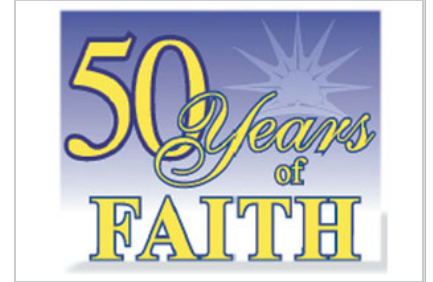




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PETRIE PARISH 50 YEARS CELEBRATIONS



CHRISTMAS GIFT GUIDE

'BEING THERE' FOR FARMERS IN NEED

August 9, 2014



Practical ministry: A rural resident receives help from Downs & West Community Support.

DOWNS & West Community Support (DWCS), a ministry of Sisters of Charity Community Care Ltd, was borne of drought but it has been in the wash-up of repeated flooding, drought, dust storms, migration of locusts and severe frosts that Sr Christine Henry's work has truly proven heaven-sent.

Her role, and that of her few volunteers, is to provide encouragement and practical support to farming families in need.

That can range from dropping off food parcels to sandbagging or providing "wellness" days for country women, providing "time out" to revive. Mostly it is in "being there".

As Sr Christine says:

"The emotional, spiritual, financial and practical needs have been enormous.

"Individuals and families experienced the worst drought in Australian history and many more were stranded in their homes or on their farms for up to six weeks during the devastating 2011 and 2012 floods.

"They watched in horror as the water surrounding their homes rose to great heights and the force of the water gushing by took out fences, livestock, farm machinery, roads, bridges and top soil.

"Crops were destroyed, ancient gum trees flattened, neighbours, relatives and friends died.

"These people may have suffered during the drought but when the floods came they had nothing more than what they could take when evacuated to safe ground.

"Many of these areas are experiencing drought again and it continues to hit many of the same families.

"Crops may have been replanted but inside, the individuals' spirits are fragile.

"To walk in the footsteps of these people as they share their experiences and plan to commence rebuilding their lives is a privilege, a journey that is to be respected, encouraged and embraced.

"I have a strong sense of responsibility to communicate God's love with word and concrete action, providing compassionate care and sharing available resources to those who are now among the most needy.

"Our work has only just begun.

"Families in need of DWCS support are identified through a web of local community organisations.

"DWCS receives no government funding. It relies on donations, mostly from individuals, organisations

and schools in Brisbane.

"In response to the emerging needs, this ministry has the potential to reach out to the suffering as Jesus did:

'For I was hungry and you gave me food; I was thirsty and you gave me drink; I was anxious and lost and you comforted me ... as you did it to the least of mine, you did it to me.'" (Matthew 25:36, 40)

For more information go to the website downsandwestcommunitysupport.org

Written by: **Catholic Leader**

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