

wesley impact!

Christmas 2017



A smile
that speaks stronger
than words

ParentsNext
**Good news
and great joy**

Home by Christmas
**Helping to
mend hearts
and minds**



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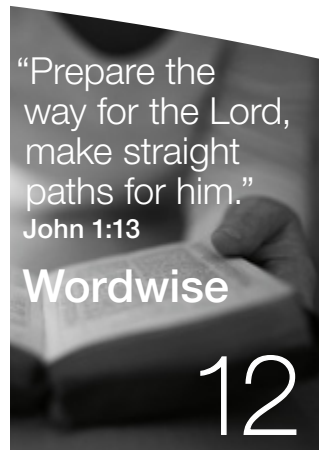
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“I baptise you with water, but he will baptise you with the Holy Spirit.”

Mark 1:8



Hello

Corrie ten Boom was a Dutch watchmaker and a Christian who helped many Jews escape the Holocaust in Europe during World War II. Corrie and others were gaoled for their actions and her life inspired a movie. Later, she authored many books and spoke of her Christian faith throughout the world.

During her time in gaol, her faith matured and deepened despite experiencing terrible treatment and seeing awful atrocities. Yet through it all she maintained a strong sense of hope and an abiding love of God and others.

She also developed a profound appreciation of Christmas and God’s gift to all people—Jesus Christ: “Who can add to Christmas?” she wrote. “The perfect motive is that God so loved the world. The perfect gift is that He gave His only Son.”

During Advent, as we busily buy gifts and search for the ‘perfect present’, we can often forget that the greatest gift we can offer others is the love that is found in Jesus Christ. This is at the centre of all we do in both Word and deed at Wesley Mission, not only at Christmas, but throughout the entire year. It is the Christmas gift that keeps giving because it is anchored in God’s unchangeable and unshakeable love. It is a love that broke into this world in the form of a small baby born in a stable and who remains pivotal to all of life as He continues to bring meaning and purpose to people today.

In this edition of **Wesley Impact!** you will read of people who have been impacted by the gift of God’s love. Paula, a sole parent, who, raising two children on her own, thought she would never be able to provide gifts for her children this Christmas until our **ParentsNext** program helped her find a job and our Wesley Vocational Institute provided training to make it a reality. It turned her life around and has given her great joy and a reason to rejoice.

Vijay, a member of one of our many congregations, has a personal faith anchored in a love of God and others. This love has given him strength during testing times, including extended unemployment, and has spurred him on to serve others in need in the heart of Sydney.

As we journey through Advent and some of us gather with family and friends on Christmas Day, let us be mindful that God’s ‘perfect gift’ is at the centre of our celebrations and that this love will be with us throughout 2018.

May this Christmas prove to be a real blessing to you and those you love.

Rev Keith V Garner, AM
Superintendent/CEO
Wesley Mission

“We can often forget that the greatest gift we can offer others is the love that is found in Jesus Christ.”



A smile that speaks stronger than words

The smile and warm greeting says it all: Vijay Singh is one of the many faces you find providing a welcome to the Wesley Mission Centre in the heart of Sydney. He is there each Sunday greeting people as they come to church or during the week as they seek food and comfort. He will be there on Christmas Day as people come to worship.

He also volunteers in a Wesley Mission program that helps school students and corporate teams understand what it's like to live on the margins and how to cope with the daily proposition of going without. Little do they know that Vijay has the lived experience of such insecurity: a man who was jettisoned from corporate life and struggled with the indignity of long-term unemployment but who still firmly believes in a God "who works all things together for the good of those who love him..." (Romans 8:28)

All that Vijay does is driven by an abiding desire to love God and others, even when life takes a turn for the worst.

As his daughter, Natasha retold the story of her father's experience of unemployment on an SBS Insight program in October, he sat next to her beaming a smile that spoke stronger than words.

Tears streamed down Natasha's face on that night. Under the studio lights, she could not contain her emotion or the love she has for her dad. She wasn't planning on crying on national television, but as emotion stirred in her voice, tears flowed.

"He's a very positive person," Natasha said. "What I've gotten from it from the

last couple of years, he's very persistent... and he keeps going. For him that is his greatest strength."

After losing his job of 28 years, Vijay was at a crossroad. Spending a large portion of his career as a mechanical engineer, Vijay struggled to keep up with the rapid changes within his industry and was unprepared when his role was made redundant.

"I'd been in a very high-profile job as general manager," Vijay said. "I had 100 employees, but the technology was changing and I was out of a job. This is the nature of the industry.

"To hear that after 28 years where I put my life and soul to the place, where I think I've sacrificed my personal time as well as my family time, to start from humble beginnings, I thought I [would] be a part of the company until I retire."

Unsure of his next step, Vijay's life suddenly took an upturn when Lucy Parker, coordinator of **Wesley Connect** asked him to volunteer his skills.

Being a member of **Wesley International Congregation** for more than 15 years, Vijay was already familiar with the wider work of Wesley Mission and relished the opportunity to be part of a team providing food, care and comfort to people who are homeless or

"All that Vijay does is driven by an abiding desire to love God and others, even when life takes a turn for the worst."

at risk of homelessness in the heart of Sydney's CBD.

Since August 2016, Vijay has been building positive and warm relationships with those who walk through Wesley Connect's doors, offering spiritual support through prayer and providing them with much-needed food.

"What **Wesley Connect** is about is we care," Vijay said. "It's not just the food or drink we provide. I think people come there because they feel comfortable with us. It's a home away from home. Yes, their home may be the street, but it is a place where they can feel comfortable. They can feel that there's a family. They can share their small joys with us."

Passionate about Wesley Mission's Word and deed ministry, Vijay sought further volunteering opportunities. He found himself co-hosting the **Wesley Homeless Food Challenge** where corporate and school groups are challenged to buy three days' worth of food with just \$10 dollars each. All food and care products purchased through the program are donated to Wesley Connect.

"I think volunteering in my opinion is a joyful experience," Vijay said. "All my life I think I wanted to make a difference to a person in any way I can. My God-given gift is to make a difference in people's lives."

During the last 16 months Vijay has offered his expertise to Wesley Mission's property and marketing teams. He also acquired clothing donations that were sold at Wesley Fair—an annual fete that raised funds this year for Wesley Connect. Vijay is currently organising donations of toys,

"All my life I think I wanted to make a difference to a person in any way I can. My God-given gift is to make a difference in people's lives..."



Vijay's family remains a source of support as does his Wesley Mission 'family'.

food and care products to give to those who walk through the doors of Wesley Connect this Christmas.

"Christmas is a time to do something special," said Vijay. "It's about that giving spirit. At the end of the day, you've made a difference to somebody's life in some small way".

For Vijay, his volunteering experience with **Wesley Disability Services** has significantly impacted his life. Vijay says his eyes were opened to the challenges faced by people with disability, after taking them on recreational field trips. While Vijay has sacrificially given so much of his time, he says volunteering at Wesley Mission has altered his perspective on life.

"While on this journey I'm taking, I think it is part of God's plan," he said. "Yes, times are hard. I've gone from having a large salary, a company car and having a corner office, and then out to nothing.

"I think I may be going through a storm in one way, but I think God wants me to work in this space so I can help people."

Faith is crucial to Vijay's life. Throughout this period of unemployment, Vijay says that his Christian community from the Wesley International Congregation has been his support. And they help to keep him smiling.

"I always believe, being a Christian, that you have to go through trials and tribulations and I think when that is over you need to say, 'I needed to go through that journey'," he said. "I was very fortunate I did not get depressed.

"Fortunately, I had my family support, which was very strong, as well as my spiritual family from church and people from my Bible study group. They all support you. And you know that they don't let you fall into that gap."

Natasha said it has been important for her father to connect with other like-minded people who support and pray for him.

Vijay's faith, his Christian community and positive attitude towards the future has urged him on throughout his search for work. Since his role was made redundant, Vijay has kept busy developing new skills, through completing a variety of courses, including a Certificate IV in Aged Care.

"He's putting all his energy and time and effort into making that a reality [a new job], whether that's through additional study or talking to managers trying to get his foot into the door," Natasha said. "He just wants to soak up as much knowledge as he can."

Vijay said **volunteering** at Wesley Mission has improved his skills and influenced his potential career choices.

"Moving forward, I would like to work full-time until I'm 70 years old and after that do some part-time work and spend more time in charity organisations, because I believe they do wonderful work," he said. "And I think it's a great feeling I get to help people."

Natasha has noticed how her father's optimism has grown and his fresh perspective.

"Now he's saying, 'I want to go into community work and I want to work with helping people'," she said. "He's done a 360 in terms of career choices. I think he gets a bit more fulfilment from helping others because he's always had a very generous heart, a very open and loving heart and I think it's best suited for him in that welfare area. Unfortunately, it took something quite bad and negative to happen to him to realise this is the direction he wants to go in."

Vijay's passion for working in the welfare sector, practically helping those most in need, also extends to supporting people spiritually. Every Sunday, Vijay stands at the doors of the Wesley Centre, greets people as they enter the building and answers questions about the church services and community service programs offered by Wesley Mission. As Projects and Ministry Officer, Vijay believes his role is vital to introducing Wesley Mission to the community.

"The first impression is very important about the church," Vijay said. "The role is to be in the front and be a welcoming person for the whole church. So anybody who walks in that church, not necessarily going to the church, I need to engage and advise, direct or give information. So I engage with them and try and highlight what Wesley Mission does."

Migrating from Fiji when he was just 18-years-old, Vijay said his passion for

helping people came from his personal journey to discover 'a place to belong'. Experiencing the struggles migrants face when adapting to a new country and culture has helped him in his ministry of hospitality and welcoming.

Wesley International Congregation Senior Pastor, Andrew Chin, said Vijay's earnest and friendly nature immediately connected with people.

"Having a warm, genuinely loving and welcoming person in Vijay—it's so real and authentic," Andrew said. "That's why Vijay's role is so important. People, no matter who they are, even if they don't know a single person, even though they feel different to other people, we don't want them to feel out of place. That's what I love about Wesley Mission—anyone can find home there and not feel out of place." ■

A rich celebration of culture

If you walk into either **Wesley International Congregation** service in Ryde or Sydney's CBD on a Sunday, it's not uncommon to find at least 40 different nationalities and almost 600 people worshipping together across both locations.

Andrew Chin, Senior Pastor Wesley International Congregation, who has been in full-time ministry with Wesley Mission since 2004 and overseeing both Wesley International Congregation services since October 2015, is passionate about creating a space where everyone is welcome, no matter their background.

"We're not trying to assimilate, we're here to celebrate," Andrew said. "I think there's a richness in the way that we learn from each other.

"It encourages a sense of multiculturalism and embracing the fact that we are different—something that brings the community together. I think it also reflects the early church and gospel. There's something about Jesus and the gospel which is meant for all people, no matter what their background is, and I think that is really precious that we have that. It means that people can find a home more easily where they can explore their faith."

Andrew said a warm welcome remains at the heart of all Wesley International Congregation's ministry—whether it's in Word or deed. He is looking forward to more opportunities where his congregation can work with other Wesley Mission congregations and Wesley Community Services to help make a difference in their communities.



"I love seeing Jesus at work in people's lives to restore them and to reconcile them to himself and to each other," he said.

Visit wesleymission.org.au/congregations for more information. ■



Good news and great joy for Paula at Christmas

It will be a different Christmas in Paula Hawkshaw's household this year. A phone call from an employer offering her a new job has proved pivotal in giving her hope and delight to her family.

It is has become a tangible message of good news and great joy.

After a lengthy—and often difficult—journey as a single mum of two, including a child with additional needs, Paula was offered the job of her dreams in aged care.

Paula's path to employment began with a visit to Wesley Mission's **ParentsNext** in Wyong, a program designed to help parents successfully enter or re-enter the workforce by the time their children start school.

The initiative gives parents access to a range of practical activities and services in the local community, from training opportunities and career advice, to parent support groups, assistance with writing resumes and even providing transport to attend an interview.

But after years of struggling as a single mum, Paula arrived at ParentsNext without much hope that anything would change.

"I was referred to ParentsNext by Centrelink, but to be honest I didn't expect to get much out of my first day at the program because of my family situation," Paula said. "Being a sole parent and having a child with special needs can make finding employment difficult."

Despite Paula's initial hesitation, Nikki Irwin from ParentsNext sat down with her and explained all the ways the program could assist her family. As Nikki shared the options available, Paula noticed a flyer offering the opportunity to train in aged care.

"I nearly jumped out of the chair when I saw the opportunity to train in aged care," Paula said.

"It's the job I've always wanted. I love being able to help people who really need it and put a smile on their face if I can."

With the help of Nikki and the team at ParentsNext, Paula was invited to attend an interview with **Wesley Vocational Institute (WVI)** just a few days later to discuss future possibilities and employment goals.

It was there she met Wesley Training Group Manager, Len Grahame, who is tasked with choosing suitable candidates for the training and offering work placements with local employers.



Working together for good: WVI's Len Grahame (left) and ParentsNext Nikki Irwin (right) with Paula at her new place of work.

Len sensed something special about Paula's passion and determination for a role in aged care.

"We had a formal interview with two managers from the facility and me. I asked Paula a few questions about what she'd like to do in the future," Len said.

After the consultation the employer selected her to undertake a **Wesley Workforce Development Training Course**.

"I could tell she was very determined to find employment and so I quickly organised for her to train on-site with a local aged care provider as she studied for her Certificate III in Individual Support," Len said.

Juggling the demands of her training, while also caring for her children, was always going to be difficult for Paula.

However, when she told her extended family about the opportunity, they offered to do everything they could to help her succeed. Paula's father even took annual leave from his own job in aged care to look after the two children while Paula studied and attended her work placement.

"I have an amazing family and everyone helped me with school drop-offs and looking after the kids," Paula said. "Having that circle of people offering their help so I could complete the course made it all happen. It was a real team effort."

Paula worked incredibly hard throughout her training. Len Grahame was not surprised she was offered a

permanent role at her workplace.

"When Paula first arrived at WVI, I could tell she felt nervous and a bit intimidated by everything that was going on," Len said. "She had no training and no qualifications. All she had was the determination to create a better life."

"Over the course of her study and work placement, she has really grown in confidence. Now she stands tall and sees a real future for herself and her children. It's been quite a remarkable transformation!"

Paula said she was thankful for the support shown by everyone—from her family through to Len, Nikki and the team at ParentsNext.

"Without my family and ParentsNext, I wouldn't be where I am now," Paula said. "I wouldn't have had this opportunity. This job will change everything for our family. Plus, it will improve my emotional and mental wellbeing and help me be a good role model for my kids." ■

ParentsNext is currently open 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 has supported 2,108 families across both locations as parents prepare to re-enter the workforce.

To find out more, visit wesleymission.org.au or call 1300 911 486.

Home by Christmas

Helping to mend hearts and minds impacted by trauma

When young men went to fight in a new war, they were often sent under the false adage ‘you will be home by Christmas.’

The sad reality is that wars always lasted years longer than expected and for most soldiers a joyous December homecoming was never a reality.

Later, service people would often return home with the scars of battle. Some of these were outwardly visible, but many were emotional, mental and spiritual wounds that took time to heal. Some were never restored and suffered ongoing and life-changing trauma.

Today, **Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)** has been given a new status in the pantheon of mental health and while it has been a recognised term since 1980, it is only in the past decade or so that the government and community have moved beyond old perceptions and the disorder has been given the mainstream attention that depression and anxiety have experienced.

In the past, people spoke of service men and women suffering ‘irritable heart’, ‘battle shock’, shell shock’, ‘war neurosis’, and ‘combat exhaustion’. The presenting symptoms of PTSD are almost timeless; even Lady Percy in Shakespeare’s *King Henry IV* can be

found lamenting the changed state of her husband, Hotspur, who had just returned from war and was showing signs of irritability, withdrawal, nightmares and depression.

In recent decades, PTSD has become a much more recognised psychological condition. **Wesley Hospitals** at Kogarah and Ashfield are one entity of only 17 hospitals across Australia which are approved providers of PTSD specialised care. Governments of all persuasions have recognised the importance and efficacy of PTSD treatment and are backing it with greater support.

A new generation of veterans from Iraq and Afghanistan—and their families—demand more. It is no longer acceptable to suffer in silence; however, PTSD can affect anyone whose life or wellbeing has been under threat or who has witnessed trauma. PTSD counselling has extended to police and emergency service workers, to sufferers of abuse, and those who have been involved in severe accidents reaching people not only in Sydney but on the NSW North and South Coasts.

It is often difficult to estimate the real numbers of people suffering PTSD as

veterans’ **mental health** issues may not be identified until months or even years after serving. The figures from the Department of Veteran Affairs (DVA) 2015 show that of the 147,318 veterans with one or more recognised mental health conditions, 31,501 had been diagnosed with PTSD; however, these numbers have been questioned by the RSL asserting that the potential number of veterans with service-related ill-health could be significantly higher.

Dr John Kearney has been at the frontline of PTSD counselling at Wesley Hospital since 1999. He is the Director of Psychological Services for **Wesley Hospital Kogarah**, and also oversees Wesley’s War Veteran Services and is an acknowledged leader in his field with strong working relationships with several leading universities. He has also consistently run PTSD programs for non-military people at Kogarah.

People suffering from PTSD usually re-experienced symptoms, such as avoidance, negative changes in thought and mood, and hyper-arousal leading to sleep disturbance, hyper-vigilance, irritability, anger and poor concentration.



“PTSD can affect anyone whose life or wellbeing has been under threat or who has witnessed trauma.”

It is usually associated with negative beliefs or expectations about oneself, others, or the world in general and negative thoughts about the cause or consequences of the traumatic events that leads to blaming yourself or others, persistent negative trauma-related emotions, such as fear, horror, anger, guilt or shame, loss of interest in activities and life in general, a feeling of detachment from others and a difficulty in expressing emotions. These can lead to low self-esteem, depression and problems holding a job or maintaining relationships.

“People suffering from trauma-related mental health issues, and PTSD in particular, tend to present with a complex array of symptoms, and indeed a fluctuating course of symptoms,” Dr Kearney said. “Therefore, it can be difficult to gain an accurate diagnosis and also difficult to treat effectively. This is one of the reasons why PTSD sometimes goes unrecognised.

“Additionally, PTSD sufferers tend to be highly avoidant of situations and their symptoms, and the most

effective treatment requires a well-trained clinician.”

Dr Kearney said treatment usually began with **counselling** rather than medication, as it is “the first solution to the problem.”

“The Australian guidelines for the treatment of PTSD recommend that sufferers should be offered trauma-focussed cognitive behavioural therapy (TF-CBT),” he said.

“Thus, TF-CBT strategies are derived from behavioural and cognitive theories. These are short-term, structured psychological interventions that aim to address the emotional, cognitive and behavioural symptoms resulting from exposure to traumatic events.”

Sufferers learn ways to confront and deal with painful memories, thoughts and images, so feelings of distress are mitigated. They also learn strategies to help them return to activities or visit places that they may have avoided since the trauma and learn to use behavioural tools to help them relax when anxiety intervenes.

Wesley Hospital at Ashfield and Kogarah has the expertise to offer TF-CBT for both individuals and groups.

Additionally, The Veterans and Veteran’s Families Counselling Service (VVCS) provides general individual, couple and family counselling to veterans and their families. VVCS helps people with war and service-related mental health conditions, such as PTSD, anxiety, depression, sleep disturbance and anger.

Dealing with traumatic experiences is painful for anyone, but it is critical to healing and to the hope of a promising future. Pain held captive in silence is pain never freed. Pain that can be expressed in a place of acceptance and grace is pain released.

“Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free” (John 8:32). ■

Call Wesley Hospital on 1300 924 522 for further information.

The Good News told by Mark

with the Rev Keith V Garner, AM

Mark 1:1-8

We have come to that time of the year which is hard to hold back—the seasons of Advent and Christmas. I have chosen not to concentrate on the familiar biblical passages, but to turn to the opening words of Mark’s Gospel. Mark was probably the first gospel writer and his good news comes to us in a distinctive style. It does not begin with a birth story of Jesus, such as we find in Matthew; it does not begin with the birth of John the Baptist, such as we find in Luke’s Gospel; nor does it begin in the marvellous heights of John’s Gospel referring to the beginning of time.

It is understandable why there might be a concentration for many on the infancy stories, as they fit well with our emphasis upon children. We at Wesley Mission are very happy to affirm such a focus, as you will read in sections of this **Wesley Impact!** magazine. However, in Mark, the good news of the gospel begins, as one writer put it, “... like a

breathless messenger who is eager to make an unexpected announcement.”¹

From the outset, Mark presents Jesus as the ‘Son of God’. People are amazed at his authority and power; he will tell the story simply and keep his narrative moving along rapidly. In his Bible Guide, David Hewitt describes Mark’s approach as like that of a fanfare, declaring “The good news starts here.”²

“The beginning of the good news about Jesus the Messiah, the Son of God ...” (Mark 1:1)

It is difficult to avoid making a comparison between the beginning of Mark’s Gospel and the opening words of our Bible in Genesis 1:1. Just as God brought creation into being, now a new work of creative power is being described. “The entire story is God’s new work in its inception and, as this verse shows, it is concentrated firmly on the person of Jesus Christ.”³

The beginning of the Gospel – v.1

Mark has begun with his fanfare, but he quickly turns to the ministry of John the Baptist. The voice of prophecy had been silent for close to 400 years, but now that silence is broken. John preached a powerful message of repentance, which may appear to be in complete contrast to a theme centred

on good news. Quite the contrary, repentance is the required attitude for us to be able to receive the good news that God is offering to us in Jesus Christ.

One of the great themes for all Christian thinking is that of the good news of grace and forgiveness. It permeates the entire Old Testament and is the striking note of the New Testament. It is important to see this opening section of Mark’s Gospel as not merely a beginning in the strictest sense, but that which is facilitating good news in all its fullness. Professor Morna Hooker, in her excellent commentary, makes this point very clearly: “In fact, Mark’s purpose is clearly to set out not just the beginning of the good news, but the good news itself.”⁴

A voice crying in the wilderness – v.3

After Mark’s splendid introduction, we may almost feel surprised to find that he quickly turns to the ministry of John the Baptist. It would be a mistake if we fail to grasp that the whole purpose of John the Baptist in the New Testament is entirely bound up in his relationship with Jesus. He is significant not only because he points forward by his words and actions, but he is also one who brings meaning and purpose into the life of the world. John’s humility is nowhere

better discerned than in John’s Gospel, where from the lips of John the Baptist we read: “*He must become greater; I must become less.*” (John 3:30).

Crowds gathered from great distances to listen to him. Some came out of curiosity, while others would realise that the message of repentance was exactly what they needed to hear. The baptism that John offered was an outward sign of an inner-change that God could bring about in people’s lives. Hewitt’s description is pertinent: “John was a man with burning convictions and an uncompromising message. He was calling people back to God.”⁵ Prophets in every age feel as though they are crying out in the wilderness. There are many reasons why Christians may feel that way today. The values that we readily embrace are established in no more than a minority of minds; therefore, we must be ready to declare what we believe to be important about Jesus Christ.

The real message is Jesus Christ – v.8

John the Baptist did an excellent job of ensuring that his profile was never higher than that of Jesus Christ. John contrasts the baptism he was offering with the person of Jesus Christ, who is

coming as One full of the Holy Spirit. Like John the Baptist before us, our role is to “*Prepare the way for the Lord*” (v.3). This may have a wide range of implications for us and will posit questions about our own relationship with God and the world in which we must live out our Christian discipleship. The words of John speak with clarity not only at one point in time, but for those of us searching for God’s truth today. John’s words inevitably strike a powerful note for his audience; however, they also speak to us in a setting that we can easily identify with, because they address an unmistakable desire for what is just out of sight.

It is true that John’s preaching caused great excitement, but Walter Wessel makes an important point: “In Mark’s account, John’s message is very brief. Mark includes nothing of John’s pointed ethical admonitions to the Pharisees and Sadducees (Matthew 3:7-10), to the crowds (Luke 3:10-11) or to the tax collectors and soldiers (Luke 3:12-14).”⁶ John values Jesus Christ so highly that he thinks of himself as not even worthy of untying his sandals for him (v.7). This was considered a very menial task and he does not feel he is able to do this for the Saviour of the world.

In this season of Advent, as we prepare ourselves for the celebration of Christmas, we must ensure that we keep our focus on the things that matter most. In this opening chapter of Mark’s Gospel, it is clear that what we have been given is the good news of Jesus Christ. This makes best sense when we understand it as a power that can bring about change in our lives and, hopefully, change in the world. In these days when our news is dominated by world conflict, refugee crises, natural disasters and divisive perspectives on many aspects of life, we remind ourselves that we can change; we can become new, loving, hopeful, joyful human beings, through the transforming power of God that we meet in Jesus Christ.

Now that’s a message of good news made for Christmas!

Rev Keith V Garner, AM

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3. English, Donald, *Christian Discipleship the Hard Way*, Methodist Publishing House, p.11
4. Hooker, Morna D, *The Gospel to St Mark, Black’s New Testament Commentary*, Hendrickson, p.35
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6. Wessel, Walter W, *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary, Volume 8*, Regency, p.620 ■

Seeds of growth take hold during 2017

Wesley Mission's more than 2,000 staff and approximately 6,500 volunteers supported more than 295,000 people during the past year, according to its **2017 Annual Report**, titled *Seeds of Growth*.

In tabling the report at Wesley Mission's recent Annual Meeting Wesley Mission CEO/ Superintendent, the Rev Dr Keith Garner, highlighted not only the growing number of people being assisted across its service areas, but also the many complex challenges facing both Wesley Mission and the Christian faith.

Suicide prevention, mental health services, assistance for young people and **disability services** had grown substantially during the past year as new programs were developed and embraced.

"**Wesley LifeForce**; it is of great joy to me that our funding was renewed and with ongoing expansion of our networks across Australia," Dr Garner told the Annual Meeting. "It combines our Christian witness with our operations. Up to the end of the last year, Wesley Mission had helped establish 72 community-based suicide networks across Australia, including 14 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander networks."

He also noted that a number of new partnerships had been established with primary health networks, including a significant network covering Western NSW Indigenous mental health funding based in Dubbo.

"During this past year, we have seen the successful transition of our disability staff and workers to the NDIS model," Dr Garner said. "**Disability Employment Services** has been rolled out in the Newcastle area."



Wesley Mission Annual Report 2017 – Seeds of growth

Wesley Mission had also established 24/7 nursing care to its residential aged care centres and transitioned three disability accommodation homes from CatholicCare to Wesley Mission. It is also now providing psychology students from Western Sydney University with formal workforce training in mental health, disability and related fields following the signing of a partnership during the year.

Other key highlights of the 2017 Annual Report include:

- **Wesley Homeless Services** supported 3,963 people experiencing homelessness
- **ParentsNext** program supported 2,108 families as parents prepared to re-enter the workforce
- Some 61 mothers and their children assisted through **Mums and Kids Matter**
- 53 young people supported through the innovative **Wesley Take Charge of Your Life** program
- **Wesley Dalmar** organised care for and supported 801 children
- **Wesley Community Housing** supported 314 tenancies
- 300 clients received their **NDIS** plans

- **Wesley School for Seniors** provided 90 different courses
- **Wesley Hospitals** provided 19,360 nights of care.

Dr Garner said there were no easy answers to solving homelessness, yet underlined the importance of remaining committed to the cause and advocating for those who have little or no voice.

He also identified a number of challenges, including an ageing population, many of whom have inadequate funds to plan for the future, the pressures upon family life, and the complex challenges of mental health, the changing nature of the Sydney CBD and the often selective outsourcing of work from governments to the non-government sector.

"We shall need to discover new ways to name the Name of Jesus Christ," he said. "We must not be lulled into the thought that, because we are engaged in very effective community services work, this alone is our Christian witness. Far too many agencies have found themselves drawn by that temptation. The Person of Jesus Christ remains at the heart of our work." ■

Darwin remembers loved ones and friends lost to suicide

Darwin hosted its inaugural **Wesley LifeForce Memorial Service** after well-attended memorial services were held in Sydney and Newcastle.

People from the northern city and the Top End, who had lost loved ones or friends to suicide, gathered next to the azure waters of Darwin Harbour to reflect upon their losses and to hear from others who had journeyed the same road.

Wesley Mission Superintendent, the Rev Keith Garner, who delivered the keynote address on the day, said recovery or healing from a loss by suicide can be an extremely difficult journey.

"The process of mending a broken heart does not take a week, a month or a year, but a lifetime," Mr Garner said.

"The road to healing is not only long, but can be bumpy with many obstacles in the way; however, by drawing upon inner resources and by being in touch with our feelings, we can find an appropriate attitude to the past, the present and the future. The Wesley LifeForce Memorial Service is an opportunity to provide comfort to those bereaved by suicide to help reduce the stigma associated with suicide

and to honour the memory of their loved ones. The message to the people of the Top End is that you are not alone in your grief."

The service heard from Vanessa Lowe who lost her 16-year-old son Taylor Thomas Luck by suicide in 2014. She turned her grief into something positive, founding the Come Walk With Me event to raise awareness about the impact of suicide.

Mr Garner also interviewed Kerrie Keepa who lost her son Christopher by suicide in September 2014. She also lost one brother, two sisters and a nephew to suicide. Kerrie is passionate about suicide awareness and prevention, founding the 'SOS Fast' (Survivors of Suicide Fighting Against Suicide Toll).

Reflective songs and performances by Rev Basil Schild and Adam Scriven provided a fitting ambience. Those attending the service had the opportunity to cast a bright sunflower into Darwin Harbour in memory of their loved one or friend.

Other individuals and families left messages of love and remembrance on the **Wesley LifeForce Memorial Wall**. Counsellors offered support.

The service was led by the Rev Steve Orme, drawing together participants and representatives from the Uniting Church in Australia Northern Synod, Aboriginal Resource and Development Services (ARDS), and Anglicare NT.

The memorial service followed a three-day **Wesley LifeForce Networks** conference in Darwin which attracted network representatives from throughout Australia who shared and discussed strategies on community-based responses to prevention and early intervention. ■



Darwin Harbour, site of the city's first memorial service.

Christmas services

Please join us as we celebrate the birth of Jesus and the real meaning of the season

Christmas Eve – Sunday 24 December

Multiple locations and languages – see wesleymission.org.au for details

Christmas Day – Monday 25 December 10 am

Wesley Theatre, 220 Pitt Street, Sydney
A combined service conducted in English, followed by a simple morning tea

wesleymission.org.au

Encouraging results from world-first research trial at Wesley Hospital

A trial conducted on patients at **Wesley Hospital Kogarah** suggests Ketamine is effective as an antidepressant when delivered to elderly patients in repeated intravenous doses.

Researchers from the University of NSW and Black Dog have completed the world's first randomised control trial (RCT) assessing the efficacy and safety of Ketamine as a treatment for depression in elderly patients at the hospital in Southern Sydney.

The results, published in the American Journal of Geriatric Psychiatry, provide preliminary evidence suggesting Ketamine's effectiveness as an antidepressant when delivered in repeated intravenous doses.

Led by a team of researchers from UNSW Sydney and Black Dog Institute, the trial tested different doses of Ketamine among 16 older-age participants (aged over 60 years) who had treatment-resistant depression administered at Wesley Hospital.

"These findings take us a big step forward as we begin to fully understand the potential and limitations of Ketamine's antidepressant qualities," said lead author UNSW Professor Colleen Loo, the Medical Director of ECT at Wesley Hospital Kogarah.

"These results are a promising early piece of the puzzle, but the risks of Ketamine use are still not wholly understood."

"Not only was Ketamine well-tolerated by participants, with none experiencing severe or problematic side effects, but giving the treatment by a simple subcutaneous injection (a small injection under the skin) was also shown to be an acceptable method for administering the drug in a safe and effective way," Professor Loo said.

Participants received increasing doses of Ketamine over a period of five weeks with doses optimised for each individual participant using a new dose titration approach developed by Professor Loo's Sydney research team and collaborators.

As part of the double-blind, placebo-controlled trial, an active control treatment, which causes sedation similar to Ketamine, was used to substitute for one of the treatment sessions. Researchers monitored for mood and other side effects after each treatment session.

Following the RCT, participants also received 12 Ketamine treatments in an open-label phase to investigate the effectiveness of multiple doses of Ketamine.

By the six-month follow-up, 43 per cent of participants (seven of 14) who completed the RCT had entered remission with five remitting at amounts below the commonly-used dose of 0.5 mg/kg. Repeated treatments also resulted in a higher likelihood of remission or a longer time to relapse with an overall response and remission rate of 68.8 per cent for the patients receiving Ketamine treatment.

"Elderly patients with severe depression face additional barriers



Dr Colleen Loo: promising results from research at Wesley Hospital.

when seeking treatment for the condition. Many medications may cause more side effects or have lower efficacy as the brain ages," said co-author Dr Duncan George from UNSW.

Dr Duncan said the results indicated a dose titration method may be particularly useful for older patients, as the best dose was selected for each individual person to maximise Ketamine's benefits while minimising its adverse side effects.

"These results are a promising early piece of the puzzle, but the risks of Ketamine use are still not wholly understood. Future studies with greater sample sizes are needed to formally assess Ketamine's side effects, such as its impact on liver function," Professor Loo said.

The study was a collaboration between UNSW, Black Dog Institute, Royal North Shore Hospital, Wesley Hospital Kogarah, the Dementia Collaborative Research Centre and the University of Otago. ■

World tuning in to new and inspiring Wesley Mission radio program

A new and inspiring Christian radio program is hitting the airwaves across Australia and the globe.

Wesley Impact! radio is a fresh and encouraging program produced by Wesley Mission Sydney featuring music, a Bible reading and a heartfelt and inspiring gospel message from Wesley Mission Superintendent, the Rev Keith Garner.

Mr Garner's message follows the lectionary readings calendar and draws on examples of the comprehensive and significant Word and deed work of Wesley Mission.

The radio program is broadcast on the East Coast of Australia on 94.9 Rhema FM Central Coast at 6 am Sunday, 99.9 Rhema FM Port Macquarie at 8 am Sunday and 91.9 1 Way FM Canberra at 9 am Sunday.

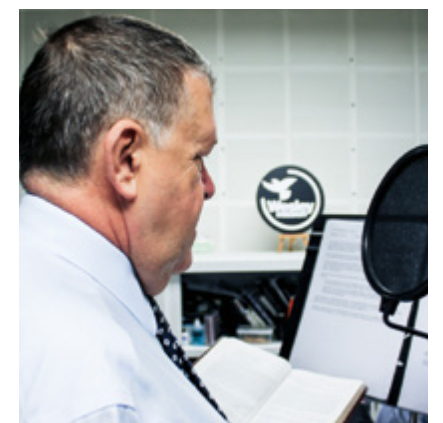
It also airs at 8.10 am Sundays on United Christian Broadcasters UCB 2 on the "It's Sunday with Abi Gregory" show. People can listen on UCB and Australian radio stations.

United Kingdom listeners can listen via national DAB, by downloading UCB Player for iOS/Android or online at **ucb.co.uk/player**

International listeners can only listen via UCB UK website at **ucb.co.uk/player**. There is a 28-day catch-up available on both UCB Player app and online.

The program is also uploaded onto the Wesley Mission website and can be listened to via Soundcloud every Sunday morning at the above address.

UCB approached Wesley Mission requesting a radio program hosted



by Mr Garner and suitable for a music format station. David Taviner, Head of Radio, UCB said the short ten-minute magazine-style program perfectly suits one of its two national Christian radio stations.

"The blend of music and a down-to-earth, practical Bible-based message is the ideal start to Sunday for Christian listeners," Mr Taviner said. ■

Get inspired for mission this Christmas

In John Wesley – The man and his mission, Keith Garner shares powerful insights from one of the world's most influential Christian leaders. You'll discover:

- John Wesley's humble beginnings
- His pathway to becoming a world-changing leader
- How his legacy can inspire for your mission.

Order for just \$19.95 and we'll include a FREE Wesley Impact DVD. Choose from:

- Faith and Leadership
- Faith and Sport
- Faith and Entertainment.

Give the gift of inspiration this Christmas! Order now by calling (02) 92635326 or email impacttv@wesleymission.org.au



**wesley
impact! tv**

Spend your Christmas with us

Tune into Channel Nine 5:30am on Monday 25th December 17, to watch the Wesley Samoan Congregation choir perform in a special Wesley Impact! TV Christmas episode

High flying experience of a lifetime makes an impact for life



Thumbs up for a cause: AMP Zip Line supporting Wesley Take Charge of Your Life.

It was the experience of a lifetime that will empower young people for life. More than \$135,000 has been raised by a group of high flyers who skittled the skies above Sydney in aid of Wesley Mission's **Take Charge of Your Life** program and other vital services supporting young people.

On a bleak and wet day, the Wesley Mission supporters took a leap of faith from one of the city's tallest buildings—the AMP Centre—to travel at up to 40 km per hour along a zip line to its sister building 20 storeys below. They joined around 160 participants, who were raising \$1 million for a number of charities as part of the AMP Foundation's 25th anniversary.

After the participants sped down the **Big Zipper line** and arrived on the roof of the AMP building, they eagerly shared the excitement of the 125-metre burst.

Stephanie Tesoriero, said she wanted to return the support she had received at **Wesley Hospital**

when dealing with an eating disorder: "I'm petrified of heights and wanted to conquer my fear," Steph said. "I'd only do this for Wesley Mission! They have given me so much and I just really wanted to give back."

One of her anonymous donors was praiseworthy on social media: "Steph, you are an amazing and inspirational young lady. It took a lot of guts to jump off the 47th floor of a skyscraper, but you did it. You should be so proud of yourself. I am in awe of you!"

Tash who has been supported in Wesley Mission's Take Charge of Your Life program had been in foster care since she was six months old. Wesley Take Charge of Your Life has helped her transition from foster care to independent living by providing her with accommodation and support as she studied for a career in disability services at TAFE.

High above the city amid the mist and gloom, her spirit was bright: "I did this for Wesley Mission, because they've helped me out more than anyone has helped me out before," Tash said.

Even Hollywood actor, Hugh Jackman, threw his support behind his old friend, Richard Duncan, during his Big Zipper fundraising venture. Jackman encouraged his worldwide following to support Richard who is Wesley Mission's Volunteering Manager.

Wesley Mission CEO, the Rev Keith Garner, said he was delighted by the breadth and diversity of support for the event and Wesley Mission. "It takes courage to step out into the unknown," he said. "It is the same challenging experience for the many

people who Wesley Mission cares for and supports each day."

While some participants were speechless after the descent, Wesley Mission supporters were clear about their intent and acclaim:

Tamara Wikaruk: "I researched all the different charities and chose Wesley Mission, because I loved that they focused on a lot of different things, especially youth as I have three kids myself."

Dominique Clapoudis: "I love what Wesley Mission do for the community. It is so easy to forget in your day-to-day life what is really going on outside."

Jackie Chung: "I did the Homeless Food Challenge with Wesley Mission and it was such an eye-opener for me. It was mind-blowing to experience what it is like to live on so little. I am passionate about what Wesley Mission does supporting those who are not in the best place."

Darragh Monaghan: "That first step was terrifying! It's great fun and going to a great cause, I am delighted to partner with them."

Ernest, AMP: "I read through all the charity partner descriptions and as soon as I read about the Wesley Take Charge of Your Life Program I knew I had to pick Wesley Mission. I really wanted to raise money to help support foster kids get back on their feet."

Natalie, Lifeline Sydney & Sutherland telephone crisis supporter: "I chose to do the zip line for Wesley Mission as I have been a Lifeline volunteer for three years and I know how valuable the work is that Wesley Mission does." ■

Wesley gambling counselling goes online in Hunter communities

Some families and individuals struggling with problem gambling often have to deal with the tyranny of distance in securing the vital advice and support needed to get them out of a financial and emotional hole.

That's why Wesley Mission has introduced a new online **gambling counselling** service for people in the Port Stephens and Great Lakes areas. The new service is taking advantage of web camera technology to reach people who have web access but cannot, or find it difficult, to travel to a counselling session in Newcastle.

It will add to a service which provides more than 600 gambling counselling sessions to people in Newcastle and the Hunter each year.

Wesley Mission gambling counsellor, Martina Magnery, said web counselling was easily accessible and functional.

"In our experience, online counselling overcomes barriers that can prevent others from seeking support," Martina said. "People in the Great Lakes and Port Stephens areas have to drive up to one hour or more to attend a counselling session in

Newcastle. Some people, who may have physical disabilities, can find it hard to leave home. Other people who are struggling financially cannot afford the cost of commuting. Web counselling opens up a range of opportunities.

"Young people also find online counselling more comfortable and effective."

Martina said online counselling was convenient for both the counsellor and the client.

"A client and counsellor can correspond or chat at a range of different times," Martina said. "Too often, counsellors and clients are juggling appointment times. Online counselling provides a greater range of appointment times across a larger geographical area.

"Some people with social phobias, agoraphobias or anxiety disorders may find web counselling a far more pleasant experience. It also overcomes some of the perceived social stigma associated with attending a counselling centre.

"Other people are more open to communicate online from their own home.

"Wesley Mission is delighted that it can provide this new and ground-breaking service to people who are facing devastating circumstances. An estimated 10 other people can be negatively affected by one person's gambling problem—not only partners and family, but also workmates and friends who may also need support."

It is expected that 250 clients will embrace the news service during the next 12 months. To book an online gambling counselling session phone (02) 4915 3688 or 1300 827 638. ■




Become a foster carer for children and adolescents from short overnight stays to one weekend monthly, several weeks up to 12 months, or more.

How much support can you offer?

To foster the future with Wesley Dalmar, call 1300 325 627

wesleymission.org.au



A black and white photograph of a young child with dark hair, wearing a striped long-sleeved shirt and dark pants. The child is holding a small, worn teddy bear and looking directly at the camera with a serious expression. The background is a cluttered room with various items on shelves and a bed with a dark blanket in the foreground.

No child
should have
to live in a
tin shed

Your donation can help **children**
who are homeless this Christmas

wesleymission.org.au/donate
1800 021 821

