

VISION AND STRATEGY



Our Vision

Being the people God is calling us to be through fulfilling the two great Commandments: to love God with all our heart, soul, mind and strength, and our neighbour (anyone we encounter who is in need) as ourselves.

Strategy 3: Love One Another What will you do?

We introduced Strategy 3: Love One Another (in our churches and diocese) in the September edition of the Vision and Strategy newsletter. If you missed it, you can download a copy from the diocesan website under the 'Vision and Strategy' tab. It includes an orientation from Bishop Ian and some recommended resources which might help you to move forward with this strategy.

Words of encouragement, acts of service, giving gifts and spending time with people are loving actions that we can all undertake. Even small gestures can mean the world to someone in your church or diocese. Mother Teresa said, *"Do not think that love, in order to be genuine, has to be extraordinary. What we need is to love without getting tired. Be faithful in small things because it is in them that your strength lies"*.

Please share your thoughts and ideas for how we can grow in love for one another in our parishes and organisations via bishop@bunbury.org.au. Contributing to this newsletter is in itself an act of showing love for others. Enjoy this strategy – loving and being loved is what we are made for!

The Four Strategies

Deepening and Growing our prayerfulness as individuals, groups and churches

Learning more about Jesus Christ in order to become more like Christ

Growing in love for, and encouragement of, one another (within our churches and diocese)

Being salt and light in the places and among the people God has placed us (in our communities)

A Word from Bishop Ian

The commandment to grow in love for, and encouragement of, one another is the third of our four strategies and it forms a vital part of our overall vision to be the church God is calling us to be and to love God with all our heart, mind, soul and strength and our neighbour as ourselves.

I have recorded a short video about this third Strategy which is available on our website. In it I mention some practical things we can do to show our love for one another, including blessing each other with: words of affirmation, acts of kindness, gifts and words of encouragement.



One thing I omitted was forgiveness. It occurred to me afterwards that we also experience feeling loved when people forgive us.

Matthew 18 v 21-35 is all about forgiveness, commencing with Peter asking Jesus whether he only had to forgive another member of the church a maximum of 7 times! Jesus' reply was to push that figure out very substantially but he then also illustrated his response with the story about the "unforgiving servant" and the tale of two debts. Some commentators have suggested the first servant owed proportionately 2 or 3 million dollars to the King and the second servant 2 or 3 hundred dollars to the first servant.

The point of the story was clear. God has mercy on us and forgives us and what we owe to God is vastly greater than what other people may owe us. Therefore, we should show mercy and forgive our fellow Christians. Paul urges the Ephesians to "be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you."

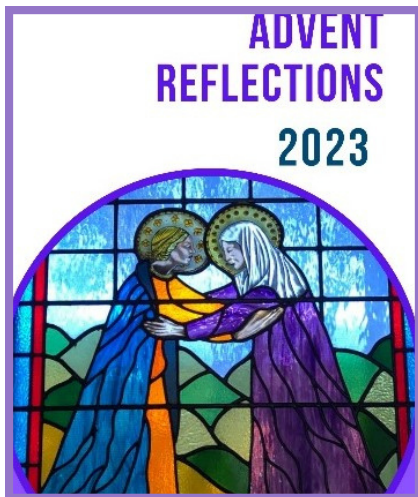
Loving and encouraging one another is not an optional extra, it is part and parcel of our Christian commitment. As one commentator phrased it: "we are the community of the redeemed." Jesus used another story about two debtors in Luke 7 when he commended the woman who washed his feet. In Jesus' paraphrased words: "she who was forgiven much, loves much."

The Diocesan Reconciliation Working Group recommended we make local apologies to Noongar Elders and people. Thanks to the work of Dr Don Reid and Karen Jetta, among others, and after consultation with the Elders, we gave the first of these apologies on 31 August to the Bunbury region. Pastor Dennis Jetta was very gracious in reply. This is an example of love and forgiveness in action between brothers and sisters in Christ."



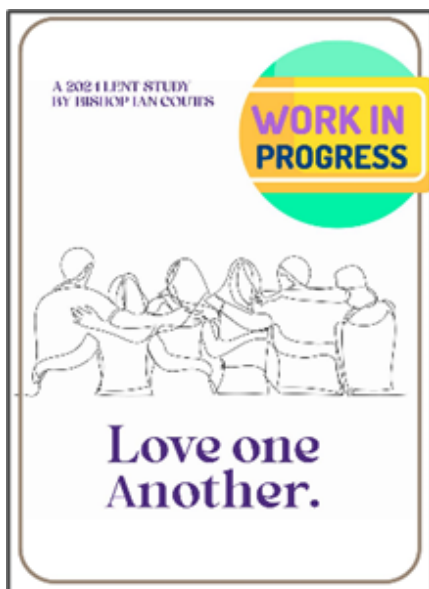
Bishop Ian Coutts with Pastor Dennis Jetta OAM.

Diocesan Resources for 'Love One Another'

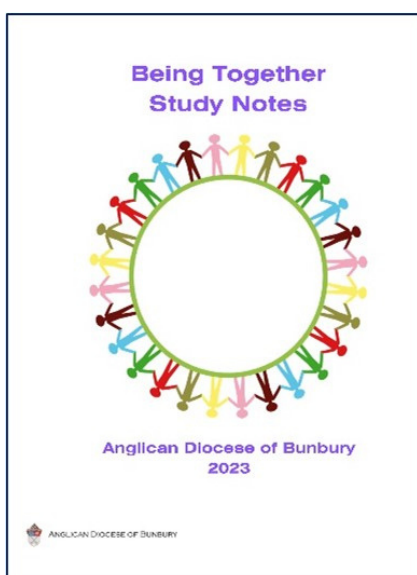


Our Advent Reflections have been written by some of our 'coastal creatives' – lay people and clergy who live in the coastal regions of our diocese. There is a reflection for Christ the King Sunday and each week of each week of Advent. Each reflection is based on a piece of scripture from the lectionary and a visual stimulus and has been written with our 'Love One Another' strategy in mind. The reflections can be used by individuals or small groups and are available now.

Rev Vicki Webb will be hosting a zoom group during Advent for anyone who would like to do the reflections in a group context online. If you'd like to take part, please contact Vicki Webb via va.webb@bigpond.com or call 0429323025



This is a 6-week course for Lent 2024 designed for groups or individuals and related to the current diocesan Strategy of 'Growing in Love and Encouragement for One Another.' The content looks at the biblical basis for why we are called and commanded to love one another, beginning with the nature of the triune God we worship, and what it means to be created as human beings in this image. The course then looks at the many New Testament passages that refer to love between the members of the church, exploring what love is, and the significance of love towards others as both an attitude and one that leads to loving action. Each week will link to the next so it is hoped that groups and individuals will be able to follow the whole Lent course, or catch up individually.



'Being Together' is a 7-week study series based on the 'Being Together Code of Conduct', produced by the Anglican Church in Australia General Synod. These studies consider what the Bible teaches about living together in community – how we relate, communicate, deal with differences, respond to conflict and celebrate our life together. 'Being Together' is available now for use by individuals or small groups in our parishes and organisations.

All these resources can be downloaded from the diocesan website under the [Vision and Strategy Tab, Strategy 3.](#)

If you would like a printed copy, please contact Kat in the diocesan office via Tel: 08 9721 2100 or Email: office@bunbury.org.au

Your Love is Better than Life Part 2

Living Water Anglican Church, Oyster Harbour

Living Water Anglican Church, Oyster Harbour, have their own You Tube Channel. Under the title “Your Love is better than Life” Part 1 and Part 2 are short video-testimonies by church members sharing their experiences of receiving love from the Lord and their church family. Transcripts for Chloe and Chelsea’s testimonies are published below. Anne and Malcolm’s testimonies were published in the September Newsletter. Many thanks to each of them for sharing their stories with us.

What story can you tell about receiving the love of God through your church family? Please share your stories with us via bishop@bunbury.org.au

Chloe



Growing up I never really had a great father figure in my life. My biological dad left before I was born and I grew up with a Dad who had a few issues that didn’t allow him to be completely present in my life. I guess growing up like this was normal for me but as I got older I began to realise I was missing out on something. Around the age of 12 or 13 the Dad I grew up with left Mum and I and I started to feel some abandonment and questioning my worth. Not long after that my friend took me to a youth group. I grew up in a Christian household. My parents taught me well but I hadn’t made that faith my own. I hadn’t understood what it meant to be a Christian.

Going to this youth group I remember all these kids worshipping joyfully and passionately and I didn’t understand how an all-loving father could let my world as I knew it fall apart around me. So I went to the back of the church and was crying. A lady came up to me. I hadn’t met her before. She sat down next to me and said, “I haven’t met you; I don’t know who you are but I feel that God’s placed on my heart to tell you that no matter how many of your Fathers let you down on earth, your Heavenly Father will love you unconditionally for ever.” I think those words changed the way I saw God’s love for me. He wasn’t distant and far away, leaving me to it as my world fell apart. He was taking those broken pieces and making something beautiful out of them. That’s when I learned that God’s love surpasses any brokenness, any circumstances, any sin. His love is better than life. Ever since moving to Albany its been so incredibly evident how God’s love has been shown in my life. He’s blessed me with a wonderful step dad and I’ve been able to come to a wonderful church which has support and community around me to help me work through some things and process some things. God provides in so many beautiful ways in the people around me and in his world and his creation.

Chelsea

Chelsea tells her story of experiencing God’s love in the midst of the sorrow of losing a baby.

In 2019 I was pregnant with our third baby. I’d been meeting with a friend each morning at dawn to pray. My friend nicknamed the baby in my womb my ‘glory baby’. At 20 weeks we were booked in for the gender scan and it turned out that that day I actually gave birth to my baby. She had passed a few weeks earlier and we were unsure if we would be able to identify whether it was a girl or a boy. The night before giving birth I didn’t sleep and spent the whole night in our living room praying and grieving and worshipping as well. In my heart I asked God, “Is it a girl or a boy?” and he said, “Girl”.

Continued Overleaf

Your Love is Better than Life Part 2 continued

Living Water Anglican Church, Oyster Harbour

My next question was, “What’s her name”, and I felt Jesus tell me, “Birdie”. We called her Birdie Love. The next day I was heading in to give birth to Birdie and I had my worship on in my ears. God surrounded both Aaron and myself. As I gave birth to Birdie the song that was playing sang the words, “Hallelujah!

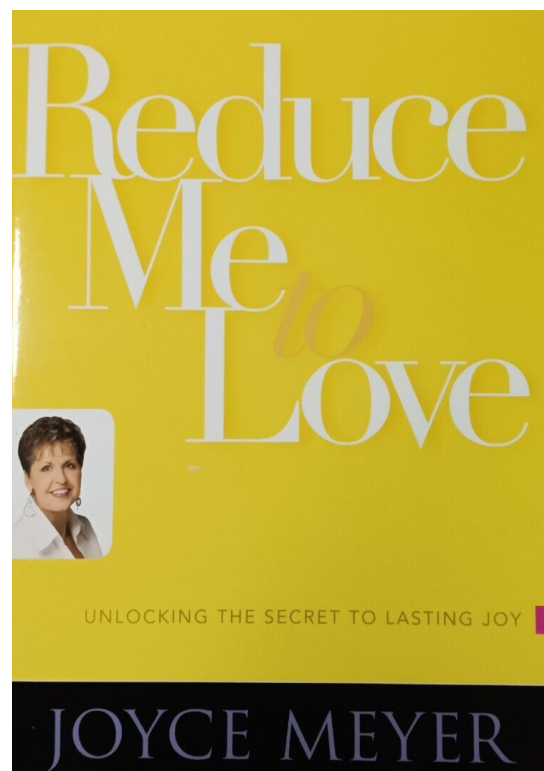


He has conquered death! Hallelujah! He has conquered death and he reigns”. In our grief Aaron and I felt Jesus very closely. It was almost a weird combination of grief and pain and joy. We felt joy even in the midst of having Birdie and letting her go. The Psalms and worship and people around us were our lifelines. God also gave us ‘telegrams’ from heaven. One friend had a vision of Birdie standing in front of Jesus and Jesus had a ring on his finger and the ring was encrusted with jewels. Jesus took off the ring and put it on Birdie’s head and it was her crown. A few weeks later, I remember I was sitting at the table and I said “Lord, ‘telegrams’ are awesome but I’d love a picture” and then my Mum drew the vision that my friend had seen of Jesus with Birdie. So God met us in the midst of our grief and the midst of our pain. God and his love was very much there and she really was my ‘glory baby’.

Recommended Reading

Reduce Me to Love: The Secret of Lasting Joy” – by Joyce Meyer

It can be very easy to lose sight of what is at the very heart of life as a believer – God’s love for you and the command that you reach out in love to others. Author Joyce Meyer points out, “you can’t give away something you don’t have!” Many of us who are trying to walk in God’s love are doing so in our own strength but the fact is, we can’t demonstrate God’s love until we have received it ourselves. In this very practical and easy to read book, Joyce Meyer provides biblical insights and draws from her personal experiences to introduce us to a life filled with God’s love – love that blesses us and motivates us to love others.



Diocesan Lay Retreat 2023

Report by Rachel-Anne Sambell, Southern Ranges Parish

The theme of this year's Lay Retreat was The 'I Am' Statements of Jesus in line with Strategy 2: Learning more about Christ in order to become more like Christ.

I arrived on Friday afternoon at the St John of God Retreat Centre to find hospitable welcome. Once I had put my luggage in my room, I reversed my steps back to the common area and made a cuppa. In one of the rooms adjoining the common area was a plethora of art and craft equipment: I delighted my heart decorating a beautiful name tag for the weekend. So began a weekend of meditation, relaxation and drawing near to our God.

The activity I liked the best was retreating into the Poustinia. This is a space – almost subliminal – to meditate and pray in. At the Retreat Centre in Shoalwater, it consists of a man-made cave like structure with an inner 'room' and an upper storey with a view to the surrounding garden.

I entered it not knowing what awaited – I think this is part of the delight – only knowing that it was a space to pray and mediate in (one of many at the Centre). In the lower room, there are prompts to help you pray and meditate, and I used one of those. The space reminded me of labyrinths I had been in, in Rome, and also, perhaps, caves of the Desert Fathers and Mothers; even hermitages used by monks in the Middle Ages. Most pertinently, of course the inner room where the disciples withdrew when waiting for Jesus all those thousands of years ago.

I thoroughly recommend attending the Lay Retreat – I think you will really get so much from it, and enjoy yourself to boot!

Opposite are two poems or prayers I wrote while on the Retreat in Shoalwater:



At the Midday Hours:

Living God,
Ever present help in time of
trouble.
Present and presence,
Beginning and eternal rest.
Alpha and Omega
Flourish in us this day,
And us in you.
Amen.

At the Fire Pit:

Flame of God,
Burn in me.
Purify me.
Shake down any impurities in me
and make me golden with
Holy Spirit fire.
Amen

DID YOU KNOW?

You don't have to wait for the next Lay Retreat to enjoy some time alone with God at Shoalwater? The St John of God retreat centre takes private bookings. Check out their website at: <https://ministries.ssjg.org.au/Retreat-Centre>

Alpha Update

Alpha in Albany



Report by Rev Karen Cave

Alpha courses were held and are being held through many churches in Albany with 100 attendees so far, and 47 new believers. We celebrated the success of Alpha with testimonies at a recent Albany Churches Combined Service. At St John's we have just completed our Alpha. An enthusiastic group enjoyed the course which was held on Wednesday evenings. Next year we will run Alpha again during daytime.



Report by Rev Shane Marques

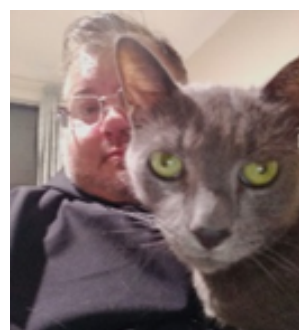
Living Waters Anglican Church in Oyster Harbour tried a different approach with Alpha this year, as I was overseas during the Alpha initiative in Albany. Instead of one course, 4 of the Oyster Harbour house groups ran Alpha and invited guests to join them. 10 new people took part in Alpha but the overall feedback is that this format didn't work very well. The invitees were overwhelmed by the number of Christians in the group which made



conversation difficult and the groups missed fellowship like they normally would experience. Overall it was good to do, but it seems clear from our experience that Alpha should be run as a stand alone group with mostly guests and only a few leaders/ helpers. We plan to follow this pattern next year.

Diocesan Zoom Alpha

The Diocesan Alpha on the Zoom platform, run by Rev Jamie Murray from Australind Parish, was very unusual this year in that, although there was initial interest from lay people from various parishes, in the end only 3 people attended the course. Two were ordained clergy and one an ordinand, all taking part with a view to perhaps running Alpha in their own parishes. Each gave positive feedback about the course.



**Feedback from Brother Martin
Pinjarra-Waroona Parish**

Our Alpha ended up being quite special in that we were all colleagues with a Christian commitment and this also was a blessing - to get to know my colleagues better, and in a setting away from the usual environment of clergy conference, Synod etc where we were all relaxed and enjoying sharing our faith . . .

Continued Overleaf

Alpha Update Continued

. . . journey with each other. So we experienced Alpha both as participants and future facilitators.

I was very comfortable with the Zoom format. I would recommend it for those in small distant centres and those with an affinity with the online and tech worlds. It may seem unusual to have the presentation on the Holy Spirit done online, but our gracious God is not constrained by physical or electronic media. Remember the example of the Centurion: "Only speak the word and my servant will be healed"!

I very much recommend the Alpha course, especially for anyone in ordained ministry or a leadership position in your congregation. It may not be your cup of tea, but do it anyway. Alpha might be the experience that allows someone to really take off in their faith and enter into a more profound relationship with our God, the most holy and undivided Trinity.



**Feedback from Carolyn Ball, Ordinand
Secret Harbour Parish**

I am currently in formation and am eager to explore my own faith and how that can be used to grow the Kingdom of God. I found Alpha on Zoom less stressful than my first Alpha experience where we had a cooked meal that I had to cater for 25 people on a few occasions. I also felt that the session was

at a more suitable time for working participants, it started earlier and finished in the scheduled time. I would recommend Alpha, particularly for working people. It could be done in small groups (2-3) meeting in a home and running the zoom meeting so you can still interact.



**Feedback by Rev Marian Prowse
Gelorup Parish**

Zoom was a good way to connect people from a distance and allow discussion on the Alpha videos, which were engaging. I liked the way the young presenters interviewed people in the street, as this gave an overview of what responses you might meet, and of how people who live in our post-Christian age are thinking. Both Nicky Gumbel and the two young presenters put the basics of Christianity in an understandable way.

I would recommend Alpha because it is a good way to reach out to others. If your congregation is tentative about sharing their faith it is something they can invite friends to, to explain to their friends what they believe, and why. It is good to offer it as either online or face to face as this can include more people, people who are at a distance or who are time-poor.

At Gelorup parish we are intending to run a 'taster' session in the hope that when people see what the presentations are like, they will want to do more or ask other friends to come. We plan to do it on a Sunday after church and follow the session with a luncheon."

Anyone can run an Alpha course and its free! For more information go to alpha.org.au