THE WAY

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FROM THE CHAPLAIN

I had the strangest Halloween experience this weekend.

Last Friday afternoon, two neighbourhood children knocked on our front door and cheerfully wished us, “An early Happy Halloween!” They then stood there smiling and waiting. We wished them an early Happy Halloween in return and said goodbye. They lingered for a few more awkward seconds before moving on. You have to admire the initiative. Why battle the crowds on Halloween night when you can start collecting early?

I admit that I have always struggled a little with Halloween, though perhaps not for the reasons you might expect. Some families use it as a fun opportunity to dress up, meet neighbours and build community. However, in my suburb it involves children roaming the neighbourhood, often without their parents, knocking on strangers' doors collecting as many lollies as possible before comparing their haul and occasionally making themselves unwell in the process!

What strikes me is how easily our culture can train us to ask, “What can I get?” Yet the heart of the Christian life asks a very different question: “How can I serve?”

At Thomas Hassall Anglican College, service is one of our key values. We want our students to use their God-given gifts to make a positive difference in the lives of others. As Jesus said:

"*It is more blessed to give than to receive.*"
- Acts 20:35

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We are designed to serve. Why, then, do we sometimes go against that purpose?

This term, many of our students will participate in Service-Learning experiences that challenge them to serve rather than be served. From packing shoeboxes for Operation Christmas Child to visiting nursing homes, students will put their faith into action and learn the joy of giving themselves for the benefit of others.

Perhaps one way parents can partner with us in this is by encouraging children to look for opportunities to serve at home as well. A simple act of helping a sibling, assisting with household jobs, checking in on a grandparent, or showing kindness to a neighbour can reinforce the lessons our students are learning at College. Service is not just an activity; it is a way of life.

As a final thought, the original meaning of Halloween, or All Hallows' Eve, was connected with remembering faithful Christians who had gone before us. Perhaps that provides a fitting challenge for us today: not simply to ask what we can receive, but to consider what kind of legacy of faith and service we will leave for those who follow.

Reverend Denis Oliver
College Chaplain

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