

Brotherhood:

Stories of Courage and Resilience

Workbook

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Carmel Hunter, Jamie Miller and
Debra Saffrey-Collins



Brotherhood
of St Laurence

Working for an Australia free of poverty

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Introduction

This workbook is a companion for the book, *Brotherhood: Stories of Courage and Resilience*, written by Fr Jeff O’Hare. His book contains short vignettes of the lives, struggles and triumphs of some of the people with whom the Brotherhood works.

This workbook is aimed at Year 9 and Year 10 students but can be adapted to all secondary students. The stories in the book and the reflections and activities in this workbook can be used as a resource in different subjects. For example, they are suitable for social justice issues in Geography and History, and values education in subjects such as Religious Education and English. The purpose of this workbook is to provide students with a deeper understanding of the issues of poverty, disadvantage and social exclusion in Australia. This workbook also aims to influence young people’s values, attitudes and beliefs, so they can reflect positive values in their present and future behaviour.

The Brotherhood of St Laurence is indebted to the writers of this workbook. The Brotherhood thanks the writers for giving up their time to meet, reflect on the stories, and write the worksheets in this workbook.

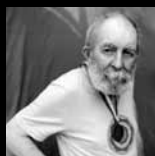
Please note that all cross-references refer to *Brotherhood: Stories of Courage and Resilience*.



Photo by Stephen Daughtry, December 2010

From left to right: Debra Saffrey-Collins, Jamie Miller, Elida Brereton, Peter Burke, Carmel Hunter, Brad Chapman, Bev Hewlett and Stephen Daughtry

Worksheets





David Nyuol Vincent

‘People were lying on the footpaths, dead. Dad would reassure me they were only sleeping.’

(David Vincent, p. 6)

Read

Read David's story on pages 5–11.

- 1 Why did David have to leave his home town?
- 2 What countries did David live in before coming to Australia?
See if you can find on a map the towns and rivers mentioned in David's story.

Reflect

David has spent much of his life as a refugee. Being a refugee is an internationally recognised, legal status.

- 1 Who can be a refugee?
- 2 According to the 1951 Refugee Convention, what criteria must a person satisfy to be classified as a refugee?
- 3 What is the difference between a refugee and an asylum seeker?

Respond

- 1 Why is the topic of refugees hotly debated in Australia?
- 2 Why are some people against refugees moving to Australia?
- 3 Many people support refugees coming to our country. Apart from Sudan, list the countries that refugees living in Australia have come from.
- 4 Have you ever felt displaced? If so, how did this make you feel?
- 5 In what ways are we shaped by the circumstances of our childhood? How have the events of your childhood shaped you?
- 6 Hypothetical: you have been put in charge of an organisation that helps refugees adjust to life in Australia. List the activities your organisation will conduct to help refugees overcome the traumas of their past and join, as full members, the Australian community.



Debra Thomas

'God dropped a huge box of colour into our world'

(Debra Thomas, p. 16)

'[Jesus can change] shit to sugar because he changed me!' (Debra Thomas, p. 16)

Read

Read Debra's story on pages 13–19.

Reflect

- 1 If you were painting a portrait of Debra, what aspects of her would you focus on to show the 'real' Debra?
- 2 How has Debra's relationship with her parents affected her life?
- 3 Why did Debra leave school when she was only 14? Why did she decide she couldn't go back to school? What were the main consequences of this decision? What advice would you have given her?

Respond

- 1 How and why did Debra 'trash' herself? Why do some young people take drugs?
- 2 What are the main risks that young people take and what are the consequences? (Note that not all risks are harmful.) Have you taken risks in your life? What were the consequences for you and for others?
- 3 Research the impact of alcohol and drug use on young people's physical and mental health.
- 4 What does art mean to Debra?
- 5 What does Debra say about her relationship with Jesus and God? How has this relationship affected her life? What is your personal picture of God?
- 6 As Debra reflects on her life, does she view the 'glass as being half-empty or half-full'? Why?



Simon Mansell

'We get to the security check-in and Simon sails through, along with untold bangles, buckles and rings, without any problems. I follow, and alarms go off all over the place' (Fr Jeff, p. 22)

Read

Read Simon's story on pages 21–8.

- 1 As you read Simon's story, list the major shifts in his life.

Reflect

- 1 Do you know anyone like Simon? If you do, how is that person's life similar to Simon's? How is it different?
- 2 How would you feel if Simon sat beside you right now?
- 3 Simon has a great love of poetry that sustains him during difficult times. What sustains you when things are not going well?
- 4 Simon's membership of the Choir of Hard Knocks (now called the Choir of Hope and Inspiration) is very important to him. Identify three reasons why this is so.
- 5 Identify one thing that is really important in your life. List three reasons why this is so important to you.
- 6 What do you think of Simon's statement, 'wouldn't it be a sad world if there was no magic' (p. 27)?

Respond

- 1 Look up the Choir of Hope and Inspiration on the internet. Write about the choir's history and formation.
- 2 Has the experience of reading Simon's story and reflecting on it given you any new insights? It might help to record these new insights in sentences that begin with 'I reckon ...'
 - a Look over your insight sentences. Do any of these have implications for you and the way you live your life? It might help to record these implications in sentences beginning with 'I would like to ...'
 - b Will any of the 'I would like to...' statements prompt you to think about changing the way you live, such as by doing something new or different? List three of these plans for the future using sentences beginning with 'I will ...'
 - c What might help you to do the 'I will ...' things?
- 3 Simon asked Fr Jeff to baptise him. What is baptism? Read about baptism on the internet. Write down why you think Simon asked to be baptised.



Pat Parker

'I became an alcoholic and ended up at AA [Alcoholics Anonymous] meetings. That blew me away, as there was a room full of people – professionals, well-known people, actors. I realised that it could happen to anyone!'

(Pat Parker, p. 32)

Read

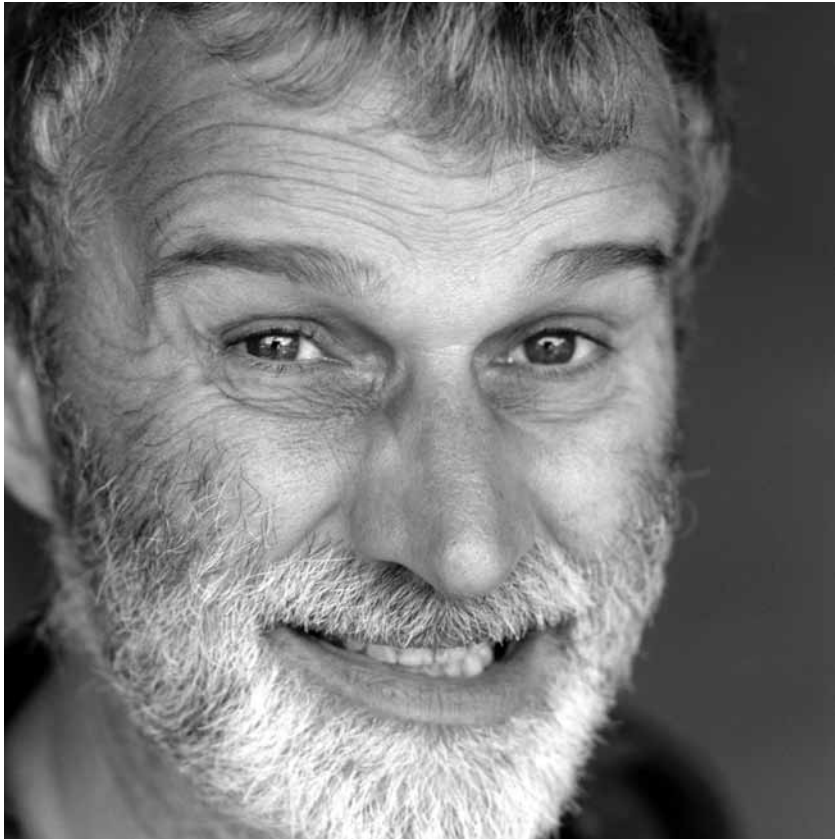
Read Pat's story on pages 29–35.

Reflect

- 1 Think about what you have just read and list 10 adjectives that apply to Pat's life story.
- 2 What do you think Pat saw as the turning point in her life when she was at rock bottom? What use did she make of this change in her life?
- 3 Describe how Pat lives her life now.
- 4 Think about your relationships with friends and others. Does Pat's story have any relevance to how you regard others and relate to them? If so, in what way?

Respond

- 1 On the internet, research if there is a connection between alcohol and domestic violence. What are some of the consequences of domestic violence?
- 2 Go to the Brotherhood of St Laurence's website (www.bsl.org.au) and find out about the Coolibah Centre – of which Pat is a member.
- 3 On the Brotherhood's website, go to the Education page (click on the 'Get involved' drop-down menu) and discover how your school might participate in the Brotherhood's work for social justice.
- 4 From your list of adjectives about Pat's life, choose four words that most powerfully describe Pat's life. Explain to your class, or write down, why you chose these particular words.



Andrew Pearson

'I know I will never beat the disease [Huntington's], but ... the more I am around creative people, the better my life is.' (Andrew Pearson, p. 39)

Read

Read Andrew's story on pages 37–42.

- 1 As you read Andrew's story, make a list of the words and phrases in the story that you think are the most important.

Reflect

- 1 How do you think you would feel if you met Andrew? What did you learn from Andrew about being true to yourself?
- 2 Andrew is described as being 'trapped in the disease called Huntington's'. Read about the disease on the internet. List how the disease would impact your life now and in the future.
- 3 Fr Jeff says that Andrew has an 'enduring positive energy'. What are the sources of this energy? How do you find the energy to overcome obstacles in your own life?
- 4 What does Andrew say about the importance of friendship? Why is friendship important to you?
- 5 Being among creative people is very important for Andrew. Think of a creative person who inspires you. What inspires you about them and how does their creativity motivate you to be creative?

Respond

- 1 Find out what research is being conducted into Huntington's disease. Consider the possibility of supporting a medical research project by organising a fundraiser through your school, church or another community organisation you are involved with.
- 2 Think of someone in your circle of family, friends or school mates who is isolated because of illness or disability. How could you be a friend to them as a way of reducing their isolation? (Once you have developed an idea, perhaps share it with someone you trust to get their feedback. Then maybe you can try it and see how it goes.)



Anthony Brennan

'People who live in poverty, who struggle, have just the same dreams and aspirations as anyone else.'

(Fr Jeff, p. 49)

Read

Read Anthony's story on pages 43–9.

- 1 As you read Anthony's story, list the major changes in Anthony's life.

Reflect

- 1 Because he wore glasses and didn't have the latest clothes, Anthony was bullied by other children at school. How did this affect Anthony?
- 2 After leaving school and working at a couple of different jobs, something happened for Anthony. What was it? How did it help him?
- 3 After a long association with the Brotherhood's Furniture Works operation, Anthony became a leader in the program. What effect did this have on Anthony? What effect did this have on others?
- 4 'Anthony, in working to transform others as he himself has been transformed, is a "wounded healer".' (p. 49) Explain what this means.
- 5 'Anthony wants to make a difference in people's lives because a difference has been made in his life.' (p. 47) How would you like to make a difference to other people's lives?
- 6 Do people who have enjoyed benefits in their lives have a responsibility to share these benefits with others?
- 7 When, like Anthony, you have had little support, little opportunity and even little love, getting a break can seem almost impossible. What do you think life is like for people like Anthony? Record your thoughts about this.

Respond

- 1 List three things you have learned from Anthony's story.
- 2 Use the internet to find programs that are similar to Furniture Works. In what ways do such programs improve life for people who have experienced isolation, rejection, unemployment or other disadvantages?
- 3 Imagine someone like Anthony is being bullied at your school. What can you do about it? What advice can you give this person?
- 4 Re-read the quote from Fr Jeff on the opposite page. What do you think these aspirations are? Are such aspirations reasonable? What could you, your school, or others do to ensure the Anthony Brennans of this world achieve their aspirations?



Beryl James

'It makes you think about our engagement with place and the part we all have to play in the responsible stewardship of our community.'

(Fr Jeff, p. 56)

Read

Read Beryl's story on pages 51–6.

- 1 As you read Beryl's story, list the things that are important to Beryl.

Reflect

- 1 How are particular places in Beryl's story significant?
- 2 Beryl has contributed to building the community in the places she has lived. Should Beryl be 'entitled to all the benefits, the spaces and the beauty' of the places she has helped to create? What do we need to do to ensure justice and equality of opportunity in this regard?
- 3 'It's not about buildings, it's about people. It's all about friendship and that means everything!' (p. 56) What does Beryl mean by this? Explain why or why not you think this is true.
- 4 Fr Jeff says that Beryl reminds him that 'connectedness gives us life' (p. 55). What do you think he means by this?
- 5 'I do get into trouble at times because of my quick tongue. I call a spade a shovel.' (p. 55) What does this mean? When is it a good idea to 'call a spade a shovel'? When is it a bad idea?
- 6 What might have become of Beryl if she had not discovered the Coolibah Centre?

Respond

- 1 Use the Brotherhood's website (www.bsl.org.au) to answer the following questions about the Coolibah Centre.
 - a What is the Coolibah Centre?
 - b Who runs it?
 - c What activities occur there?
- 2 'Living on my own in North Melbourne I do get lonely and I have little breakdowns occasionally, but that's because I'm alone.' (p. 55) What kind of things could you or your community do to alleviate someone's loneliness? Have you ever felt lonely? What is the difference between being alone and being lonely? What makes you feel better when you are sad or lonely?
- 3 Who is Fr Gerard Tucker? Use the internet to research Fr Tucker and write two paragraphs about him.



Carmelita Rajahpakse

'At the age of 66, Carmelita did her Certificate 3 and Diploma in Children's Services and suddenly all the work she had once done has come back to her and given her life.' (Fr Jeff, p. 60)

Read

Read Carmelita's story on pages 57–62.

Reflect

There have been many changes in Carmelita's life both in Sri Lanka and Australia. At the age of 66, she completed a certificate and a diploma in Melbourne so she could continue the work she had done in Sri Lanka. Carmelita was never frightened of change. She accepted it, and thought about how she could help young people.

- 1 Think about the changes you have experienced in your life; for example, starting school, changing schools, family circumstances, moving house and meeting new friends. Describe how easy or hard it was for you to make such changes.

Respond

- 1 List four of the changes Carmelita has experienced in her life. What effect did they have on her life?
- 2 What do you know about Sri Lanka? Using the internet, find out something new about Sri Lanka.
- 3 After coming to Australia, Carmelita completed some studies with the Brotherhood of St Laurence.
 - a Use the internet to research the Brotherhood's Centre for Work and Learning.
 - b Find out about programs that the Brotherhood offers and who the Brotherhood cares for and serves.
 - c Find out how the Brotherhood helps volunteers to develop their gifts for working in the community.
- 4 Carmelita's family taught her that what matters is 'not race, creed or colour but the human spirit' (p. 60). She believes that beauty and colour are only skin-deep. How do you think Carmelita's attitude has helped her to cope with the changes in her life? What would you do if you had to cope with a major change in your life at this moment?
- 5 Fr Jeff says, 'The arrival of people from different lands has brought a whole new dimension to the area, requiring us to think differently about ... this new generation' (p. 62). What type of services do you believe need to be offered in your area so that all young people will feel included and valued?



Craig Williams

'I have my own room and bathroom, and space and freedom. It's a place I can call home [the Brotherhood of St Laurence's Sidney Myer House], and I don't have to worry about being chucked out! I like community and mateship, a close-knit society. It's important to me.' (Craig Williams, p. 68)

Read

Read Craig's story on pages 63–9.

Reflect

Sometimes it's what we don't say or do that reveals a lot about what makes us tick. Often we miss the difficulties our friends are having because we don't notice what they are *not* doing. Learning to read the quiet signals our friends send out and giving them time to speak will help us to know them better.

For someone with such a difficult life, it's amazing that Craig's story reads in such a positive way. Perhaps his kindness reflects both forwards – to those he meets each day – and backwards to encompass the people and events that have gone before.

- 1 What can you tell about Craig's life from what has and has not been said?
- 2 Explain why or why not you think Craig has reason to be angry with what life has thrown his way.
- 3 When things fall apart for you, in big ways or small, how do you react? When you think of things in your past that have hurt you, are you still as angry as you were then or has something changed? If it has changed, in what way has it changed?

Respond

- 1 Maybe you have lost a family member or friend, or been rejected by someone you love. Can you describe how that felt and how it feels now? If there has been a change in the way you feel, describe how that change has come about.
- 2 Go online and read about SecondBite (www.secondbite.org). As a society, we are extremely wasteful when it comes to food and the resources of the planet, but there are people – like Craig – who are helping to change this.
 - a List one way in which our society is wasteful.
 - b Suggest a plan that will change our wasteful habits, or that will make use of something that would otherwise be thrown out.
- 3 Knowing what you know about Craig's history and attitude, write a 'Letter to the editor' of your local paper explaining why no-one should be seen as useless or hopeless.



Darryl Gardener

‘My family was good because they came to visit me a lot, so I had a sense of belonging.’

(Darryl Gardener, p. 72)

‘Luckily, one day Darryl ran into his sister in the city and she urged him to move home to be with his mum. He jumped at the chance.’ (Fr Jeff, p. 74)

Read

Read Darryl's story on pages 71–6.

- 1 As you read Darryl's story, pay particular attention to the different stages of his home life.

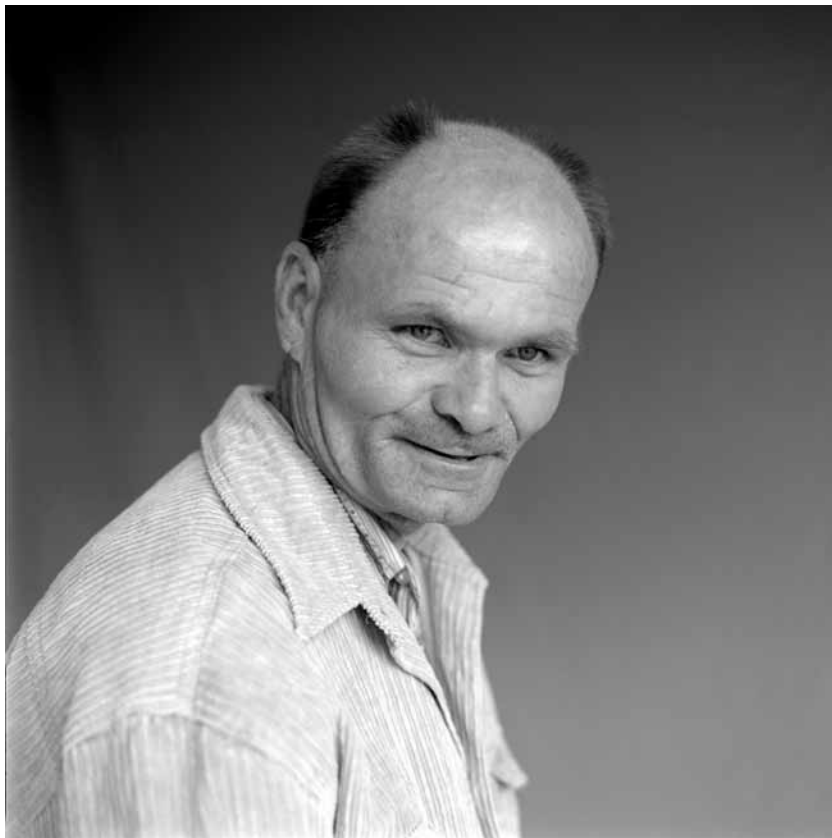
Reflect

Sometimes children, young people and adults need to live away from their family home for various reasons and for different amounts of time.

- 1 If you needed to live away from home, what would you take with you? What would you miss?

Respond

- 1 Use the internet to research boys' homes and Melbourne's boarding houses. Write down four features of boys' homes and four features of boarding houses.
- 2 How would living in a boys' home differ from living in a boarding house? How does living in these homes differ to living in your own home?
- 3 Why do you think Darryl 'jumped at the chance' to move in with his mum? What experiences would Darryl have had for the first time? How do you think he would have felt?
- 4 Darryl says that 'it's really important that we help each other' (p. 74). He believes that by helping others he has contributed to making the world a better place.
 - a Describe what Darryl has done to make his world better.
 - b In what ways can you make your world better?



Dave Graham

‘They [the staff at the kindergarten Dave attended] just could not cope with all the crap I got up to and the amount of energy I had. I used to get out of the house and just take off.’ (Dave Graham, p. 79)

Read

Read Dave's story on pages 77–82.

Reflect

Circumstances outside of Dave's control have made his life difficult in many ways. Sometimes when we look at somebody else it is very easy to see all of the things that are 'wrong' about that person and not so easy to notice the things that are 'right' about that person.

- 1 The story reveals many strengths in Dave's character. What are five of Dave's strengths?
- 2 Think about your own life. What are five strengths that you recognise in yourself?
- 3 What are the five strengths of another person you know?

Dave lives with severe short-sightedness and epilepsy stemming from a brain injury he acquired as an infant, yet he is still grateful for many things, like his independence and the people he works with.

- 4 List 10 things for which you are grateful.

Respond

Dave's life has been described as a 'rollercoaster without a seatbelt' (p. 79). His story ends with an anecdote about sensible humility. He solves a problem by putting aside pride and independence and asking for help.

- 1 What circumstances do you need help with in your life?
- 2 Who could you ask for help?



Elvie Brown

'My life is full, and it is good.' (Elvie Brown, p. 83)

Read

Read Elvie's story on pages 83–9.

Reflect

For someone who has lived with the debilitating condition of multiple sclerosis for more than 50 years, Elvie is incredibly positive, and it seems that nothing can stop her from being active and giving life a go. Being organised is important for Elvie because it helps her deal with the disease.

- 1 Do you know someone who is living with a condition like multiple sclerosis? If you feel comfortable doing so, talk to your class about how you see that person managing each day. What are the highs and lows for them? Who helps them? What kind of resources do they need?
- 2 Elvie believes in euthanasia and living and dying with dignity. What's your view?
- 3 As a class, discuss what you think makes the human spirit so resilient.

Respond

- 1 Research multiple sclerosis and euthanasia on the internet or at the library. Summarise your findings.
- 2 Conduct a class debate on euthanasia.
- 3 As a class, or individually, answer this question: what are some of the ways you could become involved as a volunteer or supporter, assisting those with long-term conditions like multiple sclerosis?



Elyse Maurelli

‘I think many of us have watershed moments in our lives. Mine was in 1970, when I was involved in a terrible car accident: a single-car roll over in which my husband, and my son aged seven and a half months, were killed. I went under the bed for nearly two years with a serious nervous breakdown; I could not function. Then I found the Brotherhood of St Laurence, and the organisation and the people in it became my saviours and my solace.’

(Elyse Maurelli, pp. 92–3)

Read

Read Elyse's story on pages 91–5.

Reflect

Life is often unfair. Doors open for some and slam in the faces of others. One of the most important questions life asks us is, 'How will I respond to what comes my way?' Elyse's story tells of an incredible life and an amazing resilience. She found ways to open doors that were shut. She found ways to fully experience life and to give to others – even in the midst of her own sorrow. Elyse found a way back into life by caring for someone else. Her relationship with Monty was healing for both of them. How we face the trouble that comes our way will shape the sort of person we become.

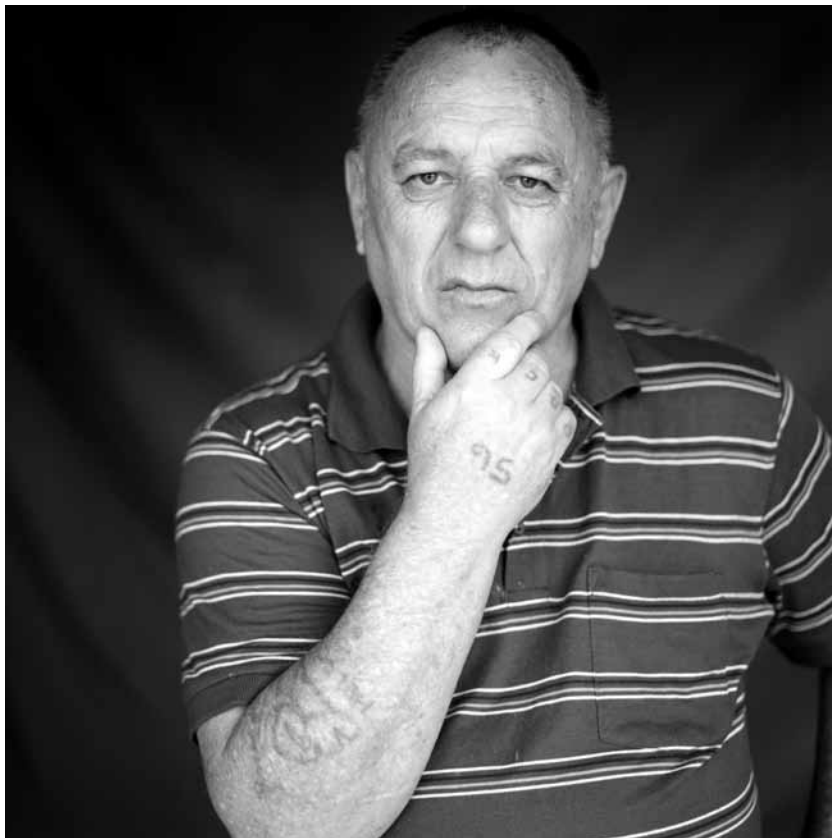
- 1 Are you brave or resilient? How?
- 2 How do you deal with the problems you face?

Respond

- 1 The British band Chumbawamba, an overtly political outfit, had a hit with 'Tubthumping' in 1997. It's become an anthem for sporting teams and for situations where a 'never give up' attitude is needed. Some of the lyrics are: 'I get knocked down but I get up again. You're never gonna keep me down'.

Identify the songs that make you feel better when you're struggling. Explain why they give you hope and make you feel better. Is it the words? Is it the tune? Is it the memories the song brings back?

- 2 Write about someone who inspires you through the way they live their life. It could be a family member, a friend, teacher or someone famous. Why do they inspire you?
- 3 Have you ever been so involved in someone else's life that you forgot your own problems? Write a poem or a list of words that explain the way this felt. It doesn't have to be deep and meaningful. Many people forget their troubles and feel connected to others when they support their favourite sporting team!
- 4 Write a description of the type of friend you would like to be and the type of friend you would like to have. Are they the same thing?



Gilbert (Gil) Baker

'Gil ended up in intensive care: as well as suffering brain damage, he had six broken ribs, neck injuries, a perforated eardrum, his nose was broken and there was a 75 mm hole in his skull.' (Fr Jeff, p. 98)

Read

Read Gil's story on pages 97–102.

Reflect

- 1 Sometimes life events can be totally unexpected. These events can have a positive and negative effect for the rest of people's lives. Think about your family's history and list six significant events that have formed your family's direction and position. It could be the birth of children, moving house, shifting overseas or sickness.
- 2 What was the initial effect of the attack on Gil?
- 3 Despite the dreadful effects of the attack, Gil has been able to respond with a number of positive actions. List some of these.

Respond

- 1 How do you think being Indigenous has affected Gil's life? What has been positive and what has been negative for Gil?
- 2 Research Indigenous people's connectedness with the land and convey what you have learnt through text, illustrations or poetry.
- 3 Go to the website of The Torch project (www.thetorch.org.au) and find out about The Torch Indigenous Artists Project in St Kilda. Investigate how your school could become involved.
- 4 What projects involving Indigenous people are in your area?



Jeffrey Robertson

'I drank, I became self-destructive, but I still took my medication [for HIV] and in doing so realised that I didn't want to die. I had become emotionally and physically bankrupt. The drinking was so heavy that they put me in a support house and diagnosed me with acquired brain damage, but later they recognised that I was having an HIV-related emotional breakdown. I was sent to Warrnambool to a rehab centre and given the opportunity to learn about the disease. Between 2000 and 2003, I got back my life.'

(Jeffrey Robertson, pp. 107–8)

Read

Read Jeffrey's story on pages 103–10.

Reflect

Jeffrey's story is a roller-coaster ride of emotions, misinformation, bigotry, disadvantage and injustice. Family, friends and community members judged him out of ignorance. Many people diagnosed with HIV and AIDS, even in Australia today, are feared by others. They are often unfairly judged and rumours create an 'us and them' mentality, especially in small communities.

When Jeffrey's situation was at its worst, he became self-destructive and he describes his life at that time as 'emotionally and physically bankrupt' (p. 108); yet something within stopped him from ending his life.

- 1 How would you support and care for someone in Jeffrey's situation?
- 2 How can we break down prejudice and intolerance between people?
- 3 Do you think we are more tolerant today of people who are living with illnesses like HIV and AIDS, than Jeffrey found people to be when he first became sick in the late 1990s?
- 4 Re-read the section about Jeffrey being reunited with his children (p. 109). Imagine his anguish over meeting them again. As a class, reflect on his daughter's wonderful response, 'Thank God you are alive! I only remember someone who loved me' (p. 109).

Respond

In so many ways Jeffrey's life is a triumph: he has been recognised publically for his work with young people, he has gathered his family around him, and he now lives an independent and full life. Living with HIV, like so many illnesses, takes enormous courage and resilience – it is not just about staying alive.

- 1 In groups, design a program that will educate students at your school about an issue that affects your community. Some examples are HIV and AIDS, Hepatitis C, poverty, racial discrimination, domestic violence, drink driving, gambling and drug abuse.

Once designed, meet with a teacher, plan how you can run the program, and make it happen.



Jonny O'Connor

'I saved a sparrow today' (Jonny O'Connor, p. 116)

'You can't always put your finger on why people reach out to me and why I have such wonderful friendships.' (Jonny O'Connor, p. 116)

Read

Read Jonny's story on pages 111–16.

Jonny is a former professional boxer who is described as a 'big rough guy' (p. 111) and who saved the life of a tiny sparrow and remembered God's peace and His mystery.

Reflect

Jonny is generous in his friendships and 'provides a warm space to visit and wonderful companionship' (p. 113) to others, yet Jonny has experienced much pain and sadness in his life.

- 1 What are Jonny's major negative experiences? What impresses you the most about how he faced the challenges in his life?
- 2 Jonny's parents influenced him in different ways. How does he describe his father's manner?
- 3 After doing something stupid and illegal (shoplifting), Jonny received a second chance from the police. Have you done something wrong and received a second chance? If so, how did this make you feel? Do you find it hard to forgive others who do wrong? Why or why not?
- 4 After his partner left him and took their children, Jonny became unemployed, unmotivated and temporarily homeless.
 - a How did Jonny find help? What does this reveal about his character?
 - b Are you resilient when things don't go your way? Share an example from your life of having to accept a change in your hopes and expectations.
- 5 After not seeing his daughter for 10 years, Johnny sought a reunion with her. What was the result of this reunion?
- 6 To what or whom does Jonny give most of the credit for his wonderful friendships?
- 7 What do you think Jonny means by 'God's peace, His mystery' (p. 116)? (Read p. 113 where Jonny talks about God).

Respond

- 1 What do Jonny's friends mean to him and give to him?
- 2 What qualities of friendship do you value most and give to others?



Father Ken Hodgson

‘From the age of nine Ken can clearly remember wanting to go into the Church; there was something about the “doctrine of the resurrection” that intrigued and enticed him.’ (Fr Jeff, p. 119)

Read

Read Fr Ken's story on pages 117–23.

Reflect

- 1 List five influences and experiences that formed Fr Ken's life journey.

Respond

- 1 Fr Ken said he received a very good education. What, in your opinion, does a good education consist of today?
- 2 Some people like Fr Ken have a clear vision of what they want to do with their lives from an early age.
 - a If you are one of these people, what influences helped you to decide what you wanted to do with your life?
 - b If you are unsure about what you want to do with your life, how can you find out what occupation or career is right for you?
- 3 Fr Ken could not sustain the very strict monastic life at Keble House theological school. Research one of the monastic lifestyles (for example, the Benedictine, Franciscan and Dominican orders) and list the three main rules members of the orders have to live by.
- 4 Why was Fr Ken estranged from Fr Tucker?
- 5 What does it say about Fr Tucker that he promised Fr Ken a home if he ever needed one?
- 6 Are there any situations where someone has disappointed you but you have still been able to show them generosity and care for them?



Kevin Dangerfield

'If as a child he was denied schooling and was sent out to do menial work instead, we as a society had failed him, in that an education is a fundamental right of every human being. His social, emotional and cognitive skills were not developed as they should have been.' (Fr Jeff, p. 130)

Read

Read Kevin's story on pages 125–31.

Reflect

- 1 Imagine what it would be like to be unable to read, write and calculate numbers. List the problems you would encounter in everyday life.
- 2 How would a child feel if they grew up with no secure home or loving parents?
- 3 In addition to his early disadvantages, Kevin had a serious work accident, which affected his memory and his ability to follow things through.
 - a Do you know, or have you encountered, anyone who has a disability (such as brain damage or physical impairment)?
 - b What was your reaction when you first encountered their disability? How did you learn to see them as a person first, and see their disability second? What effect do you think being accepted as they are would have on a person with a disability?
- 4 Why do you think Kevin's baptism helped his sense of belonging?

Respond

- 1 Students regarded as different can be excluded from mainstream school life. It could be a life-changing experience if they were accepted by their fellow students. What things could you do to help everyone in your class be accepted?
- 2 Research one of the following: Down syndrome, epilepsy, bipolar disorder or traumatic brain injury.



Maureen O'Connor

'There's no point in beating about the bush!'

(Maureen O'Connor, p. 133)

Read

Read Maureen's story on pages 133–8.

- 1 Was there any part of Maureen's story that made you laugh? Why did you find it funny?
- 2 Was there any part of Maureen's story that disturbed you? Why?
- 3 What did you learn from Maureen about being true to yourself?

Reflect

- 1 Consider Maureen's idea of turning Government House into a place for homeless people. Why or why not is this a good idea?
- 2 Maureen is reluctant to talk about her experiences of abuse, though facing the truth is important to her. What impact does talking about (or not talking about) the things that have hurt us have? (If this question disturbs you, talk about it with someone you trust.)
- 3 Look up the Choir of Hard Knocks (now called the Choir of Hope and Inspiration) on the internet. Make a list of what can be achieved for people like Maureen by belonging to such a group. Why or why not would you join a similar group?
- 4 Consider Maureen's determination to find exactly where her parents were buried. Why do you think this is important to Maureen? If you have visited the graves of family members, what did these visits mean to you? Why or why not do you think it is important to know where we have come from?
- 5 Make a list of the things that make you laugh. What does your sense of humour say about who you are?

Respond

- 1 Wear something different from what you normally wear, go out and observe the reactions of people who notice you. If people laugh at you, laugh with them and decide to feel good about yourself.
- 2 Maureen's story is also about intergenerational poverty. Look up this term on the internet and identify what needs to be done to break the cycle of poverty in our society.
- 3 Organise a laughter party, or charity day at school with your friends or family: use Maureen's menu of soft drink and Twisties; wear bright clothing; tell each other funny stories and enjoy being together.



Mr and Mrs Hu

‘I met Mrs Hu at the electricity plant; she was my “boss”. It was love at first sight; I was captivated by her. My parents insisted that I become financially independent before I could get married, that I make and save enough money to support a family. I honoured their point of view.’ (Mr Hu, pp. 142–3)

Read

Read Mr and Mrs Hu's story on pages 139–45.

Reflect

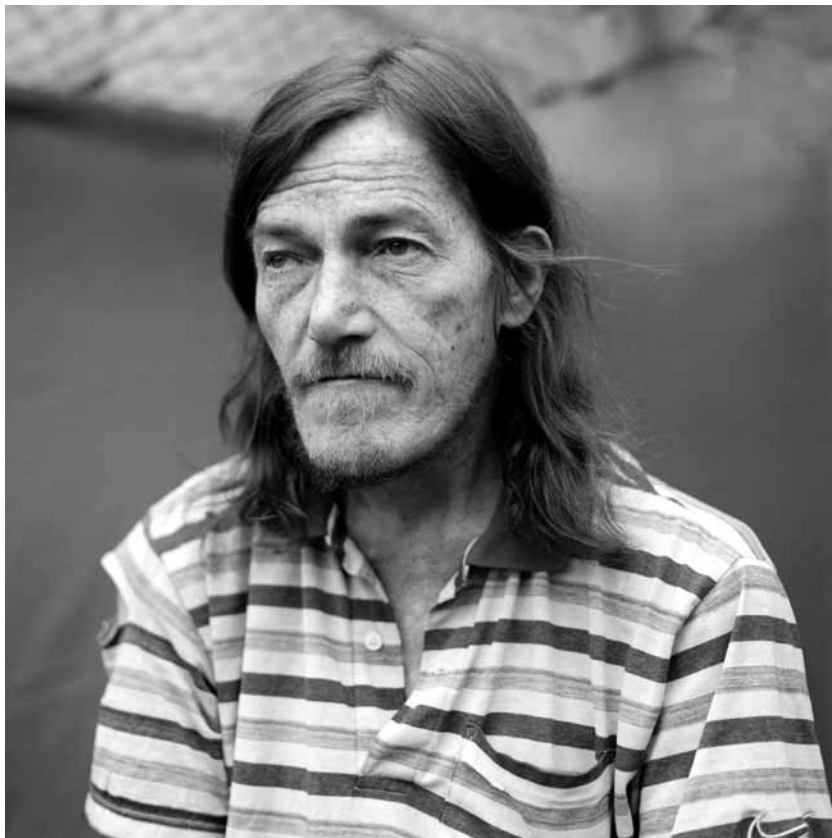
As a child, Mr Hu lived through a very turbulent time. Later in life, he moved to a strange country where he could not speak the language.

- 1 What upheavals have you experienced that changed the way you live, or the place you live or the dreams you had? List the things you wish hadn't happened and those that you are glad did happen. Which list is longer?
- 2 Mr and Mrs Hu have been married for over 50 years and are still very happy. Why do you think it's easier to cope with difficulty and change if you are in a strong, happy relationship?
- 3 Think about the people who make you feel safe, secure and loved. Have you told them how important they are to you?

Respond

Answer one of the following questions.

- 1 **a** What did you think of Mr Hu referring to Mrs Hu as the 'leader' of the household?
b Write a description of what you think is the best way for a couple to think and act together.
- 2 John Marsden's novel, *Tomorrow, When the War Began*, tells the story of dramatic change. The young people in the story have to find new ways of living when war enters their lives.
a If you have read the book (or seen the film), which character did you relate to the most? Which character would you behave like if you were in a similar situation?
b What kept the characters strong when faced with trouble; for example, was it physical strength, emotional maturity, love, or a combination of different factors?
- 3 Have you moved countries or cities? What was hardest about the change? What helped you feel at home in the new place?
- 4 Mr and Mrs Hu enjoy spending time at the Coolibah Centre. Write a poem or story about a place that you like to be.



Peter Griffin

'It doesn't take much for life to alter course, and for our well-made plans to dramatically change. ... Many of us live, more or less, on one side of advantage.' (From the Foreword by Russell Crowe, p. ix)

Read

Read Peter's story on pages 147–52.

- 1 List the major shifts in Peter's life.
- 2 What is the role of a 'roadie'? Research this on the internet.
- 3 Why did Peter lose his job as a roadie?
- 4 How does Peter spend his time now?

Reflect

Coping effectively with disappointment is a sign of strength of character.

- 1 What significant disappointments have you suffered? How did you deal with the disappointment? What did you learn about yourself?
- 2 Imagine you have to drop everything and support your family. How would this affect your life and your plans for the future?
- 3 Imagine yourself as Peter – injured and unable to work. Describe how you might spend each day.
- 4 Peter could have responded to his misfortune in a number of ways. Describe other ways he could have responded. How might you have responded in similar circumstances?
- 5 'Peter will tell you that he has a good life' (p. 151). What makes it a good life for him? Why or why not do you think Peter has a good life?

Respond

- 1 Use the internet to explore the Brotherhood of St Laurence's work. Which of their activities would help Peter the most? Why? Could you see yourself working with the Brotherhood or a similar organisation? If yes, in what capacity? If no, why not?
- 2 Think of one way you or your school could assist disadvantaged people in your community.
- 3 'Many of us live, more or less, on one side of advantage.' (p. ix) What do you think this means?
- 4 Which side of disadvantage do you live on? What implications does this have on the way you live your life?



Rhonda Hamley

'At the end of the day, after the fight is fought and the anger is rendered, it's what lies in the heart that matters.' (Rhonda Hamley, p. 158)

Read

Read Rhonda's story on pages 153–60.

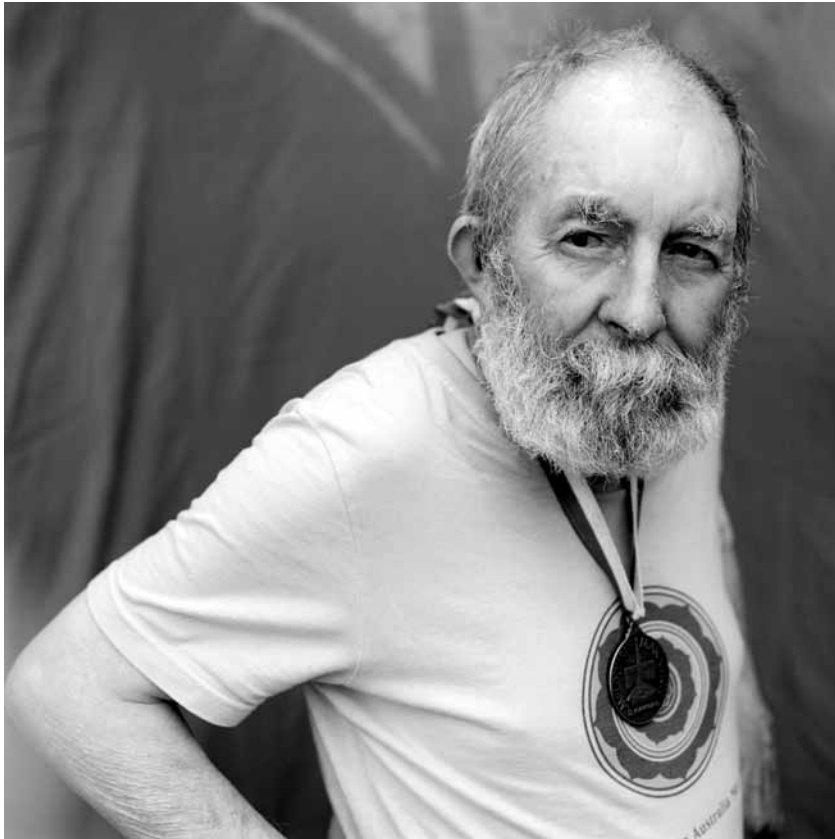
- 1 What do you think of Rhonda's story?
- 2 What words would you use to describe Rhonda?

Reflect

- 1 How do you think you would feel if you met Rhonda?
- 2 What have you learnt from Rhonda's story about being true to yourself? Imagine what it would be like to feel that you are the wrong gender. How easy or difficult would it be to change your life if this were the case?
- 3 Rhonda is described as 'highly emotional and passionate, to the point of being accused of aggression, these characteristics being balanced by a strong sense of justice' (p. 155).
 - a How has Rhonda's life been affected by the way she expresses her anger?
 - b In what ways can anger be expressed positively or negatively?
 - c What can we learn from Rhonda's experience about how we can best express anger?
- 4 In her story, Rhonda says a lot about God and the church.
 - a What do you think about what she says about these things?
 - b What insight do Rhonda's opinions give you about real or fake religion and real or fake community?

Respond

- 1 Think about a social justice issue that interests you. How passionate are you about this issue? In what ways does Rhonda's story encourage you to be more passionate about the things you believe in? Think about how you could become actively involved in activities related to this issue.
- 2 Rhonda mentions three people who have inspired her life: Fr Gerard Tucker, Dr Peter Hollingworth and Archbishop Frank Woods. Research one of these people on the internet. Write a paragraph about what is significant about their life in relation to social justice.



Roy Barrett

‘At the age of 75, he did the annual Frankston–Melbourne run; he has been awarded many medals.’ (Fr Jeff, p. 163)

Read

Read Roy's story on pages 161–5.

Reflect

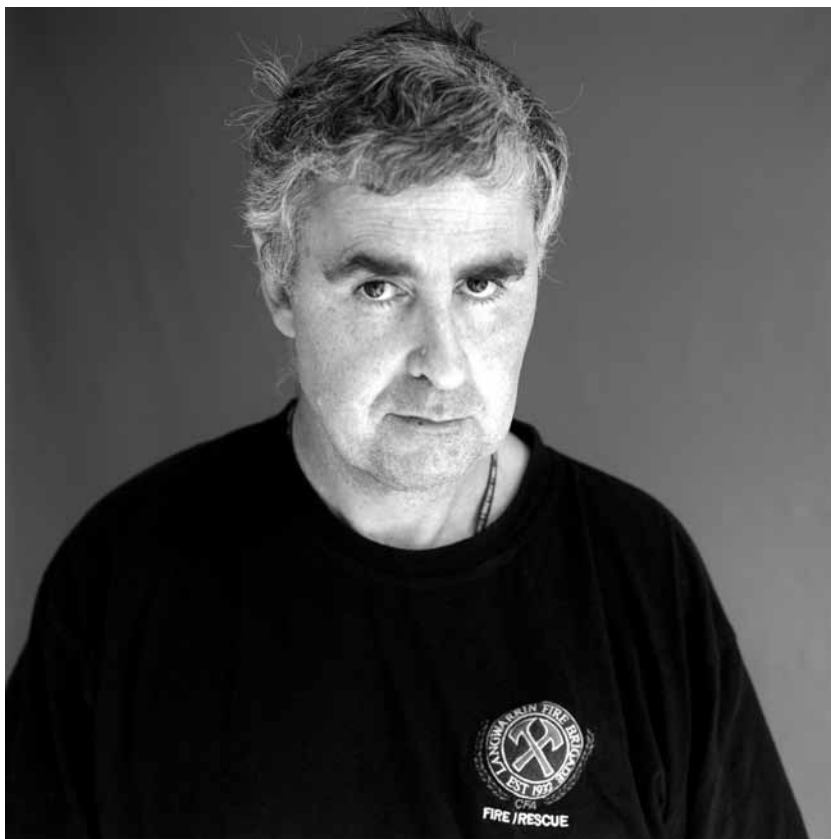
Roy is fortunate to be helped by his friends and the Brotherhood of St Laurence. Roy is more dependent on this external support than many people.

- 1 Imagine what life might be like for Roy without the support of his friends and the Brotherhood. How does this support help him?
- 2 Imagine spending a day with Roy. How would you feel about hanging out with Roy? What would be hard about it? What would be good about it?

Respond

In 1943 Abraham Maslow devised a famous pyramid called Maslow's hierarchy of needs. The five levels of the pyramid outline the things that are important to humans. Look up the pyramid on the internet and reproduce it.

- 1 Moving up the left side of the pyramid, beginning from the base, write down the resources that are available to Roy for each of the five levels.
- 2 Think about your own situation. On the right hand side of the pyramid, again beginning from the base, list the resources that are available to you for each of the five levels.
- 3 What does self-actualisation mean to you for your life?



Tom Millington

‘Tom Millington is a lovely person. He is ... a reminder that as indestructible as we think we are it only takes a moment for our life to change completely and forever.’ (Fr Jeff, p. 167)

Read

Read Tom's story on pages 167–71.

- 1 As you read Tom's story, note the impact the accident had on his life.

Reflect

After the accident Tom was in pain, he was dependent on others and he was very self-centred. Now he works with and inspires others who have similar serious health problems.

Respond

- 1
 - a Write about the experiences of someone who has a serious health problem or disability, and who has gone on to inspire others.
 - b Research famous people who had or have a disability and were/are inspirational to others. Examples include athletes like Olympians Kurt Fearnley and Louise Sauvage; film stars like Christopher Reeve, Patricia Neal and Michael J Fox; geniuses like Stephen Hawking and Beethoven; and others like Helen Keller.
 - c What characteristics are shared by the famous person of your choice and Tom Millington?
- 2 Why did Tom join and remain a member of Adam's fitness class?
- 3 'People with disabilities are most often treated by others as either invisible, embarrassing, or to be pitied' (a stroke victim).
 - a How accurate is this statement? Why or why not?
 - b What is it like at your school for students with physical, intellectual or emotional disabilities?
 - c What could you and your fellow students do to ensure that these students are accepted and given the dignity they deserve?
- 4 'Tom has extraordinary patience and resilience, seemingly awaiting an opportunity to connect and do something that will lead him beyond the moment and his disability' (p. 169). How well do you and your friends cope with setbacks in your lives?



Rev'd Elizabeth Alfred

'There are an awful lot of strange men in the priesthood.' (Elizabeth Alfred, p. 175)

Read

Read Elizabeth's story on pages 173–8.

- 1 What do you think of Elizabeth's story?
- 2 What did you notice most about Elizabeth's way of life?

Reflect

- 1 In what ways do you consider Elizabeth to be a spiritual person?
- 2 What did you learn from Elizabeth about being true to yourself?
- 3 Beside Elizabeth's bed there are 'a prayer book, a bible, a *Woman's Day* and a good novel' (p. 177). List four books that are important to you. Explain why they are important.
- 4 Elizabeth was ordained priest when she was 79 years old.
 - a Why did the church ordain Elizabeth after she retired?
 - b Why do you think Elizabeth said there are an 'awful lot of strange men in the priesthood' (p. 175)?
- 5 In what ways does Elizabeth's life experiences reflect the changing role of women in the past century?

Respond

- 1 Elizabeth was 16 years old in 1930. On the internet, research what life was like in Australia in 1930. List the similarities and differences between life in 1930 and today.
- 2 Elizabeth was ordained a deaconess in 1944. On the internet, research what a deaconess is, and list the historic and contemporary role of a deaconess in the church. How has the role changed, especially since women have been ordained as priests?
- 3 Elizabeth has led several tours to the Holy Land. On the internet, research the Holy Land and find out why it is an important place for Christians and other people of faith.
- 4 List the life experiences and achievements you would like to have by the time you are 90.
- 5 Read the children's book *Wilfrid Gordon McDonald Partridge* by Mem Fox. Write down your reflections on the relationship between a younger and an older person in the story.



Hazel Ball

'The more we are together, the happier we will be. For your friends are my friends, and my friends are your friends. The more we are together, the happier we will be.' (song sung by Hazel Ball at the Coolibah Centre; song title and composer unknown)

Read

Read Hazel's story on pages 179–85.

Reflect

Hazel has spent her life helping other people. As a strong Christian woman, she has lived her life in accordance with Jesus' command to 'love one another'. Many people these days focus on putting themselves first and looking after themselves. They do not stop to help someone else unless it is convenient for them to do so.

- 1 Think about the times when someone has helped you. How did their assistance make you feel? Have you ever gone out of your way to help someone else, or have you ever avoided helping another person? Recall your feelings in each case.

Respond

The Coolibah Centre has been very important in Hazel's life. It was through the Coolibah Centre that Hazel was able to help other people for a long time.

- 1 Look up the Coolibah Centre on the internet and find out what happens there.
- 2 What does the centre offer a person like Hazel?

Hazel's singing group had the best attendance of any Coolibah activity.

- 3 Why do you think Hazel's singing group was so well attended?
- 4 What effect does singing have on people?
- 5 What is so special about Hazel that so many people were drawn to her singing group and still ask about her, even though she cannot conduct the group anymore?

As Hazel gets older she is less interested in ordinary conversations and more focused on her worship and her longing to meet God face to face.

- 6 Why do you think Hazel has changed her interest from talking to people to worshipping God?
- 7 Think of a time when you have changed your priorities. Why did that happen? Explain how the change made you feel.



Rod and Rhonda

'Rod is never dull: he is a ladies' man, but he is also an activist and if he sees an injustice, he'll speak out. He has no fear! Life has been too tough for him to take things lying down. But he has a heart of gold and his love for Rhonda is an outward sign of something deep and unmistakably kind. ... Rhonda is resolved, grateful and a little philosophical ... in his own way, [Rod] has given her life.' (Fr Jeff, p. 192)

Read

Read Rod and Rhonda's story on pages 187–92.

Reflect

Rod met Rhonda after she had suffered a severe stroke. Having lived a very busy life, she was now sick, living alone in a hostel and hampered in her ability to care for herself.

- 1 How might Rhonda have been feeling about herself at this time?
Think about what it means for an adult with a disability to live independently.

Rhonda ended up living in a hostel because there were no close family members who would look after her, yet when Rod suggested that he could care for her, Rhonda's family objected to the plan. But Rhonda was 'unhappy and neglected' at the hostel.

- 2 What do you think Rhonda's family's objections might have been?
- 3 What do you think about the tests Rod and Rhonda were set by other people to prove they were able to care for themselves?
- 4 What gives Rod the strength to support, love and care for Rhonda?

Respond

Not all people in aged-care homes are old. Young people suffering conditions such as Huntington's and multiple sclerosis often find themselves in aged-care facilities when their families cannot care for them.

- 1 Find out if there is a young person in an aged-care facility near you who you could visit.
- 2 Volunteer at your local aged-care facility to read books, play music, wheel people in their chairs around the garden, or assist in their exercise program.

About the Brotherhood of St Laurence

Established during the Great Depression of the 1930s, the Brotherhood of St Laurence was the creation of Fr Gerard Tucker. It has developed into an independent national organisation that provides services and programs to disadvantaged parents and children, the long-term unemployed, vulnerable older people, and refugees.

As well as on-the-ground services, the Brotherhood undertakes research into the causes of poverty and develops policies to improve the situation of those people who it seeks to help. The Brotherhood focuses on the four transition stages considered critical to future wellbeing:

- the early years, both at home and in school
- the years from school to work and further education
- the periods in and out of work, whether voluntary or involuntary
- retirement and ageing.

