

# The Link

ANGLICAN DIOCESE OF ARMIDALE

2018 FEBRUARY/MARCH

## How thankful are you?



Sharon Kirk

**HOW HAS THE YEAR STARTED FOR YOU?** For most of us, it will be the same old thing... another year of work or study, another year of job-hunting, another year of tedious medical treatment, another year of secret unhappiness or of desperation to change the circumstances of your life. For others, it will be a year of change; a new marriage or baby, a bereavement to be lived through, a new job or home, a reduction in circumstances, or an unexpected windfall that improves your lot.

Whatever 2018 will bring to each of us, it is good to begin the year by thinking about

thankfulness. In October last year, Sharon Kirk from Uralla gave a powerful and personal talk about how her understanding of thankfulness has been coloured by her struggle with depression. She has kindly allowed us to reproduce part of that talk here:

As Christians, we are called to thankfulness, in both the good and not-so-good times in life. God commands us many times in the Bible to be thankful. But thankfulness is not always easy, because sometimes, we don't really understand what it is. Is it simply a case of

believing that every cloud has a silver lining and then trying to find that silver lining? Or is it a positive attitude that always hopes for the best?

Perhaps thankfulness is a case of looking on the bright side of things?

I want to suggest that it is none of these things. Thankfulness in the Bible is different. Being thankful begins with a focus on God and is not dependent on our circumstances. Psalm 100 explains that the reason we are called to thanksgiving and praise is

*Continued on page 2*

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simply this: 'For the Lord is good and His love endures forever; His faithfulness continues through all generations'. Our thanksgiving finds its birthplace in the character and work of God.

We may be thankful for all sorts of things about our life and situation, and it's absolutely right that we are thankful for all the good things in life.

But what about when our circumstances are a little different? What if your past holds painful events and memories that continue to haunt you? What if your lot in life now is less than ideal? Perhaps you are struggling with sickness, loss, or the hard realities of getting older and not being able to do all you once could do? What if the sky has turned a shade of grey and you cannot see a patch of blue. What then? How can we be thankful in the midst of life that is just plain hard going at times?

In Colossians, Paul instructs believers many times in just a few short chapters to be thankful. He doesn't just suggest that thankfulness might be a good idea if they feel like it. No, he commands them over and over again to be thankful. In chapter two, Paul gives a summary of his message with these words: 'So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live in Him, rooted and built up in Him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness'.

He has reminded them, and us, that we have been given the greatest gift of all. We were once living in darkness, separated from God, and without hope in this world, and with no hope for life beyond the grave. But because of what Jesus has done, we have now been brought out of darkness into light. Our sins have been forgiven and we are reconciled to God. We can enjoy an intimate relationship with the Maker of the Universe who actually calls us His children and guarantees us a glorious eternal inheritance.

This is our richest blessing, and this is where our thankfulness must start. When we make God the starting point and focus of our thankfulness, we can be thankful even when life looks pretty grim from a human point of view, because we're not dependent on our circumstances to dictate the level of our thankfulness.

Imagine a spring as it bubbles up and flows over. Our thankfulness is meant to be like that. We are to be so full of thankfulness to God, giving thanks for who He is and what He has done, that our lives just constantly overflow with thanksgiving. It's like, what is on the inside of us, bursts out and shows on the outside. It just cannot be contained. It spills over to those in our homes. It trickles down to those we meet each day. It is a sign to the world around us that we belong to Jesus.

## I wonder; how thankful are you? Is your cup overflowing or is it half full?

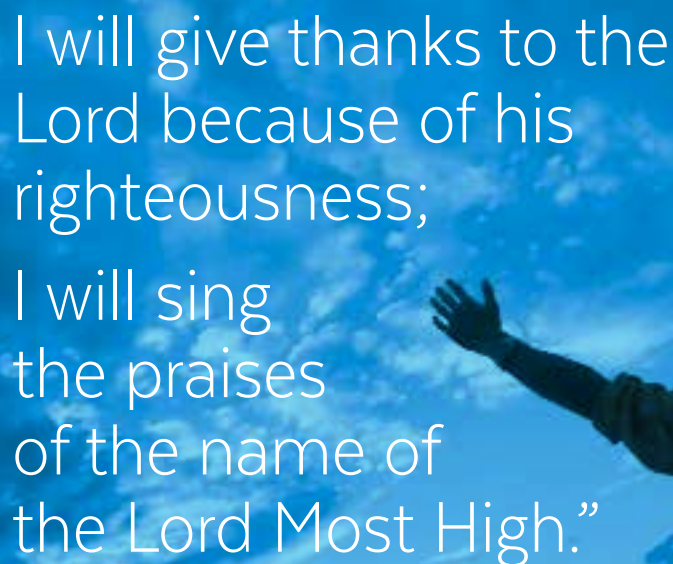
How often do you thank God for who He is, for what He has done, and for all His blessings to you? Or do you find yourself often just coming to Him with your shopping list of requests? The apostle Paul never stopped thanking God. In fact, in all his prayers that we have recorded in the New Testament, he never prays without giving thanks. It's an essential and intentional part of his prayer life. How intentional are you about thanking God? I will be honest with you: thankfulness is not something that comes naturally to me. Criticism and grumbling seem to come quite naturally, but thankfulness is something that God has had to keep working on in me over many years.

me a greater joy in God in the midst of them, and enabled me to keep going.

You see, being thankful doesn't mean that we will necessarily be happy or excited or free of pain. As strange as it seems, sometimes thankfulness and delighting in God can actually exist side by side with sadness or anguish. I think I've actually experienced my greatest times of joy and thankfulness with tears streaming down my face.

I still write in that journal today. Even now there are many times when thankfulness does not come naturally and I have to be intentional about it. And God continues to do His work, changing my heart and mind. And the more

Psalm 7:17



I will give thanks to the  
Lord because of his  
righteousness;  
I will sing  
the praises  
of the name of  
the Lord Most High."

In the worst of my depression years ago, when it seemed that every thought I had was negative and miserable, I was challenged about my lack of thankfulness. So I started a journal, and each day I made myself write down at least three things for which I was thankful. I did that day after day after day. And eventually I came to see how powerful thankfulness was.

As I continued to thank God for His love and His goodness, He began to change me little by little. My attitude started to shift from negativity to appreciation and praise, and I experienced a real joy in the midst of struggle, a joy that was not because of my circumstances, but in spite of them. It was a joy in the God who had saved me and called me his own. Being thankful didn't necessarily take away the sadness or the pain, but it gave

I practise thankfulness, the more it becomes part of the fabric of my being.

Now, perhaps God doesn't have to work so hard on you to develop thankfulness. You might be someone who already overflows with thanksgiving; it is just a natural overflow of your life in Jesus. You don't have to be intentional about it at all, it just happens. Well if that's you, then I rejoice with you. But if you're a little more like me, and thankfulness does not just come automatically, can I encourage you to be intentional about it? Will you commit yourself to practising thankfulness, whatever the circumstances are that you face at any given time? And as you do so, may God give you great joy and delight in him as you thank Him for who He is and what He has done, and all the blessings of this life that He has given you to enjoy.

# How to gain security in an insecure world

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Bishop Rick Lewers

**THE EDITOR OF *THE LINK*** HAS ASKED me to write an article to encourage people who may be feeling a little insecure about the changes and chances of this fallen world. I am glad to oblige.

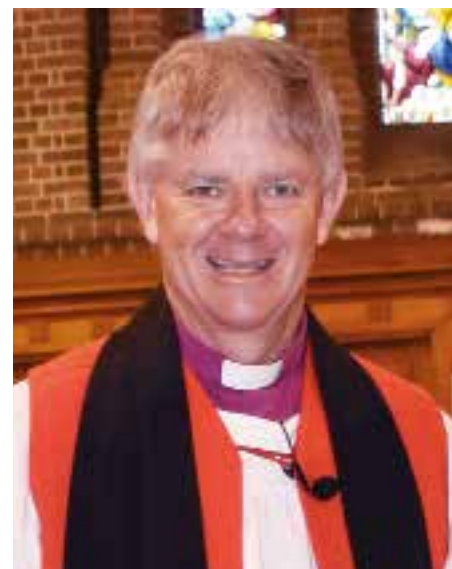
It is no surprise that a person would feel some sense of apprehension when traditional definitions in life are challenged and when nations are flexing political muscle and posturing threateningly. Of course it is a new year and with every new year our apprehensions can be a whole lot closer to home: How much longer will my parent live? Will the rain come at the right time? Can anything help me manage my depression? What will I say to my divorcing children or parents? How long before the cancer ends my life?

Our world can be an awkward place to live and in my less arrogant moments I admit to not having sufficient resources in myself to handle it all on my own. It is those last few words, “on my own”, that should be an eye opener. For the “eyes wide open” person, we should realise that life was never meant to be lived “on my own”. We were meant to live in fellowship with God and with each other. So let me suggest that our security in an age of insecurity is to be found in whom we have fellowship with. We ought not to think we live in a world so different from past history and that this age is somehow worse than all that has gone before. Biblical observation reveals Babel like unbelief, Sodom and Gomorrah style immorality, demonic encounters with the Witch of Endor, palatial materialism of the early days of Isaiah, prophetic confrontation of the social injustices of the 8<sup>th</sup> century, the recorded persecutions of the martyrs in Hebrews 11 and the crucifixion of the Christ. Less than a century ago it was Hitler, Stalin, Pol Pot and Mao. There is nothing new under the sun.

Of course, the answer for our Christian brothers and sisters in the past was to face all foes not in their own strength but by faithful dependence upon an all sufficient God in loving fellowship with each other...the same God who raises the dead and who the church gathers together to worship: dependence that issues in prayer to God for each other. As a father I have a number of dependants. They rely on me for all sorts of things: wisdom, love, security, and provision. Even 30 years into parenting, those dependants find their father useful. A father hopes that one day his children will confidently exercise responsibility consistent with all they have learnt, but a good father always remains available and a good father's child always knows their father's dependability.

When Jesus taught His disciples to pray “Our Father” He reminded the disciples that their relationship with God was one of family intimacy. As prayer makes obvious, with its emphasis on asking our Father in Heaven for all sorts of things, dependence is everything. And here is the good news – we who are dependent on God for everything can approach our very dependable Heavenly Father who knows how to give us good things. His track record from the fall of Adam, through Babel, Sodom, Kings, criminals and the crucifixion of Christ reveals the reliability of our Father in heaven. Nothing takes God by surprise. His promises are kept and, for the insecure, it is worth hearing that nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus.

In the Lord's prayer Jesus taught us to pray for the wisdom of right priorities - that God's name would be hallowed and that His kingdom would come and His will would be done on earth as it is in heaven. It is an opening request that acknowledges that God is everything to us and without God we are



nothing. Our dependence becomes obvious when we ask for our daily bread. If we sin – and we all do – we are dependent upon God's willingness to forgive. God's willingness to forgive...what a treasure to rest in! Of course, we know that to forgive others is never easy but God's dependable love and forgiveness is always the ingredient for a more gracious and forgiving self. Understanding how much we struggle to hallow the name of anyone but ourselves, how proud we become of gaining our own daily bread and how neglectful we are of the need for forgiveness, protection against temptations and deliverance from evil are no-brainers. Only our Father in heaven offers such protection and deliverance.

I think it is worth noting the corporate nature of this prayer as it begins with “OUR” Father. We don't pray in isolation but every request of the Father is a request that honours the family. Every request remembers our brothers and sisters in Christ even and especially when making our personal requests.

When Jesus taught us to pray “our Father” He knew our dependence on God is essential. But here is the amazing thing often missed – Jesus taught us to pray because He knew that our Father in Heaven is dependable and willing to answer our requests. We pray because we are our Father in Heaven's dependants. He expects us to exercise responsible discipleship but that will always include dependant prayer. So when it comes to life's insecurities talk with God, rest in Him. Eternity is assured and in Christ you have nothing to fear. When others are insecure, pray for them.

When you are insecure, ask others to pray for you. In this uncertain age we have two great resources at our disposal. One is our Heavenly Father, the other is our brothers and sisters in Christ.

Don't be afraid...JUST BELIEVE.



# Good progress



Dorothy



Pamellah



Caroline



Phionah



Junior



Isaac



Oscar

Darrell Parker

NGU Team Leader 2018

**THE HISTORY OF CHRISTIAN MISSION** is littered with zealous and often well-meaning and godly efforts to grow the Kingdom of God that sadly, somehow, miss the mark. Whether it be in the area of evangelism, Christian education, or even in simply meeting physical needs, not all the efforts of God's people to work cross culturally have been well directed or borne gospel fruit.

With thanks to God, Next Generation Uganda (NGU), however, is not one of them. This mission firmly belongs among the many missionary endeavours of today's church that are making a real, lasting, easily discernible and positive difference to both sides of this missionary partnership.

The first NGU was held way back in 2009 at the invitation of the leadership of the North Kigezi Diocese. It was they, not us, who discerned that their Christian leaders were lacking in the skills needed to handle God's word well. From that invitation and in partnership with Katoomba Christian Convention, NGU was born. The Armidale Diocese has been running the Conference independent of KCC ever since that first Conference was held in 2009.

Initially, the emphasis was simply on learning how to run this Australian grown program cross culturally. There were many mistakes made and lessons to learn. The Next

Generation Model, on the whole, transferred well to the Ugandan context and it immediately made an impact. Ugandan Christian leaders could easily see the potential the method had to train Ugandan leaders in how to be faithful to what God was saying in His word and to communicate that message in a way that was clear and compelling to a particular audience. They saw NGU as part of the answers to their prayers as the Ugandan Church fought against false teaching filtering into their ranks.

NGU is now maturing as a missionary endeavour. The aim was never simply to run the conference 'forever' and to make the Ugandan Church dependent on us. We have always understood that Ugandans will pretty much always teach the Bible, and how to handle it well, better to their own people than we Australians ever could. We have gradually seen an ever growing group of people who have graduated from the course and who are now being trained in how to teach the model to others, and also learning how to plan and run the Conference itself.

This year, for the first time ever, we had Ugandan believers running Strand Groups on their own with minimal input from us. This was very exciting. Roughly 25 people have now been identified as potential future NGU Leaders. These are all now in various stages of completing their training and, one

day not too far down the track, taking over the presentation of the Conference from us. Some of the real 'keen beans' are even talking about taking NGU on the road and introducing it to other Ugandan Dioceses.

Along the way, our team had many adventures, including the North Kigezi bus breaking down three times and having to seek substantial running repairs on the road. The food is always a hurdle for some and we were glad to get home and to not see goat or matooke (a plantain...like a green banana!) on the menu. It was tiring, challenging, difficult, wonderful all at the same time. We visited local churches, preached, encouraged their Pastors, and developed growing and loving friendships with our Ugandan brothers and sisters in Christ. It was truly an honour to be part of it.

Thanks to the great team (Simon and Erin Carter, Randall and Donna Boughton, Tim and Alison Downes, Jennifer Leahy, Tam Ramsay, Emma Little, and Geoff Hearne) for their wonderful work. You were a delight to work with and did our Diocese proud.

The Apostle Paul said to Timothy, his apprentice, "...Practise these things, immerse yourself in them, so that all may see your progress." (1 Timothy 4:15).

We can assure you that progress is being made in Uganda.





*St Mark's Kentucky says 'Welcome!'*

**SUNDAY, 22ND APRIL, 2018 MARKS 90 YEARS OF MINISTRY** and worship at St Mark's, Kentucky. The milestone will be celebrated with a service at 10.00am attended by Bishop Rick Lewers who will preach, and a luncheon in the Kentucky Memorial Hall afterwards. It will be a day to remember, to celebrate, and to give thanks to God for the faithful servants who laid the foundation of this ministry so long ago.

Before Kentucky was settled, services were held in two local properties, 'Terrible Vale' and 'Salisbury Court'. Later, people gathered in the old galvanised iron hall, built around 1918-20, where worshippers sat on wooden benches with neither backrests nor kneelers!

As the soldiers and their families settled back into life after World War 1, the growing community decided to build an Anglican church in the village. At a meeting on 14th August, 1925 The Church of England Building Committee began to make plans for a permanent church building. On 3rd September, that year, the architect, F.J. Bishop of Tamworth was selected to design the building. The building material chosen was brick, largely for maintenance reasons and because a Diocesan Council loan would not have been available for a wooden structure. The community then set out to raise the necessary funds through dances, bazaars, stalls, tea parties etc. The Diocesan Council donated £100 and lent a further £500 which took 20 years to repay. When the work went out to tender, a quotation of £1,350.14.00 from C.G.Cooper & Sons Uralla was accepted. Extra costs were £50 for

fencing, £50 for fees, £100 cartage and £50 for unforeseen expenses. The total cost was £1,600.14.00. Further savings were made by voluntary labour for site preparation and in carting materials from the local railhead, and elsewhere, to the site.

On 27th October, 1926 the Committee finalised its decisions about who would build the church and how it was to be built. A meeting of the congregation was called for 31st October after the Sunday service when full particulars were placed before all concerned. Thirty adult parishioners joined the Chairman, Rev. F de P. St John and unanimously resolved that the project should go ahead as planned. It was noted that, "A church built as per specifications will be a source of pride for generations and will become more valuable with age."

The Foundation Stone was laid by Mr. F.G. Taylor on the 16th October, 1927 and St Mark's Church was dedicated on 29th April, 1928, only six months later. As required by the Licence, the church was furnished appropriately for services, with pieces given by various families in memory of family members. In particular, various pieces have been donated to remember those who lost their lives in both World Wars.

The parishioners of St Mark's warmly invite everyone, but particularly former parishioners or members of their families, to join them for this milestone celebration. If you wish to attend or want further details contact Maureen Watson, 'Ardea', 138 Terrible Vale Road, Kentucky NSW 2354. Phone 02 67787262 or email: [ibwatson@bigpond.com](mailto:ibwatson@bigpond.com). Alternatively, call the Vicar, Brian Kirk, on 67784906



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# Teens, apps and the St

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Tim Stevens  
Youth Encourager

**I REMEMBER THE SATURDAY** afternoon as distinctly as the day I'm writing this article. My father had been tinkering away on the family computer all day, a constant stream of various pings and whistles had been heard throughout the day. That was until he emerged from the family office with one of the most remarkable feats of technology I had seen up until that point in my life - he had downloaded and printed a colour picture of the Starship Enterprise (you're forgiven if you need to look it up). We stuck that picture on the office wall and were amazed every time we looked at it.

As I speak to the parents of teenagers, one of their biggest fears becomes evident almost immediately. That fear is concerned with their children's use of technology and by extension, social media. Their concern is a natural one. Technology has moved a long way from that quiet Saturday afternoon, and kids today seem to use technology for everything. Even my two year old knows how to take photos on my iPhone, without

us really ever teaching him how to do it! If you haven't kept up, it's easy to feel like you've been left behind.

But in addition to those subconscious fears, real ones exist too. An almost constant stream of news articles about young people who have endangered themselves through technology leaves us who are not of the "iGeneration" baffled. When we examine them, the statistics are even more troubling.

In 2016, research showed that 70 percent of teenagers make an effort to conceal their online behaviour. Teenagers try to cover their digital footprints, which inevitably pushes them towards what is known in the industry as "Temporary" and "Anonymous" Apps.

**Temporary apps** allow users to send messages, images and videos that self-destruct after a period of time. **Anonymous apps** allow users to send messages, images and videos anonymously.

If you are the parent of a teenager, and you were worried that you didn't know what

they were doing on their phone, there's a 70 chance that you are right! In fact, 72 per cent of parents say that they are concerned about the online activity of their child, and 25 per cent of teens say that their parents know nothing about their online behaviour.

Now, I am confident that the majority of teenagers use technology like this with the most innocent of intentions. To keep in touch with their friends, and to share their day-to-day lives with mates. But like everything, there are hidden dangers. Anonymity can foster cyberbullying. Anonymous chatting allows predators to stalk and harass teenagers. Anonymity can encourage young people to partake in risky sexual behaviour online. Vanishing content can make tracing questionable content difficult. Teenagers can easily be exposed to adult content, both violent and sexual. Also, anonymity is never guaranteed, because 47 per cent of anonymous app users take screenshots of temporary content and save the content for later.

# Starship Enterprise

## DDF receives regulatory approval

IN LATE 2016 RELIGIOUS CHARITABLE DEVELOPMENT FUNDS, of which Armidale's Diocesan Development Fund (the DDF) is one, were subject to a number of regulatory changes instituted by the Australian Prudential Regulation Authority (APRA) and the Australian Securities and Investments Commission (ASIC). The changes were to come fully into effect on 1 January this year.

Without a financial services licence issued by ASIC, the DDF would not have been able to continue to be an investment option for retail investors, or as the DDF likes to describe them, the mums and dads who regularly attend services across the Diocese. A licence, given the size of the DDF, would, however, have been prohibitively expensive to obtain according to the Board Chairman, Tim McGhie. Working with expert legal advisers, the DDF was able to put a proposal to ASIC which was accepted just before Christmas. The approval means that the DDF in future will continue to be able to receive funds from a wide range of investors throughout the Diocese.

The uncertainty the DDF has experienced over the last 12 months is, according to its Executive Officer, Ron Perry, now behind it. Indeed, it is now free to accept investments from those who attend services across the Diocese and who wish to support the Diocese's work by this means.

People wanting further information about the investment options the DDF provides can contact Sam Brennan on 6272 4491 or at [ddfaccounts@armidaleanglicandiocese.com](mailto:ddfaccounts@armidaleanglicandiocese.com).

### Is there any good news?

YES! 58 per cent of young people say that their parents have the most significant influence on their online behaviour. So what can parents do to safeguard their teenagers?

Let me suggest four relatively easy ways to help.

- 1. Stay up-to-date:**  
Take an interest in current technology and educate yourself about the apps your child is using.
- 2. Be real about dangers:**  
Remind teenagers of the dangers of social media, communicating with strangers, exposing yourself to bullying and sharing inappropriate information.
- 3. Take the lead in privacy:**  
Check the privacy settings of your teenager's devices and apps. Understand how to block people if necessary.
- 4. Establish boundaries:**  
Create expectations about what online behaviour is acceptable and know how to limit the installation of new apps on your teenager's device.

Are you longing, like me, for the time when a single picture of the Starship Enterprise captured the wonder of a 12 year old Tim Stevens? We live in a very different age. Our Youth Encourager's Committee knows what a challenging area this is, so in the latter half of 2018, we are planning on running some more detailed training in this area. We will begin at our FUEL: Youth Leaders weekend.

In addition to that, we've got a busy year ahead. On the 27th-29th of April, Youth Muster is happening at Glen Innes Showground. Dan Wu (Moore College) and Mike Turner (Ashbury Anglican) are coming up to speak from the book of Daniel. From the 27th-29th of July, we're holding our FUEL: Youth Leaders Weekend at Copeton Dam. John Woodhouse (ex-principal of Moore College) will be coming to encourage and equip our youth leaders. We then finish off the year at Youth Surge: Combined youth nights will be happening in Gunnedah and Armidale on the 2nd of November.

See [armidaledioceseyouth.com](http://armidaledioceseyouth.com) for more information about our planned events, and if you want to educate yourself a little more about teenagers and the specific apps they use, see this link - <http://bit.ly/teenapps>

Would you like to support ongoing gospel ministry throughout the Armidale Anglican Diocese while also being able to earn interest on your savings?

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For further information please contact:

Diocesan Development Fund

email: [ddfaccounts@armidaleanglicandiocese.com](mailto:ddfaccounts@armidaleanglicandiocese.com)

phone: 02 6772 4491

address: PO Box 198 Armidale NSW 2350

Visit [armidaleanglicandiocese.com/ddf](http://armidaleanglicandiocese.com/ddf) to view the DDF Identification Statement, Ordinance and Terms and Conditions documents.



# Men @ Glen look to youth



*John Woodhouse speaking at last year's conference*

**MEN@GLEN** WILL BE HELD IN GLEN Innes on Friday the 9th and Saturday the 10th of March this year at the Glen Innes Showgrounds. Gary Millar from Queensland Theological College will be there, speaking on “Men of the King” from the Books 1 and 2 Kings. James Holbeck will be giving the testimonial talk.

The cost this year is \$90 for adults for the whole weekend, but there is a special deal for one particular age group. Organiser, Scott Wright said, “We are encouraging very young men to come along this year and we are doing this by giving away 100 free tickets to guys under the age of 18. James Holbeck recently worked with a number of teenagers at the Teenstreet camp at Gatton in Queensland which a number of our church youth attended.

He did some great work there and was thoroughly recommended by their organizing chair (who was one of our previous speakers). We always try and have our testimonial speaker from a different walk of life. James, as a former Wallaby, will really be of interest to many footy-mad country guys! So if you have a young Christian man in your life...put him in the car and bring him along for free. It's a great year to come.”

So why should the men of the Diocese go to Men @ Glen this year? Scott said, “Every year Men@Glen is uniquely different...each speaker and each talk is different and might just speak into your life in a unique way. I'd encourage all blokes not only to come, but to ask a mate to come. You might not think you have a role but each man does. I see so many

wonderful conversations happen at Men@Glen. By coming along, you might be able to say just the right thing to another bloke that will encourage him. The fellowship is very, very important. One of the great ministries is supporting guys from very small churches in our region. Every bloke should come at least once. We all need to hear deeply from God's word. The difference with normal church is that you can leave the distractions of life at home for a couple of days and dig deeper into the Bible with each session. Pray that God will speak into your life and I am convinced that He will do that through the teaching of His word.”

Visit the website [www.menatglen.com](http://www.menatglen.com) to get more information or to register.

## Comings and goings

A NEW YEAR GETS UNDERWAY, AND IT IS TIME FOR SOME OF our clergy to get up and move on. A number of new vicars have been inducted by the Bishop, and are already rolling up their sleeves to face new challenges.

Paul Foster, who has been working alongside Tim Baxter at Narrabri, became the Vicar of Quirindi where he succeeded Geoff Hearne who moved into the Bishop's Assistant role in May last year. Paul, Michelle and their children were welcomed into the parish with an induction service in early February at St Alban's Quirindi.

John Cooper has moved from Boggabri to fill the long-standing vacancy at Tenterfield. Nick Stone, who has been working in the Inverell Parish, has replaced John as Vicar at Boggabri. He is to combine his parochial duties with a Church Missionary Society roving ambassador role across the Dioceses of Armidale and Grafton, replacing David Greeff, who has moved to Western Australia.

Having been away from the Diocese for a little over a year caring for

aged parents in Brisbane, Daniel and Jenny Avenell are back home! They arrived in January, and Daniel has begun work as an associate in the Inverell Parish alongside Adam Draycott and Tineke Dekkers.

Jon Earnshaw has returned to the Diocese having been the Registrar of the Diocese of North West Australia for the past four years. Jon will combine the roles of Vicar of Bundarra and chaplain to the hospitals and nursing homes in Armidale.

Steve Cimarosti has joined the clergy team at the Cathedral in Armidale, having previously served at Port Macquarie. Steve and his wife Louise succeed Simon and Alison Reeve who have moved to the Woolgoolga Parish in Grafton Diocese where they are working in family and youth ministry. They also have a wider role in that Diocese which is being supported by the Bush Church Aid Society.

Please pray for these men, their wives and children as they settle into new ministries, that the Gospel may go forward and bear fruit in each of these parishes.



Part of the purpose for *The Link* is to share ideas. Sometimes, we are desperate for a fresh idea to put new zing into our outreach, training or pastoral care and we need inspiration to find it. So this year we will showcase some great ideas that people in one parish have found helpful. Maybe another parish

could do something similar, with a twist to suit its own situation.

To kick this new series off we go to Moree, Christmas 2017, where Vicar Phillip Brown thought that an idea he had heard in Melbourne could work just as well at All Saints.

# Snapping up visitors at Christmas

"I thought about children having their photos taken with Santa, and thought... let's make a photo opportunity that speaks to the true meaning of Christmas. So we set up a nativity scene, provided costumes and a photographer, and away we went", he said. "We advertised it at church, but also at our playgroup, and one Sunday just before Christmas, we were ready to go."

Taking the pictures that day was Lesley Barklay who is pretty much the unofficial photographer for Moree church events. She also runs the church's playgroup.

"We see between 20 and 35 kids at playgroup each week, from lots of different cultural and religious backgrounds. We are always looking for ways to plant a new seed, or open up a path into the church. I thought this was a great idea, and was not at all surprised by the overwhelmingly positive reaction we got when we announced it", she said. "In previous years, we have had one or two playgroup families join us for the children's Christmas service. In 2017, eight non-church families came along to have their photos taken, and to join us at the children-led service. I think it will be even bigger this year. I spoke to a number of people who saw the photos and were disappointed they didn't come." Lesley is looking forward to the next Nativity photo opportunity. "I think that even the most unlikely idea can be a huge success, especially if you look at using people's gifts and passions. I love taking photos, and am so grateful that this great interest of mine is a way to open up conversations about Jesus and His place in people's lives."



Clockwise from main: James and Sophie Mulligan with Jasmyn and Noah and grandmother Pingala ; Daniel and Erin Hayes; Hannah Barklay and Isaac Brown; Sarah, Richard, Frederick, Alexander and Kristian Phillips.







*Karl Grice aka The Wandering Bookseller*

**GOD'S WORD COMES TO US IN THE FORM OF A BOOK...**THE Bible, through which God speaks directly to us. Throughout the ages, books by Christian authors have helped shape, guide and change people to help them know God better and serve Him more wholeheartedly. Where would we be without the books of John Calvin, John Newton, JI Packer, Don Carson or John Chapman? If you attend a big Christian conference, you will often notice a bookstall, up the

back of the hall. On many occasions, that bookstall will be manned by Karl Grice. He is the smiley guy who just looks like he would love to have a chat with you. Karl, The Wandering Bookseller, spends his life travelling with, selling, and talking about books, specifically Christian books. We keep hearing that reading books is going out of fashion; that the internet has taken over, so we sat down with Karl to ask him about the current state of the Christian book market.

#### **How did you get into selling books?**

My first job out of high school was at the local Angus and Robertson store. The owners showed us that a workplace could be a family, and that you don't have to choose between doing business well and treating people well! I kept working in bookshops while studying at uni. After graduating, I moved to regional New South Wales with my wife and realised I could keep selling books!

#### **How did you come to be a wandering, rather than a static, bookseller?**

When I started selling Christian books, I was asked to send books to some small events. I decided to go to the events with the books. I enjoyed meeting people and hearing their stories. You can learn a lot about books from the customers who read them!

Three years ago we started a new business called The Wandering Bookseller. We are based in Katoomba now, and I travel to events in Sydney, Canberra, Wollongong, Newcastle, Orange, Albury and Molong. We also send bookstalls (and sometimes staff) to many other towns including Brisbane, Melbourne,

Mt Tamborine, Strathalbyn – and even Tamworth!

#### **Why do you love books in general and Christian books in particular?**

I have always enjoying reading. I love tracing back the history of an idea. Books help us avoid repeating past mistakes. They also help us imagine future possibilities. I like observing this process and entering into it with customers as we talk about what they are thinking, reading, or wanting to read.

#### **With the rise of the internet, what do you think is the future for books (general and Christian)?**

There are lots of Book Clubs popping up in our local area. It seems to me that Book Clubs are a much friendlier way to debate ideas than the online world of Facebook. I'm sure the customary wine and cheese platters help!

Perhaps alongside the slow-food movement we can cultivate a "slow-reading" movement. I think reading slowly and thinking deeply is a good way to practise being "quick to listen and slow to speak".

#### **Why should Christians read (Christian) books?**

Books help us process ideas and grow in our thinking. A customer recently asked for books on God's sovereignty and predestination. She was troubled after talking with her dad on the topic and was trying to work out what she thought. I recommended some books. When I saw her a few weeks later, she said the books helped and she'd like to read more. She now happens to agree with her dad!

#### **What makes a good Christian book?**

Good books help us apply the truth and wisdom of Scripture to our lives, and remind us to live in light of eternity.

#### **What do you talk to people about when they come to you to buy books?**

I like to hear what people are interested in and what drives them. I like to find out how they have come to think the way they do. And sometimes we even talk about books!

#### **What are the most popular types of Christian books at the moment? Pragmatic?**

### Theological? Topical?

Biographies are always popular. I think it's because people like reading stories. We are also beginning to realise the importance of storytelling in books on doctrine, evangelism and ethics. We see this in Christine Dillon's *Telling the Gospel Through Story* and Glynn Harrison's new book on sexual ethics: *A Better Story*.

If you want to consider more deeply the importance of "how" we express biblical truth, try reading John Piper's book *Seeing Beauty and Saying Beautifully*.

### What are some good books for kids....for parents to read to their littlies, and then for older kids to read themselves?

My favourite new children's book is a collection short one-page biographies called *Everyone a Child Should Know* by Clare Heath-Whyte. There are missionaries, preachers, poets, writers, rich people and poor people, healthy people and sick people. It's easy to read aloud, and children learn quickly that all sorts of people can be friends with Jesus. My only complaint is that it doesn't include Colin Buchanan!

For older kids, *The Chronicles of Narnia* is still on the list. One of my daughters is also enjoying *The Green Ember* series by S.D Smith. It is the story of talking rabbits (with swords!) under attack from wolves and hawks. The rabbits struggle with envy, impatience, anger, and self-pity. They learn about betrayal, repentance and forgiveness. I love that a story about rabbits can teach children so much about the human condition.

And for teens, *How Huge the Night* by Heather and Lydia Munn is beautifully crafted historical fiction (it's one of my wife's favourites!). With Hitler's influence creeping closer to one French village the main character still has everyday battles to face: friends, bullies, breakfast, irrational parents, prayer... and even if he chooses what's right, can he live it out? Can he choose love, faith and forgiveness? And can he let his enemy love him?

### What is the best thing about being a wandering Christian bookseller?

As I travel I meet people from many different churches and towns. Each person has their own story, their own challenges, their own journey with God. It is an incredible privilege to witness these saints as, sometimes in incredibly difficult situations, they continue to hope in God, to put their trust in Him and find joy in Him, despite life's pain. It is a great joy to share a story, a laugh, a tear, an idea, and maybe a book to help them (or their friend, godson, niece or mother) take one more step on their journey.

FEBRUARY/MARCH 2018

## Writing with passion

What motivates a Christian to write a book? Dr Patricia Weerakoon is one of Australia's best known practitioners in sexual health. You don't get many Christian sexologists, but Patricia is someone who has never found the usual stereotypes difficult to break. After writing several Christian books on sex she has, in her retirement, turned to writing fiction. We asked her why.



I write both non-fiction and fiction (<http://patriciaweerakoon.com/writing/>)

My non-fiction books were written to meet the felt need for information on sexuality and gender for all ages which are Bible-based and Christ-focussed. These are written mainly for a Christian readership and cover from six years (*Birds and Bees by the Book*), to couple intimacy in ageing (*The Best Sex for Life*). My first book, *Teen Sex by the Book* was awarded the Caleb prize in 2012. I started my fiction writing as a retirement activity. However, I was caught up in the challenge of writing challenging fiction for a Christian market. Having spent the first 40 years of my life in Sri Lanka, mainly in the tea plantations, I love writing about the country and its people. Living the next 30 years as a sexologist in Australia, my career as director of an international graduate program in sexual health at Sydney University has given me a unique perspective in cross-cultural fiction writing, especially in the area of sex and relationships.

My non-fiction books are written to inform and inspire people with the great and glorious narrative that the gospel provides us for sex and relationships. My fiction books are written to entertain but also inform the reader about significant issues. In *Empire's Children*, I explore class struggles and colonial influence, in my novel *Snowy Summer* (due for release in April 2018) I look at the issue of sex trafficking.

Christian non-fiction books should challenge and critique cultural norms and narratives. I would suggest that Christians should be reading these to be informed and empowered to live life that, for a Christian, will be increasingly counter-cultural to the dominant worldview.

My fiction writing attempts to do the same, but (I hope!) in a more entertaining manner.

## Building through reading

Sara Bioletti, who is a member of the Cathedral congregation in Armidale, is a reader. Having a Masters degree in linguistics, and having spent most of her working life researching and teaching English to speakers of other languages, words and meaning are very important to her. So she reads and reads and reads. She says that her reading of Christian books falls into roughly four categories.

"I read commentaries," she said. "They are so important because they give a context of time, place and theme and you can avail yourself of another person's research and deeper knowledge of the Bible, especially when it comes to understanding the original Greek and Hebrew texts. But I also read for inspiration. At the moment, I am enjoying Tim Keller's *My Rock; My Refuge*, a devotional based on the Psalms. It acts as a quick little connect every day...a great reward for little effort. I also love to read apologetics. Because I am involved in ministry to overseas students, books on apologetics equip me in a number of different ways to see issues that might be roadblocks to the Christian faith for people who come from vastly different cultures and faiths, but who want well considered answers to their questions. Finally, I love reading biographies. I like to hear somebody's account of God's unfolding story in their life. You get a picture of God's presence in the trials and triumphs of life."

But not all people are devoted readers like Sara. How can someone get started reading Christian books? "It's important to ask the question: what type of writing inspires me? Go for that! What do I think would help me? What will inspire me to connect to the word of God in a busy world? There are lots of good little books, devotionals with a bit of Scripture, a short commentary and a prayer. That's a great way to get started. Maybe you can start exploring on a Kindle. The books are easy to get, and if it's not for you, you can try something else. Of course, the importance of Christian magazines and periodicals like *The Link* and *Southern Cross* cannot be underestimated. They connect us locally, and help us to see how God is working in our wider world...in our Diocese and beyond."





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

John Bunyan



**IF YOU GO TO MEN @ GLEN THIS YEAR, YOU WILL SEE SCOTT WRIGHT. AS ONE OF the organisers, he will be running around setting up and putting out the little fires that such a large event occasionally generates. But it was a really big fire that changed Scott’s life, and taught him that the trust he had in God from an early age was certainly not misplaced..**

We had been running the winery for 17 years. It really was everything to our family; it was our life. On the day the fire happened, late in the afternoon, a good Christian friend called in and we had a coffee, it got late and we went home...a typical cool, late autumn night. We were having dinner and my son, who was in another room, called out and said that there was a huge fire. Sure enough, there was and within minutes Julie and I stood crying beside the winery engulfed in flames. It was total destruction. I called two close Christian friends and within a very short space of time our Christian brothers and sisters joined us to watch the winery burn and firemen work frantically.

It was probably the most shocking event in our lives, so far. The shock was massive and all I could think of was that my reputation and my life were now completely changed forever. I kept thinking of those country town rumours whenever a business burns down and what people would say. I think my lowest point was being taken to the Police Station for questioning. Of course, it is standard procedure for the police to investigate fires... but I felt like my reputation had been taken away.

Throughout the whole thing, God was front and centre in my mind. I am absolutely convinced that the fire was part of God’s plan for our lives to draw us closer to Him. I know a number of Christians would find that concept hard. But if we believe that God is in control of everything, then we have to know that God allows everything to happen even in adversity. It is a fallen world, but I am totally convinced

that God holds His people in His hand. He doesn’t prevent bad things happening to us, but He does use them for His purposes. In the days that followed, God himself ministered to us through His people. It was our friends and family of faith that supported us during that time. Despite the fire, I could see so many examples of God working. I was so appreciative of those Christians that stood with us that night and in the days that followed. We had never experienced so much support from friends, family, the community and our loyal customers.

I can look to the future with confidence, knowing that it is being controlled and held by our Lord. I am thankful for His healing, saving and directing hand on my life and that of my family. He has been so kind to provide for all our material needs in the aftermath of the fire and for that I am very grateful. Yet I am very aware of people who have undergone much more than I have. My heart breaks when I think of those who have been affected by sin that affects them deeply. Our hurt was just worldly things....I feel for those who have been abused or mistreated in some way; for those who suffer illness or loss of loved ones. I am not sure that I am qualified ever to speak to those people who have lost so much more than I have. Rather, I should sit and listen to their stories. But I know from my experiences that I can trust my Lord with everything. If anyone reading this article is going through a hardship...please trust Him, who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think. He has a much better plan than we can ever imagine. God is good!

## About

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