

networking

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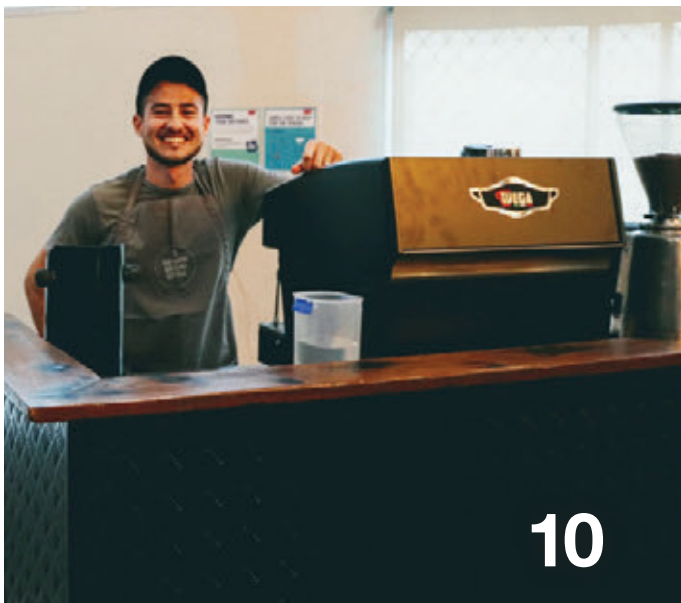
BRINGING THE LIGHT OF CHRIST INTO COMMUNITIES

LIGHT BRINGS HOPE



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networking

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networking contains a variety of news and stories from across Churches of Christ in Queensland. Articles and photos can be submitted to communications@cofcqld.com.au. The submission deadline for the next edition of *networking* is 30 April 2021.





Light brings hope.

How can the light within each of us, that illuminates through our actions and words, encourage hope in others?

Last year, Churches of Christ in Queensland impacted the lives of over 40,000 people. Though this impact, I'm sure, would have been felt by far more, including the families of those we support, members of the communities we exist in, our team members and the interactions of all those living our values in their day-to-day lives.

Hope is contagious: Hope breeds hope. That is why it is so important that we can each be the light that brings this hope.

Matthew 5, 14-16 states:

"You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a basket. Instead, they set it on a stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before men,

that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven."

Light, to me, represents possibility. From darkness, the smallest illumination can make a path and possibilities clearer.

This year, I want light and hope to be a guiding principle for us all. Consider how you can be the light that brings hope to those around you and those you support.

A great place to start is by living our values:

- Displaying unconditional love to all those around you.
- Continuously seek improvement and explore how you can make things better.
- Trust yourself and others, and trust in God.
- Show wise stewardship in the management of all resources – natural, financial, material, and emotional, and understand the impact you have in this world.

By doing this, we can each bring hope. At Churches of Christ in Queensland it is our vision to empower people to live hope-filled and meaningful lives; this is why we exist. Whatever form hope takes, we are there to support people to find.

As Roy T. Bennett stated in 'The Light in the Heart'

"Learn to light a candle in the darkest moments of someone's life. Be the light that helps others see; it is what gives life its deepest significance."

I encourage you all to find your light and bring hope in your communities.

Royal Commission – Final Report

In the first week of March 2021, the Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety final report was publicly released. This report is the culmination of activities over more than two years that have examined the residential aged care and community care sectors to make recommendations for improvement.

Churches of Christ in Queensland welcome the suggested reforms that are designed to make the aged care sector better and more person-centred. We believe our society must place greater emphasis on productive, successful and meaningful ageing, and that life is about meaning, purpose and connectedness. Our first priority remains and will always be enhancing the positive wellbeing of those in our care.

Throughout the Commission process, harrowing stories of unacceptable care and treatment of older people emerged, and I acknowledge that this was difficult for families, residents, team members and the community to hear. I assure you that our services are built on valuing seniors, and we strive to create inclusive, caring and compassionate environments that meet individual needs. We are committed to openness, transparency and continuous improvement for the people in our care, now and in the future.

Pre-emptive to the report's release, in November 2020 we established six



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Learn to light a candle in the darkest moments of someone's life. Be the light that helps others see; it is what gives life its deepest significance.

”

working groups with focuses including workforce participation, continuum of care, and regional, rural and remote service delivery. This work will dovetail into the recommendations from the report to form the latest best-practice processes that squarely focus on the health and wellbeing of residents.

Our dedicated and qualified team members work hard every day caring for older Australians and will continue to receive appropriate training and support to deliver this vital care.

COVID-19 updates

Since the vaccination rollout commenced at the end of February, we have been working with the relevant Federal Government agencies and contractors in the roll-out of the COVID-19 vaccine to our residential aged care residents and team members.

I will receive my vaccination as soon as I am eligible to do so. This vaccine is a great step forward in our fight against the pandemic. Watching our aged care services closing their doors to visitors last year in response to outbreaks in the community was distressing and not an action we like to take. We know the importance of continued family contact and connection, and it was difficult to see as families and loved ones separated. Our teams did a great job at helping residents and their loved ones remain connected through an array of other means.

We are constantly monitoring the COVID-19 situation at each of our locations, and our teams are on constant alert for any outbreaks in their communities. I am proud of the infection control in our services and how our team members, suppliers and contractors, and visitors respect the infection control requirements when on site. Thank you for helping us do our bit to keep older Australian's safe.

I am thoroughly excited for what is ahead in 2021. There are many great things on the horizon for our organisation and I look forward to sharing these with you in due course. Thank you for your ongoing support of all that we do, no matter who and where you are. Without you, we would not be able to deliver hope to so many people.

When reading *Networking* today, I hope a light shine for you and brings just a bit of hope and joy to your day that you can pass onto others.

God bless.

Gary Edwards
Chief Executive Officer ■

We need to see the light of hope and bring hope to others

By Vicki Marney – Regional Engagement Partner

In March last year, we were still in the grips of drought, our nation had been ravaged by bushfires, the new COVID-19 virus had only just started to change the way we live. We had no idea what was to come.

We kept hearing the word “unprecedented” in 2020: 2020 really was unlike any other.

The coronavirus pandemic completely upended life as we knew it, global powers shifted and the killing of an African-American man sparked mass demonstrations around the world.

Even before coronavirus hit our shores, the 2019-2020 Black Summer bushfires had already left millions of Australians feeling traumatised.

But then, for the first time since 1918, a deadly virus strain ignited a global pandemic.

Within months, the sound of sneezing and coughing made people flinch and facemasks quickly became an essential item. Anxious shoppers turned on each other by panic-buying essential items in supermarkets.

Australia no longer behaved like a united country. As international and domestic borders slammed shut, loved ones were forced to live apart and division between federal and state governments was sparked.



How blessed are we that we live here.



As the clock clicked over to 2021, there was a lot of hype over a New Year and everything would now be different. If we are to believe the media, our hope was pinned on this calendar event.

Is it different?

The New Year has seen us thrust into a more lockdowns across the country, borders slammed shut, the toilet paper panic continues, and our way of life continues to be disrupted. But, we are faring far better than many others across the globe.

While the pandemic fills our global consciousness, other countries are dealing with natural and man-made disasters and challenges:

- Indonesia Sulawesi Island, earthquake displacing over 30,000 people

- Famine brought on by conflict in African countries like South Sudan, will claim millions of lives.
- Vanuatu, like other small nations in the Pacific may be COVID free, however they rely on Tourism for their GDP – with borders closed no tourist, no jobs, no money for health, education, no Job keeper /Seeker in most countries around the world.
- Millions are dead from the virus across Europe, America, Brazil.

There is Hope...

In all of these places and in any moment in time – there is Hope.

Hope is being able to see that there is light despite all of the darkness.

The hope of new life through a relationship with Jesus. Many people around the world want to hear the essential hope of the gospel. Often in trouble times, people want to connect with supportive faith communities.

It is not the clicking over of the calendar that makes a difference, it is our faith, love and relationships that will bring joyful, purpose-filled living.

All of these things I have mentioned can bring darkness into our lives, lets choose to live a joyful, light-filled life. We need to see the light of hope and bring hope to others.

How will you bring the light and hope into your community? ■



Light at the end of the tunnel

In 2020, over 100 residents across our five Melbourne retirement villages endured countless weeks of lockdowns, but the residents' fighting spirit remained as they have demonstrated their unwavering commitment to protecting themselves and their communities from COVID-19, which at times was ravaging their city.

General Manager Retirement Living, Judene Creedy, said she saw the strength and resilience of the residents.

"I know it was a difficult time for all in Melbourne, and many were separated from their families for extended periods, we really do hope that no one has to endure that ever again" Judene said.

As a sign of support, Judene and her Retirement Living team sent a 'hug in a mug' to each resident in the Melbourne villages.

"We received some lovely responses to the 'hug in mug'. It was something simple we could do and was meant as a token to demonstrate to each resident, many who were experiencing social isolation, that we were here for them and that we were thinking of them."

Throughout the prolonged lockdowns, Retirement Living Managers from Queensland called residents to check in on their welfare and to see if they needed any extra support. These calls also gave residents someone new to chat to and a friendly voice at the end of the line. Residents also received regular updates regarding the latest government restrictions.

"The residents actively sought information about the current restrictions and contact tracing in their areas. I have no doubt that it is because of this dedication to abiding by the restrictions and getting tested if it was at all possible they could have been exposed or had symptoms,



that outbreaks were prevented in our communities. It also demonstrated the general commitment of Melbournians to beating the virus, who did an outstanding job at beating the virus and, from the actions of our residents, I can see the community spirit led to the virus being defeated from what seemed like impossible odds."

As Melbourne exits from strict lockdowns and the vaccine starts to roll-out, the Retirement Living team is looking towards the future and how the five retirement villages can be revitalised with social activities.

In March, Meredith Adams started as the new Retirement Living Manager to support the Melbourne Villages.

"We are incredibly excited to welcome Meredith on board. She has a keen

passion for retirement living, and some wonderful ideas for how our villages can enter a new era of socialising and activities that are COVID safe and promote the wellbeing of our residents. She will also be there to support residents with their day-to-day requests and welcome new residents," Judene said.

"I am excited for the possibilities for our Melbourne villages this year, and hope that all residents can embrace freedoms again and experience what it really means to be a part of a thriving retirement community. There is light at the end of the tunnel now and I hope each of our residents can step out of the darkness of 2020 and once again enjoy what should be some of the best years of their life." ■

Telling tales

Each of our lives are a culmination of stories that tell of the journey we have travelled, the challenges we have overcome, our thoughts, views and insights, and those we have loved.

Arcadia Aged Care Service residents have been telling their stories by contributing pieces to the regular service newsletter.

Lifestyle Coordinator Kelly Mangan said some residents had eagerly put their pen to paper and submitted stories for the newsletter, with others coming up with ideas for stories in future editions.

“Having our residents be more proactive is empowering, giving them a voice through the newsletter is a way to do this,” Kelly said.

During the COVID-19 lockdown, resident Victor Newman found a new passion in writing, submitting story after story each week, as well as jokes.

Victor has a unique and gregarious voice in the newsletter, engaging his readers with tales and musings that bring a smile to those getting a glimpse into his left-of-centre view of the world and hilarious psyche. In the latest edition, he treats the readers, who are his fellow residents, families and staff, to a cryptic general quiz, on behalf of his alter-ego,

Vic no. 2, with the final line stating: “Use your noodle not google, if not Vic 3 alter ego will appear, not good.”

“He really is a character and the residents and others reading the newsletter really get a chuckle out of his articles,” Kelly said.

Resident Bob Lewis regularly contributes to the newsletter, and tells concise tales from his life. His most recent submission talks of his meeting royalty. You can read Bob’s article below.

Two other Arcadia residents are excited about putting their journalist hats on and sitting down to interview other residents and staff as part of a regular ‘getting to know you’ column.

As Arcadia Aged Care Service starts to move out of the lockdown and activities recommence, there will surely be more wonderful tales coming from the desks of Victor, Bob and other residents and we look forward to reading them.

A Royal Experience

Bob Lewis

In November 1985 there was a royal visit to Australia by Prince Charles and Princess Diana. They had requested a visit to any new youth projects for disadvantaged young people, and so it was arranged that they would be given a tour of the new Youth Projects building in Glenroy. At the time I was running a government funded programme for unemployed young people called the Community Youth Support Scheme. This programme aimed to build up the confidence of young people as well as teach them practical skills.

On the day of the royal visit, the first thing I noticed was the number of plain clothed security men in and around and on top of the buildings. The royal visitors were



■ Bob, left, with his fellow resident Vic, and a copy of the Arcadia newsletter.

given a tour of the various displays and when Princess Diana reached our display, I explained to her what we did. She became quite interested when I talked to her about the many girls in our area who did not want to go to school, and who were kept at home by their mums to help around the house. Diana asked me a lot of questions about this, which took a bit of time. The “minders”

were waving from behind Diana, trying to get me to stop delaying her. However, she continued to question me and I did not know how to stop.

It was quite an unusual and rare experience to meet and talk with royalty, but as Christians this is something we can do every day as talk to the King of kings. ■



■ Jan-Paul de Waal, head barista.

Finding Common Ground through a cuppa

Common Ground Church in Townsville rolled out their coffee cart on campus in February to provide opportunities for people in the local community to come together.

According to Ben Pearson, our Regional Engagement Partner for North Queensland, the idea percolated from a Strategic Action Leadership Team meeting where it was recognised that 2020 projects couldn't be carried out as scheduled due to the COVID-19 outbreak.

Pastor Nick Waring from Common Ground Church, wanted to use this as an opportunity to find a new way to bring the Church and the local community together.

"The vision was the coffee cart would act like an office water cooler, where members of the Church would serve coffee to people from across the campus and local community in a welcoming environment," Nick said.

"Before COVID-19, the Church and the school hired coffee carts so when the pandemic hit, I wondered if this was something we could be doing ourselves while we had some downtime," he said.

Nick and Ben looked into purchasing a cart, but they weren't aesthetically appealing and quite expensive, so Ben decided he would try and build one himself.

With a background in fabrication and welding, he knew he had the skill to do it. He had previously bought an old school coach and re-purposed it into a motor home – although it took four years to build. The coffee cart project was to be far less intensive though, and in 2021 his schedule had become lighter without the usual work travel. Therefore, he decided he had the capacity to take on this exciting project for the church.

With the initial vision for the cart to stay on campus, more brainstorming led to ideas for it to also serve the

neighbouring school and to engage directly with the community. With this need for mobility in mind, Ben took some measurements of another coffee cart to get an idea of the dimensions and specifications, and added bigger wheels to make it easier to move around.

The real challenge of the project was finding a solution to provide power to the coffee cart for the built-in fridge. Initially, there seemed there was no possible way to add power as it would be too expensive to install. This didn't stop Ben – he did the electrical drawing himself to save money and then hired an electrician to make it compliant.

It took Ben over 200 hours to build the coffee cart, which he affectionately refers to as "a labour of love and a really fun project".

Nick identified another opportunity to reach out to the community by partnering with a small coffee business,



■ Volunteers, Judith Maier and Melinda Dobbie.



■ Cart on campus.



I can schedule coffee meetings now with people from all walks of life and share this common campus experience.



Bootleg Coffee. The owner of the business installed the machine and glass washer into the coffee cart and continues to provide the beans and other supplies.

The Common Grounds church has now employed ministry intern Jan-Paul de Waal as the head barista and to lead the development of this initiative. He is getting to know many people across the campus by their coffee order and training volunteers from the community to be baristas.

The coffee cart has been very popular with the school, particularly with the teachers, who are delivered their orders by the school chaplain.

“I asked the school principal about advertising the coffee cart in the school newsletter. When I read the newsletter, she wrote the ‘Church is one of our biggest community partners’ in the introduction, which was heart-warming to read. The coffee cart has been the catalyst in

building and fostering a good relationship with the school which continues to grow, including welcoming some of the school children who have become involved with our men’s shed,” Nick said.

There have been a few moments of truth for the benefits of the coffee cart. It has enabled generosity, been an ice-breaker and given us an excuse to pause and be present with each other.

Before Christmas last year, there was an opportune time to give the gift of free coffee to brighten people’s day – especially after a challenging year experienced by all.

The cart’s mobility has meant Nick was able to get out of the office and personally engage with passers-by and start a conversation. This opportunity has given so many people permission to share their story and lighten their load.

Nick said when the coffee cart was at Church services and functions, he would walk into the room and see the

buzz of excited people who didn’t know about the coffee cart.

“It’s a tool of wellbeing – a natural social connector,” he said.

“I can schedule coffee meetings now with people from all walks of life and share this common campus experience. We also get people coming on-site for a one-off meeting with other organisations – saying ‘I had no idea this was here – I didn’t expect to have such a welcoming experience.’”

Nick said, “it’s very early days but it’s great to see people who don’t know each other meet around the coffee cart. It demonstrates bringing hope to the Community, with future ideas of training up people seeking employment on Sundays after church, to give them new barista skills to support unemployment in the local community. ■

Our commitment to stand against modern slavery

Modern slavery describes situations where offenders use coercion, threats or deception to exploit victims and undermine their freedom. Practices that constitute modern slavery can include human trafficking, slavery, servitude, forced labour, forced marriage, debt bondage and child labour.

It is a confronting reality that even in the present day, men, women and children all over the world remain victims of modern slavery.

Modern slavery can occur in every industry and sector and has severe consequences for victims. They are forced to work in construction sites, mines, stores, on farms, or in homes as maids. Labour extracted through force, coercion, or threats produces some of the food we eat, the clothes we wear, the electronics we use and numerous other products that we consume. This is modern slavery. It is widespread and pervasive, and most of the time not visible in public.

The Global Slavery Index estimates that over 40 million people are affected by modern slavery. This means that there are 5.4 victims of modern slavery for every 1,000 people in the world.

The Commonwealth *Modern Slavery Act 2018* (the Act) addresses modern

slavery by asking businesses and organisations, like Churches of Christ in Queensland, to take responsibility for increasing transparency within their operations and supply chains.

We support the Act and the efforts of the global community to identify and address modern slavery risks and maintain responsible and transparent supply chains.

Through the continuous improvement of our policies and increased collaboration with our suppliers, we are committed to playing our part in combating modern slavery.

“Our Modern Slavery Statement seeks to illustrate that we understand our responsibility to combating and eradicating modern slavery from our supply chains,” Rue Masunungure, Director of Governance, said.

“As an organisation, we continue to increase our understanding and awareness of modern slavery risks in our supply chain.

“Identifying and mitigating our own involvement in modern slavery is central to our core values. We have constituted a cross functional working group that will continually explore and put in place actions to mitigate the abuse of human rights within our supply chain.” ■



Regency Park pen pals: connecting the old-fashioned way

When COVID-19 forced aged care services into lockdown and children into remote learning, the staff at Regency Park Retirement Village observed a distinct lack of connection between people and generations in the local Warwick community.

Maintenance Administration Co-ordinator Nerissa Shepherd observed the social isolation experienced not only by village residents, but the local community and her own children. When she started doing more shopping trips on behalf of the residents, she noticed the local community was void of the usual chance interactions between children and older people.

She also witnessed how the pandemic prevented many seniors' activities, including the Probus catch-ups. Without these usual everyday activities, there simply wasn't any opportunities for social contact.

Nerissa's children had grown up visiting the residents at Regency Park, and were missing their usual visits.

Thanks to some out-of-the-box thinking, connection was promoted between the local children and older people.

The children created some beautiful, colourful drawings for the single elderly

residents to put on the fridge to brighten their day. These gifts from the heart were received with much love and joy, and the residents sent letters of sincere thanks back to the children.

More children wanted to get involved, so Nerissa sent out a request in the Village Voice newsletter to Regency Park residents, to see if they wanted to participate in a pen pal program.

"The program was the first step out of complete social isolation for many residents, and receiving a letter became something to look forward to by all who participated," Nerissa said.

In January 2021, Nerissa organised a catch up for all the pen pal participants to meet with each other and spend time together out of isolation. There were many activities on the day including painting, beading, play doh, colouring-in and board games, followed by a COVID-safe morning tea.

Some of the groups exchanged email addresses and phone numbers and keep in touch and there are more situations where groups bump into each other while in town.

Resident Ann Hichens took part in the pen pal program.

"Because I don't have any family in Warwick it was nice to have contact with

a young person and to actually receive letters in my mail box. When COVID-19 hit the country, I didn't get out much at all. I was feeling lonely, so by connecting with the younger generation my spirits were lifted and I had something to look forward to," Ann said.

Fellow resident Janet Malbon had been unable to see her family, and enjoyed connecting with others.

"Being a grandmother myself it took me back to when my grandkids were small. I enjoyed the correspondence very much. Because of the border closures I was unable to see my daughter often. This caused me to feel down. But that little letter gave me a boost. I loved meeting my new friend and found her to be delightful. I got to play with play doh, draw and painted. I hadn't played with play doh in 70 years but it soon came back to me," Janet said.

"I've loved getting little Huxley's letters and drawings. All of my grandchildren have grown up and my great grandchildren live in Sydney. I feel that Huxley is part of my family now. It's nice having littlies around," Resident Val Kelly said. ■



■ Avery and Ann.



■ Huxley and Val.



■ Parker and Janet.



■ Ministry Team Leader, Steve Christian, out the front of Toowoomba North Church of Christ.

Foundation for growth

In 2022, Toowoomba North Church of Christ will celebrate 100 years of bringing the word of Christ into their community. They will also mark a decade in their new church building, which has facilitated growth and community connection.

Today, the church welcomes up to 300 people to their weekly service, though, during the pandemic, they reach up to 450 people a week in the community. Originally, the church was located in Harlaxton, though 90 years after establishing as a church, it had outgrown the building it had called home since 1953. While they had \$6 million for the \$7.2 million build of their new

building to accommodate their growing faith community, they needed finance to cover the \$1.2 million shortfall.

Ministry Team Leader Steve Christian said the church applied for a loan from Centenary Development Foundation (CDF), successfully receiving the remaining funds to see their dream facility come to fruition, and were delighted with the service they received.

“It was the only commercial loan required for the church to proceed with the \$7.2 million development. At all stages from the application and throughout the repayment period, the conduct of the CDF team was professional, helpful, friendly and personal,” Steve said.

“

We are able to do so much more in this new building than we ever could in the old.

”

“Our association with CDF made the whole development process possible in the first place, and stress-free over the loan period.”

The building is now a meeting place, with numerous weekly classes and groups associated with Toowoomba North Church of Christ using the high-quality facilities to gather, connect and socialise.

“We are able to do so much more in this new building than we ever could in the old,” Steve said.

In 2019, the church made the final payments on their loan, earlier than expected, and were able to redraw funds to extend their property.

“We are most thankful to them [CDF], and based on our experience would recommend them as the first option for financial assistance. As we were able to make payments in excess of those set down, the loan was never redrafted or renegotiated, but CDF proactively introduced a deposit/loan interest offset scheme, which was of great benefit to us, and we were able to redraw funds when an opportunity to purchase further land presented itself.”

Centenary Development Foundation prides itself on helping churches, like Toowoomba North Church of Christ, and individuals to achieve financial goals through investment products and church loans.

While this access to loan funds and great investment products benefits churches and individuals, all funds generated also go back into mission-focused activities of Churches of Christ in Queensland. These activities include support for our chaplaincy program, helping to bring the light of Christ to more people in the community.

If you would like more information about investment and church loan products from Centenary Development Foundation, go to cdf.org.au. ■



To keep up to date on the vaccination rollout, visit:

- www.health.gov.au
- www.health.qld.gov.au
- www.health.vic.gov.au

■ Elva Turrell was excited to be receiving her COVID-19 vaccination.

Hope-bringing vaccination

At Toowoomba Aged Care Service, Elva Turrell is enjoying trivia in the lounge with her friends. With a huge bright smile, she lights up any room she is in.

Elva has been a resident at our Toowoomba service for 10 months, moving in at the height of the pandemic restrictions.

“I moved in and I had to isolate for two weeks, in a totally strange environment, but it was ok, it went quickly,” Elva said.

These days she and her group of friends enjoy playing scrabble in the café and other games that the Lifestyle Coordinator arranges, “He always has something to keep us busy and entertained,” she said.

One of the main things that Elva was looking forward to was receiving her COVID-19 vaccination.

“I am very happy about getting it, because I think the sooner that we can get it under control, the better for everybody. We are very vulnerable.”

While in Toowoomba the restrictions placed on aged care services were not as far reaching and severe as in other

locations across the country, they still had an impact for Elva, her friends and fellow residents.

“It did impact us a bit because we couldn’t have visitors. We couldn’t have them, then they could only come for an hour and we couldn’t see our grand kids under 16. All these things did affect us.

“But they looked after us here so well that I didn’t have a problem with it.”

Elva acknowledges that for her fellow aged care residents in Victoria and other hard-hit locations, it must have been hard.

“It must have been so hard down there, you know. But at least it [the restrictions and lockdowns] has kept them on track to get it under control, if they hadn’t of gone as hard as they did they might not be in the good position they are now,” she said.

Elva has now received the first dose of the vaccination that she hopes will bring an end to the pandemic.

“I discussed the vaccination with my doctor and he is very happy for me to get it.”

While she believes the vaccination is for the greater good, and will protect vulnerable older Australian’s like herself,

she acknowledges that it is up to each individual.

“One of my friends, an older lady, she has decided not to get it, which is up to her to decide.”

It is hoped that through the rollout of the vaccination and people actively rolling up their sleeves to receive it, it will mean that restrictions caused by the pandemic will be a thing of the past, and residents can continue to see their loved ones.

Director of Seniors Care, Richard de Haast, welcomes the rollout of the vaccination to our services.

“Vaccination against COVID-19 is just one part of keeping our community safe and healthy and protecting vulnerable older Australian’s,” Richard said.

He acknowledges though that there has been mis-information circulated surrounding the vaccine, and urges anyone with questions about its safety and efficacy to get their research from trusted sources, including the Department of Health website. ■



Connecting to culture Gudjuda Indigenous Land

Our Youth CONNECT team and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people in Townsville experienced a Gudjuda Indigenous Land and Sea Rangers cultural tour to promote a connection to their culture through positive community experiences.

Gudjuda Rangers Uncle Eddie Smallwood, Uncle Russell Butler, Uncle Alfred Smallwood and Uncle Murray warmly welcomed the group and commenced the day with a Welcome to Country. They shared their knowledge and history through experiences in fire making, smoking ceremony, bush tucker, bush medicine, spear throwing, storytelling, boomerang throwing and rock art. This was a unique

and greatly appreciated experience as the Rangers don't normally do tours.

Support Worker Tonya Lake, assisted in organising this event and was fortunate enough to be able to attend. Tonya said the Support Workers and young people had so many memorable experiences.

"Learning how the Indigenous know how to control a fire, use bark as medicine and make fish hooks were all amazing experiences," Tonya said.

A truly memorable moment of the tour was when a couple of young people weren't aware of a prior connection they had with their mob or country, however when they introduced themselves, the Elders were able to make a connection to their family for them by identifying

their last name. This experience was pivotal for these young people to make a familial connection.

Young people stay connected to culture through their community and a strong cultural identity helps them to become resilient adults. Supporting culture and connection is a responsibility we all share. Culture plays a key role in development, identity and self-esteem, and contributes to the overall wellbeing of a child or young person, particularly when they are experiencing vulnerabilities. These connections help them to understand where they have come from and to develop their sense of belonging.

Our Youth CONNECT Townsville service currently has 63 per cent



Culture through the Land and Sea Rangers

of its young people who identify as Aboriginal and or Torres Strait Islander. This finding led to searching for an opportunity to help connect the young people with their culture.

“We learnt so much about how Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders approach storytelling and the Elders had everyone in fits of laughter with their jokes.” Tonya said.

Further opportunities arose from this event for young people to enhance their cultural connections within the local community. A young person committed to attend a weekly Men’s Business circle with Uncle Alfred and another client learned about a local Women’s Business circle which she has committed to attending weekly.

At Churches of Christ in Queensland, we have a genuine commitment to reduce the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in statutory care. We are guided by our Reconciliation Action Plan in our journey to reconciliation and to being more culturally inclusive. Cultural Connection Plans and dedicated cultural practice leaders also help foster and enhance the young people’s knowledge, connection and experiences. ■



Culture plays a key role in development, identity and self-esteem, and contributes to the overall wellbeing of a young person.





■ Officially opened! Linus Power, Honourable Leanne Enoch and Gary Edwards cut the ceremonial ribbon. Right top: Doug Sparkes, Dale White, Alicia Follent, Gary Edwards, Hon. Leanne Enoch and Linus Power.

Marblewood Apartments officially opened

In April 2020, at the height of the pandemic, a group of older residents from across Logan and surrounds moved into a brand-new apartment development in Hillcrest.

The 32 stylish and thoughtfully designed apartments are now home to 36 residents, and on 17 February 2021, Marblewood Apartments were finally officially opened.

Chief Executive Officer Gary Edwards spoke at the event, acknowledging the residents who now call Marblewood home.

“They are the reason we are here, and the focus of our mission – ensuring that all people have access to secure, appropriate and affordable housing,” Gary said.

The opening took place almost 12 months since the first residents moved into their new homes, with the Honourable Leanne Enoch who is the Minister for Communities and Housing, Minister for Digital Economy and Minister for the Arts and local member for Logan, Linus Power taking part.

“The year since we completed this development and residents moved in was disrupted by the pandemic and prevented us holding the opening event earlier, which made me even more delighted that we could gather to officially open Marblewood Apartments and welcome the residents.”

Marblewood Apartments was built in partnership with the Queensland Government Department of Communities and Housing, with construction completed in February 2020.

“These bespoke apartments designed specifically for seniors, are our fourth development as part of an under-occupancy initiative working with the Government to provide a more appropriate and affordable housing option for tenants living in public housing. Our unique service offering ensures residents have access to aged care services as well as pastoral and emotional support through our chaplaincy program,” Gary said.

Contained within this modern building is a range of innovations and design features that ease the cost of living for residents by reducing utility bills and household running costs. They have also been designed with high accessibility standards which will enable residents to remain in their homes as their needs change.

“It is fair to say that the residents here at Marblewood Apartments have well and truly settled into their new homes. It is heartening to witness the sense of community growing here amongst residents and seeing them come together to socialise and support each other in the great community spaces with the support of the housing services team.”

“The development is a testament to the productive partnership between the Government, community, the builders NCM, and architect Ryall Smyth,” Gary said. ■

Retirement on the doorstep for Kay

Kay moved into Marblewood Apartments in April 2020. The active 73-year-old still works six, five-hour shifts a week at Greenslopes Hospital and supports her grandson with learning and life skills.

Kay lives life with 110% commitment and is particularly passionate about the care she is able to provide to her grandson.

“We enjoy cooking together, I pick him up from school, and I’m the key contact for liaising with the school about his learning. While I am still alive, I have a big opportunity to support him. My focus is on making him as independent as possible,” Kay said.

Kay learned about the Hillcrest development a few years ago in the local paper and kept a watchful eye on developments. She was eventually able to downsize from her large Department of Housing home where she had been for 23 years to her new apartment, which she quickly made into a beautiful home.

She is now looking forward to starting the next chapter of her life when she plans to retire. ■



■ Hillcrest resident Kay with her grandson Dylan, May 2020.

Housing history on our doorstep

Having spent decades as trailblazers in Queensland’s social and community housing sector, it was fitting for Ross and Meredith to now call Marblewood Apartments home.

Ross was a Community Housing Resource Worker, a job that would play a pivotal role in initiating the development of Community Housing in Queensland. He is also a former Director of Lifeline in Cairns. Meredith was a founding member of the Bayside Housing Company (now part of Jacaranda Housing).

The couple is very philosophical about their move.

Moving into Marblewood Apartments is the next chapter in their lives. The unit better meets their needs as they age and their weekly schedule has filled up quickly in the time that they have lived at Hillcrest. Meredith’s grandchildren visit regularly and she is a champion knitter. Ross is still active with Yeronga / Dutton Park RSL and Naval Association of Australia commitments in particular in relation to the welfare of past servicemen.

There is no doubt this active couple is very socially driven and it is a delight to have them as residents. ■



■ Hillcrest resident Ross and Meredith enjoying their new home, May 2020.



I wouldn't want to be anywhere else

Working in emergency departments for many years was good preparation for Sophie Shrapnel, Clinical Practice Lead, Home Care.

Within her first three weeks in the role, Sophie made a life-saving call to emergency services after identifying signs of heart block over a routine video call. While conducting a client assessment – with the support of a Churches of Christ care worker – she noticed that one of the client's legs was significantly more swollen than the other, his heart rate was irregular and his breathing was shallow.

Sophie called the ambulance on their behalf and explained the gentleman was in heart failure, secondary to a complete heart block and needed to go to an emergency department immediately.

Sophie later discovered that the patient's heart paused for 11 seconds while in the Emergency Department's

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Even after a week,
I knew these were
my people.

”

resuscitation bay and he could have died if he hadn't gone to hospital.

“I told my colleague about the situation and she was saying how I'd saved his life, but to me, I was really stoked about the video call part of it and how many people were involved,” said Sophie.

It is moments like these that excite Sophie, and inspire her to make a positive impact on people's lives before they experience ill health.

I really loved the work in my old positions, but we would get patients

in the door when it was crisis point,” Sophie said.

“I saw so much opportunity for anticipatory care further back up the stream. There are well researched predicted markers for poor outcome in older people in all levels of independence and dependency – it's almost like having a crystal ball.”

Despite being in the job for a short while, Sophie already feels at home.

“Even after a week, I knew these were my people,” she said.

“It's an amazing team. They put the client first and are so enthusiastic and supportive. They're always looking for innovative ways to make processes better and easier, which is so exciting for me.

“Home Care is a great space; I wouldn't want to be anywhere else!”

Churches of Christ in Queensland have a variety of home care options that give clients the extra help they need to live a safe and healthy life at home. ■

Creating sustainability with school stationery boxes for disadvantaged children

A new community-led charity is helping local disadvantaged students, and families in need of educational resources, while also helping the environment by minimising waste from entering landfill.

In February 2021, volunteers from Hills Collective and Lions Club International created stationery boxes for disadvantaged students across Queensland schools as part of an initiative to collect and repurpose unwanted stationery, with Churches of Christ churches getting behind the initiative in their community.

Stationery Aid launched the pilot study in 2020 in partnership with schools, banks, businesses and community groups to understand what they could achieve through the collection of unwanted stationery.

The volunteer-based, not-for-profit initiative collects, sorts, cleans, renews and repacks excess and used stationery items that are in good, useable condition to prevent them from going to landfill. School stationery packs and kits are then donated and distributed to local school communities. If the pilot is successful, it hopes to eventually take the program abroad and positively contribute to global education.

The pilot study was run out of Zillmere Church of Christ on Brisbane's northside, by The Hills Collective, who are individuals and groups in the hilly suburbs of Ferny

Hills, Bunya, Arana Hills, Everton Hills, Eatons Hill and Albany Creek. They partnered with Scripture Union chaplains to reach those most in need.

The 36 volunteers collected 80 small wheelie bins worth of stationery, diverting over 70 bins worth from landfill. They sorted, cleaned and categorised the supplies before curating 97 booklist and stationery boxes for 106 disadvantaged students at 13 Brisbane schools, and one in Mackay.

For those involved, including A.J Heijns of Arana Hills Church of Christ and the Hills Collective, it has been "a tremendous journey for us to see a local charity come off the ground."

The Stationery Aid team are extremely proud of what they have achieved as a community in their first six months. While they have some lessons to learn, they are continuing to build the charity to be the best it can in order to reach the most disadvantaged students and families possible and to save perfectly usable items from landfill. ■



■ David and Sandy with stationery supplies.

Learning delicious dishes and lifelong skills

What was the first dish you learnt to cook?

Standing in the kitchen as a young child intently watching your parent or grandparent as they create a family-favourite dish is, for many, their first introduction to cooking and the start of a lifelong skill.

But what if you miss out on this moment in your life?

What if doing the big weekly grocery shop and cooking dinner each night was reserved only for those with the money and skills to do so?

A new program is helping young people who have grown up in the statutory care system to learn kitchen and cooking basics as foundations for lifelong skills.

For young people in our Youth CONNECT program, access to food that is both affordable and healthy, alongside the lack of knowledge in how to prepare nutritious meals, was an identified issue.

Noticing this skills gap, the Youth CONNECT team cooked up an initiative to teach young people some kitchen fundamentals and build on some of the basic instruction given at the young people's homes.

The team wanted to create a space that allowed young people to continue their already established cooking skills as well as learning new skills to cook quick, healthy and affordable meals within their own homes.

Late last year, they linked with CYCLE, our alternative education program, who had a space available, complete with a large kitchen perfect for cooking classes.

Youth CONNECT participant Max* identified that he enjoyed cooking, but he was struggling to find the money and motivation to make enough food each week. After completing a cooking class with the Youth CONNECT team, he realised not only how much he truly enjoyed cooking, but how easy it could actually be.

With recipe in hand, Max and the Youth CONNECT team member bought the ingredients from the supermarket before heading back to the kitchen to prepare one of Max's all-time favourite dishes, lasagne.

Following the experience, Max indicated his surprise at how easy it was to make lasagne and how the guidance and support he received made it easy for him to understand the process.

"This was a good idea and I'm glad you somehow got me to do it as I am now looking forward to making stir fry," Max said.

The cooking classes have been a hit with the young people and feedback received has been overwhelmingly positive, with young people saying how much they enjoyed this activity.

After the activity is finished, the team creates personalised recipe books for the young people to refer back to when making these meals in their own homes.

We are proud to have such a creative team who look for unique ways to help the young people we work with achieve their goals. Youth CONNECT staff members continue to seek out opportunities to both help clients grow, and to feel valued by the people around them. ■



Mustering hope

The Church and Community Engagement Team, made up of chaplains, regional engagement partners, church support, and leadership and formation, recognise and respond to the needs of those in our communities, advocating for the vulnerable and marginalised and bringing uplift and transformation.

Each year they support thousands of individuals, families and communities to access the Kingdom of God, with a loving, listening ear and practical support.

Our aged care and housing chaplains listen to individuals and those experiencing a period of crisis and help them to provide hope and meaning as well as access to the right support to help them through.

Meanwhile, the six Regional Engagement Partners spearhead activities that bring together churches and care services with their broader communities to respond to local needs. Through the 16 Strategic Action Leadership Teams, they are forwarding strategic priorities to deliver Christ's light to more people.

At the start of each year, the 45 Church and Community Engagement team members from across Queensland attend a retreat called the 'Team Muster'. For the past two years, the team has gathered at our Little Mountain campus on the Sunshine Coast.

Chaplaincy Manager, Kevin Hamer, said the muster provides time to re-engage as a team and to be trained and encouraged for the year ahead.

"During the two days, there were lots of laughs, but also time to be quiet and reflect on challenges presented to us by the speakers," Kevin said.

During the muster, each team member who had joined in the past 12 months received a gift (pictured on the front cover of this edition).

"The gift was a small lantern. When lit, it reminds us all that light brings hope, and our role, along with all Churches of Christ in Queensland team members, is to bring the light of Christ into communities: this is our mission."

Director Church and Community Engagement Tim McMenamain, shared

a bible quote with his team: "Guard your hearts as it is the wellspring of life", while on the second morning, Tim Hanna highlighted the need for the team to discern what feeds their soul, and then do plenty of it.

"It was clear that our work and life can sometimes be draining. So, we need to pay attention to our deep places and not only protect them, but engage in things that help us flourish," Kevin said.

The Church and Community Engagement Team returned to their offices with renewed hope and invigoration for the year ahead, with fresh ideas of how they can deliver our mission and bring others on the journey with them.

"Our team is made up of men and women who work alongside our services and offer a unique pastoral and leadership presence. Our aim is to serve with love, and do whatever we can to help our staff, and those we care for, to flourish." ■



Journeying through the valley of the shadow of death

In the quiet rooms of our residential aged care services, many residents peacefully lay, journeying through their final moments on this Earth. With one or more life-limiting illnesses, they receive palliative medical treatment, not to cure, but to provide comfort as the sun sets on their amazing life. At their bedside, as their loved ones gather, are our Seniors' Chaplains.

Throughout our aged care services, our compassionate and dedicated Seniors' Chaplains are an integral part of the team who support residents to focus on living their best life for as long as they are able with the medical, physical, emotional and spiritual support we provide. Eventually, they are there to support them and their loved ones in farewelling and celebrating a life well lived.

Seniors Chaplain, Jane Ott said that when she is supporting a resident through this palliative time, she focuses on how she may enhance their spiritual life and needs.

"Dying is part of living, and I gently encourage others to be prepared for this stage of life. When we receive news that a loved resident has commenced their 'end of life' stage, we know that this is the start of the next and final part of the palliative journey, not just for the resident, but their family members and the team members who care for them," Jane said.



■ Seniors Chaplain, Jane Ott.

This stage may be a day or two, or perhaps a couple of weeks. During this time, the reality of losing a loved life is faced, goodbyes are said, tears are shed, and special medical attention is given.

"As their Chaplain during this special time, I am privileged with sitting with the resident and their family, and with encouraging our devoted staff. We develop a special relationship with the resident during their time in our care, which I have noticed is a great comfort to the family when they hear me call their loved one by their preferred name, and they witness the warm affection reciprocated by the resident."

"During this time, deep emotions are experienced by both the resident and the family who may feel nervous, scared, and very sad. As the Chaplain and a familiar member of the team, we hope to be a calming presence

and to bring a sense of peace and confidence to the bedside."

Jane said that our Chaplains warmly and openly listen to the resident and those who have gathered as they talk about their life, their family, happy and proud memories, and sometimes even ideas and wishes for their funeral.

She said she encourages family members to express what they will miss about their loved one, and she will pray, read from the Bible, and leave verses and prayers for staff and family to use as a form of comfort.

"I find that Psalm 23 and John 14:1-7 are a particular help at this time."

"As required or preferred, the Chaplain will contact the resident's chosen religious minister to perform sacraments or rites according to their individual beliefs and customs. We deeply respect and bring companionship to those who prefer no religious acts at this time."

As the end nears, "I have found a beautiful act of expressing our love and thankfulness, of entrusting a loved one to the hands of God and letting go, is when we pray together or stand around the bed holding hands, sometimes we may even sing." Jane said.

While the role of a Seniors Chaplain is quite varied, the time of palliation and the end of life is indeed special. For Jane, it is a privilege to walk alongside residents as they journey through the valley of the shadow of death.

"We are blessed to share each experience as we bring the light of Christ at such a sad time." ■

Helpful information is available at:

- Palliative Care Australia www.palliativecare.org.au
- My Grief Assist www.mygriefassist.com.au

“ Psalm 23

A psalm of David

- ¹ The Lord is my shepherd, I lack nothing.
² He makes me lie down in green pastures,
he leads me beside quiet waters,
³ he refreshes my soul. He guides me along
the right paths for his name's sake.
⁴ Even though I walk through the darkest valley,^[a]
I will fear no evil, for you are with me;
your rod and your staff, they comfort me.
⁵ You prepare a table before me in the presence
of my enemies. You anoint my head with oil;
my cup overflows.
⁶ Surely your goodness and love will follow me
all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the
house of the LORD forever. ”

“

Jesus Comforts His Disciples

- ¹ Do not let your hearts
be troubled. You believe
in God[a]; believe also in
me. ² My Father's house
has many rooms; if that
were not so, would I
have told you that I am
going there to prepare a
place for you? ³ And if I
go and prepare a place
for you, I will come back
and take you to be with
me that you also may be
where I am. ⁴ You know
the way to the place
where I am going. ”

Strengthening spiritual connection for holistic care

Graham Friis is our first Spiritual Care Practitioner within the Home Care team. Through his role, Graham promotes holistic care of clients, so they can maintain a healthy sense of purpose and wellbeing, regardless of their stage in life.

The approach is based on our Positive Wellbeing Model of Care, spiritual support provides a holistic approach to clients' care at home or on-site.

Graham believes that spirituality is about connection to what's important to us. Sometimes, when that connection is broken, it's good to talk things through with someone appropriate.

"Spirituality means different things to different people. Religion and faith may be part of it for some people, but it isn't always religious," Graham said.

Spiritual needs might include purpose and meaning in our lives, to love and feel loved, a sense of belonging, or to feel hope, peace and gratitude. Spirituality is the sense of connection to the things that are important to us – the things that bring us meaning.

"What is most important to us can change over time, particularly as life moves on. Or sometimes we can lose connection with the things that are important to us and not realise the effect that this is having on our thoughts and emotions. There may be feelings of sadness or loneliness or perhaps recent changes in life's circumstances have



produced feelings of being overwhelmed or anxious," he said.

Graham's conversations are tailored to clients' background, experiences, spirituality and preferences to help make them feel comfortable.

Churches of Christ in Queensland believes greater emphasis should be placed on productive, successful and meaningful ageing; that growing older need not be a period of continuous decline and removal from society.

We believe caring for older people must include maintaining, and even building, capabilities and potential, not simply managing decline.

To enable this, we implemented our Positive Wellbeing Model of Care – a holistic, person-centred approach focused on uplift and quality of life. ■

{ People & Events }

in our communities

100th birthday

On 18 January, it was a very special day at our Fair Haven Maryborough Aged Care Service as resident Laurel celebrated her 100th birthday. She marked the milestone with a celebratory breakfast with her fellow residents before spending the day with her beloved family, planting a tree and plaque in the service's rose garden. Congratulations Laurel on such a wonderful milestone!



Meaningful activities

Twice a day, Kevin likes to sweep the courtyard and assist with any folding at Fair Haven Maryborough Aged Care Service. The resident likes to keep active and is supported in his activities by the service's volunteers. Volunteer Duane helped him put together pencil boxes made by the men's shed. Our services promote active and meaningful activities with residents.

A ball of fun – Is there anything music can't fix?

Our residents at Fair Haven Aged Care Service in Hervey Bay had a 'ball' during their musical therapy lifestyle activity. Music has so many benefits for our seniors. It can improve coordination and mobility, encourage social interaction and be overall very relaxing and therapeutic.



Dedication

A warm congratulations to Rod Philps, Joe Schluter and the wonderful people of Browns Plains Church of Christ on your recent dedication service.

With a newly refurbished building, it's an exciting time to see what's in store for the ever-growing faith community of Browns Plains.



A cuppa amongst friends is good for the soul

It was a gorgeous morning in Warwick when local seniors came together for the first Friendship Morning Tea since they were put on hold last year. We were delighted to sponsor this wholesome event, which promotes social connection and the beauty of friendship and catch-ups over a cup of tea.



Time to relax and unwind

RACV Royal Pines Resort recently welcomed some of our foster care families to stay and enjoy their summer holidays with free accommodation, breakfast and use of all the facilities. Everyone enjoyed room service on the first night and had spaghetti with meat balls and were then served with fruit and yoghurt for breakfast before a huge hot buffet. Yum!

The team at RACV Royal Pines were welcoming, patient and helpful for the family needs. One of the boys was so excited with the two huge pools and slid on the water slides numerous times as well as mighty big smiles and giggles throughout the water playground. It was great way for our foster families to have fun and enjoy their school holidays, thank you RACQ and RACV Royal Pines Resort for your hospitality and welcome. Lifetime memories were certainly made with this stay.



Outstanding contribution recognised

Congratulations to Karen Scott, Practice Lead – Clinical with our Clinical and Care Governance Team. Karen was recognised by the Queensland Fire and Emergency Services for her outstanding and dedicated service to the North East SES Depot with the 2021 Australia Day Achievement Award.

Karen has been volunteering with the SES for over 10 years. Karen truly has a humble, serving heart and is shining Christ's light in her community. Congratulations on your well-deserved recognition and the inspiration you are for others.

Island getaway – How amazing is this view?

Our young people enjoyed an escape to the naturally beautiful Stradbroke Island earlier this week, accompanied by our Adventure Therapy Team.

The trip encouraged our young people to engage with each other and to learn how to build and keep emotionally healthy relationships as they become young adults.



Garden makeover

The Lifestyle team at our Fair Haven Harvey Bay recently surveyed their residents about what they would like to see in their garden. Following an overwhelming response, the revitalisation of the garden quickly commenced. Bird baths and wheelbarrow gardens practically went up overnight! Residents are over the moon with the new additions to their peaceful garden. Huge thanks to our local Hervey Bay community and Council for your donations and support.



Giving it some heart

Our team at Fair Haven Maryborough have joined the Tasmania-based '1000 Hearts' project. 1000 Hearts is a kindness project, offering handmade pocket hearts as a symbol of compassion and care.

Fair Haven volunteer, Dell, has so far made over 130 hearts, each complete with a lovely written verse:

"This pocket heart has been lovingly handmade as part of 1000 Hearts, to share and celebrate kindness.

Keep it close and give it a squeeze when you need a reminder of love, hope, courage and comfort."

To find out more about the 1000 Hearts Project, visit www.1000hearts.com.au

Centenary celebrations wall

The 100s' Club has one very special entry requirement - you must be a centenarian! The photo gallery at Gracehaven Aged Care Service, features current and former residents who all reached the amazing milestone! It is a wonderful way for residents and families to celebrate long lives, lived well.





New clubhouse

Residents from Fassifern Retirement Village are beyond thrilled with their new clubhouse. A special morning tea was held at the official opening last week, where Service Manager Alanna gifted each resident with a 'welcome' mug. The Clubhouse will host a range of activities for residents, such as trivia, darts, ukulele groups, knitting groups and bible study. Welcome Fassifern family!

Myles Waldron ordination at Lowood

It's always wonderful to see growth in our Church community. A big congratulations to Pastor Myles Waldron on his recent ordination at Lowood Church of Christ. We feel very blessed to have you Myles.



Great Aussie tradition continues at Fassifern

Is there anything better than a lakeside barbeque with friends?

Our Fassifern Retirement Village residents look forward to their monthly lunches, where they get to enjoy each other's company while relaxing in the afternoon country breeze.



Bush garden a hit

Residents at our Barcoo Multi-Purpose Service in Blackall were positively blooming after winning the 'Best Non-Residential' category in the Blackall-Tamboor Regional Council Bush Garden Competition.

Check out these beautiful pictures of their communal courtyard garden and 'COVID creation area'.



April

2 APRIL

Good Friday

4 APRIL

Easter Sunday

21 APRIL

Harmony Day

25 APRIL

ANZAC Day

May

1-31 MAY

Domestic and Family Violence
Prevention Month

17-21 MAY

National Volunteer Week

26 MAY

National Sorry Day

27 MAY-3 JUNE

National Reconciliation Week

June

5 JUNE

World Environment Day

14-20 JUNE

Men's Health Week

A new way with Our Way

In February, team members across Churches of Christ in Queensland heralded a new era for accessing organisational information.

Our Way app, which is powered by Mumba, is a gamechanger for Churches of Christ in Queensland and the way employees can interact with information.

Director of People and Culture, Jodie McAloney, spearheaded the implementation of the employee engagement tool, which in part is designed to allow team members to access information, such as rosters, payslips, wellbeing initiatives and team member benefits, anywhere, anytime, from the palm of their hand.

"For a long time, we had examined how we could make accessing information easier for our team members. The majority of our staff are out caring for and supporting our residents and clients and are rarely at a computer. Through this custom-built tool, they can now access a huge range of information, with staged plans to add even more features," Jodie said.

Throughout the second half of 2020, a team of experts representing the

organisation strategically planned how the app would be used, the content that team members wanted and needed to access, and how best this could be done.

"We engaged app developers Mumba to help us to deliver our vision for an application that is user friendly, secure and reliable."

The results from the first week spoke for themselves.

"Within the first week of launching, over 2000 staff had downloaded and logged into the app, with messages flowing through expressing excitement and gratitude for the app. I was glad that we were finally able to make this app happen and that it really met a need for so many of our valued team members."

The February version of the app is just the first in a staged approach to additional features being incorporated to the platform. Over the coming months, staff will be able to access additional information, including local-level channels.

Chief Executive Officer Gary Edwards is keen to communicate regularly through his dedicated channel. He is also looking forward to seeing the suggestions for improvement or innovation users are encouraged to submit.

"One of the great features of the app is the ability for team members to submit their ideas through the 'Bright Ideas' channel. One of our values is continual innovation, and that can be of any size or significance. From trivial musings about what you would like to see, to more major needs to change, we look forward to seeing the ideas our team members have to make their working day better," Gary said.

"Our Way shines a light on connection with and between our amazing team at Churches of Christ in Queensland and is a manifestation of our values of continual innovation and mutual trust as we make information readily accessible and allow for real-time sharing of feedback. I look forward to it becoming an indispensable tool that will help them shine bright in their many and varied roles," Jodie said. ■



Bringing the light of Christ
into communities



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