

Olive Way Pastor

There's a couple of blokes that have been coming to Olive Way since late last year. They always appear reasonably well groomed and clean, despite the fact that they are homeless and sleeping in a Park. In fact if it wasn't for their ever-present shopping trolleys full of their belongings you might not know that they were homeless. They are friendly and affable chaps, who often make light of their situation.

Since the pandemic began there has been a push from a variety of agencies, including Vincent Care, to find crisis accommodation for the homeless (they call it 'assertive outreach'). Whilst this has been good, there have been quite a few people who have fallen through the gaps. Our two homeless friends were some of those, at least initially, as they were not able to be contacted when accommodation became available. However, after one of them was provisioned with a phone from Launch Housing he was eventually placed in a motel for a week. That time frame has been expanded as the pandemic has endured, and he continues to be housed in the same hotel to this day.

It was quite amusing to see them turning up to the Salvos lunch distribution the week after they had moved into their hotel. They looked tired and a bit dishevelled. Both of them told me they were struggling to sleep in their new surrounds. They had become so accustomed to sleeping in the park that they were not accustomed to the strange new environment of their hotel rooms. The irony was not lost on our friends who both laughed at their circumstances. Even leaving their trolleys back at the hotel was a bridge too far for one of them. Despite having no need for it in his trips up to Brunswick, he couldn't bear to leave it behind at the hotel. Even after several weeks of having a room he

continues to take it everywhere he goes, it is like a security blanket for him.

These lunch time distributions are key for me in continuing to make connections with our Olive Way folk. There are only a couple of our usual Olive Way guests who don't come. These are the ones I try to ensure that either myself or one of our regular Olive Way volunteers maintains contact with. There are currently five lunch distributions at Brunswick Salvos, and I am present at three each week. It provides a little window into how people are faring in these difficult times. What little pastoral care I am able to offer is given here.

In other news...

As you may have heard, with the declining numbers of new Covid 19 infections in Victoria and with cafes and restaurants opening up, the steering committee and I began to look at how Olive Way might be able to operate in the new conditions. It was really lovely to see some of our usual volunteers (and a new one too) coming back to muck in and help me set up for a socially distanced Olive Way in the hall (see photos).

Those plans were obviously scuttled by the recent spike in infections in the Moreland area and an increasing number in Victoria. It was incredibly disappointing for me, not to mention the guests. One thing they are really craving right now is a place to sit down and be with other people in a place that is safe and warm. Our volunteers were also disappointed that they were unable to come back and get a little regularity into their weeks.

Nonetheless, I am continuing to work to get Olive Way ready. I am a little more hesitant at the moment given the increased likelihood of infections, however, I am hoping it will be ready when it is safe to do so.

In still more news...

The Olive Way area is being painted during its furlough, and it is looking amazing! A big thanks to Kirsty and Amelia for the choosing the colour scheme, and a big thanks to Laurie who is doing a fantastic job. It is bold and really bright, complimenting existing building and brickwork. I can't wait until we can move back in there! If you are passing the church please feel free to peek in and have a look. Here's a couple of pictures to whet your appetite.

