

## Living the Story

The centerpiece of the EACH AGM was a documentary that told the story of the organization, beginning with a man sitting in his car with a shotgun on the dashboard, a bottle of pills in his hand and a few neighbors who could recognize that the issues were not just clinical or legal ones. At a time when the EACH brand can be found up and down the east coast of Australia, stories such as these are crucial - they tell us who we are and what kind of people we seek to become.

A couple of weeks ago I sat among people who had been subjected to sexual abuse by the church. On an overcast afternoon in Healesville, a not-so-small group gathered in cricket clubrooms to share stories, to speak the unspeakable, to bring into the light what had so long remained in darkness and to find in these stories the truth that might begin to set them free.

I recently had the privilege of being part of the Bushfire Recovery Team's Day of Reflection. As this work finishes the team put aside a day to mine the experience; to pause on this hinge point of ends and beginnings. There were stories of miles travelled, of not having the answers but coming alongside anyway. These were bushfire-blackened stories of mystery and trauma, where hopelessness and hopefulness sat alongside one another like neighboring houses - one saved and the other lost. In these stories we find the reasons that we do the work we do; who we are and what matters to us; the kind of people we have been and who we seek to become.

In the telling of stories meaning is made and our place in community is found. Stories locate us. In a culture of competing priorities and options attached to almost everything, it will be the burden of this time to discover meaningful stories of hope and freedom and to hold fast to them, like a sailor in a storm.

Last Sunday on the banks of the river in Warrandyte my church gathered to baptize three people. In the running water of the river, where past and future meet in the eternal present, a new story was being born . . .

'Eventually, all things merge into one, and a river runs through it' - Norman Maclean

- James Godfrey EACH Chaplain