

Dear friends,

I write to offer you an update of **Mackay Street Chaplaincy**. Have you heard of it? Have you seen the team members on the street between 11pm and 5 am on Friday nights? ... the tent at the Westpac corner? So what's it all about?

The service is made up of volunteers who come from all walks of life, members of the Mackay community and range in age from 19 to 80 and they have all undergone basic training. Some of them have come from churches and some not. All of them simply want to make the City Heart of Mackay a better place. The basis of the service could be said to come from a powerful story Jesus told, a story which gave the word '*neighbour*' a new meaning, that is, **anyone in need**.

The story of the good Samaritan tells of a traveller in a lonely place who is attacked and robbed and left for dead on the side of the road. A couple of religious leaders - Jews in good standing, pass him by. But a third man who is a Samaritan, a group despised by Jews, stops, gives first aid to the man and takes him to a place of safety, thereby saving his life.

The story may have become somewhat sentimentalised over the many years since it was first told by Jesus, and that raises a couple of questions in my mind: Was the traveller foolhardy, placing himself in danger by travelling a dangerous road alone? Was he indeed a good, a 'worthwhile' person? We don't know the answer to those questions any more than his Samaritan rescuer did and any more that we volunteers know of the people we seek to help in Mackay. All the Samaritan knew was that here was a person in need, and without further question, he helped him in a practical kind and, non-judgemental way.

This is how the Street Chaplains seek to operate. We patrol the nightclub precinct, keeping an eye out for anyone at risk or in need and are prepared to help in practical ways. So far, after seven weeks, we can see that we have made a difference. We have been able to assist young women and men who have needed basic first aid, Band-Aids, a cup of water and a lollipop, a listening ear, and assistance to get to a place of safety and a taxi home. We have been able to prevent some unpleasant outcomes and we have been delighted by the positive welcome we receive each week. We don't preach at anyone – that's not our purpose, as has been said: *"Preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ at all times, and, if necessary, use words."*

If you are interested to know more, if you would like to be part of the training to become a volunteer, being held over the weekend of 16/17 February, please phone me or come to the tent to speak to a volunteer and ask for an application form.

Help us boost our numbers so we can cover Saturday nights as well!

**Ann Dittmar-McCollim, 4957 3341**

**Holy Trinity Anglican Church.**