Engaging with the local community

RESOURCES AND CASE STUDIES

Anglican Church Southern Queensland

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Overview of case studies

Introduction

This guidebook is designed to assist parishes in engaging with their local communities. Without going into detail on wider community engagement literature, community engagement approaches and strategies relevant to church settings will be explored through case studies of Anglican Church Southern Queensland parishes. The seven case studies are taken across the three regions of the diocese, from projects undertaken in recent years.

In each instance, a brief description of the particular community engagement approach or strategy will be followed by a case study. In some instances, those contributing the case studies have then provided some tips for parishes seeking to learn from the community engagement project. Some reflection questions are then given to promote further learning transfer from the case study, before listing resources for further information.

Proclaiming

1. Holistic approach
Each case study involves integrating of ministering to the needs of the whole person in body, mind/emotions, and spirit. Look for these three threads woven into each case study. For example, the Thread Together piece combines practical clothing assistance for disadvantaged people, the emotional self-esteem boost of having the dignity of new good quality clothing, and the community expression of Christianity's spiritual values in action.

2. Build in natural faith sharing opportunities where appropriate
Any introduction of a faith sharing element needs to be included intentionally, to fit into the purposes of the project and to flow naturally with the activity. For example, in the community meal case study, before guests eat they are invited to answer a question about what they're grateful for. This is then woven into a brief, low key reflection.

3. Link proclaiming with wider diocesan vision and initiatives
Some projects easily lend themselves to linking with wider Anglican Church Southern Queensland initiatives and agencies. For example, two of the case studies involve First Nations people and so dovetail well with the diocesan Reconciliation Action Plan. Additionally, the First Nations dolls project was able to partner with the work of Anglicare.

4. Use multiple effective media channels for promotion
Several of the case studies highlight the importance of promoting the project and its purpose across communities and networks. It is important that messages get to as many groups of relevant stakeholders as possible. Both the winter shelter and community meal projects underline the relevance of using social media to reach some of the intended audience groups.

Serving

1. Tap into parishioner's gifts
In each case study the parish concerned has tapped into the gifts, skills and interests of parishioners and other volunteers. In the 'bums off seats' community building case study with Chermside parish, the related concept of empowerment is introduced. Helping parishioners identify the gifts they would like to offer is an important element, which they can then be free to offer if they feel empowered to do so.

2. Link with local needs and people
While sometimes projects were chosen because they were topical in nature, a key feature of all the case studies is linking with local issues and/or people affected locally by the issue. Where direct contact with beneficiaries of the project is not possible, linking with a local contact person can be particularly helpful. This is evident in the First Nations doll initiative where, while it was not appropriate to have contact with the kids in residential care, the project coordinator was able to liaise with a local Anglicare worker involved in Out of Home Care.

3. Hospitality
Foundational to a service approach to community engagement is the concept of hospitality. This is illustrated well in the community meal case study, where the Maroochydore parish emphasise the importance of intentionality in warmly welcoming all those who arrive in the space. Schnase (2018, p. 46) recommends parishioners do the following 'Radical Hospitality Group Activity'.

> *Together with others, walk through your church's physical spaces as if visiting for the first time. Talk about what you see, what you smell, what you hear, what you notice that is welcoming and inviting and helpful, and what you find confusing or uninviting or forbidding. Imagine moving through both the indoor and outdoor spaces from the point of view of a child, a teenager, a mother with a baby, a person with a disability.*[1]

In his chapter on radical hospitality, Schnase contends that hospitality applies equally to having people in our space to "come and see", and us moving to others' spaces in the community to "go and do". Hospitality is an attitude and a way of relating to others, regardless of where we encounter them.

4. Multi-generational approach
Different parish contexts impact on their approach to multi-generational community engagement. In the case of the scarves for seafarers case study, parishioners were able to assist students at their local Anglican school to develop their knitting and crocheting skills, as well as contributing to the wider community. Such external partnering can enhance the multi-generation engagement of an initiative.

[1]Schnase, R. (2018). *Five Practices of Fruitful Congregations*. Nashville: Abingdon Press.

Worshipping

1. Build in prayer for the project from the outset

In their useful book on community development, Ballard and Husselbee (2007, p. 75) discuss the integral role that theological reflection plays in a congregation discerning how they relate to their changing neighbourhoods. Prayer needs to be kept at the centre of the ongoing journey of discernment of parish community engagement. Regular intercessory prayer in worship services is a common example of this. The Parish of Maroochydore was able to take this one step further by inviting a guest of their community meal to speak about their experience to parishioners during a worship service.

2. Incorporate prayer explicitly with participants where appropriate

Shared prayer can be a wonderful way of bonding volunteers for service activities in a common purpose and in seeking their labours to bear fruit. For example, The Parish of Chermside incorporates a prayer amongst volunteers when they commence activities such as their soup kitchen shifts. It is important for the leadership to identify if and when it is appropriate to use prayer with wider groups that include community volunteers.

3. Use symbolic action and ritual

Much community engagement work is unseen and unheralded, and in the case of social justice initiatives, may be hard to quantify. One way of acknowledging and demonstrating the commitment of parishioners and other participants is through some sort of symbolic act or ritual. In the case of the community organising case study, the Parish of Buderim incorporated the signing of a handmade table cloth during a ceremony of commitment to First People's Constitutional Reform.

Learning

1. Research issue/activity

For community engagement to be effective, decision making needs to include a research base right from the early stages of a project. Not only do decision makers need to understand the community issues being addressed in an initiative, they also need to be aware of best practice responses and the contributions of other stakeholders within the space the project may be operating in. Ballard and Husselbee (2007, p. 75) make the observation that this helps churches go into an initiative with their eyes open, knowing what is needed and reducing the change of the project being derailed, unsustainable, ineffective, or – worse – causing damage. In the case of the winter shelter case study, The Parish of Toowoomba West was able to adopt a pre-existing model that had been reliably tested. The parish was also able to incorporate small group material already developed on homelessness in bible studies for parishioners. In the community meal case study, The Parish of Maroochydore researched the timing of other community meals to make sure theirs was on a day not covered by other organisations.

2. Identify funding opportunities

Tapping into grants from government and other sources can be an important financial source for parish projects. The Parish of Chermside's case study demonstrates the potential financial rewards of investing research time on identifying relevant grants available to community groups.

3. Partnering to tackle bigger issues

Some issues are bigger than any one organisation's capacity to tackle them alone. Churches are communities with finite resources, and specific gifts and strengths. Partnering with other organisations is a way of leveraging the strengths of member organisations to address issues to assist people with needs that otherwise might otherwise be hard to meet. Indooroopilly parish's partnership with Thread Together is an example of a church partnership that gives volunteers practical opportunities to assist vulnerable people have access to redistributed new clothing from manufacturers at no cost.

4. Utilise diocesan resources

Don't reinvent the wheel, or stumble into troubles that other parishes doing similar things have faced! The Winter Shelter case study from the Parish of Toowoomba West specifies the importance of getting assistance with insurance and Workplace Health and Safety topics from specialists at St Matin's House, who routinely deal with these across parishes.

Identifying local community needs

It is important for a parish to discover the real needs of its local community, for it to be able to respond to its community context in a creative and sustainable way. A community profile is a snapshot of the significant features of a community.

The following tasks can be attempted to develop an in-depth community profile. They are presented in a suggested order. When time is limited, a selection of the tasks can be attempted.

1. Observation

Physically move around the area (walking where possible), using your five senses.

Think about the lens from which you are viewing from. Think about different lens you could use. For example, what you would notice if you were representing each of the following professions or points of view:

- Social worker
- Town planner/architect
- Environmental scientist
- Entrepreneur
- Local political member
- New resident from interstate or overseas

Use the following to record/collect information:

- Notes
- Photos
- Video

2. The Geography

A good starting point is to get a map of the local area in as large a scale a possible (e.g. 1:2500 or 1:10000). These are not always easy to get, but there are some specialist map suppliers for commercial maps. Maps are published by various government departments. Council libraries are also a useful port of call for more information on these.

To complete this task:

1. Determine the physical boundaries of the location.
2. Ascertain the administrative and other boundaries (e.g. Council Ward).
3. Mark on a map the land uses and facilities of the area:
    - Housing, different sorts
    - Industries and businesses
    - Retail
    - Leisure and cultural facilities
    - Health facilities
    - Education: schools, colleges, universities, etc
    - Public transport
    - Faith organisations: churches, mosques, synagogues, etc
    - Council resources: libraries, social services, etc
    - Post offices
    - Refuse and recycling facilities

Community centres are rich sources of information about a local area. Subscribe to your nearest centre's newsletter, and read their annual report. Spending some time visiting your nearest community centre can also be a valuable way of connecting with a range of people that may not visit your church. Visiting a centre in person can provide an additional opportunity to link with other community organisations and resources, using community noticeboards and other information on offer. Talking with workers from community centres is also a rich source of information and ideas.

You can find your nearest neighbourhood and community centre on the Queensland Government website.

FOR INFORMATION COLLECTION

- use camera
- take notes
- make entries on large scale map

3. Statistics

Research the following statistics:

- Population make up: households, gender, age, ethnicity, faith
- Socio-economic data: employment, income, etc
- Housing stock

Resources to assist with data collection include:

- Council libraries
- City hall/central council information
- Real estate agents
- The Australian Bureau of Statistics
- Queensland Regional Profiles
- NCLS Community Social Profile

The NCLS Community Social Profile (CSP) is a 28 page profile of your local community, showing key information about the people living in your neighbourhood, using data from the 2016 National Census. Presented in a format that's easy to read, the CSP identifies what's changing in the social make-up of your community, helping your church or organisation to understand your community better.

Local council members have well-developed networks that give them an oversight of their suburbs' needs and profiles. Develop familiarity with your councillors and council services. Contact your local councillors letting them know you're wanting to engage more with your community. Some parishes even invite them to an event to enhance the relationship and also to give opportunity for informal contact from which other opportunities might develop.

For data collection and presentation, use:

- maps
- bar/pie charts
- tables
- description

4. History

Write a summary of the local history. This is a chance to share stories and capture the feel of the area.

Include:

- Local First Peoples groups
- Key events
- Population mobility
- Socio-economic growth/decline
- Building spread

Resources:

- Council libraries
- Museums
- Historical societies
- Newspapers
- Internet

5. Human impressions

Seek out responses to the following questions:

1. What is good about living here?
2. What do you feel about the neighbourhood?
3. How would you improve it?
4. What community facilities are needed?
5. Where do you travel for work/shopping/leisure/family?

Methods:

- Choose samples with representative people e.g. teachers/nurses/social workers, etc
- Approach people in the street/at home/cafes/pubs/etc (this needs to be done with discretion and an eye to respecting people's privacy).
- Use questionnaires/formal or informal interviews
- Form focus groups

Record by:

- filling in forms
- note taking
- analysing both as statistics and impressions

6. Presenting the profile

Present material in a form that communicates best with the intended audience. A range of quantitative (numerical) and qualitative (non-numerical) information is usually presented using tables, graphs, quotations, stories, pictures, and various other approaches to thicken the representation.

Ask:

- what are strengths/weaknesses/opportunities/threats?
- do any possibilities for action begin to appear?

Additional resources

Ballard, P., & Husselbee, L. (2007). *Community and Ministry: An Introduction to Community Development in a Christian Context*. London: SPCK, pp. 72).

---- (2017). *Stats have Faces: Helping your Congregation Engage its Community.* Uniting Church in Australia, Queensland Synod.

A place to call home: community meal

Every Wednesday night, St Peter's Anglican Church, Maroochydore hosts a free weekly Community Meal for people who are homeless, isolated, lonely and in need of love and care, provision and social inclusion. The Rev'd Tania Eichler outlines below how the Community Meal works.

Our doors open around 4 pm, when we greet our guests and sit down with them for a chat in our Church Hall, providing pies, sausage rolls and pastries that have been collected from local bakeries, along with a space for people to charge their phones. At 5 pm, before the main meal is served, there is a combined interactive grace and 'Think Spot'. It starts with the question, "What are you thankful for?"; and is followed by a shared Gospel message of love, hope, peace and joy. This is tied in with visual motifs from sidewalk chalk art provided by a talented parishioner. We also celebrate good news and birthdays! This is a space where all are welcome. It is more than a meal — it is an extension of the family table with conversations and connections for all who need a hearty meal and some TLC.

One of our regular friends who comes to the Community Meal, Pat, said that the weekly gathering provides a home and family for him and others who come along: "The Community Meal gives me, and us, hope. It helps me to stay connected and keeps me sane. I can connect and communicate and meet other people, my peers. This stops the isolation and segregation of being on the street. The good old-fashioned home cooked meals bring back good memories of family meals and gatherings. I value the community meal so much, as it gives me the family connection that I lack. It is like coming home for a Christmas or special occasion and having dinner, catching up with what has been happening, telling stories, and laughing and crying together. The Community Meal is my family."

As part of our Mission Plan, in the Community Meal we aim to be an active and loving faith community of people who seek to live and be like Jesus. As such, focusing on outreach and service to the wider community. We seek to be welcoming and inclusive of all irrespective of age, race, gender, or ability, recognising that all people are created in the image of God. We aim to relate with respect and compassion to people who are in need, isolated or disadvantaged in the community.

Our Mission Plan also embraces our Diocesan Mission (The Mission of the Church is the Mission of Christ) of these two Marks of Mission: "To respond to human need by loving service" (through the practical presence and provision at the Community Meal); and "To seek to transform unjust structures of society, to challenge violence of every kind and pursue peace and reconciliation" (through advocacy on behalf of people who struggle accessing government and not-for profit agency mental health, and other, support: eg via the NDIS or QCAT (public trustee)).

COMMUNITY BUILDING

Projects that intentionally bring people together to simply get to know one another. This community engagement approach is typically less strategic and more organic than other approaches.

Our parishioner volunteers share with me that they see the Community Meal as a ministry that they feel blessed to be a part of, including Jenny: "I enjoy it! I love our guests; the team and it is being with friends. I see it as a way of life, a ministry, not a job. I feel so blessed that I am able to do it and see and hear the love from all friends whom we welcome at the Community Meal."

Our caring and loving presence through the Community Meal is often mentioned and personal thanks is given to the team. We have had many opportunities to grow relationships and spend time discussing pastoral and faith issues and requests for prayer. The impact of this has seen more people engaging with the Think Spot, sharing their life's journey and taking steps in faith journey. The Pastoral Care team prays regularly for the Community Meal.

Through the Community Meal our parishioners disciple people, as they listen, engage and share stories; and we also have five Community Meal friends who have become regulars in our worship services and have begun to take up service to, with and for others. For example, Rob, is on a roster that helps care for our gardens. Another, Greg, coordinates the packing up and clearing of tables. Thank you to the many people who minister God's love in this way.

Top 11 tips for starting and coordinating regular Community Meals

1. First, do enough research to identify whether a Community Meal (or another initiative) will meet the needs of your surrounding community, and discuss the idea of hosting a regular Community Meal with parishioners and other stakeholders to ensure there is enough support for the idea (e.g. local Anglicare services and Anglican School).
2. Make the Community Meal a regular day/time so parishioner volunteers can more easily commit to assisting and so guests have a regular event to look forward to.
3. Ensure each guest is warmly welcomed as soon as they enter the door.
4. Choose menu items that are healthy and easy to prepare in bulk, sourcing local fresh produce for regular donations.
5. Say grace and share the Gospel message in an accessible way that is free of jargon and centred on Jesus' love for each person.
6. To help create a 'home-like' welcome, celebrate people's birthdays and good news.
7. Actively find ways for parishioners to participate and contribute their unique talents (such as cooking, serving and hospitality skills) and gifts (such as warmth, ability to listen and enthusiasm).
8. Give regular guests appropriate opportunities to participate, so they also feel some ownership over the initiative.
9. Use a variety of media to get word out about your Community Meal: flyers, social media (e.g. Facebook photos), church signage and your church's website (ensuring privacy requirements).
10. Thank your parishioner volunteers for their specific contributions.
11. Engage external networks for a coordinated approach (e.g., in the area there is one community meal available every day from Monday to Saturday).

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- How important do you think tip 1 in the list above is for a community meal project or for other forms of community building?
- What other important learnings from the tips list above could be transferable to your setting?

MORE INFORMATION

Contact The Rev'd Tania Eichler,
The Parish of Maroochydore:
5443 2133
tania.eichler@anglicanchurchsq.org.au

'Bums off seats': creating a community of care

"Our church is thriving because our parishioners are encouraged to coordinate and drive activities and explore their unique gifts in a prayerful, enthusiastic, collaborative and welcoming community of love and care," say Beth Rigby, Margaret Coombs and Fr Daniel Jayaraj from All Saints', Chermside.

At All Saints', Chermside, we have focused on developing a 'bums off seats' and 'all are welcome' model of church in the last 18 months. Excitingly, this model, with its focus on developing and empowering volunteers, has led to both spiritual growth and an increased number of people engaged in church and community life.

At All Saints', Chermside we have parishioner and wider community volunteers coordinating and driving a range of initiatives, including an op shop; an emergency food relief pantry; a soup kitchen; a 'Coffee and Craft on Tuesdays' outreach ministry; regular Bible studies; a 'Little Saints Playgroup'; a '501 Community Club' fellowship lunch; and, appeals, such as Operation Christmas Child.

Whenever our volunteers gather, they pray to start each activity. Our volunteers are also given operation guidelines so they know what tasks need to be done and how. We are never shy about asking other organisations for help. Being dedicated to prayer, clear about expectations, bold and collaborative has helped to grow our various ministries and develop the gifts of our people. Our ministries are evolving as our parish practises love and care centred on Christ.

Op shop

Our op shop started last year and runs every week day between 9 am and 1 pm and is driven by both parishioner and wider community volunteers. One of our young volunteers, Anna, visited the op shop one day to purchase items. She was so pleased with the quality and cost of the fashion items that she purchased $80 worth of clothes. After one visit, she became one of our regular volunteers, and assists at the op shop when she is not studying at UQ. She likes to describe our op shop as a 'from basement to fashion bombshell'.

All op shop proceeds go toward funding our outreach ministries. All donated items are dropped off to us and are sorted and displayed by 12 friendly regular volunteers. While much of our stock is sold, our volunteers also give clothes and household items to people who drop by who are in need, including single parents, people experiencing homelessness; people who have fled family and domestic violence; former prison inmates and patients leaving The Prince Charles Hospital.

COMMUNITY BUILDING

Projects that intentionally bring people together to simply get to know one another. This community engagement approach is typically less strategic and more organic than other approaches.

Originally the basement space was rented by an external business, but upon a church review last year, we decided to transform the space into an op shop. The op shop's set-up, including equipment and storage, was largely funded by community grants, which were written and submitted by one of our volunteer op shop coordinators, Jan.

Parish pantry

Our pantry started over 30 years ago. It was open for a few days a week, but since last year it has been open Tuesday to Friday every week between 10 am and 1 pm. During the COVID-19 period, our pantry has assisted 1194 individuals, couples and families, as there has been a significant increase in need since April. Once a month we also open the pantry just for international students, with 30-50 students coming on these specially dedicated mornings.

Approximately 20 volunteers lovingly make up food packs for people that are designed to last two days, and include a number of tinned items, cereal, long-life milk, pasta, biscuits and other non-perishables. We also distribute fresh bread and produce with these packs. We work with our parishioners and other organisations to ensure that the pantry is always well stocked with diverse products, including items donated by the Parishes of Stafford, Aspley-Albany Creek, Nundah and Wilston; Share the Dignity; Second Bite (Coles); Oz Harvest; and, the Fijian/Hindu Community.

Soup kitchen

Our soup kitchen is open every Monday and Wednesday evening between 5.30 pm and 7 pm. Our soup kitchen has 10 to 12 volunteers who share the cooking, serving, set-up and pack-up tasks. We put much love into the food we prepare and make sure that we mix-up the main meals served, which variously include curries, lasagne, shepherd's pie and roasts. Once a month, the good people at our local Nando's provide food for our soup kitchen guests, bringing with them their yummy chicken. The meat for our soup kitchen is donated by our friendly local butcher, Rode Meats.

Diverse people are welcome to our church hall soup kitchen, including people experiencing homelessness, international students and people who are feeling isolated. The soup kitchen gives us an opportunity to bring people together and provide TLC to people who really need it.

'Coffee and Craft on Tuesdays' outreach ministry

Coffee and Craft on Tuesdays also started last year and is run on the first and third Tuesday of the month between 9.30 am and 11.30 am in our church hall. Like our op shop, this ministry is run by both parishioners and volunteers from our wider community. The craft group is an outreach and social activity, involving the wider community and, on occasion, guests from our soup kitchen. This group also creates blankets and beanies for rough sleepers, as well as other items.

Bible studies

Our parish runs four Bible study groups for parishioners and the wider community. During the COVID-19 period, our Bible study groups meet online; however, they are usually run in people's homes or on the church site. Our Bible study groups have been running for years and are coordinated by Parish Council. Studying the scriptures is important for our church's spiritual growth.

Little Saints Playgroup

Our Little Saints Playgroup has been running for over 15 years. Our playgroup is very multi-cultural and meets every Monday between 9 am and 11 am during term time. Five volunteers help coordinate craft, art, singing and play activities for up to 12 children and their carers weekly. Mums and dads use the time to relax and chat over a coffee onsite while their kids are having fun playing. We registered our playgroup with Playgroup Queensland last year in order to include the wider community.

'501 Community Club' fellowship lunch

Six to eight volunteers run our '501 Community Club' fellowship lunch once a month. Approximately 30 people attend each luncheon, paying $10 for a yummy meal and fun social event, with proceeds going towards funding programs such as our Operation Christian Child initiative.

Operation Christmas Child

Our church has supported the Samaritan's Purse Operation Christmas Child appeal for over 20 years. This initiative has grown, with over 200 shoe boxes filled with kids' items annually, including something to wear, something for school, something to cuddle, something to play with and a hygiene item, as well as a personal note.

We have over a dozen volunteers assisting with this appeal throughout the year, including sourcing shoe boxes and donated items and wrapping and assembling boxes. Parishioners are very generous with their donations of both gifts for the boxes and money to cover postage. We have several gifted sewers who are kept very busy preparing garments for the boxes during the year.

Top 10 tips for engaging the support of volunteers and the wider community

1. Invite parishioners and people from the wider community to be involved in every facet of your church's ministries to develop a 'community of care' and be open to new ideas.
2. Engage parishioners and people from the wider community to review what is and isn't working and be open to change things that need changing collectively.
3. Encourage parishioners and people from the wider community to identify and explore their unique gifts and to step out of their comfort zones.
4. Ensure that the contributions of parishioners and people from the wider community are acknowledged and that they feel appreciated for their contributions.
5. Ensure your volunteers feel supported and empowered by equipping them with clear guidelines for each ministry, while also letting them coordinate and drive activities.
6. Ensure volunteers have access to the resources they need, including equipment, shelving, furniture, stationery and space.
7. Start everything with a prayer and provide a laminated prayer for volunteers to pray together at the start of every initiative and event.
8. Collectively foster a community that is intentionally and warmly welcoming to everyone.
9. Be bold – don't be afraid to contact other organisations and seek their support for donations, such as OzHarvest, SecondBite and Share The Dignity; local businesses, such as butchers, greengrocers, restaurants and bakeries; other parishes and faith groups; community groups; and, elected representatives in your area.
10. Find out what community grants are available and apply for these, including council, state government and RSL Club grants, to help fund your ministry.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- What examples of partnering with other organisations come up in this case study?
- What tips stand out to you as particularly important learnings?

MORE INFORMATION

Contact The Rev'd Daniel Jayaraj,
The Parish of Chermside:
3359 2062
revdanielpaulraj@gmail.com

Supporting First Nations constitutional reform

St Mark's Anglican Church, Buderim has partnered with the local Aboriginal Buelah Community to advocate for First Nations constitutional reform. Parishioners signed a table cloth, printed with the Uluru Statement From the Heart text, in their support of First Nations constitutional reform, justice and self-determination.

St Mark's Reconciliation Group member and table cloth co-creator Margaret Norris said that the table cloth signing initiative was timed to "coincide with the launch of 1 Voice Uluru's week of action. Our cloth is a project of our Reconciliation Group to promote awareness of current Indigenous issues for members of our parish and we hope it will be a lasting sign of positive relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples," Ms Norris said. "We have been delighted to have the support of the local Beulah Community, including community coordinator Heather Johnston and artist Kim Spittles, who is a Wiradjuri woman and who has designed the border of the table cloth for us. Mothers Union members have also been invited to work on the embroidering."

The Uluru Statement From The Heart was the result of a constitutional convention, held at the foot of Uluru on the land of the Anangu people in May 2017, bringing together more than 250 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leaders. The Convention was convened by the bi-partisan appointed Referendum Council to discuss and agree upon an approach to constitutional reform to recognise First Nations peoples.The Uluru Statement states two overarching reform objectives, these being establishing "a First Nations Voice enshrined in the constitution", and a Makarrata Commission "to supervise a process of agreement-making between governments and First Nations and truth-telling about our history".

The Rev'd Moria Evers said that by supporting the Uluru Statement From The Heart, St Mark's Anglican Church upholds the Reconciliation Action Plan of the Diocese. "The table cloth signing is a grassroots initiative of the Parish that supports the Diocese Reconciliation Action Plan's aims of raising awareness of First Nations' self-determination and appreciating Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories," Mother Moira said.

COMMUNITY ORGANISING

In community organising, groups come together around a particular issue and lobby government to implement changes. An example is the Qld Community Alliance, which has a number of churches, including Anglican and Uniting, as members.

"By supporting the Uluru Statement, the Parish of St Mark's seeks to empower and give voice to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples by recognising and acknowledging their ancient and sacred link to the land. The Parish of St Mark's is pro-active in its engagement with and support of the local Kabi Kabi custodians of the land. We believe that this can only enrich our lives together and our mutual commitment to care of the land of which we are joint stewards."

The table cloth signing initiative at St Mark's was part of a broader 'Sunday Afternoon Conversation' event where The Rev'd Dr Jo Inkpin spoke about 'Feisty Friends and Foremothers of Jesus', which was arranged by Heather Johnston.

Reconciliation Action Plan Coordinator and Bwgcolman woman Chrissy Ellis said that St Mark's approach is unique and she encourages other parishes to support the RAP and long-fought for initiatives, such as The Statement From The Heart, in active ways. "It is important for parishes to implement our RAP because God calls us to a ministry of reconciliation," Ms Ellis said. "St Mark's presents a unique truth-telling model as a church committed to reconciliation and justice for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

The Statement From The Heart represents a collective voice of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples across our nation and the church has an active role to play in acknowledging our voices and supporting the Makarrata and constitutional reform. The Uluru Statement From The Heart has evolved after generations of our people campaigning and lobbying for formal recognition as First Nations people."

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- What is the value of symbolic actions like this table cloth signing?
- What are the opportunities and risks of parishes getting involved in community organising campaigns that become heavily politicised?

MORE INFORMATION

Contact The Parish of Buderim: 5445 2060

Or, visit the University of Minnesota Morris website.

Responding to Anglicare call for First Nations dolls

The Parish of Gold Coast North is very involved with First Nations issues. They do a range of activities, including this one where they partnered with Anglicare.

"Our group took up the challenge to create specially-made dolls for First Nations children in care...Unlike the usual activity of plain knitting or crocheting with donated materials, this mission required planning and problem solving. Members raided their own collections of cloth, or bought stuffing and appropriately patterned dress material, exchanged patterns and ideas and brought their energy and skills along to meetings to share ideas," says Roselyn Drake from St Matthew's Church, Coomera.

On a Tuesday morning in May, the Coomera Craft Circle, meeting at St Matthew's Church were busy making rugs and other knitted and crocheted items for local people sleeping rough who are helped by St John's Crisis Care, Surfers Paradise. This group of parishioners and other community members had been meeting, chatting, crafting and sharing morning tea for quite a few years. Our group had started off in a parishioner's home and when she moved away, we commenced meeting in the newly-built church building.

This particular May morning, we were expecting Anglicare Cultural Support Worker and Kuku Yalanji woman Lalania Tusa, from the nearby suburb of Nerang, to join us. She was visiting our church to collect nearly 40 First Nations dolls and other toys we had been making for the more than 70 First Nations children in foster care on the Gold Coast who Lalania helps care for.

Late last year, Lalania had been guest speaker at an afternoon tea event at St Matt's when she mentioned, over a cuppa, that she had trouble finding suitable simple dolls, and other toys, that could provide a welcoming and appropriate gift for First Nations children newly arriving in foster care. Sometimes these children are taken suddenly by police or safety officers and are unable to bring any familiar possessions with them.

DIRECT SERVICE

Projects that provide a service or product to an individual, group, or the community as a whole. This is typically how community work has been expressed historically. The risk of disempowering people by doing things for them rather than with them, should be considered when using this approach. However, it is still a valid expression of community engagement, when people are treated with dignity and respect, and when the approach is one of a suite of complementary approaches in a community. Examples include filling a volunteer shift at a local organisation, creating social media tools for an organisation, or creating a community mural.

After lovingly making these dolls, we were ready to give the first batch of over 35 dolls and woolen toys to Lalania. She presented our Coomera Craft Circle with a plaque that she had painted with a serpent to express her thanks and promised to come by another day to tell us how the children responded to the dolls. “When she took the gifts back to her office, Lalania’s manager and fellow workers were amazed and delighted with the beautiful collection and eager to give them to First Nations children in care."

Meeting every two weeks, the Coomera Craft Circle now has two strings to its bow, with two different groups of neighbours in need, as we create warm goods for people sleeping rough on the Gold Coast and dolls and toys to comfort First Nations children who Anglicare helps care for. The Circle does not follow an assembly line pattern of manufacture, as every rug and every doll is unique, but all gifts share in common the driving motivation to offer some comfort to neighbours in need.

The doll-making initiative was an interesting project, starting with wild enthusiasm, dwindling to concern as we at times wondered how best to make the dolls and slowly feeling our way through the creative process, to finally having a beautiful bundle to hand over to Lalania for distribution to the children.

Anglicare Southern Queensland posted the following on their Facebook page after receiving the dolls and toys: “We couldn’t do what we do without the thoughtfulness of our community around us. The amazing craft group at St Matthew’s Anglican Church kindly volunteered their time and handmade a range of beautiful First Nations dolls to give to children in care. Our foster care team were overjoyed to receive the carefully made treasures that will provide comfort to the young people.”

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- What First Peoples cultural sensitivities might need to be taken into account for this project?
- How could doll makers, or others working with First Peoples, learn more about the relevant cultural awareness if they aren’t sure how to proceed?

MORE INFORMATION

Contact The Parish of Gold Coast North: 5580 5814.

Visit the University of Minnesota Morris website.

Refer to the book *Community and Ministry: An Introduction To Community Work In A Christian Context* (pp. 43–45).

Helping those living on Toowoomba's streets

Forty parishioners from the Parish of Toowoomba West have completed one-day training with Lifeline in order to volunteer at a shelter for those living on the streets. They have taken on a variety of roles, including cooking, welcoming and chatting with guests, making beds, staying overnight to be a listening ear, cooking breakfast, preparing packed lunches and packing up beds.

There are around 10-12 other parishioners who volunteer offsite by washing the linen and towels, cooking desserts and baking biscuits, collecting toiletries for guests' packs and lovingly sewing fabric bags for care packages. By serving in this way, parishioners are living the Gospel call to love their neighbour and welcome the stranger. They were inspired after engaging in a parish Bible study in Lent this year, which was prepared by Bishop Jeremy. The Bible study was called *Head, Heart and Hands: Practising Faith Today*, and over 70 parishioners met in small groups to do this Lenten study. Coming out of the Bible study, parishioners were keen to use their hands and do something practical for their neighbour as an expression of their faith. The Bible study explored taking risks for one's faith and acknowledging that a lived faith has a cost for the individual and their respective faith community.

DIRECT SERVICE

Projects that provide a service or product to an individual, group, or the community as a whole. This is typically how community work has been expressed historically. The risk of disempowering people by doing things for them rather than with them, should be considered when using this approach. However, it is still a valid expression of community engagement, when people are treated with dignity and respect, and when the approach is one of a suite of complementary approaches in a community. Examples include filling a volunteer shift at a local organisation, creating social media tools for an organisation, or creating a community mural.

The 'Winter Shelter Toowoomba' operates under the auspices of Lifeline Darling Downs in South West Queensland Ltd, alongside seven other churches of different denominations. Our shelter is open on Saturday nights, with other churches each providing a given night during the winter months. Toowoomba West parishioners not only volunteer at their own shelter, but also at the shelters in the halls of other denominations.

The model used is the Christian 'Stable One Winter Shelter Network' model. The mission of Stable One is to: "...support the Church as it works together to share the love of God by providing accommodation to those in need. To journey with each person towards stability, offering physical and spiritual care."

Top 10 tips for setting up your own Winter Shelter:

1. Educate your faith community through Bible studies, homilies, social media posts and newsletters about the causes of homelessness and how people can help.
2. Select a proven model to base your shelter on, such as the Stable One model.
3. Connect with an organisation like Lifeline, who can assist with administration, volunteer training and logistics.
4. In the enquiring stages, liaise with Diocesan staff based in St Martin's House, such as from insurance and workplace health and safety, to seek any required advice and guidance; your Regional Bishop; and, partnering organisations (we had to have a building assessment done by an independent builder for Lifeline).
5. To make your shelter sustainable, connect with other churches in your area, so each church offers a place for people to stay on a given night per week during the winter months.
6. Ensure your volunteers are trained in the necessary areas, including regarding Diocesan volunteer requirements and any training required by partnering organisations.
7. Ensure your volunteers are given the pastoral care and prayer support they need to serve.
8. Offer opportunities for people in your faith community to volunteer both onsite at the shelter and offsite behind the scenes.
9. Get word out about your shelter through social media channels and the media.
10. Talk to other faith community leaders in our Diocese to find out what works and what doesn't work and to share ideas.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- How would you summarise the tips above using the following headings:
  - research, education and training
  - partnering
  - pastoral care and prayer
  - communications
- What alternative approaches that are less resource-intensive could a parish adopt if it has identified affordable housing as an issue in its area?

MORE INFORMATION

Contact The Rev'd Pauline Harley,
The Parish of Toowoomba West:
pauline.harley@anglicanchurchsq.org.au

Or, visit donorbox.

Scarves for seafarers

St Paul's School Year 6 students recently gifted personally decorated calico bags filled with toiletries and 80 handknitted scarves and beanies to Mission To Seafarers clients in collaboration with St John's Anglican Cathedral.

Over the years, St Paul's students have knitted scores of scarves and collected toiletries for Cathedral Honorary Deacon The Rev'd Dr Ann Solari to distribute to the people she serves in her ministry and work as a general practitioner, including international Mission To Seafarers visitors.

Year 6 St Paul's School students said that they found knitting the scarves both enjoyable and challenging, and were motivated to knit the scarves conscious that they were going to people in need. "The cause behind our knitting project really helped to raise our awareness of other people in our community and the work they do to support people who are less fortunate," Ben said. "Knowing that the scarves were going to someone in need helped me to persevere when the knitting got tricky. It's harder than you think!" Annabel said.

"It was really fun to make the scarves. It felt good to know that we were helping people in need," Amaya said. "Doing something special for a good cause felt like I was able to give back to my community and others less fortunate," Georgia said. "Knitting was actually really fun and we hope that the scarves go to people in need," Isaac said. One of the student's grandparents worked with her friends to knit 80 beanies for the St Paul's student-driven initiative.

Year 6 student Liam said that knitting alongside grandparents was the highlight of the project for him. "Knitting with grandparents and friends across generations was surprisingly interesting – there was so much storytelling," Liam said. This inspiring student-led project is a reflection of St Paul's School's mission to be "a student-centred Anglican community with a purpose of preparing resilient global citizens who are innovative thinkers with a heart for servant leadership."

PARTNERSHIPS

In a parish setting, a partnership is where a church collaborates with one or several other organisations to:

- provide a service
- organise/lobby around an issue
- run a key event (e.g. a Q&A panel)
- implement other activities.

The Rev'd Dr Ann Solari said that the students decided to decorate calico bags and put toiletries inside reusable zip lock bags after she encouraged the school to consider improving the environmental sustainability of the project. "When I went to talk to the students recently, I was amazed when I was presented with 80 handknitted scarves not in cellophane wrapping but in calico bags, which had been printed with a message and a picture that each individual student had designed," Dr Solari said. "Inside each bag was a scarf knitted by students and a beanie which one child's grandmother and her friends had made when they heard what the children were doing. Each bag also contained a zip lock bag with toiletries inside."

The Cathedral, a Resource Church, is well known for its commitment to social and environmental justice and working alongside like-minded organisations and community groups, shaping its ministry around all of The Five Marks Of Mission.

Soon after Dr Solari's visit to St Paul's School, MTS Chaplain The Rev'd Stephen Briggs collected the calico bags and the gifts at the Cathedral for distribution to international seafarers who visit the MTS Port of Brisbane centre daily.The Rev'd Stephen Briggs said that the seafarers value the practical benefit of the knitted apparel receive, as well as receive a morale boost. "Seafarers are most appreciative of the thought and effort that go into making beanies and scarves for them," The Rev'd Briggs said. "To know that someone cares enough about them to make something that keeps them warm on cold days and nights at sea warms them not only physically, but emotionally as well."

The Rev'd Briggs said that it is important for different parts of our Diocesan community to collaborate on projects with international reach. "Our ministry should not only be to those close to us, but also the wider world community," he said. "Initiatives such as making items of clothing for seafarers demonstrates our Christian witness globally as the seafarers whose lives we touch, through small acts of friendship and hospitality, communicate that with other seafarers and their families across the world."

Mission to Seafarers is a registered charity and worldwide missionary society of the Anglican Church, operating in over 230 ports internationally and in 28 ports around the Australian coastline. MTS Brisbane supports seafarers and their families back home by providing emergency assistance, hospitality and communications facilities in its Port Of Brisbane centre, transport, ship and hospital visiting and spiritual support.

This practical and pastoral care is critical to the wellbeing of seafarers, many of who come from majority (developing) world countries, spending long periods away from their families in order to send money home. In her visits to St Paul's School over the years, Dr Solari has introduced the work of MTS to the students, as well as shared about other areas of justice that are core to the Anglican Church's mission. "The children in our schools are not only being taught about God and how to worship God, but about principles of social and eco justice," she said. "We are teaching them and others about love and what love in action really looks like. We are building a community here, where all are welcome, where all can find a home, where all can worship and pray together."

Types of organisations willing to partner with parishes

- Organisations/groups/committees in our Diocese (e.g. MTS, Anglicare, Mothers Union, St Francis College, RAP Working Group, Community of The Way, Angligreen, Anglican schools, St John's College UQ, other parishes, Franciscans, etc)
- Places of worship (e.g. local mosques, temples, churches of other denominations, etc).
- Faith-based associations (e.g. Queensland Council of Imams).
- Inter-faith or ecumenical alliances/groups (e.g. Queensland Faith Communities Council, The Order of Saint John of Jerusalem).
- Secular or religious charities (e.g. Anglicare, Anglican Board of Mission, Share The Dignity, Cancer Council, Romero Centre, Stable One: Winter Shelter, Lifeline).
- Professional associations (e.g. Australian Association of Social Workers).
- Unions and union peak bodies (e.g. Queensland Council of Unions).
- Social enterprises (e.g. Mu'ooz restaurant).
- Food rescue organisations (e.g. OzHarvest, Second Bite).
- Networks, alliances, collective impact initiatives (e.g. BRASS Network, Queensland Community Alliance*, Logan Together).
- Agencies (e.g. Multicultural Australia).
- Foundations (e.g. Rotary, Lions Club).
- 'Ethnic' associations (e.g. via Queensland Community Alliance).
- Advocacy/activist organisations (e.g. Amnesty, Stop The Traffik, Love Makes A Way).
- First Nation organisations (e.g. From The Heart, First Nation corporations, Supply Nation, etc).
- Schools.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- What sort of partnerships does your current parish or previous parish have with local schools?
- What opportunities exist for your parish to further develop school partnerships?

MORE INFORMATION

Contact The Rev'd Ann Solari, St John's Cathedral: annsolari@westnet.com.au

Thread Together: transforming lives, one piece of clothing and conversation at a time

Thread Together is a global first, dedicated to taking excess new clothing from manufacturers and designers and redistributing it to vulnerable people within the community at no cost to the recipient. The mobile wardrobe van, sponsored by Bendon Lingerie, is facilitated and run by Anglicare Southern Queensland and St Andrew's, Indooroopilly.

In this case study, four big-hearted women from the St Andrew's, Indooroopilly community share about what drew them to volunteer for the innovative Thread Together initiative and the highlights and learnings from their volunteer journey so far.

Allana Wales – St Andrew's, Indooroopilly Thread Together volunteer

It is impossible to delineate where the 'Church' ends and our human, daily and communal lives begin, and vice versa. Upon my enthusiastic retelling of the sorts of tasks Thread Together volunteers undertake (such as sorting, packing, folding, crate-stacking, box-crunching, recycling, hanging, stocking and driving), a friend remarked to me, "Oh, so you are helping people in need?" It struck me, suddenly, that of course we were. Of course we are because the person in need is me. I am the one who has come away with the gift of listening to a young guest who visited the Thread Together van at one of our return meets. He had met someone nice and shared in conversation, with his new clothes giving his own dignity a boost. Often our privilege is born of having been present for, and listening to, an unexpected narrative.

There are concentric circles of community inherent in a venture such as this. When volunteers are in the church undercroft or the garage sorting or packing clothes, we have the benefit of truly invaluable time with friends who are either connected to or who attend the parish. When we drive the van out for a Thread Together site visit, we meet volunteers from other organisations (both secular and ecumenical) and we enjoy showing how the van is fitted out. Often this is a springboard for more conversation and recommendations for other potential sites to visit. The flow of enrichment across our communities is manifold.

The remarkable partnering of Thread Together, Anglicare Southern Queensland and St Andrew's, Indooroopilly, together with The Rev'd Sue Grimmett's vision, has given ground for the gentle transformation of lives for the better. I look forward to seeing how this partnership will continue to nurture ourselves and others – volunteers, guests and patrons alike – in this active movement of dignity where everybody wins.

PARTNERSHIPS

In a parish setting, a partnership is where a church collaborates with one or several other organisations to:

- provide a service
- organise/lobby around an issue
- run a key event (e.g. a Q&A panel)
- implement other activities.

Susan Gill – St Andrew's Church, Indooroopilly Thread Together volunteer

I was drawn to volunteer with Thread Together for the following two reasons. The first, caring for people in our communities, and the second, caring for our planet. Supporting people who are experiencing hardship in their lives by utilising clothes that would otherwise go to landfill achieves both goals. In my time in the program I have observed the impact that receiving new clothes has made in people's lives.

An example of this from one of our sites is a young woman who had only the clothes she wore, as she had recently fled a domestic violence situation. The look of joy on her face as she looked through the van and chose a range of clothes that were new and suited her style was deeply rewarding. Her gratitude was enormous and it was both a joy and delight to watch her move from sadness as she told me her story of fleeing to feelings of hope that there were people who could help her reclaim her life.

The part that Thread Together plays in providing this hope is significant. My key learning in that the dignity in being able to have access to new clothes at a time when little else in life is working is critical. Without access to critical life needs, people lose hope. They feel different from their peers, isolated and sometimes even ostracised.

Christian organisations working together in partnership bring this hope and, with it, the possibility of a new and different life to those in need. Christian beliefs are demonstrated in a kind, supportive and practical way. I love that Thread Together is a vital part of providing hope in the community. The additional bonus is the friendship and camaraderie I have gained from my fellow volunteers.

Shubhra Srivastava – St Andrew's Church, Indooroopilly Thread Together volunteer

Projects like Thread Together represent Christianity in action. The partnership between Anglicare, an organisation which has the networks to identify those in need of assistance, and the Parish community which represents the 'grassroots' of the Christian Church, is a natural fit. Organisations can provide the resources to assist these projects, but ultimately people working together to support each other are what builds a better and more caring community.

St Andrew's Indooroopilly Thread Together volunteer, Shubhra Srivastava, believes that everyone has a right to live with self-respect and dignity in the world. Far from my hometown in Lucknow, India, I came to Brisbane, Australia to live. I have seen people here with the same emotions and feelings as in India. We can see on the ground why Australia is called a multicultural country, and that we are all fundamentally the same.

I have always wanted to serve people who are in real need. Fortunately, I met Tim (the Parish Administrator at St Andrew's, Indooroopilly) on one occasion at the church, where he explained to me about this wonderful Anglicare project, 'Thread Together', which assists vulnerable people in the community. One of the best things about volunteering for this project is seeing the smiles on the faces of people who are receiving new clothing. This gives me an inner happiness which I can't buy. Being there to listen to someone telling their life story about so many hurdles and pains teaches me about dealing with difficult situations. Also, I believe that what we are doing with Thread Together is a moral reflection of what it means to be a true Australian.

Through volunteering for this project, I have learned so many things. One of the things I value most is being able to serve people from different communities, cultures and backgrounds. Through Thread Together, clothing is diverted from landfill and people are respectfully clothed, and this is making a meaningful contribution to society. Special thanks to Kate Littmann-Kelly, Anglicare's Thread Together Volunteer Coordinator, for her continuous support and assistance.

Benefits of partnerships

- Helps parishes to more effectively love our neighbour.
- Helps shift misconceptions re the Church being 'insular'.
- Contributes to growing healthier and more connected communities.
- Broadens a parish's community network for future endeavours.
- Leaders and parish volunteers learn new skills and knowledge.
- Significantly increases chances of getting approval on grant applications (especially government grants).
- Increases pool of resources (e.g. re time, hands/feet, finance, venue options, equipment).
- Increases 'news worthiness' of initiative.
- More opportunities to be Christ to others.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- From reading the case study, what do you think has contributed to the Thread Together partnerships being strong and effective?
- What insights do you glean from the viewpoints shared by the four Thread Together volunteers?

MORE INFORMATION

Contact Kate Littmann-Kelly,
Thread Together:
klittmann-kelly@anglicaresq.org.au

Contact Leanne Wood,
Thread Together:
lwood@anglicanchurchsq.org.au

Contact The Rev'd Sue Grimmett,
The Parish of Indooroopilly:
suzanne.grimmett@anglicanchurchsq.org.au