

The Link

ANGLICAN DIOCESE OF ARMIDALE

2022 APRIL/MAY

Barraba or bust



Barraba or bust

On the 4th June, an evangelistic preaching training day will be held at Barraba. This year's guest speaker is **David Mansfield** (right), former Director of the Department of Evangelism in Sydney. David is a well-known as a warm and winning speaker. He has had an interesting career path; from cheesemaker, to the army, to Bible college and then 45 years, in parish and para-church ministry, mostly in New South Wales (with a short stint in Western Australia), until his recent semi-retirement.

Now, at the age of 70, he has a wealth of experience and encouragement to share.

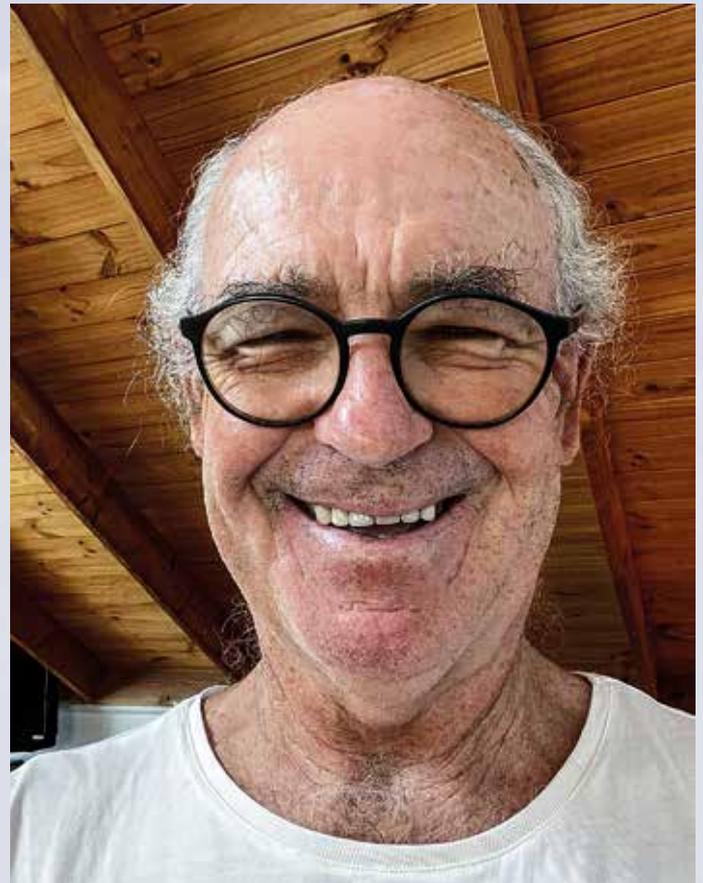
A FEW MONTHS AFTER I BECAME A CHRISTIAN AT THE AGE of 16, the Inter-School Christian Fellowship leader at school asked me to give three 10-minute talks over a three week period at the ISCF meetings on what the Bible says about 'love'. I wanted to decline but it felt at the time like cowardice because from the day I became a believer I had a burning desire to see my family and friends come to Christ. Nonetheless, I have never been so scared in all my life. I approached the task like a man preparing to stand before a firing squad. I was just turning 17 and didn't know how to say, "No". I have never known how to say, "No". I guess that's why I've agreed to lead this workshop on giving evangelistic talks.

That frightening episode in my life laid a foundation for a tentatively growing confidence in speaking publicly and learning how to communicate Christianity. Over the next three years, at Agricultural College and in the army I took up any and every opportunity to get on my feet and speak about stuff. The college debating competition; the annual public speaking competition, both prepared and impromptu; preaching at little village church services in the Hawkesbury and Colo Valleys.

Had I not been nudged, pushed, shoved and dragged in those early days it never would have happened. And now, after well over 50 years of speaking, preaching, teaching and writing about Jesus, I look back with an incredible sense of gratitude for the privilege and opportunity.

Not that I think I am any more than slightly better than below average. I have always been reasonably content to bounce around in the bowels in the back half of the bell curve when it comes to most things in life, whether rugby, study, surfing or speaking about the Lord Jesus. But, at the same time, I have always tried to push myself beyond my self-perceived limits to the front half of the bell curve (who was it who said the first 50 years are the hardest?) and in no small measure that is why I have taken on this task at Barraba - as much as anything, to thrust myself beyond my comfort zone and to keep learning by experience. But most of all to spend time with teams of people from local churches who are keen to further our evangelistic speaking skills and be pushed that little bit further out of our comfort zones.

When I tried to decline the great John Chapman's invitation in 1991 to succeed him at the Department of Evangelism in the Sydney



Diocese by serving up all that stuff about the bowels of the bell curve, he returned serve by saying that although I'd probably never appear on centre court at Wimbledon, I'd do okay on the country circuit. So, Barraba, here I come.

I am very excited about this day as I hope you are too. We have abused and elevated (or relegated) the word evangelism to something that is out of reach to the ordinary Christian and only something for the professionals.

I have a deep-seated fear that we have so 'professionalized' the preaching task that lay people have been starved of the kind of opportunity I was thrust into while still a toddler in the Christian life. How will young Christians ever know whether they have a gift, a talent (call it what you like) as raw and untrained as it might be, if they are not given some tools, training and the opportunity to give it a go? Any Christian can evangelise. Every Christian ought to be trying. Getting a little bit of help and encouragement to give it a go will always help.

I hope that I will be able to help us all to look at a passage in the Bible and work out how to communicate it simply, clearly and interestingly in a public setting, whether that is a sermon in church, a talk in a tent at beach mission, a class at school etc. I hope too, that I can let you in on a little secret that has helped me over the years...I trust God to be doing His thing when I am doing His thing!

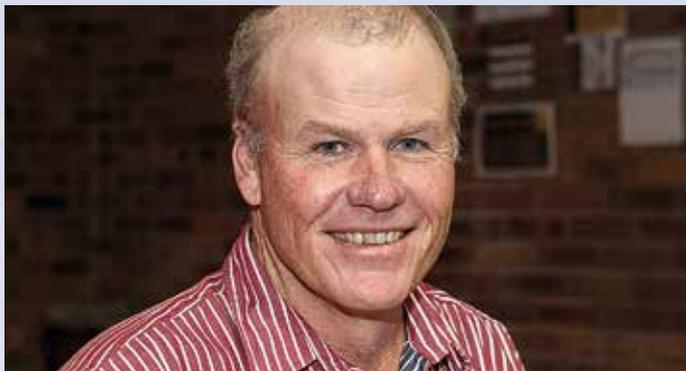
It is worth remembering that if it was left to the professionals, John Chapman, John Stott and Billy Graham, as well as some of us, may never have heard the great truths of the gospel which changed their lives, as well as countless others. Isn't that worth giving it a go?

The Link, Number 81
April / May 2022
ISSN 1834-0741

Anglican Diocese of Armidale PO Box 198 Armidale 2350 02 6772 4491 armidaleanglicandiocese.com
Editor: Robyn Powell E: robynjpowell@gmail.com
Art direction and assistance from Stephen Mason and Anglican Media Sydney.
Thanks to all photographers who contributed to this issue..

The Link is published by the Anglican Diocese of Armidale as part of the Diocesan vision to "Introduce people to Jesus and help them home to Heaven".
COVER PHOTO: Jeremy Fitzhardinge

Speaking from experience



NOTHING COULD BE MORE IMPORTANT THAN GETTING equipped to better explain God's word to someone who doesn't yet know Him. You might be preaching in church, giving a youth talk, Sunday school lesson or a Scripture class in school. Often you will be speaking to two different audiences; those who know Jesus and those who don't know Him yet. So having a day dedicated to learning the whys and hows of this sort of speaking, while in the company of others who are keen to learn can only be a great privilege.

Dean Bloomfield (above) from Barraba never expected to add 'lay preacher' to his resume, but after many years of learning and practising, he can attest to the enormous benefits of a Diocesan lay preaching workshop.

"One of the best parts of the lay preaching workshops is meeting and sharing with other lay people from throughout our Diocese," he said. "Like me, they have never stepped inside a Bible college, but they have wondered if it might be possible to serve our God and His people from behind a lectern. The responsibility of speaking from God's word faithfully can be daunting. So I am so grateful that at these lay preaching days we learn how to find the central message in a passage and how to speak to this big idea and develop it without straying from it. It is only when I understand what I'm on about that God's truth, from His word, can be made clear.

Like many of us, I am far from being a confident speaker and my first

sermon attempts really displayed this. However my church family was very loving and more than supportive. I also know that watching someone step outside of their comfort zone to talk about things of God can be intriguing and engaging. With a bit more experience, I know now to expect God to provide more than I need to stand up and deliver a 20-minute talk.

I can now say quite honestly that my favourite part of the process is the preparation; praying, spending time with God in deliberation and looking more deeply at a portion of my Bible. I find new insights and implications and enjoy the prospect of sharing these as Sunday approaches. With such benefits, being called upon to preach occasionally is not at all taxing even before I balance it with the amazing grace God has extended to me in Jesus.

This year's preaching workshop has a focus on evangelistic preaching. During the upheaval of the COVID pandemic, a war in the Ukraine waged with ruthless evil intent and the general sacrifice of truth into the mire of optional genders and a sexual preference smorgasbord, there are loud voices decrying the relevance of God. Christians may be tempted to quietly subside. But in this turbulent time we will also meet people who are deeply concerned and fearful because the footholds they have always held are shaky. Their 'guarantees' of a life expectancy, of social, political and economic stability have been lost, or no longer offer the surety they once seemed to offer.

With encouragement from their welcoming Christian friends we should expect to find newcomers, not yet saved, in our pews with their questions, which can all be answered in Jesus. Those of us who already know and trust in him have, by grace, been 'lifted out of the slimy pit, out of the mud and mire'. The lay preacher, reading God's word regularly and more carefully in order to preach from it, can place their feet more firmly and, walk around more steadily, on the rock of salvation onto which God has lifted us. With this steadfast foothold comes a love and concern for those who don't yet know Jesus. We can encourage them toward Him and the salvation that we know, with the way we live our own lives and with the words that God has given us. Please pray for and consider coming to the lay preaching workshop in Barraba."

Tackling evangelism



Some years ago, the Diocese created an evangelism resource called *The Tacklebox*.

This short book talks about evangelism in many contexts, from friendships, to church, to speaking to specific groups such as children and youth, as well as indigenous evangelism. It gives hints for the best way to prepare to evangelise (spoiler alert...it's prayer) and even addresses evangelism at weddings and funerals.

In his introduction, former bishop Rick Lewers explained why the book was given its title.

When I get time, I love to fish. I take my tackle box, open it up and choose my tackle, and I fish. I am not always successful in catching fish but I can truthfully say I have never once caught a fish while not fishing. That would be a miracle only God can supply.

The Bible describes God as a fisherman. Sometimes he fishes in judgement carrying people away with hooks, while on other occasions capturing hearts for his Kingdom. In Luke 5:10, it was Jesus Christ who invited his

disciples to join his fishing expedition as fishers of men and women. To mix the metaphors a little, "When Jesus saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. Then he said to his disciples, "The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field." (Matthew 9:36-38)

...So, as disciples of Christ we ought to love to fish, and the most helpful piece of tackle in our tackle box is the Word of God. As you read this book you will be provided with wise counsel in so many areas of evangelism, but the starting point for any fishing expedition with Jesus Christ is in the Word of God. God's Word provides the understanding of the human predicament and the gospel which is the power of God for salvation...

To read the whole book go to the diocesan website, <http://www.armidaleanglicandiocese.com/resources/>

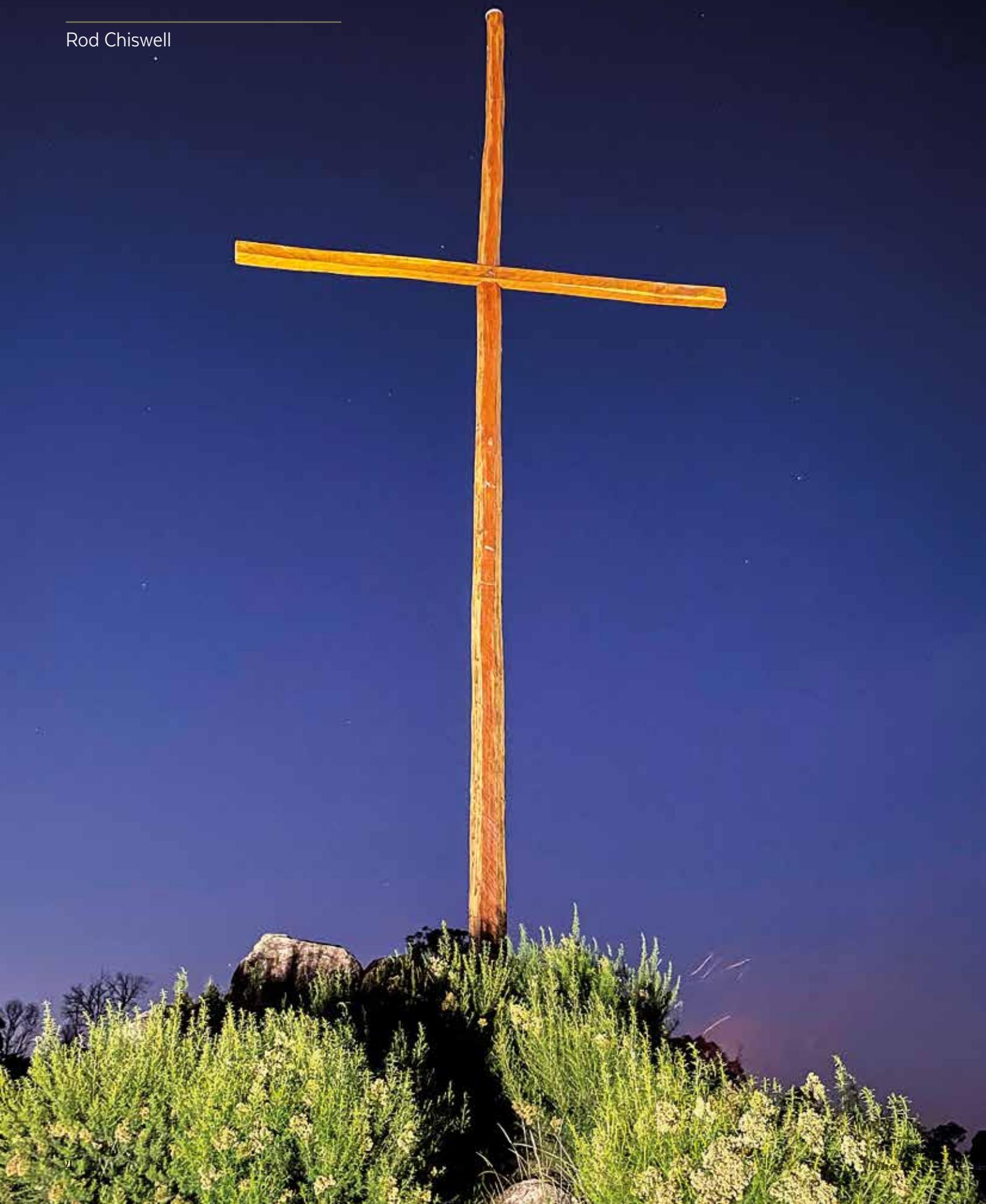
You can download it for nothing and keep it as a reference.

But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have...

1 Peter 3:15

Under the stars at the cross

Rod Chiswell





DEAR BROTHERS AND SISTERS IN CHRIST,

Greetings to you all from Armidale in Autumn. I've been thinking lots lately about the cross of Christ. I took these picture recently during an outdoor gathering at Penny and Charlie McCowen's place "Highfields" near Deepwater.

This cross can be seen clearly at night from the highway just before you descend the Bolivia range heading north to Tenterfield. Periodically the Emmaville/Deepwater church family comes together with friends to the cross on the hill to share a meal, open God's word and sing his praises. And so it was, on a near perfect Saturday evening at the start of April, that my wife Jenni and I had the privilege of being part of a truly memorable evening.



Once the convoy of four-wheel drives had climbed the hill, a huge bonfire was lit. Sausages were cooked, the billy was boiled and wonderful fellowship was shared over a simple meal. At the foot of the cross under the stars we heard God speak to us as Psalm 8 was read. Written some 3,000 years ago by King David, it captures the sense of God's greatness, our smallness, and yet how special each one of us is to Him. *"O Lord, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth...When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have put in place."* As we sat under God's heavens, we could all see the work of our creator's fingers. The stars that he had set in place spoke clearly of His great power and majesty. Under the huge expanse of the night sky, we were reminded of how small we are as human beings. And so, the question that David asks next made sense. *"What is man that you are mindful of him, the son of man that you care for him?"*

I don't know about you, but it blows me away when I think about the fact that the God who created the universe is mindful of me, that he cares for each and every one of us as human beings. That seems incredible, yet according to God's word, it is true! Listen again to what Psalm 8 tells us about ourselves as human beings. *"Yet you have made him a little lower than the heavenly beings and crowned him with glory*

and honour. You have given him dominion over the works of your hands, you have put all things under his feet." These verses allude to the opening chapters of Genesis in the Bible, where God entrusts mankind with the care of the earth. Human beings have a special place in God's created order. When he speaks of our being crowned with glory and honour, David speaks of the image of God bestowed upon every human. With privilege of course comes responsibility, and sadly we haven't always ruled the earth well in a way that brings glory to the one whose image we bear. Sometimes we've mucked it up by failing to care well for God's creation. Sometimes we haven't treated other people with the love and respect they deserve as fellow human beings. These are just symptoms of the underlying human problem which is that all of us have failed to treat God as God and live for His glory. In Romans 3:23 the apostle Paul sums it up like this. *"For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God."* The reality is that we need a Saviour to overcome, not only our personal sin, but also the fallen condition of creation which comes as a result of it.

The writer of the book of Hebrews tells us that Jesus Christ, our Saviour is the perfect representation of the humanity described in Psalm 8. In Hebrews 2:9 we read, *"But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels now crowned with glory and honour because he suffered death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone."* In Jesus we see God's rule in humanity as it was meant to be. In Jesus we see God's justice as he paid the price for human sin on the cross. In Jesus we see God's love for sinful but precious people like you and me. As we reflected on these truths that night under the stars at the foot of the cross on the top of the hill, we were powerfully reminded of God's greatness, our smallness, and yet of how wonderfully loved we are by our creator God.

Now there were some there that night who had pondered those truths before, and simply treasured them afresh. There were others there that night for whom those truths were new and caused them to pause and think. But what about you? You may have never considered that the God who created this world has put you here for a reason. You may have never heard that the God who made you in his image cares deeply for you. You may not have thought about the extent of God's love for you in sending his only son Jesus to die in your place that you might be forgiven and live for his glory. If that is you as you read these words today, then perhaps you might ask the God who put the moon and the stars in place to help you start on a journey that begins with turning to him for forgiveness and new life. This brief prayer might be a good place to start.

O Lord our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth.
 Lord God, I acknowledge that you are very big and I am very small.
 Thank you that even so, you are mindful of me and care for me as a human being.
 Thank you that you have made me in your image and entrusted me with the care of your world and other people.
 Please forgive me Lord for the times I have failed to treat you as God and others as people precious to you.
 Thank you, heavenly Father for sending your son Jesus to rescue and restore me.
 Thank you that He lived the perfect human life and died the perfect sacrificial death.
 Thank you that on the cross Jesus fully paid the penalty for my sin that I might be forgiven and have eternal life.
 Please strengthen me by your Spirit Lord from here on in, to live a life of love for you and others, for your glory.
 For I pray it in Jesus' name. Amen.

May God in His mercy, hear your prayer and continue to draw you closer to Him.

With love in Christ, Rod Chiswell.

A life of ministry

Robyn Powell
Editor

HOW OFTEN DO YOU THINK ABOUT YOUR VICAR'S, assistant's or bishop's wife? How often do you pray for her. Do you, perhaps take her just a tiny bit for granted? Are you quietly (or even loudly) outspoken about her children when they are not perfectly behaved?

Sadly, I have been guilty of all these things. It was not until a dear friend, the wife of a well-known minister in Sydney tearfully admitted to the agony of coping with the very public criticism of her husband that I began to understand that the life of a clergy wife is not always a positive one. Clergy wives have much to bear...the moving from parish

to parish, and the difficulty of making new friends while missing the old ones. The fact that her children are on show in a way other children are not. The expectations that she will be the first to suggest new ministries, and to get them started. The swinging front door, that admits any one at any hour despite how tired the inhabitants are feeling. Of course, these are not difficulties that are exclusive to ministry wives, but we often forget that these difficulties can exist. Maybe it's time to give your clergy wife a call and tell her how much you appreciate her, or take her out for morning tea, or cut her a bunch of flowers from your garden. She will love it!

The bishop's wife

Jenni Chiswell, Armidale

I was really fearful of becoming a clergy wife. The role-models of clergy wives in my life had been remarkable women and I felt terribly inadequate to follow in their footsteps. Thankfully, I learned that being a clergy wife is not such a defined role with prescribed responsibilities. I discovered that there was freedom for me to work out how to serve God in this role, using the gifts He'd given me.

I think we can take a clergy wife for granted because we may have expectations of what she should or could be doing. Coordinating womens' Bible Study groups, teaching and coordinating kids ministry, visiting, practicing hospitality, maintaining an immaculate vicarage (with small children), running a playgroup ministry, teaching scripture classes, attending all church services, remembering intimate details of each person's lives, delivering meals to the sick, leading the music ministry, walking on water, raising the dead... Perhaps not altogether realistic expectations. We do well to remember that it is the clergyman who has been employed to serve in the church, not his wife. She is a member of the congregation who happens to be married to a clergyman. What she chooses to do or not do is something she can work out in freedom with the Lord.

It is helpful to remember that as well as being a clergy wife, she may be in paid employment, studying, a mother (or wanting to be), under financial pressure, a long way from her family/support network, home-schooling, supporting her childrens' education, dealing with health issues, caring for children (possibly with special needs/difficulties), caring for aging parents, dealing with challenging teens, and this list could go on forever. Being married to a clergyman is a significant part of a woman's life, but clearly not the only dimension to her life.

Someone once said to me that being married to a clergyman was no different to being married to any other professional. As I reflected on that, I thought, actually, that's not true! My accountant doesn't get called in the middle of the night to come to the hospital because someone is dying. The local engineer doesn't usually get called in to deal with marriage breakdown, a child with terminal cancer, a homeless person who needs food and somewhere to stay. The pressures on a clergy family are unique, but are shared by others in the same position. There is something very helpful about meeting together with others who understand because they live similar lives. That is why the ministry wives conference is so helpful

There are many ways to help your clergyman's wife practically. Many women are a long way from their families and support networks. Get to know your clergy wife as an individual- what are her interests, her hobbies; what does she think about, read about, what has she left behind to come to your parish? Don't be shy about inviting her over for a cup of coffee. She will remember your kindness and conversation, and will appreciate you taking initiative. If she has children, offering to babysit occasionally might be helpful. If you have an issue with her husband on something, deal with it in a godly manner. Don't grumble to her or others about him. Make a time to talk with him about it. Clergy hear a lot of criticism, so perhaps look for things you can be positive about.

Prayer would be so appreciated! As Christians, everyone is engaged in a spiritual battle with our sinful nature and the world, but I sometimes think the enemy works especially hard to make things difficult for those in Christian leadership. Prayer is a powerful tool. I would suggest praying for your clergy wife's marriage would be a great place to start. Pray for God's protection over that relationship, and for their growth as a couple. Pray for her children and their love for Jesus. Pray for wisdom, grace and strength as she navigates change, adjustment, and many relationships. Better yet, ask her how you can be praying for her. I am sure she would appreciate that immensely!



The vicar's wife

Ruth France, Walcha

Things our husbands deal with are felt by us too. Sadness, hard situations, disappointments, criticisms are felt keenly by us as wives. Getting their children out the door to church each Sunday by themselves is hard. Husbands are getting things ready for the service and not around on a Sunday morning, and this is particularly hard when the children are small. Not always loving the decisions that are made by the parish council or church leaders but being directly affected by those decisions as a family or couple. We go through all sorts of emotions when we hear our husbands being criticised: frustration, disappointment, anger, annoyance and guilt are just some of them. We often feeling the need to forgive even when we have not been directly wronged.

So I always try to coming back to God's word and listen to His voice. I remind myself that while people will let us down, Christ is our rock and will NEVER let us down. Keeping our eyes on Jesus and remembering He sees everything. We don't need to defend ourselves to anyone, it is Christ we are serving. I also need to remind myself that my husband's job is not to make friends or be liked. His job is to shepherd the flock God has given him, and to speak the truth in love.



The first generation

Jo Dunlop, Tamworth

Scott and I have been in ministry in the Diocese for over 25 years. We arrived with three children fresh from College, eager and green. Our youngest was born here. In the vicarage, I have experienced raising babies and toddlers, school aged children and teenagers, and the challenge of the empty nest as they left for university and became adults. As I think back, I remember the true gifts from God of those years...the people who stood out, not so much because of what they did, as because of who they were in our lives.



They prayed with me and for us; women who cared personally and wanted to uphold not only me, but my family in prayer. How amazing to have faithful women praying in the good and the bad times. Women would meet regularly and pray, bringing our husbands and our family's needs to God. They showed love by welcoming us into their hearts as family. They would take time to chat to the kids and ask how they were, others would have a joke with the boys or ask about what they knew to be their interests. We were embraced, physically and emotionally. Our kids even called some their Aunties and Uncles!

We were welcomed into their homes. They didn't expect us to do all the hosting, but invited us over, even when we were a family of six! They not only showed hospitality to us, but also to other church members. These people not only supported us personally, but also partnered in the gospel with us. They understood we were the people God had placed there as leaders of his church at that time and they got behind us and alongside us. They willingly put their hands up to help where they could and worked in partnership for Jesus in many different ways. There are a couple of women who come to mind, who were always there, working behind the scenes, happy to do the mundane faithfully serving side by side with me, often having a laugh together. They also sought to understand some of the unique pressures of ministry and lend their support whenever needed.

As these people lived out Christ-like love, they were a true blessing to my children, as well as to Scott and me. We now have a daughter in ministry in the Diocese. Dee and Matt have just started at Inverell with children almost identical in age to when we started out. Scott and I are so very proud of them taking the big step to commit to full time ministry. As God has blessed us, we pray that God will bring people into their lives that will be 'like family' to them.

The second generation

Dee Stones, Inverell

Hello from a minister's kid turned minister's wife! My husband Matt and I finished college last year and have just moved to Inverell where he has begun serving as the Assistant Minister. We have brought our three little kids with us, and we are so thankful for them and the opportunity to serve God as a family here.

For me, there were many wonderful things about growing up in a ministry house. It was one of the greatest privileges of my life and I am forever thankful to have grown up in a home where the glory of God and the service of our church was the primary focus of our family. I have the greatest love and respect for my parents having had front row seats to their godly example in our family and in ministry.

Looking back, it brings me so much joy as I reflect on the people in my churches that God used to love and support me, even as I faced some of the extra challenges of being a ministry kid. These people would greet me with warmth, hugs and genuine care. They took an interest in me, would pray for me and made sure I knew that...even now! When I went through some challenging years in my teens, several older women stand out to me as I remember their unconditional love and extra effort during that season. I praise God for them! There were certainly also some very hard things about growing up in a ministry house and we had these things in mind when we were considering full time ministry. Matt and I were aware that we were choosing to make sacrifices on behalf of our children and that growing up in a ministry home would mean many blessings, but also additional challenges for them.

Our first priority is that our children know God and develop their own relationships with him. We seek to raise them, as God calls all parents to do, in His word and to not place extra expectations on ourselves or our children because we're a ministry family. Aware of the challenges they may face as we serve in ministry we pray that God would protect them in the ways that we can't and that their experience of church would be the beautiful picture the Bible shows us - a place of love and learning as we live as God's people together, praising him and enjoying him as one family united in Christ.

We pray regularly that our children would love God with all of their heart, soul, mind and strength and that he would place people and experiences in their lives that would grow them in Him. Please pray this with us for our children and for those of your own pastors.



Indigenous ministry news

Jum Naden and some members of the Front Yard Church.

ON 28 MAY, AN INDIGENOUS MINISTRY DAY WILL BE HELD at Narrabri. This day is being run by the Indigenous Subcommittee for the Diocese in conjunction with the Narrabri Anglican church.

Jum Naden, a member of that committee and is looking forward to a fruitful day.

“While the vision of the committee for the day has remained the same – that we would see churches have a go at ministry to Indigenous communities that are within their parishes – we have decided to approach the day from a different angle this year with trying to help people/churches understand what the bible says about why this is an important task,” he said. On the day Kurt Langmead will give a talk on “What is the Gospel?” and I will give a talk on “What is culture?” The hope is that with the talks we will give people a foundation to be able to work from when thinking about and having a go at Indigenous ministry.”

Jum currently works as an assistant minister at St Peter’s South Tamworth, and has a special responsibility for the Front Yard Church, an indigenous church in Coledale.

“Coledale Front Yard Church is coming along well,” he told us. “St Pete’s Anglican Church has purchased a property so we can build an outdoor ministry centre. We have Council approval to go ahead with the build and are waiting for quotes from builders, so we know of how much we must fundraise for the ministry. Currently every week we have anywhere between 90-120 people meet to sing songs, have dinner, and hear from God’s word. On Thursday morning we run a community pantry van ministry in conjunction with Anglicare that also happens on the block in Coledale. As the year progresses, we hope to establish two bible study groups in the community...one for men and one for women.”

Please pray for Jum and the leaders at the Front Yard Church, and especially that funds might soon be raised for the new ministry centre.

Meanwhile in Uralla, Dixie Skuthorpe (above) is keeping busy!

“I commenced in my role as Aboriginal Pastoral Worker in 2018. The primary focus of my role is to build relationships within the Aboriginal community, engage within the local community, provide pastoral care, and coordinate and conduct St John’s Children’s Sunday school program.”

When someone tells you they “provide pastoral care” you might



think that means talking to a few people who are having some difficulties. For Dixie, it goes much further. Over the past few years she has: visited Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people in hospital, helped with the provision of meals on a regular basis, to families within the parish, helped with grocery shopping for families in the parish, has aided people in accessing specialised services and has met and prayed with individuals and families impacted by addiction.

“Throughout the year, and when I am aware of families or individuals in need, a food hamper and or food voucher is provided,” she said. “Over the Christmas period food hampers are delivered to families with whom I have had connections and have developed a rapport. One of the teachers from Uralla Central became aware of hampers being delivered to families, and in 2021 gave books and pencils and other school supplies to include in the hampers. The teacher is interested in continuing to provide school resources for the children to include in the hampers.”

As well as pastoral care, she is involved with Sunday School at St John’s Uralla, and (through Young Life New England) the Wyldlife Club, for year five and six students from Minimbah Aboriginal Primary School and Newling Primary School in Armidale. In April 2021, St John’s started a Breakfast Club (BC) for all school aged children, the BC is in partnership with Uralla Neighbourhood Centre. The Breakfast Club is held each Wednesday during school term. In addition to Breakfast we also provide a lunch pack for the children who need it.

All these activities are just part of Dixie’s ministry. “I praise God for guiding me through these times and giving me strength to support those in need and His perfect timing,” she said. Please pray for Dixie’s health and stamina as she takes on multiple ministries, all with the ultimate goal of introducing people to Jesus and helping them home to heaven.

Catching up with our missionaries

THE CHURCH MISSIONARY SOCIETY'S MISSION ENCOUNTER will be held 5-6 August, 2022 at the Peter Chiswell Hall, William Cowper Campus, Calrossy Anglican School. Stuart Coulton, former principal of Sydney Missionary and Bible College (SMBC) will be the guest speaker. Adam and Helene Ramsay from Japan and Gillian Law from Italy will be there, and we will be introduced to new workers heading out to South Asia and Japan.

Ahead of that weekend, we caught up with Andrew and Margie Newman in Uganda, Bruce and Libby in South Asia and Gillian Law in Rome.

Andrew and Margie

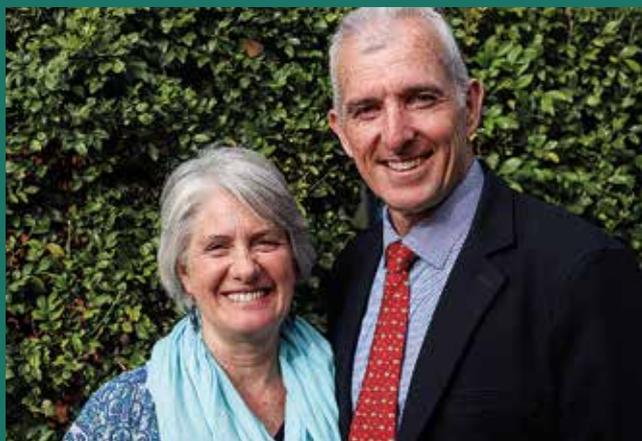
In November last year we had three concerns weighing heavily on our hearts: we had not cuddled our new (and first) grand-baby Winnie, we had news that Andy's mum was quite unwell, and our youngest son Dan was about to be engaged but we had not met Jess face-to-face

We told the Lord about our heavy hearts. We asked him to open doors for us in order to get home for a short time. We knew it sounded mad because COVID was on the move again but we thought we would ask anyway.

What followed was ... amazing! We were able to come home for a visit.

The thing is, we weren't expecting such a beautiful thing to happen. We are so grateful. There was nothing of entitlement in our prayer. And we knew He would see us through to November '22 (Home Assignment) if COVID stopped us. As we think about what transpired, we choose faith over luck. This was no fluke. The Lord was just plain kind to us and our very grateful family. Actually, in our November/ December prayer letter you prayed this prayer: *that the Lord provide for us as we feel the distance from family again this Christmas*."

Thank you!!!



Since returning to Rukungiri, we read Psalm 34 - so apt for what we experienced. There, King David makes it clear where gratitude should be directed. So, we now gladly testify:

The Lord is always good. Just consider all we have, daily, because of Jesus. But we *have tasted and seen that the Lord is good (v8)* in a unique and personal way. So, for us, we *will glory in the Lord (v2) ... Glorify the Lord with us; let us glorify the Lord together (v3)*

Bruce and Libby

Life over here has always consisted of comings and goings. We experience grief when friends leave and we welcome new friendships that surprise us and remind us of God's kindness. Missionary children have particularly felt this turnstile spin. It has been lovely to welcome back folk from home assignment and there is an anticipation of our first expatriate retreat after some time - even more for us having spent a year in Australia.

Ironically, we have had to make the decision to return to Australia for a time. Our tourist visa days are running down, and we need to save some for government interviews and the official stamping. This means that Libby will teach online again from Australia. Please pray that we will adjust to more transition and still be able to give satisfactorily to our work here in South Asia online.

Gillian



Exams are over. The new semester has started. The weather is warming up. The days are getting longer. There's a buzz in the university areas of Rome. It's super busy. But it's the sort of busyness that I love because it means I'm out and about with students.

It's good to get the students together again: some mature and great examples to others, some young Christians still working out what it looks like to be a follower of Jesus and some non-believers. And really excitingly we've met new students who want to be part of GBU (the University Bible Group): some internationals especially as the European uni-exchange scheme picks up again after the pandemic, and other Italians from outside of Rome who are looking for community here.

Along with the positives, there is also the reality of life in a broken world. War has broken out on our border. I say 'border' because Italy is part of Europe and Europe is very united at the moment. There are Ukrainian students who study in Italy, my staff colleagues know the GBU (International Fellowship of Evangelical Students) staff in Ukraine. It's horrible... as war always is. It's sobering. It's scary. And my sense, talking to students and others, is that there is more fear about what might happen with war than the fear when the pandemic first struck. It's another reminder that we can't rely on politics or diplomacy for ultimate peace: I heard a wonderful testimony from a brave lady in Ukraine helping people evacuate. She would say 'You've prepared your backpack, well done. Now have you prepared your soul?'

Scripture Union gets playing





AFTER TWO YEARS OF COVID DISRUPTION, SCRIPTURE UNION CAMPS are up and running at full speed again! Joe Goldsworthy, member of St Peter's South Tamworth, ex-NSW country rugby coach, and former Head of the Secondary Boys' at Calrossy cannot wait to get on the paddock.

"In 2019, a week before the Scripture Union Rugby Camp was to begin, my phone rang," he told us. "It was Brad Thorn who said 'I am able to come to camp and I will be bringing my sons.'

For those who are not familiar with rugby, Brad Thorn is rugby 'royalty', admired and respected around the world as one of the very best and toughest players of all time. An All Black, a Kangaroo, a winner of Rugby's World Cup, Super Rugby and the Heineken Cup, and a State of Origin Rugby League player and NRL premierships, he has done it all in union and League. At present he is the coach of the QLD Reds Super Rugby team. The sight of Brad Thorn, 195cm and 114kg, being tackled by a crowd of young keen rugby players on the paddock and then hearing him talking about the importance of Jesus in his life and the need for these young men to ask Jesus to be the captain of their lives will remain in my memory.

Last year with COVID rampant, he could not come in person but was able to speak to the boys via Zoom on the State of Origin night. This year he will look to support the camp again. COVID prevented Australia's 1991 World Cup winning captain, Nick Farr Jones, from attending last year but again, he was able to speak to the boys about his love of Jesus with the help of technology. Hopefully in 2022 he will be able to come in person.

This year's camp will be held in Tamworth at Calrossy Anglican school, starting on Saturday 2nd July and finishing on Tuesday 5th July. The coaching, again under the direction of Ofa Fainga'anuku, (ex- Tongan international, ex-Bayonne and Worcester, NSW Waratahs and Sydney first grade) will be age specific and with the highest regard for the welfare of each child. We have had enquiries about expanding the camp to include girls in future years, and we appreciate your prayers that we make wise decisions in this and all aspects about camp.

Beside the fun and the rugby, there will be good Christian teaching. Rugby might be 'the game they play in heaven' but heaven needs to be thought about! If you have boys from Year 5 to Year 10 who would like to come then visit <https://sunsw.org.au/events/rugby-union-camp/>, email surugbyunioncamp@gmail.com or contact Olivia on 0490 111 610."

...and baking



Meanwhile, Olivia Ruigrok has plans to keep the girls busy, with a new idea.

"Janelle Tongue and I were chatting about camps one day, about how there are so many camps for boys, but there weren't quite as many for girls," she said. "We discovered over the course of our conversation that we both really loved cooking, and of course, we both love Jesus!

That was the beginning of the launch for Bake-Off! Camp, a fresh new camp for girls in years seven to nine. But it is more than just baking... if you cook it, you eat it!

This weekend camp, held 20-22 May, is full of opportunities to broaden the skills and expertise of young women from table etiquette and three course meals, to making damper in a camp oven. They will learn to bake sweets and treats, create recipe books, how to serve dishes and how to wield a variety of utensils! They will have the chance to connect with other campers, rise to different challenges and learn more about Jesus with caring female leaders who love to read the Bible and share His love. We are excited to have Eunice Holford as our speaker who will be giving four talks on 'God's Recipe Book for Life'.

We are excited to see what God will do through this first-time camp, and maybe in the future, we can open it up to girls and boys in a broader age range! To register, visit <https://sunsw.org.au/events/bake-off-camp/> - spots are filling fast! Contact Olivia Ruigrok 0490 111 610 or Janelle Tongue 0428 421 206 for further information."

Ben at rugby camp.



Hannah and Miles come home

HANNAH AND MILES LANE WERE FULLY IMMERSSED IN A typical urban life. Both worked at high pressure jobs which came with all the attendant stresses and anxieties. Their marriage had become hard work, and they were not sure what to do. So they did a weird thing. They went ‘farm sitting’. Twice, during 2019 and 2020, they stayed on farms in northern New South Wales, in order to help out farmers still suffering the results of the drought.

One day, while visiting Manilla, Miles spotted a beautiful shopfront house for sale, and they started to contemplate the possibility of leaving Sydney. Hannah had just resigned from her corporate job, Miles was working from home developing an app, and they had milestone birthdays approaching. At the end of the second farm-sit they returned to Sydney, packed up their house, and turned their faces north.

“It was a stressful period,” Hannah said, “but God was incredibly gracious to us. The farmer from our first farm-sit generously allowed us to stay in a cottage on his farm until we moved into our new home in Manilla. The following months were difficult. The Lord provided for our employment and financial needs, but it was emotionally and relationally stressful. In hindsight we can very much see God’s hand and His grace in our challenging journey to the country. After a challenging year, it was a great surprise to discover - on New Years’ Day - that I was pregnant! Our son Jeremiah was born in September 2021. He has brought much joy to our life and we are very thankful for God’s blessing. Jeremiah is an amazing gift from God.”

For Hannah and Miles this move has been about far more than finding fresh air and a pretty home. “What I most want to share is the overwhelming kindness and grace of God we have experienced,” Hannah told us. “We came to Manilla as two weary and broken people,

and we have found healing and restoration. On many occasions we had been ungodly and brought shame and dishonour to the Lord. Yet in His great mercy, He allowed us to experience forgiveness. Over the last two years, we have grieved wounds of years past, grappled with leaving our sins, regrets and sorrows at the cross, and learned to deeply and fully surrender them to the Lord - the righteous and just judge. He has lifted our burdens and put a new song of joy in our hearts.

“The LORD has done great things for us, and we are filled with joy.”
Psalm 126:3

Church has been wonderful, with excellent Biblical teaching and loving pastoral care from our minister, Dave (Fisher), who has blessed us with wise counsel, rebuke for our wrongdoings and much prayer. We love our church family dearly. We have experienced genuine friendship, received much love, shared lots of laughter, been convicted of our failings and assured of our forgiveness as we study God’s word together. But I also believe our presence in a shopfront house in the town-centre is part of His plan. He has blessed us with an opportunity to share the gospel through the beautiful nativity and Bible verses we display in our front windows each Christmas, and that brings us great joy.

We would encourage other people to consider living and serving God in the country, especially now that working from home is easier and more acceptable - there are great people and ministry opportunities in rural and regional Australia. It would be wise to think carefully about possible locations, churches and ministry opportunities, as well as employment, education and housing opportunities, and individual gifts, interests and abilities. But ultimately, it’s “trust and obey” - trust that the Lord will lead you to the place he wants you, and will use you - through obedience, for His glory - in the place He puts you.”

“...there’s no discouragement shall make him once relent his first avowed intent to be a pilgrim...”

John Bunyan