

The Link

ANGLICAN DIOCESE OF ARMIDALE

2019 JUNE/JULY

Why we had to say “No” and what that means for us all

WHEN YOU RECEIVE AN INVITATION TO a get-together of any kind, it is considered polite to accept or decline the invitation in the same way in which you received it. The Lambeth Conference has been meeting every ten years for the past 180 years. This conference traditionally invites every bishop in the world-wide Anglican communion to meet together with the Archbishop of Canterbury. The next conference will be held in 2020.

Bishop Rick Lewers has been invited to attend the conference, and he has declined the invitation.

His reason for declining is so important, we have taken the unusual step of devoting over half of this issue of *The Link* to the reason why he, as well as his brother bishops in the Diocese of Sydney, have taken this step. As well as Rick's article, we have included an article written by the Metropolitan of New South Wales, the Archbishop of Sydney Glenn

Davies, which expands on why not attending a formal event is of such great importance to all Bible-believing, Christ-honouring Anglicans in Armidale and Manilla and Lightning Ridge and Mullaley and Quirindi; as well as those in Vancouver, Nairobi, Singapore and Santiago. We thank Archbishop Davies for allowing us to re-produce his article here.

Please take the time to read, ponder, discuss and pray about the deep and troubling issues these two articles raise and which affect us all.



There is another meeting of bishops (and laity) from many corners of the world...GAFCON. The Global Anglican Future Conference began in 2008 and quickly became a movement for renewal of the Anglican church and mission across the world. Since then conferences have been held in Nairobi, London and Jerusalem. This is the conference our bishop attends. These are the GAFCON bishops from Africa, Asia, North and South America...all committed to biblical truth and the mission of the gospel.

Standing for truth

Bishop Rick Lewers

RECENTLY, I WAS CONTACTED BY A CLERGY FRIEND FROM another diocese who asked for “a succinct summary of how I would describe the other gospel that is at the heart of the heresy pervading our church and driving issues around human sexuality.”

Well, I am rarely considered succinct but by way of contrast the difference between the Bible’s gospel and that of our modern heretic can look, at least, like this: the Bible proclaims a gospel of repentance from sin while the heretic proclaims a gospel of permission for sin.

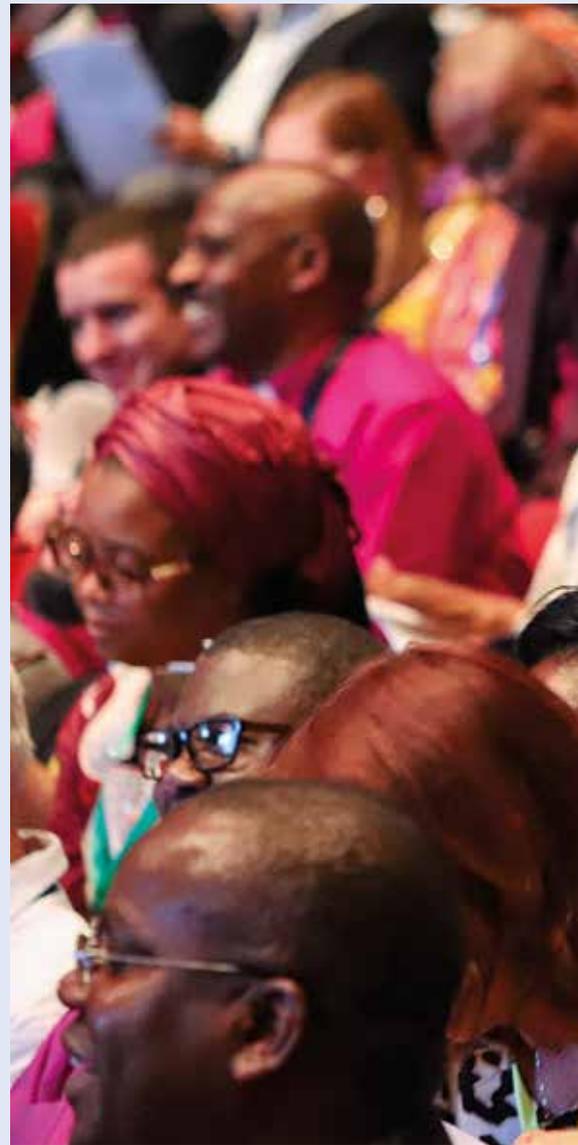
Sadly, my friend’s question is driven by an increasingly divided Anglican Communion in which two very different integrities are becoming apparent. One the truth, the other heresy. There is nothing new about heresy in the church other than the fact it is now very difficult to discipline. In the 16th Century one saint addressing the heresies of his age was heard to say, “Where ever God has His church the Devil has his steeple in the same yard.” That is sadly a contemporary truth.

For the glory of God and the salvation of the lost it is incumbent upon Christ’s church to suffer gladly any cost in defence of the Christian gospel. We should not be surprised by the need for such a defence. To protect the church from heresy, where discipline seems impossible, the true church needs to be in a constant state of reform in obedience to God’s word. Such obedience could mean that our fellowship with other parts of the Anglican Communion ceases. That would not mean we cease to be Anglican, but it would admit to the view that others *have*. This is something our own diocese needs to be prepared for should other dioceses break fellowship with the fundamental declarations of our church. Broken fellowship is never a good thing but, as it may prove necessary, we should pray that repentance and a return to Biblical truth would prevail.

Now you may consider my 16th century quote a little harsh, putting the heretic in the company of the Devil but that is where the Apostle Paul says the Spirit puts such heretics, “*Now the Spirit explicitly says that in later times some will depart from the faith, paying attention to deceitful spirits and the teachings of demons, 2 through the hypocrisy of liars whose consciences are seared.*” (1 Timothy 4) Interestingly, the heresy at that time, like the heresies we are encountering today, included the issue of marriage.

Proclaimers of a false gospel, whether bishops, deans or clergy, are really no different to the unbelieving social worker, doctor or psychologist who has given in to the age of confusion. Not knowing how to help, the surrender position of the helping professions and the liberal church has become permission giving and there seems to be a loss of will to call people to repentance.

Unsurprisingly, heresies spring from a wrong starting point. False gospels begin with humanity, while the Christian gospel begins with



Rick and Janene Lewers praying at Gafcon in Jerusalem last year.

God. The outcomes of both are interesting. If you begin with humanity, humanity will shape what we believe about God. If you begin with God, God will shape what we believe about humanity. It really is the question of creation – do we create God or does God create us? The answer will indicate who we consider sovereign and the difference will be permissions or repentance.

The Bible starts with these words, “In the beginning God...” not “In the beginning man...” There’s the starting point for the Christian world view. God is the initiator. He is creator and we are his creatures. Grappling with God’s intentions for His creation inevitably demands the knowledge of God which can only come by God’s own revelation of Himself. That revelation is two pronged. Psalm 19 and Romans 1 make clear that God reveals himself in creation and in His word. In the opening chapter of Hebrews the writer also reminds us, “*Long ago God spoke to the fathers by the prophets at different times and in different ways. 2 In these last days, He has spoken to us by His Son. God has appointed Him heir of all things and made the universe through Him.*” The Christian gospel begins with the premise that God has spoken and His ultimate word is His incarnate Son, Jesus Christ who is both Lord and Saviour.

Atheists deny the existence of God and reject the revelation of God in the Bible. The false teachers, however, offer a much more dangerous approach that seeks less to understand the Scriptures than to interpret the Scriptures. The difference is subtle but not unimportant.

Understanding the Scriptures requires you listen to what God has



said and to sit under His authority. Where a part of the Bible is unclear we don't ignore it but we look to the rest of the Bible to offer us further understanding. By contrast, interpreting the Scriptures makes you the authority over what God has said. Both have enormous implications when it comes to faith and practice.

This is not just semantics. When we seek to understand, understanding submits our reason, tradition and contemporary circumstance to God's word. When we seek to interpret, interpreting submits God's word to our reason, traditions and contemporary circumstances. The outcomes can be significantly different when it comes to faith and practice.

Start with God and you start with the Almighty, the Sovereign, the holy and perfect. Start with humanity and every effort is flawed from the start by our createdness, weakness, and fallen nature. It is hardly surprising that when we get God wrong we get ourselves wrong. It is hardly surprising when we put ourselves in God's place that we will compromise God's absolutes.

Given that contrast, it can only be the sin of hubris that would have us pursuing interpretations that offer permissions rather than encouraging repentance and faith that comes with understanding God's word. Such hubris will heal no ills, trivialise sin, reduce Christ, profit no salvation and consign people to hell.

What a difference the truth understood makes. It puts God on His throne and straight talks the problem of sin and the fallen nature of our humanity. By way of encouragement, the heavens proclaim His

glory and His word reveals the inspirational love of our maker and redeemer. It speaks to our reconciliation with God and offers the restoration of self. In a lost and confused age the Christian gospel offers the repentant new birth, justification by faith, atonement through propitiation and the substitutionary death of Christ and resurrection to eternal life. The Christian gospel does not offer permissions to sin, but for the repentant, God grants us the fellowship of the Holy Spirit to comfort and sustain us amidst the myriad temptations we face.

I write this to you because we must not be naïve about the Anglican Communion. Our church is blessed with many a lucid thinker whose passions are uncompromisingly Christian. This edition of *The Link* includes the clear thinking of our Metropolitan Archbishop, Glenn Davies. Archbishop Davies has very helpfully outlined the challenges confronting the Anglican Church nationally and internationally. As the Anglican Communion becomes increasingly divided it is crucial that we all understand the issues and be prepared for decisions that may be forced upon us as a diocese in the future. As you read the Archbishop's article I hope it will help you understand why I will not be attending Lambeth but will attend the consecration of the newly appointed Anglican Bishop in New Zealand and that I will continue to encourage the work of the Global Anglican Fellowship (GAFCON) while ever it is faithful to God's word.

Understanding the issues requires a commitment to understanding God's word. Preparing to stand for Christ requires our repentance. I encourage us to do both as we seek to glorify our great God.



Grounding fellowship in truth

Archbishop Glenn Davies spoke at GAFCON in Jerusalem last year.

Archbishop Glenn Davies

PAUL'S FINAL WORDS TO THE CHURCH of God in Corinth are well known to all Christians. They are simply referred to as “The Grace”, though not to be confused with giving thanks before meals!

May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all (2 Corinthians 13:14).

The apostle’s prayer is both simple and profound, trinitarian in character as it reflects the commitment of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit to all believers.

I have often reflected upon the phrase, “the fellowship of the Holy Spirit”. This is both personal and corporate, just as Paul’s image of the believer’s body as a temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 6:19) sits alongside his image of the church as the temple of God’s Spirit (1 Corinthians 3:16). As the Spirit has taken up temple residence in us, our fellowship or communion with him enables us

to experience God’s gift of union with Christ.

As Anglicans, we recognise our Christian faith is not individualistic, but corporate. Because we belong to Christ, we are part of a local church; because we are Anglicans, our local church belongs to a diocese; similarly, our diocese belongs to a province; and our province is part of the worldwide Anglican Communion.

Many readers will be aware of the term “Anglican Communion” and be equally aware of the turmoil in which the Anglican Communion has been engulfed since 2003 when the Episcopal Church in the USA decided to consecrate Gene Robinson, a man in a homosexual relationship. At the time, many described this breach of Anglican faith as “a tear in the fabric of our Communion”.

Over the next five years Rowan Williams, the then Archbishop of Canterbury, convened various committees, task forces and panels to

consider the situation. None of these resolved the matters.

When he invited the bishops of the Anglican Communion to the Lambeth Conference in 2008, the Archbishop of Canterbury chose not to invite Bishop Gene Robinson. However, neither was Bishop Martyn Minns invited, as he was then leader of a Nigerian-based church in the United States. The church had been set up for faithful Anglicans who believed that the endorsement of same-sex relationships was contrary to the teaching of Scripture. As it indeed is.

The same view had earlier been expressed by an overwhelming majority of bishops at Lambeth 1998 (expressed in Resolution I.10). In 2008, Archbishop Williams declared: “I have to reserve the right to withhold or withdraw invitations from bishops whose appointment, actions or manner of life have caused exceptionally serious division or

scandal within the Communion". Yet the Archbishop invited the American bishops who participated in Gene Robinson's consecration, contrary to the advice of the Primates' Meeting. The tear in the fabric of the Communion widened.

This failure to appreciate the gravity of the situation was to have far-reaching consequences. It prompted the formation of the Global Anglican Future Conference (GAFCON) in Jerusalem in 2008, where more than 1100 delegates, bishops, clergy and lay people gathered to preserve and promote the truth and power of the gospel of salvation in Jesus Christ as Anglicans have received it.

This became not merely a moment in time but evidenced a movement of the Holy Spirit in its desire to reclaim the truths of God's word, despite the prevailing spirit of the age, where God's word had been abandoned. No Sydney bishops attended Lambeth 2008, whereas they all attended GAFCON 2008 in solidarity with those who still believed in the Reformation formularies of the Church of England.

Now, more than a decade later, Justin Welby, the Archbishop of Canterbury has called together the bishops of the Anglican Communion. However, unlike his predecessor, he has chosen to invite three bishops who are in same-sex relationships. Moreover, somewhat surprisingly, where the bishops' spouses have been invited, the Archbishop has not invited the spouses of those bishops in same-sex marriages, because they are in violation of Resolution I.10.

The incoherence of this is hard to fathom. He is excluding those who have married a bishop of the same sex but invited the bishops themselves! He seems to have ignored the fact they, too, are clearly in contravention of the 1998 Lambeth Resolution (I.10). When challenged about this inconsistency, the only answer from the Office of the Archbishop was

“
...what exactly
is the Anglican
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Who decides
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not a part of this
worldwide body?”

that Lambeth is for bishops – that is, bishops in the Anglican Communion, regardless of their beliefs and actions.

It is worth remembering the very first Lambeth Conference in 1867, where Archbishop Longley of Canterbury stated the reason for gathering the bishops of “the Reformed Church in visible communion with the United Church of England and Ireland” was for the purpose of

cementing yet more firmly the bonds of Christian communion between Churches acknowledging one Lord, one faith, one baptism, connected, not only by the ties of kindred, but by common formularies... our very presence here is a witness to our resolution to maintain the faith, which we hold in common as our priceless heritage, set forth in our Liturgy and other formularies.

Sadly, not all the bishops who have been invited to Lambeth 2020 adhere to our “common formularies”, as neither the Thirty-nine Articles nor the principles of the *Book of Common Prayer* are considered as standards of doctrine for many Churches in the Anglican Communion.

This causes us to consider what exactly is the Anglican Communion. Who decides who is part or not a part of this worldwide body?

Historically bishops from around the world were invited by Canterbury to come together in conference for fellowship and the resolution of difficulties. It was their fundamental agreement on doctrine that always undergirded their deliberations.

It is highly regrettable to say this, but I believe the Anglican Communion has lost its moorings and has become, effectively, the “Canterbury Communion”. In other words, rather than the Archbishop of Canterbury inviting those bishops who uphold the foundational trio of the Bible, the *Book of Common Prayer* (1662 edition, which includes the Ordinal) and the Thirty-nine Articles, he



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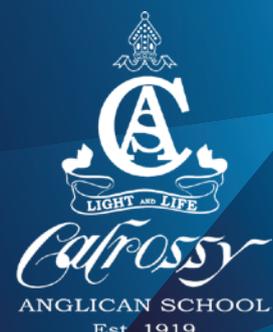
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has erred in two respects. He has failed to invite bishops who uphold Reformational Anglicanism and has invited bishops who have repudiated these fundamental truths.

For this reason, we can be thankful the Constitution of the Anglican Church of Australia defines our communion with other Churches doctrinally, not historically. Section 6 states it in this way:

This Church will remain and be in communion with the Church of England in England and with churches in communion therewith, so long as communion is consistent with the Fundamental Declarations.

Our Constitution does not tie us to Canterbury. It ties us to the Church of England, but only as long as its doctrine is “consistent with the Fundamental Declarations”.

If England were to depart from the “commands of Christ” or from “His doctrine” the Anglican Church of Australia would no longer be in communion with the Church of England. Our communion with other Churches is similarly grounded in doctrine, not merely ‘the ties of kindred’.

The seriousness of departing from the commands of Christ, as evidenced by the recent decision of the Anglican Church of Aotearoa, New Zealand and Polynesia to allow bishops to authorise the blessing of same-sex unions in their dioceses, caused our national General Synod Standing Committee to note that this decision “is contrary to Resolution I.10 of the 1998 Lambeth Conference and is not in accordance with the teaching of Christ (Matt 19:1-12)”. Accordingly, the Standing Committee of the Australian Church noted that relationships “have been impaired in the wake of this change”.

For these reasons the Sydney bishops have each, of their own volition, declined the invitation of the Archbishop of Canterbury to attend the 2020 Lambeth Conference. They have communicated graciously with the Archbishop of Canterbury and explained their reasons for not accepting his invitation. They have done so because the Lambeth Conference no longer reflects the Anglican Communion, a communion of Anglican churches who share the same fundamental beliefs, encapsulated in the Anglican trio of Bible, *Book of Common Prayer* and the Articles. Canterbury may wish to invite those who have repudiated the teaching of Christ and the doctrinal declaration of the 1998 Lambeth Conference, but it will merely be a meeting of the Canterbury Communion.

If we return to the apostolic Grace of 2 Corinthians, it is the fellowship of the Holy Spirit that binds us together in Christ, not the historical ties of the British Empire. This was the view of the bishops who gathered at Lambeth in 1920, who issued an Encyclical



Christ Church Gate, Canterbury. PHOTO: Ads Meskens

Letter to “The Faithful in Christ Jesus”.

For half a century the Lambeth Conference has more and more served to focus the experience and counsels of our Communion. But it does not claim to exercise any powers of control or command. It stands for the far more spiritual and more Christian principle of loyalty to the fellowship. The Churches represented in it are indeed independent, but independent with the Christian freedom which recognises the restraints of truth and of love. They are not free to deny the truth.

The constraints of truth and love have persuaded us not to attend the Lambeth Conference. While it has been argued that the absence of conservatives will lessen the impact on the conference and prevent our voice being heard, it is our very absence that sends the loudest message. Our voice is clearly heard even from a distance.

If Lambeth 2020 were to overturn or modify Resolution I.10, then that would sound the death knell of the Canterbury Communion, but not of the Anglican Communion. For, we shall continue to strengthen the Anglican Communion and the proclamation of the gospel through our association with the Anglican Future movement (GAFCON), the fellowship of faithful Anglicans around the globe. After all, the Gafcon Primates, who met in Sydney last month, represent 50 million Anglicans of the 70 million Anglicans in the world.

Our fellowship of the Spirit is a communion grounded in the truth, the truth of God’s word and his gospel. When the structures that were put in place to guard this communion fail, it is incumbent upon us to renew, reclaim and refresh those structures for God’s mission in the world and for the greater glory of God.



A newbie joins in

Neil Hunt with his Narrabri colleague Ralph Wood. The Venerable Geoff Hearne did not want to be left out of the photo!

Rev Neil Hunt

MY FAMILY AND I HAVE BEEN IN THE DIOCESE SINCE 1994 AS members of St Marks UNEChurch Armidale. In 2015 we moved to Darwin for five months as short term workers with CMS at Nungalinga, a training college for Aboriginal church leaders, and then onto QTC (Queensland Theological College) in Brisbane for three years. It has been such a joy to come back to the Diocese this year where I've taken up a position as Assistant Minister in Narrabri.

In June I had the joy of attending Clergy Conference for the first time. It was terrific. I remember thinking at one point "This feels just like most other Christian conferences I've been to: great fellowship, solid Bible teaching, helpful discussion and prayer groups, all in God's beautiful creation."

I've known many of the Armidale diocese clergy for a number of years through events such as Men@Glen, CMS Autumn Encounter, lay preaching days, and Synod. As a newbie to full-time ministry, however, it was great to be welcomed so warmly onto the team.

What a joy it was to spend the week with brothers and sisters who all treasure the Bible as God's authoritative word to us. It's just like our minister at St Marks back in '94 used to say: "What the Bible says God says!" Actually, the timeless authority of God's word was a repeated theme throughout the conference. It came up in the bible teaching Bishop Rick brought us from the opening chapters of 2 Corinthians, and also from Steve our visiting speaker. In one conversation I had the chance to give a belated thanks to Rod Chiswell for helping to ground me in the authority of that word. He was guest preacher at an induction at St Marks in 2012. Rod was as sick as a dog that night, but his words have stayed with me ever since: "What the *people* of God need most is to be fed on the *word* of God".

Alongside this warm fellowship was a series of very encouraging

talks from Steve Abbott from the Anglican Diocese of Sydney. Steve has written a course called *Everyday Evangelism* and I guess you could say he gave us all a behind the scenes look into the thinking that went into the course. Steve will be coming up to present the course across our Diocese during September, as part of our preparation for next year's focus on evangelism. It was helpful for us to be able to see where he is coming from so that we can honestly and heartily recommend the course to our churches.

I think the strength of the course is that it's evangelism training for non-evangelists. Most Christians I know really do long to see their family, their friends and their neighbours saved through hearing the gospel and putting their faith in Jesus. But most Christians find evangelism hard. Even the word "evangelism" strikes genuine fear into the heart. It conjures up images of memorised scripts and complete strangers, being chased off front lawns, solemn vows to never again be so foolhardy. Being laughed at in the work place, being thought a bigot, people avoiding me...

Evangelism *is* hard and this course won't make it easy. But Steve's aim is for everyone who comes to be able to think about their own situation and say with some confidence, "I could do that." And whatever "that" is, it's going to be different for each person because God has put each of us in different situations with different gifts and abilities.

I'm so glad we got a taste of *Everyday Evangelism* during Clergy Conference. It gave us much to talk about in our discussion groups and over meal times, and to bring to our Father in our prayer times.

It's great to be part of a diocese that places such an emphasis on preaching Christ crucified and risen as Lord. How amazing it is that our Father would entrust His precious word to His church as the means of both building up that church and reaching the lost.

One year ago, Anglicare Northern Inland (ANI) merged with Anglicare Sydney for economic and growth reasons. From this merger the new ANI has forged a fresh pathway for the region. The team in both Northern Inland and Sydney have stood on the shoulders of those before them, and together they have worked towards building an image that incorporates the best of ANI and the best of Anglicare.

Anglicare and ANI together are big business. But we must never forget that this big business is about people...the people who serve, as well as those they help. Here are three snapshots of just some of those people.

The New Job



Northern Inland Team May 2019.

Claire Dunlop

TWELVE MONTHS AGO, I BECAME THE REGIONAL MANAGER for Anglicare Northern Inland. I'm not sure I realised the extent to which I was going to become a 'jetsetter' but such is the life of a Rural Regional Manager. I quickly found myself travelling back and forth between Sydney and Northern Inland often, interspersed with driving around the 100, 000 square kilometre region on a fortnightly basis. Encouraging the staff as they journey alongside communities through counselling and mental health services is a key component of my job, as everyone at ANI listens to stories all the time from the far-flung townships about how people are thriving or struggling in their lives.

I regularly reflect on the contrast between my two lives, I have a life in Sydney where I attend meeting after meeting, battle traffic along with other Sydneysiders, visit my parents and in-laws, and enjoy the hustle and bustle of Sydney life. Then I have my country life; a life characterised by long distance driving, country twang, roos on the road, drought... and the list goes on.

The difference between the two lives is felt most profoundly when I fly to Sydney. I finish eating dinner with my family in Moree at 6.15pm, drive the 2 minutes down the road, hop on the 7pm flight

and by 8.30pm I'm renting my hire car and merging with the evening traffic on the M1.

On my return flight to Moree, I leave the crowded Sydney terminal and an hour and half later fly into Moree airport. Every time it's the same lovely predictable experience; I fly in over large cotton and grain fields as far as the eye can see. As the plane unloads us on the tarmac, I say hello to 'John' my neighbour who is unloading the luggage off the plane. I walk toward the terminal, which is really just a shed with carpet, and there predictably and comfortably, every...single...time... is my hubby waiting for me to come home. He stands in the same spot in his blue work shorts and shirt, every time I fly in. Sometimes the kids are with him, sometimes they're not. I look for him through the plane windows, and he's there waiting to welcome his wife home, to bring her back to the family she loves and to the community she serves. This man is never noticed in the bigger scheme of my job, but there he is championing me (behind the scenes - just how he likes it) while I work with Anglicare to support our community and our region and to bring hope and advocacy to country people, as I have in the last 12 months and, I hope, for decades to come.

Anglicare helps people get moving in Moree

MOREE RESIDENTS WILL NOW BE ABLE TO ACCESS physiotherapy services as part of their National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) package thanks to a new partnership with Anglicare and local physiotherapist, Rachel Bell.

“We want to offer a holistic service to people who may need mental health support,” explains Anglicare’s Regional Manager, Claire Dunlop.

“We cannot treat people with mental health challenges in isolation from their physical wellbeing. For instance, people who come to us for counselling for their chronic pain also need to see physiotherapists or occupational therapists to help with their physical concerns.”

Claire and Rachel recognise that every person’s situation is unique. Both have a desire to assist the NDIS participants of Moree to access services as easily as possible to support their situation and goals.

People who access counselling through their NDIS package may also be funded for physical issues. By coming through Anglicare, they can reduce the number of service agreements they require and streamline service delivery.

In addition to NDIS Physiotherapy, Anglicare also offers NDIS Support Co-ordination and Counselling. According to Claire, there are also plans to partner with other allied health services in delivering NDIS to the town of Moree.

Rachel, who works with her husband Greg Bell at Gwydir Chiropractic and Physiotherapy, is delighted to be partnering with Anglicare.



Rachel Bell and Claire Dunlop.

“Through their counselling, mental health and NDIS programs, Anglicare offers an excellent professional service that is deeply relational.”

The partnership also means Rachel can get on with the work she loves – helping people with their physiotherapy needs. Anglicare, as a registered provider, will manage all the NDIS requirements.

If you would like to enquire further about NDIS Physiotherapy, Counselling or Support Co-ordination please contact Anglicare on (02) 6701 8200.

Inbox

The following thank you letter was written by one of our clients in Northern Inland who wanted to express their gratitude to Michelle and the team for bringing hope and peace to their family.

AT A TIME WHEN WE WATCH OUR DAMS empty...our paddocks brown and turn to dust... our animals’ condition slowly withering.

Poor Snow, our ewe, is constantly tail end Charlie. Her steps are slower and slower each day. Woolly Jumper, our oldest girl, is getting thinner and thinner. Moley, Elsa, Suzie, Major, all with sore feet from scratching at the dust, looking for any sign of green.

When each trip to the feed store shows empty pallets, bought out in haste as soon as it is brought in. Your one trip a week to town was a few days too late. And no matter how many stores you visit, they all reveal the same disparaging story.

You return to your land head hung low, saddened by their faces, their calls for food. Broken by the thought of the next step. Which is kinder? To sell your family of woolly four-footed friends to market? The ones you bottle fed from birth? To let them go to slaughter

or to do the unthinkable and let them sleep eternal?

You see no hope, no light at the end of a dry future. You have begged the government for help and seen none; prayed to the gods for rain, whether it be Christian or mythical, you have asked them all! Your heart is broken, you see no rainbow. No future for them, or your family.

The kids still bring home more requests for money from school, school photos, camps, excursions. You don’t want them to miss out, so you tighten your belt a little more.

The car breaks down. It is a major fix, but you need that car because your husband cannot drive because he has just had an ankle fusion. In pain he is wishing he could help. It will be a long six months to recovery.

Still no rain, our dams so low there is more mud than water. Then the house tanks begin to run dry and we see no way out. We have deferred the phone bill three times already.

And more bills arrive - rego, gas...will it ever stop? Will it ever rain?

And then like a rainbow we made the best decision ever. We asked Anglicare in town for help. No one likes to ask for help, but we are so glad we did. Michelle has moved heaven and earth to help us organise our bills, a bit of relief in the food shopping and even helped get us water.

Although, it is still not raining and some problems still remain – the animal food, the cars – we feel we can breathe a little again. Weights have been lifted off our shoulders, like taking the yoke, our burden has been shared. Life is getting better.

We thank you from the bottom of our hearts. Every animal on our farm thanks you. Our children thank you! You keep us going for a few more months, still looking at the sky for rain but for now at peace.

Thank you Anglicare.



Using your seniority for good

Bishop Rick Lewers

I WAS LEAVING FOR HOLIDAYS AND looking for reading material when I noticed one title and remembered another. There was John Piper's *Don't Waste Your Life*, and John Chapman's, *Making the Most of the Rest of Your Life*. Earlier in the morning I was reading about Bishop Ivan Lee in the *Southern Cross* magazine. Ivan has a very serious cancer and the challenge for him is how to make what is left of his life as beneficial to others and honouring of God as it can be. I did wonder if the Lord was trying to tell me something as I prepared for a break. I wonder if God might be challenging you similarly?

There are many different ways of handling growing old but often senior Christians struggle to work out how to be useful for Christ. Sadly, it is sometimes not even a consideration. Retirement from work comes with retirement from church commitments... and just when God had given you enough time to be really useful for His Kingdom.

How would you like to spend the rest of your life? Growing Bonsai trees, building model ships, improving your handicap, getting the nomad van organised, etc. etc.? None of

these things are inherently wrong but how do they compare with investment in Christ and a modelled godliness. If I was to steal a thought from John Piper's book: would you prefer to show God the shells you found on a beach somewhere or rejoice in the outcomes of introducing people to Jesus and helping them home to heaven? If I could be so bold, drop the shells and make yourself eternally useful and a joy to our Father in heaven.

Of course, it is not that easy for a senior to find a ministry when so many ministers seem to overlook the army of faithful senior saints choosing a younger ministry team. That is a mistake, but it is one where a senior must show patient wisdom. Sadly, some ministers can be a little insecure around senior saints and in truth some seniors have not bathed themselves in glory when given an inch and they take a mile.

So for good or ill, I want to encourage senior Christians to go boldly where unbelieving seniors have never dared to go. I want to encourage the over 60's like me (yes that is a seniors' category) to be like the Old Testament, Caleb, who in his old age courageously took



New Life for everyone



The crowd at the New Life conference last year.

up the challenges God put before him. Such great courage, and great faith comes with our discipleship in and by our great God .

I have been asked to speak at the *Mount Tamborine Seniors' Get Away* along with Dr David and Mrs Marg Price, November 14th to 17th 2019.

There will be four elective sessions, hymn singing, a bus trip, a garden walk and a great concert. Most importantly it will focus us on our service for almighty God. I managed to scrape in by a year, but my much younger wife has been given permission to accompany me. When I got the invitation to speak, I immediately asked if the seniors from the Armidale Diocese could attend. The answer was a resounding 'YES!'

Full time registration, meals and house party accommodation is from \$250/person and cheaper if you choose to caravan. You could even organise a group and travel together for mutual encouragement. I hope to see you there.

If you would like to attend, simply call Jim and Grace Vine by landline on 07 5676 7251 or mobile 0432682824.

This year's New Life Conference for women will be held in Tamworth, at Carinya Christian School, on the weekend 6-7 September. Our guest speaker is Lizzie Smallwood (right) from the United Kingdom. Lizzy is well-known to Australian audiences from her previous visits here, but this is the first time we are able to host her in our own backyard.

Given the difficulties of country life, particularly during this time of drought, the subject of perseverance is particularly pertinent. Lizzie will be opening up the book of Hebrews to see what the Bible says to encourage us to persevere, while some women from our diocese will be sharing their own stories of perseverance.

If you have attended a New Life Conference in past years, you will know just how valuable the weekend of fellowship and teaching can be. If you have never made it before, this is the year to get there!

You can find more information and register at newlifeconference.org.au





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

John Bunyan



IT IS NOT OFTEN THAT A BRAND-NEW Anglican diocese is created, but that is exactly what happened in New Zealand in May this year. Representatives from 12 churches gathered together to form the Church of Confessing Anglicans Aotearoa/New Zealand and they have recently elected the Reverend Jay Behan, vicar of St Stephen’s Christchurch, as their first bishop.

This diocese was formed by the 12 churches which withdrew from The New Zealand General Synod, after its vote to bless same-sex marriages. It has been a difficult and painful process for all concerned, especially for the bishop-elect.

On a visit to Sydney, Jay Behan was interviewed by Dominic Steele on his podcast *The Pastor’s Heart*.

Jay said, “In 2018 the New Zealand General Synod gave canonic permission to bless same-sex marriages or civil unions. There is always a danger of knee-jerk reactions or short-sighted responses...we wanted to make sure that we were prayerfully and carefully considering what we should do and what was the best way to honour the Lord and love people. We wanted to make decisions that didn’t just benefit us, but would bring the most encouragement, blessing and support to others. We also wanted to make decisions that would last, that in two generations people will be thankful for. One of the blessings of the Anglican church is that it has stood for 500 years, regardless of the personalities involved. So we didn’t just want to do something where a few like-minded friends will do something that lasts for 10 years, we wanted to make decisions that will last, God willing, over the course of time.

On the day the motion was passed, there were three of us who immediately resigned.

I remember explaining to our Christchurch delegates that day why we were resigning and I burst into tears, because I had suddenly realised what had happened and the weight of it...it was kind of uncontrollable...”

In the following weeks, nine more churches made the decision to leave the NZ General Synod and join the new diocese.

Archbishop Foley Beach, chairman of the GAFCON primates, sent a message to Jay and his colleagues in New Zealand saying, “The Primates’ Council thanks God for the courage and faithfulness of those churches and individuals in New Zealand who are remaining as Anglicans in the faith as we have received it, as they establish a new Anglican diocese. The council gladly endorses the new diocese, recognises it as authentically Anglican, declares itself to be in full communion and celebrates our common life. The council encourages the participation of GAFCON bishops in the consecration of the new bishop.”

The Synod of the Church of Confessing Anglicans Aotearoa/New Zealand has asked us to join them in this prayer:

Give thanks to God for his grace and mercy towards us in Christ. Pray for Jay, his family, and the church at St Stephen’s. Pray for the 11 other churches of the diocese in their mission and ministry, and for the many other churches we pray will join and be planted in our new diocese for the glory of God. Amen

To hear Jay’s full interview, go to www.thepastorsheart.net/podcast/2019/5/14/leaving-gracefully-from-an-apostate-denomination

About

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