

## **All Saints Day/ Anglicare Sunday: Horizons of Hope**

“May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be pleasing in your sight, O Lord my rock and redeemer” Amen

Today we are combining our celebration of All Saints Day with Anglicare Sunday. The link is Christ’s message of Hope. All Saints Day is a time of remembrance and honouring of all the followers of Jesus who have entered paradise to be with our Lord. For many of us it is a time of reconnection with past and present personal loss. In our gospel reading we hear of the deep grieving of Mary and Martha over the death of their brother Lazarus. But Jesus knew that despite his death, Lazarus would be all right, for he would awaken him. In John 11.5 we are told: *“Accordingly, though Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus, he stayed two days longer in the place where he was.”* From our perspective this seems mightily cruel – Lazarus’s family suffered for four long days, believing him lost to them, slowly rotting within the tomb.

To this Jesus retorts in verse 15: *“For your sake I am glad I was not there, so that you may believe. But let us go to him.”*

Once he arrives verse 33 tells us that Jesus *“was greatly disturbed in spirit and deeply moved.”* Indeed he wept.

He then gave thanks to his Father and through Him, performed his greatest miracle: the resurrection of Lazarus from death. This act was done for our sake, so that we may believe that God sent Jesus to us. It dramatically affirmed the declaration to Martha in verses 25 and 26: *“I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die.”*

It is this knowledge of eternal life that gives to every follower of Christ their most profound HOPE! And it on this HOPE that the work of Anglicare is founded. I’m going to share with you now a short sermon from the Revd. Sarah Plummer, the Anglicare Executive Director of Mission and Culture. It is entitled: Horizons of Hope.

### **REVD SARAH PLUMMER**

So in Sarah’s words:

I want you to imagine you are sitting on a sandy beach in the pitch black.

You can feel the cold sand under your feet, you can hear the crashing of waves but have no idea how close they are. You are scared, you are alone and you are cold.

You can hear someone approach. Anxiety rises in your body but they introduce themselves. They ask if you would like a blanket. You say yes out of relief as the cold had ached into your very core.

“What are you looking at?” they ask, as your eyes are looking down and you cannot see much at all.

The stranger speaks again. “Can I encourage you to look up; look to the horizon, and there the first rays of dawn overwhelm your eyes.”

This image is what it is like to go from a life with no hope to a life filled with hope. In Romans 5.2 Paul says, “we boast in our hope of sharing the glory of God.” It reflects what Jesus himself said to Martha in John 11.40: “Did I not tell you that if you believed, you would see the glory of God?”

And the amazing thing is that when we share that hope with others and invite them to look at the glory of God just peeking out over their horizon, miracles can and do happen.

The recent lockdowns saw a repeat of the anxiety experienced in the first lockdowns of 2020. Families couldn't leave their homes, people living alone were left further isolated, and those who are vulnerable are struggling the most. People come to emergency relief services for help wearing T-shirts wrapped around their faces because they haven't been able to buy a mask, or asking for food which they have to eat while stranded in their cars as they have no-where else to stay.

The local Anglican Parishes and Anglicare teams across the region are working hard to remain a safe place and haven of stability for people most in need. Many not-for-profit church agencies and their partnered churches are also doing the same.

One of these people is David. David is in his 40s and lives in Canberra. In early 2020, at the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, he found himself struggling mentally and emotionally. The trauma of being alone was compounded by other circumstances in his life that had left him further isolated and feeling like he had no-one to turn to for help. When he was at his lowest, David reached out to the team at Gordon Community Centre, which runs as a partnership between Anglicare and Lanyon Valley Anglican Church.

## **We'll now watch a video where he explains his experience.**

Sarah continues:

While most people who reach out for emergency assistance need food or help with bills, at Anglicare we know that often people are experiencing deep feelings of rejection, anxiety and disconnection.

Many times this sort

of need is hidden out of shame or guilt. Anglicare, with the support of church partners like Lanyon Valley Anglican Church, want to see these hidden needs addressed too. An estimated 80-100 people come through the Gordon Community Centre every month to receive food assistance, participate in the playgroup activities or informal classes, and join the community lunch or just catch up for a 'cuppa'. All these activities are designed to support the local area and keep people connected, with services adapting and continuing, even during COVID-19 lockdowns.

Many times the work of Anglicare is evident in tangible ways through food parcels, material aid, case management or referral services. But the work of Anglicare is intangible too. David's story is just one of many in which

Anglicare's services are a connection point where people find healing in their own hearts; where their view of themselves and their outlook on life can be transformed in healthy and truthful ways. For David, it led him to renewed faith.

When you offer care to another human being you are helping them to lift their eyes to the 'Horizon of Hope' found in Jesus. I thank God for many people who sacrificially and simply care for another human being.

When Christians come alongside people, when we ask if we might place a blanket on their shoulders, encourage them and invite them to lift their eyes, we shine the love and Hope of Jesus Christ into their life.

I started this sermon with an image of a cold, lonely, scared person on a beach, looking up to see the hope-filled light of sunrise breaking across the darkness on the horizon. I finish by encouraging and inviting you to look at and participate in this message. We go a long way to reduce poverty in this world when we care and support others so that

they too can be encouraged to lift their eyes and see the resurrected Christ our living Hope.

## **CONCLUSION**

Now back to me: As we continue to navigate through our season of change, I hope you find it encouraging to glimpse into what God's up to in the Gordon Community Centre.

To conclude, in our Parish, numerous Saints have wholeheartedly served people in this community over many years. Today we honour their faithful service. And perhaps the best way we can do that is to repledge our own efforts to share the hope of God's glory. In closing, I pray that we may always lift our eyes to the horizon and be filled with the hope of life eternal through our saving Lord Jesus. Amen