

Embracing Ministries

An initiative of the Anglican Church of Canberra and Goulburn

MAY 2020

MESSAGE FROM OUR DIRECTOR

My prayers have been answered. I am overwhelmed with joy at how fast Embracing Ministries (EM) is growing. We are now connected to over 70 Families, 25 mentors and a growing number of schools and churches. The young people volunteering as mentors talk of their own experience of God's love and notice how we care for every individual on our programs. We have engaged with families isolated from church communities. Many of the families attending EM programs have never had any connection with church before or have felt they were not welcomed because they have children with special needs.

By God's grace we have also been ministering to numerous families of other faiths. These families comment that with us they have found a place to feel accepted, loved and embraced. This is because EM truly offers a safe space for people to feel free to speak the truth, ask questions of each other and offer support and care. Embracing Ministries welcomes people of all ages and all abilities. We are driven by values of hospitality, creativity and celebration, with Christ at the centre drawing together the efforts of God's people to love each other. Embracing Ministry has a focus not on disability but on inclusion. We have been able to support families, youth and adults to feel included in community. It is thanks to Anglicare's support in providing my salary for 3 days per week that I could be available to pastorally care for each family as needed. Embracing Ministries has grown so much in just 12 months. We give thanks for the Stening Trust donation. Their financial donation is paying for my clergy stipend for one day a week. This means I am now working 4 days a week, allowing me to provide more time and care to families. Our hope is that next twelve months, as we grow, that we will be able to continue to build closer connections or new relationships with all parts of the Anglican Diocese of Canberra and Goulburn.

ANNUAL REPORT

The Embracing Ministries team and volunteers have worked tirelessly to produce our Annual Report 2019-2020. Andrea, our director, asked our community for testimonies about the impact of Embracing ministries in their life. The compassion, integrity, kindness and respect that Andrea spreads through her ministry was prominent from the overflow of responses. Embracing ministries would like to thank all those who took their time to write about their experiences, it was a real blessing to read each one.



PASTORAL AND SPIRITUAL CARE

Embracing Ministries also provides pastoral and spiritual care to staff within the Disabilities Services in Anglicare. The need for this service has increased significantly as a result of the devastating Bush-fires and the COVID-19 emergency. As part of the response to this need, Embracing Ministries offers individual pastoral conversations and has started a weekly Zoom Morning Prayer Service to which all Anglicare staff are warmly invited to participate.

Rev. Peter Malone, Anglicare Manager of Chaplain and Mission Formation has written:

"Amidst the disruption experienced through the current COVID-19 crisis, Rev. Andrea has shown her compassionate heart once more by extending the role of Embracing Ministries to providing a weekly Zoom Morning Prayer service for all Anglicare staff. This inclusive, caring service provides an opportunity for staff to nurture their spirituality at the start of each Monday. Judging from feedback, it

is proving to be a blessing for many. Even if they choose not to actually participate, staff have expressed gratitude for this level of care and support being made available. Thank you, Andrea!"



UPDATE ON OUR ZOOM PROGRAMS

As a result of COVID-19, Embracing ministries decided to transfer our weekly Music programs (i.e. Minnows Music, MEP and the newly created YEP) on to zoom. There were many technological challenges that arose but the programs have been successful and are providing much needed support to our isolated families. We have been so blessed to have been virtually welcomed into so many families home and seen the much needed smiles and laughter of our Embracing Ministries Children.

Here is an excerpt about a mother and her child's experience of our Zoom Bend and Stretch program.

"I just wanted to drop you a line to say thank you for the Zoom session yesterday. My child really enjoyed it and it has made such a difference. He's been struggling the last few weeks with being away from school and his friends but I noticed a distinct change yesterday afternoon. He was much happier and settled and more like his old self. So thank you so much."



Embracing Ministry supports and nurtures the spiritual life of all people, regardless of their abilities

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HIDDEN DISABILITIES AND FAITH

Jenny Wright is a radio announcer for IRPH and church member of Forde Anglican Church. Monica Short is a Charles Sturt University social science researcher and the wife to the Bishop for the Anglican Diocese of Canberra and Goulburn. Recently they explored the experience of living with hidden disabilities in their IRPH weekly radio program - *Life with disabilities*. This is an excerpt from their program.

Photo: Jenny making her broken ribs, the invisible, visible with a sling



All people are created in God's image, including people living with disabilities. All people are an essential part of Australian society. All belong in society. All have essential skills and can make our world a better place - teaching us all how to live well with each other. This can include teaching others how to survive living in isolation during this period of COVID 19. In her research, Monica highlights that people living with hidden disabilities are the experts about their own lives and their specific disabilities. She also believes that people who personally understand hidden disability can explain to others what it is like to live with this form of disability. Real-life stories about hidden disabilities can be used to make changes in society. For example, people

living with hidden disabilities can use their stories as case studies when lobbying different organisations to provide accessible services for all. They can also teach us how to understand each other, how to listen and how not to make false judgements about people.

Jenny Wright is living with hidden disabilities and she shares here about her experience of seeing a counsellor after fracturing her back and having depression, which led to a breakdown. At the time Jenny spoke to a psychologist about her disability and faith.

Jenny says:

It may sound daft but I am so glad that I had that time in rehab, that is where I met the lovely lady psychologist. She was the first person to respect my feelings. She also respected my faith. Yes I know they are trained to do that, but the psychologist spent time with me listening, talking and we did a role reversal (which I have never liked) but it was interesting. I was always a blubbering mess when I was talking to the psychologist as she would unlock stuff that I had submerged for so long. One particular day, I was talking to the psychologist about my situation, things that I had submerged for countless years. As part of the role reversal, the psychologist asked me, 'What do I do when things are complicated?' My natural response was to say, 'Pray'. She just looked at me and with a smile on her face and said, 'You know what to do'. (Pray!) She was the first professional in rehabilitation to respect me and my faith and it was great. It was the beginning of a very long journey out of the depression.

Monica presents through her research that faith matters. Faith allows people to

confront the challenges experienced with living with impairments. Faith gives hope in dark times. For example, faith is what got Jenny through a very dark time. Jenny also shares the following about her experiences:

One day I was in my lounge room completely lost. In desperation, I stood on the Bible, and I spoke to God, quoting scripture back to Him. I prayed and told God I am standing on your word, your promises. Your word is truth. God, you are my refuge and my strength. I was crying my heart out to God for help.

No matter what happens, Jenny's experience shows that God is always with her and that He is her friend. Similar to Jenny, we have the option to pray to Him at all times. Monica's research reminds us that every person is made in God's image and is equally important. God is love and gives hope.

(For more information about Monica's research, please see this link <https://arts-ed.csu.edu.au/schools/humss/staff/profiles/lecturers/monica-short> If you would like to listen to Jenny interviewing Monica on IRPH tune into radio station frequency 11.25am.

Contact Embracing Ministries
info@embracingministries.org

Bank Details: Anglican Investment Development Fund (AIDF)
BSB: 702 389
Account: 0520 9841



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