

Day of Encouragement

❑ Christian faith is a call to serve others

Service to others was a consistent theme in the four presentations at the Lay Ministry Encouragement Day in Wellington on Saturday March 12.

The gathering, which attracted almost 90 participants from 22 different parishes across the Diocese of Bathurst, heard inspiring presentations from Bishop Ian Palmer and three lay leaders from within the diocese.

Uplifting praise and singing, led by musicians Jay Quince and Peter Woodlands from Parkes, also contributed significantly to a day which many participants described as a great encouragement.

Bishop Ian gave the first talk of the day, on the topic *Who are we?*

Drawing on Ephesians 1, he said St Paul refers to the followers of Jesus Christ as 'saints' - and we should think of ourselves in the same way.

He also quoted Isaiah 49: 'See, I have written your name on the palms of my hands,' reminding us that God has chosen to love us, and sees each one of us as unique and valuable.

Bishop Ian posed the question: 'Why are you still a Christian?' and invited everyone to offer a single-sentence answer. The responses, written on A3-sized sheets of paper, were put up on the wall as a backdrop for the rest of the presentations during the day.

The second speaker, Natalie Quince, drew from Scripture and her own experience to address the question, *What is Lay Ministry?*

"Are we really being followers of Christ in our lives?" she asked. "What is it that God wants us to do with our faith?"

Answering her own question, she said "Ministry is of the essence of the life of the whole body of Christ: and ... all baptised persons are called to minister in the Church and in the world."

She backed this statement up with several Scripture references, including:

But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's



PRAISE: *Enthusiastic singing was a feature of the Encouragement Day, which also provided opportunities for lay people to share some of their own experiences in ministry.*

special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. (1 Peter 2:9);

Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms. (1 Peter 4:10);

For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do. (Ephesians 2:10).

Natalie challenged her listeners to consider two questions:

- ♦ Have I been called to ministry?
- ♦ Am I being the minister I was called to be?

A lawyer by training, Natalie told how she had resigned from her job in a local legal practice to become voluntary manager of Anglicare's welfare work in Parkes, in response to God's calling.

She concluded by inviting everyone to reflect briefly on what might be the greatest barrier they have overcome (or might still have to overcome) to become effective in their ministry - and what would be the results of being free in Christ to overcome this barrier.

After a very satisfying lunch (provided by Wellington parishioners) Sylvia Hitchick spoke on *What Lay*

Ministry? and showed how our individual interests, skills and abilities (given by God) motivate us to serve in particular ministries.

She stressed that while some ministries or forms of service might appear more important than others, all are necessary for the proper functioning of the church as the body of Christ.

She pointed out that God has made each person to be unique: "Did you know that you are the only one of you in the whole world?"

However, this did not mean that life should be self-focussed.

"You are God's special creation, to be a certain kind of person, to do specific things that only you can do to build the Kingdom," she said.

A teacher based in Bathurst, Sylvia quoted Romans 12 to list seven specific giftings that guide the type of service or ministry Christians might be equipped for: gifts or abilities that motivate them in particular ways.

She listed these as:

- ♦ Prophecy/Insight/Intercession/ Vision / Having Godly Perception;
- ♦ Serving/ Helping/ Practical/ Supportive/ Gets the job done;

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Bishop Ian's Easter Message: Dying to live

BY

BISHOP

IAN

PALMER



Beloved in Christ,

"A Bishop is called to maintain the Church's witness to the resurrection of Christ from the dead."

I firmly believe what the Scriptures tell us: that Jesus lived, died, was buried and on the third day God raised him from death leaving the tomb empty.

I firmly believe that through his death on the cross and glorious resurrection that death has been defeated; sins are forgiven, evil has been conquered; hope and new life are offered to all.

I enjoy the Easter celebration that "Christ is risen" and the Renewal of Baptismal Vows. I hold onto the words of the priest, "Remember to whom you belong".

We belong to the One who died

and rose again for us. "We are a resurrection people and 'Hallelujah' is our song!"

Many times during the past year it has been hard to sing this "Hallelujah!" Often the way forward has felt like dying; a surrender into nothingness. Again and again I've had to learn that I am not ultimately in control – only God is.

Shortly before he was crucified Jesus said, "Very truly, I tell you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. Those who love their life lose it, and those who hate their life in this world will keep it for eternal life." (John 12:24-25)

Isn't it significant that on the

cross, which was killing him, Jesus too surrendered his life to God and breathed his last? It sounds like an act of will. Dying is more than just a physical process; it is a spiritual and deeply human surrender back to God of the gift of the breath of life that God breathed into Adam in the Garden. This takes courage and a very deep trust that God is in control and that only through God's grace is resurrection possible. I've witnessed dying people do this.

I've witnessed saintly people do this in life. Dying is not something we do once. Dying is a way of life for the Christian. Jesus did it many times. In the Garden of Gethsemane he prayed, "Not my will but yours, O God, be done." We pray the same prayer "Your will be done on earth (in my life), as it is in heaven".

This is the pathway of surrender. It is the only way ahead I can see for our Diocese. My prayer is, "Show us your way, O Lord." and then, "Give us courage to walk in this way with you". Whatever we do should then point people to Jesus who lived, died and rose again and leads us on in his resurrection life.

To God be the glory,

+ Ian Bathurst

Day of Encouragement

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- ♦ Teaching / Declaring God's Word / Imparting God's truth and understanding;
- ♦ Exhorting / Encouraging / Motivating/ Bringing out the best in others;
- ♦ Contributor / Sharer / Meeting needs / Generous with time and money;
- ♦ Facilitator/ Administrator / Co-ordinator/ Leadership /Bringers of Order out of Chaos;
- ♦ Mercy / Compassion / Empathy / Healing Love to the broken.

Using a hypothetical example of a hostess dropping the cake as she was bringing it to the table at a birthday party, Sylvia invited participants to write down the way in which they would respond to the situation.

She explained that these responses gave an indication of what their primary 'motivational gift' might be.

In the final presentation of the day, Lew Hitchick addressed the topic: **Now What?**

He said that, having equipped each of us for a particular ministry role in the church, Christ was now counting on us to play our part.

He invited the gathering to join

together in saying the familiar words of the post-communion prayer: *Father, we offer ourselves to you as a living sacrifice, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Send us out in the power of your Spirit, to live and work to your praise and glory.*

"It's not only a prayer – it's a declaration, and we're renewing our commitment to service in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, each time we say it," he claimed.

"As followers of the risen Lord Jesus, we are disciples – and the job of a disciple is to make more disciples ... We're called not just to be the church, but also to grow the church."

Lew also pointed out that a study by the Viability and Structures Task Force of the Anglican Church's General Synod, published two years ago, had shown that the way in which we currently 'do church' in inland Australia is not sustainable.

"We can no longer rely on what we've always done, because it's plainly not working in our context," he said, "and you'll know the saying, 'if you keep doing what you've always done, you'll keep getting what you've always got'."

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Keeping churches safe

❑ Safe Ministry training days raise awareness of ministry responsibilities

Two one-day workshops in Orange early in March have helped keep parish leaders up-to-date with Safe Ministry practices and procedures.

Presented by Peter Barnett of Safe Ministry Resources, the two days each had a different focus: Friday (March 4) was actually the second day of a two-day clergy conference, with church wardens invited to join the clergy to plan the implementation of the Safe Ministry Policy adopted by Bishop in Council late last year.

Saturday (March 5) was required training for all parish officers and people in leadership positions, and consisted of training in safe ministry procedures including an overview of the principles; protecting vulnerable people; recruiting and training safe leaders; and developing safe ministry programs. About 90 people attended the Saturday program.

Peter Barnett pointed out that the starting place for providing safe ministry was 1 John 4:16 – God is love! “Jesus is the hands-on demonstration of God’s love for all people, not only the religious, important or wise, but also for children, women, the lowly, the poor, the sick, sinners and tax collectors.”

Citing Philippians 2:1-11, he said God’s love for us calls us to put others first, consider others’ interests and to imitate the example of Christ.

“When a church appoints a leader or helper to a position of leadership, they are saying, ‘We trust this person to represent God for us – we trust this person to not make the good news of Jesus into bad news by harming others,’” Peter Barnett said.

He offered guidelines for the appointment of volunteer church workers to ensure that due diligence requirements were met.

His suggestions included:

- ♦ Identify the role and length of time the role is to be filled;
- ♦ Form recruitment teams of two or three people including the ministry team leader, with both genders represented;
- ♦ Set a minimum attendance requirement – e.g. attendance at church for at least six months prior to appointment.
- ♦ Safe Ministry screening (using a sample form which he distributed);



ENGAGEMENT: Safe Ministries presenter Peter Barnett used a variety of techniques to keep his audience engaged with the subject matter.

- ♦ Working With Children Check;
- ♦ Relevant Police checks;
- ♦ Referee checks;
- ♦ Position Interview to explore the applicant’s suitability for the role;
- ♦ Induction – to ensure that all leaders are given appropriate information and training to enable them to successfully share in ministry;
- ♦ Ministry review – could be done at the end of each year, providing leaders with an opportunity to say whether they will be available for the role next year.

He also pointed out the importance of ongoing supervision for leaders, including clear role expectations, adequate support, a commitment to leadership development, clearly defined boundaries (code of conduct), and well-communicated processes for handling conflict or complaints against the leader.

Overarching principles

Peter Barnett listed four overarching principles which provide the ‘umbrella’ under which we develop and implement safe ministry policy.

- 1. Exercise transparency** – being willing to show others how you are caring for people; ‘being seen to be doing the right thing’.
- 2. Ensure accountability** – being willing to answer to those in authority; being willing to be called to account for the way words or actions have impacted another person.

3. Meeting legal requirements – complying with legislation regarding Work Health and Safety, child and elder abuse, concealment, Working with Children Checks as well as the legal concepts of due diligence and duty of care.

4. Consider insurance implications – the management of risks for local churches (in ministry programs, activities and events) is the responsibility of the Parish Wardens and the Parish Council.

Peter Barnett’s lively and informative presentation included case studies and group discussions to keep his audience engaged throughout each day, and one participant commented afterwards that he had done an amazing job of making a potentially boring topic very interesting!

The two workshops will be repeated in Wellington on Friday and Saturday, May 20-21.

As in Orange, the Friday will focus on implementation of the Safe Ministry Policy and Church Wardens are being urged to attend. Saturday’s program will be the safe ministry training that all in leadership positions in the church are required to attend every three years. This includes Licensed Lay Ministers and parish council members.

Those planning to attend either day in Wellington should notify the Registrar, Karen Trafford (preferably email: karen.trafford@bathurstanglican.org.au) or (02) 6331 1722.

Ash Wednesday Climate Justice Forum

Blow the trumpet in Zion; sanctify a fast; call a solemn assembly; gather the people (Joel 2.15-16).

At the beginning of Lent, Anglicans gathered at Trinity College in Melbourne to pray, listen and talk about care of creation and climate justice.

The Ash Wednesday Climate Justice Forum was organised by the Anglican Alliance, the Anglican Board of Mission (ABM), the Public Affairs Commission and Anglican Overseas Aid.

The participants came from across Australia and the world. They were diverse; young and old, from the inner city and the country, priests and SRC (Social Responsibility Committees) members, scientists and aid workers, church workers, volunteers and lay people.

The Forum heard Rose Elu from the Torres Strait Islands and Tagolyn Kabekabe from the Solomon Islands describe the effect climate change is currently having on their communities and the communities' responses.

Eco-theologian, Mick Pope, talked about theology and the science of climate change and Professor Neil Ormerod from the Australia Catholic University presented on *Laudato Si'*, Pope Francis' bold encyclical on Care for our Common Home.

Ncumisa Magadla described the vibrant activities of the Green Anglicans – the Anglican Church of Southern Africa's Environmental Network. These included a Carbon Fast for Lent and the expectation that confirmation candidates successfully nurture a seed during their 18 month preparation process.

Throughout the day participants discussed what they had heard and shared what was happening in their various parts



AFRICAN CONTRIBUTION: *Ncumisa Magadla, from the Church of Southern Africa (ACSA) Environmental Network, talks to participants about the efforts of the ACSA in reducing the effects of Climate Change. Photo (c) Christopher Brooks/ABM, 2016*

of the church.

In the afternoon the forum addressed what the Anglican Church in Australia should do in response to the challenge of climate change.

There was a consensus that it was a key priority for the church in our time.

Suggested responses included creative liturgy, planting gardens, solar panels, theological teaching, partnerships between churches, divestment from fossil fuels, a clear connection between climate change and poverty in development work, prophetic advocacy and developing a new language to describe the vital place of the fifth Mark of Mission into the broader theological story.

Bishop Stephen Pickard concluded the day, speaking about the Bonds of Affection which enable Anglicans to engage with Climate justice globally.

Rev'd Andy Bowerman, the Co-Director of the Anglican Alliance, flew in from England to facilitate the forum. He is taking the results of the forum to the upcoming meeting of the Anglican Consultative Council in Zambia.

ABM Education Officer, Celia Kemp said, "Praying, listening and talking to people from vastly different circumstances who share a deep love for God's creation and are acting to care for it brought hope into an area where there is often nothing but a sense of futility and despair."

Anglican Women of Australia AGM next month

Our diocesan body is experiencing a fresh awakening, with several new, enthusiastic members of the committee.

At its meeting in January it was confirmed that over the last few years many of the long established groups have taken an alternate role in their parish activities and have become AWA Friendship Groups or using a similar name, but wanting to stay under the AWA umbrella which is very important these days when there is so much uncertainty about the future direction our diocese will take over the next few years, but let us still think positively.

We will be celebrating 50 years of

AWA in our Diocese next year and will be looking for ideas of how we can recognise the great occasion.

To cater for both types of groups, the original AWA Group and the AWA Friendship Groups, and to finance the established needs of the Diocese, it has been decided that we have two annual subscription systems, one to continue paying the usual \$4 per member to the Diocesan Treasurer, or pay a \$10 affiliation fee. It will be up to each parish to decide which category they come under.

We would like to continue supporting our World Vision Child and our long term and important commitment to the

ABM Auxiliary. Donations to other community and mission groups, which used to be sent through the Diocesan Treasurer, will now be sent direct to the organisation concerned.

The diocesan AGM will be hosted by Mudgee Group on 14th April, and they hope as many groups as possible will be represented. Final details will be sent to all parishes shortly. Please support the committee on its present journey as we prepare to celebrate 50 years of Anglican Women of Australia in our Diocese.

Cecily Butcher
President