

FOR THE LOVE OF GOD + -

WHY YOU NEED CHRISTIAN NEIGHBOURS: FAITH AND SOCIAL CAPITAL

This segment comes from **EPISODE 3: RICH + POOR.**

From decadent medieval popes to modern televangelists with private jets, religion and money can make for an unsavoury mix. But why do we think of charity – care for the poor and the sick – as a good thing in the first place? People in the Graeco-Roman world didn't think so: they mostly thought the poor and suffering deserved what they got. This segment looks at research into the ways that modern churches and individual believers serve their communities.



THEME QUESTIONS

Should local churches be more involved in serving their communities? Why or why not?



ENGAGE

1. Find or sketch three images that describe your idea of a perfect neighbour.
2. Answer whether you AGREE or DISAGREE with the following statements:
 - a. Churches are not very involved in my local community.
 - b. Religious people seem to do more volunteer work than non-religious people.
 - c. It would be good to have a Christian neighbour.
3. Read this short article, "[Anglicare opens new community pantries in St George and Sutherland Shire](https://cpx.video/anglicare)" (cpx.video/anglicare). In what ways do you think this initiative will help the community?



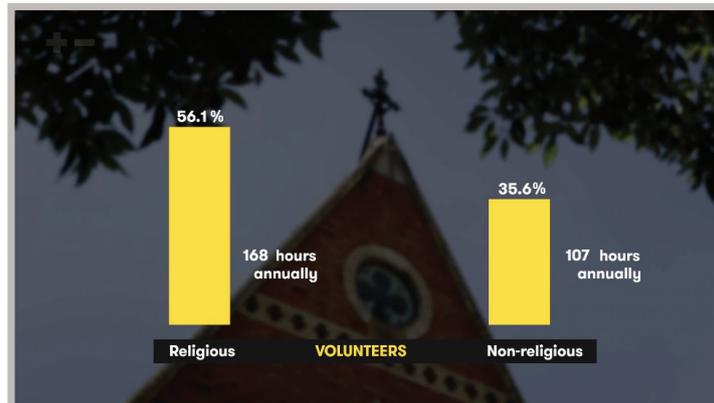
UNDERSTAND AND EVALUATE



WATCH the segment: “Why you need Christian neighbours: Faith and social capital”
(cpx.video/socialcapital)

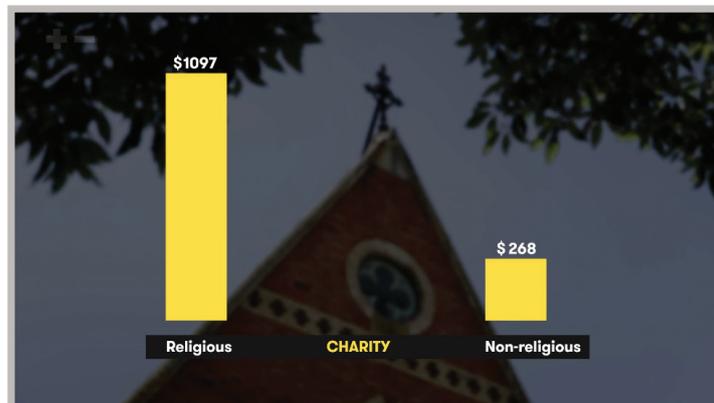
1. Describe how All Saints church in Petersham helps the local community.
2. Outline some of the needs in society that churches and individual Christians are involved in meeting.
3. Look at the following graphs.
 - a. Write a sentence for each graph explaining what the different numbers refer to.
 - b. What stands out to you about these statistics?

Volunteer rate and average annual hours volunteered



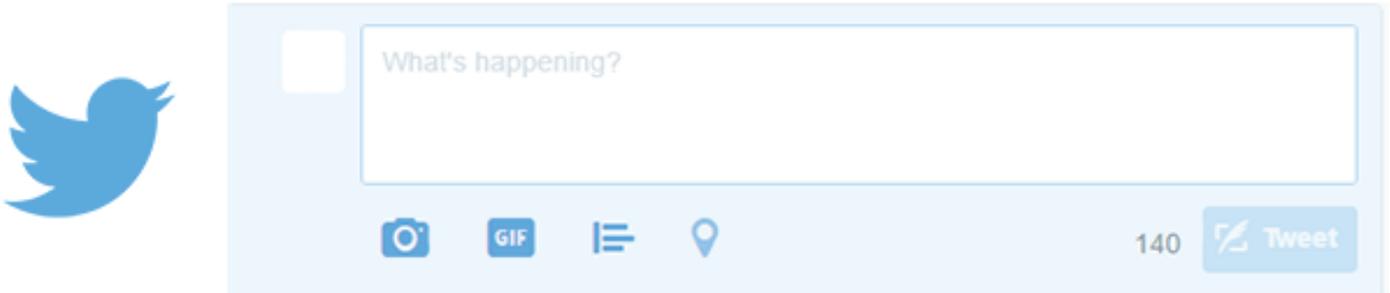
Nivison-Smith, I. and Lyons, M. (2006), “The relationship between religion and volunteering in Australia”, Australian Journal on Volunteering, Vol. 11, No. 2, p.29.

Average annual amounts given by givers



Lyons, M. and Nivison-Smith, I. (2006), “Religion and Giving in Australia”, Australian Journal of Social Issues, Vol. 41, No. 4, p.426.

4. While he says that Christians are often particularly drawn to “applying love in small, individual, practical ways”, Francis Spufford also says, “It is perfectly possible ... to go to a church and go ‘help!’ and have them go, ‘I’m sorry, we’re busy with the flower arranging’.” What could explain such inconsistency in behaviour?
5. What does the video suggest motivates Christians to help others in their community?



6. Write a tweet to summarise your reaction to the video.

BIBLE FOCUS

READ Matthew 25:31-40.

1. List the “good deeds” commended by the king (v.35-39).
2. Explain the comparison Jesus makes between a person’s treatment of others and the way they treat Jesus himself.
3. What motivation does this passage give for helping others?

READ James 2:14-17.

4. Why does the author say that faith without action is not enough?
5. How should those who take this Bible passage seriously treat people in need?
6. How could these passages, and other Christian teachings about helping those in need, contribute to the common good?

APPLY

1. Andrew Leigh, in his book *Disconnected*, describes social capital as “networks of trust and reciprocity that link multiple individuals together”. He also makes a distinction between “bonding” social capital (which joins together similar people) and “bridging” social capital (which transcends boundaries of race, ethnicity or income).
 - a. Explain why social capital might make it easier for someone to participate in civic activity such as volunteering.
 - b. Explain why people who attend church might have a high level of “bridging” social capital.
 - c. In small groups, draw a mind map of your own social capital - the networks that you belong to.
2. Make a list of some individuals, groups, or organisations you know of that are involved in some kind of action to benefit your local community.

| Individual/group/organisation | What they are doing |
|-------------------------------|---------------------|
| | |

- a. What do you think motivates these individuals or groups to serve the community?
- b. Does their example make you want to serve your local community too? Why/why not?
- c. What is one way that you could help serve your local community?

EXTEND

1. Read this article by Simon Smart in ABC's The Drum, "[So religion makes you meaner? Not according to the evidence](#)" ([cpx.video/meaner](#)). Write your own "online comment" responding to the article.
2. Hold a debate to answer the question: "Is caring for the poor a good thing?" You may want to watch the segment "[Being poor in the ancient world](#)" ([cpx.video/poverty](#)) to help you.