



The Wayside Chapel

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Thursday, 20 September

Dear Inner Circle,

We owe so much to Muslim people. There was a time when Western Culture had fallen into such darkness that the best plan we could produce was an invasion of the Middle East. It's for good reason this period of history is known as the Dark Ages. We were the terrorists in those days, driven by an ideology that gave us permission to invade and brutally treat peoples who were minding their own business. Mind you, we didn't call ourselves terrorists in those days, we called our invaders "Crusaders". It sounded so much nicer although the effect of their actions was exactly the same. Oddly enough, the Crusades saved the West because we found a Muslim culture whose science and scholarship was way ahead of the West. This superior learning was imported back to the West and our culture was revitalised because someone stopped long enough to notice that there was much to be learned. Our giants of science and theology would never have found oxygen except for the import of wisdom from the Muslim world.



I saw the violence on the TV last week and my contribution into the cacophony of opinion is to remind you that our greatest enemy is "fear". Sure, there are some bone heads among our Muslim brothers and sisters that would give a dumb sign for their children to hold but it wouldn't take me long to find some Christian bone head who would put a sign in their child's hand saying, "Believe the right stuff about Jesus or burn in hell". Bone heads abound on all sides of every religious fence. The truth is that Muslim people are fine citizens making a wonderful contribution to this nation. Perhaps we need to stop long enough again to see that there is much to be learned. I would think that the Muslim community would have much to teach us about family cohesion, about modesty and about values that trump the material and the measurable. Perhaps the Muslim world could save us again. While I'm on a roll, I think the current outpouring of feeling has less to do with a stupid film and more to do with layers of misunderstanding that weigh Muslim people down with every news report. Our language labels acts of violence committed by the West as "freedom fighting" and acts of violence committed by Muslims as "terrorism". American Foreign Policy, that we Australians seem willing to die for, has caused no end of pain in the world. Have you stopped to ponder how the citizens of Iraq are enjoying the 'freedom' that we brought them? Our most urgent need today is to stop talking in the language of black and white. When I was a kid, cowboy movies had the good guys wearing white hats and the bad guys wearing black hats. If only the world was so simple! Until we are able to admit that the dividing line between good and evil runs through every community and through every human heart, we will visit only further damage to this world.

This has been an odd week where lots of unrelated people have brought photos for me to inspect. It seems like an important moment when someone brings a photo and can say, "this was my mum and dad" or "this was my dog" or "this was my house." One fellow showed me a picture of his mum and said, "I can't believe she's still alive because she told me 20 years ago that her whole body was riddled with cancer." As he said these words there was still no question that his mother could have been lying or manipulating him in some way. Another lady showed me some professional shots of a handsome couple and little baby. It's easy for me to go over a baby and while I was complimenting her, she said, "This is my son. He's beautiful but I'm an embarrassment to him. I haven't seen this baby and I expect I may never." Another lady was pointing out various family members in a poor old photo and she paused as she pointed to one fellow. "You know I'm a grown up now, but this was a bad man and even in a photo I kind of go into a bit of a panic and I can feel my arms tied behind my back and my legs tied together." This was not said with any desire to draw attention but rather as a matter of fact. In a later photo she pointed to an old man and she melted and said, "This was my grandfather. He was probably the only good man in my whole extended family."

We've got an information session tonight at 6pm for people interested in becoming volunteers at Wayside. If you'd like to volunteer in one of our many available roles, we'd love to see you here. We're particularly keen for people who are

able to serve through the day time hours during the week. To register, send an email to waysidevolllies@thewaysidechapel.com. We've also got three jobs available at the moment - Communications Assistant, Youth Worker and Community Service Worker. If you'd love to join a wonderful team that is making a real difference, we'd love you to apply. More details [here](#).


This morning I was talking with a fellow at our front door. He'd clearly been sleeping rough and he looked badly in need of a shower and some care. He told me that he had a broken rib and that carrying his swag was particularly painful. He told me that he was from the country and that his girlfriend was soon to have a baby. He said that he suddenly, "wasn't doing well mentally." He said that he had a place to sleep in his country town but that the floor of the house had come loose and it was so unstable that he felt unsafe. I don't doubt his story although I'll bet it is not the floor of his house but the floor of his life that has come loose. Let's hope we can find him the right kind of help.

That's more than enough, thanks for being part of our inner circle,

Graham

Rev. Graham Long
Pastor and CEO
The Wayside Chapel
graham@thewaysidechapel.com

[Click here](#) to listen to podcasts of past Inner Circle's, aired on ABC 702's 'Afternoons with James Valentine'

 Be sure to follow Graham on Twitter if you have an account; [@waysidepastor](https://twitter.com/waysidepastor)

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We're here

29 Hughes Street,
Potts Point, 2011
Phone: 02 9581 9100

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