



Aussie Deacon

Newsletter of the Australian Anglican Diaconal Association

www.aussiedeacons.org.au

March 2017

Greetings to Deacons across Australia,

It seems such a long time ago now, but in April 2016, the Biennial National Deacon's Conference took place in the beautiful Mornington Peninsula in Victoria's south.

We were blessed with perfect balmy weather and exceptional hospitality by the co-ordinating team of the Anglican Parish of Flinders and Balnarring.

'Serving the Least' was the theme for the conference which welcomed deacons from Dioceses around Australia. Thirty one of us gathered to share worship and fellowship with each other, a place where young and old, new and experienced deacons celebrated their ministries, shared their frustrations, listened and learnt and wondered anew at the revelations that took wing and were given voice from the gospels and writings of the Old Testament prophets and apostles of the New Testament.

Inspired anew by the teachings of Rev Susanne Watson Epting (the key note speaker, Deacon from the Episcopal Church and author of 'Unexpected Consequences'), Rev Dr Matthew Anstey and Rev Dr Stephen Burns with robust observations offered by Rev Dr Charles Sherlock, formal sessions dovetailed into lively table discussions centred around the application of scriptural texts to the daily living out of our diaconal ministries. Indeed, the entire role of the Deacon within a three-fold ordained order, which differs wildly across the disparate Dioceses of the Australian Anglican Church, was the topic of conversation that was returned to most frequently.

Revd. Dr Stephen Burns reminded us of the foundational tenets of our Baptismal Covenant – the blueprint for godly living in a secular world. We were challenged to explore the question: 'How does the Deacon live out that Baptismal covenant differently than the laity in light of our ordination?' Perhaps some of the words that we might use that inform and define the Deacon and his/her role may include: 'to be signs and animators of the body of Christ in the world', 'to be the interface between the world and the church' or 'to be an interpreter to the church of the needs, concerns and hopes of the world'. It was the idea of being an interpreter that captured the imagination and resonated with the diaconal spirit of many present at the conference. To be an interpreter is to enter *into* the world of the people for whom we are advocates, to understand them at a deeper level of intimacy and to be discerning about the nuances of the needs, concerns and hopes that we hear. It also implies a level of deep and attentive listening to ensure that we travel deep into the essence of their truth.

Revd. Dr Matthew Anstey through his examination of diaconal ministry embedded in the stories of Naaman in the OT and the Ethiopian Eunuch in Acts, further endorsed and highlighted the imperative of entering into

another's life experience in order to be able to speak of God's redeeming love for them at the very place of their need. Only then can we truly begin to engage with all the baptised and enable them, with us, to meet the needs, address the concerns and celebrate and bring to fruition the hopes of the anawim of the world.

The silent inherent assumption that underscores this notion of 'interpreter' is that the world and the church speak different languages. Is the Church's lived experience becoming further removed from the lived experience of those outside the Church community? How then do deacons span that widening divide to hold both the Church and the world in one holy communion?

Revd. Susanne Watson Epting provocatively proposed this statement:

'Deacons should be goading the Church into exile – away from privilege,' or from a different perspective: 'Deacons should be an irritation to the Church.'

Within the rich and varied discussions had at the conference, perhaps a final question posed by Susanne deserves deep reflection: 'What can the Church do if you are a deacon, that it couldn't do if you weren't?'

Our grateful thanks for a fabulous conference must go to the convening team of Melbourne and their tireless work in ensuring that all participants had a fruitful and engaging time.



Save the Date!!

The next Biennial Conference is being hosted by the Deacons of South Australia, ably convened by Revd. Diane Schaefer and Revd. Marian Giles.

It will be held at St. Peter's Anglican Cathedral of North Adelaide from:

Sunday 8 – Thursday 12 April, 2018

The theme chosen for this conference is:

'Walking Sacraments'

There are some fabulous speakers lined up to present including:

Revd. Rosalind Brown

author of 'Being a Deacon Today', and a return appearance by:

Revd. Matthew Anstey

Principal of St. Barnabas College in Adelaide.

Please view the attached 'Save the Date' poster at the end of this newsletter and it can also be found on the website.

<http://www.aussiedeacons.org.au/>

Further details to follow and if you have any queries you can email:

aadaconference@gmail.com

I am looking forward to seeing you there in 2018!!

Website

We have a new look website which is still under construction but will be a fabulous resource for Deacons across Australia once it is completely up and running.

My sincere thanks to Revd Claire Morgan from the Diocese of Melbourne who is our Website Administrator for the fantastic work she has done thus far.

Please visit it often and find out what is new on it. Keep it as a favourite!! The newsletter will be published on the website as well as being emailed to you. Further details regarding the 2018 conference will be regularly uploaded. You can also join the AADA if you are not already a member by downloading the application form from the website.

If you wish to contact any of the Executive please use this email:

aussiedeacons@gmail.com

Contributions to the Newsletter

This is the first newsletter since the conference and I am hopeful that we can publish one every quarter. If you have any submissions for the newsletter (and we would love to have your contributions about what is happening in YOUR diocese) please send them to the website email for consideration for publication.

This is your newsletter and needs to be relevant to your experiences and ministries as a deacon in your space and time.

I hope to publish a biography of a past deacon and their life's ministry in every newsletter so if you could send me information and a photo of a deacon who has retired or died in your Diocese who you would like acknowledged for the work they did, please send it to the website email for consideration.

World Diakonia Conference

The 22nd World Assembly of Diakonia is being held in Chicago this year! The dates are:

June 28 – July 5

And is being held at Loyola University. Registrations are currently open. This is where deacons from every denomination and from every corner of the world meet to talk all things deacon. You can log into the website for further information at:

<http://www.diakonia-world.org/en/activities/assemblies.shtml>

The theme is:

Shaken by the Wind

A Lenten Offering

Below is a meditation on the Good Friday story that I wrote some years ago and which was published in our Anglican Messenger this time last year. I offer it to you all now as a reminder that we are an Easter people and we called to be out in the fringes and the lowly places, standing among the poor and the disenfranchised, speaking resurrection joy into lives that are still swathed in darkness and despair.

With every blessing on you all for a reflective Lent and a joyous Easter.

Mandy Herriman

'I Am' (a Good Friday Reflection) by Venerable Mandy Herriman

*Deacon St Anselm's Kingsley North/Woodvale
Archdeacon to the Household of Deacons*

I am Mary. I bore you in my womb and wept tears of joy as I cradled you in my arms. I carried God's wondrous deeds deep within my heart and pondered them in my solitude. I am Mary who dwells with every mother as they bear forth their children and weep with joy as they cradle their babes in their arms. I am Mary whose heart is heavy burdened with the pain and sorrow of the death of my beloved son. I am every mother who cradles their dead and dying sons and daughters in their arms. In their deep pain and helplessness, I stand beside them as their children die of disease, poverty, greed, war and violence. I share their pain because I have borne it too. I am Mary.

I am Peter, the disciple who loved you and swore to lay down my life for you. I declared with loud bravado that I would never disown you – the one I believed in and the one I loved. I ran from your need and ignored your pain and left you abandoned to bear it alone. I stand beside all those who weep tears of repentance when they turn away from those in need. I am every person who turns away from the pain of others and abandons them to the injustices and horrors of this world. I am every good person who turns away from evil because I am afraid to lose my life. I am every good person who loses their life because I deny Christ. Yet Jesus Christ redeems my cowardice and transforms it into courage. The hope remains that my weakness will be transformed into the strength by which the kingdom of God will be manifest in the world. I am Peter.

We are your women disciples. We watch your suffering and the pain is too much to bear yet we cannot leave you. From deep within us we find the strength to remain with you. You have loved us with love that transcends all human understanding. This love dignifies and values us and we are transformed to be women of courage. We are every woman who stands firm in the face of degradation and suffering. When women bring their compassion and sorrowing love to those who suffer, we stand among them. When women walk beside those in pain and ease their passing, you will find us. We stand beside the women of this world who speak for those without a voice and work for justice. We are the women disciples.

I am the criminal who shares your pain and is crucified by your side. I am the criminal who in my last hour saw the kingdom of God breaking through the darkness and in your light was redeemed and transformed. I stand among all those whose sin consumes them and at the last see Jesus Christ ready to gather them home in humble repentance. Amazing grace that opens the eyes of the lost, cleanses their hearts of all sin and brings them home. Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom. I am the criminal.

I am Pontius Pilate who washed my hands of your condemnation yet cannot erase my guilt from my heart. I wanted to set you free and believed in your innocence yet bowed to the demands of an insistent crowd. Your freedom rested in my hands and I washed it away. I am every person who has the power to make a difference yet follows the demands

of a greedy and dispassionate world. Amid the guilt of a world that sacrifices the innocent for power and greed I stand. Amid the guilt of a world that washes their hands of the condemnation of the innocent, you will find me. I am Pontius Pilate.

I am the Roman centurion. I nailed your hands and feet to the cross which would be your deathbed. In your vulnerability, I mocked you and degraded you and stripped you of your dignity before the whole world. Yet at the last I saw the truth of who you were. O, that I had recognized that in your living. When people are degraded and humiliated, I stand among them. When the vulnerable are exploited and their dignity denied, I am there. I hammer in the nails of oppression, hatred, intolerance and injustice and make that their deathbed. I divide the spoils among the oppressors. Yet there remains the hope that at the last my eyes will be opened to see the truth and I will see the kingdom of God breaking through. I am the Roman Centurion.

I am Joseph of Arimathea. I did not condemn you Jesus, but I may as well have done so. I failed to defend your innocence and by my silence secured your death sentence. Words of freedom remained unspoken, and the dissent of my heart remained unbidden. I stand among those who give assent to death by silence. When injustice and suffering is present, I am every person who stands mute against the truth. It is I who refuses to speak the words of liberty and in the deafening silence of the world in the midst of oppression you will find me. Yet my repentance redeems my silence. I gave you dignity in death and honoured your name and your family by giving you a burial place. In a world without hope I am the one who shows forth the kingdom. Through the darkness and despair of the tomb, I am the one who tells of the resurrection hope and transforms the lives of those who live without hope. I am Joseph of Arimathea.



Save the Date

“WALKING SACRAMENTS” Australian Anglican Deacons Conference



HOSTED BY

The South Australian Deacons

DATE

Sunday 8 - Thursday 12 April, 2018

VENUE

St Peter's Anglican Cathedral, North Adelaide, S.A

SPEAKERS

Rev'd Rosalind Brown, from Durham Cathedral

Author of *Being a Deacon Today* and *Can Words Express our Wonder?*

Rev'd Matthew Anstey, Principal of St Barnabas College, Adelaide

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