



## Loneliness affects health

Back in 2018, Britain's Prime Minister, Theresa May, appointed a 'Minister for Loneliness' to tackle the isolation felt by more than one in 10 people in the United Kingdom. 'For far too many people, loneliness is the sad reality of modern life', Mrs May said. 'I want to confront this challenge for our society and for all of us to take action to address the loneliness endured by the elderly, by carers, by those who have lost loved ones – people who have no-one to talk to or to share their thoughts and experiences with.'

Studies in Britain revealed that the majority of people over 75 live alone, and about 200 000 older people in the UK had not had a conversation with a friend or relative in more than a month. Doctors also said that they frequently encountered patients whose primary concern was isolation. It was not just a potential cause of a deeply painful experience, but also harmful to both physical and mental health.

This isn't just a British problem. A *Washington Post* study found that loneliness can be deadlier than obesity, and should be considered a major public health hazard. Across Europe, and here in Australia, numerous studies have shown that satisfaction with life is waning, and that society is becoming a lonelier place.

In Sweden, single adults without children make up about half of all households. *Lifeline Australia* conducted a 'loneliness survey' in 2016. It showed that one in every 10 Australians believes loneliness is increasing. As Australia's population ages, more and more people are living in retirement villages or in aged-care facilities. Often children live at a distance from ageing parents – interstate, or overseas. Younger, 'tech-savvy' people spend a lot of time at their computer, and use it as their prime medium of communication. It even happens that staff at adjacent desks in an open-plan office largely communicate with those alongside them by email!

Congregations can also be lonely places. People whose marriage partner dies suddenly find they don't get invited out as they used to because they no longer are one of a couple. Young singles moving from a country town to the city often find it difficult to fit in at church. Often newcomers leave quickly after church without speaking to anyone.



Being there with people is the essence of Pastoral Care Nursing. The increasing demands on pastors is placing increasing pressure on them, and often this restricts their ability to maintain personal pastoral care for their parishioners. As our population (and our church membership) ages, the need for such personal pastoral care increases. While Pastoral Care Nurses minister to people right across the age spectrum, they can be of particular blessing to older people.

This is sometimes called 'ministry of presence'. It means serving people and standing with them in the midst of their anxiety and fear. In such difficult times it is important to be realists and not pretend things are better or worse than they actually are. It is about coming alongside people and bringing hope, pointing people to the fact that Christ makes all things new.

Companionship and social contact are important for older people – especially those who may be living alone following the death of a spouse. If they have children, these often live at a distance – interstate, or even overseas.

As people age, they often face increasing health issues. Pastoral Care Nurses can help them recognise and understand what they may be facing. They are able to 'walk with' people in these circumstances, helping them navigate Australia's complicated health system, and just being a listening ear, and a 'little Christ' (Martin Luther's term) to help them in their need.

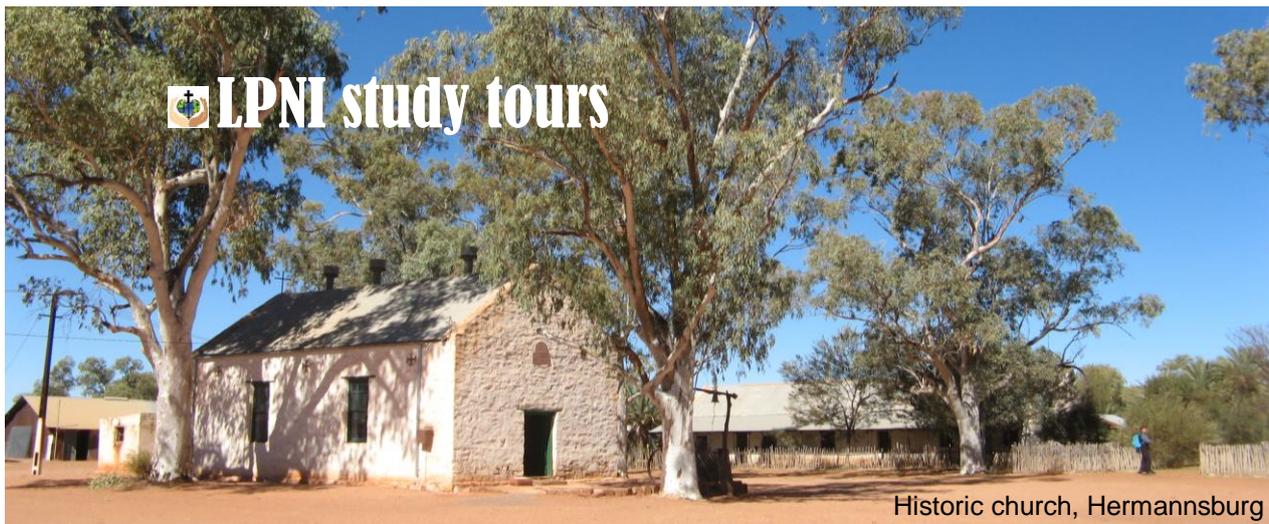
In some congregations with a Pastoral Care Nurse, the nurse has also been able to coordinate the congregation's caring visitation ministry, involving and supporting others – elders, lay assistants, women's fellowship visitors, etc.

# What's happening

## Nuriootpa, SA

At St Petri congregation, Pastoral Care Nurse, Jenny Wood, has been promoting a series of videos titled *In the Basement*. These videos feature conversations on four parts of our lives that we all have to deal with: fear, anxiety, shame and guilt. Doctors Noel Due and Kirsten Due talk about these things from a psychological, medical and biblical viewpoint, in a relaxed and non-judgmental way. They can be viewed at:

[www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLdQ7kCgDfjYziC1WKZJXZ1Yx-dbkHGfTP](http://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLdQ7kCgDfjYziC1WKZJXZ1Yx-dbkHGfTP)



Historic church, Hermannsburg

A few places are still available for the **2019** Lutheran Parish Nurses International (LPNI) study tour to Singapore on 3-9 October. Registrations need to be lodged by the middle of May.

The program includes a tour of the island, a night safari at the island's world-famous zoo, a seminar at the Redeemer Lutheran church, and a visit to St Luke's Eldercare. Local pastors will be invited to the afternoon session of the seminar to learn about the Pastoral Care Nurse ministry.

The **2020** tour will be to Alice Springs in July. An itinerary/registration form is now available. The tour includes visits to the Royal Flying Doctor base, the Lutheran Mission site at Hermannsburg (pictured), and to tourist attractions such as Simpson's Gap, with a visit to Uluru an 'add-on' extra.

For a registration form, or for more information on either tour, contact: [robert.wiebusch@lca.org.au](mailto:robert.wiebusch@lca.org.au)

The **2021** tour will be to eastern United States.

The LPNI Scholarship Committee has this year awarded scholarships to Lengi Derring of Madang and Waso Serere of Goroka, both in Papua New Guinea. Each will also receive a travel grant from US-based *Lutherans in Medical Mission* to assist

with travel costs. As well as being a Parish Nurse, Lengi is a lecturer at the Lutheran School of Nursing in Madang. Waso works at the Goroka hospital as well as serving as a Parish Nurse. Both Lengi and Waso completed an *Introduction to Parish Nursing* course in Goroka.



Lengi Derring



Waso Serere

## Introductory course

For more information about the Pastoral Care Nurse ministry, or for an enrolment form for the Distance Education version of the LNAA's *Introduction to Pastoral Care Nursing* course, contact [robert.wiebusch@lca.org.au](mailto:robert.wiebusch@lca.org.au). The course is a guided reading course covering 16 modules. It comes with a textbook and manual, and invites a response to each module.