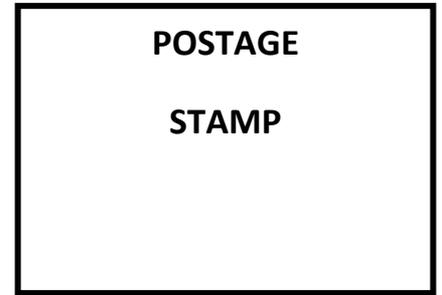




If undeliverable return to
Emmanuel Centre
A SELF HELP CENTRE
For People with Disabilities
25 Windsor St Perth WA 6000
Tel: (08) 9328 8113 (Voice)
(08) 9328 9571 (TTY)
SMS 0401 016 399
Fax: (08) 9227 9720



Email: EmmanuelCentre@westnet.com.au

Web address: www.emmanuelcentre.com.au

Facebook for Deaf : <http://facebook.com/Auslan.live>

Web address: www.emmanuelcentre.com.au

EMMANUEL NEWS July 2013

COMING EVENTS AS WE GO TO PRESS (Check before coming could be changed. Look inside for more info.)

Sunday July 21st 9.30 am Mass. At St Francis Xavier with interpreter and PowerPoint . Followed by Auslan café 10.30 am – 12. noon including light lunch.

Monday July 22nd “Challenges” 9.30-10.30 am Emmanuel Centre; “Learning activities” with Christine 11-12.30
DRUMBEAT with Christine 1-2 pm

Tuesday July 23rd “Painting with Geoff” 9.30-10.30 am Emmanuel Centre, “Learning activities” with Christine 11-12.30
Bible Study 1-2.30 pm

Thursday July 25th Grammar Disc 1-2 pm “Learn English” with Emma

Sunday July 28th 9.30 am Mass. At St Francis Xavier With Interpreter And PowerPoint

Monday July 29th “Challenges” 9.30-10.30 am Emmanuel Centre; “Learning activities” with Christine 11-12.30
Volunteer DRUMBEAT with Christine 1-2 pm

Tuesday July 30th “Painting with Geoff” 9.30-10.30 am Emmanuel Centre, Scrapbooking with Sharon “11-12.30
Bible Study 1-2.30 pm

“Open forum on Disability, the Church and the Wider Community” 7 pm to 9 pm at Emmanuel Centre

Thursday August 1st Grammar Disc 1-2 pm “Learn English” with Emma

Sunday August 4th 9.30 AM MASS. AT ST FRANCIS XAVIER WITH INTERPRETER AND POWERPOINT. Followed by Morning tea with Parishioners of St Francis Xavier

Monday August 5th “Challenges” 9.30-10.30 am Emmanuel Centre; “Learning activities” with Christine 11-12.30
DRUMBEAT with Christine 1-2 pm

Tuesday August 6th “Painting with Geoff” 9.30-10.30 am Emmanuel Centre, “Craft with Shirley” 11-12.30
Bible Study 1-2.30 pm;

Thursday August 8th Grammar Disc 1-2 pm “Learn English” with Emma

Sunday August 11th 9.30 AM Mass. At St Francis Xavier with Interpreter and PowerPoint

Monday August 12th “Challenges” 9.30-10.30 am Emmanuel Centre; “Learning activities” with Christine 11-12.30
DRUMBEAT with Christine 1-2 pm

Tuesday August 13th “Painting with Geoff” 9.30-10.30 am Emmanuel Centre, Activities with Christine “11-12.30
Bible Study 1-2.30 pm

Thursday August 15th Grammar Disc 1-2 pm “Learn English” with Emma.

Sunday August 18th 9.30 AM Mass. At St Francis Xavier with Interpreter and PowerPoint followed by Auslan Cafe 10.30am – 12. noon including light lunch.

Monday August 19th “Challenges” 9.30-10.30 am Emmanuel Centre; “Learning activities” with Christine 11-12.30
DRUMBEAT with Christine 1-2 pm

Tuesday August 20th “Painting with Geoff” 9.30-10.30 am Emmanuel Centre, Scrapbooking with Sharon “11-12.30
Bible Study 1-2.30 pm

Thursday August 22nd Grammar Disc 1-2 pm “Learn English” with Emma

Sunday August 25th 9.30 AM Mass. At St Francis Xavier With Interpreter And PowerPoint

Monday August 26th “Challenges” 9.30-10.30 am Emmanuel Centre; “Learning activities” with Christine 11-12.30
DRUMBEAT with Christine 1-2 pm

Tuesday August 27th “Painting with Geoff” 9.30-10.30 am Emmanuel Centre, Activities with Christine “11-12.30
Bible Study 1-2.30 pm

Thursday August 29th Grammar Disc 1-2 pm “Learn English” with Emma

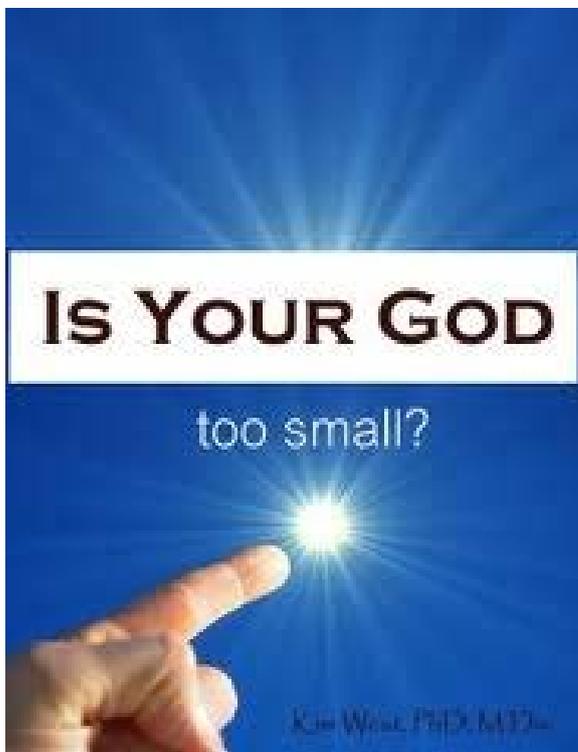
Sunday September 1st 9.30 AM Mass. At St Francis Xavier with Interpreter and PowerPoint

Monday September 2nd “Challenges” 9.30-10.30 am Emmanuel Centre; “Learning activities” with Christine 11-12.30
Volunteer DRUMBEAT with Christine 1-2 pm

Tuesday September 3rd “Painting with Geoff” 9.30-10.30 am Emmanuel Centre, “Craft with Shirley” 11-12.30
Bible Study 1-2.30 pm

Thursday September 5th Grammar Disc 1-2 pm “Learn English”





I've often thought about God's Creation. How diverse it is with majestic giant stars to tiny microbes. I am also aware that there is an interaction of this creation. I am learning more about the place of trees in relationship to carbon and oxygen. I don't question that trees take in carbon dioxide and give off oxygen without anyone lifting a finger. I am really happy the earth's gravity means that we all stay put on earth. And in all of this there are cycles of life. I am amazed at the balance of creation, if we don't interfere. Yes, in some ways I accept the awesomeness of God in creation and the environment.

Then I think of the people and reflect on their stories and their contribution, if I recognize their individual giftedness. How I struggle to look past the obvious, to see the deeper reality. When I glimpse the God reality in each individual it opens up a whole new understanding of who God is and what he gives me through another. How God has a unique plan for each of us and how that plan has a further opportunity as we encounter each

other on our journey through life no matter how long that life is. How remarkable is God to organize this!

But there is still a part of me that tries to figure out.... How is it happening? I want to prove something through xrays, CAT scans, PET scans and blood tests. I want to make science my God.

I often sit with parents after they receive a negative prognosis about the future of their child at birth or after an accident. Richard's parents were told after his car accident that their son would be "a vegetable". His parents did not accept that medical verdict. With extensive therapy by the family and an army of volunteers Richard today lives in his own flat and volunteers with an agency helping others.

Fr Paul's recent experience is another example. After blood transfusions and medications his blood counts were all good. A PET scan showshowever the cancer is indeed active and spreading and yet the doctor cannot find any physical evidence of increased cancerous growths. Fr Paul's physical health seems to have improved with increased energy, good colour and generally feeling well. How can that be?

I realize how small I think God is or rather how small I make God. When my God is too small then my problems become too big and I retreat into fear and insecurity. It is time for me to exchange the gods of my own making for the God who really is. "What ifs" of life are useless. They are like, "should haves", "could haves", "would haves" which distract from what is. At those times when my God is great I realize then my problems pale into insignificance and I rest in awe of a God whose power is unlimited, whose ways are not understandable and whose love for me goes beyond anything I could imagine. If I believe that God can intervene, then I can trust and my worries are replaced with peace.

Pope Francis's first encyclical "Follow the Light of Life" reminds us "our culture has lost its sense of God's tangible presence and activity in our world. We think that God is to be found in the beyond, on another reality far removed from our everyday relationships." But God is right here with us, ever present in his world, his people and in me and you.

Is your God too small?

Barbara



OPEN FORUM ON DISABILITY THE CHURCH AND THE WIDER COMMUNITY

DATE - Tues 30th July

TIME – 7pm to 9pm

PLACE - Emmanuel Centre, 25 Windsor St
Perth

Emmanuel Centre is hosting an Open Forum on Disability, the Church and the Wider Community. If you are a person with a disability or a parent or carer of someone with a disability this is an opportunity for you to network with others and discuss some of the issues which are important to you. These could include some of the following or any issues that you want to raise:

YOUR CONCERNS _____

EDUCATION

EMPLOYMENT

RECREATION

SOCIALISING



PARTICIPATION IN THE CHURCH

PREPARATION FOR THE SACRAMENTS

ETC, ETC

Come along and have your say and share your experiences and concerns. For catering please RSVP by Monday 29th July to Emmanuel Centre

If you have special needs, please let us know.

**25 Windsor Street Perth Western Australia 6000. Tel. (08) 9328 8113
9328 9571 (TTY) 9227 9720 (FAX)**

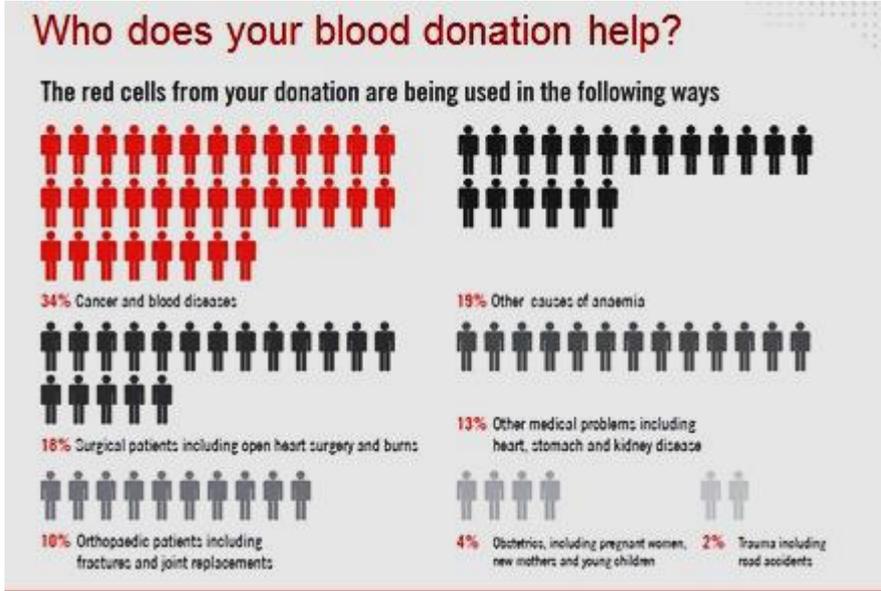
e-mail: EmmanuelCentre@westnet.com.au

THIS EVENT IS FREE



- Each week, Australia needs more than 27,000 blood donations to meet the need of patients across the country
- 1 in 3 Australians will need blood or blood products at some point in their lives, yet only 1 in 30 currently donates
- All blood components have a short shelf life, creating the need for a constant blood supply
- A single donation, when separated into its components, can help at least 3 different patients and contribute to making up to 20 products

components, can help at least 3 different patients and contribute to making up to 20 products



ARE YOU ELIGIBLE TO GIVE BLOOD?

Most people are able to give blood if they

1. Are fit, healthy and not suffering a cold, flu other illness at the time of donation.



It is with sadness that we say goodbye to our volunteers, Fran Mahoney, Tom Lowry and Tonny Rodgers who died recently. We extend our sympathy to their families and friends



FILMS CELEBRATE DISABILITY DISCRIMINATION ACT
 To mark the 20th anniversary of the DDA, a collection of stories told on film, titled *Twenty Years Twenty Stories*, explores how the lives of people with disability have been impacted by the Act. Visit www.emmanuelcentre.com.au for fully accessible films, auslan, audio description and captioned.

1 in 5 Australian adults will experience mental illness every year, but there's a lot we can do to support our mental health and wellbeing.

We hear about mental health and mental ill health a lot these days. But we don't really think about it until we, or someone close to us, experiences mental health problems. There is a continuum of mental health. Sometimes we are really emotionally well and healthy, sometimes we experience mental health problems and sometimes mental illness. We might think, "If only there was a First Aid Course for Mental Health." Good News. There is.

Tasha Broomhall is a Master Mental Health First Aid instructor who has



delivered more than 130 Mental Health First Aid courses in Perth and throughout Western Australia. She is an engaging presenter who has delivered various mental health training programs over the last 12 years, including guest lecturing at both Murdoch and Curtin Universities and presentations at local and national industry conferences. Tasha has provided mental health training to a range of audiences including various government

departments; Human Resources personnel; line managers; nurses; teachers; mental health consumers & carers; employment agency staff; aged care staff; business service staff and employers in the community. Tasha is based in Perth Western Australia. Tasha has worked in the disability for the last 12 years and has studied psychology, human services and workplace training and assessment. She is Director of Blooming Minds - visit their website: www.bloomingminds.com.au

The Woodvale parish, 29 Duffy Terrace is hosting a meeting with Tasha during Mental Health Week on Tuesday 8th October from 7-9 pm.

Further information will be in our next Newsletter and on the Emmanuel Centre Webpage.

Tobacco Free 10 week course

Our programme is currently directed at smokers with a diagnosed mental illness, this can be anything included in the spectrum from depression and anxiety to schizophrenia and bipolar disorders. The statistics show that these groups have particular difficulty and are financially disadvantaged when it comes to the habit of smoking. What we aim to do with the 30 minute Talking Tobacco sessions is to create a forum of discussion where consumers can focus on their likes and dislikes of the habit, and show them that there are resources available that can give them hope and offer them strategies to address their tobacco concerns. The 10 week Tobacco free program is run in an environment of positive reinforcement and self empowerment, not punishment and excommunication. The facilitators are peer workers who have both smoked and living in recovery of a mental health diagnosis, so that the participants understand that they are able to identify with all the difficulties associated when addressing tobacco addiction Interested? Contact

Deb Dalton, Peer Worker, Tobacco Free Program, Mental Illness Fellowship of WA (Inc)

ERBEAC Building, 1st Floor, Suite 29, 8-12 Stafford Street, Midland WA 6056, Phone: (08) 9250 2884 or (08) 6365 2999, . Fax: (08) 9250 1495. Email: tobaccofree3@mifwa.org.au

GOD LIVES UNDER THE BED



I envy Kevin. My brother, Kevin, thinks God lives under his bed. At least that's what I heard him say one night. He was praying out loud in his dark bedroom, and I stopped to listen, 'Are you there, God?' he said. 'Where are you? Oh, I see. Under the bed....'

I giggled softly and tiptoed off to my own room. Kevin's unique perspectives are often a source of amusement. But that night something else lingered long after the humour. I realized for the first time the very different world Kevin lives in. He was born 30 years ago. As a result of difficulties during labour he has some difficulties. Apart from his size (he's 6-foot-2), there are few ways in which he is an adult.

He reasons and communicates with the capabilities of a 7-year-old, and he always will. He will probably always believe that God lives under his bed, that Santa Claus is the one who fills the space under our tree every Christmas and that aeroplanes stay up in the sky because angels carry them.

I remember wondering if Kevin realizes he is different. Is he ever dissatisfied with his life? Up before dawn each day, off to work at a workshop, home to walk our cocker spaniel, return to eat his favorite macaroni-and-cheese for dinner, and later to bed. The only variation in the entire scheme is laundry, when he hovers excitedly over the washing machine like a mother with her newborn child. He does not seem dissatisfied.

He lopes out to the bus every morning at 7:05, eager for a day of simple work. He wrings his hands excitedly while the water boils on the stove before dinner, and he stays up late twice a week to gather our dirty laundry for his next day's laundry chores. And Saturdays - oh, the bliss of Saturdays! That's the day my Dad takes Kevin to the airport to have a soft drink, watch the planes land, and speculate loudly on the destination of

each passenger inside. 'That one's goin' to Brisbane!' Kevin shouts as he claps his hands. His anticipation is so great he can hardly sleep on Friday nights.

And so goes his world of daily rituals and weekend field trips. He doesn't know what it means to be discontent. His life is simple. He will never know the entanglements of wealth or power, and he does not care what brand of clothing he wears or what kind of food he eats. His needs have always been met, and he never worries that one day they may not be.

His hands are diligent. Kevin is never so happy as when he is working. When he unloads the dishwasher or vacuums the carpet, his heart is completely in it. He does not shrink from a job when it is begun, and he does not leave a job until it is finished. But when his tasks are done, Kevin knows how to relax.

He is not obsessed with his work or the work of others. His heart is pure. He still believes everyone tells the truth, promises must be kept, and when you are wrong, you apologize instead of argue.

Free from pride and unconcerned with appearances, Kevin is not afraid to cry when he is hurt, angry or sorry. He is always transparent, always sincere. And he trusts God. Not confined by intellectual reasoning, when he comes to Christ, he comes as a child. Kevin seems to know God - to really be friends with Him in a way that is difficult for an 'educated' person to grasp. God seems like his closest companion.

In my moments of doubt and frustrations with my Christianity, I envy the security Kevin has in his simple faith. It is then that I am most willing to admit that he has some divine knowledge that rises above my mortal questions. It is then I realize that perhaps he is not the one with the handicap. I am. My obligations, my fear, my pride, my circumstances - they all become disabilities when I do not trust them to God's care.

Who knows if Kevin comprehends things I can never learn? After all, he has spent his whole life in that kind of innocence, praying after dark and soaking up the goodness and love of God.

And one day, when the mysteries of heaven are opened, and we are all amazed at how close God really is to our hearts, I'll realize that God heard the simple prayers of a boy who believed that God lived under his bed. Kevin won't be surprised at all! Anonymous



“Wit’s End Corner”

‘They reel to and fro, and stagger like a drunken man, and are at their WITS’ END.

Then they cried out to the Lord in their trouble, and he brought them out of their distress.”

Psalm 107:27-28

Are you standing at “Wits’ End Corner”,
Christian, with troubled brow?
Are you thinking of what is before you,
And all you are bearing now?
Does all the world seem against you,
And you’re in the battle alone?
Remember---at “Wits’ End Corner”
Is just where God’s power is shown.

Are you standing at “Wits’ End Corner”,
Blinded with wearying pain,
Feeling you cannot endure it,
You cannot bear the strain,
Bruised through the constant suffering,
Dizzy, and dazed, and numb?
Remember---at “Wits’ End Corner”
Is where Jesus loves to come.

Are you standing at “Wits’ End Corner”?
Your work before you spread,
All lying begun, unfinished,
And pressing on heart and head,
Longing for strength to do it,
Stretching out trembling hands?
Remember---at “Wits’ End Corner”
The Burden-Bearer stands.

Are you standing at “Wits’ End Corner”?
Then you’re in the perfect spot
To learn the wondrous resources
Of Him who fails you not:
No doubt to a brighter pathway
Your footsteps will soon be moved,
But only at “Wits’ End Corner”
Is the “**God who is able**” proved.

GET INVOLVED

Auslan Café

Sunday 18th August
and Sunday 15th

September, 10-30am to 12 noon . Followed by
free lunch. Classes are free. Contact Emma or
Barbara emmanuelcentre@westnet.com.au



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Catholic Mass

Where: St. Francis
Xavier’s

Time:9:30am Mass

Where:23 Windsor Street, Perth



When: Every Sunday morning Sign Language
Interpreter and Powerpoint

Morning Tea:

Every 1st Sunday on every month we share a
morning tea social gathering after Mass here at
Emmanuel Centre.

Welcome to bring a small plate to share.

NEWSLETTER

If you would like to receive our Emmanuel
Centre’s Newsletter; give us your name and
address and tell us how you want it in:

- Braille * Mail/Email
- Large Print * Or other format
- Audio CD Please let us know.

Email: emmanuelcentre@westnet.com.au

Website:

www.emmanuelcentre@com.au

Facebook: www.facebook.com/auslan.live

SMS: 0401 016 399, **TTY:** 08 9328 9571

FAX: 08 9227 9720 **VOICE:** 08 9328 8113

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The Sunday School Teacher asks, "Now, Johnny, tell me
frankly do you say prayers before eating?" "No sir,"
little Johnny replies, I don't have to. My mom is a good
cook."

+++++

A little girl became restless as the preacher’s sermon
dragged on and on. Finally, she leaned over to her
mother and whispered, "Mommy, if we give him the
money now, will he let us go?"

Helping Hands Bali
Holidays in Bali for people with disabilities
www.helpinghandsbali.com.au

24 hour care, transport,
restpite, assistance
with accommodation
and much more.

WHO'S IN CHARGE?

Do you feel out of control when it comes to modern social media? For most of us who have just got used to using email, the other social media can seem overwhelming. Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, Pinterest, Google+, and Instagram, to mention just a few can seem like foreign lands.

YOU take charge. Let's look one at a time.



TWITTER – Use it to respond to those things that interest you and send messages of importance to you.

(10 minutes a day)



FACEBOOK – Respond to comments, you want to respond to; “like” content sparingly; share highly visual content like video and pictures.(6 minutes a day)



LINKEDIN – Join discussions that are relevant and ask questions which will move the discussion forward.

(6 minutes a day)



PINTEREST- Pin new content important to you and only repin relevant content .

(4 minutes a day)



GOOGLE+ - Post new content (if any) and ask questions.

(2 Minutes a day)

INSTAGRAM – Share some interesting photos and new content, inspiring quotes?

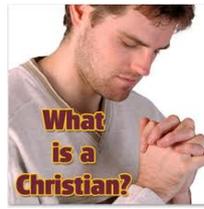


Practice using your time wisely. You WILL get better at it.(2 minutes a day)

ADD this up and it comes to 30 minutes a day AND HOW MUCH TIME DO YOU SPEND ON EMAILS?????????

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POPE FRANCIS WAS WAVING AT THE PEOPLE AT SAINT PETER'S SQUARE WEDNESDAY29TH MAY 2013 GENERAL AUDIENCE WHEN, INCREDIBLY, A DOVE PERCHED ON HIS HAND!



When I say that 'I am a Christian', I am not shouting that 'I am clean living. I'm

whispering 'I was lost, but now I'm found and forgiven.'

When I say 'I am a Christian', I don't speak of this with pride.

I'm confessing that I stumble and need Christ to be my guide.

When I say 'I am a Christian', I'm not trying to be strong.I'm

professing that I'm weak and need His strength to carry on.

When I say 'I am a Christian', I'm not bragging of success.I'm

admitting I have failed and need God to clean my mess.

When I say 'I am a Christian', I'm not claiming to be perfect.My

flaws are far too visible, but God believes I am worth it.

When I say 'I am a Christian', I still feel the sting of pain.I have

my share of heartaches, so I call upon His name.

When I say 'I am a Christian', I'm not holier than thou, I'm

just a simple sinner who received God's good grace,

somehow!

Be Blessed, Be a Blessing.

Life is a series of events, good and bad. Learn from the bad. Give thanks for the good. And share the emotions with those who love and support you through life's ups and downs.

BY LOVE OR BY LAW

(Written by Barbara Harris for the Record Newspaper May 2013)

One of the greatest sadness, tension, conflict, dilemma, (I don't know how to exactly describe it) that I face in my work at Emmanuel Centre is coming to grips with the reality that while many people in the Catholic Church operate "in love," many people in the Catholic Church operate outside the law.

Twenty years after the Australian Federal Parliament passed the Disability Discrimination Act of 1992 making it unlawful to discriminate against people with disabilities and their families; there are parts of the Church who ignore the legal ramifications of this very explicit Law. Is it ignorance of the Law? Is it that we believe that the Catholic Church is outside or above the Law? Whatever the cause, it reflects badly on the Church as a whole and belittles those parts of the Church which does its utmost in "love" to make sure that what we do and say as Church, is accessible for people with disability.

WHAT DOES THE LAW SAY?

The Federal *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* (DDA) aims to ensure that people with disability are not treated less favourably than people who do not have a disability.

- The DDA covers areas such as **employment, access to goods, services and facilities, education, access to premises and transport**. The DDA defines disability very broadly and includes, for example:
- people who are blind or vision impaired; who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing; with intellectual and learning disabilities; with mobility and manual dexterity difficulties; with psychiatric disabilities; who have a brain injury; who have epilepsy; and people who have a disease-causing organism such as the HIV virus.

The DDA says that, "Service providers, [**This includes Church, parishes, Catholic organisations and schools**] such as event's **organisers and sponsors** have a **legal responsibility** under state/territory and Federal Laws to avoid discriminating and, when barriers exist, to remove them.

Access for people with disabilities is not only about physical access to buildings for wheelchair users, but also includes, for example, access to written information for people with vision impairments and access to public announcements for Deaf people, to mention only a few.

A few examples of actions that might lead to discrimination complaints include:

- The parish social committee organises a self-service buffet at lunchtime for those attending the parish retreat. Some people with mobility impairments or vision impairments may find it difficult or impossible to carry or hold food from a buffet selection and to eat without placing their plate on a table.
- A Reader/Lector who uses a wheelchair cannot proclaim the Word in the same way other parishioners can because there are steps up to the lectern.
- Motions being put to the Annual General Meetings of the Parish/school/organisation are only available as printed material making it difficult for a blind parishioner/member to participate in the debate.
- The Catechists' presentation to sacrament candidates and their parents is delivered in a room with no hearing augmentation system for people who are Hard of Hearing.
- Parishioners attending Mass need to go to another building to find an accessible toilet.
- Workshops organised for church employees has steps up and down to enter meeting room.
- Presentations are made to groups without use of microphone and hearing augmentation devices and/or without reference to people with disability and their families who depend on those things to participate in the meeting.
- People who are Deaf and use Auslan are not able to participate in their local parish or in Sacramental preparation programmes because they are not provided with a qualified interpreter by the parish because of the cost.
- Parish Newsletters are only available in printed form or posted online only in PDF format which is inaccessible for people who require equipment and programmes such as "Jaws" to read out loud what appears on the computer screen.
- A social outing for parishioners requires the elderly to climb steps into the bus.

- Children with intellectual disabilities are not accepted as altar servers.

Here are some examples of complaints and outcomes relevant to events that have been brought to the Human Rights Commission:

- A man who has a hearing impairment complained that when he attended a lecture series at a public venue he was unable to hear the lectures as there was no audio loop installed. The complaint was resolved with the respondent agreeing to provide an apology, a refund of \$85.00 for the lectures and install an audio hearing loop. Could this man attend your church services?
- A man who uses a wheelchair complained that a major publicly funded arts facility did not have public lift access, so that patrons requiring lift access needed to arrange to be met by staff and accompanied through goods lifts and otherwise off limits areas. The complaint was settled with an agreement to install appropriate public lift access. What about your facilities?
- A woman who was profoundly deaf and who relied on an audio loop and an Auslan interpreter was provided with neither at a meeting. A complaint was lodged. The organisation apologised and immediately set up an access plan for all future gatherings.
- A woman who has arthritis complained that no provision had been made for disability access at a street festival organised by her local council. The matter was resolved when the council agreed to develop and publish a disability access plan for public events within 6 months. Does your service, parish, school, organisation have an access plan?
- A parent with a child who uses a wheelchair complained that when he attended an event at a major public venue, access to toilet facilities was inadequate with insufficient signage, doors too heavy to open and insufficient room. The matter was settled when the respondent advised that signage had been upgraded and refurbishment of toilets commenced. Do you have an accessible toilet?
- A child with a disability was refused enrolment at her local catholic school. This case went to Court and the child was admitted to her local school

We in the church need to know that if we organise an event or provide a service, that by Law, we are a service provider and we are the person(s) responsible for making sure the event or service is accessible. This needs to be done on every occasion. If people enrol prior to the event this is an opportunity on the enrolment form to facilitate this. **Responsibility for access to goods and services lies with those who organise the goods and services.**

If you contract services for an event or service you are organising, you must ask suppliers for details of how they make their services accessible for people with disabilities. If you are providing a service to the public or congregation, which we as Church do, then we have responsibilities under the DDA and we need to meet those responsibilities.

Complaints can be made to the Australian Human Rights Commission: in writing or in an electronic format. Check out the following webpage http://www.humanrights.gov.au/complaints_information/looding.html.

The Commission will try to conciliate an agreement between the service provider and the person who has complained, but if this is not successful the complainant will be advised of their right to take their complaint to the Federal Court or Federal Magistrates Court. If the Federal Court or Federal Magistrates Court finds that the service provider discriminated and there is no unjustifiable hardship defence it can order the service provider to remove the barrier or stop the discrimination and to make changes to avoid discriminating again in the future. The Court can also order the payment of compensation to the complainant.

Discrimination from any source hurts. When it comes from your own family it can be particularly painful. I cannot begin to count the number of times I have sat with parents and people with disability in their grief and frustration in the face of church discrimination. It is easy enough to suggest that those aggrieved should bring a complaint to the Australian Human Rights Commission, but as people see church communities as their extended family, it is very hard. The tendency is to walk away from the church carrying the hurt for life.

People say to me, "Barbara, how can I possibly take my family (members of the church) to the Commission? I cannot understand how my family (other church members) can deny me my right to belong and participate in Church. Am I asking too much?"

DO WE AS CHURCH OPERATE "IN LOVE" OR DO WE THINK THAT WE ARE OUTSIDE THE LAW?