



Deacon Paul Crowe and his wife, Gordana. Paul recently retired from his professional career and is recovering from surgery and both Paul and Gordana are hoping to do more in their parish.

## **A time of discernment**

*Deacon Nick Kerr*

THIS is a time of change for Deacon Paul Crowe and his wife, Gordana. Paul recently retired from his practice as an orthodontist in Launceston. Gordana is a pastoral carer at Calvary St Vincent's Hospital, Launceston and also does some work at Calvary St Luke's as well. Paul is recovering from two bouts of surgery for arthritis and Gordana has dropped down to casual work while he recovers.

Both are assessing their future ministry and hoping to become more involved in their parish of Launceston.

Paul and Gordana are known especially for their work with RCIA – the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults.

"We've both been involved with RCIA for quite some years – since about 2002, well before I was ordained, first of all as observers, then as team members," Paul said. "Previously we'd been involved in marriage preparation.

"The people who come along to RCIA usually haven't had a lot of contact with the Church. They have some sort of active faith but it is not formed. They're seeking something, something more.

"Some people are funny. If they come along to something like RCIA they expect to see an 'official' representative of the Church. If they don't, they have a suspicion about whether it's orthodox or not. So, as a deacon, my role in the

RCIA is, first of all, as a member of the team, but secondly as the Church's and the parish's 'official' representative."

What does Paul find most appealing about RCIA?

"I think it's that, right at the beginning, we tell our own stories, our faith stories, and we ask the individual candidates or catechumens to tell us a little bit about their faith stories. They're not necessarily fully fleshed out at that stage, but they tell us how they've come to that point of their faith journey.

"We're constantly amazed at how the Holy Spirit has worked within them. Each of them has a different story. Each has come to the RCIA from a very different perspective. We find it very enriching for our faith as well.

"That sounds selfish, but it's a wonderful experience for us.

"As they develop trust in us as people, they open up to us a little more and tell us a little more about their life stories. Sometimes they can be quite tragic stories. Sometimes they can be very faith-filled stories.

"They come from different age groups. They might be 20, 30, 60. And they come from different backgrounds.

"Some have almost no faith background. Some have tried what you might call spiritual taste testing. They've tried different faiths and churches but haven't felt fulfilled for various reasons. So they've come along to see what the Catholic Church has to offer.

"We've very rarely lost people. Once they're baptised into the community, or confirmed and received Eucharist for the first time, they've usually stayed as active members of the community.

"We find that a wonderful thing."

Paul said the whole adult learning experience is enriching for everyone concerned.

"We don't follow the book slavishly," he said. "We always say to the candidates, 'If you have a burning question at any particular time about our Catholic tradition, ask that question at that point. If we're talking about the sacraments and you have a question about the liturgy or social justice – ask it.'

"We often find that, if one person has a question, others have the same question as well, but are afraid to ask it."

The team often invites a priest along for a particular session, like the session on Reconciliation. "Priests have been involved in the sacrament as confessors, where we haven't," Paul said. "That perspective can be enriching for the candidates."

Paul is also involved with his parish and the State Council of the St Vincent de Paul Society. Now that he has retired, and his health is improving, he and his parish priest are talking about how he can do more in the parish.

**Gordana** was a pastoral carer at Calvary four days a week before Paul's surgery.

"Our aim is to give spiritual and emotional support to everybody there, and sometimes practical support, especially for people from a long way away," she said.

"We also support the staff as well as the families of the patients wherever we see a need, like post-bereavement care."

Now Gordana is wondering if she could do similar work as a volunteer through the parish.

"What I'd really like to do is set up a sort of drop in centre," she said. "It might be just a morning a week when anyone can come in, young, elderly, it doesn't matter, just to play draughts, scrabble or some simple game – just come in and have a bit of fellowship.

"We've got a nice new parish centre. We have the venue, it's comfortable. With Paul's surgery I haven't felt it's been the right moment to do it.

"Our parish does have a seniors' group, specifically for retired people, once a month. I'm really thinking of people who might be single mums, married or unmarried, people who can't find work and who find it hard to fill in the day with things that don't cost money.

"I was talking to one parishioner with a slightly disabled daughter in her 20s. She said they go for a walk in the Gorge most days, then they stop in a park that has adult gym equipment and do a workout there because they can't afford to go to a gym and that's free, but it's hard to fill in the day with things they can do."

Gordana is still part of a group, MOTS – Mothers of Teenagers. "That started when we had teenagers," she said. "That was a while ago. We don't meet so often now.

"Paul and I have always been involved in the Church. We used to do marriage preparation

before. We've been on the parish pastoral council. I've been doing pastoral carer's work for about eight years.

"I don't really see myself as Mrs Deacon. I'm supportive, of course. I like to be there when Paul's preaching. I've been to one or two of Paul's baptisms, but I don't see the need to be there all the time.

"I'm pretty sure people see me as supportive of Paul. But it goes both ways. One Sunday a

month Paul sits in the pew with me. That's been nice. I do feel a bit of a widow – but it does give me a bit more of an insight into the position of all those other people who are there as singles, men and women. There are lots of people who are there without anyone else.

"I know he's there. He never winks at me when he's processing out after Mass, though. I think that's an omission. I think that he thinks it would be unseemly."



Deacon Nick McFarlane outside St Mary's Cathedral, Hobart. Nick is deacon at the Cathedral.

## **'A feel for evangelisation'**

DEACON Nick McFarlane has what he calls "a real feel for evangelisation". When he was first ordained he prepared a report for the Hobart archdiocese on evangelisation.

"I went back to the Archbishop to talk about a report I'd written about all the things we could be doing and he asked me what I thought was most important," Nick said. "I said we somehow need to get through to men.

"One of the things I'd talked about in the report was MenALIVE, which had started in Brisbane as a way of doing weekend retreats – they don't call them that – with laymen by laymen, to get them to read Scripture prayerfully every day, to pray every day and to stay associated with sharing groups of some sort."

Nick got some active Catholics, mainly from Charismatic Renewal together to form a group



and he talked to one of the MenALIVE founders in Brisbane. MenALIVE sent some people down to lead a session. Afterwards they told Nick the Hobart team could be doing some of the presenting themselves.

“Within a couple of years we had a team of our own running retreats,” Nick said. “We ended up doing some in Victoria, in Gippsland diocese and in Sale. That was quite a work of the Spirit.

“Annually MenALIVE does a live-in retreat, MenALIVE to the MAX, where they talk about calling. We repeated that material here – quite a formative experience. Some of the men had quite a fresh experience of the Lord.

“That team’s still going. It’s a great support to me in my diaconate. There’s a fellowship there that seems natural and vital. It’s quite rare in the Catholic Church. Many Catholic ministers are on their own.

“Often members of the team, when they go to parishes, find the parish priest is quite isolated. It can be a refreshing experience for him to go to something he doesn’t have to run himself – somewhere where he can share his struggles to some extent with some laymen as peers.”

Nick is a keen supporter of Alpha. He explained:

“About five years before I was ordained, about the time I was starting to study for the diaconate, a priest came to the State Service Committee of the Charismatic Committee – I was involved in it in those days– and spoke about Alpha. He said it had a good reputation for drawing people to the Lord and bringing people into the Church from outside, people who had lapsed or people who had never really known the Gospel. He was quite encouraging.

“At that time we had a little Disciples of Jesus Covenant Community here in Hobart. We’d be taught to be missionary disciples – that was a key part of being a Christian.

“Alpha lined up with the things we were trying to do. We were only a few in number, so we drew in a few people from the parish here in Sandy Bay.”

Nick and his wife Giovanna live in Sandy Bay.

“I started reading and researching about it,” he said. “I came across someone in the Catholic bookshop who told me Alpha was starting up in the Anglican parish just round the corner from

where I live. We rallied round a few friends from the parish and we did a course with them. That’s the best way of learning – do it. Then we ran one for ourselves, with a lot of support from the then parish priest.

“It was a fair bit of work, but it was quite fruitful. And it was good fun – 10 weeks of making casseroles and taking them to the parish centre. We’d worked out that we could fit about 35 people sitting round little tables, which is how you’re supposed to do it. We prayed like mad the first night – and I think 34 people came.

“The theory is that you should run three a year. If you line up a couple of people from the first course, they’ll be great witnesses for the next course, great evangelisers. So, you have a dinner after the first course, and you ask the people to bring their friends, you show them a video – and it’s almost the start of a second course. So you say, ‘If you’re interested, we’re doing another course in three weeks time ...’

“In the end it petered out. We had a team of four – and one guest. But if four people spent 10 weeks cooking casseroles and one person came to the Lord, it would have been time well spent.”

Nick said the real reason it died out was because not enough people in the parish were prepared to bring someone.

“You can advertise till you’re blue in the face,” he said. “What brings people is word of mouth – someone who says, ‘I’m going, why don’t you come with me?’ If you have someone to go with, they usually love it, even if they have queries and qualms about the Lord and faith in Christ. They love the fellowship and you’re talking about things that are close to people’s heart. The Gospel speaks to a deep need in all of us.

“The talks are really well organised. It’s a polished process. It has been honed by decades of practice. So it works. It is an effective way of evangelisation.”

Nick has run Alpha courses in Risdon prison, when he was in prison ministry, and now in his own parish, the Cathedral parish.

“When Archbishop Porteous came he got a remarkable woman, Dr Christine Wood, who has a doctorate in theology, to come as Director of the Office of Evangelisation,” Nick said. “One of the many things she did was to go around the parishes talking about possible ways of evangelisation. Alpha is one of them.

“Alpha has penetrated deeply into the life of the Catholic Church in Europe, America, Canada and so on, as well as in part of Australia, where quite a few parishes are running Alpha with quite a lot of success. It has proved to be not only a very viable way of bringing post-modernist people to the Lord and towards Christian fellowship and into communion with the Catholic Church but also of re-energising the faith of many who

are still coming to church but who have almost forgotten why.

“People look at basic questions, in a friendly context that they can easily handle. If you ask people to come to Mass for the first time they can be put off by the rules and behaviours they can’t understand. If you ask them to come to a shared meal – pretty well everyone can do that.”



Archbishop Julian Porteous of Hobart (pictured) will host the National Association of Deacons conference in March. In our October issue he spoke of his hopes that the conference would encourage the diaconate in his own archdiocese and throughout Australia. Here he speaks about the conference theme, “Go therefore and make disciples,” (Matthew 28:19): Deacons as ministers of the new evangelisation”.

## Evangelisation – front and centre

EVANGELISATION needs to be front and centre for all the activities of the Church, Archbishop Julian Porteous said in an interview.

“The word evangelisation has come into greater currency in the Church since 1975, when Blessed Pope Paul VI produced that vital document, that foundational document, *Evangelii Nuntiandi* (Evangelisation in Our Time),” he said.

“It has also been a source of inspiration and challenge to the Church.

“It has a particular significance at this moment in our history, particularly as it has been developed under Pope St John Paul II when he spoke about the New Evangelisation. We tended in the past not to talk so much about evangelisation but about mission and the missions. Priests and

religious would go to the missions. The missions were seen as being overseas, in places like China or Japan or India.

“We went through a period, particularly in the last couple of centuries, of remarkable missionary endeavour as areas of the world were opened up to the proclamation of the Gospel. That’s been an enormous enrichment to the Church. The Church in Africa, for example, has grown so remarkably and is so vital. That basic missionary activity is, of course, meant to continue. There are areas where the Gospel is still to penetrate.”

Archbishop Porteous said we now have a new phenomenon – a very challenging phenomenon for the Church.

“We’re finding cultures and societies that have traditionally been Christian or Catholic and where the faith has been integral to people’s lives and where the faith is now being weakened by all sorts of factors,” he said.

“There are, in particular, factors like growing secularisation, materialism, and some of the new ideas that are flooding through, like relativism. Powerful social ideological movements at work are weakening people’s faith, undermining their faith and leading to a loss of a sense of the presence of God and a loss of Catholic identity.

“So there is now a new challenge before the Church which certainly Popes like St John Paul II identified as a fresh impetus for evangelisation within cultures that have been understood traditionally as being Catholic.”

In earlier times, he said, faith was passed on by osmosis.

“It kind of seeped into people’s souls. They lived in families where there was an active practice of the faith with the family Rosary, where there were images of the Sacred Heart or devotion to Our Lady, where family prayer was a feature of the life of the family.

“You had parish communities that were so much more coherent. The Catholics banded together in communities. Our schools were staffed by religious and were very strong instruments in handing on the faith to the children. It was a very strong Catholic environment.

“Now each prong of that three-pronged instrument of handing on the faith has been significantly weakened.

“The family has been weakened as a place

where faith is lived and was like the air they breathed in family life. Parish life has been fractured in all sorts of ways. And schools are not the same as they once were and are not now such strong environments for fostering faith.

“Because faith is not as effectively transmitted as it once was, we need to look afresh at how we can pass on the faith, at how we can evangelise. And so we need to find, as Pope John Paul said, fresh, new ways of bringing the faith to people.

“We need to find ways of evangelisation that operate within contemporary culture. This is a great challenge for us.”

Archbishop Porteous said we are seeing change.

“Up to the present moment a lot of the new movements in the Church have been the primary drivers, if you like, the primary sources of developing the new evangelisation.

“But now we’re starting to see parishes realising that this is part of their own missionary responsibility. We’re just starting to see this. It’s an important missionary development. Parishes are starting to ask, ‘How can we evangelise within our own immediate environment?’

“I think evangelisation should be front and centre of the vision and mission of parishes and dioceses –and of anyone engaged in the mission of the Church. We have to ask the question, ‘How is the work I’m doing in the Church evangelising?’ That would apply to deacons.

“Deacons aren’t just for carrying out a liturgical function. They’re not just for providing a service in the parish. They can also ask themselves, ‘How is my ministry directly oriented towards evangelisation?’ Because I believe that needs to be front and centre for all the activities of the Church.”

“I think, firstly, the Church in Australia needs to look to the new movements – in two ways. One is to give them space to contribute to the life of a parish or a diocese. We can learn from them, the way they go about evangelising, the methods and approaches they have developed, particularly those that are proving successful.

“We need the movements. We mustn’t marginalise them, or think of them as ancillary to the life of the Church. They’re not just small groups, each doing its own thing. We need to bring them into the very heart of parishes and dioceses and encourage and support them.



“Secondly, within parishes themselves, as a starting point, there needs to be what I call the deepening or regeneration of a very active and dynamic faith – and we may have to do this for some time.

“I think this is where we need things like regular parish missions that are evangelistic in nature. We need, if you like, to stir up the embers of faith that may have died a bit in parishes, stir them up so they’re flaming and bright again so that people in parishes who have gone through some personal renewal or revitalisation of their own faith will then become the advocates of evangelisation.

“I think parishes need to develop more programs that are specifically aimed at reaching out to others around them.”

A program like Alpha would be a good example, he said.

“Parishioners put on a program where they invite their friends to come along and take part.

There are many programs around now. Parishes need to develop programs that are directly oriented towards evangelisation.

“And then, of course, we need people who have a real desire to share their faith, a real desire to draw others to Christ, to have more confidence in doing that, and to see that as their responsibility as Catholics.

“We need to take up what Pope Francis has said. All of us need to become missionary disciples. A disciple is one who listens. A missionary is one who goes out.

“We need people to be formed in faith, who enter more deeply into a personal relationship with the Lord, deepening their own prayer life, their attentiveness to Scripture, their desire to live their lives in deep personal union with Christ – who then want to reach out and help others discover what they’ve discovered, help them find the treasure they’ve discovered in Christ.” ●

## Helping to form lay apostles

CHRIST calls all the baptised to proclaim his Gospel in the world. And Pope St John Paul II taught that “Formation is not the privilege of a few but a right and duty of all” (Christifideles Laici 63). But how many parishes can provide a formation that equips people for such a great mission?

Clara Geoghegan, Australian co-director of the Sienna Institute, points out that most parishes can’t. And, for 49 per cent of Australian Catholics, the parish is the main contact those Catholics have with the Church.

Clara has degrees in arts and theology and lectures in both the Department of Church History and the Department of Pastoral and General Studies at Catholic Theological College, Melbourne. She will speak at the National Association of Deacons conference in Hobart.

She feels the Sienna Institute may be able to help parishioners become what she calls “intentional disciples”.

“The Sienna Institute started off in the United States in the late 1990s,” Clara said. “I first stumbled across it the very first time I surfed the

net. It helps parishes form lay apostles.

“We run a number of programs. Probably the best known is the Called and Gifted workshop. It’s essentially about helping people discern their spiritual gifts or charisms, which is what St Paul talks about in Corinthians and in Romans, and it’s in Hebrews. Paul’s expectation was that, after baptism, these gifts would start to manifest themselves.

“In the workshops we draw on the tradition of the Church and the lives of the saints who exhibit particular gifts; but we also look at other people, people we may know as prominent in Australia. For example, I’ve used the poet Les Murray to illustrate a charism of writing. I’ve used Caroline Chisholm to illustrate a charism of wisdom, and Florence Nightingale – getting ecumenical – for administration.

“The beauty of the workshop, and it’s not rocket science, is that people don’t discover startling things about themselves. What they discover is the confidence to use the gifts they already have, when they see what they’re called and gifted to do. That’s what we do with parishes.



Clara Geoghegan, Australian co-director of the Sienna Institute

I've also done work with Catholic schools to help them discover their school charism.

"We probably do about half a dozen workshops in parishes each year, as well as professional development work in schools. We had about 350 people do the workshop in the Sale diocese in April-May and I've been back to form a teaching team for the diocese. We've set up a Called and Gifted team in Canberra."

Clara has also done "quite a bit of work" based on the book, *Forming Intentional Disciples*, by Sherry Weddell, founder and co-director of the Sienna Institute.

"I've just been reading another book, published in 1964," she said. "It talks about the vast number of people in our congregations who are really 'baptised non-Christians'. Sherry's saying much the same thing. Only a small percentage of our congregations are actually 'intentional disciples'. The others are somewhere along the path.

"Sherry talks about 'thresholds of conversion' and ways of helping people to cross those thresholds. And that's essentially what New

Evangelisation is about. In *Forming Intentional Disciples* Sherry, I think very helpfully, breaks up Baptism into receiving the capacity for faith and the need to make an act of faith. We receive the capacity for faith, but we're not very good at helping people to accept that gift, unpack it, so to speak."

Clara explained how she came across the Sienna Institute the very first time she played with the internet.

"I was involved with the Dominican Laity, the Third Order, so I was looking at some Dominican sites and the Institute came up. The site had only been live for about six months. I was really fascinated by this spiritual gifts concept. I said to my husband, 'I really want to order some of this stuff on the internet.' He said, 'Don't do it online.' So I rang them up and spoke to Sherry and received the material.

"At that stage I was living in Newcastle and I was on the Adult Faith Development Commission of the diocese. The very next meeting I went to, someone was passing round the Called and Gifted inventory."



About six months later Sherry rang Clara.

“She said, ‘I’ve been invited to go to New Zealand for the Eucharist Congress. How far is Australia from New Zealand?’ I said, ‘you’d better come on over.’”

Sherry went to Newcastle, ran a workshop for 50 people, and, Clara said, it was a huge success.

Clara added: “I thought, ‘I just want to do something with this.’”

“About a year later we ended up back in Victoria at about the same time as Mark Coleridge came back as auxiliary bishop. I’d had a conversation with him some years before, and that all came back to me. He’d been telling me about his involvement with the Disciples of Jesus. He’d considered himself to be charismatic and that that the Holy Spirit was

doing something there. So I spoke to him and said, ‘I’d like to do something with this workshop for Catholic adult education here in Melbourne.’ He agreed. So we brought Sherry out again, had a number of workshops and trained a group of presenters. That was in 2004.”

The Sienna Institute Australia’s website says the mission of the Siena Institute is to:

ASSIST lay Catholics discern their place in God’s plan

HELP lay Catholics become aware and equipped for their role in the Church’s mission to the world.

ENABLE lay Catholics, clergy and religious be co-responsible for the church’s mission of helping every man and woman to encounter the risen Christ.



## New norms and guidelines

*The full text of the new norms and guidelines  
for Australian deacons are on our website.*

Go to

<http://www.ausdeacons.org.au/downloads/content/4163.pdf>



# NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF DEACONS 2017 Biennial Conference

Thursday 23 to Sunday 26, March 2017

## VENUES

**Best Western Hotel Hobart, 156 Bathurst Street, Hobart, Tasmania, 7000**  
**St Mary's Cathedral, Harrington Street, Hobart, Tasmania, 7000**

MARCH in Tasmania is the best time of year to visit. The weather is great, not too hot or too cold. Tasmania has deep roots into the history of Australia. As in Mark and Matthew's Gospel "**Go and make disciples** ... to the ends of the earth." So come to the ends of the earth and enjoy our beautiful island State. See what's on offer and, while you are here, spend a few days at the 2017 biennial conference

But you need to hurry – the Early Bird registrations will close on Friday 27 January and we don't want you to miss out on this opportunity to attend the National Association of Deacons (NAD) biennial national deacons' conference in March 2017.

### Early Bird registrations are:

NAD Couple	\$450.
NON NAD Couple	\$500.
NAD Member	\$225.
NON NAD Member	\$275.

### After the 27 January

### registrations increase to:

NAD Couple	\$520.
NON NAD Couple	\$570.
NAD Member	\$260.
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### How to register

To help with planning please register at - <https://www.trybooking.com/205328>  
The Tasmanian Deacon's Organisation Committee,  
on behalf of the National Association of Deacons,  
is looking forward to welcoming you to Tasmania and its capital city,  
Hobart, for the 2017 biennial national Deacons conference.

If you need any further information, get in touch with me –

**Rev Michael Hangan**

Mobile: 0438 243 533

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Postal: PO Box 40, Moonah TAS 7009





## Membership Application

APPLICANT'S DETAILS: [ PLEASE PRINT CLEARLY ]

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Preferred Name : .....

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Mailing Address (if different from Residential Address)

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Date of Ordination : ..... Place of Ordination : .....

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Current Ministry Activity : .....

Signature : .....

NAD represents all the Catholic Deacons of Australia and is associated with the National Council of Priests (NCP) as a sub-association within the NCP. A copy of this application form will be sent to NCP who will invoice you for your membership fees. Membership fee is \$100, except for newly ordained and those retired from ministry, when the fee is \$50.

NAD aims to provide a forum for deacons in Australia gathering their views, ideas and experiences. Through our membership with the NCP we are able to have a voice in matters concerning clergy life and ministry with the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference. NAD also has relationships with key people involved in the formation of deacons in Australian dioceses, ordinariates and eparchies.

Please forward to  
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