

# Embracing Ministries

An initiative of the Anglican Church of Canberra and Goulburn

March 2020

## *Covid-19 Closure*

As most are aware, all Anglican services have now been cancelled due to the spread of Coronavirus in order to uphold the safety of those most vulnerable in our community.

Unfortunately this also means that our April 2020 Easter Little Treasures Holiday Program is also cancelled.

In the meantime as an alternative to the Holiday Program, we at Embracing Ministries are offering to provide **Easter resources packs** for children to enjoy reading and playing with their parents/carers at home. Please **contact us** if you would like an Easter Pack delivered to your door and/or if you would like to chat and pray with myself or one of our team. Rest assured, we will uphold strict hygiene measures for requested home visits.



Even though we are not able to meet as a group we would like to encourage families to think of non-traditional expressions of church that do not include in-person meetings for your children. In this time of lock down we want to encourage parents and carers to initiate and lead spiritual activities with their children at home -

especially at Easter time. Remember to take time to read a children's bible or book together with your children, or to do bible craft together. We know this can be tricky so we hope the Easter Resource packs will help with this. Furthermore, if you don't have stories or a bible at home, please don't hesitate to let us know so we can help with this!

May you and your family be blessed as you celebrate the true meaning of Easter, from the reflection of Good Friday to the joy of Easter Sunday and the promise of eternal life.

Many blessings, Andrea

## *New and continued partnerships*

Our work at Embracing Ministries owes its success to the support we receive from the communities of Churches and Schools that partner with us. Such support has enabled us to support and create inclusive spaces for children and youth with a disability and their families.

Because of generous financial donations made to Embracing Ministries we have been able to run several successful programs including our continued Sibling program and newly started Music Engagement program. Such programs have extended our connections with the surrounding communities and provide support and fun to these individuals and their families. Nevertheless, donations are not only financial, without the generous donation of time by volunteers and mentors we would not be able to facilitate any of our programs.

Embracing Ministries is very excited to have recently partnered with Saint Mary in the Valley Anglican Church. The Reverend David McClennan has offered to help and connect with anyone in our community who would like to join the Saint Mary in the Valley church family. There will be an online service which will include a Kids Spot for children to be a part of. We want to thank Saint Mary in the Valley for opening their arms to our community and offering to support our families.

We would also like to thank Anglicare Gordon Community centre and Lanyon Valley Church for their wonderful support with making hampers for families within our community for families with kids with special needs. The team at Anglicare work hard to support Embracing Ministries families and are always willing to lend a hand anyway they can. Thank you so much!

We are especially thankful and highly blessed at this time for our partnership with Canberra schools. With the help of Trinity Christian School, Embracing Ministries will be able to gift 60+ families with Easter Resource packs. Through Anglicare Burgmann School donated 40 easter eggs.

Thank you!



March 2020

### Why Belonging?

Part two of a series about research on belonging.

By Monica Short and Jenny Wright.



Not all of us feel like we belong. Nevertheless, we all seem to need to belong and feel loved. Monica Short is committed to seeing all people flourish and having the freedom to express their faith in community. Monica passionately explains that all people are to be respected for who they are, what they think and what they believe. Monica advocates through her research for all to be included and feel like they belong in society. Belonging involves sharing life in a relationship, creating trust, building a mutual identity and being in a community together. Churches can be a place of belonging, providing support and love. This is seen through Nicole's story, as recorded in the article "Faith matters: From a disability lens" authored by Nicole Tillotson, Monica Short, Janice Ollerton, Cass Hearn and Bonita Sawatzky and published in the *Journal of Disability and Religion*. This article retells the impact upon Nicole of a funeral at her Anglican church. The funeral was for a much-loved baby of a church family - baby Lotte - who

died in utero due to health complications. The article also describes Nicole's attendance at a medical appointment for genetic counselling. Nicole is a Christian, belongs to a church, lives with Rod Monochromatism, is of childbearing age and was being asked by her specialist to consider what she will do if she was to become pregnant. Nicole contrasts the two experiences:

"Lotte's parents' faith was relevant for me because of my appointment for genetic counselling. I was thinking about the decision I have to make - that is, if I have a baby with my condition would I terminate the pregnancy? Not only that, but what does termination say about my life and who I am? Lotte's life mattered so much to so many people and my life matters too. Lotte's families' stance was very helpful for me as a person living with a disability." (Tillotson, Short, Ollerton, Hearn, & Sawatzky, 2017, p. 326)

For Nicole, her Christian faith and the values of her church community validated her life and if she was to become pregnant, they validated the life of her baby. Further, Nicole's active involvement in a church provides her with opportunities to serve others, to participate in activities and to belong. Nicole's faith and the Anglican church funeral reminded Nicole that she is fearfully and wonderfully made by God (Psalm 139:14).

Nicole's story, as well as Monica's research, show that Christian faith can matter. Faith can change someone's life, validate their identity, help someone overcome difficulty, and rebuild a life. People living with hidden and visible disabilities are

important and they have a right to express their faith in community and to belong.

### Reference

Tillotson, N., Short, M., Ollerton, J., Hearn, C., & Sawatzky, B. (2017). Faith matters: From a disability lens. *Journal of Disability and Religion*, 21(3), 319-337.

### Acknowledgement

This news story is based on a radio interview between IRPH radio announcer - Jenny Wright, and Charles Sturt University social science researcher and committee member for the Anglican Diocese of Canberra and Goulburn's Embracing Ministries - Monica Short. The interview was broadcasted on radio station IRPH Thursday 18/2/20 at 9.15am. Parts of the interview are reproduced here with permission. IRPH provides a radio service to people with print disabilities as well as to the general listening public. Their website is <https://www.radio1rph.org.au/about-us/who-we-are-our-vision-and-mission/>

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