



wesley
Easter 2015
impact!

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“For God so loved the world
 that He gave His only Son”

John 3:16



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“He has
 given us
 new birth
 into a
 living hope...”

1 Peter 1:3



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As I watch and read the daily news, I am always thankful for stories of people who are helped in the most difficult of circumstances. Such stories breathe into our weary world the knowledge that even when negativity seems to dominate, it is still possible for the light of hope to break through.

These stories could be about survivors pulled from an earthquake-stricken building, a breakthrough in the treatment of a debilitating illness or the discovery of a missing child alive and well.

Hope often comes through the sacrificial efforts of people who are prepared to give up time, money and talents, and at times put themselves at risk for others who are trapped, suffering or lost.

This hope can shine in the life of any individual. And it is a hope that has shone in the lives of Paul and Ian, whose stories of perseverance we read in this edition of *Wesley Impact!* This same hope can unite individuals, families and communities as well.

We also learn how this hope has brought Jessica through the choppy waters of life and how it fuels her enthusiasm for her work at Wesley Vision Valley.

In addition, we meet Alan, and marvel at the journey he has taken from a place of isolation and fear, to one of friendship and service.

At a time when we remember the great love of God for us

in the coming of His Son, we are also reminded that God is working in beautiful and sometimes surprising ways in the world around us.

This means that we can reach out with friendship to those in need, mindful that the power of God is always at work in our actions and that redemption, restoration and recovery can occur no matter what our circumstances.

The message of Easter is one of light and hope. May each of us truly embrace its message in our lives and in the service of others.

Keith Garner

Rev Dr Keith V Garner
Superintendent/CEO
Wesley Mission





Packed with a purpose: united in faith

While Paul Barnes and Ian Nicholls do not always see eye to eye, they are eternally united on the message of Easter—of new life and hope through the resurrection of Jesus. They have stories of longevity, and hold the love of God close to their hearts amid the challenges and complexities of life.

The two are long-term employees of Wesley Packaging Services at the David Morgan Centre in Rydalmere, yet opposites in their expressions of faith. While Paul (pictured on left) is colourful and outspoken in his approach to work and people, Ian (right) is calm, quiet and steady—a latter day Martha and Mary in the business of packing.

Ian grew up in a Christian family with parents who encouraged him to go to church. Yet the most important moment in his Christian faith came at the age of 21, when he was sitting in church listening to a sermon. “When I was a teenager, I’d had peer pressure to turn away from God so I did—I still went to church but I wasn’t taking any notice,” he reflected. “During that message that night, I realised God offered something better than anything else, and I’m now living for him all the rest of my life.” Three years later, Ian was one of thousands to confirm his faith at the Sydney Billy Graham Crusade.

Ian’s deep Christian faith is a thread that runs visibly through his life as a gentle but unmistakable driving force, according to the Rev David

van Akker, chaplain to the David Morgan Centre.

“Ian is a remarkable but very unassuming man—he gets that being a Christian is about serving others and he has his eyes open to the needs around him,” he said.

Looking at Ian’s weekly calendar, it is hard to disagree. On the two weekdays he is not working at the David Morgan Centre he is using his annual leave to serve at his local church, Riverside Baptist Church in Ermington. He helps run a food bank which sells groceries at a reduced price to families in need, he is a leader at an afternoon kids’ club for local children from low-income families, and he also looks after young children at the creche at Sunday morning services and helps deliver hampers to families in need at Christmas time.

He has been a leader in the Gerroa Beach Mission team for 36 years, and one of the activities tents has been called “Nicko’s tent” to acknowledge his faithful service.

“I want to tell people about Jesus,” Ian said. “It might be one word I say when I’m giving a kids’ talk that makes a difference to someone,

Ian’s deep Christian faith is a thread that runs visibly through his life as a gentle but unmistakable driving force, according to the Rev David van Akker, chaplain to the David Morgan Centre.

and when I help give out hampers, it’s like giving a gift from Jesus.”

Ian is one of the centre’s four assistant supervisors, whose main responsibility is counting and checking goods for quality control. He is also always on the lookout for others who might need assistance.

“I find it rewarding that I can help people who aren’t as well off as me—they come to me if they’ve got problems,” he said.

Ian’s faith has endured testing times, and the toughest of these was the death of his beloved father Ray 14 years ago. Ray had been an accountant with Wesley Dalmar, and fell ill suddenly while Ian was holidaying on a farm in Parkes. Ian rushed home to spend time with



his dad, who died three days later. “It was upsetting but I knew he was going to a better place and that he would have been worse off if he had lived,” Ian said.

For Paul, the journey has been different: the Boys’ Brigade provided a solid foundation of Christian teaching during his

“I think they enjoy working here at the centre and they’ve made good friendships—it’s more than just a place to work.”

teenage years. A summer camp at age 16 was a turning point for him. “I had been christened as a baby but that camp was where I made those vows for myself,” he said.

Now Paul cannot imagine life without God. “If I didn’t believe in Christ I’d be completely lost.” Paul is passionate in telling others about Jesus, even though he is sometimes accused of being a ‘Bible-basher’. “I don’t Bible-bash,” he said. “I just want to let people know that the big guy upstairs was sent as a baby to save our lives from eternal darkness.”

Before Paul began at Wesley Packaging Services, none of his job

opportunities had been successful. However from the time he joined Wesley Packaging Services, his experience was different: the Operations Manager at the time, Jack Wilkins, showed him true respect and genuine interest.

“When I came to the interview with

Jack, I was waiting in the foyer and Jack came along and introduced himself to my parents and he was a lovely person to me,” he said. “When I couldn’t do something, he’d say ‘OK let’s go onto the factory floor and see what you *can* do’. I thought, ‘I’m going to last a long time in this place’.”

That affirmation had its sequel in December when Paul was acknowledged at Wesley Mission’s Thanksgiving Service for his 30 years of service. As he received his certificate from New South Wales Premier, the Hon Mike Baird, he

surprised the congregation as he enfolded the Premier in a hearty and heartfelt bear hug. “I thought ‘Here comes King Kong!’—he’s such a tall man!”, he said recalling the event.

Next year it will be Ian’s turn when he will be recognised for 40 years’ service at the centre. Wesley Employment Services’ Business Manager Rick Lyddiard said many of Wesley Packaging Services’ employees have worked at the centre for more than 20 years.

“I think they enjoy working here at the centre and they’ve made good friendships—it’s more than just a place to work,” Rick said.

A highlight of Paul’s working week is the chapel service which David runs each Thursday after the weekly staff meeting. “If I didn’t go to chapel, my grip would be loosened, but chapel strengthens my ties with God,” Paul said.

It is a service which speaks into the hearts of many staff with 90 per cent attending the service and participating in singing, Bible reading and prayers.

“When I’m leading the chapel

service, if I want anyone to pray, Paul will always put his hand up," David said with a smile.

"When the sun rises on Easter Sunday, I know Jesus is alive in me and I feel strong."

Both Paul and Ian face continued challenges, especially with their health. Ian has diabetes and needs

daily treatment, and he has recently undergone operations to remove cataracts from his eyes. Paul is still having physiotherapy after a painful recovery from a shoulder operation two years ago.

Easter is a clear and helpful reminder of the faith that unites the pair and gives them hope amid the difficulties of life.

"Easter reminds me that Jesus died for me, and rose again, and that

he's living in me now," Ian said.

Paul says he draws strength and comfort from the Easter message: "When I think of Jesus dying on the cross, I feel lost and it hurts immensely, like a thousand knives going into my stomach," he said. "But when the sun rises on Easter Sunday, I know Jesus is back from the dead and powerful, and he's alive in me, and then I feel strong." **i**

The David Morgan Centre

Paul and Ian are part of a team of 108 supported employees at Wesley Packaging Services, all of whom have a disability. The majority of workers have some level of intellectual or mental disability.

When the David Morgan Centre first opened in 1973, it functioned as a sheltered workshop in which people with a disability made arts and crafts. Over the years it has evolved to become a commercial

enterprise in which employees work on packaging products from pet food to pharmaceutical goods. The centre has provided services to high-profile clients such as McDonald's, and also assembled visitor packs for the Sydney Olympics.

Employees are involved in tasks such as shrink-wrapping, gluing and inserting envelopes for mail-outs, and assembling a variety of products from window

latches to portable toilets.

"While every one of our employees has a disability, we do all we can to provide them with an environment that is just like any other work environment, which means that they have responsibility, and they can turn up to work and feel a lot of self-worth and value in themselves," said Rick Lyddiard, Business Manager at Wesley Employment Services. **i**



[Find out more about Wesley Packaging Services.](#)



wesleymission.org.au



Jessica's faith: a vision splendid

Each day Wesley Vision Valley Manager Jessica Warner leads a team that welcomes people young and old to the Aussie outdoors, and invites them to challenge themselves to achieve what might previously have seemed 'impossible'.

As she helps primary schoolchildren attach their harnesses for rock climbing, Jessica is clearly in her element. Yet she reveals there is a greater love that drives her.

The story of this love goes back to the outdoor recreation camp in Chicago, United States, where Jessica met her Welsh-born husband Anthony. Her seven years working as a leader at this camp gave her a wonderful foundation for her work at Wesley Vision Valley. "The US is the leader in the industry, especially in kids' camping," she said.

During this time a different foundation was also being built: that of Christian faith. Jessica had grown up with the Salvation Army church in New Zealand, but only began to embrace the Christian message for herself when Anthony's grandmother became ill.

"She was a strong Christian and she always wanted him to go back to church through his teenage years," Jessica said. "When she got sick, church was on Anthony's radar a bit more and he wanted to go back."

The Chicago church the couple joined quickly became a central part of their life.

"It was hard living away from home and having something in common made it easier," Jessica recalled. "In our line of work, which was emotionally draining, it was nice to have people who were supportive."

However this new faith was put to the test when a series of trials came into Jessica's life.

Three years ago, after her return to Sydney with Anthony, Jessica supported a close friend who lost her mother to cancer. Then her own mum was diagnosed with breast cancer.

"My family is a huge part of my life; we're very close and mum was diagnosed the week after I took on the role of Manager of Wesley Vision Valley, which was huge for me," she said.

At the same time, her newborn nephew was unwell. "These things made me question 'What's going on?' but I also felt like these things were happening because God knew I could handle them," she said.

Even on the days when she didn't feel she could cope, Jessica said God's presence was a great comfort. "It was quite a rough time but knowing I could lift it up to God was good," she said.

Throughout these trials, Jessica's enthusiasm for her work at Wesley Vision Valley has not waned. A typical day could see her managing finances and 80 staff members, troubleshooting where necessary, or working on strategies to achieve the many goals she has for the future of Wesley Vision Valley.

One of her biggest challenges at present is ensuring all the programs at Wesley Vision Valley operate within the current work health and safety legislation, while also providing an environment where people can take risks and step out of their comfort zone.

"We need to get people to a point where they have to rely on others and then understand that they've got a team to support them and everything is in place to keep them safe," she said.

Jessica is also looking at how to align Wesley Vision Valley's activities more closely to the Australian school curriculum.

Ultimately she envisages Wesley Vision Valley inspiring the world

"It helps to know we're doing it all to advance God's kingdom and to give young people a better go at life."

of Christian camping and outdoor recreation to be the best it can be.

Behind all this is the love that Jessica says gives every day meaning, especially now as Easter approaches.

"It helps to know we're doing it all to advance God's kingdom and to give young people a better go at life," she said.

Jessica believes that the modern Wesley Vision Valley experience is simply continuing the founding vision of the Rev Dr Sir Alan Walker.

"I feel honoured to be at a site where there is so much history—Alan Walker is around in what we do here and it is only fair that we honour him and the work and passion he had," she said. 

[Find out more about Wesley Vision Valley.](#)



Alan's awakening

As Alan Pickering sits down for lunch at the Wesley Seniors Social Hub Tuggerah, he is unmistakably the life of the party. “I’m the clown of the place”, Alan chuckles as he shares a joke with each person at the table, and gets a good amount of ribbing in return. His weeks are busy with social engagements now but it was a different scenario 18 months ago, when fear and anxiety gripped his heart and even polite conversation was off the agenda.

“I don’t want to go,” he remembers telling his daughter Christine, who had urged him to give Wesley Seniors Social Hub Tuggerah a try.

“I know what’s going to happen—as soon as I walk in the door and see a lot of people there I’ll start shaking and I’ll want to go back home,” he said.

When Alan, 77, first visited Wesley Seniors Social Hub at Tuggerah, he had just moved from his home in Kurri Kurri to be much closer to Christine, who drove him to medical appointments.

At Kurri Kurri, he had sought solace in his 300 pet birds who he says were his ‘therapy’. Yet he admits they were also his way of avoiding people. “If I was coming out of my aviary I’d look around and make sure my neighbour wasn’t in the yard before I’d come out so I didn’t have to talk to him,” he said. “I had good neighbours, but I didn’t want to talk to anyone. I just wanted to be by myself because I was frightened of people.”

Alan says the fear was like an inferiority complex that smothered his natural abilities to connect. “I

feel inadequate, and I feel inferior to people ... I didn’t really have friends—it was hard for me to make friends because I wouldn’t go out,” he explained. In particular, Alan struggled to build friendships with other men.

“I just wanted to be by myself because I was frightened of people.”

As Christine recalls, Alan had lived with this fear for most of his adult life. “When we were growing up, Dad

had mental illness, agoraphobia and depression and he never did anything with us—we didn't even know him as kids," she said.

Alan thinks back to his own childhood in Kurri Kurri, and remembers being a 'loner' who preferred horse riding to school. While his school absences affected his ability to write and spell, he nevertheless carved out a career with BHP.

"Being from Kurri Kurri, as soon as you turned 16, you went into the coalmines ... then I worked in a brickyard making high temperature bricks for the steel mills—I liked that 'cause I could work by myself."

As Alan openly shares his story, it becomes evident that behind the jovial smile lie long term difficulties that have impacted his life, including his marriage and employment experiences.

At the age of 45, Alan was forced to give up work after being diagnosed with anxiety and depression. His prime pastime became sitting at home in front of the television, having little contact even with his own family members.

Yet today, everyone that knows Alan, from his local GP to his family, says he is a different man. The catalyst, Alan says with gusto, was "Wesley Seniors Social Hub".

"My life's changed completely," Alan beams. "When I first started coming I think they hit me with one of those gramophone needles—you can't shut me up now, I just go on and on!"

Christine agrees: "Wesley Mission is amazing, and the change in my dad is amazing—he now feels comfortable, nurtured and confident, and helps out with people who aren't as able-bodied as he is. I've never really known him my whole life until now and he participates in life like he never has before."

These days Alan also plays a much more significant role in the lives of his two grandchildren, aged nine and six. He now picks them

up from school and takes them to swimming. "My daughter wouldn't even have asked me to do that before," he said.

When Alan first visited the Wesley Seniors Social Hub it was the kindness of Joan, one of the clients, that made Alan feel he could come back. Regional Manager of Wesley Seniors Living Deborah Williams says Joan, naturally a friendly person, was simply being herself.

"She is an original client at the centre and she has always been like a mother hen—she'll give feedback, and she takes on a volunteer-type role and helps ease people into the centre," she said.

Alan appreciated Joan's openness, sense of humour and genuine interest in him.

Alan now leads activities at the centre and looks out for any clients needing friendship and care. "If there's anyone who needs a bit more attention, Alan will take them under his wing and encourage them to stay with activities instead of getting upset or wanting to wander off," Deborah said.

When Alan cautiously began attending the Wesley Seniors Social Hub twice weekly, the exuberant welcomes he received on each visit gradually helped him to let go of the fear.

However it was when he missed out on a few visits due to public holidays that he began to realise the vital difference the Wesley Seniors Social Hub was making to his life and outlook. "I didn't come here and I started going down again," he said.

Now Alan attends Wesley Seniors Social Hub Monday to Friday every week. "It's the best thing I've ever done in my life!" he exclaimed with a tear in his eye.

"I like it because I like helping people," he said, indicating that his newfound confidence has realised previously unknown qualities.

The confidence he has gained from Wesley Seniors Social Hub has inspired him to join another social

Alan now leads activities at the centre and looks out for any clients needing friendship and care.

group in the area that meets on a Saturday.

The Wesley Seniors Social Hub has been operating in Tuggerah since 2005. On average, each weekday between 9 am and 4 pm, 23 older people arrive at the centre to chat, enjoy morning tea and a hot lunch, and participate in a range of activities including bowls, bocce, word games, bingo, pool or just listening to the radio. A second Wesley Seniors Social Hub was opened in Newcastle in July 2014, and another opened in Sydney's south-west, in December 2014.

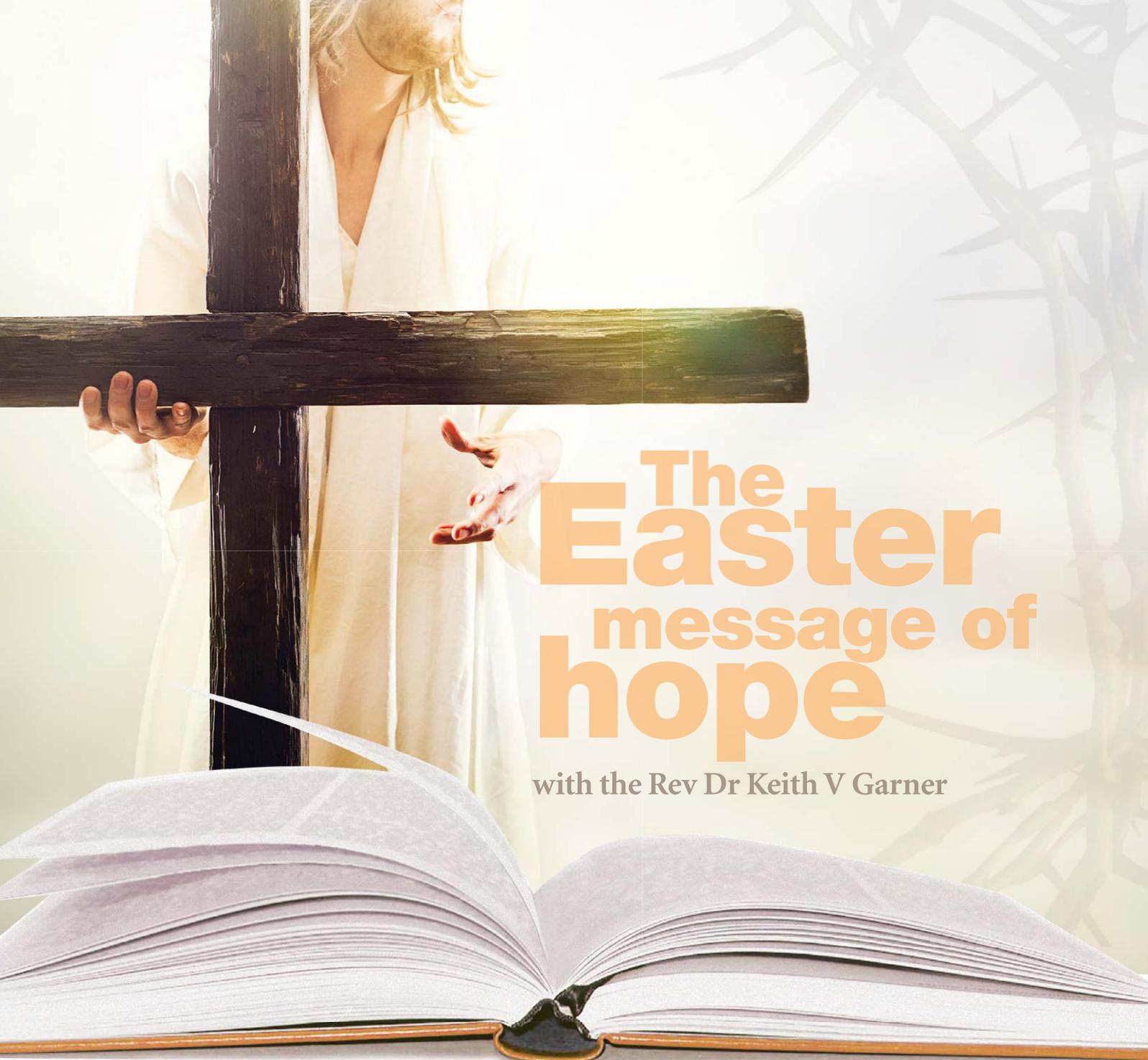
Deborah says Alan's brighter outlook is one of several to emerge from the Wesley Seniors Social Hub Tuggerah. The opportunity to meet other people and to have a purpose for the day has helped diminish feelings of depression and despair.

"That's what we're all about—forging connections and allowing people to be the best they can be, and getting them connected with the community and with other people," she said.

Christine says this new lease of life gives Alan an opportunity to enjoy some of what his anxiety and depression took away from him in the past. "He's never home these days—he's got 30 years of sitting around to make up for!" she said.

Alan still has challenges beneath the surface that he's all too aware of. "There are people I still won't go and sit with because I have an inferiority complex—you don't believe it when I'm here because I try and hide it by joking with everyone." 

[Find out more about Wesley Seniors Living Centre.](#)



The Easter message of hope

with the Rev Dr Keith V Garner

— 1 Peter 1:3-12 —

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade.” (1 Peter 1:3-4a)

Of all the words that are uttered about the account of Easter there is none as descriptive as the word ‘hope’. Easter is a time of new hope,

for it commemorates something of unique importance—and that is the resurrection of Jesus, which brings this hope to the whole world.

The nature of hope

We could not contemplate an assessment of life without touching on this great theme. Just imagine the farmer who plants seeds, hoping they will germinate, grow and yield

a huge crop. If this same farmer did not have hope, the exercise would be completely pointless.

As a Christian minister I have stood before many couples and asked them the penetrating questions relating to the vows they were about to take in their marriage ceremony. If they had no hope, what a futile occasion that would be.

With hope, both the farmer and the couple are touching on the most

important of all aspects of faith and life.

An extended thanksgiving or blessing typically follows the greetings at the opening of a Pauline letter.¹ The writer of this epistle gives us insight in the earliest verses, “Conventional letters had a shorter prayer or wish for the health of the recipient. Verse 3 states the basis for praising God: Christians have been reborn to a new hope through Jesus Christ.”²

Much of Wesley Mission’s life and witness expresses our praise to God, but also reaches out with a message of hope to people who have been damaged by life and who are looking for something more meaningful.

The obstacles to this hope

If we establish in our minds that this hope is refreshingly new, we will understand those who oppose it and present unhelpful obstacles.

Charles Cranfield is insightful, in asserting that “this radical transformation is altogether God’s doing; ... Something utterly decisive has happened, an altogether new situation has been brought about.”³

Sadly, there are hindrances to the most hopeful and best laid plans. Our experience of death and evil are powerful expressions of what can actually prevent people experiencing hope. In our Christian living, we are very conscious that hope often exists, despite the many hurdles and barriers that may be encountered along the way.

As we communicate a message of hope at Easter, we recognise that we are talking about the challenge of death, which Jesus Christ overcame. We reflect upon the fact that today we often seek to maintain our hopefulness by pushing death and evil to the back of our minds. All that this achieves is a fanciful and unreal pattern of hope. The best message a person can take from this particular process is the

The direction of our lives is fundamentally altered by the resurrection of Jesus Christ. It not only releases us from the fear of death, but it also gives us confidence to face the numerous challenges of this life.

artificial advice: ‘Cheer up, there’s nothing to worry about’.

Howard Marshall asks, “But what is hope?” He concludes, “It is the conviction that something will happen in the future. But for that conviction to exist there has to be some kind of basis.”⁴ Marshall argues strongly for the historicity of the resurrection and I do find his argument convincing, as he reminds us that the hope of future life rests on the fact that God raised Jesus Christ from the dead.

As we declare our Easter message that God’s love is ‘... for you’, we know that many people find the obstacles of suffering, cruelty and rejection are all too prevalent. Yet the Easter message of hope was brought about by the resurrection and grounded in the reality of One who was rejected and cruelly crucified. This is the basis of our hope.

The consequences of this hope

While this passage in 1 Peter refers to hope in the end time, it is quite clearly bound up in the Person of Jesus Christ. As the author reflects upon the coming of Jesus, he writes as though it is something that will happen within the lifetime of his readers. It is Marshall again who creatively points us to the nature of this hope: “It contains the ideas of rescue from danger, healing from illness, deliverance from the threat of death and entering into a state of wellbeing.”⁵

Douglas Harink reminds us that we have become children of God by God’s own act of redemption and new creation. We are delivered from bondage of many kinds and set free in the fullest sense from all that would enslave us. He writes,

“In the cross the powers that enslave are defeated. Through the bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ, God’s unconquerable power of life is unleashed upon the creature delivered from bondage to decay.”⁶

Elsewhere in the New Testament, we read that the resurrection of Christ is the chief article of our faith. It is little wonder that the Apostle Paul should write, “And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins. Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ are lost. If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are to be pitied more than all others.”⁷

The direction of our lives is fundamentally altered by the resurrection of Jesus Christ. It not only releases us from the fear of death, but it also gives us confidence to face the numerous challenges of this life.

It is the inspiration of all we do in and through Wesley Mission—and the power of the Risen Christ is with us today. This hope is offered to you and through it we extend the reach of our arms into every part of our community, where we can declare that no situation can be described as hopeless if we are willing to confess that ‘Christ is Risen!’ for ‘He is Risen indeed!’

Rev Dr Keith V Garner 

1. See 2 Corinthians 1:3 and Ephesians 1:3
2. Perkins, PHEME, *First and Second Peter, James and Jude*, John Knox Press, p.29
3. Cranfield, C E B, *The First Epistle of Peter*, SCM Press, p.21
4. Marshall, I Howard, *1 Peter*, IVP New Testament Commentary, p.36
5. Ditto. p.39
6. Harink, Douglas, *1 & 2 Peter*, SCM Theological Commentary, p.44
7. 1 Corinthians 15:17-19

Find out more about Wesley Mission News.

Premier gives thanks for Wesley Mission's rich contribution to community sector

Hundreds gathered at the Wesley Centre in December as New South Wales Premier, the Hon Mike Baird gladly presented Wesley Mission staff with service awards and praised them for their steadfast efforts.

The Premier acknowledged the contribution of the community services and aged care sector, and the dedication and hard work of Wesley Mission staff.

"Thousands of hours of work have been done that has made us richer as a community," he said. "This is a jewel that should be acknowledged. Every opportunity I get to support the work of Wesley Mission I will."

The Superintendent of Wesley Mission, the Rev Dr Keith Garner said the service was a fitting conclusion to a very busy but positive year.

"We bring together the worship of God in Christ and the service of those who are hurting," he said. "We are grateful to God for guidance through some very choppy waters."

Wesley Mission Non-Executive Director and Chair Mark Scott thanked God for the opportunity to



Wesley Packaging Services employee Terence Whitehouse is congratulated by the Rev Dr Keith Garner (left) and New South Wales Premier, the Hon Mike Baird (right) for his 40 years of service.

serve those in need, for volunteers and the service of those who were being recognised. "It's extraordinary just how much

has been achieved in 12 months and there are still new important opportunities opening up as well," he said. 



Wesley Social Support

Wesley Social Support will help you make new friends, meet people from your local area, join a group, or go on a short trip.

We have a host of activities organised. Some of these include:

- book clubs and hobby groups
- visiting markets and historical places of interest
- men's sheds
- outings to films and exhibitions
- computer groups
- picnics and sausage sizzles
- day trips
- art and craft groups
- community lunches.

Eligibility criteria apply.

To find out more call 1800 559 848 or visit wesleymission.org.au

New out of school hours care centre at Quakers Hill meets community need

A new \$400,000 out of school hours care centre staffed, managed and funded by Wesley Mission has been opened at Quakers Hill Public School. The Wesley Out of School Hours Care building will boost the capacity of children in the program to 150.

Wesley Out of School Hours Care has been operating at Quakers Hill Public School auditorium for the past 15 years, but after consultation with parents and the school, Wesley Mission decided to develop a program-specific centre to meet the increasing demand.

Each school day the program currently provides before-school care to 75 children, and offers after-school care to approximately 115 children—this has increased to 150 children from Term 1 this year. It also provides vacation care to around 50 children during school holidays.



Quakers Hill Public School Principal Bert Lo Campo (centre) with the Rev Dr Keith Garner and senior members of the Child, Family and Disability Services team at the opening of the new centre.

The centre was opened by the Superintendent of Wesley Mission, the Rev Dr Keith Garner.

“The time before or after school is a critical moment in a child’s day,” Dr Garner said. “It is important that children have suitable and appropriate care arrangements as well as opportunities to enjoy activities which promote mental and physical wellbeing.

“Children experience care which is as close to home as it can be. The

program is providing children with an environment that is fun, creative and active but also gives them a chance to wind down with friends after a long day at school.

“Wesley Mission also offers children the opportunity to learn life skills such as making their own breakfast when they arrive, how to cook tasty snacks and how to share their games, knowledge and experiences with each other. It is a place where they feel safe, secure and cared for.” [i](#)

Expansion of community visitors scheme in the Hunter and Central Coast

The Wesley Community Visitors Scheme has recently been expanded thanks to funding from the Department of Social Services for three years from 2014.

Wesley Mission has been delivering a community visitors scheme since 1993, with the current program involving more than 100 volunteers who provide one-on-one visits to residents in designated aged care facilities in the local government areas of Newcastle, Port Stephens, Cessnock, Maitland and Lake Macquarie.

The service is extending to include group visits where a volunteer will meet with a small group of residents in aged care facilities in both the Hunter and Central Coast regions.

By drawing together residents within the same aged care facilities, the group visits will provide a different benefit to one-on-one visits, helping residents develop friendships within each facility.

Also included in the expansion are home visits—volunteers visiting people in their own homes as part

of each client’s respective home care package. With the changes to the aged care sector, many people are electing to stay in their own home with the support of home and community care services.

People who receive volunteer visits through the Wesley Community Visitors Scheme are socially isolated with minimal family support.

The expansion will aim for 20 volunteers conducting group visits and 20 volunteers making home visits across the Hunter and Central Coast regions. [i](#)

NEWS 

Federal parliamentarians hear Wesley Mission's suicide prevention story

A group of more than 35 ministers, members and senators of the Australian Parliament has heard first-hand about Wesley Mission's Suicide Prevention Networks which are supporting communities in more than 40 Federal electorates across Australia.

A delegation led by Wesley Mission Superintendent, the Rev Dr Keith Garner, presented to a Parliament House meeting in December at the invitation of the former Federal Minister for Health, the Hon Peter Dutton.

By June this year around 50 networks will be operating across the nation, embracing one-third of all electorates.

"What underpins our work is the fact that you don't have to be a health professional to provide initial support", Dr Garner said. "Ordinary people can be equipped to identify signs and refer people to those who can offer help. We have a responsibility to empower community workers with the appropriate skills to handle this challenge.

"This is a whole-of-community approach. We draw on local individuals and service providers to work collaboratively. We provide hands-on support which



Yolngu tribal leader Gayili Yunupingu and the Rev Dr Keith Garner.

includes seed funding and ongoing information and training. We seek to identify communities with high rates of suicide and work with local people."

Parliamentarians also heard from Gayili Yunupingu, tribal leader of Yolngu communities of East Arnhem Land and chairperson of the Galupa Marngarr Suicide Prevention Network in Ski Beach, Northern Territory. In 2007 the Ski Beach community had one of the highest pro rata suicide rates in the world. Members of the local community knew swift and strategic action needed to be taken.

A suicide prevention group was formed and continues to be

supported by Wesley LifeForce with resources, networking and collaboration. The message to parliamentarians was that for the past two years not a single death by suicide has been recorded in the Ski Beach community.

The 30 minute presentation also included a short video which captures some of the initiatives in Wesley LifeForce Suicide Prevention networks from across Australia.

Wesley LifeForce Suicide Prevention networks have raised awareness about suicide and empowered and resourced communities in their fight against it. [i](#)



Ready to mingle?

Wesley Seniors Social Hub is a centre for seniors who want to socialise, visit new places, enjoy a meal or spend time with others from their local area.

Wesley Seniors Social Hub locations:

Fairfield	Tuggerah	Newcastle
61-63 Smart Street	3/5 Colony Close	15 Denison Street

Become a member today, call (02) 4352 3880 or visit wesleymission.org.au

Wesley Impact!: your say

In 2014 *Wesley Impact!* magazine was given a fresh new look to enable us to better communicate the Word and deed ministry of Wesley Mission.

We have been delighted to receive so many of your surveys, which have shown us what you value about our magazine and what you think about our new format. Your feedback is very important to us, so thank you to our readers for showing your strong support and interest for *Wesley Impact!* and the work of Wesley Mission.

The key findings from the survey indicate that readers are very happy with *Wesley Impact!* magazine. The results will help us as we continue to develop the magazine and show you more of how Wesley Mission witnesses to the gospel in our community. In 2014 *Wesley Impact!* was awarded best magazine layout of the year from the Australasian Religious Press Association.

— Graeme Cole, Editor



95 per cent of readers were very satisfied or satisfied with *Wesley Impact!* magazine.

“I enjoy all articles.”

92 per cent of readers say the magazine shows how Wesley Mission is making a difference.

“Good, challenging stimulus to action.”

88 per cent of readers say the magazine has appropriate coverage of Wesley Mission’s faith in action.

69 per cent of readers said the stories they enjoyed most in *Wesley Impact!* magazine were those of changed lives.

Fun day in the sun for Wesley Aunties & Uncles 40th anniversary celebration

It was a day where the sounds of summer at Wesley Vision Valley echoed with more energy than usual: children laughing, splashing water and music in the air. Hundreds of children, their parents, their ‘aunties’ and ‘uncles’, and volunteers enjoyed fun activities in the picturesque bush location for the Wesley Aunties & Uncles 40th Celebration Picnic Day.

As Wesley Aunties & Uncles has brought so much hope and inspiration to children and young people in need over the past 40 years, there was no better way to acknowledge this achievement than bringing smiles to the faces of children and families.

It was an honour to have Robert Robertson, the brother of Wesley Aunties & Uncles founder Rose White, share the event.

He joined the Rev Dr Keith Garner, Carol Garner and Michelle Parrish, Manager, Wesley Aunties & Uncles to cut a celebratory cake.

People made the most of the day with the waterslide, swimming, zumba, a music workshop, flying fox, canoeing and pony rides.

Many parents commented that they loved having dedicated time together with their children and the ‘aunties’ and ‘uncles’.

Jaycar Electronics donated 100 remote-controlled toy helicopters and the public provided bags of toys as Christmas gifts for children and young people. [i](#)



(left to right) Michelle Parrish, the Rev Dr Keith Garner, Carol Garner and Robert Robertson.

NEWS

Touching words from the Rev Noreen Towers open Wesley Fair

In a fitting sequel, the Rev Noreen Towers opened the 101st Wesley Fair last November, 50 years to the day since she began serving Sydney’s homeless through Wesley Mission.

In one day Wesley Fair raised \$22,000 for the Wesley Oasis drop-in centre in Newcastle which assists thousands of homeless people each year.

“For the first 10 years of my ministry there was no government funding for homeless services, and so I know what it is like to struggle to find money,” Miss Towers said.

The Wesley Oasis drop-in centre is at risk of closing due to cuts in government funding. Wesley Oasis is an information and referral centre for people who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless. The centre aims to provide comfort and support and is a link to additional



Among the Wesley Fair crowd the Rev Dr Keith Garner introduces the Rev Noreen Towers.

services relevant to their needs.

The Rev Dr Keith Garner spoke of how vital the centre is for Newcastle and the Hunter Region.

“For one year at least, with funds from Wesley Fair, we will underwrite their work,” he said.

Miss Towers talked about the crucial role Christian organisations had to play in the community. “The church is at its best when it does

the work no-one else will do,” she said. “The funds from today will go to serve people who are homeless, so open your pockets and enjoy the day.”

The crowd certainly did open their pockets as they swelled into the ground and lower ground floors of Wesley Mission at 220 Pitt Street, purchasing a rich array of arts, crafts, food, fashion, books and music. **i**

Gen Z is standing tall on positive message

The second annual Stand Tall—The Event held at Knox Grammar School delivered a clear message that recognised the value of high school students ‘standing tall’ against the pressure to surrender to peer driven, high-risk behaviour.

The school’s Great Hall buzzed with excitement as 1300 students and teachers heard from leading Christian singers, media personalities and sports stars, who encouraged their audience to make positive choices and reject life-threatening, dangerous behaviours.

Organisers said the event was designed to bring serious messages about life choices to

teenagers through positive and popular Christian role models.

Wesley Mission was an integral part of the event at Knox College, providing substantial support. Funds raised at Stand Tall went to Wesley Mission.

An exciting all-star skateboard demonstration on a huge half-pipe by dual world champion Eddie Elguera, world women’s 14 years champion Poppy Starr Olsen, and leading young national skaters Sam Sutton, Gracie Earl, Luke Russell and Amar Hadid was the highlight of the day.

The USA’s Eddie Elguera flew in from Palm Springs with a message about making choices and saying ‘no’ to drug and alcohol centred



Poppy Starr Olsen shows her world-class skills.

parties. Eddie tours the world with legendary skater Tony Hawk, who as a teenager was inspired and influenced by Eddie. Eddie’s message was clear: others are watching and learning from us.

Poppy Starr Olsen, from Bondi, was also a keynote speaker. **i**

Safe accommodation for homeless young people on the mid-north coast

The Wesley Homeless Support Youth program is up and running on the mid-north coast as part of the New South Wales Government's Going Home, Staying Home reform of homeless services. Under the government funding package, Wesley Mission will offer accommodation and support services to over 300 young people each year.

Each year the program will assist more than 100 homeless young people to rapidly find stable accommodation. At the same time Wesley Mission will reach out to over 200 other young people to resolve issues such as family conflict that may cause them to become homeless in the future.

Wesley Homeless Support Youth will also assist young people who cannot live at home to find secure accommodation. Young people housed through the program will



The Wesley Homeless Support Youth team.

be supported to make sure they have the necessary life skills to live independently.

Young people aged 16–17 years are currently being assisted by the program but it will soon expand to assist young people under 25.

Meena Johnson, Team Leader, Wesley Homeless Support Youth, said rising rent costs was a key cause of homelessness.

“Many young people struggling on Youth Allowance cannot afford rent and do not have a rental history,” she said. “This means they are often forced to go into unstable share accommodation.

“We will be providing safe alternatives for young people who have run out of any good options for accommodation and who are dealing with real crises.” 



Sunday March 15
Nigel Benn is a former world champion boxer from the UK who has found more value in his faith than his world title belts.

Sunday March 22
Andrew McDonough is the author of 'The Lost Sheep' book series for children, and shares his passion for children and the gospel.

Sunday March 29
David Cornford is the creative director of Wesley Mission's Easter outreach taking place on the streets of Sydney.

[For more interviews wesleymission.org.au](http://wesleymission.org.au)



wesley impact! tv

5.30 am Channel 9, 7.30 am Australian Christian Channel



For you, **HIS LOVE**

Easter Mission 2015

Palm Sunday Procession and community family event

1.30 pm Sunday 29 March 2015—Phillip Street, Circular Quay

Good Friday drama, procession and service

1.30-4 pm Friday 3 April 2015—Martin Place Amphitheatre

Easter Sunrise Service

6 am Sunday 5 April 2015—Sydney Opera House

wesleymission.org.au **Do all the good you can** because every life matters

