

## CYCLONIC HOSPITALITY

Perhaps because there was no room at the inn, Jesus both dispensed and received hospitality, throughout His earthly life. Standouts were of course the feeding of the 5000, and the Last Supper, interspersed with visits to private homes – which must have been challenging for the hosts, with 13 hungry men and many followers. So we are sure that the giving and accepting of hospitality is central to the Christian ethos.

So where does the cyclone come in? Although official reports are still patchy, media reports about Cyclone Gabrielle contain many references to simple acts of hospitality at grassroots level, particularly in isolated communities where everyone realized there was no point waiting for the authorities to arrive. These acts were played out in sports clubs, schools, marae, country halls and other community facilities. All that was required was a way to boil water, heating, warm changes of clothes, and if not road access, then somewhere for a helicopter to land. Most but not all would have had cooking facilities of some sort. These stories are a reminder that although we think we are well-connected, some events can cut us off and make us totally dependent on – and also compelled to help – our neighbours.

Where does this leave our Cathedral? Hamilton is not the East Coast, but the complacent days are long gone. The city is largely flat, and we can no longer assume that we know what the next disaster is going to look like. We occupy one of the CBD's highest points, we offer a full suite of spiritual, psychological and physical comfort, and we have a large kitchen, albeit we are dependent on electricity to function effectively. We can seat, feed and sleep quite a lot of people.

Is this something we have spoken to the Civil Defence authorities about? Might there be public money available to fund backup energy sources?

This would be a marvelous opportunity for outreach, perhaps alongside our Catholic friends on the other side of the river. There are synergies too with the Court facilities, to which we are connected by footpath.

Christian hospitality must extend beyond the formality of the Eucharist. Outward and visible signs of this ethos call for prayerful exploration.

We stand on a rock – both physical and metaphorical – and this is a God-sent opportunity.