

A litany of gratitude on the Bridge to Brisbane



Bishop John Roundhill supporting Anglicare Southern Queensland's Foster and Kinship Care programme during the Bridge to Brisbane fun run in September 2026 (Image supplied)

I recently completed the [Bridge to Brisbane](#) 10km run, sporting an Anglicare Foster Care running shirt and Bush Ministry Fund (BMF) hat! Being a bishop, this was an unusual way to spend a Sunday morning, but as I joined more than 40,000 folk on a glorious spring morning, I was thankful to be pounding the pavement.

The fun run event was all the more remarkable for me personally because I was told some six years ago that I needed to stop running. I wrote about this in an [anglican focus](#) "Learning to recalibrate" reflection.

The last six years have been about learning the joy of resistance training and Pilates classes and also, at the suggestion of a sports physiotherapist, relearning to run. None of this changes the fact that I am now an older man with dodgy knees. I dare say that I might still need new knees within five years or so.

Back then I did not fully understand what "recalibration" would mean for me — reducing my step length, learning the joy of powered squats and trying to find joy in tedious exercises with unfamiliar names. Yet being able to run supporting [Anglicare's Foster and Kinship Care](#) programme and the [BMF](#) has been one of the highlights of my year.



"I recently completed the Bridge to Brisbane 10km run, sporting an Anglicare Foster Care running shirt and Bush Ministry Fund (BMF) hat," says Bishop John Roundhill in 2026 (Image supplied)

As the runners made their way over the Gateway Bridge towards the Brisbane Showgrounds, we were greeted by various entertainers and well-wishers, including street bands, a Chinese lion dancing troupe and a Buddhist monk ringing bells. In an underpass runners we were delighted by [Underground Opera](#) — fantastic.

I also passed one DJ playing Hozier's 2014 debut hit "Take Me To Church", which made me reflect on how some people have a negative experience of church when they are not welcomed.

I also wondered what it would have been like if we had passed folk singing energetic Christian hymns or worship music? Maybe this is something a parish or school could organise next year.

Anglicare's Foster and Kinship Care programme [needs funds](#). Last year Anglicare Southern Queensland supported 1,853 foster and kinship carers who provided safe and loving environments for 2,339 children. For these children, foster and kinship care offers safety and stability, along with belonging and hope.

The [Bush Ministry Fund](#) supports church communities in our Diocese, particularly in remote communities. Bush Church Aid (BCA) and the Church Missionary Society (CMS) do not provide support for these communities. If we pray for regional parishes in our Diocese, then supporting the BMF is a practical extra step.

As I ran that Sunday morning, giving thanks to God came easily, so my "gratitude litany" was a long one. I gave thanks for health and the ability to run, for the wonder of the world around me, for Anglicare's work supporting children, and faithful remote communities.

Giving thanks at 6.30 minutes per kilometre was not a bad way to spend a Sunday morning.

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



"One of the most inspiring conference moments was during a Morning Prayer led by The Rev'd Mamuor kun Peter. He shared a childhood story about tending sheep and keeping them warm with a fire at night. When the fire began to fade, his father would bring the scattered sticks together and the flame would burn brightly again. He likened this to God gathering us together so that our faith remains strong and our collective light can guide others," says The Rev'd Sam Sigamani (Image by anglican focus, August 2026)

Southern and Northern Region clergy — Sam Sigamani, Mary-Anne Rulfs and Jilleen Chambers — 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 Sam Sigamani — Priest-in-Charge, The Parish of Wynnum

A key insight I took away from The Rev'd Bree Mills' session on "From Formation to Faithfulness" is the importance of perseverance in ministry. Church growth requires faithfulness, prayer and a willingness to keep trying new approaches. Not every initiative will succeed and failures can become steppingstones for future fruitfulness. Remaining committed in prayer and trusting God's leading are essential for long-term ministry effectiveness.

This insight encourages me to continue developing new ministries for children and families in my parish. I have been introducing faith-based programs aimed at helping children encounter Christ and become connected with the church community. While some initiatives have not achieved the desired outcomes, each attempt has provided valuable lessons. I will remain consistent in prayer, evaluation and innovation, trusting that God works through both successes and setbacks.

One of the most inspiring conference moments was during a Morning Prayer led by The Rev'd Mamuor kun Peter. He shared a childhood story about tending sheep and keeping them warm with a fire at night. When the fire began to fade, his father would bring the scattered sticks together and the flame would burn brightly again. He likened this to God gathering us together so that our faith remains strong and our collective light can guide others.

The annual clergy conference is important because it provides an opportunity for spiritual renewal, learning and fellowship. Clergy often serve in demanding and sometimes isolating circumstances. Gathering together strengthens relationships, encourages mutual support and allows us to learn from one another's experiences. It also reminds us that we are part of a larger Diocesan community, united in our calling and shared mission of serving Christ and his people.



"We can be really encouraged that our distinctive work in Christian schools of the Anglican tradition — nurturing young people in heart, soul, mind and strength — is meeting a real need," says The Rev'd Mary Anne-Rulfs (Image supplied, August 2026)

The Rev'd Mary-Anne Rulfs — Director of Mission, Anglican Schools Commission

Despite raw data and the common experience of declining church attendance, Mark McCrindle's session highlighted the undercurrents of faith emerging in Australia across all demographics, particularly young people. This shows that the work we are doing in our schools to equip students through faith formation pathways is vital.

We can be really encouraged that our distinctive work in Christian schools of the Anglican tradition — nurturing young people in heart, soul, mind and strength — is meeting a real need in our world where crises of meaning and belonging are experienced by many. Anglican schools provide faith formation pathways through religious education, service learning, the school's worship life, authentic relationships and the nurturing of students' curiosity and appreciation of beauty, awe and wonder.

I accompanied author and speaker [Dr Beth-Sarah Wright](#) to the conference for a day. Beth-Sarah shared with me how encouraged she was to hear much of what is core to her “[Dignity Lens](#)” work echoed in the important ministry of ADF chaplain The Rev’d Sarah Gibson, who spoke about “Strategic Empathy: Christian Presence with Intention in Context” at the conference. This inspired me to continue the dignity work we are resourcing schools with — so schools can participate in such Christ-centred mission.

It’s important to see ourselves as part of a diverse community, where our different skills and experiences can strengthen our collective impact in ministry. Clergy conferences offer the opportunity to share our insights and be resourced for ministry in relevant and practical ways. We also receive encouragement through our Bible studies, prayer and worship together, refuelling us in our calling.



“In a small country parish inwardly focused on parish priorities, it is easy to become unhealthily isolated. Clergy conferences provide opportunities for learning, laughter, reconnection with old and new friends, the revitalisation of our call as ordained persons, and Spirit-led worship of the One whom we serve,” says The Rev’d Jilleen Chambers (Image supplied, August 2026)

The Rev’d Jilleen Chambers — Parish Priest, The Parish of Kilcoy-Woodford

My prayerful question for this year’s conference was: “How does The Parish of Kilcoy-Woodford, as a small, vibrant and outwardly focused parish, build on our community connections and create Christ-centred opportunities?” The recent clergy conference facilitated learnings and conversations on such possibilities.

I received a constructive and encouraging reminder when reading a comment written by a conference participant on a butcher’s paper feedback and insights sheet: “FAIL — First Attempt In Learning”. Errors or mishaps are rarely endpoints, but opportunities for improvement and reflection. First

attempts don't always work out as hoped — when they don't, chalk them up as experiences and try another way.

I was encouraged and challenged by The Rev'd Bree Mills' presentation on her research about the development of innovative and missional leaders. I was also inspired by her useful break down on how to move a parish towards the goal of more effectively communicating God's love.

I especially enjoyed brainstorming with The Rev'd Donna Petersen on ways The Parish of Mt Gravatt could positively connect with school children walking through the driveway. This raised similar questions for our parish, including engaging Op Shop customers walking through the courtyard of St Matthias', Woodford. As a first step, I will explore ways to create ongoing interest in the Christian story beyond our Christmas and Easter displays.

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Editor's note: Stay tuned for a "Clergy conference insights and learnings 2026: 2.0" jointly written *anglican focus* piece.

Dates & Seasons • Tuesday 8 September 2026 • By The Rev'd Lynda Crossley

Pyjama Sunday: Supporting Anglicare



The Rev'd Lynda Crossley with St Gabriel's, Carindale community members commemorating "Pyjama Sunday" in July 2026 (Image supplied)

The St Gabriel's, Carindale community recently hosted our annual "Pyjama Sunday". What is this you might ask?

Well, parishioners are invited to dress up in their winter pyjamas and bring new pyjamas for children in out-of-home care. These pyjamas are passed on to Anglicare to give to children whom Anglicare provides foster and kinship care services to.

Our parish has a tradition of commemorating Pyjama Sunday and passing on new kids' pyjamas to Anglicare. We give thanks to God for all the ways — big and small — that we can support Anglicare.

Around the time of our "Pyjama Sunday" we were focussing on [Matthew 13](#) and the Kingdom of Heaven. In The Parable of the Mustard Seed Jesus says:

"He put before them another parable: 'The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed that someone took and sowed in his field; it is the smallest of all the seeds, but when it has grown it is the greatest of shrubs and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and make nests in its branches.'"

So, we know that even small acts of kindness, such as wearing pyjamas to church and bringing a new set of PJs and some joy to kids in out-of-home care, helps bring about God's kingdom.

We are glad to partner with Anglicare and are thankful for the practical ways Anglicare assists our parishes by sharing in the Anglican Church's mission.

Since being appointed the priest of The Parish of Carindale around 12 months ago I have connected often with Anglicare because they are the "practical care arm" of our Church. Anglicare's fundraising and mission team members are great to work with, bringing a wonderful energy and a deep commitment to our Diocese's parishes.

Our parish looks forward to commemorating [Anglicare Sunday](#) on 13 September.

Editor's notes: Anglicare Sunday liturgical resources, prayers and materials (such as "Tea for Tomorrow" resources) may be [downloaded](#). To find out more about Anglicare Sunday, please [email](#) Anglicare Southern Queensland's Director of Mission Dr Stephen Harrison.

Anglican Church Southern Queensland parishes, schools and ministries can [reach out](#) to Zareena Rajan — Anglicare's Community Relationship Manager — to discuss how Anglicare can help your faith community and how your community can support Anglicare's vital work.

A year of firsts in my second year of curacy: A photo essay



The Rev'd Richard Butler officiating his first marriage — the wedding of parishioners, Jacqueline and Patrick — in September 2026 at St Mark's, Warwick (Image supplied)

Officiating my first wedding service

As I wrapped the white stole around the couple's joined hands and said, "In the name of God, I declare them to be husband and wife", I felt incredibly privileged to perform the sacrament of marriage for the first time. What made the service particularly special for me is that Jacqueline and Patrick are members of the St Mark's, Warwick congregation. I walked alongside this beautiful couple in the marriage preparation process as we discussed values, communication and the importance of supporting each other, as well as planned the service.



Bishop Cam Venables with Ian Mace, Hayleigh McCosker, Jackson McCosker and The Rev'd Richard Butler outside St Mark's, Warwick, after celebrating the annual "Service of Confirmations" on 19 July 2026 (Image supplied)

Confirmations

Another "first" during 2026 was the preparation of candidates for Confirmation, including running a series of interactive Confirmation classes for two teenagers (Jackson and Hayleigh), and a separate series of interactive classes for adults Ian (Confirmation) and Evan (Reception into the Anglican Church). I also prepared the liturgy for the Confirmation service itself, including PowerPoint graphics and hymns, which was approved by Bishop Cam prior to the service. The interactive style of these sessions proved successful for both teenagers and adults alike.



St Mark's, Warwick parishioner Ali Barnett and The Rev'd Richard Butler at the opening night of Art @ St Mark's during the 2026 Jumpers and Jazz in July Festival, with Ali's "Symphony of Blossoms" in the background (Image supplied)

Art @ St Mark's

While this year's [Art @ St Mark's](#) was my third, it was the first time I didn't feel nervous. This popular Jumpers and Jazz in July Festival art exhibition and café event, which is hosted by our parish every year, is one of our parish's outreach highlights.



The Rev'd Richard Butler, The Rev'd Rosemary Peterson (from Christ Church, Killarney, which is part of The Parish of Warwick) and The Ven. Lizzie Giatskell after the deconsecration service at Christ Church, Killarney on 29 August 2026 (Image supplied)

Farewelling Christ Church, Killarney

Ordained ministry takes many forms. When Christ Church, Killarney was deconsecrated in late August I, along with other ministry team members, provided pastoral care and support to parishioners who felt a combination of grief, nostalgia and anxiety. The process of deconsecrating a church can be very emotional for parishioners — and for clergy. This was the first time I was involved in a church deconsecration, and I felt humbled being included in what felt like a farewell to a church with such a rich history. I would like to acknowledge The Rev'd Rosemary Peterson's ministry for Christ Church, Killarney — she became Priest-in-Charge of this church in 1999 when it was a standalone parish. She is beloved in Killarney for her compassionate nature, honesty and quintessential country directness.



The Rev'd Richard Butler leading a congregation of residents from various aged care homes in "How Great Thou Art" at St Mark's, Warwick in September 2026 (Image supplied)

Hymns and 1940s-era classics

I love that residents from various Warwick aged care homes can gather a few times annually in our beautiful church to enjoy the richness of our pipe organ music. Because I lead regular services as part of my aged care ministry, I know that "How Great Thou Art" is a favourite hymn because it is always sung at the highest volume. So I ensured this song was included on the "playlist" at our most recent pipe organ concert. We also sang Glenn Miller Orchestra signature tracks, such as "Chattanooga Choo Choo" and "A Nightingale Sang in Berkeley Square", and engaged in a fun Glenn Miller-themed trivia quiz.



"The mentoring I have received from The Ven. Lizzie Gaitskell as my 'training incumbent' has been invaluable in ensuring my development in the early stages of ordained ministry," says The Rev'd Richard Butler (Image supplied)

A big thanks to The Ven. Lizzie and Bishop Cam

I commenced my ministry at St Mark's, Warwick as Assistant Curate in December 2024. As I prepare for the completion of my Warwick curacy towards the end of this year, it's a good opportunity to reflect on what I have contributed to the local community and how the Warwick community has enriched my life. The mentoring I have received from The Ven. Lizzie Gaitskell as my "training incumbent" has been invaluable in ensuring my development in the early stages of ordained ministry. Lizzie's style of liturgy, immense compassion and her unfailing dedication to her vocation have been inspirational and formative for me. I'd also like to acknowledge The Right Rev'd Cam Venables — Bishop for the Western Region — who has supported me ever since I felt called to ordained ministry.

Editor's note: The Bush Ministry Fund solely funds rural ministry in our Diocese, and it is the only fund that financially supports rural ministry in our Diocese. The Bush Ministry Fund money boxes are a fun and easy way for individuals, families, parishes and schools to donate to bush ministry in our Diocese. Order your BMF money box today by emailing Helen Briffa in the Western Region office via helen.briffa@anglicanchurchsq.org.au or by calling 07 4639 1875.

Q&A with dad, home cook and priest, The Rev'd Stephan Prabu



"I believe our greatest strengths are the unity, faithfulness and strong sense of belonging among our parishioners, and by nurturing these gifts we can strengthen our community and extend that same welcome, care and support to the wider community around us," says The Rev'd Stephan Prabu from The Parish of Gold Coast North (Image by anglican focus, 2026)

Where do you currently live and where do you worship?

I live on the Gold Coast and worship with The Parish of Gold Coast North — so I'm very much part of the local community and blessed to call the Gold Coast home.

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

I've been part of the Anglican Church since August 2023, and these days I'm serving as Priest-in-Charge at The Parish of Gold Coast North — so there's never a dull moment. I was ordained a priest in 2005 in The Diocese of Madras in the Church of South India.



The Rev'd Stephan with Medha and children "making beautiful family memories together on the Gold Coast and enjoying quality time together in 2025" (Image supplied)

What does your current role involve?

As Priest-in-Charge, I wear a few different hats — sometimes all before morning tea! I look after the parish administration and day-to-day operations, lead worship and preach, visit and care for our parishioners, and connect with the wider Diocese on all sorts of parish matters. I also keep an eye on policies, procedures and compliance — making sure we are doing things properly.

What do you most love about your role?

I love leading worship and preaching because I love being in the presence of God and having the privilege of sharing His Word with others. I also love meeting and spending time with parishioners through visitations, prayer and everyday fellowship because I genuinely enjoy being with people and walking alongside them in their faith journey.

What is a highlight of your current role as a parish priest?

A recent highlight is the Faith and Wellbeing Day, which our parish held on Saturday, 15 August. Program highlights included spiritual reflection and encouragement, financial awareness (including scam awareness), health and ageing-well sessions, music and worship and fun icebreaker sessions. More than 70 community members joined in.



The Rev'd Stephan Prabu and Bishop John Roundhill with fellow pilgrims gathered at Holy Rood Church on the Gold Coast during Bishop John's "Walking the Walk" pilgrimage during Holy Week in 2025 (Image supplied)

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

I'm looking forward to Curry & Company on Saturday, 3 October 2026 and Theoikos – House of God, an ecumenical Christmas carol Service on Sunday, 8 November 2026, bringing together around eight churches from diverse backgrounds.

Our community garden continues to grow with support from Gold Coast City Council. The Youth and Children Ministry Team (YCMT) has started Family Sunday services in our two church centres. Through Sunday School, Youth Convention and Young Alpha, we are seeing encouraging and considerable responses from children, youth and families. It's a wonderful mix of faith, food, fellowship and community.

What is your advice for people thinking about a vocation to ordained ministry?

I hope more young people will answer God's call to ordained ministry. I encourage them to read the Bible faithfully, pray constantly to deepen their relationship with God, and patiently discern God's guidance in the events unfolding around them. I am confident that God will open the right doors at the right time.

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

I was born in a Christian family, but at 15 I came to know the Lord for myself and realised that serving Him was what I wanted to give my life to. Ever since, the Church and ministry have pretty much been my second home.

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

My faith steers my life, shaping my decisions and priorities more than careful plans at times. I've made some sacrifices and missed out on opportunities along the way, but I've chosen to follow where I believe the Lord is leading me, particularly in ministry.



St Matthew's Church, Upper Coomera parishioners praying for The Rev'd Stephan, Medha and family in June 2025 (Image supplied)

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?

I believe our greatest strengths are the unity, faithfulness and strong sense of belonging among our parishioners, and by nurturing these gifts we can strengthen our community and extend that same welcome, care and support to the wider community around us.

What is your favourite scripture and why?

[1 Corinthians 13](#) is my favourite Scripture because Paul's beautiful take on love cuts straight to the heart of what really matters — if we in the Church kept coming back to it and lived it out, I reckon we'd keep our priorities right and be much less likely to miss the mark.

What person of faith inspires you the most and why?

Sadhu Sundar Singh (1889-1929), the Indian evangelist, inspires me greatly — his life reminds me a bit of Paul's, with a deep, living relationship with Jesus, a wonderfully simple way of life, and a commitment to living out and sharing the Gospel in a way that made sense within Indian cultures.

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

For me, Reconciliation is one of the clearest ways we can live out the life and ministry of Jesus — by walking alongside Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, acknowledging the wounds of the past, seeking to heal rather than cause further harm, challenging prejudice, and recognising that the responsibility to change is ours, not theirs.

What is the kindest gesture you have ever received?

The kindest gesture I've ever experienced was from God during my postgraduate theology studies at Gurukul Theological College in Chennai when I left my job and my wife, Medha, left hers so I could take two years away from work — God provided everything we needed for fees and family expenses, so generously that we even found ourselves helping other students along the way.

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

I've actually got two: Medha keeps me grounded by reminding me to regularly reflect, self-evaluate and keep improving, while The Rev'd Daniel Jayaraj, from The Parish of Chermside, encourages me not to compromise and to always give my very best to parishioners.



Home cook The Rev'd Stephan Prabu prepping a no-bake strawberry cheesecake for his son's birthday in August 2026 (Image supplied)

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

When I get a bit of downtime, I love cooking — it's my way of switching off and relaxing, and I reckon feeding people is pretty good therapy. But spending time with my kids is what really recharges my batteries; they keep me laughing, grounded and happily busy.

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

I'd take a plane, a GPS and enough fuel to get me home — because I'm a home-loving bloke and, frankly, I'd be less interested in surviving on a deserted island and more interested in finding my way home.

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

The Bible — I've probably given away more copies than any other book, partly because I've been blessed with plenty to share and partly because I reckon there's always a chance that one day someone might pick it up, have a read and discover something life-changing in it.

What is your karaoke go-to song?

My karaoke go-to is "[Deep in Love with You](#)" by Michael W. Smith — a beautiful worship song written by Michael W. Smith, Christa Black Gifford and Deborah D. Smith.

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

If I'm having a bad day, I reckon the best remedy is to head home, put on a good movie, raid the fridge for whatever looks tempting, and forget about the rest of the world for a while!



Stephan and Medha on their wedding day at St Andrew's Church, Chengalpattu in 2005 (Image supplied)

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

My wedding day, without a doubt — I'd happily do it all again, but this time I'd organise it a bit better, with Medha by my side, because after all these years I've realised she knows a lot more about event organising than I do.

Where do you do your best thinking?

At home during my early-morning meditation — I'm an early bird, and that quiet time before everyone wakes up is when my mind is at its clearest and I do my best thinking.

Editor's note: You are warmly invited to the "[Theoikos – House of God](#)" ecumenical Christmas carol Service at 3pm on 8 November 2026 at St Matthew's Anglican Church, Upper Coomera.

“The greatest gift of any pilgrimage is the relationships formed on the way”



Pilgrims with Bishop Aleksey Smirnov of Baku and Azerbaijan in May 2025 (Image by Christian Pilgrimages)

It was an early June morning when our pilgrimage group headed out to pray the Stations of the Cross along the *Via Dolorosa* — or “Sorrowful Way” — in Jerusalem. The early start beats the crowds, who later converge on the narrow streets and laneways making a slow, prayerful walk difficult. One of our fellow pilgrims carried a large wooden cross as we moved through the streets, hushed and overawed by literally walking the way Jesus walked to Golgotha.

Each of us read one of the stations. By the time it was my turn — Station VIII, where Jesus meets the weeping women of Jerusalem — others had joined us on this way, including locals. So, praying with us were some of the present-day Palestinian women of Jerusalem. In this moment I felt like time was collapsing — not in the sense that we were being transported back in time to when Jesus of Nazareth walked this way, bearing his cross. Rather it felt like we were part of an eternal present with Jesus meeting us there, still sharing in the sufferings of all those who walked that way.

That pilgrimage helped me find my place in a much bigger Church, worshipping a much bigger God. From touching the rock of Golgotha in The Church of the Holy Sepulchre (worn smooth by the hands of countless pilgrims down two millennia) to swimming in the Sea of Galilee to descending underneath worship sites in Nazareth’s earliest streets, this journey made prayer a “practice of place” in the community of other pilgrims.

I fondly remember speaking with Palestinian women volunteering for [Sabeel](#), which is a nonviolent grassroots ecumenical movement promoting action for justice and peace. I learnt so much about the deep faith and courage of these Christians who were living out the Jesus’ way under occupation. This

meant that when I returned home and heard news reports about Palestinians living in the West Bank, women I'd met came to mind, along with a new sense of both the compelling challenge of Jesus' teaching and the liberating witness of his life.

Pilgrimage is gaining in popularity all over the world. Perhaps this is because a physical journey to holy places can help us take the deeper journey within — to the indwelling life of Christ who calls us to become most fully alive and fully ourselves. As we walk well-trod pilgrimage paths, we are taken beyond our life as an individual believer and recognise our connection to other seekers and to the God who has always, and will always, seek us. Sometimes we need to travel to new lands in order to discover that which is right here with us all along, closer than our breath.

In May 2027 I will have the privilege of being the spiritual leader of a [Christian Pilgrimage](#) (a company owned by Perth-based Palestinian Anglicans) to the Sacred Caucasus, travelling to Armenia, Georgia and Azerbaijan. These places are the heartland of two ancient apostolic traditions that have survived as a vibrant Christian witness over the centuries.



"The medieval frescoes in the dozens of David Gareja cave monasteries in Georgia near the Azerbaijan border will be historic and sensory highlights," says The Rev'd Sue Grimmett (Image by Andrzej Wójtowicz on [Wikimedia Commons](#))

The [Oriental Orthodox Armenian Apostolic Church](#), the world's first state Christian religion, was founded in 301 CE. In Armenia we will explore UNESCO-listed medieval monasteries carved into the cliffside, such as that at Geghard. Here we will learn about the earliest Christian communities and saints, such as St Gayane — an abbess who was martyred in 301, along with her fellow nuns.



**Pilgrims outside the Church of the Holy Mother of God at the Noravank Monastery, Armenia in May 2025
(Image by Christian Pilgrimages)**

Thinking about the Georgia visit, I am most excited about experiencing the [ancient polyphonic liturgical chanting](#). I think we can become so blinkered about what it means to be “the Church” and what worship looks and feels like that we sometimes neglect historic global Christian traditions, to our own impoverishment. I am also looking forward to visiting and praying with the St Gayane Church community to experience worship that helps me encounter the holy through other [Georgian Orthodox Church’s traditions](#).

The medieval frescoes in the dozens of David Gareja cave monasteries in Georgia near the Azerbaijan border will be historic and sensory highlights. I am also anticipating our tranquil walk along the pink and white slopes at the foothills of Azerbaijan's Khizi mountains, also known as the "Candy Cane Mountains", which date back to the Cretaceous period.



"I am also anticipating our tranquil walk along the pink and white slopes at the foothills of Azerbaijan's Khizi mountains, also known as the "Candy Cane Mountains", which date back to the Cretaceous period," says The Rev'd Sue Grimmett (Image by Canva)

As part of these sacred site experiences, we will taste wine crafted using an 8,000-year-old monastic tradition of fermenting grapes in *qvevris* — large, buried egg-shaped clay vessels. I am told that we will also savour the Georgian *supra*. This is a traditional feast known for its structured sequence of toasts — commencing with a toast to God — led by a *tamada*, with those gathered invited to joining in the cycle of toasting. During the *supra* we will enjoy a range of local flavours, including *lavash* (flatbread) baked on clay oven walls, *khachapuri* (cheese-filled bread) and *khinkali* (savory mountain dumplings).

While these are wondrous destinations and experiences, the greatest gift of any pilgrimage is the relationships formed on the way, with the locals from each place, with fellow pilgrims and with the Divine.

There are many holy pilgrimage paths to tread. Wherever you go, the journey always becomes one that — while being walked across ancient holy sites — winds its way through our interior landscape, re-shaping the way we see the world and God's people, thus deepening our relationship with God.

An online information session will be held on Wednesday, 28 October 2026 at 7pm AEST (Queensland time) with The Rev'd Sue Grimmett. [Please register online](#) for the online information session.

Unveil the timeless magic of the Sacred Caucasus on a journey through Armenia and Georgia, led by The Rev'd Sue Grimmett, with optional extension to Azerbaijan. Follow in the footsteps of saints to learn about the Oriental Orthodox Armenian Apostolic Church and the Eastern Orthodox Georgian Orthodox Church. The pilgrimage will run from 10 May to 31 May 2027. [Register online](#) by 30 November 2026 — places are limited to only 20 pilgrims.



Unveil the timeless magic of the Sacred Caucasus on a journey through Armenia and Georgia, led by Brisbane-based The Rev'd Sue Grimmett in May 2027, with optional extension to Azerbaijan (Image supplied)

Acknowledging Country: Beginning with respect and leading with heart



"Acknowledging Country recognises Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the First Peoples of the land now known as Australia and their continued connection to Country. When the words are spoken with authenticity and heart, they create a moment where people can feel the respect, truth and connection," says Reconciliation Queensland's Engagement and Education Coordinator, Sara Frazer (Image supplied)

For thousands of generations, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have followed cultural protocols when entering the Country of another people. These protocols include the importance of seeking permission, listening and recognising the responsibilities held by the Traditional Caretakers of that place. Acknowledgement of Country comes from these traditions and invites us to pause, open our hearts and know whose Country we are on.

For me, an Acknowledgement of Country is a statement from the heart that recognises the Traditional Caretakers and their continuing connection to Country, including land, sky, waterways and community. Anyone can offer an Acknowledgement, while a Welcome to Country can only be given by a Traditional Owner of that Country. An Acknowledgement of Country also usually "pays respects to Elders past and present", which in part reflects the significant value of Elders in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures.

Acknowledging Country recognises Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the First Peoples of the land now known as Australia and their continued connection to Country. When the words are spoken with authenticity and heart, they create a moment where people can feel the respect, truth and connection.

What moves me most is seeing our youngest children in early childhood settings learning whose Country they are on and understanding that the words they speak carry meaning and feeling. That

learning is now flowing through educational spaces, businesses, organisations and government, as well as into personal moments and gatherings. When people take the time to know the Country they are on and speak from a place of genuine respect, an Acknowledgement becomes more than words — it helps create spaces where First Nations people feel seen, valued and culturally safe.

An Acknowledgement can be spoken at the beginning of a meeting, service, event or other gathering. It can also live on websites, email signatures, social media, corporate stationery, event programs and other communications. The form may change, but the heart of it should remain the same — with time taken to know whose Country you are on, understanding the meaning of the words and sharing them with care.

A plaque near the entrance of a building or a framed Acknowledgement in a reception area, foyer or meeting space is a beautiful and lasting way to recognise Country. It's important for organisations to take time to learn about the Country they are located on and seek guidance from Traditional Caretakers or local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community members where possible. When done with care, this can support a Reconciliation Action Plan commitment while helping to create an environment where First Nations people feel welcomed, respected and culturally safe.

A visible Acknowledgement is a daily reminder that every organisation stands and operates on Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander Country. It shows First Nations staff and visitors that time has been spent knowing, learning and understanding the history and living continuous culture of that place, helping them feel seen, valued and welcomed.

[Reconciliation Queensland](#) supports Reconciliation Action Plans (RAPs) because they are a commitment and give organisations a practical way to turn words and good intentions into meaningful and accountable action. For us at Reconciliation Queensland, the strongest RAPs are not about compliance or ticking a box, they are about leading with heart, genuine feeling, building authentic relationships and creating lasting sustainable change.

For me, an Acknowledgement of Country should never be lines we simply “get through” before moving on to the “main business”. Words matter, but they carry their greatest strength when they come from the heart and are supported by learning, truth telling, genuine relationships and meaningful action. Our responsibility is to keep listening, keep learning and ensure the respect we speak is also reflected in the way we walk, talk interact and work together.

Editor's note: The ACSQ's [Reconciliation Action Plan](#) includes the Action, “Demonstrate respect to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people by observing cultural protocols”, with associated “Deliverables” including:

- **Increase ACSQ's understanding of the purpose and significance behind cultural protocols, including Acknowledgement of Country and Welcome to Country protocols.**
- **Provide resources on cultural protocols, including protocols for Welcome to Country and Acknowledgement of Country.**
- **Invite a local Traditional Owner or Custodian to provide a Welcome to Country or other appropriate cultural protocol at significant events each year.**
- **Encourage service centres to develop Acknowledgement of Country commemorations (e.g. plaques or framed certificates) for the reception area of ACSQ offices and parishes.**

- Encourage Acknowledgement of Country to be included in all Year Books, PowerPoint templates, websites, social media channels, and other communications and marketing collateral where possible.
- Continue to encourage all parishes to include an Acknowledgement of Country or Welcome to Country before services and parish council meetings and other significant events.
- Include an Acknowledgement of Country or other appropriate protocols at the commencement of important meetings.

To find out more about Acknowledgement of Country and Welcome to Country, please visit the [Reconciliation Australia](#) website. For “Know Your Country” resources, including banners for email signatures, please visit the [Know Your Country](#) website.

Local • Tuesday 15 September 2026 • By Matthew Nicholls

New research calls for deeper understanding of spiritual needs in caring for people living with dementia



The webinar, "Beyond Memory: Recognising and Responding to Spiritual Needs in Dementia" with Associate Professor Robyn Wrigley-Carr from the University of Divinity and Anglicare Southern Queensland's Practice Development and Pastoral Care Lead, Felicity Dougherty, challenged the idea that a person's identity, relationships and capacity for meaningful connection disappear as cognitive ability declines.

Anglicare Southern Queensland has brought together leading researchers and practitioners to challenge assumptions about dementia and explore how meaning, connection and personhood can endure well beyond memory.

As dementia increasingly shapes the experience of ageing and end-of-life care in Australia, a webinar hosted on Wednesday, September 9, by Anglicare Southern Queensland's Centre for Research and

Social Change has highlighted the importance of recognising and responding to the spiritual needs of people living with dementia.

The webinar, “Beyond Memory: Recognising and Responding to Spiritual Needs in Dementia”, featured Associate Professor Robyn Wrigley-Carr from the University of Divinity and Anglicare Southern Queensland’s Practice Development and Pastoral Care Lead, Felicity Dougherty.

Together, the presenters explored the spiritual dimensions of dementia from the early transition into residential aged care through to advanced dementia, challenging the idea that a person’s identity, relationships and capacity for meaningful connection disappear as cognitive ability declines.

In the build-up to Dementia Action Week (September 21-27), Ms Dougherty said emotional and spiritual needs persist throughout the dementia journey.

“People living with advanced dementia may communicate and relate differently, but that doesn’t mean that communication and relationship are not possible,” she said.

“We need to get beyond the surface of what we see. Every person, regardless of their capacity, should have the opportunity to be part of meaningful and reciprocal relationships.”

Ms Dougherty shared findings from her Master of Pastoral and Spiritual Care research into a practice she describes as “responsive presence” — an approach that uses sensory experiences, observation and relationship-building to create opportunities for connection with people living with advanced dementia.

Her research involved spending time with five residential aged care residents living with severe cognitive decline, using personalised prompts including music, familiar objects, scents, photographs and other sensory experiences.

The encounters revealed moments of joy, laughter, friendship, emotion, recognition, choice and self-expression.

One powerful finding was the contrast between assumptions about people living with advanced dementia and what can emerge when they are given time, attention and meaningful opportunities to engage.

“Relationships are what define us as humans,” Ms Dougherty said.

“People with advanced dementia can still participate in relationship. They may simply need support and different opportunities to do so.”

Dr Wrigley-Carr explored the experience of transitioning into residential aged care through the story of “Jim”, a man living with mild to moderate dementia.

His journey highlighted how entering residential aged care is not simply a physical transition, but can often involve profound experiences of grief and loss.

“Collaboration between families, spiritual care practitioners and aged care staff is critical in understanding and responding to a person’s individual needs,” Dr Wrigley-Carr said.

“Input from families of people living with dementia, spiritual care practitioners and staff can help shape personalised support including familiar music, church activities, chapel services, outings, reminiscence, meaningful relationships and opportunities to continue helping others.”

The webinar reinforced the importance of seeing spiritual care as broader than religious practice alone.

Spiritual needs can include the need for meaning, hope, dignity, connection, identity, love, belonging and support through experiences of loss and change. For people living with advanced dementia, these needs may be communicated through facial expressions, gestures, emotion, laughter, music, touch, sensory responses and relationships rather than words.

The research also challenges persistent stereotypes that people with advanced dementia are “shells” of their former selves.

As Ms Dougherty told webinar participants: “Living with dementia is just one way that people may change as they age, but core elements of personhood remain.”

Hosted by [Anglicare Southern Queensland's Centre for Research and Social Change](#), the webinar is part of the not-for-profit organisation's ongoing commitment to translating research into practical approaches that improve the lives of people receiving care and support.

The “Beyond Memory: Recognising and Responding to Spiritual Needs in Dementia” webinar recording may be viewed on the [Anglicare Southern Queensland YouTube channel](#).

Reflections • Thursday 3 September 2026 • By The Rev'd Charlie Lacey

Tough Questions: What is a Sermon?



"Sermons are usually a combination of preaching and teaching. The two often go together, but they are not the same thing," says The Rev'd Charlie Lacey from St Andrew's, Springfield

There are millions of sermons online and the number is growing daily. However, a great many of these are misleading, spurious, and antithetical to the Gospel. It is therefore imperative that Christians have a good understanding of what a sermon is, so they know what to look for.

Sermons are usually a combination of preaching and teaching. The two often go together, but they are not the same thing. The New Testament word for preaching is, in the original Greek, *kēryssō*, which means to “herald” or “proclaim”, much like a town crier would have done in the days before modern means of rapid communication. In the New Testament, preaching (*kēryssō*) is the public proclamation of Biblical truth, with a view to bringing people to repentance and faith in Jesus. A good example of preaching would be John the Baptist’s message in the wilderness, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near” ([Matthew 3.2](#)). Teaching on the other hand, or *didaskō* in New Testament Greek, means to impart, explain, or guide by means of systematic teaching. An example of teaching in the New Testament would be Jesus’ “Sermon on the Mount”, which occupies [Matthew chapters 5-7](#).

The words *kēryssō* (preaching) and *didaskō* (teaching), are used together to describe Jesus’ own ministry. For example, “Jesus went throughout Galilee, teaching [*didaskō*] in their synagogues, proclaiming [*kēryssō*] the good news of the kingdom, and healing every disease and sickness among the people.”

In the pastoral epistles, church leaders such as Timothy and Titus are exhorted to follow this model of preaching and teaching. For example, [1 Timothy 4.13](#), “Until I come, devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to preaching and to teaching.”

In the book of Acts, we see that the early Church “devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.” The Apostles shared the same teaching they had received from Jesus, now recorded in the New Testament.

Preaching and teaching are inextricably linked to the Good News of Jesus. A sermon, which usually includes a mixture of both, should not be a matter of personal opinion, cut adrift from the moorings of Scripture, but rather it is delivering from the pulpit that which has already been delivered in the Scriptures. Oftentimes, those who deliver sermons decide what they want to say and then go hunting for random verses to support their preconceived message. This kind of fragmented approach is prone to error. A more faithful approach, is to look at a verse or passage in the context of that which comes before and after, thus allowing the Bible to speak for itself.

Teaching, in the context of a sermon, is the art of explaining facts and doctrine, and giving clear knowledge, often through step-by-step breakdown of the passage. The ultimate aim of teaching is to help Christians understand what God wants for them and from them. Teaching is a key part of discipling people to live out their faith. The goal of preaching is to urge a direct response to God by moving the heart and the will. Preaching aims to increase faith, change hearts and transform lives. However, whilst God may speak through the preacher, it should be noted that any change will always be a work of the Holy Spirit. A good sermon should therefore enlighten us, challenge us, and move us to make changes to our lives.

In the words of John Stott, “To preach is to open up the inspired text with such faithfulness and sensitivity that God’s voice is heard and God’s people obey him.”

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

“The ‘real’ St Francis of Assisi was far more unsettling than sentimental”



Archbishop Jeremy Greaves celebrating St Francis Day with wolf-like Border Collie, Paddy, in October 2024 (Image supplied)

As the anniversary commemorating 800 years since St Francis of Assisi’s death approaches, it’s a good time to ponder the life and legacy of a timeless Christian whose witness still speaks with startling clarity in our own age.

Francis has become so familiar to us that it is easy to domesticate him. We picture the gentle friar surrounded by birds, blessing animals and speaking kindly to wolves. We place statues of him in gardens and remember him on his annual Feast Day with pets and prayers. Yet the “real” St Francis of Assisi was far more unsettling than sentimental. He was a man who walked away from wealth and status, embraced poverty, challenged the assumptions of his society, crossed boundaries of fear and hatred, and called the Church back to the simplicity of the Gospel.

And perhaps that is why he still matters.



"Francis has become so familiar to us that it is easy to domesticate him...We place statues of him in gardens and remember him on his annual Feast Day with pets and prayers. Yet the 'real' St Francis of Assisi was far more unsettling than sentimental," says Archbishop Jeremy Greaves (Image by Hugo Magalhaes on Pexels)

There are many stories told about Francis. Some are certainly legends, polished by centuries of devotion. But legends endure because they carry truth deeper than mere historical detail.

There is the story of Francis preaching to the birds. Whether it happened precisely as described matters less than what the story reveals: Francis recognised all creation as alive with the praise of God. He [saw kinship](#) where others saw hierarchy — "Brother Sun", "Sister Moon", "Brother Wolf", "Sister Water". In Francis, Christianity became expansive again — not centred only on human concerns, but attentive to the whole community of creation.

And that matters profoundly in our own age.

We live in a time marked by human-induced ecological damage, environmental anxiety and deep uncertainty about the planet's future. Francis reminds us that creation is not a resource to exploit, but a gift to cherish. Long before environmentalism became a movement, Francis understood that spiritual health and the health of the Earth belong together.

Then there is the famous story of the Wolf of Gubbio — the fierce wolf terrorising a town until Francis approaches it, not with weapons, but with peace. Again, perhaps more parable than newspaper report. But what a needed parable it is.

Because our world is full of wolves now: violence, polarisation, suspicion, war, cruelty amplified by technology, fear of the stranger, contempt for those who differ from us. Francis believed that peace begins when we refuse to surrender to fear. He crossed battle lines during the Crusades to meet the

Sultan — not as enemy, but as fellow human being. That act alone remains astonishing even eight centuries later.

Francis teaches us that peace is not weakness. Peace requires courage. Compassion requires courage. Gentleness requires courage.

And perhaps most striking of all is the joy of Francis — not naïve happiness or denial of suffering. Francis knew suffering intimately. He endured illness, disappointment and pain. Near the end of his life his body was frail and broken. Yet joy remained at the centre of his spirituality because his life was no longer organised around the anxious project of protecting himself.

There is a freedom in Francis that speaks powerfully to our exhausted age.

So many people today carry burdens that are crushing: anxiety about the future, loneliness, economic pressure, grief, division, endless striving. Many of us inhabit a culture that tells us we are what we achieve, what we own, what we consume, what we project to others. And many are simply tired.

Into that weariness Christ says: “Come to me.”

Francis heard that invitation and trusted it enough to build his life around it. Not perfectly. Saints are never perfect. Francis himself struggled with disappointment, with conflict within his movement, with the painful reality that even good institutions drift from their founding vision. But perhaps that, too, is part of his gift to us. Holiness is not perfection. Holiness is openness to grace.

The legacy of Francis is not ultimately about animals, though he loved them. Nor is it about romantic poverty or medieval nostalgia. The legacy of Francis is a radically Christ-centred life marked by humility, joy, peace and love for all creation.

And the world still longs for such lives.

The Church still needs such lives.

Perhaps especially now.

Eight hundred years on, Francis still calls us back to simplicity in a world of excess, to peace in a world of violence, to reverence in a world of exploitation, and to joy in a world so often marked by despair.

And perhaps the greatest tribute we can offer Francis as this year’s Season of Creation draws to a close goes beyond admiration to imitation. Not necessarily by abandoning everything and walking barefoot through hill-top villages as St Francis did.

But by asking ourselves: what burdens do we need to lay down? What fears do we need to release? What part of creation are we being called to love more deeply? And, where are we being invited to become agents of peace?

A Franciscan blessing:

May God bless you with discomfort,
At easy answers, half-truths,
And superficial relationships

So that you may live
Deep within your heart.

May God bless you with anger
At injustice, oppression,
And exploitation of people,
So that you may work for
Justice, freedom and peace.

May God bless you with tears,
To shed for those who suffer pain,
Rejection, hunger and war,
So that you may reach out your hand
To comfort them and
To turn their pain to joy

And may God bless you
With enough foolishness
To believe that you can
Make a difference in the world,
So that you can do
What others claim cannot be done
To bring justice and kindness
To all our children and the poor.

Amen

Editor's note: Celebrate St Francis Day at St Francis College on Wednesday, 7 October 2026, beginning with a Eucharist at 12 noon, followed by a light lunch and an address from our guest speaker, The Rev'd Dr Matthew Beckmann OFM. [Register online](#) by 11pm Saturday, 3 October 2026. Free event.

“Protecting our children from harm is embedded in our customary practices and continues today”



"You see, peace is something that we, as First Nations people, understood and lived for many millennia prior to colonisation. We lived to be in sync with our Country, to care for it, and critical to this way of living is the centering and caring for our babies, our children," says Dr Pakeri Ruska (Image supplied)

Scholar Patrick Wolfe defines settler colonialism "[inherently eliminatory](#)". By no coincidence, the youth justice system in Australia is the epitome of settler colonialism. It legislates the banishing of First Nations youth to a system that is completely failing them.

In this country, we have [children as young as 10](#) locked away in prisons, removed from their families, their communities and [Country](#).

In 2026 we call this the "youth justice system", reflective of Australia's earliest legislation, such as the [Industrial and Reformatory Schools Act 1865](#), which mandated that so-called "neglected" children could be detained simply for being "born of an aboriginal or half-caste mother".

[Australian Government data](#) shows that First Nations children are less than seven per cent of Australia's population, yet make up 60 per cent of the youth prison population. Worse still is that 78 per cent of these children have not been convicted — they are unsentenced, meaning they have not been found guilty of any crime.

The rates are not only extremely disproportionate, they are dire and every single "number" is a child, and in all worlds every child matters.

What does this tell us? In the words of the Justice Reform Initiative, "[Jailing is Failing](#)". And it didn't just start failing — the system has been broken for generations.

Yet what does the Queensland Government do? It intentionally exacerbates the problem.

In 2023, the ALP Queensland Government [overrode](#) their own *Human Rights Act* to introduce the [Strengthening Community Safety Bill](#), which, when passed, [made](#) it “an offence for children to breach a condition of their bail undertaking”.

In 2024 the LNP Queensland Government introduced the Making Queensland Safer Bill — after [platforming](#) “tough on youth crime”, including “Adult Crime Adult Time” in their election campaign — with the youth justice minister admitting that the new legislation would disproportionately impact First Nations children “[due to their over representation in the criminal justice system.](#)”

Despite this admission, [Queensland imprisons](#) more children than any other state or territory, spending \$251 million annually. This legislation, which was passed quickly, removed “[d]etention as a last resort”, thereby violating international human rights standards, including the [Convention on the Rights of the Child](#). The passing of this legislation meant that the state’s *Human Rights Act* was overridden for the third time, with the [Queensland Human Rights Commission](#) stating that “All three overrides have been in relation to youth justice” and that “the government’s own words acknowledge the harm these reforms will do to already marginalised children and young people, including their disproportionate impact on First Nations children.”

In 2025 the LNP Queensland Government introduced more amendments to their “Adult Crime Adult Time” laws. In response the [United Nations](#) stepped in, urging members of the Queensland Parliament “to vote against the bill” as it “would have an especially negative impact on the lives of indigenous children, who are already disproportionately represented in the criminal legal system.”

[Premier Crisafulli’s](#) response to the United Nations was, “You don’t control me, and I don’t answer to you.”

Where, then, do we go from here?

How do we address the overrepresentation of First Nations youth, and uphold [UN Secretary-General António Guterres’](#) call to “build a more just world with compassion, equality and dignity for all”?

The [UN](#) describes the 2026 International Day of Peace as “more than the absence of war; it is the foundation necessary to collectively tackle humanity’s challenges.” Whilst this concept of “peace” is understood as something that occurs between countries, it is equally about what happens within them.

You see, peace is something that we, as First Nations people, understood and lived for many millennia prior to colonisation. We lived to be in sync with our Country, to care for it, and critical to this way of living is the centering and caring for our babies, our children. Protecting our children from harm is embedded in our customary practices and continues today.

However, when the settler-colonisation of Australia began it brought with it a foreign system of law, which First Nations people were involuntarily subjected to. Colonialism paternalised every element of First Nations peoples’ lives whilst removing our children in the process.

And now, instead of being able to thrive in sync with Country — which includes community, culture and kin — First Nations children are more likely to suffer in a cycle within Australia’s so-called “youth justice system”.

Jails do not work. They fail to address recidivism. They fail to provide the holistic, wrap-around care that children require, which has been [proven](#) to reduce incarceration.

So instead, we must turn to community — to the hundreds of First Nations communities across the country that are self-determining change, including building holistic and supportive programs for children to prevent and reduce the contact they have with harmful carceral systems.

And why should we support self-determination? Because it's working. So much so that the Federal Government has invested over [\\$80 million](#) into funding First Nations self-determined initiatives via [justice reinvestment](#).

But more needs to be done and, at a minimum, Queensland needs to follow suit and fund what works — First Nations community-led programs, not a billion-dollar [prison industrial complex](#).

We, as a nation, cannot be at peace with ourselves whilst First Nations children are incarcerated at exorbitant rates and call it "justice".

Editor's note: Dr Pakeri Ruska will be giving this year's annual Brisbane Peace Day Lecture, alongside Dr Krystal Lockwood, at St John's Cathedral on Monday, 21 September. The lecture event will begin at 7pm and will close at 9pm. Entry is free; however, please [register online](#) for catering and seating purposes (donations to help cover event costs are welcome).

“Working alongside Barry has changed the way I approach people who are in difficult circumstances”



Barry Rienecker (Rosies Ipswich Coordinator) spoke at a Secondary Assembly at The Springfield Anglican School in early 2025 and was delighted to collect over 1000 noodle cups given by TSAC families — the collection was organised primarily by Year 12 and Year 9 Health students, with College Chaplain The Rev'd Jonathan Kemp assisting (Image supplied)

Soon after arriving as the new Chaplain at The Springfield Anglican College, I was invited to take students to the Ipswich branch of “Rosies — Friends on the Street” as part of our College’s Service Learning program. There I met Barry Rienecker, a retired public servant who has led Rosies at Ipswich since 2014. I have since joined in more than 50 Rosies outreaches and Barry has been at virtually all of them.

Barry leads a Rosies outreach four times per week, every week, regardless of conditions because, as he says, “Rain doesn’t stop people being hungry.” His reliable appearance at the outreach venues around Ipswich means he knows each regular patron well and inspires their trust, creating a safe space for them to share their personal ups and downs with him, seeking his wise counsel in often complex social or bureaucratic situations.

Barry’s sense of social justice leads him to adopt a compassionate and fair approach when connecting with each patron. He ensures everyone has an equitable opportunity to receive a fair share of the food and beverages available, and always does what he can to respond to special requests.

The way Barry interacts with people of all ages and backgrounds is a constant reminder to me that treating every person with dignity is not as difficult as we sometimes may think. On the rare occasion that someone demands to be served first, Barry tends to gently remind them that there is easily

enough for everyone — that no one will miss out — and that waiting a minute or two to be served is not really a great imposition.

When Barry hears a story about a patron's struggle with the legal system or government policies and processes, his calm and sensible responses reflect his awareness that not everyone in society has been afforded the same privileges of education and wealth.

Working alongside Barry has changed the way I approach people who are in difficult circumstances. I find I tend to be less judgemental about how people choose to spend their time or money because our personal circumstances can change very quickly. Barry's other big lesson for me is that doing the justice work of meeting people's basic needs, so their dignity is upheld, is not actually that difficult — we just need to have the will to start doing it.

This has led to me encouraging more students to be involved so they, too, can see that honouring people's inherent dignity is not as difficult as they may think.

National • Wednesday 23 September 2026 • By Michelle McDonald

ACSQ agencies back landmark Senate inquiry recommendations supporting children before crisis point and “smart on crime” rather than “tough on crime” messages



Anglicare Southern Queensland's submission to the Senate Legal and Constitutional Affairs References Committee inquiry into Australia's Youth Justice and Incarceration System emphasised the impacts of school suspension and exclusion, including the risk of responding to behaviour without addressing the conditions driving it (Image from Pexels)

Key Anglican Church Southern Queensland agencies, the Social Responsibilities Committee and Anglicare, have joined mental health and First Nations legal experts in welcoming the “youth justice”

Senate inquiry's recommendations and its rejection of the media's "moral panic", while calling for evidence-based and community-centred responses.

The Senate Legal and Constitutional Affairs References Committee inquiry into Australia's Youth Justice and Incarceration System was established in the context of news media increasingly sounding the alarm about a rising "youth crime wave".

The committee's [report](#), which was released on Friday, found that distorted crime reporting is skewing community perceptions, as data shows that youth offending is falling significantly nationwide.

"...media reporting on what is often described as a crisis in youth crime is fuelling public fear of Australia's youth and driving moral panic," the report said.

"To challenge this false narrative and provide a fact-based contribution to the public discourse, the committee recommends that the Australian Government design and develop an education campaign.

"The campaign should draw on actual crime data and statistical evidence to counter sensational media coverage on youth crime and the false narrative that the country is in the grip of a youth crime wave.

"The education campaign would also provide 'smart on crime' rather than 'tough on crime' messages.

"To this end, it would provide evidence-based information on the benefits of alternatives to incarceration for community safety and wellbeing."

The report referenced 2024-25 Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) figures, showing that on an average day 4,147 young people aged 10 and above were under "youth justice" supervision across Australia.

On an average night in the June quarter of 2025, 60 per cent of detained children aged 10–17 were First Nations children, despite Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children comprising just 6.6 per cent of the youth population.

The committee heard insights from Aboriginal young people, including youth from Mount Druitt in New South Wales, who have been harmed by the criminal justice system and impacted by foster care and school exclusion.

The report published a call to action from the youth-led *Mounty Yarns: Lived Experiences of Aboriginal young people in Mt Druitt* [project resource](#).

"As a community and as young people, we know what works for us. Solutions need a strong focus on self-determination, investing in young people, and changing the way other people look at young people in Mount Druitt," *Mounty Yarns* says.

"Solutions need to be centred around youth and community leadership, with the goal of intergenerational change.

"As Aboriginal young people we can tell you that the 'Justice System' is not working and is actually having a devastating effect.

“Our young people need to know that we as a community care for them...

“Nothing improves by locking up kids. When you do, you take us away from everything we value — our family, our culture, our country...

“As you read through the experiences of young people in Mount Druitt and see how young we were when we were harassed, traumatised and brutalised by police, and harmed by systems that didn’t support us, remember that no young person should be experiencing these things.

“We want everyone to be able to learn from the experiences, strengths, challenges and resilience of us as young people...

“We share these yarns with you and ask that you listen and hear our truths.

“We hope that you hear our solutions and back us to make change.”

The committee’s report highlighted early intervention, community-based prevention and diversion, finding significant links between “youth justice” involvement and racism, transgenerational trauma, disability, family disruption, housing insecurity and educational disengagement.

It also highlighted the role schools can play in a child’s pathway into the justice system, reinforcing the importance of early intervention and support to help children remain engaged in education.

Anglicare Southern Queensland’s inquiry submission emphasised the impacts of school suspension and exclusion, including the risk of responding to behaviour without addressing the conditions driving it.

In 2025 First Nations students and students with disability in Queensland were twice as likely to be suspended or excluded, while students in out-of-home care were three times as likely to experience suspension or exclusion.

Anglicare’s Group Manager for Youth Justice, Tahnee Ledgerwood, said the findings reinforced the importance of looking at what happens before a child reaches the “youth justice” system.

“By the time a young person comes into contact with the youth justice system, there have often been multiple opportunities to identify that they and their family need support,” Ms Ledgerwood said.

“Schools are often one of the first places where children begin to show that they are struggling.

“When a child is experiencing trauma, disability, family violence or other challenges, removing them from education without addressing what is behind the behaviour can mean missing an important opportunity to help.

“Young people should not have to reach the justice system before they get the support they need.”

The inquiry quoted Productivity Commission figures showing that community-based approaches can reduce offending and improve community safety, while costing only \$424 per young person, per day compared to the \$3,625 per-day cost for detention alternatives.

The committee's four recommendations included national minimum standards for youth justice; a National Child and Community Safety Taskforce; an evidence-based community education campaign about youth crime and alternatives to incarceration; and, a further inquiry into the factors contributing to youth incarceration.

During inquiry hearings paediatrician Niroshini Kennedy from the Royal Australasian College of Physicians emphasised the need for preventive healthcare in early intervention.

"In my practice, many of the children who fall through the cracks are the children who haven't had the opportunity to have preventive health checks that might, for example, identify that a child who is falling asleep at school and constantly late to school might actually have an undiagnosed sleep apnoea and actually need surgical treatment for tonsils and adenoids," Dr Kennedy said.

"That a child who may supposedly not be paying attention in class might actually have undiagnosed glue ear and a hearing impairment that requires surgery."

Hearing loss is often referred to as "the smoking gun" in policy conversations about the disproportionate incarceration rates of First Nations adolescents.

The Anglican Church Southern Queensland's Social Responsibilities Committee chair Peter Catt said if governments focus more on addressing well-documented medical issues like ear infections, rather on "punitive" custodial approaches, that the wellbeing, talents and education of First Nations children will be nurtured.

"It is well known that First Nations children suffer one of the highest rates of infection-related hearing loss in the world and that this rate contributes to the disproportionate number of First Nations children trapped in our so-called 'youth justice system'," The Very Rev'd Dr Catt said.

"Queensland records [the highest rate](#) of First Nations children detained, with this rate increasing since 2021, which is unsurprising given the punitive legalisation passed by successive state governments in the last few years.

"Such high rates of incarceration have clear flow-on effects, including on education.

"If we want to see more First Nations young adults in university lecture rooms than in prison cells, then we obviously need to care for all our precious young people — physically, psycho-socially, culturally and spiritually.

"This means listening to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander experts, including youth, rather than to the dog-whistling mainstream media.

"Instead of exacerbating the transgenerational trauma caused by colonialism's ongoing impacts, our tax dollars must be invested in prevention, including solving simple issues like early childhood 'glue ear', while listening to what our intelligent First Nations youth are already telling us.

"This includes better funding community-led on-Country initiatives, as well as establishing the cross-sector National Child and Community Safety Taskforce."

The National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Services' (NATSILS) submission called for media reporting about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to be further regulated in alignment with the Australian Human Rights Commission's [National Anti-Racism Framework](#).

NATSILS Executive Director Nick Espie, an Arrente man, has urged the adoption of the report's national minimum standards and called for Prime Minister Albanese to listen to First Nations experts.

"The recommendation that the Prime Minister act has been informed by evidence given by hundreds of experts and people with lived experience," Mr Espie said.

"It is crystal clear what the Prime Minister must do."

The Justice Reform Initiative also welcomed the report, with psychologist and Initiative spokesperson — and former National Children's Commissioner — Anne Hollonds AO challenging leaders to implement common sense reforms that protect both children and the wider communities they live in.

"We have never been closer to real evidence-based reforms that will protect the human rights of children and also make communities safer," Ms Hollonds said.

"More work now needs to be done.

"We have the evidence, we have the recommendations.

"What we need is the political will to act, for political leaders to have the courage to implement evidence-based approaches that have been proven internationally to prevent crime and make communities safer."

Dates & Seasons • Tuesday 1 September 2026 • By Uncle Paul Paulson

"Country Is Our Teacher": Indigenous Literacy Day



Uncle Paul Paulson (Director of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education, Anglican Schools Commission) with St Paul's School students Lachlan and Eva discussing Jamal Fogarty's new book Learning to Fly on 31 August 2026 ahead of Indigenous Literacy Day (Image Supplied)

When I was growing up I spent my school canteen money on books. I just couldn't read enough. In primary school the *Biggles* series by WE Johns were my favourite books. In high school my favourite books were *The Elephant Man* by Christine Sparks and *To Kill a Mockingbird* by Harper Lee — these books gave me insight into the human condition and the importance of empathy and justice.

As a child most of the stories I heard from Mob were shared verbally. My uncles used to take us out fishing and pass down stories about Country, including the land, *moogai* (ancestor spirits), and the river and creeks. They told us that the rivers and creeks have always been there for us. The rivers and creeks we fished in were secret locations and not easy to access.

These stories were ancient stories, passed down through generations, that held knowledge. Growing up, stories about Country were vital because they reinforced the importance of caring for our land and waters. And, by sharing about ancestor spirits we learnt that Country is sacred.

As I write this, I am returning from St Paul's School, where I met with First Nations students to share about a picture book recently written by my nephew NRL player, Jamal Fogarty. In Jamal's book, [Learning to Fly](#), he writes about growing up in Beaudesert on Mununjali Country. His wonderful picture book explains how important family, community and positive choices are for Jamal.

It was an honour to assist Jamal with his new book by translating the English into Yugambeh, which is the language of several Mob, including the Mununjali people.

As [Indigenous Literacy Day](#) approaches this week I have been reflecting on the importance of both books and verbally shared stories.

Indigenous Literacy Day is a national celebration of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' stories, cultures and languages.

An initiative of the Indigenous Literacy Foundation, Indigenous Literacy Day is celebrated on the first Wednesday of September, so this year it will be enjoyed on Wednesday, 2 September.

This year's Indigenous Literacy Day theme is "Country Is Our Teacher".

The Indigenous Literacy Foundation is inviting us to celebrate Indigenous Literacy Day by watching the [free Film and Livestream event](#) to learn about First Nations stories, cultures and languages.

Check out the Indigenous Literacy Day website for [teacher resources](#) (including classroom activities, such as colouring-in sheets, find-a-word sheets and worksheets) and [promotional resources](#) (including posters, email banners, fundraising information, toolkits and social media tiles).

If you are an Anglican school or ECS, parish, ministry or agency, you can contribute and celebrate Indigenous Literacy Day annually by:

- [Registering](#) to watch the ILD Film and Livestream
- Making a [donation](#)
- [Buying](#) their books.
- Hosting a "[Great Book Swap](#)".
- Learning a song in a First Nations language with [Busking for Change](#)
- Downloading [resources](#).

I look forward to celebrating Indigenous Literacy Day and give thanks for the gift of storytelling.

ACSQ Social Responsibilities Committee draws a red line against genocide, war crimes and unlawful occupation



Churchie graduate Senator David Pocock co-introduced the Red Lines Package of bills into the Senate during the recent Spring sittings (Image sourced from Senator David Pocock's Facebook page)

The Anglican Church Southern Queensland's Social Responsibilities Committee has co-signed a letter to the Minister for Foreign Affairs urging the Labor Government to reconsider its position after it joined with the Coalition to block a parliamentary inquiry into a package of bills drafted to ensure Australia doesn't contribute to war crimes, genocide and unlawful occupation, in line with international standards.

The four bills introduced as the [Red Lines Package Omnibus Bill 2026](#) would prevent Australia funding, arming or investing in genocide, war crimes, and illegal settlements anywhere in the world.

"We write on behalf of the organisations supporting the Red Lines Package to express our deep disappointment that the Government has blocked a Senate inquiry into the Bills," the letter to Senator the Hon Penny Wong said.

"They represent something very simple: the expectation that Australia should live up to the long-running international standards to which it has committed, and that our laws should prevent Australian public money, weapons, trade and investment from contributing to genocide, war crimes and unlawful occupation.

"They would give communities confidence that Australia has red lines grounded in law, rather than relying solely on the Government's political discretion to decide how and when to act after grave violations have occurred."

"The Red Lines Package is a measured proposal. It seeks to give practical effect to existing Australian commitments under international law, including the *Genocide Convention*, the *Arms Trade Treaty* and international humanitarian law.

"We are not asking the Government to accept every provision of the Bills without question.

"We are asking for proper parliamentary scrutiny: examine the bills, hear evidence, test any concerns and consider how they can be improved.

"We would welcome the opportunity for the Red Lines coalition, together with the Bills' drafters, to brief you and discuss any concerns the Government may have."

A diverse coalition of dozens of Australian faith, multicultural, civil society and human rights organisations has endorsed the bill package, including letter co-signatory the Anglican Church Southern Queensland's Social Responsibilities Committee (SRC).

Chair of the Anglican Church Southern Queensland's SRC, Peter Catt, said that the SRC is a strong advocate for the bill package and calls upon Churches nationally to actively support the legislation.

"The ACSQ's Social Responsibilities Committee was proud to be the first Church group nationally to formally endorse the Red Lines Package of bills earlier this year," The Very Rev'd Dr Peter Catt said.

"Doing so aligned with the Anglican Mark of Mission to 'Transform unjust structures of society, challenge violence of every kind and pursue peace and reconciliation'.

"When Churches join with other groups, such as Jewish and Muslim groups, as well as think tanks like The Australia Institute, and human rights organisations like Amnesty International, a powerful message is sent: Australians don't want their tax dollars funding war crimes, genocide or illegal settlements anywhere in the world.

"We encourage all Australian Churches and Christian organisations to support this critical legislation in any way they can, including endorsing the bill package and calling upon Parliament to support an inquiry."

The letter was co-signed by Australian Jewish, Muslim, Christian, human rights and civil society organisations, including the Jewish Council of Australia.

Jewish Council of Australia executive officer Bart Shteinman said that Australian legislation must align with international law and obligations.

"From Australia to Palestine, Sudan or Yemen, Jewish Australians know that our safety is bound up with safety and justice for all peoples in all places — without exception," Mr Shteinman said.

"Many of us have ancestors who were persecuted or murdered while the international community stood by or acted too late.

"Ensuring our domestic laws match our international obligations is the right thing to do to protect human rights everywhere.

“It’s long past time for our political leaders to legislate their red lines and make sure our country is never contributing to genocide, war crimes, or illegal occupation.”

The [package of bills](#) was developed over several years by legal academics and practising lawyers.

A broad group of crossbench parliamentarians introduced the legislation during recent Spring sittings.

Independent Dr Sophie Scamps MP introduced the Red Lines Package Omnibus Bill 2026 into the federal House of Representatives on 14 September, with Independent Andrew Wilkie MP co-sponsoring.

The following day it was introduced into the Senate by Churchie graduate Senator David Pocock and Senator Dr Mehreen Faruqi, with Senators Lidia Thorpe and Fatima Payman co-sponsoring.

The bill package was launched earlier this month at a Parliament House event, with former President of the Australian Human Rights Commission Gillian Triggs AC giving the event’s keynote address.

“It is one thing for nations to sign human rights treaties on the international stage. It is quite another to enforce their legal obligations under domestic laws,” Emeritus Professor Triggs said ahead of the event.

“While Australia has been a global leader in promoting international human rights law, it has been slow to legislate to enforce its treaty obligations in practice.

“The Red Lines Package is a groundbreaking initiative to prohibit arming, funding, investing in or profiting from acts of genocide, war crimes, crimes against humanity or illegal occupation wherever they occur in the world.”

Author’s note: This draft legislation has strong public support. For many Australians, this bill package is about our nation’s integrity — aligning our legislation with international conventions and treaties, such as the *Arms Trade Treaty* and the *Genocide Convention*, which we have long been signatories to.

We are just asking for the bill package to be scrutinised by a Parliamentary inquiry.

You can help by [writing](#) to your Member of Parliament asking them to support an inquiry into this four-part bill package.

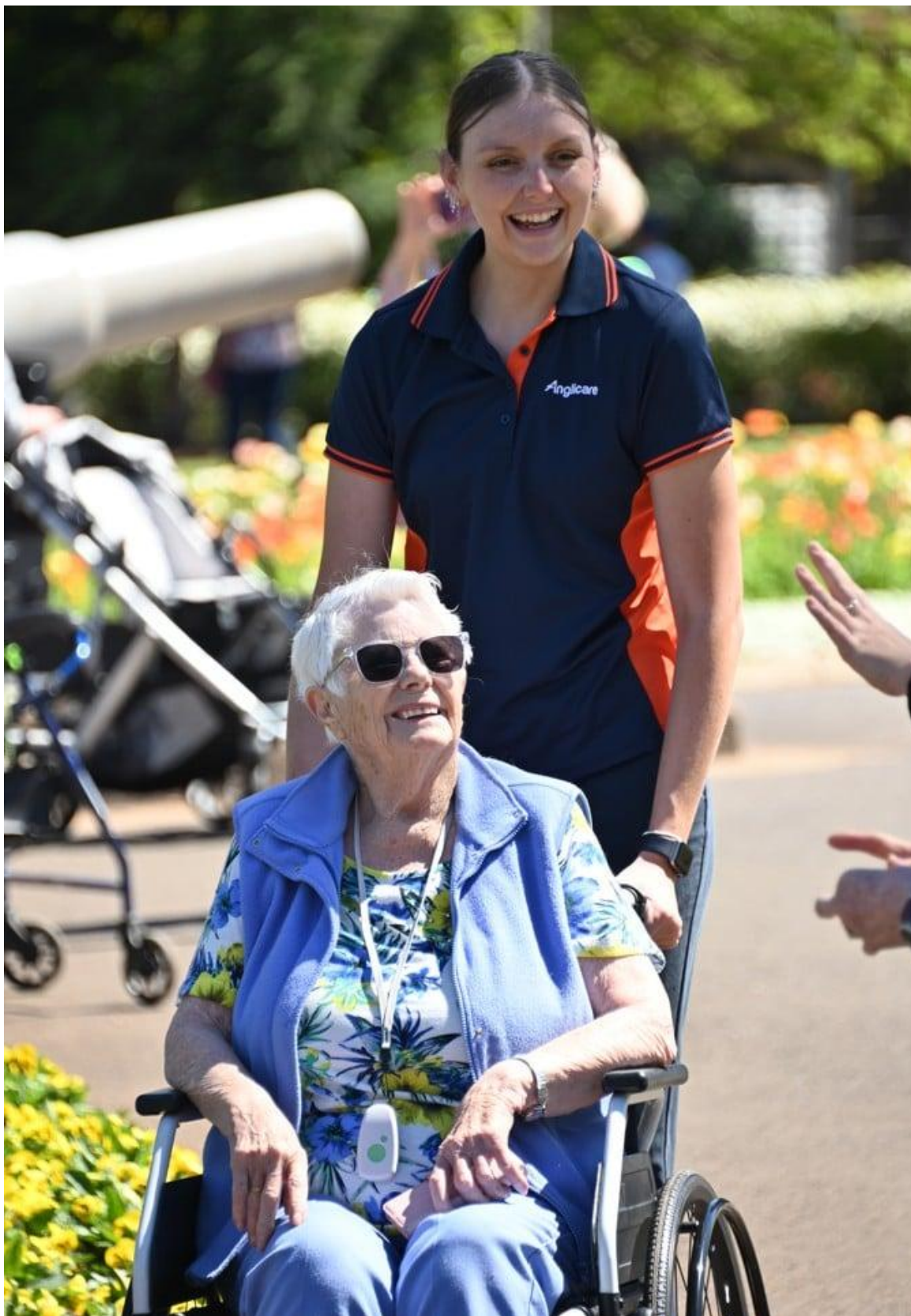
Anglicare's Symes Thorpe residents stop to smell the roses ahead of Carnival of Flowers



Symes Thorpe residents with lifestyle team leader Marion Barltrop, at Queens Park in Toowoomba, enjoying the flowers ahead of the 2026 Carnival of Flowers event (image supplied)

Residents from Anglicare Southern Queensland's Symes Thorpe aged care community have enjoyed a special outing to Queens Park, getting an early glimpse of Toowoomba's spectacular floral displays ahead of the Carnival of Flowers.

They travelled by bus to explore the gardens, enjoy a picnic and make the most of the spring sunshine, with many residents keen to see the blooms and revisit a much-loved annual Toowoomba tradition.



Symes Thorpe resident Bev with Anglicare Southern Queensland team member Alicia in Toowoomba's Queens Park ahead of the 2026 Carnival of Flowers (Image supplied)

Symes Thorpe diversional therapist and lifestyle team leader Marion Barltrop said September was always a highlight for residents, many of whom had grown up in Toowoomba or the surrounding region.

“Carnival of Flowers has been a special event in their lives.

“It’s a highlight and the whole of September is a highlight,” she said.

For resident Naomi Richardson, the outing was an opportunity to enjoy the gardens, fresh air and company of friends.

“I like getting out, walking around in the fresh air with friends and seeing the well-cultivated gardens,” Naomi said.



Symes Thorpe resident Naomi Richardson enjoying an outing at Queens Park in Toowoomba ahead of the 2026 Carnival of Flowers (Image supplied)

A keen fan of Queens Park’s rose garden, Naomi said she loved seeing all the flowers and the way they bloom.

Ms Barltrop said the outing also gave residents, many of whom were keen gardeners, a chance to share stories, memories and experiences from their own gardens.

“It makes a nice change of scenery for them,” she said.

From “Come and Do” to “Come and See” — Why ABM pilgrimages are changing for the better



ABM pilgrims enjoyed the graceful traditional dancing of the Kolomosu youth from the Diocese of Ysabel during their pilgrimage to the Solomon Islands in July 2026 (Image by ABM/Meagan Schwarz)

What is a pilgrimage? Why do we choose to go on a pilgrimage?

Books and articles may offer us a definition of pilgrimage, but the true meaning always lies within the heart of each pilgrim. There would be similarities — a journey of some sort, prayerful intention, a deliberate stepping aside from routine, finding the voice of God in the unfamiliar — but, even then, each pilgrim responds to the same pilgrimage in a different way.

“Come and See” is an invitation from ABM to you, to experience God’s mission at work in the lives of our Anglican partners. This reflects a practical change in how ABM engages in mission, from sending missionaries to do God’s work, to sending pilgrims to see how God is working through our partners.

In July 2026, 12 pilgrims joined me for 10 days in the Solomon Islands, visiting the Anglican Church of Melanesia (ACOM).



ABM pilgrims enjoyed the lively music of the Kolomosu youth playing their bamboo instruments during their pilgrimage to the Solomon Islands in July 2026 (Image by ABM/Meagan Schwarz)

ABM's partnership with ACOM goes back 175 years to the formation of ABM in the early years of the Melanesian Mission (which eventually grew into the now independent Church we know as ACOM). Our partnership has evolved over that time, and the pilgrimage was a celebration of all that has been achieved and recognition that the Australian Church can learn from our sister Church in Melanesia.

The pilgrims saw the undeniable physical and material poverty present in the Solomon Islands, but they also saw the great strength, joy, hope and resources present in the Church.



Young altar servers assisting at a St Barnabas Provincial Cathedral service in Honiara, which ABM pilgrims attended during their Solomon Islands pilgrimage in July 2026 (Image by ABM/Meagan Schwarz)

They saw a strong and vibrant Church that is responding in practical ways to local needs.

They saw how the support of ABM AID [Anglicans in Development] is facilitating new programs that bring love, hope and justice.



ACOM's Freda explaining to ABM pilgrims (in July 2026) how collecting climate data (temperature, rainfall and shoreline measurements) is helping communities prepare for and respond to changes in the climate (Image by ABM/Meagan Schwarz)

Flying into Honiara, I felt like I was back in PNG, where I'd lived and worked with ABM and the Anglican Church of PNG for seven and a half years. The warm and musical welcomes and generous hospitality only reinforced that feeling. Although one aspect of those welcomes was a culture shock for some pilgrims: both PNG and the Solomons Islands think that a warm welcome includes being challenged by a dancing figure wearing a mask and waving a hatchet.



A traditional warrior welcomes ABM pilgrims upon their arrival at All Saints', Honiara in July 2026 (Image by ABM/Meagan Schwarz)

After their initial shock, the pilgrims were moved by the singing — from rousing hymns and choruses that made our hearts soar, to the quiet delicate “Agnus Dei” and Taizé, sung during communion — nourished physically by the plentiful food and encouraged spiritually by the worship and conversations with our hosts.



ABM pilgrims enjoyed spending time with parishioners at St Alban's, Honiara (Image by Adara Raistrick)

Meeting people matters!

While hearing about a partner Church from others and seeing pictures is valuable (and for some, the only way available to them), it is true that there is nothing quite like visiting and seeing for oneself what God is doing.



ACOM staff member Marilyn met ABM pilgrim Kylie in Australia in 2025 when Mothers Union members from Honiara visited her parish (Image by Adara Raistrick)

For me, meeting ACOM staff felt like greeting old friends. I knew their names from reading about the work we support over many years. For the pilgrims, they met strangers on day 1 and farewelled friends on day 10. Once we got past the obvious differences, pilgrims found our hosts shared similar hopes and concerns for their children, country and Church. But they also found in our hosts the same joy Paul expressed in his letters — joy amidst the troubles.

Visiting St Nicholas Demonstration Farm, a place I have read and spoken about for many years, was a particular highlight for me. I was keen to see the enormous watermelon patch I'd seen in photos. The student who kindly took me there was surprised at my delight in having my picture taken in the watermelon patch — but she graciously found a good-sized watermelon for me to hold!



ABM's Meagan Schwarz was excited to see the St Nicholas' farm's watermelon patch she's heard about for many years (Image by Adara Raistrick)

And then she shared her delight in working at the demonstration farm as the practical assessment of her agriculture course. She spoke passionately about taking her knowledge into the villages and teaching families to use fewer chemicals on their food gardens, improve their nutrition and harvest yield, and then be able to sell excess food at market. She is one of many students being trained by St Nicholas Demonstration Farm.

Transformation

The pilgrims came and saw and were changed. One pilgrim admits that seeing for herself the devastating impact of rising sea levels on shorelines and changing rainfall patterns on the livelihoods of the people she met has challenged her views on climate change.



Shoreline at Red Beach near Honiara where measurements are taken to track erosion and sea levels (Image by ABM/Meagan Schwarz)

Another was challenged to stop taking for granted the conveniences offered to us in Australia and to live more simply, having witnessed the joy of our hosts who had comparatively less.

Here are a smattering of the comments made by returning pilgrims:

"I feel more at peace with myself and God more capable of endurance and resilience."

"It reinforced the joy of worshipping in community. Sometimes we need to be refreshed in community rather than feeling it is all about effort with little return. It brought some real renewal for the love of church in all its many forms."

"I have strived to be a positive person, generally. But meeting the Melanesian people really ignited my heart, to spread not just the Gospel message, but the joy therein. I've said multiple times a day since coming home the passage from Nehemiah 8.10 'The joy of the Lord is my strength.' God has been renewing my joy constantly, and I'm able to give that joy to others the same way the Solomon Islanders gave to me."

"I am challenged to rediscover a sense of joy in worship."

"God was calling me to be present in the unfamiliar and to trust. God was exposing me to examples of following God and loving others."

"I hope that it has taught me to be more humble and appreciate the differences in people that we meet or know in our daily lives."

"I am praising God more for his awesomeness and power in my life, realising that I don't need to have all the gadgets and gizmos, I need a quieter and simpler faith and lifestyle."

This is why the ABM pilgrimage program is integral to ABM's vision for mission: helping Australian Anglicans understand the ways in which God is working through them and our partners to achieve the promise from Jesus in John 10.10: life in all its fullness.

The Anglican Church of Melanesia has bold visions to serve its people and care for the land on which they live. They have rich resources in the people and cultures of the Solomon Islands and Vanuatu. They have integrated mission programs that connect and mutually benefit their schools and religious orders and parishes. And they have a joy in worship and life that many pilgrims noted was missing in their own communities.

They also face challenges. As the pilgrims reflected on all they saw and heard we realised that the question is no longer what "we" can do for "them", but how we can walk with them in God's mission, together.



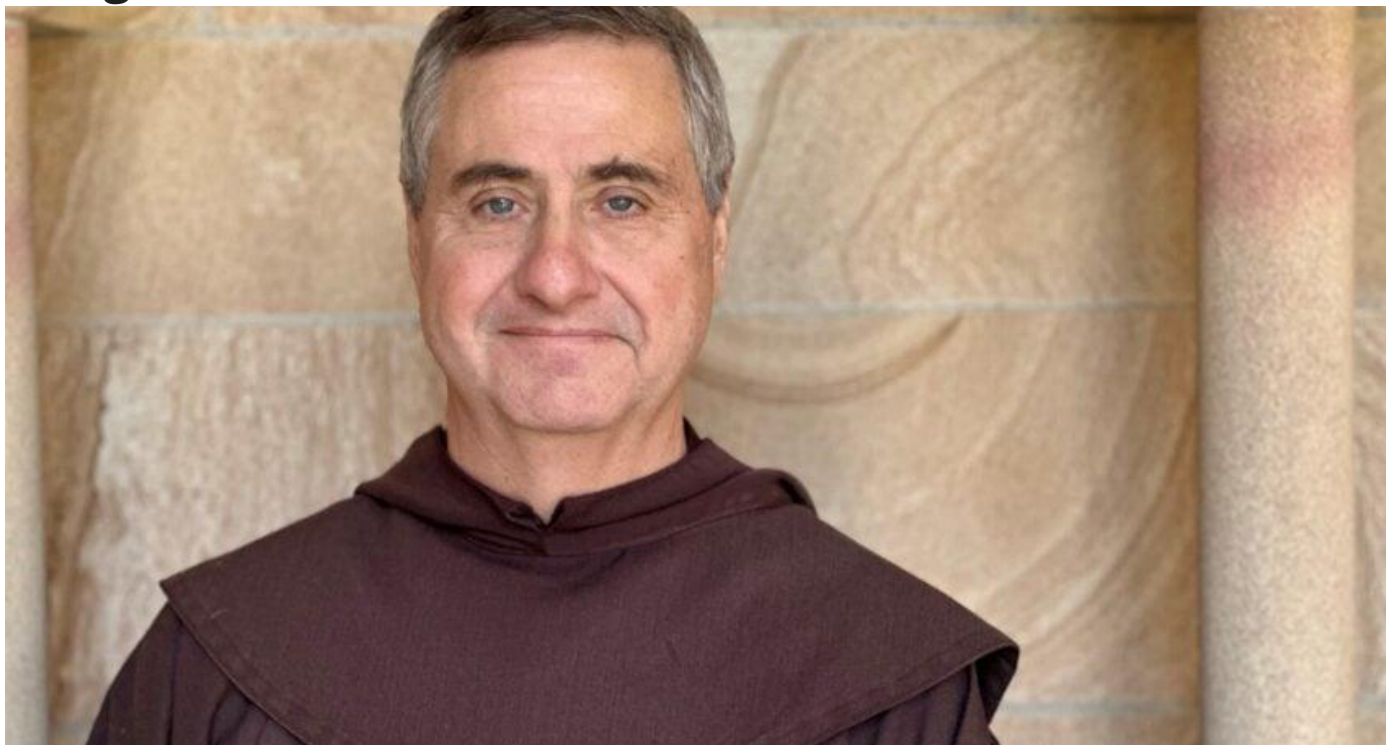
ABM is committed to walking with their partners as they respond to God's call to their Church (Image by Adara Raistrick)

Editor's note 28/09/2026: First published on the [Anglican Board of Mission website](#) on 18 September 2026.

Editor's note 29/09/2026: 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.

People & History • Monday 7 September 2026 • By Br Nathan James SSF

"St Francis inspires me to seek God's presence in all things"



"St Francis recognised all creation as brother and sister," says Br Nathan-James SSF during Season of Creation 2026 (Image by anglican focus)

In 1998 a friend invited me to visit The Chapel of the Holy Cross in Sedona, Arizona. There, I was drawn to a metal figurine of a man with birds sitting on his shoulders, though I did not know it was St Francis. Later in 1999, while visiting St Paul's Anglican Cathedral in London, I found a brochure advertising a vocation day with the Society of St Francis. Reading about how St Francis left his secular life to follow Jesus through prayer, community and service — especially to people who are living in poverty and marginalised — deeply resonated with me. At the vocation day, I realised that the figurine I had seen in the chapel was St Francis.

My favourite story about St Francis' is about his prayer before the crucifix at San Damiano in Assisi, Italy. Francis had been searching for purpose and meaning in his life, but found no answer. At San Damiano he opened his heart and soul to God to find the answer. There God called him to "rebuild my Church". Francis committed the whole of his life to that vocation.

St Francis recognised all creation as brother and sister, which is beautifully expressed in his "[Canticle of the Creatures](#)":

*Most High, all-powerful, good Lord,
Yours are the praises, the glory,
and the honour and all blessing.
To You alone, Most High, do they belong
and no human is worthy to mention Your name.*

*Praised be you, my Lord,
with all Your creatures,
especially Sir Brother Sun,
who is the day,
and through whom You give us light.
And he is beautiful
and radiant with great splendour;
and bears a likeness of You, Most High one.*

*Praised be You, my Lord,
through Sister Moon and the stars,
in heaven You formed them
clear and precious and beautiful.
Praised be You, my Lord,
through Brother Wind,
and through the air, cloudy and serene,
and every kind of weather
through which you give sustenance to your creatures.
Praised be You, my Lord,
through Sister water,
who is very useful and humble
and precious and chaste.
Praised be You, my Lord,
through Brother fire,
through whom You light the night,
and he is beautiful and playful
and robust and strong.*

*Praised be You, my Lord,
through our Sister Mother Earth,
who sustains and governs us,
and who produces various fruit
with coloured flowers and herbs.*

*Praised be You, my Lord,
through those who give pardon for Your love,
and bear infirmity and tribulation.
Blessed those who endure in peace,
for by You, Most High, shall they be crowned.*

*Praised be You, my Lord,
through our Sister Bodily Death,
from whom no one living can escape.*

*Woe to those who die in mortal sin.
Blessed are those whom death
will find in Your most holy will,
for the second death shall do them no harm.*

*Praise and bless my Lord and give Him thanks
and serve Him with great humility.*

St Francis saw creation as a reflection of God's presence and love. So, St Francis inspires me to seek God's presence in all things, especially in moments when recognising that presence can be challenging.

The annual [Season of Creation](#) commences on 1 September, the World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation (and the first day of Spring in Australia), and ends on 4 October, St Francis of Assisi's Feast Day.

It is an honour to pay tribute to St Francis during this year's Season of Creation because on Sunday, 4 October we commemorate 800 years since St Francis' death.

St Francis teaches us that creation is a gift from God, deserving of reverence and care. Seeing all creatures as brothers and sisters encourages us to protect the environment, respect all forms of life, and recognise our responsibility as stewards of God's creation.

Editor's note: Check out the [Season of Creation](#) website for resources and commemoration ideas and download this wonderful ACSQ Season of Creation [prayer and reflection resource](#), which includes an introduction by Bishop Sarah Plowman, the Grow Together Network chair.

Bishop Daniel Abot awarded the Cross of St Augustine for Services to the Anglican Communion



The Archbishop of Canterbury, The Most Rev'd and Rt Hon Dame Sarah Mullally with Bishop Daniel Abot and Rachel Jimma (Bishop Daniel's wife) at Lambeth Palace on Friday, 11 September 2026 when Bishop Daniel was presented The Cross of St Augustine for Services to the Anglican Communion (Image by Alima Deng)

Dear sisters and brothers

I am delighted to share the news that Bishop Daniel Abot has been awarded The Cross of St Augustine for Services to the Anglican Communion by the Archbishop of Canterbury overnight at Lambeth Palace.

[The Cross of St Augustine](#) was founded by Archbishop Michael Ramsey (the 100th Archbishop of Canterbury, who served in this capacity from 1961-74). First awarded in February 1965, it is a circular medallion bearing a replica of the ninth-century Cross of Canterbury, infilled with blue enamel.

As part of the Lambeth Awards, The Cross of St Augustine is awarded to those who have made an outstanding contribution to the worldwide Anglican Communion. It is the second highest international award within Anglicanism.

Bishop Daniel will be well known to you for his work in South Sudanese and Sudanese communities locally and internationally, as well as for his significant ministries in this Diocese.

His citation reads:

The Right Reverend Daniel Deng Abot — The Cross of St Augustine for Services to the Anglican Communion

For leading groundbreaking peace work in South Sudan and for his continuing ministry to South Sudanese and Sudanese diaspora communities in Australia and internationally

Daniel was born in (now) South Sudan. During the civil war, 12-year-old Daniel fled 1,000 miles on foot to Ethiopia and then to Kenya. He spent 15 years in refugee camps, meeting his wife, Rachel, in Kenya where he was priested. After moving to Australia with Rachel and their children in 2003, Daniel worked for Anglicare, assisting newly arrived refugees, and served as an honorary priest.

In 2014 the Diocese of Duk was established to help bring peace to the region. Daniel was appointed the first Bishop of Duk while working for the Queensland Government. While Rachel stayed in Australia with their seven children, 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. 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 as he outstandingly embodies the Marks of Mission.

A full report on Bishop Daniel's award from the Archbishop of Canterbury will be published on [anglican focus](#) once the professional photographs have been received.

Please join me in congratulating Bishop Daniel Abot for being the recipient of this prestigious award and in giving thanks to God for his and Rachel's lifelong dedication to ministry and mission in the service of Christ.

Congratulations, also, to this year's other Lambeth Awards recipients.

Yours in Christ

The Most Reverend Jeremy Greaves KCSJ
Archbishop of Brisbane