



wesley impact!

Easter 2017

Broken made new

Reflecting on
the meaning and
promise of Easter

Living with autism

A family finds
restoration with Wesley
Disability Services

Matty's kitchen rules

Supported employees
help grow Wesley
Catering

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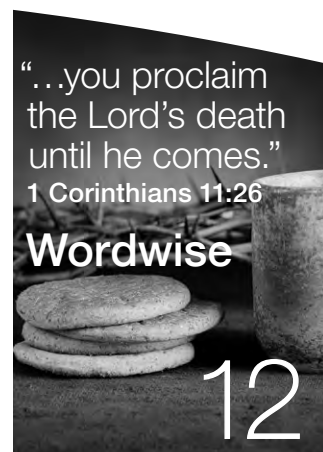
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**“For I received from the Lord what
I also passed on to you...”**

1 Corinthians 11:23



Hello

Holy Week and Easter provide us with the opportunity to take stock of our lives.

Life is full of challenges and demands but for far too many people, brokenness not wholeness marks their experience. At Wesley Mission we deal with broken lives each and every day: loneliness, isolation, mental health issues, homelessness, poverty and relationship conflict can drive people over the edge and into despair.

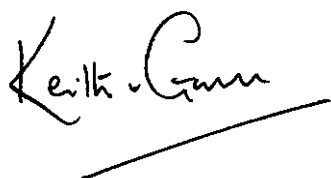
Walk around the streets of any city or town and you will find damaged goods piled on the footpath for council pick up. Anything that is broken or that is no longer needed is thrown away. We despise what is old or damaged—sadly that is too often the case with people who have been broken by life.

The message of Easter however is that through our experience of brokenness we all have the opportunity to be made new through the generous love of Jesus Christ. In this edition of *Wesley Impact!* you will read about people who have embraced this message in all aspects of their lives, making the Easter message of renewal a living hope that inspires and transforms.

In so many aspects of our Word and deed ministry, lives continue to be made new. People like 18 year old Zach Smail, who with the help of Wesley Mission is living a fulfilling life and is pursuing his passions, or a young sole parent who felt discarded by society and is now living her life-long dream of running her own business.

Grandmothers at a Wesley Mission seniors living centre are also reaching across the globe, supporting grandmothers in Africa who are raising their grandchildren after a generation of parents was ravaged by AIDS. Such an initiative echoes the Easter message of grace and acceptance.

As we engage with the Easter story and all the hope it brings, may you also gain fresh insight and understanding of what it means to be broken and made new in Jesus Christ.



Rev Keith V Garner, AM
Superintendent/CEO
Wesley Mission

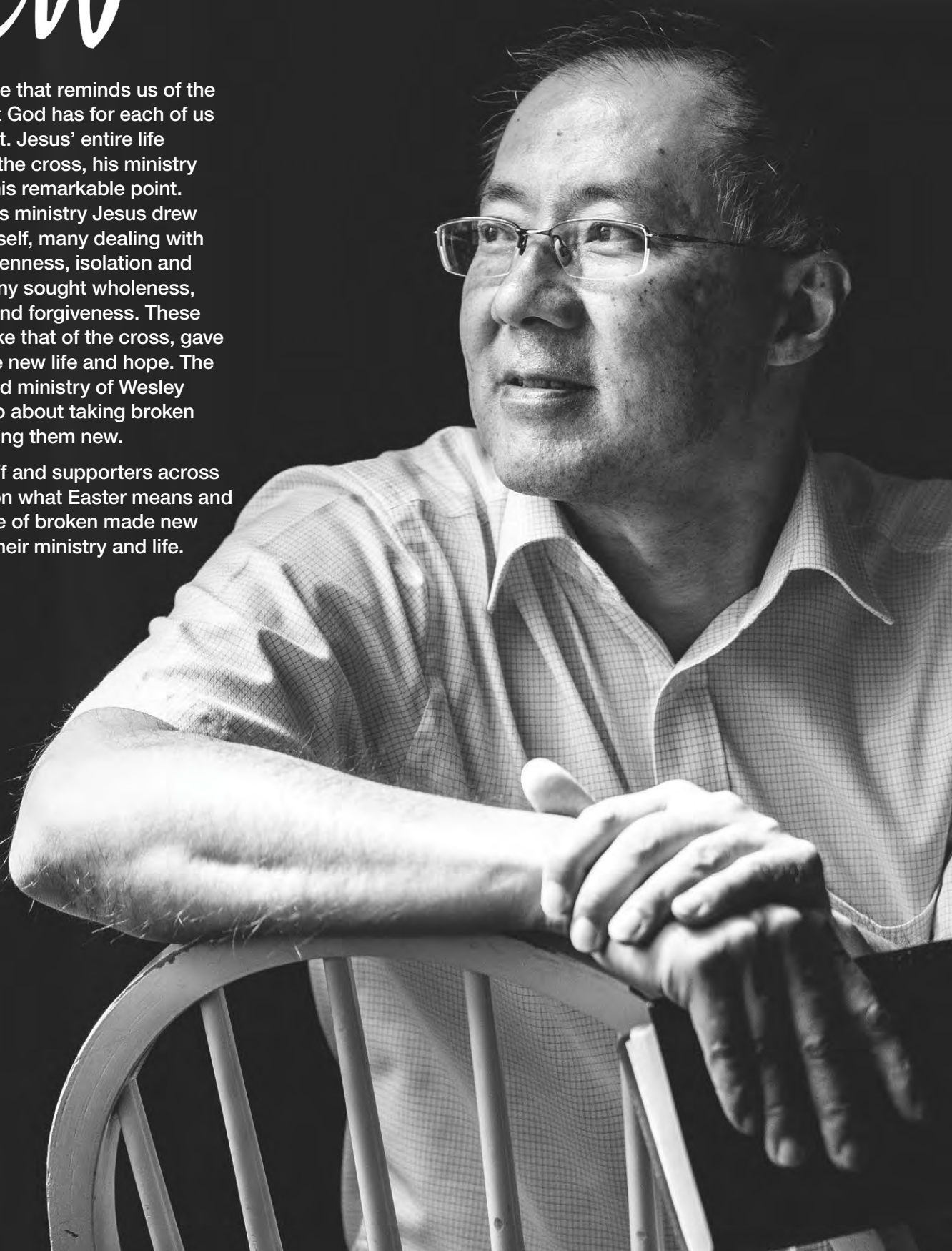
“We all have the opportunity to be made new through the generous love of Jesus Christ.”



Broken made *new*

Easter is a time that reminds us of the great love that God has for each of us in Jesus Christ. Jesus' entire life culminates in the cross, his ministry a journey to this remarkable point. Throughout his ministry Jesus drew people to himself, many dealing with issues of brokenness, isolation and exclusion. Many sought wholeness, compassion and forgiveness. These encounters, like that of the cross, gave broken people new life and hope. The Word and deed ministry of Wesley Mission is also about taking broken lives and making them new.

We asked staff and supporters across Wesley Mission what Easter means and how the theme of broken made new resonates in their ministry and life.



Michael Tang, Pastor, Wesley Edward Eagar Lodge

Michael ministers at Wesley Edward Eagar Lodge, which provides emergency accommodation for people experiencing homelessness.

What does broken made new mean to you?

I see two levels of brokenness. There's our own brokenness, which everyone has, even if they don't realise it. Our relationship with God has been broken by our disobedience and that is renewed in Jesus in his death and his resurrection.

And the second brokenness is what I see in my work, as a minister at Wesley Edward Eagar Lodge. It's brokenness in every sense that you can think of: broken relationships; broken and being destitute physically and literally; broken families.

But God continues to work amidst the brokenness, even the extreme brokenness.

For example, people might think that because someone is homeless that they're not strong. But there's a man here whose father died one week, and then his son took his own life the following week. Of course, he was absolutely affected, but he's working through that. God's getting him through that. I can't even fathom the amount of strength one needs to deal with that, while also trying to find accommodation and trying to get your life back together.

What is the promise of Easter?

Easter is the promise of life. Eternal life. Knowing that Jesus has risen from the dead—that he has power over death—that's the deal clincher for me.

Jesus clearly shows he has power over death by resurrecting. He can give life. And so that brokenness that we speak about, he's the answer to that, because in that brokenness he brings life.

What sustains you in the risen life with Jesus?

God himself sustains me. I see a lot of brokenness. But I also see things that other people don't see: I see miracles.

A man who has lived at Wesley Edward Eagar Lodge told me that he had been abused as a child, by his father. And then one day, this man saw his father at the train station. Of course, his first instincts are going to be, 'That's my dad, I'm angry, I want to punch him out because of what he's done in my life.' But this man told me, 'I just put my hands in my pockets and I walked away'.

That's God at work.

Rene Acker-Sessions Manager, Wesley Family Centre, The Hills

Rene has worked for Wesley Mission for 11 years, most recently leading community hubs that provide a range of services supporting families and communities through every stage of life.

What does broken made new mean to you?

Before working at Wesley Mission, I worked in England with very high complex needs young people who had, sadly, through their early experiences either committed very serious crimes or had been impacted by terrible abuses. People would say to me, how can you work with those kids? They're horrible, they're awful.

One particular young boy comes to mind. I remember sitting in my car driving to work, crying in prayer, saying, "God, I don't like this child. I can't stand how he makes me feel".

And the message I received was, "I'm not asking you to like him, I'm asking you to love him". I think once I could let go of that and allow myself to sit in faith, I realised I was just a vessel for God's work and I could start to see the beauty in these children.

And so I was able to reflect that love back at them, and I actually witnessed changes that were so dramatic and divine. That represents broken made new—miracles do happen and it is possible for every one of us to have a new beginning.

What is the promise of Easter?


Easter for me brings a sense of peace. We are human and living in the metropolis of Sydney where we are all hanging on to that fast runaway train, and it's very easy to get caught up in our human responses to stress.

So Easter provides me with an opportunity to reflect on things I could have done differently. But rather than hold the shame, the message of Easter tells me that there's forgiveness, there's acceptance in being human. There is the strength and courage of God's convictions and Jesus' conviction to sustain and nourish me through the hardships, despite my human frailties.

What sustains you in the risen life with Jesus?

Just being able to talk about the miracles I witness in my life, personally and professionally. Knowing that no matter how hard the challenge that is put in front of me, particularly when I want to go into control mode, rather than feeling disheartened I know that I don't walk this journey alone. I'm part of a bigger picture, and I have God sustaining that and sustaining me to always do bigger and better and greater. But the energy doesn't have to come from me, it comes from something divine.





Alex Grimaldi
Executive Manager,
Wesley Finance & Planning

**Lucy Parker, Coordinator,
Wesley Connect**

Lucy coordinates the Wesley Connect program, through which volunteers offer faith, food, friendship and connection to people who are experiencing homelessness or at risk of becoming homeless.

What does broken made new mean to you?

I accepted Jesus as my Lord and Saviour in 2011 at the age of 37, having had absolutely no Christian upbringing.



I thought, “I am certainly not worthy to go into a church let alone pray to God”. I was completely ‘broken’. My marriage had broken down and I was facing the real fear of bringing up my three children alone, without the support of my loving family in the United Kingdom, on the other side of the world.

But during that time, God revealed to me who He was and what Jesus did at the cross. It spoke of an unconditional love that I didn’t know, Abba Father—God is our Father who loves us. This was the biggest revelation to me and through reading the scriptures and following my journey in Christ, I truly knew that He did love me and wanted to love others too.

What is the promise of Easter?

Easter Sunday reminds me of my personal salvation journey.

A traumatic event happened on Easter Sunday in 2010, a year prior to my salvation. It was so bad that I blocked out days from my memory, started to have panic attacks and suffered anxiety. Having always been a very healthy young woman and mother, this was a shock and not the person I wanted to be. Then, exactly two years later, I was being water baptised on

Easter Sunday, along with my eldest son who had also accepted Jesus as his Lord and Saviour.

God spoke to me through that experience, that He truly does ‘make new the broken’ and of His unconditional love for us all.

What sustains you in the risen life with Jesus?

The power in the name of Jesus; having an authentic, real, honest relationship through prayer; and studying God’s Word.

I now work in a church ministry at Wesley Mission and am privileged to be part of witnessing His almighty power of a risen life through other people who encounter Christ and begin a new life transformed.

I can look back to when I felt there was no hope, no future. I kept trusting in Jesus and now I can see how He sustains us.

I no longer have panic attacks or anxiety. I am healthy and always full of joy despite life’s trials and tribulations. My family has Australian citizenship and yes, I am on my own with my beautiful children, but we are all so blessed that Jesus is active in our everyday lives we live in His peace and presence.

Alex helps managers across Wesley Mission plan for the future and ensure that there will always be enough money to do all that Wesley Mission wants to do.

What does broken made new mean to you?

It's why I work here, because that is what we do.

Whether it's supporting kids who are in terrible situations by finding families for them so they can get from a broken place to a new place. Or taking families that are close to breakdown and pulling them together and working out how they can then work as a family and function. Or supporting people who are on the brink of harming themselves. Or seeing people who are living with serious disabilities live a fulfilling life with our support. There are so many examples.

It's just core to our mission to 'do all the good you can'—the way we work through that is by restoring people from a broken place to a new place.

What is the promise of Easter?

The promise of Easter to me is peace. It's knowing that one day, when we die, there's Heaven and God's presence waiting for us.

And it's also knowing that there is peace now, because His presence is here. He's here. Through dying on the cross and coming back He enabled

the Holy Spirit to be here so we can access His love and His presence now.

I also think about my children. I've got two little boys, aged five and two, and I just have all these worries about cyber bullying and online gambling and the other dangers and temptations that surround them in the modern world. But that peace that I see in the promise of Easter, it gives me the confidence that if I can impart that message of what Jesus did, to my kids, then that peace will take them through those times.

What sustains you in the risen life with Jesus?

Prayer. Just time in God's presence, praying through what's gone well, what's not, and worshipping. That time in his presence massively sustains me, just to know His love and to know the peace that comes through that.

And also the spirit of Christian fellowship—both at work at Wesley Mission and outside of work—because the friendship of other people who know Jesus and talking about how Jesus has done something in their life is hugely encouraging and it sustains me.



Brendan Paul, Actor

This year, Brendan will perform the role of Jesus Christ in Wesley Mission's Good Friday drama for the third year in a row. He has been acting since his final years of high school and describes the opportunity to portray Jesus Christ as a 'dream role'.

What does broken made new mean to you?

It refers to our connection with God and the separation of that connection. The brokenness of us all was all of a sudden made new when Jesus died on the cross and Easter is the time to remember that. This message resonates so well with Easter and with what Jesus did because, in fact, He was broken himself. He was physically broken to create us new.

What is the promise of Easter?

The promise of Easter is the promise of eternal life and knowing that we get to live with Christ. It's the promise of God's love for us no matter what.

Jesus not only died, He suffered a horrible, excruciatingly painful death. And He did that for me, for all of us. The promise of Easter is the promise

that I am loved. Every single one of us is loved.

Easter is the time to remember that, because in this cynical world, in this 'me me me me' world, it is so easy to forget. Love is so easy to forget.

So I try to remember the importance of love and I take into the world around me this act of God.

What sustains you in the risen life with Jesus?

Love: knowing I am loved. God's love is ever present, day to day, through the presence of the Holy Spirit. I am sustained by knowing, and feeling His presence with me wherever I go.

I feel supported by that, and whenever I see my fellow brothers and sisters in Christ doing the wonderful things that they do, it reminds me of God's love and it strengthens me. ■



One man's rubbish...

A young man with an unusual
hobby finds restoration with
Wesley Disability Services.

Eighteen year old **Zach Smail** just might be the only teenage boy, ever, who doesn't need to be asked twice to take out the rubbish on bin night.

Each week, when the garbage truck rumbles toward the Smail's family home in NSW's Hills district, Zach is there to welcome it. He cheers as the mechanical arm grasps the bin and empties its contents. He waves to the driver as the hulking vehicle lumbers away. He hoses down the bin and returns it to the backyard. And he does it all with a smile.

Zach has been fascinated with bins, and the whole garbage collection process, since he was two years old, playing with the miniature bins his mother, Susan, used for storage. "I thought it was just a toy thing," Susan says. "And then it became a thing that (the toy bins) had to go out with our bins at the front of the house and they would end up with rubbish in them. And we worked out it wasn't toys at all, it was a serious thing."

Over the past 16 years, Zach's interest has become his passion. Today, his bedroom is filled with garbage trucks and bins of every colour, size and shape—many of them filled with even more bins. Zach even sends weekly bin night reminders to friends and relatives across the country, keeping track of their individual garbage collection schedules.

"Whatever colour it is, he remembers which one is recycling and which one is the grass bin. He does Melbourne, he does Sydney, he does Queensland. And we're very proud," Susan says.

Zach also happens to have autism—a lifelong developmental condition that affects the way he relates to his environment and how he interacts with other people. Or as Susan explains, "Autism means you're perfect and your brain works differently".

As a young child, Zach was extremely energetic and prone to violent outbursts, but doctors were reluctant, at first, to diagnose him with autism. They described him as "just (being) on the extreme end of busy," but Susan says 'busy' was an understatement: "He was an escape artist. He'd run. And he would just keep running."

The memories of this time still clearly upset Susan as she recalls the challenge of supporting him and the strain on the family.

"We all tried to keep sane. Hide in our rooms. Everyone needed to be away from each other," Susan said.

"He was into everything that wasn't locked. And he tried to get through the locks as well. He didn't stop until he went to bed. And bedtime was a really good time of the day for everybody."

Stress, exhaustion, guilt and fear were breaking Susan and her family. She could not help feeling envious of other families who did not have to deal with the same challenges.

"I still look at people walking up and down a busy road and they're not holding their little kid's hands and I'm jealous because I still hold his hand. Just for comfort for me now because I know he's safe and he won't do silly stuff."

Susan didn't know how to heal her family. She didn't know what services were available or how to access them until Zach transferred to a new school in Year 5 and the staff told her about Wesley Disability Services.

Through respite care, Zach received short term support that provided him with a change of scenery for a few days and gave Susan and her daughter a break from their daily caring roles.

"It was fabulous," she said. "I couldn't believe that there was this opportunity that we could all just have a bit of a rest from each other and regather our thoughts."

Living within a damaged world, it is the call of Wesley Mission to realise the hope in broken lives and to make them new. By doing this we serve the potential of God's promise of new life and hope.

Susan's family was drawn back together through the relief provided by Wesley Mission. Having short, regular breaks from one another helped release the tension so they could enjoy each other's company again.

"Zach might go to respite and we're all cranky with each other and by the time he comes back home we've missed each other," Susan says.

"If Zach wasn't going to Wesley Mission's respite, I think we would be a little frazzled. I think that the little things that we can deal with would become big things." ■



Zach even sends weekly bin night reminders to friends and relatives across the country.



Matty's kitchen rules

Wesley Vision Valley's Matthew 'Matty' Biddiscombe is about to trade in his well-worn gardening gloves for a pair of the disposable, latex variety as he moves out of the garden and into the kitchen.

Currently employed full-time in gardening and maintenance, Matty is getting ready to join the Wesley Catering team and kick start his dream of working in the food industry. He'll be assisting this fast-growing Wesley Mission service to prepare and deliver impeccable food—canapés, hot and cold buffets, personalised menus and more—for functions and events held by Wesley Mission and by external businesses and partners.

"Cooking is my main passion, I've always wanted to work in the kitchen," said Matty, who joined Wesley Mission almost five years ago, via our supported employment services. Starting at Wesley Mission's David Morgan Centre—a packaging facility located in Rydalmere, NSW—he has always been quick to jump at any opportunity to develop and grow his skills.

"I wanted to give gardening a go," he said. "So I joined the gardening crews. We mowed the lawns and did gardening at the different (Wesley Mission) centres, but we spent most of our time at Wesley Vision Valley."

As a local of Dural, Matty loved the time he spent working at the nearby Wesley Vision Valley—a sprawling conference, retreat and recreation centre nestled on 100 acres of magnificent bushland. So when the centre's management decided to employ someone full-time to look after gardening and maintenance, go-getting Matty was first to put his hand up for the opportunity.

Matty clearly loves the challenge of learning new skills and the staff at Wesley Vision Valley have taken notice. When a position recently came up in the kitchen, they knew he would be interested and that it would be a great opportunity for him to access the real-world experience he needs to build his career in food and hospitality.

He might not have started yet, but Matty knows his way around a kitchen.

"I do quite a lot of cooking at home. I teach myself," said Matty who enjoys cooking for his parents and three siblings.

"I look at cooking books, go on the internet and look at recipes. I make homemade pasta. It's hard though ... you have to remember you don't put any water in, just olive oil."

Dean Jones, Wesley Catering's head chef, interjects while nodding in affirmation: "Yeah you don't want it too wet or it sticks," he said.



"Cooking is my main passion, I've always wanted to work in the kitchen."

This opportunity for Matty is a result of increased demand for Wesley Catering's services. The team began as an in-house service for Wesley Mission's conference centre. As the demand increased, the organisation decided to market Wesley Catering to external clients, providing businesses and organisations a professional, high-quality service along with the opportunity to support Wesley Mission's work empowering communities and vulnerable people.

One of Wesley Catering's recent clients is the NSW Department of Justice, who has engaged Wesley Catering via National Disability Services. It was in securing this contract that opened up the opportunity to fast-track plans to place supported employees in the catering team.

"As a certified Australian Disability Enterprise (ADE), Wesley Mission currently provides employment support to around 100 employees with disabilities," said Rick Lyddiard, NSW Operations Manager for

Wesley Employment Services.

"Our peak body, National Disability Services, employ a sales person whose primary role is to lobby government agencies to procure services from ADEs. We met with this person and asked them what gaps they had in the market, what services do government departments want that are not readily available in the Sydney area."

The answer was catering. And it came as welcome news to the Wesley Employment Services team, because not only was Wesley Mission already operating a professional, competitively sustainable catering business, but Rick knew that Wesley Catering was also experiencing, and proactively seeking, intense growth.

"I had previously spoken to Rick about having supported employees join the team—that was before the department of justice contacted us—so it was already in the works," said head chef, Dean.

"If you don't know it, we'll show you and you'll learn."

"We have a kitchen here and a culture and a team who has time to welcome and train new staff. So I wanted someone who wanted to be in the kitchen, so there's actual outcomes for them. I want to give them that real-world on the job training, to build those skills that can transfer over to other employment."

Since work with the Department of Justice began, the team have secured another government client, the NSW Crime Commission, a subset of the Department of Justice.

"This is a great outcome for both Wesley Mission's supported employment services and Wesley Catering. It opens up another possible avenue for potential supported employees, particularly those who might be National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) clients looking for supported employment in hospitality," Rick said.

Dean said the external catering business and off-site work is expanding. The hope is to take on more staff through supported employment services. He is also excited to be able to provide Matty with the opportunity to work toward his dream of one day working in a restaurant kitchen.

"I want to learn how to cook more difficult things. But I'll do lots of things," Matty said in anticipation of what his new job with the catering team will be like. "Some washing up, some cleaning, food prep, serving, pretty much everything that I'm capable of."

"Oh I think you're capable of pretty much everything, absolutely," Dean assured him. "If you don't know it, you just don't know it yet. So we'll show you and you'll learn." ■



Head chef Dean Jones with Matthew 'Matty' Biddiscombe.

Given for you

with the Rev Keith V Garner, AM



1 Corinthians 11:23-26

Our Easter edition of *Wesley Impact!* comes at a time when we are deeply engaged in our Easter Mission. The week begins with Palm Sunday and concludes in the Sydney Opera House on Easter Day with the declaration that “The Lord is Risen!”

Christians of all traditions share in worship and Holy Communion, which is variously described, lies at the centre of our Christian life. This year’s Easter Mission embodies the message of *Broken made new*, and every time we celebrate God’s presence at his table this theme can be said to have been declared.

Throughout history, people have become bogged down in complex debates about the manner in which Jesus Christ is present in communion and the controversy has at times been fierce. However,

“every act of worship should be seen as an encounter with God”¹ especially the Lord’s Supper.

The connection to Easter is particularly focused on what we know as Holy Week and the culmination of all things on Easter Day. It could be said that the earliest accounts of the Lord’s Supper are not in the gospels but in Paul’s letter to the church at Corinth. As we look at 1 Corinthians 11:23-26, we note it comes from an interesting chapter which focuses upon worship issues and in particular a section which corrects some of the abuses of

communion in the early church. Whenever we share together in communion, there is a demonstration of what we believe and how God offers us a taste of his living presence.

In this passage we can discern a fourfold pattern which is replicated as we celebrate communion today. We recognise Jesus Christ took bread and wine, he gave thanks, he broke the bread and he gave this bread and wine to his disciples. In the gift of God through communion, powerfully spoken at Easter, we find enormous promise and a hope that will sustain us day by day.

I want to reflect upon this central act and, in doing so, flag those things that I trust are part of our mission outreach at Easter.

It is a place to recall

This meal that Jesus shared with his disciples was preserved and celebrated with great regularity. From the character of Paul's comments, "We can assume that the Supper was held at frequent intervals, and not merely as an annual remembrance of the Lord's death at the Passover season."² This is confirmed through the Acts of the Apostles which show that the church met to break bread as often as daily in Jerusalem. (Acts 2:46) It became part of a pattern which enabled people to be drawn into the fellowship of God's people and to understand just what Jesus Christ had done for them. We are told that "the Lord added to their number daily". (Acts 2:47)

The Christian tradition is built powerfully upon a longstanding Jewish tradition of storytelling. We cannot even begin to understand the importance of the Passover meal without realising that it involves recalling the story of a people that God brought through the most painful of experiences. As we tell the story of

the good news, we cannot avoid the reality of the suffering and message of the cross in Jesus Christ. There is a sense of sacred memory involved in Holy Communion and yet it is more than memory for, as we bring to mind what he has given for us, we recall the merits of what has happened to bring this about as if it were happening now.

It is a place to be re-made

The gracious presence of God, which we celebrate in communion and declare at Easter, is a concept that people can be helped to understand. One writer, seeking to explain the meaning of the sacraments, wrote, "God communicates to us in a way that is particularly suited to our creatureliness. As humbling as that may be, we need more than talk, more than words on a page; we need a touch, a smell, a taste – just as lovers need more than the words 'I love you' but also a kiss or an embrace. But the sacrament is more than a medium of communication; it is a medium of action, God's action."³

Many have come to the table of God broken and have left with a sense of wholeness, bruised and yet felt the comfort and strength of God, doubting and left believing. This is the power of God to make us new. In the breaking of bread and the pouring of wine, there can be the recognition that Jesus Christ is alive and ever-present amongst his people – and that he gave himself for each of us.

It is a place where we can receive

There are few words in the New Testament that are as indicative of the whole Christian life than when we read that Jesus asked us to "do this in remembrance of me" (1 Corinthians 11:24). The host of every communion

service is not a preacher or a priest, a leader or an elder, but Jesus Christ himself. The service is not just a service or an event in which we participate: it is a place where we receive the gift of God's presence and the opportunity to enter into his eternal life.

When God's people gather together it is one of the most significant actions we undertake. We will never replace the importance of the community of the church and it is a distinctive mark of the Christian character. Why on a Sunday do we not just stay at home or drive around in our cars, listening to religious music? The simple answer is that this is not enough – for we are drawn together and it is a primary impulse of our discipleship. It is the gift of wholeness in Christ spoken with clarity at the table of God that makes us a people. "We become a coherent body, drawn to each other because of our shared commitment to our Lord and to his kingdom coming."⁴

Jesus gave us communion to be a central part of our Christian lives. However, many people struggle to understand it and to give it a meaningful place. It must never become mere ritual. The Christian life can be understood in relation to a gift and nowhere is this more clearly demonstrated than when we come together to celebrate the power of Easter. May all of us be drawn once again into a closer understanding of the gift that God has given to us which we celebrate every time we take bread and receive of Christ.

Rev Keith V Garner, AM

1. Dixon Neil, *Approach with Joy*, Epworth Press, p.29
2. Marshall, I Howard, *Last Supper and Lord's Supper*, Paternoster, p.108
3. Vander Zee, J Leonard, *Christ, Baptism and the Lord's Supper*, IVP, p.192
4. Kreider, Eleanor, *Given for You: A Fresh Look at Communion*, IVP, p.213 ■



Almost 1,150 new participants attended Wesley Mission's financial literacy program in 2015-16.

ASIC report underlines Wesley Mission's contribution to better financial literacy

The Australian Securities and Investment Commission (ASIC) has affirmed the ground-breaking work and outcomes of a Wesley Mission financial literacy program in its 2015-16 National Financial Literacy Strategy Annual Highlights Report.

The Wesley Mission *In Charge of My Money* Financial Literacy Program supports vulnerable Australians including government income recipients, people from culturally and linguistically diverse communities (CALD), those in addiction centres and domestic violence clients.

Almost 1,150 new participants attended more than 300 face-to-face sessions in 2015-16, nearly double the number of participants in 2014-15.

The National Financial Literacy Strategy is led and coordinated by ASIC. The Annual Report noted that the Wesley Mission program was: "Helping people struggling to manage their money to make better-informed decisions about their spending and borrowing.

"The program has been externally evaluated, through a grant from Financial Literacy Australia. The evaluation, undertaken by Macquarie

University and RMIT, tracks the longer-term impact of the program on participants, seeing whether follow-up SMS messages reinforce motivation and improve behavioural changes.

"Findings show that the program is working well in a number of key areas. The final report was released in October 2016."

Launching the Report in Canberra the Minister for Revenue and Financial Services, Kelly O'Dwyer, said financial literacy not only helped improve living standards but ensured that the country had an effective financial services industry.

"With an ever wider range of financial products and financial services being made available to consumers, financial literacy empowers individuals so that they can master the complexities of decision-making around these products—and they can take full advantage of the benefits that flow from financial innovation," she said.

The program was expanded in 2014 thanks to further funding by Financial Literacy Australia.

During the past year the program has been delivered across 11 new areas in regional New South Wales and the Sydney metropolitan area.

"Participants consistently rate the program highly for usefulness, quality of speakers, materials, and overall value," the Report said.

The age range for participants were 11–17 (1 per cent), 18–25 (8 per cent), 26–39 (50 per cent), 40–64 (38 per cent), and over 65 (3 per cent). There were equal numbers of male and female participants.

ASIC Chairman Greg Medcraft emphasised the importance of financial literacy programs in supporting better financial outcomes for Australian consumers.

"It is encouraging to see many of the projects use a grass-roots approach to provide support where it is most needed, particularly with consumers who may be vulnerable. With this in mind, ASIC provides tailored resources for priority audiences including Indigenous Australians, women and CALD communities," Mr Medcraft said.

The Superintendent of Wesley Mission the Rev Keith Garner said Wesley Mission was delighted that the program continues to be a success.

"For decades Wesley Mission has been innovative in the areas of financial counselling and financial literacy," Mr Garner said.

"This latest report from ASIC underlines the enduring nature of our work in providing tangible and lasting outcomes for some of our most vulnerable and disadvantaged Australians.

"Our commitment to research in financial stress and financial literacy during the past decade has provided the framework and impetus for programs like the Wesley Mission *In Charge of My Money* Financial Literacy Program. ■

Frank Vickery Village residents reach out to African grandmothers

On the first and third Tuesday of every month, a sunny room at Wesley Mission's Frank Vickery Village in Sylvania is filled with laughter and chatter as a lively group of residents meet to create and sell unique gift cards in support of African communities affected by AIDS.

Known as *Grandmothers to Grandmothers*, the program is an initiative of the Canadian-based, Stephen Lewis Foundation, and the funds raised help provide practical support for African grandmothers who are raising their own grandchildren and other children in their villages who have lost their parents to AIDS.

Kerry Little, a resident at Frank Vickery Village, was already a member of *Grandmothers to Grandmothers* when she launched the group at Frank Vickery Village in 2015.

Her team is made up of 12 residents who, as grandparents and great grandparents themselves, were shocked and moved to learn about the plight of the women and children they are now helping to support.

From the beginning, Kerry had a clear vision for the group. "I went to Jodie (the centre manager at Frank Vickery Village)," she recalls, "And I said, 'I want this group to be really quite different. I want it to be a demonstration of love'."

As a result of their efforts, the group has already sold hundreds of cards. The money they've raised will help supply the women with essential items for the children in their care, such as food, health care, school fees and school uniforms, as well as supporting income-generating programs, counselling, social support, essential shelter and other necessities.

"We raised and donated \$1,000 in 2016 to grandmothers in 15 African countries, and this has been accomplished by selling the cards for just \$2.50 each," Kerry said. Many in the group had never made cards before, or participated in any kind of craft activity. "We show everyone what to do and how to do it, we're very gentle."

"The purpose of the group is certainly to raise funds for our charity. But it's also raising us. It's raising our fun level ... It's raising our self-esteem."

Huddled around a table strewn with scissors, glue, cardboard and



Kerry Little launched *Grandmothers to Grandmothers* at Frank Vickery Village in 2015.

all manner of decorations, the group moves between jovial conversation, intense concentration and impromptu sing-alongs. One member, Roy, said: "It's such a wonderful group of people, and it makes us all have a little feeling of wealth, to help other people."

The group is just one of the many activities that undergird Wesley Mission's seniors living: a clear demonstration of God's love that helps create a future, mends broken lives and provides practical hope that is so much at the heart of the Easter message.

In recognition of her tireless efforts, Kerry was nominated as the Australian Ambassador for the Stephen Lewis Foundation in 2016, traveling to Africa to join like-minded supporters from around the world. Now back in Australia, she hopes to soon see more and more *Grandmothers to Grandmothers* groups operating across the country. ■

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ParentsNext helps single mum achieve her business dream

With encouragement and support from Wesley Mission's ParentsNext program, a single mum from Sydney's South West has opened her own hairdressing salon and discovered a new sense of independence.

Wesley Mission launched the ParentsNext program in April last year to help parents with young children who are not yet in school set and achieve personal goals for education and employment.

When Mia* was unemployed and had her hands full looking after her four year old daughter, she was referred to the program by Centrelink. Without a network of support from other mothers, Mia found it difficult to identify and access activities that would help her "quite shy" daughter make new friends and learn new skills.

Coming from a Vietnamese background, Mia wanted her daughter to learn to speak Vietnamese, so the staff at ParentsNext helped her find a singing and dancing class run by the local Vietnamese Association.

Mia says ParentsNext helped her find the confidence and motivation to connect more within her community. "If they didn't push me to go to the singing lesson, we wouldn't have done anything so I think it's helped us to get out of the house. Helped me to talk to other parents and helped her to talk to other kids," she said.

As Mia continued to share her situation with ParentsNext team members, she discussed her previous training and experience in hairdressing, and indicated that she dreamt of one day opening her own salon.

With support and advice from ParentsNext, Mia began investigating what it would take to open a business



ParentsNext launched in April 2016 to help parents re-enter the workforce.

in Australia. While much of what she discovered—such as how to register her business and apply for an ABN—was new and a little complicated, Mia grew excited about the prospect of being self-employed, doing something she loved, and knowing that she would be setting a strong example for her daughter.

"She's been asking me for a long time, 'When are you going to be your own boss?'. And now she's so happy, she loves coming to the salon," Mia said.

After a lot of research, Mia located a suitable salon to lease in Bass Hill and her new business is now up and running. As a proud business owner, Mia says she is enjoying the flexibility of being self-employed.

"Now I work for myself, I can start a bit later, drop my daughter off at school, go to work, and put her in after school care the days that I need to. I thought about it for a

really long time, working for myself. And I think I just needed that little push."

ParentsNext is currently available to parents of children aged five years and younger, who have not undertaken paid work in the last six months and live in either the Bankstown or Wyong local government areas.

The program is designed to help parents successfully enter or re-enter the workforce by the time their children start school. Mia says she would recommend ParentsNext to any parent who needs a bit of extra help and encouragement to get back into the workforce.

"When I go to Wesley Mission, it doesn't seem like they're working for someone," she said. "It's kind of like I'm talking to a friend and they're trying to help me out."

*Name has been changed to protect privacy at the request of the client. ■

Foster carers shine in volunteer awards

Each year, Wesley Mission holds a Volunteer Appreciation luncheon to honour the incredible contribution that our volunteers make by devoting their time and energy to serving others.

In late 2016, the Wesley Centre was transformed for the event, into a 1920's ballroom, draped in gold and dripping with glitter, glitz and glam. The room sparkled under the lights, but the real stellar performers were Wesley Mission's dedicated volunteers whose commitment to doing all the good they can continues to make it possible for us to help increasing numbers of people in more ways.

Married couple, Brian and Kaye Taylor jointly took out the main award, Volunteer of the Year, for their work with Wesley Mission's foster care.

"It's unexpected," Brian said. "But we don't do it for awards or anything

like that. We do this because we love kids. I think all kids deserve an equal start in life and we can help give them that.

"Some of the kids come back to visit now. One young man has brought his own son to come and visit us. He told the girls we're looking after now that this is a good place to be. That's the real reward. He even got our name put on his birth certificate."

Brian and Kaye were nominated by Barbara Taylor, program manager at Wesley Dalmar, for their ongoing commitment as foster parents for the past 14 years.

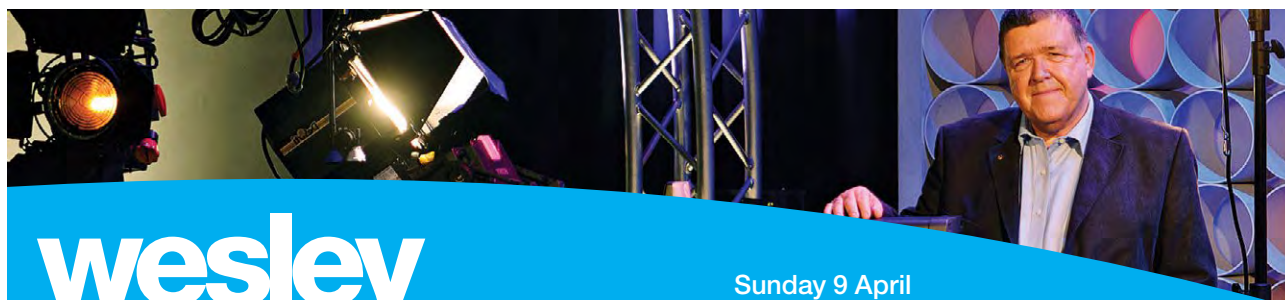
"Brian and Kaye are a selfless couple, having cared for many children of all ages and disabilities," said Mrs Taylor.

"Brian and Kaye are giving and loving carers who continually put the children in their care first. They make such a difference to the lives of



Brian and Kaye Taylor win 'Volunteer of the Year' for 14 years as foster carers.

the children in their care, whether it is permanent, short term or respite, and they are an integral part of our local carers support group, never hesitating to volunteer when help is needed in any way." ■



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Newcastle High School students learn the Aboriginal tradition of creating possum skin cloaks.

Possum cloak project helps create young healthy minds in Newcastle

In December last year, 14 girls from Newcastle High School joined together in a unique activity that brought them closer to their culture—and each other.

As part of the Wesley Young Healthy Minds program, the girls created a traditional possum skin cloak. Along the way, they also developed a renewed sense of confidence, and a deeper connection to their heritage through this culturally rich, hands-on activity.

Wesley Young Healthy Minds was launched in August 2015 to help young people facing challenges such as unsafe housing, lack of connection to community and school, and living with a parent who is experiencing mental illness or addiction.

The program has been at capacity since it began, with hundreds of young people and their families being positively impacted, including the 14 girls who participated in the possum skin cloak project.

In Aboriginal tradition, a mother would work together with her wider family to make a waterproof possum skin cloak for her infant, which became a lifetime ceremonial coat, a covering, and a burial garment. Today, there are only a few original possum cloaks remaining.

Over two days, the girls assembled at King Edward Park, a beautiful and prominent headland in Newcastle, and a significant site for the Awabakal people. To create the cloak, they first shared ideas and designs and then collaborated to stitch the cloak together. Wesley Young Healthy Minds offered practical care for the girls, serving up nutritious food throughout the two days. For these young Newcastle girls, joining together to create the cloak was an ideal opportunity to express their creativity, learn more about their heritage, and form bonds for the future. They said the program made them feel “peaceful” and “included and connected to the land”.

At the end of their time together, the girls presented their completed

cloak to the high school principal and spoke proudly and publicly of their experiences.

“I felt like I was part of something important and of great significance,” said one of the girls. Another was overwhelmed by how capable and empowered the activity made her feel, reporting to organisers that it was the first time she ever felt truly proud of herself.

The program made them feel peaceful, included and connected to the land.

The project—hailed as a great success by everyone involved—is one of many different ways Wesley Young Healthy Minds is helping young people improve resilience, develop communication skills, grow in self-confidence, and establish stronger ties with their school and wider community. It is a program that is drawing together strands of hope and making lives new: a theme which resonates not just at Easter but throughout the year. ■



Connor, 14, will represent Australia at the 2017 Futsal Championship in the United Kingdom.

A 14 year old teenager, who is supported by Wesley Mission, has realised his sporting dream by representing Australia in Futsal—the dynamic and growing five a side modified soccer game.

Connor played for his country at the annual Pearl River Delta Futsal Championships in China last August.

Wesley Mission helps 14 year old achieve sporting dream

The unique opportunity gave Connor the opportunity to compete at an international level, make new friends, travel overseas and expand his horizons for a potential future in the sport.

Futsal is an adapted form of soccer played on a smaller, typically indoor, pitch. In preparation for his first ever futsal championship, Connor spent hours working on his ball skills, training every Monday night with the Gol Brazil academy team, and continuing his preparations at home every other day.

"I was so nervous when I got on the plane, knowing I was on the way to China and representing my country," he said.

Throughout the five-day championship, Connor and his team played with skill and passion, winning both semi-finals and earning a place in the grand-final.

On the day of the final, many of Connor's Aussie teammates fell ill, experiencing soaring temperatures, upset stomachs and headaches. However, the

team stayed competitive until the final siren rang. Despite losing 4-2, the players were ecstatic to finish in second place.

Off the court, Connor enjoyed sightseeing and experiencing the unique culture of southern China including impressive ancient sites and bustling shopping centres.

During nights off, the team visited local restaurants and sampled exotic delicacies, including some delicious "fluffy" donuts.

"We ate so much Chinese food ... I didn't want to eat Chinese for months when we got home!" he said.

Thanks to the support of Wesley Mission, Connor continues to expand his horizons and fulfil his sporting dream.

His recent performance at the 2017 Club Futsal Championships in Sydney has qualified Connor for his second international championship. He looks forward to representing his country again at the next futsal championships to be held in the United Kingdom later this year. ■

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