

# Abundance

THE MAGAZINE OF ANGLICAN OVERSEAS AID | SUMMER 2020

## Standing tall



# A new decade for change

**The Reverend Dr Bob Mitchell AM**  
CEO, Anglican Overseas Aid



When you think of the word, 'poverty', what images come to mind for you? This is a question we often ask when we visit Anglican churches as part of our work of awareness-raising and fundraising.

Most answers focus on tangibles, where poverty is about hunger, a lack of adequate shelter or access to clean water. These are true, but all these deprivations, more than anything, can erode a person's sense of dignity.

In this *Abundance*, we will be highlighting the concept of dignity in the lives of people living in poverty and our Christian response to it. We would also like to show you some of the initiatives we are very excited about moving forward into 2020.

One of these initiatives is the new *Mind and Body* program in Gaza. This is an innovative program which allows women with breast cancer to come together to discuss their well-being and issues they experience from having this illness, dealing with it in the middle of a conflict zone and in a culture where women's rights are restricted. You can read about the *Mind and Body* program on page 4.

We also have a wonderful example of transformation from Vanuatu where one woman talks of her experience and involvement in combatting gender-based violence. Our *Safe, Strong Communities* project is helping to change harmful attitudes about violence against women and is bringing peace into many households in Vanuatu. You can read this inspiring story on page 6.

The Pacific is also the focus of a program called *Disaster Ready*, which is making it easier for communities to better prepare themselves in the most disaster-prone region on the planet. The CAN DO consortium has been hard at work on this program, and our own Tim Hartley explains the details of it on page 7.

There have also been many highlights closer to home in the last six months. In August, Alan and Denise Nichols were made life members of Anglican Overseas Aid, we sent out our popular Advent Reflection booklets, and we were able to share videos from our Board's self-funded visit to East Jerusalem, Gaza and Kenya earlier last year (see page 3).

Back in October we were proud to continue as a sponsor of the annual Justice Conference, and recently we were present at the CMS Summer Under The Son conference. These events gave us a chance to talk to new people and personally meet and thank many of our friends and supporters.

Finally, can you believe it is only a month until Ash Wednesday? We are producing our annual Lenten Reflection booklets again this year. If you have ordered them in previous years you will receive the same amount again this year. However, if you would like to order them for the first time, or order extra copies, see the information on the back page.

I hope you are blessed by the stories in this issue of *Abundance*. We are certainly blessed by your continued support of our work. Have a great 2020!

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**Front cover image:**  
**Women in Vanuatu are learning more about their rights and protecting their families.**



# INBRIEF

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## POWERFUL VIDEO TESTIMONIES

In the last issue of *Abundance*, we highlighted the self-funded Board member trip to our projects in East Jerusalem, Gaza and Kenya.

Thanks to Chris Shearer of Anglican Media, we have some short videos of the trip and our work. The videos contain powerful testimonies of transformed lives. From children attending speech therapy in East Jerusalem, to teachers now equipped with child protection strategies in Kenya, these videos show the impact of your support in the most challenging of places.

The videos are perfect to use in your Sunday service or shared with smaller groups. View the videos on our youtube channel:

[www.youtube.com/AnglicanOverseasAid](http://www.youtube.com/AnglicanOverseasAid)



## RECOGNITION FOR TWO SPECIAL STEWARDS

In August we were very proud to see life membership of AOA conferred on Emeritus Archdeacon Alan Nichols AM and Denise Nichols OAM.

Both Alan and Denise have been involved with AOA from the beginning in 1988; Denise a past Deputy Chair of the AOA board and Alan the first Director. They both are passionate about the strong connection between AOA and churches.

The conferral of their life membership was celebrated at an event at Bishops court, hosted by Archbishop and President of AOA, The Most Revd Dr Philip Freier.



## BUSHFIRE FUNDS

As Australia deals with the bushfire crisis, our hearts and prayers go out to all those impacted - the churches in the regions, our donors and everyday Australians who have lost so much and are grieving.

The Anglican Diocese of Melbourne has enabled donations for the bushfire emergency through the Melbourne Anglican Foundation Trust to be distributed to victims of the bushfires in Victoria. Visit <https://maf.melbourneanglican.org.au> to donate.

## CHRISTMAS APPEAL UPDATE

A genuine thank you to all those who donated to our *Moving into the neighbourhood* Christmas Appeal - we reached our target because of your generosity!

The Bible study on page 8 delves more deeply into the wonder and generosity of our God as the God of relationship and inclusion.

## ACT ALLIANCE PRESENT AT COP25 CLIMATE TALKS IN MADRID

The global ACT Alliance, of which we are a member, was represented at the UN Climate Conference in Madrid in December.

The summit went over-time as different countries debated how to address climate losses, adapt to changing environments, and strengthen emissions targets. The presence of not-for-profit coalitions like

ACT Alliance ensures that the people we represent have their voice heard in these discussions.

Our own Tim Hartley has also been appointed to the ACT Alliance climate justice group, representing the Asia-Pacific region, so we look forward to making our own contribution in the future.



# Healing Mind and Body in Gaza

Breast cancer is a leading cause of cancer death in the Gaza Strip. Survival rates sit at around 65 percent (and can be as low as 40 percent), compared to over 90 percent in Australia.

Most of us will probably know someone who has dealt with the trauma of breast cancer. Like any serious illness, it affects every part of our lives. In addition to the physical burden of the illness is the emotional and mental stress caused by the trauma of treatment and the loss of 'normal life'.

For women in Gaza, however, living in a conflict zone with limited electricity (only for six-eight hours per day), where most of the water is undrinkable, and experiencing cultural stigma and ostracism by your family (it is not uncommon for husbands to leave their wives after diagnosis), the psychological impacts are magnified.

It is for these reasons that the Ahli Arab Hospital (AAH) has introduced an innovative new program for breast cancer

patients. The *Mind and Body* program has been running since early 2019 and is already having an impressive impact on women with breast cancer.

This wonderful program is helping women receive the psychological help they need to cope with the emotional stress of living with the illness. Joining with other women, the program allows them to talk about their illness in a safe environment, knowing they are being listened to and that they are not alone.

One participant said, "My life changed completely. I learnt new techniques which helped me to start a new life and come out of my darkness and depression. I became more confident and empowered."

There are currently more than 100 women participating in the program. They each attend 10 sessions which focus on activities such as movement and breathing, biomedical issues and the women's family trees. The sessions allow the women to express their feelings in a safe space

*Our 'Women's Health and Wellbeing' program in Gaza is funded in part by the Australian Government through the Australian NGO Cooperation Program (ANCP) and in part by your donations.*

*We are proud to partner with the Australian Government in delivering this inspirational program.*

which decreases their stress levels.

Due to the cultural stigma attached to having breast cancer, the program is restricted to just the women. This allows them greater freedom to express themselves.

The women have commented that they have an increased sense of self-esteem as a result of the program. The positive feedback has been consistent across all the participants. Putting the skills they learned in the program into practice in their lives has given them a new sense of purpose.

Some of the women find that their husbands are supportive of them doing the program, while others do not. One way in which AAH is working to address the lack of support from husbands is by providing transport for ladies to attend the sessions. This means there is no financial burden for the husbands. There is already significant financial pressure on most households because of the very high

rate of unemployment. The women who attend the program also do not incur any financial burden. All costs are covered by the hospital.

Other feedback from women in the program reflects the positive impact the program is having. One woman said, "I went from a cycle of depression to a cycle of happiness." Another said, "I am sick and my son is sick, but now I feel a sense of purpose through the *Mind and Body* program."

A third lady said, "Psychosocial support is more important than financial support. Financial support finishes, but psychosocial support stays with you for the rest of your life."

Once the program has finished for the women, some of them will be encouraged to come back to the hospital and talk to future program attendees. The hospital also hopes that the program will be further expanded.

Suhaila Tarazi, the Director of AAH,

stated her heartfelt gratitude for the support provided by AOA over so many years. And we would like to thank you, our supporters for your support. Without you, programs like *Mind and Body* would not be able to continue.

The women of Gaza are looking to live a better life. In what is a terribly dark context for living, Suhaila says the light is there, provided by supporters like yourselves as you continue to support women with breast cancer.

**Above left: The Ahli Arab Hospital is a light in a dark place for many women in Gaza. Photo credit: Chris Shearer, Anglican Media**

**Below: Suhaila Tarazi, Director at Ahli Arab Hospital, (centre left) with women who have attended the Mind and Body Program. Photo credit: Ahli Arab Hospital**





# Pacific Island Focus

## Standing up to domestic violence in Vanuatu

***In small communities in Vanuatu the tide of gender-based violence is receding with greater awareness and knowledge gained through social networks.***

Sheryl\* is a 66-year-old Ni-Vanuatu woman who lives on Pentecost Island, Vanuatu. She is a mother of eight, grandmother, and a community leader.

Sheryl has changed work locations in recent times, but she now finds herself living back in her home village.

Like many women from Pentecost, Sheryl grew up witnessing her father abuse her mother. In a home and community where violence against women was the norm, Sheryl believed “it was okay for men to hit women.” The cycle of abuse continued when she married; Sheryl was physically abused by her husband for decades.

It was not until Sheryl began work with the government and the Anglican Church of Melanesia’s Mothers’ Union that she became aware of beliefs

and attitudes that were different from those she grew up with. She was introduced and exposed to women opposing gender-based violence (GBV) and learned that the violence she was experiencing was not right and that she no longer had to endure it.

Sheryl built awareness and knowledge of the effects of GBV with her husband, resulting in a significant transformation within him. However, it wasn’t until 1995 that change was realised. Then 45 years old and carrying their eighth child, Sheryl was relieved that her husband stopped abusing her following a serious injury he caused both her and their unborn child.

Today, Sheryl teaches her three sons to “talk to your wives, not hit them. Discuss your problems; understand each other.” On Pentecost, she says “women are not aware yet, they don’t know their rights. Women believe men hit us to teach us. I used to think it was okay for

**Below: Ladies taking part in social gatherings have opportunities to build greater awareness and knowledge in their communities.**



men to hit women, but now I know it is not”

Sheryl believes the church is starting to address GBV by preaching and raising awareness of it. She is also working hard with the Pentecost chiefs and has caused a shift in their beliefs to the point where the chiefs now refer cases of abuse to her and involve her in running awareness sessions.

The *Safe, Resilient Communities* project - which we support through funding from the Australian Government - is assisting more women like Sheryl. The project team was on Pentecost in October facilitating a study which gathered information through interviewing

community members about their beliefs and attitudes towards GBV.

The project aims to change harmful community beliefs and attitudes towards GBV, creating safer communities for women, men and children through community education and social networks.

Many women like Sheryl are benefiting from this wonderful project, and the plan is to reach hundreds more women like her across Vanuatu.

*\*her name has been changed to protect her privacy*

# Being ready and prepared

***An update of how we are working together with other agencies to create safe communities and spaces in times of disaster.***

**By Tim Hartley**

Disaster Response and Resilience Co-ordinator

2019 was a big year for our involvement with the Church Agencies Network Disaster Operations consortium (CAN DO). This involvement means we are a part of a larger network of humanitarian relief, allowing us to make a bigger impact.

The CAN DO consortium continues to be active in global humanitarian responses. It recently implemented an El Niño response in PNG and acted to curb an outbreak of Ebola in the Democratic Republic of Congo. Both responses have been on behalf of the Australian Government's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade through the Australian Humanitarian Partnership.

AOA has also been actively involved in CAN DO's Safeguarding and Localisation Working Groups.

These groups have shared our team's expertise whilst keeping our projects and policies at the forefront of best-practice in these critical areas. An important development has been a set of procedures on Prevention of Sexual Exploitation, Abuse and Harassment (PSEAH). CAN DO has been the first consortium to develop such procedures, which highlight the proactiveness and seriousness with which CAN DO members are taking these issues.

In terms of preparing for disasters, AOA continues to lead CAN DO's *Disaster Ready* activities in the Solomon Islands. Some important resources were launched in the last three months of 2019. One of these was the newly designed 'Safe n Redi' smart phone app, an app designed to help track church-owned places of refuge people

can go to in the case of a disaster. 30 participants from local CAN DO partners have been trained in how to use the technology and have been collecting data across Guadalcanal. The volunteers have already mapped 58 buildings, with a goal to map 100 facilities by the time of publication.

A series of Bible studies called the *Theology of Disaster Resilience* was also launched by CAN DO. 40 participants from the Solomon Islands, including women and youth from all the main church denominations and national church representative bodies, participated in developing the series. You can download the Bible studies for free from our website.

It was a big year to be Disaster Ready, and if recent planning is any guide, 2020 looks to be even bigger!

# Moving into the neighbourhood

## BIBLE READING

John 1:14 from The Message

## BACKGROUND

The opening of John's Gospel describes the coming of God into the world as God 'moving into the neighbourhood'. Such a description evokes images of God moving into your street or even the house next door. It conjures images of community, where God lives among us in real flesh and blood.

This is what the original Greek translation meant when it said that God 'tabernacled' among us. The tabernacle, in Judaism, was the place in the Temple where none other than the presence of God dwelled. So, when John says that the Word 'tabernacled' among us, he is saying that, in Jesus, none other than God in flesh and blood was right here with us.

The Bible reveals God as a God of relationship. True relationship builds up the other and allows them to flourish to their full potential. Relationships can only flourish when we are in close proximity to each other. This is why God became human and moved into our neighbourhood. God wants intimacy with everyone, regardless of nationality, race, gender or age.

## REFLECTION

It has been said that expectation is the mother of disappointment or disillusionment. When we have a set idea in our mind and it is not met with reality, we can become confused and upset.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What images come to mind when you read about God 'moving into the neighbourhood'?
2. When you think of God, do you think of someone 'up there', in your heart or in your community? Or do you think of God somewhere else?
3. It has been said that your image of God creates you. What in your life has shaped the image that you have of God? How does it align, or not align, with the image described in John's Gospel?

## IDEA FOR APPLICATION...

Think about new people who have moved into your neighbourhood recently. Do you know them? If not, introduce yourselves to them and welcome them. Ask them how you can be of help to them in adjusting to the neighbourhood.

This was the response of many people to Jesus. For hundreds of years the Jewish people had been waiting for a messiah figure to liberate them. That desire had become stronger by Jesus' time when the Romans occupied the region.

Jesus though was not the messiah figure that people expected. Even John the Baptist, who announced the coming of the messiah, became confused. One week he is baptising people, including Jesus, and telling them that he is the one who is to come. The next week John is in prison, full of doubt and asking his disciples to ask if Jesus was really the one they were expecting.

The response of Jesus to John's question is unequivocal: "Go and tell John what you have seen and heard: the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the poor have good news brought to them."

Jesus moves into the neighbourhood to set things right. Our confusion is understood and heard. The lowly are lifted up and the last are first. Transformation is coming for all, from Mozambique to Melbourne, and from the Solomon Islands to Sydney. By coming in the flesh, God shows us what that looks like and how we can be part of it.





Above: Dams like this are a life line for communities in the Afar region of Ethiopia. Photo credit: Afar Pastoralist Development Association (APDA)

# Restoring an ancient vision in the Afar

***In one of the harshest places to live on Earth, the nomadic people who call the Afar home depend on rain and the dams that it fills for survival.***

At the Bargaale dam in the Afar region of northern Ethiopia, a miracle used to occur every day. Literally thousands of animals would appear, seemingly out of nowhere, with their Afar shepherds, and come and drink. It was a beautiful reminder of the image in Isaiah 65 of “the wolf and the lamb feeding together”

Today however, the Bargaale dam is dry. Four regular rainy seasons have been reduced to two, and even then, they are unpredictable. The water sources are desperately depleted in the hottest region on the planet.

Valerie Browning, from our partner, the Afar Pastoralist Development Association (APDA), speaks passionately of the plight of the Afar people. With years of silting taking its toll, she says it is crucial to dig out the dam now so they can collect the next rains.

“The community is very, very desperate to do this. It means everything to them – it means their life, literally. If their herds have to go many kilometres to find water first, walking huge distances, the milk is not near the house, the animals are in danger, they have to live away, the family is divided. The children, women and elderly are left to suffer. It’s really an awful situation and that’s what they are up against right now,” Valerie explains.

We are currently working on a long-term solution to this increasingly dire problem. We are supporting the *Dam Reconstruction and Building Project* which will involve reconstructing the existing dam to ensure that rainfall is captured effectively and is available for almost the whole year.

Increased water storages will allow the animals to stay alive and the Afar people to use the water for crop production. Feeding the animals in the dry season means having enough milk to survive. It would also mean growing crops such as onions that sell well on the market.

You can support the Afar people by donating to our work to build the dam and restore the ancient vision of Isaiah.

*To support the work of the Afar in building the dam, head over to our website at [anglicanoverseasaid.org.au/donate-online/](http://anglicanoverseasaid.org.au/donate-online/) (choose ‘Ethiopia – APDA & Valerie Browning’ from the drop-down menu).*



# What is poverty to you?

*Giving a voice and agency to the people who matter*

**By Nils von Kalm**

Community and Church Engagement

Twenty years ago the World Bank set out to 'collect the experiences of the poor', to find out, from their perspective, what poverty is. The study, interviewing 60,000 people around the world who were living in poverty, was called *Voices of the Poor*.

When we think of poverty, our perspectives may be more local and include issues like homelessness, minimum wages, or they may be more about global issues of hunger, access to clean water or conflict.

While these are all accurate in context, the study actually highlights something that is just as relevant now as it was two decades ago; the participants responded that poverty is ultimately about a lack of a sense of dignity. It is about feeling less than others, about being downtrodden by those more powerful.

This is why restoring dignity is key in alleviating poverty. As Christians we believe we are made in the image of our Creator and have inherent dignity. When that is taken away, it is an affront to the Creator who made us. When we consider how Jesus related

to people, we see clearly the worth that he places in everyone. We also want to emulate this in our work - we want people to see their own worth.

We have seen this change in our work with communities around the world. In South Africa, claims of violence were generally ignored, or women blamed for the violence perpetrated against them. Now, women are gaining the courage to stand up to the male village chiefs, speaking about violence against them in the villages, saying enough is enough.

We see the same in the Pacific. Through simple savings initiatives, women are gaining more power and decision-making in their households and communities, which over time, give more voice to speak out against domestic violence experienced in their villages.

When people realise their own inherent dignity, change happens. It is a long and slow process, but when it does happen, the change is deep and becomes part of the culture.

**Below: Children on the island of Mota Lava in Vanuatu, where our project operates.**

**Above right: Men work in the quarry just outside of Chaka, Kenya. There are no longer children being forced to work here thanks to the Imarisha Maisha project. Photo credit: Chris Shearer, Anglican Media**







# Gabriel, an Angel of Chaka

## *Education is freedom for the children in Kenya*

Parents living in poverty are often faced with dilemmas that we find unimaginable. If you were faced with the choice of either not feeding your children, or taking them out of school to work in a quarry to earn income for your family and you, what would you do?

This was the very real dilemma facing parents in Chaka, Kenya.

Our project, *Imarisha Maisha* (Swahili for 'strengthen life'), tackled this problem head on through the work of paralegals (also known as 'nyumba kumi'). One of the paralegals, Gabriel, became aware of the situation at a nearby quarry, where children were working, crushing large stones.

At the time, there were around 100 children, aged between 10 and 18 years, working in the quarry rather than attending school. He interceded, telling the parents about why their children should have an education, and now, two years later, they are all in school.

It wasn't easy for Gabriel. He says, "when I started intervening for

the children, some of the parents resisted. Over time though, most of them became convinced of the importance of having their children gain an education."

Today, Gabriel is a popular local figure, who parents can turn to for advice when facing these dilemmas.

Gabriel is just one of the paralegals trained by our partner, the Anglican Church of Kenya, Mount Kenya West (ACK). They are trained not only in child rights, but also in women's rights, so they can educate the community about abuse of women and children and supporting victims.

Violence is a major problem in Kenya, with approximately 45 percent of both men and women having experienced violence as adults. Child abuse is also prevalent, with 32 percent of girls and 18 percent of boys having experienced sexual violence.

It is a monumental task to combat this, but the ACK is making significant in-roads in the counties

of Nyeri and Laikipia through training about violence and child protection to a range of groups, including clergy and churches, schools, and community leaders through health centres and for government workers.

Combatting violence is only one aspect of the *Imarisha Maisha* project, with the ACK also providing opportunities to learn about saving money, and establishing economic activities such as crop farming, seedling nurseries and raising chickens. These have provided an alternative to the child labour in the quarries.

In all of these ways the project is providing an avenue for women and children in Mount Kenya West to live in dignity – with full access to their rights, and the ability to leave a life of poverty and gain so much more.

*The Imarisha Maisha project is funded in part by the Australian Government's Australian NGO Cooperation Program. We are proud to partner with them in this work.*

# Free Lenten Reflections are now available

Order your copies today to have them in time for the beginning of Lent (beginning 26<sup>th</sup> February). Available in Chinese and English.

**Stocks are limited - order before they run out!**

This year our free Lenten Reflection, themed 'Learnings for Life,' follows the Lectionary and contains week by week studies designed to probe, stretch and challenge us in the lead up to Easter.

We hope that through following with us on this contemplative journey you will be blessed with a brighter and stronger sense of purpose as we meditate on Jesus' sacrifice on the cross.

To order, please email us at [aoa@anglicanoverseasaid.org.au](mailto:aoa@anglicanoverseasaid.org.au) or call us on 1800 249 880.

*If you received the Advent Reflection, you will automatically receive the Lenten Reflection. Please contact us if you would like to change the amount that you receive.*



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