within 12 weeks of transition.

The model combines 24-hour specialist nursing, personalised behaviour support, access to geriatricians and allied health professionals, and small, secure, dementia-friendly environments designed to reduce distress and improve quality of life.

It also supports a more personalised approach to treatment, with the program reporting significant reductions in the use of psychotropic medication through tailored therapeutic interventions and specialised clinical support.

For residents and their families, the impact can be life-changing — from improved mood and appetite to renewed routines, greater engagement and the ability to enjoy simple pleasures such as spending time outdoors.

The planned fourth unit in Toowoomba will build on this work, responding to growing demand for specialist dementia services and extending access to the program.

Mr Singh said the award recognition belonged to the people delivering and shaping the service every day.

"This is about more than an award. It's about dignity, quality of life and making sure people with the most complex dementia care needs are not left without the right support," he said.

"We thank our staff, residents, families and clinical partners for helping make this program what it is today."

Banners unfurled at places of worship nationwide as Australian faith leaders stand in solidarity with Pacific Church leaders during Pre-COP



Archbishop Jeremy Greaves, who gathered with fellow inter-faith leaders outside St John's Cathedral on 6 October 2026, said Australian political leaders have a special obligation given Australia's proximity to the Pacific Islands and its unique COP31 role (Image by anglican focus)

Australian faith leaders have unfurled banners at places of worship across the country, including at Brisbane's St John's Anglican Cathedral, advocating for Pacific neighbours and a just transition to renewables as the Pacific Pre-COP continues.

The banner gatherings were held yesterday to show solidarity with Pacific Church leaders after they introduced a [statement](#) at the official opening service of the [Pre-COP ministerial meetings](#), which are being held in Fiji.

"Dear political leaders, COP 31 delegates, this is our true story. We are sinking. We are vulnerable. Resilience is no longer enough," the statement said.

"For far too long, the powerful of this world have comforted their consciences by romanticising our endurance.

"Global media and international summits praise Pacific islanders for being 'strong', 'smiling', and 'resilient'.

"But when you praise our resilience while continuing to expand fossil fuels, that praise becomes a cloak for inaction."

“...we appeal to the global leaders and polluting industries: Do not stand at the foot of our suffering and admire us for how bravely we carry the cross of climate change.

“Help us take this cross down!”

The Pacific Church leaders list four key demands in their statement, including radical emissions reductions; accountability for loss and damage; direct grant-based climate finance; and, subsidiarity and inclusive governance.

The St John’s Cathedral banner, which read “Love our Pacific neighbours: Fossil Fuel Treaty now”, was unfurled with the support of Anglican, Catholic, Uniting Church, Buddhist and First Nation leaders.

Archbishop Jeremy Greaves, who gathered with fellow inter-faith leaders outside the Cathedral, said Australian political leaders have a special obligation given Australia’s proximity to the Pacific Islands and its unique COP31 role.

“The prime minister has spoken of Australia as a proud member of the Pacific family, and of Australia’s role as a partner and leader in the region — he has also said that there is no avoiding the scale of our responsibility, or the cost of inaction, on climate change,” Archbishop Jeremy said.

“Those are important words, but leadership also means being prepared to face reality when the facts demand difficult choices.

“Our Pacific neighbours are asking Australia to phase out fossil fuels.

“Australia is also playing a leading role in the global climate negotiations as President of Negotiations for COP31.

“If fossil-fuel phase-out is not on the agenda, why isn’t it?”

At the Pacific Pre-COP Prime Minister Anthony Albanese is joining approximately 4,000 delegates from more than 50 countries in Fiji.

The Pre-COP meetings will lay the foundations for negotiations at this year’s [COP31](#), which will be held in Antalya, Türkiye, between 9 and 20 November.

Yesterday’s banner solidarity gatherings were held in Brisbane, Cairns, Newcastle, Sydney, Melbourne, Adelaide and Perth.

The gatherings were coordinated by the [Australian Religious Response to Climate Change](#) (ARRCC), which is a multi-faith member organisation committed to reversing climate change.



Archbishop Jeremy Greaves joined faith leaders, including Ven. Lozang Tsultrim (Carla Pearse) from the Chenrezig Institute, Aunty Sandra King from the Anglican Church Southern Queensland and Cheryl Dugan from the Laudato Si' Movement at a St John's Anglican Cathedral banner unfurling on 6 October 2026 in solidarity with Pacific leaders during the Pre-COP (Image by *anglican focus*)

Executive Director of ARRC and ordained Buddhist Tejopala Rawls said that Australians need to reflect on the obligations that Australia's political leaders carry.

"Australians know something about what it feels like to live with insecurity from a changing climate — we have seen bushfires, floods and heatwaves disrupt homes, communities and livelihood," Mr Rawls said.

"In Buddhism, waking up means seeing clearly what is actually happening, rather than clinging to the world as we would like it to be — we are being asked to do that now.

"The reality facing our Pacific neighbours has changed.

"Australia needs to wake up to that reality and ask what responsible leadership requires of us now — and have the courage to act on what we see."

Eighty Australian faith leaders issued their own [challenge to the prime minister](#) in support of Pacific Church leaders via an open letter organised by ARRC.

"Australia has a particular responsibility in this global challenge," the open letter said.

"We are one of the world's biggest exporters of coal and gas.

"The decisions we make about fossil fuels therefore have consequences well beyond our own borders, including for our Pacific neighbours.

“Australia has an opportunity to work with Pacific nations and other countries to bring this conversation to the centre of COP31 — and to help build international cooperation around how a fair and orderly transition can actually be achieved.”

The Anglican leaders who signed the open letter include The Rev’d Uncle Ray Minniecon (Glebe), Archbishop Jeremy Greaves (Brisbane), Bishop Keith Joseph (North Queensland), Bishop Murray Harvey (Grafton), Bishop Peter Stuart (Newcastle), Bishop Kate Prowd (Melbourne), Bishop Hans Christiansen (Perth), The Very Rev’d Dr Andreas Loewe (Melbourne), Bishop Philip Huggins (Episcopal Adviser on Peacebuilding, Melbourne), and Jo Knight (CEO, Anglican Overseas Aid).

Australian Anglican leaders are collaborating increasingly with inter-faith leaders in a joint call for the federal government to take action that effectively reverses damage to the climate.

President of the Islamic Council of Victoria Mohamed Mohideen OAM said that it is incumbent upon Muslims and all people of faith to assist our Pacific neighbours.

“In Islam, we are taught that human beings are entrusted with the care of Allah’s creations,” Dr Mohideen said.

“We are not owners of the Earth to do with as we please; we are trustees with a responsibility to protect what has been entrusted to us.

“The Qur’an calls us to justice, to avoid causing harm and to remember our responsibility to those who come after us — that responsibility does not stop at national borders.”

“When our Pacific neighbours are telling us that their homes, communities and futures are being threatened, people of faith have a responsibility to listen and to act.

“We need leadership that puts justice, compassion and the protection of creation into practice.”



Inter-faith leaders and their communities are collaborating increasingly in a joint call for the federal government to take action that effectively reverses damage to the climate, including in Cairns as people of faith gathered outside the Guru Nanak Sikh Temple on 6 October 2026 in solidarity with Pacific Church leaders during the Pacific Pre-COP (Image by ARRCC)

President of the Uniting Church in Australia Assembly Charissa Suli, who is based in Sydney, called upon the prime minister to be more accountable to future generations.

“Prime Minister, you have spoken about Australia being part of the Pacific family and about standing alongside our Pacific neighbours,” The Rev’d Charissa said.

“Being a good neighbour means more than words — it means listening, accompanying one another, and being prepared to act on what we hear.

“Pacific Church leaders have been clear about the urgency of the climate crisis and the need for a just transition away from fossil fuels.

“As Australia assumes the role of President of Negotiations for COP31, we have a responsibility to listen carefully to Pacific leadership and to carry those priorities into Australia’s leadership of the negotiations.

“For me, this is ultimately about what it means to love our Pacific neighbours.

“Love is expressed through action and accountability.

“It also means respecting the dignity, leadership and self-determination of Pacific peoples as we work together for the generations who come after us.”



Inter-faith leaders gathered outside St Michael's Uniting Church in Melbourne on 6 October 2026 in solidarity with Pacific Church leaders during the Pacific Pre-COP as part of a nationwide banner unfurling initiative organised by the Australian Religious Response to Climate Change (Image by ARRCC)

The [Conference of the Parties](#) (COP) is the chief decision-making body of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).

All states that are parties to the UNFCCC are represented at the annual COP global climate summit, the first of which was held in Berlin in 1995.

At COP30 in Brazil last year, Australia secured the role of COP31 President of Negotiations, as well as an agreement for a Pacific-hosted Pre-COP, including ministerial meetings and a leaders' event.

The Pre-COP is being co-hosted by Fiji and Australia on 5 to 8 October, with a leaders' event hosted on the low-lying atoll of Tuvalu on 5 to 6 October.

This week's Pre-COP will be [Prime Minister Anthony Albanese's](#) fourth official visit to Fiji and first official visit to Tuvalu.

During National Reconciliation Week last year Archbishop Jeremy Greaves co-signed an [open letter](#) with Torres Strait 8 spokesperson Yessie Mosby calling for the prime minister to “Say ‘yes’ to Yessie” and visit him on Masig island to witness the impacts of climate change.

The letter, which was endorsed by Queensland inter-faith leaders, was sent by Archbishop Jeremy and Mr Mosby after Mr Mosby [invited](#) Mr Albanese to Masig “several times”.

Prime Minister Albanese is yet to visit Masig.

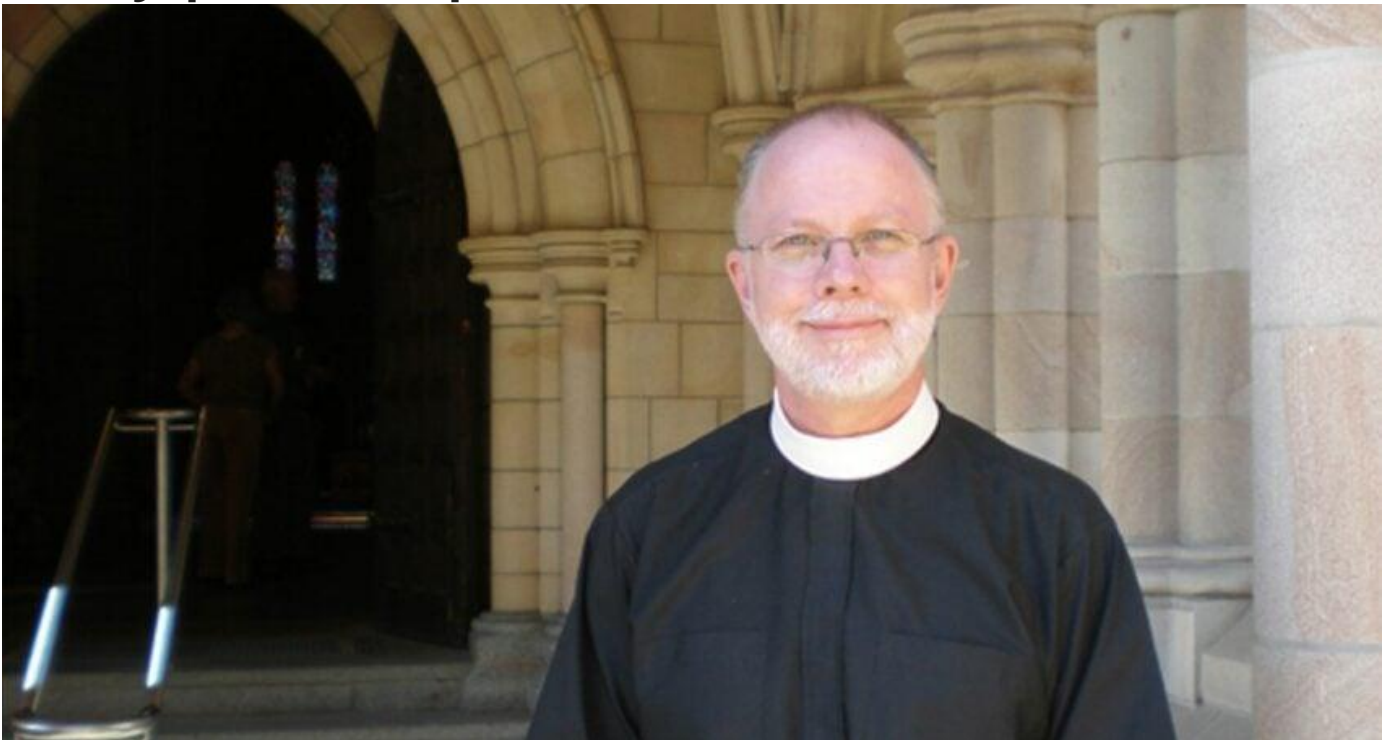
Justice Unit note: Here are five things you can do to help:

1. [Sign](#) a “Faiths for a fossil-free future” letter.
2. [Join](#) the Fossil Fuel Treaty campaign and find out how to get involved.
3. [Follow](#) ARRCC on social media to stay up to date.
4. [Join](#) ARRCC as an individual or organisational member.
5. [Write](#) to Prime Minister Anthony Albanese asking him to “[Say ‘yes’ to Yessie](#)” by visiting Torres Strait 8 spokesperson Yessie Mosby on Masig to witness the impacts of climate change on Australia’s Torres Strait Islands.

Editor’s note 8 October 2026: Two images added to this news story, including the St Michael’s Uniting Church and the Guru Nanak Sikh Temple images.

Reflections • Thursday 1 October 2026 • By The Very Rev’d Dr Peter Catt

Poetry, praise and pride



"At times it seems that the mad rush, which for me not only represents the busyness of the world, but also all that seeks to overcome peace-making, will overcome the presence of the wise and peaceful one," says The Very Rev'd Dr Peter Catt (Image supplied, 2021)

O, tell us, poet, what you do?

I praise.

But the deadly and the violent days,

how do you undergo them, take them in?

I praise.

But the namelessness — how do you raise

that, invoke the unnameable?

I praise.

*What right have you, through every phase,
in every mask, to remain true?
I praise.
— and that both stillness and the wild affray
know you, like star and storm?
Because I praise.*

—“Praise” by Rainer Maria Rilke
(Translated by Denise Levertov in *Light up the Cave*)

Today I am incredibly grateful for the love and support that I have received during the past six weeks and for the incredible kindness of those who have taken the time in one form or another to be present or in touch as I complete my time at St John’s. Thank you.

At the conclusion of the Pride Evensong last night at my request Andrej kindly played “Mad Rush” by Philip Glass. The piece was written to honour the visit of the Dalai Lama to the Cathedral of John The Divine in New York City, USA.

“Mad Rush” alternates between quiet sections that conjure up the image of that humble man walking down the long aisle of that amazing cathedral greeting people along the way. From time-to-time louder more dramatic sections break in representing the mad rush of the world outside the cathedral.

At times it seems that the mad rush, which for me not only represents the busyness of the world, but also all that seeks to overcome peace-making, will overcome the presence of the wise and peaceful one. The piece, however, finishes with the gentle presence inviting us into a profound and transformative silence.

“The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness will not overcome it...” (John 1.5).

First published in the “Cathedral Precinct eNews” on Monday, 28 September 2026.

Q&A with liturgical assistant, organist, Simnel cake baker and retired hospital doctor, Gillian McDonald



"We're currently preparing for the St Thomas' Annual Bookfest, which will be taking place between Saturday, 3 October and Monday, 5 October 2026," says Dr Gillian McDonald (Image by anglican focus, 2026)

Where do you currently live and where do you worship?

I live in Brisbane and worship at St Thomas' Anglican Church in Toowong.

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

I have been involved with the Anglican Church Southern Queensland since 1969 as an organist, sacristan, liturgical assistant, parish councillor, church warden and Simnel cake baker.

What does your current role involve?

Currently I continue serving the parish in my roles as liturgical assistant and as one of three organists. I also volunteer one day a week at the church bookshop, help plan and staff the [St Thomas' Annual Bookfest](#), attend the church outreach activity "Open Door" monthly with tea, sandwiches and fellowship, and along with fellow parishioners raise funds via St Francis College carparking for Suncorp Stadium events.



"Currently I continue serving the parish in my roles as liturgical assistant and as one of three organists," says Dr Gillian McDonald from St Thomas', Toowong (Image by *anglican focus*, 2026)

What do you most love about your role?

The opportunity it provides for companionship and community outreach.

What is a highlight of your current role?

As an organist, a key highlight is sharing familiar and less known hymns with the congregation. At a funeral a mourner who was unfamiliar with the service expressed that she felt comforted by the hymn "Abide With Me" and left feeling more at peace.

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

We're currently preparing for the [St Thomas' Annual Bookfest](#), which will be taking place between Saturday, 3 October and Monday, 5 October 2026. Subsequently there will be reorganisation and redistribution of books in our refurbished bookshop.



St Thomas', Toowong parishioners and bookshop volunteers Dr Gillan McDonald, Diane Harwood and Claire Hall showing off one of the books on sale at the St Thomas' bookshop, which is located in the parish centre (Image supplied, 2026)

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

Starting from correspondence Sunday school on the radio on Sunday mornings as a child, I have remained associated with church worship through school, university and family life.

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

I try to be guided by the second of commandment of Jesus, to love my neighbour as myself and find, on reflection, it is applicable to most situations.



Dedicated St Thomas', Toowong parishioners Sophie Richmond, Dr Gillian McDonald, Martin Finbow and Libby Nock on 1 September 2026 (Image by *anglican focus*)

What is your favourite Bible scripture and why?

[Psalm 121](#): "I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills from whence cometh my help", which reminds me of the mystery of creation and the wonders of nature.

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

We should work to understand and advocate for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, recognising their ancient cultures and wisdom.

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

The important strengths of caring and fellowship are fostered through worship, initiatives including Open Door, care packages for seafarers and annual blanket drives for people sleeping rough, as well as offering hospitality to community members who attend services and visit the bookshop.



Dr Gillian McDonald assisting with The Parish of Toowong's monthly fellowship outreach "Open Door" in September 2026 (Image supplied)

What person of faith inspires you the most and why?

A hospital chaplain, whom I met while working as a ward doctor. He brought his personal faith to people in difficult situations, providing quiet assurance that God was aware of their need.

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

When I was driving to Brisbane in my first car (well before the advent of mobile phones), part of the accelerator cable came loose at dusk on a major highway causing the car to be undriveable. A bus driver kindly pulled over, temporarily abandoned his busload of passengers, and showed me how to reattach the loose cable, so that I could reach Brisbane safely.

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

When I was growing up, a Presbyterian minister advised me to regard the Bible as a fish, and to get the most benefit from it by eating the flesh and being prepared to spit out the bones.

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

I enjoy baking, reading and recently learnt how to make sandals.



Gillian McDonald with Jackie Orme Ward (shoemaker and instructor at Pendragon Shoes in Maroochydore) at a sandal-making workshop, where Gillian made her own sandals (Image supplied, 2026)

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

An umbrella to keep off the rain and the sun, a blanket to keep warm and a bottle of water.

Where do you do your best thinking?

In the shower.

What's your best childhood memory?

Growing up on a stone fruit orchard and eating a ripe peach fresh from the tree.

What is your karaoke go-to song?

"I walk the Line" by Johnny Cash.

What is your earliest memory?

Riding with my mother and big brother in my father's motorbike sidecar, wearing a cloak with a white pixie hat when I was about two years old.



"I try to be guided by the second of commandment of Jesus, to love my neighbour as myself and find, on reflection, it is applicable to most situations," says Dr Gillian McDonald (Image by *anglican focus*, 2026)

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

Sing a song or go for a walk.

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

My first day at school because I understand I enjoyed it, but I don't remember it.

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

Bread because there are lots of options.

Editor's note: Come and browse thousands of books for sale at the St Thomas', Toowong 2026 Bookfest on Saturday, 3 October (9am to 3pm), Sunday, 4 October (12 noon to 5pm) and Monday, 5 October (9am to 3pm). Browse books across all genres, and enjoy morning tea, a cake stall and a sausage sizzle. Free entry. Onsite parking available. For more information, please visit the St Thomas', Toowong [Facebook page](#).

Faith & Wellbeing Day: Caring for the whole person



Retired GP and parishioner Dr Peter Lewis speaking about physical health at The Parish of Gold Coast North's Faith & Wellbeing Day on 15 August 2026 (Image supplied)

At the end of our recent Faith & Wellbeing Day, one parishioner approached me and said, "I never realised how much wisdom the Bible has for the challenges we face in everyday life." This wonderful comment captured what we hoped to achieve on the day, reinforcing the vision we had for the gathering. We wanted to create a space where faith could speak into the practical realities of everyday life and wellbeing.

The idea for the day arose while listening to our parishioners' concerns. More community members are juggling medical appointments and health concerns, while online scams are increasingly affecting people financially and emotionally.

I also wanted the day to emphasise that the Bible is a treasure trove of God's wisdom and blessings for every stage of life. I began planning the event early in the year, taking time to develop the programme and identify interesting and relevant speakers.

The day began with the spiritual theme of "graceful ageing". Bishop John gave a fantastic presentation on Abraham's story, reminding us that God continues to have a purpose for us throughout every season of life. ICT Group Manager Ben Ward from the Cathedral Precinct provided practical advice about how to stay safe from online scams. Dr Peter Lewis (a retired GP) and Mirja Wheatley (a nurse navigator) offered informative sessions on men's health awareness and dementia, connecting faith with important issues affecting our daily lives.

We promoted the event through our parish newsletter, social media, *anglican focus* and local Facebook community groups. We were particularly encouraged that people who are not church

members joined in the day. The event turnout exceeded our expectations. Although 35 people registered, around 70 people attended, with the event becoming a parish talking point.

Our inaugural Faith & Wellbeing Day reinforced my conviction that the Church is called to be holistic in its ministry, caring for people spiritually, physically, emotionally and practically. I have already started planning for next year's Faith & Wellbeing Day, and I encourage other parishes to consider planning their own.

Five top tips for organising a parish Faith & Wellbeing Day:

- 1. Choose relevant topics in consultation with your parishioners by speaking with your community members to identify issues that genuinely affect their everyday lives.**
- 2. Start early: Begin planning six months ahead to allow plenty of time to develop the programme and promote the event.**
- 1. Secure speakers early: Identify and confirm interesting speakers (who are relevant to your community's concerns) several months before the event, ensuring speaker diversity.**
- 2. Ensure community members actively participate in the event's planning and on the day.**
- 3. Promote well: Begin promotions at least two months ahead through parish newsletters, notices and social media; ACSQ channels, such as the *anglican focus* [Events page](#); and, local community channels, such as Facebook groups.**

Northern and Southern Region Clergy Conference 2026: Insights and conversation highlights 2.0



The Rev'd Elizabeth Donald-McConnell and The Rev'd Dr Ann Edwards at the Northern and Southern Region Clergy Conference at Noosa in August 2026 (Image supplied)

Southern and Northern Region clergy — Elizabeth Donald McConnell, Mamuor kun Peter and Charlie Lacey — share about what they learned at the recent clergy conference, how they will apply these learnings to their ministries and what conference conversation inspired them the most.

The Rev'd Elizabeth Donald-McConnell — Parish Priest, The Parish of Centenary Suburbs

Social demographer Mark McCrindle's analysis of emerging trends confirmed something I had experienced, as largely true, namely, that Generations Z (51 per cent) and Y (54 per cent) — those aged 17 to 46 years — are more likely to be open to spiritual conversations. When comparing these figures with Baby Boomers (32 per cent) and Gen X (43 per cent) we can see how important it is that we challenge our own assumptions that these kinds of conversations are unwelcome by younger people, and have courage to respond when an opening occurs.

I am currently praying about how to create opportunities where my peers and my children's peers feel comfortable gathering and discussing spiritual things. In particular, I'm conscious that inviting people to a bricks and mortar church might be a barrier, so I'm considering other venues. The work that our Diocese's fantastic FormEdFaith team is doing through [innerVIVID](#) could provide a good vehicle for these conversations.

During Army chaplain The Rev'd Sarah Gibson's session on "Christian Presence with Intention in Context" The Rev'd Stephen Briggs from The Parish of Grovely described a prayer walk that he and some parishioners undertook over a couple of weeks. He said that as he was joined by different people on different days, they walked their suburb's streets and prayed for all the families, businesses and schools. Stephen shared that this helped them see their suburbs differently and opened them up to curiosity about local peoples' needs.

Gathering to worship, pray, study scripture and learn together is the best way to strengthen our bonds of collegiality. When we eat together and learn more about each other's lives, sustained over a number of days, we gain empathy for each other and create new, or strengthen existing, friendships. When we are seen in public as a gaggle of clergy — smiling, singing, praying and eating together — we are witnesses to the Good News of the love of God.



"Spending time together as clergy, sharing our ministry experience with each other, learning new things from the speakers and from each other, worshipping together and praying for each other are special because when you return home you think differently and have new energy," says The Rev'd Mamuor kun Peter about the 2026 Northern and Southern Region Clergy Conference (Image by *anglican focus*)

The Rev'd Mamuor kun Peter — Priest-in-Charge, The Parish of Caboolture

All the speakers at this year's conference were fantastic and I learnt a lot from them. What stood out for me was The Rev'd Bree Mills' session on "From Faith Formation to Fruitfulness". Moving from a large parish in Hervey Bay to a smaller parish in Caboolture I was questioning myself, wondering what I can do to build numbers. However, Bree explained that church is not about the numbers — it's about love and how we share the love of God.

Because of this learning I have taken off the hat that worries about increasing church numbers and put on the hat about sharing the love of God. This has freed me up to think more about how I should engage the community. I think that by focussing on sharing the love of God that parishioner numbers will increase.

On the Wednesday night of the conference I told my life story — which I have previously shared on [anglican focus](#) — to Ann Joseph, Ann Armitage and Joanne Rose from the St Martin's House episcopal office. One of these women started tearing up as I shared about my desert journey as a child and the suffering I went through. Touched by her compassion, I explained to her that my journey has shaped my attitudes, vision and relationships with God and people.

Spending time together as clergy, sharing our ministry experience with each other, learning new things from the speakers and from each other, worshipping together and praying for each other are special because when you return home you think differently and have new energy.



"It seems that young people, in particular, are especially open to exploring, and potentially receiving, the good news of Jesus. I hope to redouble our parish's efforts to pique the interest of the people around us with the Gospel," says The Rev'd Charlie Lacey about the 2026 Northern and Southern Region Clergy Conference (Image supplied)

The Rev'd Charlie Lacey — Priest-in-Charge, St Andrew's, Springfield

Of all the clergy conferences that I've attended, I found the subject matter at this one the most relevant and helpful. I particularly enjoyed the sessions on "Leadership" and "Revitalisation" by The Rev'd Bree Mills. As leaders, it's good to be reminded that our personal spiritual disciplines impact the efficacy of our leadership and the overall health of our parishes. Bree's sessions connected well with

Mark McCrindle's "Trends and Changes in Australian Society". It was inspiring to learn that despite ABS Census data suggesting that Christianity is in decline, there are many statistical signs of hope.

It seems that young people, in particular, are especially open to exploring, and potentially receiving, the good news of Jesus. I hope to redouble our parish's efforts to pique the interest of the people around us with the Gospel.

I always find the change of scenery and pace at the clergy conference refreshing. Sometimes too refreshing! On Tuesday afternoon I set an alarm for a quick nap, only to wake naturally at 8pm, having slept through the special celebration dinner.

The benefit of this was that I had the energy to stay up chatting until the small hours with a friend and colleague, which for me is the most valuable part of these times together.

Justice & Advocacy • Monday 12 October 2026 • By Steph Cotroneo

"The Rev'd Dr Ann Solari's genuine service-learning partnership approach is exemplary"



The Rev'd Dr Ann Solari and Churchie Lay Chaplain Steph Cotroneo cooking up a slow cooker storm in the Cathedral kitchen, with meals prepared by Churchie Year 5 boys and their families, on 8 October 2026 (Mothers Union gave four slow cookers to the Cathedral for their rough sleeper program) (Image supplied)

While I had seen The Rev'd Dr Ann Solari around the Cathedral prior to 2021, I didn't know her well or much about her role as a Cathedral deacon. During that year several Churchie students and staff expressed empathy and concern to me after seeing people setting up their bedding outside the Cathedral following our Easter services. I subsequently contacted Dr Ann, who agreed to visit Churchie to speak with the Year 5 boys. She was so generous with her time, initially speaking to all the Year 5 boys together before visiting each of the five Year 5 classes.

Dr Ann's sensitivity and kindness emerge in classroom conversations, especially in the way she encourages the boys and validates their feelings and ideas. I admire the way she balances speaking honestly and directly and age appropriately. When the boys speak with her they feel able to make a meaningful difference. Following their initial conversations with Dr Ann the Year 5 boys decided to cook hot meals and baked goods for Cathedral rough sleepers, with the support of their families, as well as provide mattresses, pillows, linen, Milo and milk.

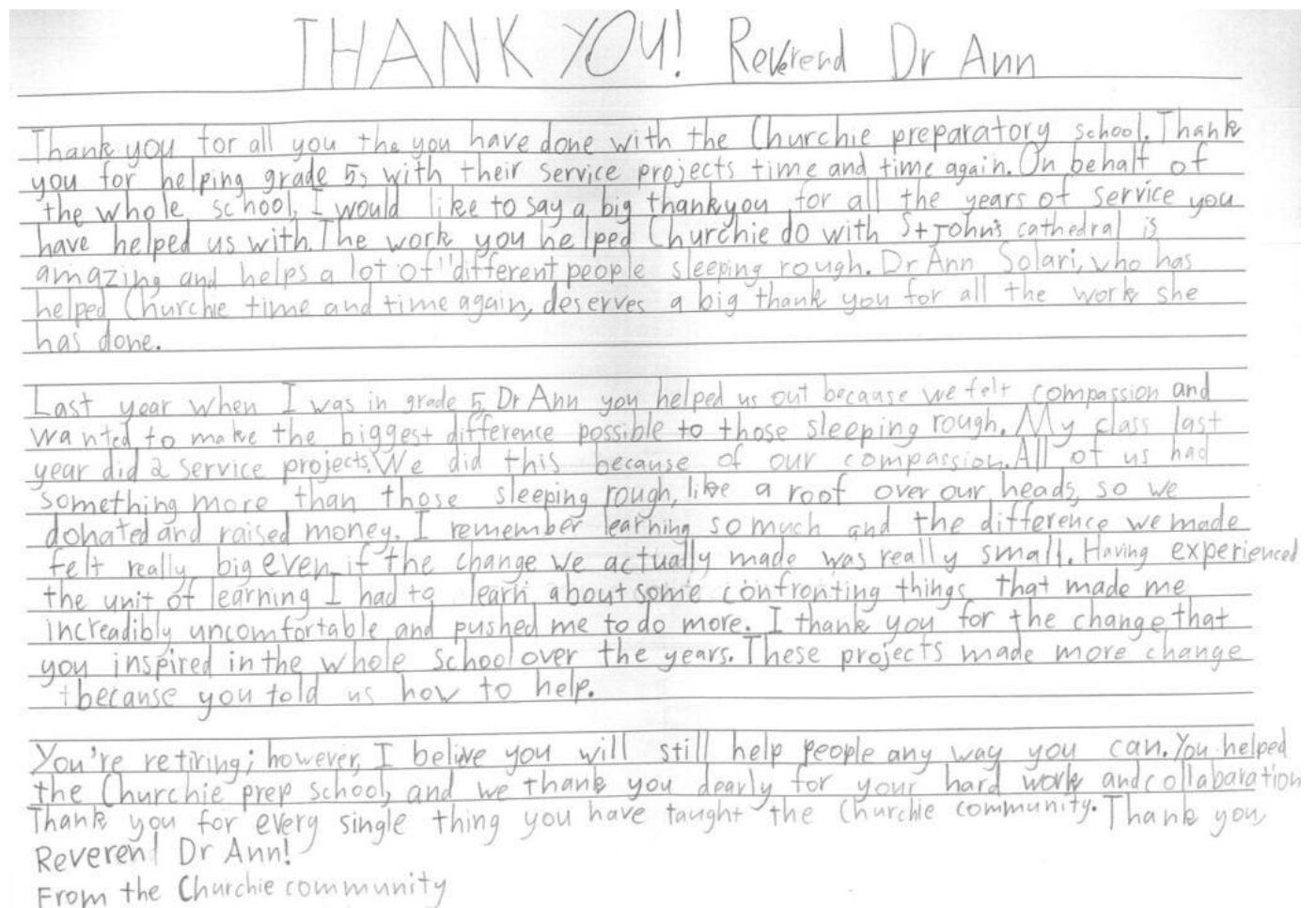


Churchie Year 5 students decided to make meals (such as chilli con carne) for slow cooking for people sleeping rough on the Cathedral Precinct grounds to enjoy (Image supplied, 2026)

Dr Ann's example shows me that everyone matters because every person is created in God's image. On Thursday last week I ran into a gentleman on the Cathedral Precinct who used to sleep on the Cathedral grounds. He shared that he now has a house. When I asked him what that's like, he said he now has a washing machine and that he's getting used to sleeping in a real bed again. He said that he

was dropping by to thank Dr Ann. Upon finding out that Churchie boys and their families make the hot meals, brownies, cupcakes and cookies for Cathedral rough sleepers, he said that he'd organise for blank cards to be left in the kitchen so people sleeping rough can leave "thank you" notes. This is such a touching gesture and shows that Dr Ann, in creating a community of belonging and care, helps make service-learning transformational for all, rather than transactional.

Dr Ann sees even very young students as capable and caring people who can think of their own ideas and solutions. She even takes calls from our Year 5 class when she's overseas, chatting on speaker phone as the boys talk through ideas with her and seek feedback. The Rev'd Dr Ann's Solari's genuine service-learning partnership approach is exemplary.



Churchie students sent this letter to The Rev'd Dr Ann Solari at St John's Cathedral to thank her for her support with service learning (Image supplied, 2026)

Celebrating Dalit Pride: Lectures on Dalit Theology



"Devasahayam grounds this theology in the lived experience, struggle and faith of Dalit people. It speaks of suffering, but also of resistance and hope. The title Celebrating Dalit Pride captures this well," says Dr Stephen Harrison, pictured with The Parish of Chermshire's rector The Rev'd Daniel Jayaraj, who introduced Stephen to Celebrating Dalit Pride: Lectures on Dalit Theology by Bishop Vedanayagam Devasahayam (Image supplied, 2026)

Celebrating Dalit Pride: Lectures on Dalit Theology brings together lectures delivered by The Right Rev'd Vedanayagam Devasahayam while he was Professor of Systematic Theology at Gurukul Lutheran Theological College. Compiled as a resource for theological students and teachers, the book introduces the history and social experience of Dalit people, examines caste and its relationship with Christianity, and develops the key concerns of Dalit theology. Devasahayam writes from both academia and lived experience. In the preface, he recalls the "discrimination, humiliation and shame" he experienced from childhood because of his Dalit identity and his determination that this injustice "needed to be challenged and changed."

The central concern of the book is the experience of oppression and exclusion of Dalit people and how this reality should be understood theologically. Devasahayam considers the origins and continuing impact of caste; the way caste practices have been reproduced within religious communities, including Christianity; Christian mission responses to caste; and, the movements of Dalit communities towards Christianity. From this he develops Dalit theology as a theology concerned with the transformation of structures that deny the full humanity of Dalit people.

One of the book's strongest themes is the everyday reality of caste. Devasahayam does not treat caste simply as a social hierarchy or historical system. He shows how people experience it through exclusion, humiliation and the practice of "untouchability". By connecting these experiences with theological questions about human worth and dignity, he makes caste difficult to dismiss as a distant

cultural issue. He presents it as a system that devalues the lives of people and is therefore contrary to the Gospel and demands a Christian response.

A second major theme is the persistence of caste within Indian Christianity. Christianity proclaims the equal dignity of all people before God, yet Christian communities have absorbed caste practices from the societies around them. Devasahayam exposes the gulf between the Gospel the Church proclaims and the discrimination it allows in practice. I found this especially confronting because it raises a question for all Churches: what prejudices and inequalities do we absorb from our surrounding cultures, even when they are contrary to our theology?

The third theme is the distinctive character of Dalit theology itself. Devasahayam grounds this theology in the lived experience, struggle and faith of Dalit people. It speaks of suffering, but also of resistance and hope. The title *Celebrating Dalit Pride* captures this well. Dalits are presented as people whose identity and experience become sources for theological reflection.

Some of the most powerful material is Devasahayam's own experience:

"My personal experience of the practice of untouchability began at the age of 6 at a shop in my village. The shop keeper, a lady, ensured that I was kept at a safe distance without entering the verandah and brought me the things I needed outside the shop. She asked me to place the coins I had on a parapet wall, poured water on it before taking the coins inside, because for her, the touch of the coin from an Untouchable without washing was polluting" (p.9).

Decades later he describes the following:

"A couple of year before I became a Bishop, while I was working as a professor of theology, I went to my village. From Chennai I had to transfer to another bus in a small town near my village. Though it was a crowded bus I was able to find a place to sit. My neighbour started the conversation enquiring about the village I was going to and also about the details of my family. Immediately after he recognised my caste he got up and moved to the front and travelled all the way standing. Though I was highly educated and neatly dressed, yet sitting near to me was considered polluting and shameful for him" (p.10).

These stories show that caste discrimination is not simply historical or overcome through education or achievement. They give the theological arguments of the book a human reality. Some of the stories of Dalit discrimination Devasahayam's shares are horrific and should move even the hardest heart.

The most valuable learning for me was a much deeper appreciation of both the reality of caste discrimination and its continuing consequences for Dalit people. I had some awareness of India's caste system before reading the book, but little understanding of what this could mean in everyday life. I was also surprised and disturbed by the extent to which caste distinctions have entered Christian communities. This is true despite Dalit's comprising over 70 per cent of Christians in India.

The book has changed caste from something I regarded as distant from my own context into something I believe Christians elsewhere should pay attention to. It has strengthened my conviction that Christian faith cannot be separated from challenging systems and practices that diminish human dignity. It also prompts me to ask harder questions about our own institutions: what forms of exclusion or inequality might we accept because they have become normal, even while proclaiming values that contradict them? Practically, it has made me want to introduce others to Dalit voices and

ensure that their experience is included in conversations about racism, discrimination, justice and Christian mission.

Celebrating Dalit Pride is confronting and theologically challenging. Devasahayam's lectures are so compelling that the reader cannot separate theology from the realities experienced by communities affected by injustice.

I would recommend this book to Anglicans, particularly clergy and theological students. It would also be valuable for anyone seeking to understand how Christian theology can emerge from the experience of communities struggling against persecution and oppression. For Australian Anglicans, it offers an introduction to a reality about which many of us know relatively little and a challenge to examine the forms of exclusion present within our own contexts

V. Devasahayam, 2022. *Celebrating Dalit Pride: Lectures on Dalit Theology*. BTESSC, India.

Editor's note 16 October 2026: *Celebrating Dalit Pride: Lectures on Dalit Theology* is available in the Roscoe Library at St Francis College.

Top 10 tips for your parish, school or religious organisation to care for the climate and creation



Five Leaf Eco-Awards Director Jessica Morthorpe with ACSQ Justice Enabler Peter Branjerdporn at the Many Faiths, One Planet biodiversity conference in Melbourne on 3 October 2026 (Image by anglican focus)

Growing up in a regional area I loved seeing the hundreds of galahs that lived on a vacant block next door. Every day when we returned home from primary school I witnessed a beautiful vision of pink wings flying up into the trees as the car pulled into the driveway. To me this huge flock was a community of creatures. When the vacant block's development commenced I worried about where my galah friends would live and find food. So whenever we drove by a vacant block of land I would think "Maybe the galahs could move here."

Looking back now I see that this early childhood experience gave birth to my concern for creation, including species habitat and survival.



“Growing up in a regional area I loved seeing the hundreds of galahs that lived on a vacant block next door,” says Jessica Morthorpe, the founding Director of the Five Leaf Eco-Awards (Image by Itimlin on Pixabay)

My Christian faith was very important to me growing up — I went to Sunday School from a young age and read the Bible a lot. However, I didn’t connect my faith with caring for creation until young adulthood.

While studying at university, I heard an Anglican bishop speak about the theology of creation care for the first time. This was a life-changing gathering for me. I subsequently discovered Christian books and resources that connected caring for the natural environment with scripture. I realised that that these two important pillars of my life — my love of nature and my faith — are deeply connected rather being in “competition” with each other.

Once these pillars were connected I looked around at the Churches in Australia and wondered why they weren’t doing more to help lead the environmental movement. So in 2008 I launched the [Five Leaf Eco-Awards](#), which is a national, ecumenical and non-competitive change program for Churches, schools and religious organisations.

I run this program as a volunteer, in response to God’s call to care for creation, alongside a committee of volunteers, including The Rev’d Peter Moore, Chair of Angligreen and Deputy Chair of Queensland Churches Environment Network (QCEN).

Whether you’re just getting started or your church, school or religious organisation has been caring for creation for years, the Five Leaf Eco-Awards can help you take the next step.

The awards program covers five holistic areas, including Buildings, Worship, Congregation, Outreach and Community Leadership.

Two ACSQ parishes have achieved Five Leaf Eco-Awards. [St John's Anglican Cathedral](#) and [St Luke's, Ekibin](#) have both received the Five Leaf Eco-Awards Basic Certificate and a Five Leaf Eco-Awards Eco-Worship Award.

The first step is to visit the Five Leaf Eco-Awards website and complete the simple [survey](#), so you share with our committee what you have undertaken so far. In my experience churches are very humble and reluctant to be seen to be boasting, so I especially encourage parishes to complete the survey.

Quite often parishes, schools or religious organisations have achieved what is needed to receive an award without knowing it. Other times they just need to undertake a few extra steps or actions to be eligible. We can then support them as they take these extra steps, while connecting them into a like-minded network and providing resources, such as for Season of Creation and World Environment Day.

I encourage parishes, schools or religious organisations to be flexible and practical, especially if they are starting out — focussing on what is achievable and relevant to their context and the interests of their community. There is no “one way” to care for creation — every community is different.

Top 10 tips for your parish, school or religious organisation to care for the climate and creation:

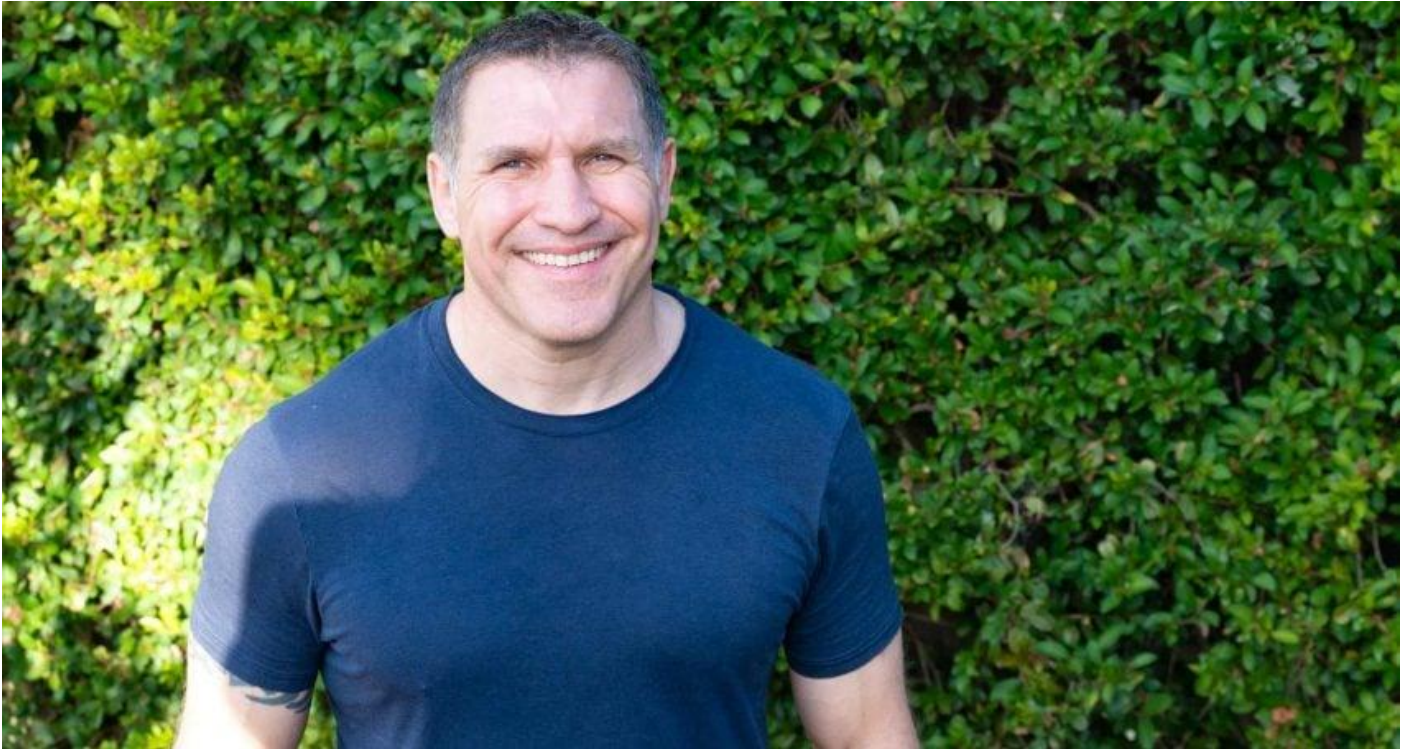
1. Complete the [survey](#) on the [Five Leaf Eco-Awards](#) website to gauge where your parish, school or religious organisation is at, to get new ideas and to find out whether you are eligible for an award or what next steps are required for eligibility.
2. To reduce plastic, consider a “no-single-use plastic” policy and use washable crockery and cutlery (washing up together can also be great for connecting and building relationships).
3. Consider putting a timer on hot water urns, switching to 100 per cent post-consumer recycled paper, installing energy efficient lighting, recycling more, switching to an online newsletter, turning off rarely used fridges, starting an op shop or creating a toy library.
4. Install a native beehive, worm farm or compost bin and plant trees.
5. Find out more about how First Nations peoples care for Country and consider planting an Indigenous food garden.
6. Start a community garden (Anglican Church Southern Queensland parishes, schools and ministries can join the [Grow Together Network](#) — [email](#) The Rev'd Samuel Dow to find out more).
7. Educate your community members about home sustainability options, such as solar panels and rainwater tanks, for greater collective impact.
8. Write to MPs, ministers and senators calling for meaningful climate action (including writing to the prime minister and asking him to [“Say ‘yes’ to Yessie”](#) by visiting Torres Strait 8 spokesperson Yessie Mosby on Masig to witness the impacts of climate change on Australia's Torres Strait Islands).
9. Find out what your parish, school or religious organisation is already doing and join in (Anglican Church Southern Queensland parishes, schools and ministries can join in the ACSQ [Sustainability Roadmap](#) initiative).
10. Host a community conversation, workshop or other gathering, such as on [Clean Up Australia Day](#) (first Sunday of March annually), [World Environment Day](#) (5 June annually) and [World Ocean Day](#) (8 June annually) or during [Season of Creation](#) (1 September to 4 October annually) or [Plastic Free July](#).

Justice Unit notes: To find out more visit the [Five Leaf Eco-Awards website](#) or [email](#) the Five Leaf Eco-Awards Director, Jessica Morthorpe. And, if you are an Anglican Church Southern Queensland parish, school or ministry, please remember to [email](#) the *anglican focus* editor about any Five Leaf Eco-Awards updates.

Also, check out the free resources on the [Ten Ways to Care for Biodiversity](#) website.

Reflections • Tuesday 13 October 2026 • By The Rev'd Charlie Lacey

Tough Questions: Should Genesis 1 and 2 be taken literally?



"Rather than becoming preoccupied with questions the text may not be attempting to answer, perhaps we should give greater attention to the questions it does answer," says The Rev'd Charlie Lacey from St Andrew's, Springfield

Genesis 1 and 2 are beautiful Hebrew texts that reveal profound truths about our origins. Unfortunately, they have become two of the most contentious chapters in the Bible and are often cited by atheists as evidence against the reliability of Scripture. It is frequently claimed that Darwin's theory of evolution has discredited the biblical account of creation. Yet science and Scripture, rightly understood, are not at odds.

The creation-versus-evolution debate is often something of a red herring for both Christians and atheists. It is a red herring for Christians because Genesis 1 and 2 are not scientific texts attempting to answer scientific questions, and reading them as such can drain them of much of their beauty and theological significance. It is a red herring for atheists because even if one accepts evolutionary theory, the deeper questions remain unanswered: Why does anything exist at all? How did inanimate chemical elements come to life? Why do human beings have an appreciation for beauty, goodness, and truth? And so on. Science may describe many processes within the universe, but it does not eliminate the need to ask these larger questions.

Genesis 1 and 2 do not primarily seek to answer the scientific questions of when and how the universe came into being. Rather, they address the theological questions of who created the universe and why. Among Christians there are generally two common approaches to these chapters. Some read them figuratively and poetically, while others read them literally. I suspect a more nuanced approach is needed. There is little doubt that these chapters contain poetic features, yet they also communicate real truths about our origins. The theologian John Goldingay describes their genre as “historic parable”.

One of the wonderful things about poetry is that it can be true without being literally true. Indeed, poetry is often among the most powerful ways of communicating truth, which is perhaps why roughly one-third of the Old Testament is written in poetic form. Consider this extract from the Song of Songs:

*How beautiful you are, my darling!
Oh, how beautiful!
Your eyes behind your veil are doves.
Your hair is like a flock of goats
descending from the hills of Gilead.*

*Your teeth are like a flock of sheep just shorn,
coming up from the washing.
Each has its twin;
not one of them is alone.*

*Your lips are like a scarlet ribbon;
your mouth is lovely.
Your temples behind your veil
are like the halves of a pomegranate.*

*Your neck is like the tower of David,
built with courses of stone;
on it hang a thousand shields,
all of them shields of warriors.*

(Song of Songs 4.1-4)

I once asked AI to produce an image based on a strictly literal reading of these verses, and the result was so hideous that I could not have shown it in church. Yet the poem is true. It describes a beautiful young woman. Her eyes are not literally doves, but they are soft and gentle. Her hair is not literally a flock of goats, but dark and flowing. Her teeth are not literally sheep, but white, even, and complete. Poetry often communicates truth through imagery rather than straightforward description.

To become fixated on scientific questions when reading Genesis 1 and 2 is therefore to risk missing the point. These chapters are first and foremost theological. Their purpose is not to satisfy modern scientific curiosity but to reveal God’s relationship to the world he created.

This does not mean scientific questions are unimportant. Christians may legitimately hold different views about the age of the earth, the extent of evolutionary processes, and the interpretation of the creation days. What it does mean is that the truth of Genesis does not stand or fall on whether it answers scientific questions in the way modern readers might expect.

The important question is this: What is God saying to us through these texts?

Several great themes emerge. Genesis reveals that God is the creator of all things. The universe is not self-existent but derives its existence from him. Human beings occupy a unique place within creation because they are made in God's image. Creation is declared good, and humanity is entrusted with the responsibility of caring for it. Most importantly, Genesis teaches that the world is not the product of blind chance but of divine purpose and intention.

Whatever conclusions one reaches regarding the scientific questions surrounding these chapters, these theological truths remain unchanged.

Faithful Christians hold a range of views on the relationship between creation and evolution. Some embrace theistic evolution, believing that God worked through evolutionary processes. Others maintain a literal six-day creation. Still others understand Genesis 1 and 2 as describing real historical realities through rich theological and poetic language. While these positions differ in important respects, they all affirm the central truth that God is the creator.

God speaks through the whole of Scripture, and Genesis 1 and 2 are no exception. Rather than becoming preoccupied with questions the text may not be attempting to answer, perhaps we should give greater attention to the questions it does answer. In these opening chapters of the Bible, God reveals who he is, who we are, and why the world exists at all. And those truths are every bit as important today as they were when Genesis was first written.

First published on the [St Andrew's, Springfield website](#) in October 2026.

How we met Dean Peter Catt, why we love working with him and why we'll miss him: A photo essay



The Very Rev'd Dr Peter Catt (centre) with ACSQ Justice Enabler Peter Branjerdporn and ACSQ Director of News and Community Engagement Michelle McDonald outside Cherbourg's Ration Shed Museum on 18 November 2024 when community leaders gathered with First Nations Elders for community "hearings" (Image by anglican focus)

Peter Catt, who recently retired as the Anglican Dean of Brisbane, has courageously used his platforms in all his advocacy over many decades. We have worked alongside Dean Peter in several justice spaces — and in this photo essay we share about some of this work.

How we met

We met each other and Dean Peter over 10 years ago through the ecumenical grassroots group Love Makes A Way, which advocated for the release of refugee children, men and women who were warehoused on offshore camps. We were immediately struck by his humility, eloquence and bravery and how he embodies non-violence.



St John's Cathedral Dean, The Very Rev'd Dr Peter Catt, lighting a candle with community members: 1,500 people turned up to the nation's largest Sanctuary vigil on Monday, 8 February 2016 to pray for hundreds of men, women and children whom the Federal Government was threatening to deport back to Nauru and Manus (Image supplied)

Advocating for the rights of refugees and people seeking asylum

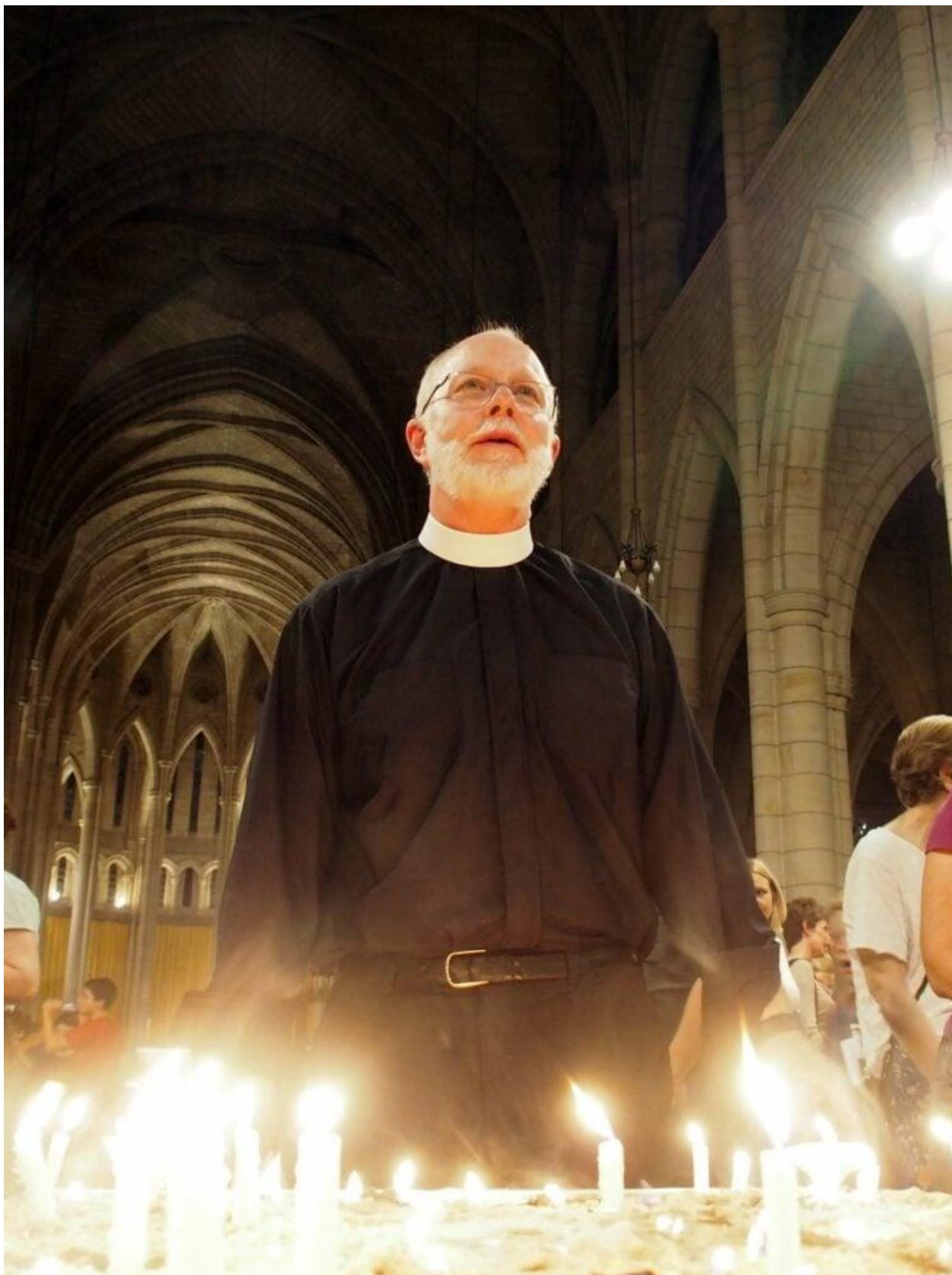
Dean Peter's courage was particularly demonstrated to us in the way that he led the [Sanctuary movement](#). As the (then) chair of the Australian Churches Refugee Taskforce (ACRT) Dean Peter led this movement, which offered "Sanctuary" to people who were being threatened with deportation by the Federal Government back to detention centres on Manus (in northern Papua New Guinea) and Nauru (in Micronesia, now known as "Naoero"). These families and individuals were living in "community detention" in suburban houses around the country while they or their children received medical treatment. This cohort included dozens of Australian-born babies and toddlers who were medevacked to our hospitals from Nauru. St John's Cathedral was considered "Sanctuary HQ" nationally, partly due to Dean Peter's ACRT role and partly because it was the largest church to offer Sanctuary. The Sanctuary offer was very effective — not a single refugee from this cohort was deported back to Nauru or Manus. Even the (then) Minister for Immigration Peter Dutton said that the Government would not be "[dragging people out of churches](#)".



Love Makes A Way training community members in a packed-out Darnell Room on 3 March 2016, so St John's Cathedral had support in case Sanctuary was sought by refugees who were being threatened with deportation back to Manus or Nauru (Image by Peter Branjerdporn)

We worked closely with Dean Peter (and other Love Makes A Way members) to help set up Sanctuary structures, train community members to support the cathedral if Sanctuary was sought and in the organising of a Sanctuary vigil, which was attended by around 1,500 community members. We love this story that [Dean Peter tells](#) about the 8 February 2016 Sanctuary vigil:

“While preparing for the hastily organised sanctuary liturgy all those years ago, I vividly remember looking for vigil candles. As I picked up a box of 100 candles in the storage room, I looked at them hoping that enough people would turn up to light them all. Later that day, as more and more people arrived at the vigil, I had to keep bringing additional candles out from storage for people to light. In the end, 1,500 people turned up. I have never been happier to be 500 short of anything in my life.”



St John's Cathedral Dean, The Very Rev'd Dr Peter Catt, hoped that at least 100 people would join in prayer for sick and injured refugees who were being threatened with deportation back to Manus and Nauru — enough so that one full box of candles would be lit: 1,500 community joined in the 8 February 2016 vigil, so Dean Peter was happily 500 candles short (Image by Peter Branjerdporn)

One of the things we most appreciate about Dean Peter is that he is incredibly supportive of other peoples' initiatives, campaigns and events, and, depending on what is needed, he is willing to either be

“front and centre” or assist behind the scenes. We are genuinely amazed that he managed to find time to support us whenever we needed him, and we sincerely appreciate it. For example, Dean Peter came to support us when we organised two impromptu Love Makes A Way “donation drives” outside the Department of Home Affairs for people seeking asylum whose [Status Resolution Support Services](#) (SRSS) safety net payment was suddenly cut off leaving them at risk of homelessness and being unable to afford basics like food, nappies and medicine.



Love Makes A Way clergy and lay people, including The Very Rev'd Dr Peter Catt, outside the Department of Home Affairs in Brisbane where a donation drive was set up by Peter Branjerdporn and Michelle McDonald, so community members could drop off food, nappies and supermarket gift cards for people seeking asylum after the SRSS safety net was suddenly cut off in mid-2018 (Image by Peter Branjerdporn)

We also worked with Dean Peter, and clergy and lay people from the ACSQ and other organisations, to advocate and pray for the more than 100 men who were being detained in a Kangaroo Point hotel. The majority of the men held in the Kangaroo Point Central Hotel came to Brisbane in 2019 under new medevac laws and were detained there after more than seven years in offshore detention — over 80 per cent of the men were detained despite already found to be refugees. Dean Peter supported our advocacy, joined in the vigil outside the hotel and [joined in prayer vigils](#).



The Very Rev'd Dr Peter Catt (third from left), The Rev'd Canon Gary Harch (second from right) and Queensland Community Alliance organiser Elise Ganley (first from left) joined other faith leaders, including The Rev'd David Busch and The Rev'd Jenny Busch (holding candles) from Love Makes A Way, and other community members at a Kangaroo Point cliffs prayer vigil on Friday, 12 June 2020 for the men being indefinitely detained at the Kangaroo Point Central Hotel (Image by Peter Branjerdporn)

We have worked closely with Dean Peter in many other social justice spaces — especially since we commenced our employment at the Anglican Church Southern Queensland (Peter in 2017 and Michelle in 2018) — however, working with him on the Sanctuary offer is our highlight.

Climate, creation care and sustainability

Dean Peter is also well known for working alongside leaders from low-lying Torres Strait Islands and Pacific Islands as they advocate for a just transition to renewables and sustainability.



(Left to Right) Peter Branjerdporn (Justice Enabler, ACSQ), The Rev'd Peter Moore (Chair of Angligreen), The Right Rev'd Dr Winston Halapua (Archbishop Emeritus Aotearoa, New Zealand and Polynesia), The Very Rev'd Dr Peter Catt (Chair of the Social Responsibilities Committee), The Rev'd Eleanor Mancini (Anglican Mothers Union Australia Social Issues and Action Coordinator), and Aunty Dr Rose Elu (NATSIAC Executive Member and Saibai Elder) at the 2025 Sustainability Roadmap Workshop, which was held at St John's Anglican Church, Hendra on Friday, 25 July 2025 (Image by Mothers Union)

Dean Peter gets that we must be led by Indigenous leaders from communities who are already on the frontlines, such as Aunty Dr Rose Elu from Saibai and The Rev'd Eleanor Mancini from Tonga. For example, Dean Peter worked with us to support [The Rev'd Eleanor Mancini](#) in the organising and promotion of last year's successful [Sustainability Roadmap Workshop](#) at St John's, Hendra.



The Very Rev'd Dr Peter Catt with ACSQ Justice Enabler Peter Branjerdporn (on guitar) at an Australian Religious Response to Climate Change Christmas carols vigil in King George Square on 15 December 2018 (Image by ARCC)

While we undertake different tasks for some initiatives — sometimes Peter organises events that Michelle helps promote — we can always count on Dean Peter to be present. Even when it's hot and humid in mid-December, Dean Peter will turn up wearing his clergy collar at our request to support all kinds of gatherings, including Christmas carols for the climate and refugees. Dean Peter is one of the most “Eucharistic” people we have ever encountered — not just because he is a priest, but because he consistently demonstrates what it means to be *present* with God's people.



An inter-faith group, including The Very Rev'd Dr Peter Catt, kept vigil outside Trevor Evans' Albion electoral office on Monday, 18 October 2021, calling for Australia to take stronger climate policies to the United Nations climate summit (COP26) in Glasgow, especially for a stronger 2030 target (Image by Peter Branjerdporn)

Other climate and creation care work that Dean Peter has dedicated himself to includes joining in vigils and rallies; [visiting MP offices](#), government leaders and fossil fuel companies; co-leading our Diocese's [Earth Overshoot Day](#) response annually with Peter and [writing for anglican focus](#) — just to name a few. This dedication is also seen as he leads by example with his low-carbon lifestyle and caring for Country by driving an EV, keeping native bees and chickens, and composting and recycling.

Indigenous peoples' self-determination

Dean Peter is consistently one of the strongest advocates for Indigenous peoples' rights, even when it costs him.



The Very Rev'd Dr Peter Catt leading the following prayer at the third "Praying for Gaza" vigil in King George Square on 9 June 2024: "As an Anglican priest, I lament the loss of all Palestinian and Israeli lives to violence, especially the more than 15,000 children. I pray for all faith leaders in the Holy Lands — may you speak into their hearts, strengthening their commitment to each other, blessing them with your wisdom as they engage in ceasefire conversations and guiding them towards a just peace. I pray that the world's leaders heed the UN Special Rapporteur's April report and publicly acknowledge that a genocide is happening in Gaza and cease arms trade with and implement the appropriate sanctions on Israel. I pray, too, for the military personnel who drop the bombs, launch the missiles and drive the bulldozers and tanks, and for the politicians who sign the orders — for such actions damage their humanity. I pray this in Jesus' name. Amen." (Image by *anglican focus*)

At the time of writing this photo essay many cross-sector leaders still staggeringly consider it "controversial" to advocate for children who are being killed in a genocide. By 31 October 2023 when [UNICEF was saying](#) "Gaza has become a graveyard for thousands of children", Dean Peter paid attention. We sincerely respect the way that Dean Peter stepped up and advocated for Palestinians, including at the 2024 Palm Sunday rally when [Dean Peter](#) publicly called Israel's genocide in Gaza "a genocide".

We want to take this opportunity to thank Dean Peter, in the context of his role as Chair of the Social Responsibilities Committee, for backing us in our ongoing advocacy for the international rules-based order to be upheld for Palestinians, including their right to [self-determination](#) and for an end to [Israel's illegal occupation](#) and [genocide](#). His support has really meant a lot to us, as well as to inter-faith leaders, both locally and nationally.



The Very Rev'd Dr Peter Catt with Aboriginal Elders and Archbishop Mark Coleridge outside the Cherbourg Ration Shed Museum on Monday, 18 November 2024 following the community "hearings", which Elders still held even though the Queensland Government announced it would introduce legislation to repeal the *Path to Treaty Act 2023*, abolish the Truth-telling and Healing Inquiry and remove the inquiry's Members from office (Image by *anglican focus*)

Dean Peter is known for saying that "the ministry is in the interruptions". So he dropped everything to help when official Truth-telling and Healing Inquiry hearings in Cherbourg were cancelled due to the new [Queensland Government announcing](#) that it was introducing legislation to repeal the *Path to Treaty Act 2023*, including abolishing the Truth-telling and Healing Inquiry. For example, he met with us and other ecumenical leaders at St Martin's House at short notice; [wrote](#), posted and spoke; provided pastoral support; co-signed an [ACSQ statement](#); and, went with us to support community-led hearings in Cherbourg. After the official Inquiry hearings were cancelled by the new Queensland Government, Elders still decided to go ahead with the hearings, with the hearings locally led. We were struck by the courage of the Elders who spoke about their traumatic experiences being stolen from their families, despite being in shock because the official Inquiry hearings were cancelled. The Elders said that they were moved by Dean Peter's support and his willingness to take the three-hour drive to be present. We will always look back on this day and remember how Dean Peter was there in Cherbourg when Elders from the Stolen Generations needed him.

We also worked closely with Dean Peter from 2018 to support the Uluru Statement From the Heart, including in 2022 and 2023 while advocating for the Referendum "yes" vote. Again, Dean Peter rolled up his sleeves and was clear and unequivocal. He worked with us to deliver online resourcing workshops for clergy, advocates and communications professionals across the country in partnership with the National Council of Churches in Australia and other ecumenical groups; he co-signed a [parliamentary submission](#); met with and supported First Nations Elders and leaders, including Professor Megan Davis, who gave the [2022 Brisbane Peace Lecture](#) in the Cathedral; and, worked with us and other Queensland Community Alliance members on the [Final Voice Sprint](#) assembly, which was held in the Cathedral. These are just a few ways he supported constitutional recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples through a Voice to Parliament.

Dean Peter also supported the nationwide “Week of Silence”, which [ACSQ Elders called for](#) following the referendum outcome, by hosting a silent vigil with prayer spaces in the Cathedral. What really stood out to us in this incredibly sad period is that he didn’t question the need or wisdom for this “Week of Silence” — where other Christian leaders and writers nationwide engaged in debate in the week following the referendum or argued that allowing a week for First Nations peoples to grieve was unnecessary, he just got it.

Advocating for peace and an independent Australia

[Rain](#) or shine, every year Dean Peter speaks at the Palm Sunday rally and then usually joins in the march. We’ve been supporting him at the Palm Sunday gathering since 2016 with photography or videography, as well as marching with him.



The Very Rev'd Dr Peter Catt marching with community members at a Palm Sunday rally in Brisbane, circa 2017 (Image by Peter Branjerdporn)

While Dean Peter speaks on a different theme every Palm Sunday, his message is consistent — that if we want Australia to be a nation of peace that isn’t unduly influenced by multi-national corporations (including weapons manufacturers) or other nation states (including the US and Israel), then ordinary people need to step up, [because](#) “politicians actually do not lead — they like to give us the impression that they are the leaders, but they’re not. They’re followers and our job is to point the direction to them”. We are both challenged and inspired by his consistency, clarity and steadfastness.



The Very Rev'd Dr Peter Catt speaking at the 2026 Palm Sunday rally in King George Square, Brisbane (Image by *anglican focus*)

Dean Peter has achieved a lot as the Chair of the ACSQ's Social Responsibilities Committee, including advocating for legislation to be aligned with international conventions and treaties, such as the *Arms Trade Treaty* and the *Genocide Convention*, which Australia has long been a signatory to. He recently contributed to an [anglican focus news story](#) in support of a parliamentary inquiry into a package of bills drafted so Australia doesn't contribute to war crimes, genocide and unlawful occupation, in line with international standards. This package of bills is known as the "[Red Lines Package Omnibus Bill 2026](#)" and the ACSQ's Social Responsibilities Committee was the first Church organisation or agency to [formally endorse](#) the package of bills, which has also been endorsed by Amnesty, Oxfam, The Australia Institute and other charities, faith groups and community organisations.

Being with, in and for the wider community

One of the common themes that has emerged in the hours we've spent selecting photos from network folders, the *anglican focus* media library and social media for this photo essay is that Dean Peter has been as equally generous welcoming people from the wider community *to* the cathedral as he has been with his time *off* the Cathedral Precinct in the wider community.



The Very Rev'd Dr Peter Catt cooking his famous vegetarian paella for Living The Change workshop participants on Monday, 9 September 2019 during Season of Creation (Image by *anglican focus*)

For example, Dean Peter is well known for cooking up a pancake storm in the cathedral — along with Gerard Finn — early on Shrove Tuesday mornings for city workers to come and enjoy. He is also known for filling his gigantic pan with delicious paella for cathedral and wider community members to savour, including on International Women's Day and for Season of Creation climate justice events. We see this as an extension of his "sacramental hospitality" as he shows what being a "Eucharistic" person beyond the cathedral's sanctuary area means.



The Very Rev'd Dr Peter Catt and Gerard Finn cooking up another St John's Cathedral pancake storm early on Shrove Tuesday morning in 2023 (Image by *anglican focus*)

Dean Peter's open mind and big heart are also evident in his ecumenical and inter-faith work. We have witnessed this while working with Dean Peter in a range of inter-faith and ecumenical initiatives and events, including regarding [gambling reform](#), [peacemaking](#), [climate care messaging and events](#), [youth justice](#), [anti-racism](#), [First Nations peoples' rights](#), and advocating for [Sudanese people](#) and [Palestinians](#), just to name a few.



The Very Rev'd Dr Peter Catt, ACSQ Justice Enabler Peter Branjerdporn and ACSQ Director of News and Community Engagement Michelle McDonald joining ecumenical, Muslim, Buddhist, Hindu, Sikh and First Nations leaders at the third 2024 "Praying for Gaza" vigil in King George Square on 9 June 2024 (Image by *anglican focus*)

For more than a decade we've called Peter Catt "Dean Peter", so we've decided to keep calling him this. After more than 10 years working with Dean Peter, before and during our ACSQ employment, his retirement is an end of an era for us — as we are sure it is for many others, especially those who have long worked closely with him.

To Dean Peter, we say 'thank you' for always having our backs, for caring for our community and making everyone an 'us', for being *present* and for saying what needs to be said, even when you know it will cost you.

WCC commends Nobel Peace Prize awarded to Navanethem “Navi” Pillay



Navi Pillay during her tenure as UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (Image by UN / Jean-Marc Ferré)

The World Council of Churches is commending the awarding of the Nobel Peace Prize to Navanethem “Navi” Pillay for her efforts to promote peace and international law.

The prize committee noted that she has been instrumental in ensuring that war crimes, crimes against humanity, and genocide are prosecuted.

Born into a family of Indian Tamil origin under apartheid in Durban, South Africa, Pillay became a lawyer and legal pioneer, confronting deep structural discrimination, segregation, and exclusion. A common thread runs from her early work defending Nelson Mandela and others who stood up against apartheid to her service as a judge in some of the key international court cases of our time

She has served as a judge on the High Court in South Africa, the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda, and the International Criminal Court. She was the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and, until recently, she chaired the UN Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Occupied Palestinian Territory. Today Pillay is a judge on the International Court of Justice in the case where Myanmar stands accused of genocide

In historic international court cases, she has shown that legal measures can help prevent acts of war and violence. Pillay has also contributed to strengthen the institutions of international law.

“Navi Pillay is a well-deserved recipient of the Nobel Peace Prize,” said World Council of Churches (WCC) general secretary Rev. Prof. Dr Jerry Pillay.

“She is known for her courage, convictions, and outstanding work in upholding international law and principles.”

He noted that Navi Pillay has never hesitated in linking peace to the call for justice and truth.

“The WCC is very proud to have worked with her at times and appreciated the value she placed in the role of religion in addressing global challenges,” he said.

“We offer her our heartfelt congratulations and take pleasure and delight in the honour duly accorded to her for her many years of service and contributions in the areas of justice and peace.”

Peter Prove, director of the WCC Commission of the Churches on International Affairs, also warmly welcomed the award to Navi Pillay for her work to promote the rule of law, and to strengthen the institutions of international law.

“In her various roles — as a judge on the High Court of South Africa, the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda, and the International Criminal Court, as UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, and as chair of the UN Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Occupied Palestinian Territory — Navi Pillay has been one of the most prominent leaders in the field of international human rights and humanitarian law, and as the Norwegian Nobel Committee has affirmed, peace requires justice,” said Prove.

“The WCC has just concluded a major international consultation in which we recalled the focus in ecumenical social ethics on promoting international law for the protection of vulnerable people, communities and nations against violence and abuse by the powerful. Throughout her career, Navi Pillay has advanced and defended this shared commitment.”

First published on the [World Council of Churches website](#) on 9 October 2026.

2026 Archbishop of Brisbane's Appeal



ACOM's Fredah Fataka coordinates a network of 16 environmental observatories around the Solomons, including one at Paibeta Community High School on Savo Island, and trains school students to collect and record the data (© ABM AID 2025 / Isabel Robinson)

Archbishop Jeremy Greaves invites you to support the work of the Anglican Church of Melanesia in the Solomon Islands and Vanuatu.

In partnership with Anglicans in Development, the Anglican Church of Melanesia is building stronger, healthier, safer and more climate-resilient communities.

The 2026 Archbishop of Brisbane's Appeal supports locally led initiatives by the Anglican Church of Melanesia to address current and emerging challenges for future generations.

Inspired by Jesus' example of caring for the whole person, communities work together offering adult literacy classes, positive parenting programs, improved access to water and toilets, and initiatives that tackle climate change.

Stand with the Anglican Church of Melanesia, responding to local needs in loving service.

Your gift will transform lives for generations to come.

Gifts to Anglicans in Development (AID) are tax deductible.

Solomon Islands — Creation care



"I know that God created us, so we too need to be good stewards of Creation," says Freda Fataka, ACOM's Environmental Observatory Coordinator, pictured recording rainfall data (© ABM AID 2025 / Isabel Robinson)

"I have a passion for caring for nature," say Freda Fataka from the Solomon Islands.

"I know that God created us, so we too need to be good stewards of Creation."

Freda Fataka is a guardian of the land and sea and works as the Environmental Observatory Coordinator for the Anglican Church of Melanesia (ACOM) in the Solomon Islands.

She is just one of many people working for ACOM, inspiring young and old alike to participate in simple yet profound work: gathering the data that shows how quickly the climate is changing.

"Data is important for evidence purposes to the government," Freda explains.

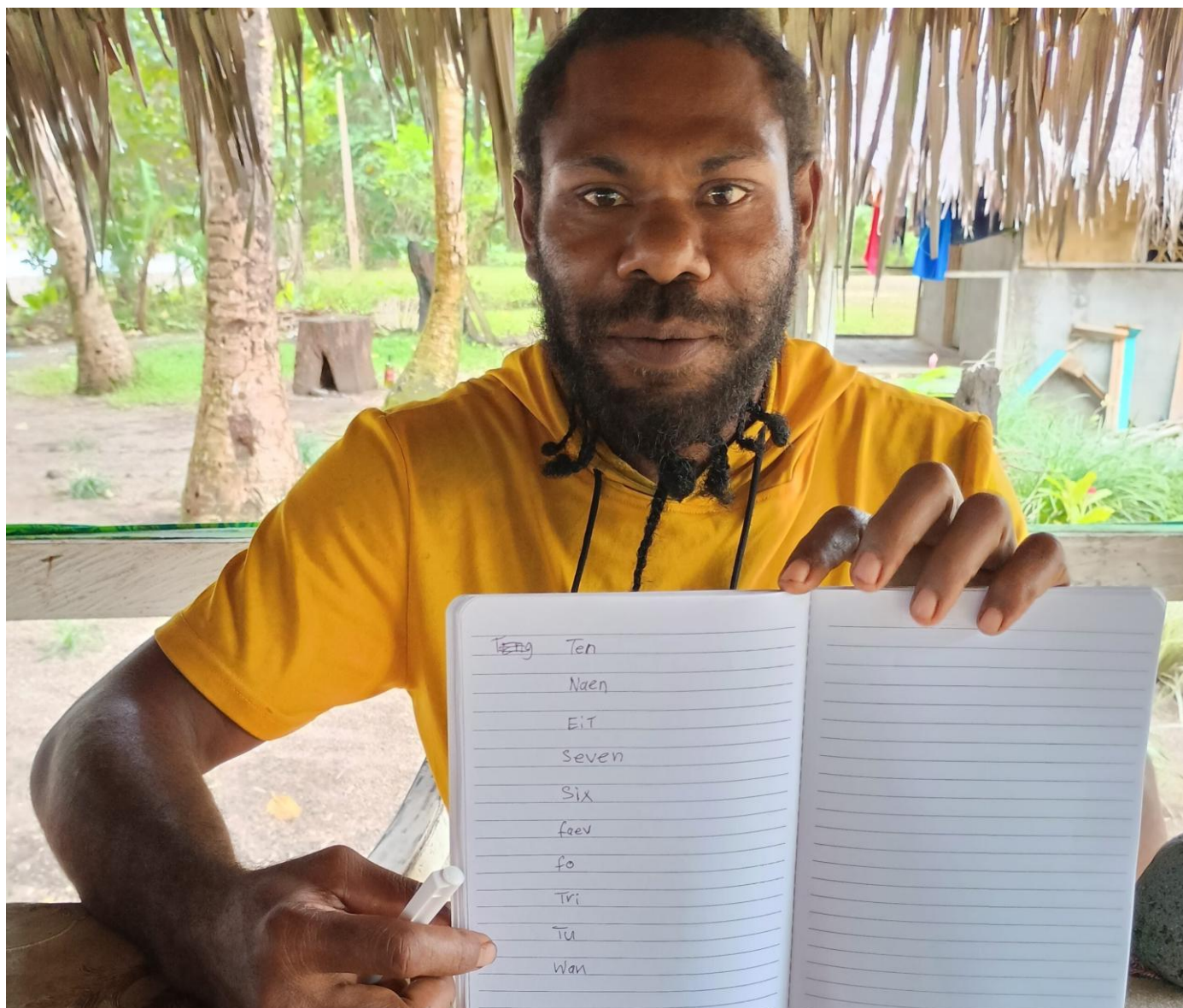
"It helps us see with the naked eye all the changes that are happening."

In July 2026, Archbishop of Brisbane Jeremy Greaves led a pilgrimage to the Solomon Islands. The below video tells the story:

Vanuatu — literacy schools

In Vanuatu, ACOM runs literacy schools that give people a second chance at education.

Ray Jounto, a literacy student from Vanualava, shared how learning to read and write has reshaped his world.



Ray missed out on a formal education, but thanks to new literacy skills, learned at an ABM AID funded adult literacy school in Sola, Vanuatu, he has become a carpenter (© ABM AID 2026 / Terry Russell)

Ray was only six when his father died — his widowed mother could not afford the fees to keep her son in school.

For many years Ray fished to make a living, but in 2015, he got the chance to enrol in an ACOM literacy school on his island.

Slowly but surely, he began to understand letters, words, and numbers. Soon, Ray used his new skills to write letters to his mother, and help his three children with their homework, which made him immensely proud.

His passion for learning ignited, Ray kept up the momentum and in 2022 enrolled in a carpentry course run by ACOM. Now that he understood numbers, Ray could make sense of measuring centimetres and metres.

He applied his new carpentry skills by building his own house. With this success, Ray started getting carpentry contracts right around Vanualava.

“...I learned to read, write and count. Now I can read the Bible in church, and I was assistant foreman in the building of a new church in Wasaka...” Ray said.

Ray’s story is just one of many. Men and women across Vanuatu have been given a second chance at education through ACOM’s literacy program, opening up doors to future opportunities.

Vanuatu — water, sanitation and hygiene

Clean water, decent toilets and good hygiene are basic human rights. They should be available to everyone, everywhere — but they aren’t.

Across Vanuatu, ACOM is working to install water supply systems, from rainwater tanks to piped spring systems. They also build model Ventilation Improved Pit (VIP) toilets, and work with communities to adopt safer sanitation practices.



On the island of Vanualava, Kaltonga and his son are thrilled with a new Ventilation Improved Pit (VIP) toilet, a much-needed addition to community health and hygiene (© ABM AID 2026 / Terry Russell)

Easier access to fresh water has a huge impact on the lives of people, especially women and girls who often bear the burden of water collection.

With fresh drinking water at hand, and sanitary toilets installed, disease is reduced. When a water system is installed, daily tasks like washing dishes and clothes take less time.

“We no longer have to walk down to the well to do laundry,” says Rita from the island of Ambae. “We can do it at home.”

Locally led, locally driven

These are just a few examples of the faithful work of ACOM that the 2026 Archbishop of Brisbane's Appeal will support.

ACOM's own mission statement includes:

"Demonstrating God's love in responding to human needs in loving service."

The work outlined above aims to achieve this goal. It is shaped by local customs and with local needs in mind. Communities see their own knowledge reflected in the designs, which strengthens ownership and pride.

You can be a part of this work by praying with our brothers and sisters in the Solomon Islands and Vanuatu and giving to this appeal.

In partnership with the Anglican Board of Mission's Anglicans In Development initiative, Archbishop Jeremy Greaves invites you to support the work of the Anglican Church of Melanesia in the Solomon Islands and Vanuatu by contributing to the "[2026 Archbishop of Brisbane's Appeal](#)". This work is building stronger, healthier, safer and more climate-resilient communities.

“The hearts, minds and doors of chaplains are always open”



Padre John Hoare following the baptism of Michelle McDonald and her younger brother in the late 1970s at St Paul's Chapel at the Royal Military College, Duntroon (Image supplied)

One of the best conversations I've shared with a priest was at last year's Synod with (then) Army chaplain Brigadier The Rev'd Rob Sutherland CSC. This is unsurprising because Padre Rob is witty and warm and because chaplains of any kind are always up for a good yarn. Even though Rob barely knew me I felt that he connected instantly and in a genuine, easy-going way.

Rob and I really got yarning when I mentioned that I was baptised by a Catholic Army chaplain at St Paul's Chapel at the Royal Military College in Canberra. Rob asked me who the chaplain was and when I said, "Fr John Hoare", Rob replied with, "He was a chaplain at Duntroon when I began my training there in the 1970s, and I remember him well — Padre John never turned anyone away from his communion rail." Delighted, I responded with, "Wow — that's a big deal for a Catholic priest, even now! My parents, who met as Army officers, were very fond of him. He officiated their wedding service, as well as my younger brother's baptism on the same day I was baptised because Mum and Dad — being 'Army' — presumably liked the 'twofer' efficiency."

Since this animated chat I've often pondered Rob's observation that: "Padre John never turned anyone away from his communion rail." This brief remark sums up what eight years of being *anglican focus'* editor has shown me — that there is something very special about chaplains because the hearts, minds and doors of chaplains are always open.

Thinking about my baptism and my parents' wedding, as well as the hospital chaplain who led the funeral of my veteran maternal grandfather, reminds me that chaplains are present from the womb to the tomb.

After many interviews with Australian Defence Force (ADF) chaplains — along with the publishing of their [submissions and videos](#) — since 2018 I recognise how distinctive and invaluable their ministry is. In 2023 Padre Rob outlined the following in an *anglican focus* piece he authored titled “[ADF chaplains are often the front door to other support](#)”:

“We undertake all the training that we need in order to go almost everywhere that our soldiers go. If our soldiers are tired and hot and wet or cold and hungry then so are we, but this sharing of physical circumstances engenders a sense of belonging. Once we are there, somehow we get trusted with the big issues that are going on in soldiers’ lives. When a soldier approaches me and says, ‘Hey, Padre, I’ve just heard from home that...’, it’s generally not great news and our proximity means we get trusted to help through the tough times.”

Sometimes folk ask me why I’m so supportive of ADF chaplains and veterans given my progressive leanings. I respond by saying, “I think you can be ‘a progressive’ and care about chaplains and ADF personnel — if our nation is going to ask them to risk their lives for us and recover upon their return and ask their families to cope while they are deployed, then we should care for them and their loved ones. Churches, especially, need to do much more, including welcoming and ministering to them.”

It’s because ADF chaplains are *present* even when it’s uncomfortable or dangerous — with no agenda other than to care, listen, encourage, gently advise and minister because they understand what soldiers, sailors and aviators are going through — that I feel so compelled to support their work.

In my last chat with Padre Rob — about the Diocese’s relatively new Veterans and Families Advisory Working Group — I asked him what support ADF chaplains need most. One of the things on Rob’s list is bringing Christian ministry, including the sacraments, to veterans and families who ask for support. He noted that “there aren’t enough serving ADF chaplains now to baptise, conduct services — including weddings and funerals — and anoint the sick.” He also shared that there is an increasing need for ministry to people who have left the ADF, particularly veterans who are wounded in body, mind and spirit.

If you are an Anglican Church Southern Queensland priest or deacon in our Diocese and you would like to express interest in assisting our ADF chaplains with sacramental hospitality and services, please [email](#) “Defence Anglicans”.

Editor’s note: Brigadier The Rev’d Rob Sutherland CSC (Ret’d) joined the Army in 1974 and served for 20 years as an Infantry Officer. He then served for 27 years as a part-time or full-time Army chaplain, including as Archdeacon of the Army. Rob established the Veterans’ Chaplaincy Pilot Project for the Department of Veterans’ Affairs and the Warrior Welcome Home Program.

Principal in focus: Andrew Peach, West Moreton Anglican College



Members of the West Moreton Anglican College team, including Principal Andrew Peach (centre, back), at the inaugural ASCENT Anglican School Awards on 15 May 2026 (Image supplied)

Andrew Peach's career reflects a distinctive blend of educational leadership, community engagement and strategic vision, positioning him as one of Queensland's most experienced and versatile school Principals. Appointed Principal of West Moreton Anglican College (WestMAC) following a national search, Mr Peach assumed the role at the conclusion of longtime Principal Geoff McLay's tenure at the end of 2024, bringing with him more than 27 years of experience across education, government and sport.

Mr Peach has built a reputation for leading large, complex school communities with a strong focus on individual student excellence. Prior to WestMAC, he served for eight years as Principal of Marsden State High School, where he was widely recognised for transforming school culture through high expectations, industry partnerships and a focus on student voice. His leadership during this period was acknowledged in 2019 when he received the Excellent Leadership in Teaching and Learning Award at the Queensland College of Teachers' TEACHX Awards, and in 2020 when he was recognised as the School Principal of the Year, Government at the Australian Education Awards.

Academically, Mr Peach holds a Bachelor of Education and a Master of Business Administration qualification that have informed his practical yet strategic approach to school leadership. At the heart of his leadership philosophy is ensuring that learning is closely tied to community, that aspiration is matched with opportunity, and that students are supported to feel connected to their future pathways.

Mr Peach's professional pathway is notable for its breadth. Alongside senior roles within the Queensland Department of Education, including Executive Principal, he has worked at the national

level in sport, most recently as General Manager of School Participation with the National Rugby League (NRL) and the inaugural Chief Executive Officer of Former Origin Greats Queensland (FOGS). These roles allowed him to merge his longstanding passion for education and youth development with his genuine enthusiasm for sporting participation on a national scale. In 2025, he returned to full-time education, taking on a new professional challenge in leading a Prep to Year 12 independent school for the first time. Mr Peach acknowledged the strong foundations already established at WestMAC that enabled him to take on the opportunity.

The WestMAC community recently celebrated success at the inaugural Ascent Anglican Schools Awards. The college's Agricultural Excellence Program won the Signature Program or Project Award, and Art Teacher, Amanda Dawson was recognised as the winner of the Early Career Teacher.

As WestMAC looks ahead to long-term development initiatives, including major campus infrastructure projects, Mr Peach's blend of educational credibility, organisational leadership skills and community-minded vision positions him as a Principal focused not only on student success, but on shaping a school environment that also develops resilient and capable future citizens.

Editor's note: First published in the Anglican Schools Commission's [Footprints](#) magazine, Term 3 2026 edition.

Season of Creation closes — but actions will continue



(Photo by Albin Hillert / WCC)

As the Season of Creation officially closed on 4 October, people gathered online from across the world for a prayer service that not only recapped many green initiatives but also encouraged ongoing action to care for creation.

Speakers reflected on this year's theme, "Living Water" (Ezekiel 47:9, 12): "Wherever the river goes, every living creature that swarms will live...Their fruit will be for food and their leaves for healing" (NRSV).

Analisa Ramsahai, environmental scientist and Catholic climate activist from Trinidad and Tobago, who serves as a board director and secretary for the global Laudato Si' Movement, focused on water as connection — our connection with each other, with the earth, and with God.

"Rain returns water to the earth, nourishing plants, animals and people," she said.

"But before we explore these connections, I invite you to experience water for a moment."

She then invited those gathered to imagine — and deeply appreciate — all the ways in which water touches their lives.

Elizabeth Trice, a UK-based wildlife and conservation professional and an active environmental organiser within the Church of England, and founder of "The Seedlings Network," expressed her appreciation for the gathering.

"It's key to look back at our beginnings," she said, referring to water being connected with the origins of all life.

"It's also important to remember that the voices of tomorrow are also the voices of today," she added, noting that young people are not just carrying the future of the earth but also the present.

Fr Movses (Garen) Yosolkanian, Armenian Apostolic, with the Middle East Council of Churches (MECC), noted that water is a gift from God, a source of life, healing, and restoration.

"Yet we find ourselves in a thirsty moment in the struggle for global ecological justice," he said.

"Across the world, our water sources are threatened. What should be a source of life is increasingly becoming a source of struggle, injustice, and division."

María José Tejedor González, with the ACT Alliance, thanked the speakers, those who began and continued earth-friendly initiatives, and all those who prayed.

"You all inspire us with your wisdom, hope, and witness throughout this season," she said.

"You remind us that caring for creation is a shared calling. Although today marks the end of this year's celebration, the journey continues."

Season of Creation is the ecumenical world's month of prayer and action for creation. Beginning with "Feast of Creation in Christ" on 1 September, is a time of witness to God's love and our human responsibility.

The season forms one chapter in the World Council of Church's Ecumenical Decade of Climate Justice Action (2025–2034), launched in Johannesburg in 2025.

Full video: [October 4: Season of Creation Closing Event 2026](#)

First published on the [World Council of Churches website](#) **on 5 October 2026.**

Australia needs an official measure of poverty, says Anglicare Southern Queensland



Anglicare is calling on the Australian Government to establish an official, multidimensional measure of poverty and use it to set and track progress against clear targets to reduce poverty (Image by Pexels)

Australia needs an official measure of poverty that captures more than household income and reflects the realities people face in their everyday lives, Anglicare Southern Queensland says ahead of Anti-Poverty Week.

Anglicare is calling on the Australian Government to establish an official, multidimensional measure of poverty and use it to set and track progress against clear targets to reduce poverty.

[Anti-Poverty Week](#) runs from Sunday, 11 to Saturday 17, October, with this year's national campaign focused on collective action to end poverty.

More than 3.7 million Australians are estimated to be living below the commonly used poverty line, including 757,000 children.

Anglicare Southern Queensland CEO Sue Cooke said Australia needed a clearer picture of what poverty looks like in people's everyday lives.

"We cannot properly tackle poverty if we don't have an official way of measuring it," Ms Cooke said.

"Income is an important part of the picture, but it doesn't tell the whole story.

"Housing costs, access to essentials, health, education and the ability to participate in community life can all shape whether someone is experiencing poverty."

Australia's poverty line is commonly measured as 50 per cent of median weekly household income, adjusted for household type.

But during this year's Anti-Poverty Week Anglicare Southern Queensland is calling for a standard measure of poverty that looks beyond income and includes the multiple dimensions that affect people's ability to live a secure and healthy life.

"Having an agreed national measure would help us understand the scale and nature of poverty, set meaningful targets and measure whether the actions we are taking are actually making a difference and hold government accountable for progress," Ms Cooke said.

"At the moment, we measure household income in multiple ways.

"Often these measures don't tell us whether a family can afford their housing, put food on the table, get to medical appointments or give their children the opportunity to participate in school and community life."

The importance of a multi-dimensional measure of poverty is illustrated through Anglicare's Anti-Poverty Week campaign featuring "Sophie", a fictional 10-year-old girl living with her mother and younger brother.

Sophie's household has an income of \$950 a week. Under the commonly used income-based poverty measure, the household is just above the poverty line.

But the family pays \$550 a week in rent, leaving \$400 to cover food, electricity, transport, phone and internet costs, medical expenses, childcare, education, insurance, loans and the everyday activities that help children participate in their communities.

The question posed by the campaign is simple: Is Sophie living in poverty?

The answer depends on what we measure.

"Sophie's story shows why the way we measure poverty matters," Ms Cooke said.

"On income alone, her household sits just above the poverty line.

"But when we look at what is left after housing and the range of costs a family faces, we get a very different picture.

"A child should not be considered to be out of poverty simply because their household income sits a few dollars above a particular threshold.

"We need to understand whether families have enough to meet their basic needs and participate fully in society.

"That is what a meaningful measure of poverty should help us see."

The need for a better measure is particularly clear as housing costs continue to place pressure on Queensland households. Anglicare's latest Southern Queensland Rental Affordability Snapshot found

just 26 rental properties out of more than 8,000 surveyed — 0.3 per cent — were affordable and appropriate for households on minimum wage or whose main income is income support.

Anglicare's frontline experience shows the consequences of this pressure, with more people seeking support across a range of services.

During 2024-25, Anglicare Southern Queensland provided homelessness support to 627 women and young people, for example.

Anglicare Southern Queensland also provided new clothing to more than 4,000 people in need through its Thread Together partnership.

Ms Cooke said Anti-Poverty Week was an opportunity to focus on what poverty actually means for people.

"Behind every statistic is a person, a family or a child," she said.

"If we want to reduce poverty, we need to be able to see it clearly.

"That starts with having an official measure that reflects the complexity of people's lives.

"Australia needs to be able to track not just how many people are below an income threshold, but also whether people have enough to live safely, participate in their communities and give their children the opportunities they need to thrive."

Anglicare will join community organisations, advocates, service providers and parliamentarians at the Queensland Anti-Poverty Week gathering at Queensland Parliament on Tuesday, 13 October.

The event, co-hosted by [Anglicare Southern Queensland](#), [Mission Australia](#) and [QCOSS](#), will highlight the experiences of children, young people and families experiencing poverty and disadvantage, while showcasing services and initiatives supporting Queensland communities.

“Affirmation of Just Peace” published by International Peace Convocation in Korea



(Photo by Albin Hillert / WCC)

An International Ecumenical Peace Convocation held, 9-13 September in South Korea, has released an “Affirmation of Just Peace.”

The convocation was convened by the National Council of Churches in Korea, Christian Conference of Asia, and World Council of Churches.

“During our conference we listened to voices from Palestine where the violence of war and injustice continues unabated and from Ukraine where there is no end in sight to the war,” reads the document.

“We heard voices from the Philippines where human rights violations continue, and concerning the oppression of ethnic minorities in Sri Lanka.”

The text names other forms of armed conflict and structural and state violence that persist across the world.

“Political tensions are escalating and militarism is intensifying among countries aligned with opposing blocs, while the battlefield deployment of AI-enabled weapons systems and even the growing threat of nuclear war give cause for profound concern,” reads the text.

“In many countries, hatred and discrimination driven by ideological extremism — including Christian nationalism — have become pervasive, inflicting suffering on diverse social minorities and marginalized communities.”

The text also names the current context of the Korean Peninsula.

“The two Koreas must find a path to peaceful coexistence grounded in mutual respect,” reads the text.

“We call for the restoration of communication, the prevention of military incidents, and dialogue among the parties concerned to end the state of war and build a durable peace regime.”

The document expresses the commitment to promote the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons.

“We stand in solidarity with peoples and communities affected by war, occupation, political violence, and human rights violations, including in Palestine, Ukraine, Myanmar, Sudan, Iran, Sri Lanka, the Philippines, and Colombia,” reads the text.

The text expresses the commitment to strengthen church-based action for climate justice and the restoration of creation.

“We understand peace not only as the absence of war but as a process of healing, reconciliation, and transformation,” reads the text.

“We affirm that peace must be experienced in the everyday lives of people living on the Korean Peninsula.”

The document also affirms the calling of the churches to become communities of healing and reconciliation in a divided society.

“We commit ourselves to move from declaration to sustained action,” reads the text.

Full text: [Affirmation of Just Peace — by international peace convocation in Korea](#)

First published on the [World Council of Churches website](#) on 5 October 2026.