

**Young Victorian Anti-Poverty Awards at St David's – Welcome: Adrian Pyle -
16 October 2005**

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Good afternoon to you all and welcome to St David's and the Anti-Poverty Awards for Young Victorians 2005. My name is Adrian Pyle and I am the convenor of the awards.

The awards were started as an activity of St David's last year and I opened this awards presentation last year with a fundamental question, "Why?"

I've reflected on this question again this year. I've read and re-read what I wrote last year and I'm honestly not sure that I can express any better than I did then. I started talking about the place we are in ...this church, here at the end of the Golden Mile – one of the most exclusive stretches of real estate in Australia. A spiritual presence at the end of a succession of high walls and security gates. A seeming paradox on World Anti-Poverty Sunday. With apologies to those who were here last year I went on to say this....

You are of course in a very traditional church building. It is a beautiful space with wood and stone and dappled light through stained glass. It offers tremendous, at times spine tingling acoustics. If you get married here and the light shines through that window just as you say your vows, your wedding photographer might say "I'm not a spiritual person but that was spooky!" These are special bricks and mortar with a strong resonance for those who've made St David's their spiritual home. But that is not church.

Hardly a week goes by where I don't read something about the church as perceived by those outside of the church. And it's all about rigour and structure and rules and religion and property committees and whether I bow at this door or that door. And that's not to knock tradition, it's just to say that people see only the procedure and tradition and don't see the path to the spiritual. I've heard it said that people are inspired by Jesus but have little time for the Christian church. Jesus inspired – and then changed lives - by connecting with community, being involved with people in their moment of need, helping (not nagging – helping) people disconnect from destructive behaviour and revel in the possibilities around them. Even in 2004 he gets really good press. In 2004 the church gets press for making women deacons but not bishops, for infighting about sexuality and for having to express sorrow about past injustice.

So what can a little church in Canterbury do about it? Well, where we feel a concern in our community, we can think about our own capacity to connect, to be involved, to help. We can see millions of dollars being spent on personal development in the corporate sector (which is not necessarily a bad thing) and we can ask, how much are we spending on building community capacity and personal capability in the community sector? How much are we spending to equip people – the people fighting poverty on the street - with improved skills? These are the questions we've asked which have led us to the concept of the

Anti-Poverty Awards. We are attempting to support, uphold and celebrate the means towards eradication of poverty – young anti-poverty workers – by reaching out to them and having them come into our midst to educate us.

The awards are shot of inspiration for our community, the wider community generally and for young Victorians specifically. Psychologist James Hillman says that inspiration is an inbreathing of the spirit and not an exaltation of the spirited. We have deliberately changed the title of the project this year – offering ‘awards’ and not a ‘prize.’ We are not about putting people on a pedestal – this is not a competition - but we are about recognising examples of young talent and dedication, saying ‘well done’ AND pausing to think “What can we learn from your dedication? How can we inbreathe your spirit?”

There is a major award of \$3500 and our review panel - Ian Walker, Alex Sangster, Lorraine Duff, Megan Dunn, Tam Nguyen, Margaret Ray and myself - had the wonderful but very tough job of considering each application and deciding for which application the major award might provide an extraordinary impetus – a significant bolstering of their capacity to fight poverty. As I say, that is a tough job. Because it is such a tough job we wanted to clearly recognise four other applicants as well this afternoon with encouragement awards. They are all inspirational in what they do.

As well as the \$3500 self development package - which will be tailored by the recipient and St David’s to expand their knowledge and experience in anti-poverty work – the overall award consists also of the Mason Statuette. Donated by St David’s members Bruce and Helen Mason she is a statuette from the Soul Journeys Maasai Tribe Collection. Standing on a base expertly turned by our own Mr George Ray, she is an inspiring figure. She represents the inspiration of local youth in support of all the tribes of the World.

Once again this year I want to thank our review panel members for giving of their time and their knowledge to the review process. I am indebted to Melynda Woodward, Margaret Ray and John and Val Little as well as Connections Child Youth and Family Services for their help with administrative work and support.

And yet again we must offer a major note of thanks must be extended to the ANZ’s Camberwell Local Market Unit and its CEO Ian Walker. Ian can’t be with us this afternoon but is represented by Balwyn Branch Manager Lorraine Duff. Once again Ian has involved himself in these awards with great fervour. I get a great kick out of planning the awards with him and in the way we grow our understanding of the complex issues of poverty.

Finally before our first item on the program for today I must make mention of our oration today. We are very thankful to Dr Ray Cleary for joining us and I will say more about Ray when we introduce the oration. Again, I think what I said last year expresses it as well as I can: The oration is of course named after Mr Will Thomas, a late member of the church. You’ll find a short version of Will’s wonderful life story on the back of the program today and I’ll let you read that in your own time. However from a personal perspective I want to

express my appreciation to the Church Council for agreeing that this Oration be named in Will's honour. In the time our membership of St David's coincided I didn't know Will extremely well. But I didn't have to know him well to see him striving to help those less fortunate than himself. It's an enduring St David's image for me – of Will Thomas drumming up support for the food collection for Broadmeadows and carting heavy food boxes to ensure the goods got where they needed to go. Will Thomas struck me as being less about the institution of the church and more about rolling your sleeves up to connect and to help out. That was his effort to somehow mirror the inspiration of Jesus.

We are now going to have a special presentation from Mr Joe Natoli, a year ten student at Collingwood College. Joe was born in the Philippines and was adopted from a children's home there by Australian parents, Basil and Mary Natoli. On his recent return to the Philippines Joe was struck by the effects of poverty on the people of his native land. He had taken video footage of his journey and with help from several sources he developed a short video presentation called "Journey to Reality." On World Anti-Poverty Sunday - and as we present these awards - it offers a stark reminder of how poverty prevents people from participating in the fullness of life – and it invites us to be thankful for the contributions of people, here and all over the world, who are fighting poverty. Please welcome Joe Natoli:

Journey to Reality

And now it is time to meet our finalists. The first finalist is Mr Denis Cairney. Denis's application was made, as per the guidelines for the award, as a senior representative of the Ampersand Network Board. Unfortunately Denis is unable to be with us this afternoon due to a prior commitment and is represented by fellow board member Katia Rotar. Denis, like all members of the Ampersand board, was heavily involved in volunteering as a school student. His volunteer work exposed him to poverty and disadvantage in his own City. In one role he tutored refugee children in St Albans. In another he served meals to those in need of emergency relief on the edge of the City. In yet another he provided one-to-one mentoring for children at camps held for those from some of Victoria's most disadvantaged families. Denis's personal action continues in similar roles to this day and he is the current young citizen of the year for the municipality of Boroondara. However Denis's particular passion has been in encouraging others to engage in actions of social reciprocity. He believes that, by encouraging others to 'get involved' the impact against poverty and related social ills can be maximised. Consequently Denis, and six other young people, who were thinking the same way, have developed the Ampersand Network. The Ampersand Network is an initiative to present volunteer support-work opportunities to tertiary students in a way that is attractive and relevant to them. The network has grown quickly and as the Ampersand website says: Volunteer work inevitably exposes people to some of the most pressing social issues that exist in our communities. The experience of volunteering can provide students with a perspective they might not otherwise gain from uni life, and may help to produce the more broad-minded, socially engaged and compassionate generation of leaders we will

require to meet the challenges of the future.

Representing Denis Cairney and to tell us a little more about Ampersand Network, please welcome Katia Rotar.

questions

Thank you Katia.

Next we welcome Mr Alistair Webster. In 2004 Alistair was offered the chance to take over a small community fund that his parents had established some years earlier. The fund had been started but had not been developed and was effectively defunct. In his travels Alistair had noticed patterns of entrenched disadvantage which develop along lines of ethnicity and culture. Consequently he decided to devote his philanthropic efforts to promote systemic change for groups experiencing sustained poverty in local indigenous, migrant and asylum seeker communities. Alistair and his advisory board have done a masterful job of reinventing a defunct fund. They have created a purposeful fund which enabling grassroots programs that make a real difference in the target communities. Would you please welcome Alistair to the microphone.

questions

Alistair Webster - Thank You.

It's time now to meet Hayley Peck.

Hayley's particular passion with respect to the eradication of poverty is in the area of international humanitarian and aid work. Her interest was developed through high school as she took a pivotal role in international affairs and aid committees, particularly concerned with awareness raising and fundraising for projects of major agencies and organisations. Since then Hayley has travelled extensively and her travels abroad have not only been tourist oriented but have involved her in the life and work of people experiencing significant disadvantage. Her next overseas expedition will be at the start of 2006 when she travels to Eastern Cape in South Africa. She will spend nine months in a rural community working alongside local community support staff as a peer educator. Her work will include development of a baseline survey and needs assessment for the community in which she works, planning and implementation of projects with the support of local and international aid groups and potentially the implementation of ongoing projects which may be supported from Australia. Ladies and Gentlemen, please welcome Hayley Peck:

questions

We now come to the second annual Will Thomas Oration and the delivery of that by Dr Ray Cleary. Ray is the Chief Executive Officer of Anglicare Victoria.

Ray's first appointments were in 1977 as Executive Director of Child Care Services for the Uniting Church and the Copelen Street Family Centre, now part of Connections, Child Youth and Family Services. After a number of other community sector roles, he took up a position as Vicar at St Paul's Anglican Church, Canterbury in 1992. In 1995 he returned to agency work as CEO of Melbourne CityMission and then on to his current position in 2000.

Ray has a Bachelor Degree in Economics, Social Work and Theology combined with a Diploma in Education and a Doctorate in Ministry Studies. He is currently the Chair of the Social Responsibilities Committee of the Anglican Diocese of Melbourne and a member of the Victorian Inter Church Gambling Task force. In 2001 Ray Chaired the Victorian Government's Ministerial Advisory Committee on Homelessness and until recently was a Charter Member of the Brotherhood of St Laurence. He is a Life Member of the Children's Welfare Association of Victoria and a Board Member of the Victorian Council of Social Service, the Australian Theological Foundation and Families Australia. In June 2003 Ray was appointed to the Victorian Government's Ministerial Advisory Committee for Children and Family Support and the Ministerial Housing Council. Ladies and Gentlemen, would you please welcome Dr Ray Cleary.

Oration

Thank you Ray.

We return to meeting our finalists and next meet Alana Smith. Alana is a second year Arts/Law student with a passion for Human Rights and improvement of life conditions in the developing World. It seems appropriate therefore that she should be the chairperson of Vision Generation – or VGen – the youth movement of World Vision. Alana's involvement with VGen began after undertaking a World Vision study tour to a developing country and then being selected as a Youth Ambassador for the organisation, having the chance to share her experience with other people her age and younger. She has been active in awareness raising campaigns, VGen's current fundraising campaign to support vocational training for women in Palestine and the development of VGen in Australia at a federal or whole-of-country level. At the end of this year she will venture to South America for two months of volunteer support work in Quito, Ecuador.

Let's welcome Alana Smith.

questions

Thank you Alana.

Our final finalist for this year is Kimberley Smith. Unfortunately Kim cannot be with us this afternoon. But, as I speak here from the middle of Melbourne suburbia, Kim is somewhere on her way to the base camp of Mt Everest. We are however very happy that her parents were able to be here with us this afternoon.

With Kim not here to answer any questions, it falls to me to tell you little about her work. Kim is a probationary psychologist working as a family services practitioner in Healesville. She has developed programs both at Healesville and in similar roles in Western Melbourne – programs that have aimed to develop self esteem and decision making capabilities for children and young people from disadvantaged backgrounds. Programs that Kim developed herself or in which she assisted with development include ‘The Seven Weeks of Self’ program - a self esteem program for girls in Melbourne’s outer east, a similar program for girls at the Western English Language School in Western Melbourne, a drug prevention program in the west, a ‘Choices and Challenges’ program about alternatives to use of violence, and a ‘Journeys’ art program – encouraging children to use art to express feelings that may otherwise be suppressed and then presented in anti-social ways.

As occurs for many people, Kim found that her passion for helping people in developing countries was fuelled particularly by having a sponsor child. Kim tells the story of receiving pictures, month after month in grey pencil-sketch form from her sponsor child. An idea came to mind; What about sending a small box of colour pencils to encourage some experimentation? Kim wasn’t sure that anything would happen, but then, in the subsequent letter, she opened the letter to find a big, bright red heart, drawn for her. Kim’s current trip takes her to Nepal as part of an awareness and fundraising campaign to support twelve orphanages in around Kathmandu. Next year Kim is hoping to involve herself even more deeply in community development in an area of great need. She is planning to travel to Liberia to work in a refugee camp, using some of her skills as a probationary psychologist and with the support services of the Global Volunteer Network organisation, to work with young children in the camp – children for which a sense of self might be the one thing that ensures their survival.

Ladies and Gentlemen, with the knowledge that Kim is on a great expedition right now, let’s offer her our support from right over here in Melbourne and also thank her for sharing some of her story with us.

We are now going to hear a short musical reflection from St David’s Organist and Musical Director Geoff Newton. During this time I invite you to think about what you have heard today, think about what inspired you and think about how we can spread the inspiration around ...so that the push to Make Poverty History might one day be reality.

Musical Item

Well what remains to be done is to announce the recipient of the overall award and to do that I’d like to ask Lorraine Duff from the ANZ Bank to come forward. Ladies and Gentlemen, please make her welcome.

