

Connect

A newsletter for supporters of CatholicCare

Building connections, Growing together

- Breaking the cycle of disadvantage - Winter reflection -



From the CEO

"You cannot have special without ordinary."

As winter draws in and the weather gets colder, it can be hard to find the lightness, freedom and pleasure that comes so easily during the summer months. We seek comfort, both physically and mentally, from our surroundings and those we surround ourselves with. We may even find ourselves reflecting on the year so far - are the goals we set and the intentions we had in January still enriching our lives and serving those around us? Have our efforts been of benefit to our lives and to others? Have you celebrated your hard work and the results you have achieved so far?

As I reflect on my first six months at CatholicCare, I can't believe how quickly the year has flown. I have spent this time immersing myself in the work that we do, meeting our staff and understanding the needs of the community we serve. Our staff have such passion for their work and the people that come across their paths. I have heard many stories of triumph over adversity and know that there is great work being done.

In Denmark they have the word 'hygge' (pronounced hue-guh) which, in essence, describes a sense of cosiness through everyday activities that bring a feeling of contentment or wellbeing. To me, I find that this feeling comes from appreciating the everyday moments and creating an environment where we don't take the ordinary for granted. The moments we spend with those we love and those we admire, where we are focused on being present, bring a sense of wellbeing and happiness.

All too often, the pressures that we face in society put stress on families and relationships. Through our work we see many families buckle under the strain. As I have visited our programs I have been struck by the enormous pressures faced by individuals and families who seek our assistance. Providing a loving and secure life for their family is the main priority for so many of the people we meet. I am also struck by the huge commitment of our staff and volunteers and their endeavours to provide a human response, with practical and realistic options, as part of a compassionate and professional service. I am very proud of the many years of experience contributing to CatholicCare's unique approach



to working with families including the importance of ongoing connections. In this edition of Connect we explore how CatholicCare programs and services are a place for refuge and warmth; where the bonds of families and communities are strengthened to help cope with the pressures of everyday life - and there is a great article that provides more ideas on keeping you and your loved ones connected.

Just as winter is nature's opportunity to build reserves and gain energy for the creativity and growth that the light of spring brings, I am looking forward to spending time with the team at CatholicCare building energy for growth to come. There will be a lot happening over the next 12 months that I look forward to sharing with you as the year progresses.

As always, I give thanks to you, for your support and your actions, to reach out to those who need affirming of their place and their value in this world. I hope you will pause and reflect on the year that has been so far, and celebrate the ordinary, as without it we would not understand the significance of those times we see as extraordinary.

Many thanks

Netty Horton

About us

Relationships are at the heart of why CatholicCare exists. We help people to build positive relationships, and repair connections when needed. CatholicCare is the social service agency of the Archdiocese of Melbourne and the Diocese of Sale. We provide a range of counselling, education, community and pastoral services. We support all people regardless of their religious belief or background. Our vision is for a stronger, more resilient and inclusive society - where everyone can reach their potential and enjoy 'life to the full'.

Child safety is paramount

CatholicCare actively works to listen to, empower and protect children, and has zero tolerance for child abuse and neglect.



Greater Melbourne • Geelong • Gippsland

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 CatholicCare acknowledges the traditional custodians of the lands and waters of Victoria, and pays respect to Elders past and present.

A winter reflection

In May of 1940, winter shifted into spring. On the beaches of Dunkirk in France gathered some 350,000 British soldiers hoping against all hope of being rescued. Home was but only a channel-crossing away. And yet, home could never have felt so far and unreachable. The Christopher Nolan movie captures in a visceral way the lived experience of the "so close but so far" perspective of each and every one of those soldiers.

This time of the year ushers us into the depths of winter. It is understandable that winter is perceived as a bleak and miserable time of the year. It doesn't have to be that way though. As it was for the soldiers on the beaches of Dunkirk, a winter of being disconnected from home gave way to a spring that brought "home" to them.

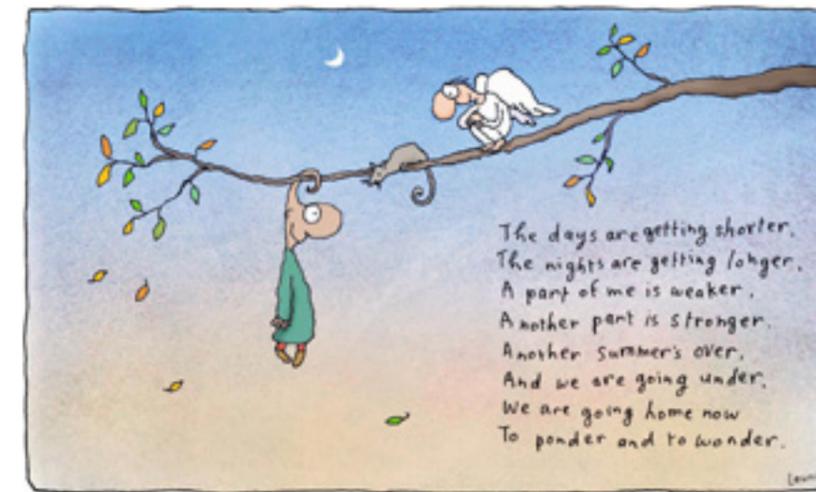


Image courtesy of Michael Leunig.

The days are getting shorter.
The nights are getting longer.
A part of me is weaker.
Another part is stronger.
Another summer's over,
And we are going under.
We are going home now
To ponder and to wander.

Paul Zammit
Senior Manager, Pastoral Services

Winter can be a time that encourages us to stop, to take the time to ponder and reflect on what is really important. It makes sense that winter can heighten the importance of having a sense of home, of connection to place and people. Synonymous with the notion of home is the experience of family. Whatever shape and form family takes, at its very heart are the ensemble of relationships that bind and interconnect.

Atonement is an important concept in many faith traditions, particularly in Judaism and Christianity. If we break the word down, "at-one-ment" - it takes on a significance and meaning that perhaps is not at first glance apparent. At-one-ment: to be at one with our world, with each other and at one with our deepest self; is this not at the very heart of what it means to be truly and deeply

human? At-one-ment is really about home, family, relationships, connection... it is about "life to the full." And at CatholicCare, we are especially attuned to the social structures and realities that rob people of their humanity, of their sense of home and connection to people and place.

Yes! Winter is a great time to stop and ponder that which is truly important. It is indeed a time to nourish the soul.

Rebuilding families - reducing youth crime

Crime committed by African youth made news headlines early this year, and while that issue was over-dramatised, there remains a very real concern regarding disenfranchised youth (of all cultures) and how to better address their needs and reduce their chances of re-offending.

A 2016 Victorian report from the Youth Parole Board shows that, of all children in detention, 63% were victims of abuse, trauma or neglect; 45% were subject to a previous child protection order; and 19% were under a current child protection order. This shows that many have come from broken families, giving us insight into one of the major contributors of youth crime.

Research from Jesuit Social Services has shown that youth justice systems which focus on supporting young people to develop and maintain connections with their family, are most effective for reducing crime and re-offending.

Education is another important factor that was found to be effective, and here at CatholicCare we see the role that both education and positive relationships, or a lack of them, play in the lives of all and not just youth offenders.

Earlier this year we spoke with Deng Malith, one of our Alcohol and Other Drug case workers who supports African youth. Deng explained that for refugee youth, integration into Australian life can be difficult - the culture, the schooling, the language and the people are so different, and without the right support from their families and the community, a small percentage begin to fall through the cracks and enter into the world of crime.

"If they fall behind educationally - without support to stay in school - they can feel inadequate and that is when behavioural issues arise leading to disengagement with the school system. There is usually increased conflict with parents followed by withdrawal from family." - Deng Malith.

Victoria needs to be helping our youth offenders reconnect with their families and re-engage in schooling, rather than the current ineffective punishment that is given out in our youth justice system. At CatholicCare we see the impact that both education and building positive relationships has on our youth offenders, which not only stops re-offending but also helps in getting their life back on track.

Breaking the cycle of disadvantage



Intergenerational disadvantage refers to the situation in which multiple generations of the same family experience high and persisting levels of social exclusion, material and human capital impoverishment, and restrictions on the opportunities and expectations that would otherwise widen their capability to make choices. (d'Addio, 2007; Frazer & Marlier, 2007).

The intergenerational cycle of disadvantage and poverty is certainly real, and the problem is getting bigger. The 2015 *Dropping Off the Edge* report produced by Jesuit Social Services and Catholic Social Services Australia, concluded that 20 of Victoria's most disadvantaged postcodes were also found to be in the same category in the 2007 study and many of these have been in this depressed state since the first study in 1999. Residents living in these areas aren't just dealing with one form of disadvantage, but multiple complex barriers to individual wellbeing and community participation. They are three times more likely to experience unemployment and twice as likely to have criminal convictions. Families are passing down not only negative behaviour, such as drug use, but also situations of disadvantage to the next generation, with each subsequent generation stating that it is hard to imagine a different, better life for themselves.

Based on the *Household, Income and Labour Dynamics in Australia* survey showing longitudinal results from 2001 to 2008, 35% of all Australians had been living in poverty at some stage over that time period. Living in poverty, or under the poverty line, is

described as having an income at less than 50% of the median Australian income (median weekly income in 2011 was \$577 for individuals and \$1,481 for a family). That means during this period, approximately 1.38 million individuals were living on less than \$288 a week, while the average rent was \$285 a week.

Sadly, since that report was released, these figures have grown and it is now estimated that nearly three million Australians are living in poverty - including over 750,000 children. Several studies have shown that children living in these households have poorer social and emotional wellbeing, lower educational levels and less future opportunities overall.

'Between 2001 and 2008, approximately 1.38 million people were living on less than \$288 a week at some stage (with the average rent being \$285 a week at the time).'

Paul Zammit, Senior Manager for CatholicCare's Pastoral Services, knows that entrenched disadvantage is currently a major problem in the prison population. The same postcodes pop up time and time again as the previous address for prisoners. Many offenders find it hard to

break out of the cycle no matter how determined they are, with over 53% of ex-prisoners re-offending and returning to prison within two years. Statistics also show that children of prisoners are six times more likely to be imprisoned in the future than their peers.

CatholicCare is well aware of the problems facing the disadvantaged and marginalised. Many of our offices are located in these 'most disadvantaged' postcodes. Staff are working with more clients each year who present with multiple issues and concerns due to entrenched poverty. The core of our support model is to build resilience in families and individuals to allow them to change the trajectory of their future and that of their children.

"Our staff are seeing the effects of long-term disadvantage play out in the worst ways with those they support," says Lisa Foley, Senior Manager of CatholicCare's programs in Melbourne's East, South, and Gippsland. "It's hard for people to make the first step to change their life when they have seen generations of their family having lived the same way. It becomes normal to do the same things. If they haven't seen their parents get up and go to work every day, it can be hard to imagine this future is even possible."

It isn't all doom and gloom though. CatholicCare's programs focus on early intervention and strengthening relationships, and we are seeing positive outcomes. In the last 12 months alone, our counselling services have helped over 2,300 people during times of family violence, child-parent conflict, depression, and alcohol and other drug issues; a basic first step in moving towards a brighter future.

Education is key to breaking the cycle of disadvantage and some of our most effective work is focused on helping students at risk of disengaging with education. Working together with the student, the school and the family, staff seek to understand and manage the complex underlying issues for their refusal to attend school. Our programs have achieved great success in keeping young people at school and helping them understand the value of completing their education to achieving a better life.

Building resilience in the individual and the family is fundamental to breaking the cycle and walking a different path, no matter where they start from or how long they or their family have been on that road.

'Many offenders find it hard to break out of the cycle ... with over 53% of ex-prisoners re-offending and returning to prison within two years.'

If you, or someone you know, needs assistance in dealing with life's challenges, please contact us on 03 9287 5555 or visit our website www.ccam.org.au for more information.

Want to help? If you would like to find out more about how you can support the various programs and services offered by CatholicCare, please contact our Donor Relations team on 03 9287 5517 or donate using the donation form in this newsletter, or online at www.ccam.org.au/donate



- Entrenched disadvantage is concentrated in a small number of communities within Victoria - including Traralgon, Moe & Corio in regional areas, and Broadmeadows, Dandenong and Sunshine in metropolitan areas.
- 4% of all postcodes in Victoria account for more than 28% of the most disadvantaged areas.
- 25% of Victorian prisoners come from 2% of the state's postcodes (for both adult and youth justice).
- By age 11, children in families with intergenerational disadvantages have already substantially fallen behind their peers in both academic and social-emotional development.

Building connections, Growing together



From childhood we all love to build, to create, to stand back and think, “Wow, I made that!” What about building relationships, especially within those most intimate situations of the family? How do we go about building those connections, so we can grow together?

Last month, CatholicCare encouraged schools and parishes in the Archdiocese of Melbourne to reflect on these themes during Family Week. Those that participated reflected together, prayed together, played together, learned together and, we hope, grew together.

Winter, with its greater incentive to be indoors, is the perfect opportunity to build connections with those closest to us. As we seek shelter in the warmth and cosiness of our homes and families, we are able to spend more time with each other – to grow together.

Below are some ideas for activities that you can do with your family this winter, and all throughout the year!

Indoor Activities

- Cooking, and enjoying a meal together is a perennial favourite. Try something new.
- Explore an old photo album together.
- With your teenagers, you could binge-watch a television series together. Break it up with reflections on what you have seen, and do something nice for each other - such as getting hot drinks and snacks.
- Conduct a science experiment together.
- Design some “Get Well Soon” cards or small gifts so they are ready to be taken to relatives or neighbours who need support during times of sickness in the cold months.
- Dig out the board games and take turns in choosing one to play.
- Discuss what you can add to the house to make it more homely and cosy - frame and hang up new family photos, or craft something together to use as decor. Make it into a project!

Outdoor Activities

- Put on your jacket and wellies and go for a creek ramble; take photos of interesting plants or animals that you find.
- Check out a skate park or adventure playground.
- Find a local farmers’ market or craft market, and chat to some of the artists or producers.
- Visit a local church or other place of worship, and take note of its unique design features.
- For the artists in the family – visit the Heidelberg School Artists Trail or the McClelland Sculpture Park in Langwarrin.
- Check out a local sporting event that you have never considered; entry will be free (or cheap) and you may acquire a new interest.
- Share what you have discovered with other family members.

The value of rituals for family resilience

As the family gets older, regular practices or rituals may need to be adapted. This doesn’t mean giving them up altogether, but being flexible, and even creating new rituals. See the special moments in the ordinary things you do, by focusing on doing them together and doing them with love.

The end of a day is a great time for reflection. Express what you are grateful for, and commit to God’s mercy on those occasions for which you need forgiveness or healing.

Parishes and schools in the Diocese of Sale will celebrate Family Week in the month of August. Please contact us for more details.

For more activities visit www.ccam.org.au/BuildingConnections

Parker Moffit Bequest Society Event



Once a year CatholicCare holds the Parker Moffit Bequest Society event to thank our supporters who have chosen to leave a gift in their will, and to acknowledge those who had passed away during the previous year. It also provides attendees with a chance to learn more about our programs, hear about the impact of their donations, and to meet with other like-minded philanthropists.

This year’s event, which was held in March, featured the story of our founders Norma Parker and Connie Moffit as the theme focused on International Women’s Day.

CatholicCare’s CEO, Netty Horton, spoke about Norma and Connie and their achievement in setting up CatholicCare in 1935; challenging the norm of removing children from struggling families, by establishing a social service that would help families to stay together. It is the belief that families can be strengthened through support and education that underpins CatholicCare’s services today, Ms Horton said in her speech.

Spiritual Director Fr Gerard Dowling (pictured left) gave a moving prayer during the event and reflected on the nature of gratitude and its importance

in society. Guests also heard from Board member, Dennis Torpy, who gave an update on the funds raised and the programs supported by the society members. A special appearance by Emeritus Board member, Fr Kevin Mogg included a reflection on the issues of times past and how CatholicCare continues to play a relevant role in creating a better society for all.

Donor Relations Manager, Emily Werner, said the annual event was a chance to thank donors for their generosity. “We also have an opportunity to show how many people were assisted by CatholicCare last year through gifts left in Wills. The legacy of our bequest donors will live on and continue to support the most disadvantaged well into the future.”

For more information on leaving a gift in your Will, please contact our Donor Relations Team on 03 9287 5517.

Run for Refugees

The annual Run Melbourne event is the perfect opportunity to support CatholicCare through fundraising while working on improving your fitness. This year, Run Melbourne is being held on Sunday 29 July and features a half marathon, 10km and 5km walk/run.

Members from Team CatholicCare will be raising funds for CatholicCare’s Refugee Settlement programs – these programs help refugee families with the life skills and techniques they need to adapt and thrive in Australia. This is the fifth year CatholicCare has had a team in Run Melbourne and we have raised over \$60,000 towards the refugee programs.

If you are looking for a great way to work towards a fitness goal and to support CatholicCare, consider joining us! Many of the previous Team CatholicCare members have got their families involved with fundraising and participating on the day.

If you are interested in joining Team CatholicCare or wish to make a donation please visit www.ccam.org.au/RunMelbourne or contact the Donor Relations Team on 03 9287 5517, or at Fundraising@ccam.org.au





There are some scars you can't see.

Violence can tear families apart. With your support, CatholicCare can help them rebuild their lives for a brighter future.

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Thank you!