

> Sharing our Faith

Olive Way Reflection - 10th Anniversary

On a draft program for tonight I noticed this segment being described as a speech. But I would rather it be titled a reflection. A reflection about how an active Church taking a risk in God's name can have an impact both on a community, in this case Brunswick and surrounding suburbs, but also on the Church community itself. It is therefore a reflection about what is happening in the name of God and this Church.

Nothing in my long life has given me more pleasure than being able to stand here tonight and reflect with you about ten years of Olive Way. How this Congregation allowed our then Deacon, Richard Arnold, and me to go away and explore whether there was a Ministry that would open up these buildings during the week.

Some years before, the St Andrew's congregation at Sydney Road offered a drop in centre here as well as providing a space for the Asylum Seekers Welcome Centre. Twelve years ago they were joined by a larger congregation from South West Brunswick who were very outreach conscious but operating in a quiet street well away from the hustle and bustle of Sydney Road.

So after one month and having consulted the local Council and other nearby Churches we proposed a new drop in centre through which we would welcome the community. It was a one pager that said if it didn't work we would come back and say so. In today's world we might require a consultant and a long report.



Celebrating the Opening after worship, 10/6/07



2nd anniversary, loving it

A few weeks later (7th June 2010) we put a sandwich board on the footpath. It said "Olive Way a peaceful spot to talk, read, rest or reflect - all welcome". Catherine Mullen and I sat and waited on the first day open and three people came in.

Two days ago on Thursday, 45 people came in to share time with us. Last December 110 came to Christmas Dinner.

Visitors tell us how much they feel welcomed and accepted and that Olive Way has made a difference for them. We are very pleased to



be joined by some of those visitors tonight and we assure them, just in case they haven't already noticed, that at Olive Way they are accepted unconditionally. We also want them to know how much their presence has enriched the lives of workers and volunteers alike. I am reminded of a verse of a song we sing in Church - "Some days we're resurrected, we feel new life inside" We go home a bit tired but always feeling positive about something that happened that day and ready to come back next week.

There are probably 100 different reasons why our visitors seek acceptance, companionship and conversation. They are the sort of reasons many of us have had to seek help in our life. They include early deprivation; illness; loneliness; poor life choices; broken relationships; accidents; disconnection from family; unemployment, depression; lack of access to accommodation; and the list goes on. Visitors talk to us about needing to care for a sick relative; about physical abuse, and verbal abuse from neighbours. The sort of things that have at times impacted on many of us.

Except in a few cases we don't even know our visitors surnames but it doesn't matter. They come from all over the world and represent the cultural and religious diversity of Brunswick and surrounding communities. They can share something of their life journey with us or something that has bothered them that week. Sometimes we can offer practical help and other times they just appreciate a friendly ear. Increasingly they are able to have conversations with each other and sometimes we lean back and listen to the buzz as they chat. When it seems helpful we offer to spend time with them in our Church and many have attended Sunday services.



Our traditional program of refreshments on Tuesday and Thursday and a cooked lunch on Wednesday has been extended to include an Art Program in conjunction with Arts access, a writing program on Tuesday and Sydney Road Opera Company on Thursday. Piano lessons have also been much appreciated, and Church access is also appreciated by some with existing or newly acquired musical skills.

Public reflections have been offered by two visitors which tell the Olive way story better than I can. These quotes are but a précis.

Giovanni speaking at an Arts Access function at Federation Square in February said amongst other things:

" My encounter with Arts Access at Brunswick's Olive Way was fortuitous. I thought I had stepped into a pond but it was an ocean. I was part of an exciting & vibrant network of artistic people. It brings my mates out of their lonely rooms and into the community where they can find companionship and warmth. We have somehow created a multi racial, non-judgemental, mutually supportive community" and he goes on.

Chandra speaking in our Church some weeks ago talked about her involvement in writing and art groups and also her appreciation of a tall young handsome man called David and young and beautiful Abi who taught her to play the piano. She has suffered from depression. Quote: *"I find this place like a Doctor's prescription. Because of Olive Way we are enriched, we are happy, we have made new friends and moreover we have found kindness, feel welcomed and more"*



I also want to share two personal experiences from this week with you. I noticed a man come in who had not been in for some weeks. Turned out he had an infection. I told him he had been missed. As I got up he smiled and thanked me for the conversation.

Another regular visitor likes ground coffee rather than Nescafe. She had been there most of the day and I asked whether I could make her a cup of "fancy coffee" - my expression. She said yes and as I gave it to her she smiled and said it was her birthday the day before. It was though I had given her a birthday present. Leanne was there and will remember the incident.

Some talk to me and suggest what we do must be difficult or complicated. I think these two examples illustrate that simple kindness and interest in the wellbeing of another is the uncomplicated prerequisite.

To quote Padriag O Tuama - *"Nobody thinks that one small kindness is going to change a life. But it might change a moment, and in that moment something small can grow"*

If anything I have said has sparked you into thinking whether you may be a volunteer, we are always seeking more help. The unforeseen absence of both Peters last week highlighted the need for more depth in volunteer ranks. Talk to Peter if that spark has been lit in you.

A big thank you to our Ministers. Firstly Ray Gormann who strongly supported the concept at the outset and also showed his support



by being the Cook on a Wednesday and attending regularly at other times. Ian Ferguson has also given unstinting support through his attendance at Wednesday lunch and calling in at other times. Both of them have also cared for our leaders and other workers. To our former Deacon, Richard Arnold, my staunch partner in the initial stages. We sat near each other in Church the day Chandra spoke and both had tears in our eyes. It tends to happen in old age.



To our former leaders Carlynne Nunn and Fiona Bottcher. Almost every week someone that you cared for or influenced asks how you are. You are both warmly remembered. To Big Peter and not so big Peter, your contributions as leader and Chef/Toasted sandwich maker continue to be very much valued and appreciated.



To Ann Soo and Damian Coleridge who lead the Arts Access and Sydney Road Opera Company, our thanks for your creativity that allows our friends to express themselves in Art, Writing and Music.

To all the vollies - some shorter time and others like Helen and Leanne who have travelled with us for ten years a big thank you - never underestimate how you have impacted the lives of our visitors.



Look around and identify others in attendance by name. Catherine Mullen, Cathryn Goode, Abi Benham Bannon, David Stephens, Linda Fisher, Janet & Dave Watson Kruse, Kimberly Fraser.

I could go on for hours but must finish. Thank you for catching the Vision 10 years ago. The program is not perfect and ongoing refinement will be considered. But basically it achieves the goals established and later reinforced by internal and Presbytery Reviews.

There will clearly be an ongoing demand for this service and I hope we can meet the challenge. If it were possible to change DNA retrospectively Olive Way would be identified as part of the DNA of this Church along with the Asylum Seeker Welcome Centre.

I hope what has been demonstrated by Olive Way will influence our ongoing search for new Mission fields. In terms of numbers in the Congregation and potential income we are better placed than most. We can follow the example of Jesus who showed us how to care unconditionally for others and take risks in his name.

So to finish with two very appropriate words from my old mentor, John Wesley. He said - *"Go not to those who need you but those who need you most"* and *"The best of all is, God is with us"*

Thank you for coming to join our night of thanksgiving. Enjoy yourselves.



Barry Cook

Reflection offered at the Olive Way Pot Luck Cabaret - celebrating 10 years of Olive Way Ministry, 29th July 2017

Olive Way Potluck Cabaret



What an amazing and extraordinary night we had. Over 120 people gathered to celebrate 10 years of Olive Way Ministry. Tables groaned under the weight of the food we all brought to share. Ian blessed our gathering and our meal. Peter welcomed us and acknowledged the [letter of congratulations](#) sent by Peter Kahlil, MP

The program for the evening was wonderfully entertaining. Our headline act was the Sydney Rd.

Opera Company's performance of 'On the Way to Santiago'. The program included a fabulous and impromptu fashion parade with David, Rachel, Abi and Daniel, songs from Church Council, JAM committee, D&E committee, Peter Blair, Maggie Somerville, Jessica Kvanskul (with Natalie, Shawn and Alistair), Adrian Brown (with Alistair) and Rachel Beagley, David Stephens & Abi Benham Bannon; skits from the worship committee (all about socks), Mulling (Little Red Riding Hood - unforgettable) and Book Group (a Roald Dahl Poem); stories from Julie Perrin and Carlyne Nunn and an all in dance to 'Doin' the Eagle Rock' with the Pastoral Care Community Team. We laughed, listened, joined in and appreciated all that was offered.





Glenice and I catered desserts to perfection (ie no left overs). After all who can resist sticky date pudding, chocolate self-saucing pudding and apple crumble.

Between the two sets Barry offered his wonderful reflection. We sang Happy Birthday and gathered former and current leaders along with Barry and Catherine (the first two volunteers) to cut the cake. Many thanks to Sahar & Alireza Talebi for making and providing such a beautiful and delicious cake.



The pop-up Op Shop proved to a wonderful drawcard on the night raising \$487.10

and a further \$877 over the next four weeks - a total of \$1362.10. Preserves raised \$376.00 from the night of the Cabaret and the next two Sundays. Donations raised \$2997. So in celebrating the



10 years of Olive Way Ministry together we generously raised \$4,735.10 to support this vital work into the future.

Thank you to everyone who contributed - table hosts and guests, committees, groups and individuals who offered items, everyone who donated to and purchased from the Op Shop and especially Helen Burnham for her enthusiastic encouragement to all of us to donate and buy.

The organizers of the event - Glenice Cook, Jessica Kvanskul, Alistair Hunter, Peter Blair and myself - were overwhelmed and delighted by the response, by the joyfulness of the celebration and the generosity of all who came.

Saide Cameron

A day in the village of Brunswick

I have often said that life around Brunswick can often feel like a village, not that it looks like one. The thing that make a village feel 'villagey' is that people are known to one another, you pass the same people on the streets, you can get what you need locally, and so on. There is an air of familiarity about the place. And being in a olive Way gives a unique perspective to that village life. In some ways I feel like Olive Way is at the hub, not of the whole village but a certain strata, the Olive Way strata.

This became very noticeable one day after Olive Way. I usually do a top up shop on Wednesday after we've closed, and so at the end of the day I started off up to Aldi, armed with my shopping bags. Stepping out of BUC I notice Emily across the road, I can't chat but I can wave. She gives a cheerful wave back. A few steps on and I bump into Giovanni, we walk and talk for the length of our shared path before bidding each other farewell. In Aldi, I nearly walk into Christina, I tell her I had seen her daughter that day, then turn walk up the aisle and spot Frank buying some dinner. We have a long chat (as is often the case when I haven't seen him for a while) then depart. Stepping outside Aldi I spot Tas on the street and exchange pleasantries. A few steps later while waiting at the lights to cross Glenlyon Rd, Theo crosses over Sydney Rd and greets me in his warm and friendly manner. Of course, while waiting for the lights to change, and while Theo is still chatting, Warren pulls up in the van that we had been talking about earlier in the day. He waves, and we chuckle. Theo and I then continue on before I say goodbye as I reach the church and he continues down Sydney Road. In a short space I had encountered six people!



We have a unique opportunity in Olive Way to help bring out that village life. Olive way presents us with an opportunity to become known to one another, a far cry from the alienation of the busy, bustling crowds of the city. Where we are known, there is the opportunity for love and acceptance. Opportunity, because it is not a guarantee, but a possibility that requires choice on our part. It is wonderful to see the way that BUC has continuously demonstrated that choice over the past ten years. The celebration of that continual choosing at the anniversary cabaret was an amazing affirmation of the commitment, will, determination and faithfulness of the congregation to people living in tough times.

Peter Blair, Olive Way Co-ordinator