

The Link

ANGLICAN DIOCESE OF ARMIDALE

2022 FEBRUARY/MARCH

Still caring

IN NOVEMBER LAST YEAR, ANGLICARE LAUNCHED A NEW initiative for New South Wales' north west: a Mobile Community Pantry.

Regional Manager for Anglicare New England North West Claire Dunlop was joined by Bishop Rod Chiswell, Deputy Mayor of Tamworth Regional Council Phil Betts and Councillor Juanita Wilson to introduce this project which is a co-operation between Anglicare and three Anglican churches in Tamworth; St Paul's Oxley Vale and St Peter's South Tamworth.

The Mobile Community Pantry (MCP) provides a bag full of groceries for just \$15. In these difficult and uncertain times, many

people have found it even harder to make ends meet. Anglicare is committed to helping anyone who needs it - a hand up, not a handout, as Claire Dunlop emphasizes. "It has been quite a successful venture already," she said. "We are averaging 15 to 20 people at each place we visit. Some people are subsidizing their food shop while for others it provides all the food they can afford for the week."

The van visits several locations each week. It is at St Paul's church, West Tamworth every second Tuesday 10.30 to 11.30am, at Oxley Vale Public School every second Thursday 3.45 to 4.45 pm,

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Clockwise from top left: The Moree Disaster Recovery Team are happy to be of service; Claire Dunlop is delighted to see Bishop Rod Chiswell and Councillor Juanita Wilson cut the ribbon on the opening day; a fierce competition between Moree Council and the Diocese of Armidale in a stir-fry cook off using ingredients from the MCP. Cover photo: Wendy Smith from Anglicare shows how easy it is to shop at the MCP.

From page 1

and at Coledale Front Yard Church every second Thursday 10.30 to 11.30 am. To find out the dates, please contact the Anglicare, Tamworth office on 6701 8200.

Of course, a service cannot continue without people to help, and Anglicare is looking for volunteers. "Anglicare provides the van and the resources, and each church provides people to welcome and serve those who come. We are looking for more volunteers to drive and stock the van. We are really struggling to find enough volunteers at the moment and would love to hear from anyone who could help. Just call the office and they will tell you what to do," Claire said.

"I really have the best job in the world," she continued. "What I love the most is that it's not just people being handed a wad of cash. People are budgeting the \$15, and then coming in selecting what they really need for themselves. The other great thing is that if we identify someone who is struggling with financial or mental health issues, we can put them in touch with other Anglicare services which may assist them."

While speaking of volunteers, Claire wanted to put a call out to

anyone who might be interested in being trained for and joining a Disaster Relief Team. "When a disaster occurs in a town, Anglicare is one of the agencies commissioned by the government to assist. We often work in evacuation centres, where we go in and help people to feel cared for. We fill whatever gaps there might be... serving meals, welcoming, providing comfort packs or simply talking!"

Recently, we had a flood in Boggabilla and residents were evacuated to the Moree evacuation centre. We had just taken on six new volunteers who were doing the training for the first time that morning. We quickly sent them off to the evacuation centre and they were able to do their practical component of the training at a real evacuation, not just a pretend one! We would love to have these teams in Armidale, Tamworth, Inverell and Glen Innes because we all know that quite a few disasters tend to hit our region! Again, people can call head office in Tamworth to find out more."

Please continue to pray for the work of Anglicare, especially for the Mobile Community Pantry, and give some thought and prayer to the possibility of becoming a volunteer in either of these vital, practical ventures.

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Trusting in God's providence



Rod Chiswell

DEAR BROTHERS AND SISTERS IN CHRIST,

I am writing this on Australia Day, with somewhat subdued celebrations occurring in towns and cities, large and small all over our nation. The year has begun on a tentative note with ongoing uncertainties surrounding the COVID pandemic. It seems that we have entered another year of COVID related challenges. Such a situation might perhaps prompt questions from some, "What is God doing? Why would He allow further disruption to gospel ministry plans in 2022?" When seasons of difficulty arise and drag on it is tempting to doubt God's good purposes and plans. Indeed, the world around us, who are looking for reasons to reject God, succumb to the temptation quite naturally.

Recently, I was watching the latest Marvel movie called *The Eternals*. Now, normally I thoroughly enjoy these action blockbusters, but this one was different. Almost allegorical in flavour it had a blatant agenda, which was to cast doubt on the goodness of a sovereign God. The message it sent was crystal clear: If God has plans, then they are bad plans. But we know better than God. In fact, we do right and we do better when we reject God's plan and do what WE feel is best. Now, perhaps I'm seeing the movie through new glasses, having just read *The Rise and Triumph of the Modern Mind* by Carl Trueman, but the narrative of *The Eternals* was all too familiar. Moral good is now determined internally, not externally, and we would be better off without God!

Of course, this is just a fresh expression of a much older story. In Genesis 3 the serpent questioned God's word and good purpose. The result of following that tempting narrative was catastrophic, not just for Adam and Eve but for creation more generally. Thankfully God's

bigger purpose looked beyond the fall to a rescue plan that started with Abraham and ended in Jesus.

In recent weeks I have been reminded of that plan in an excellent book by John Piper called *Providence*. "Providence," says Piper, "is God's purposeful sovereignty. Its extent reaches down to the flight of electrons, up to the movements of galaxies, and into the heart of man. Its nature is wise, and just and good. And its goal is the Christ-exalting glorification of God through the gladness of a redeemed people in a new world." Piper's book traces the theme of God's providence from Genesis to Revelation and encourages us to remember that the providence of God directs the entire course of human history.

God's providence in our current circumstances is only seen through the eyes of faith. Standing back from the last couple of years I've seen how God has preserved and refined His church. I've seen how He has used the pandemic to shake the tree and open the door for the gospel to touch and soften normally hard hearts. I've seen God continue to raise up gospel workers to go into the harvest field of our Diocese. All of these come as answers to prayer and encourage me to persevere, trusting in the providential hand of our loving and merciful God.

In Uganda they have a saying that underlines their firm belief in the doctrine of God's providence. "God is good all the time...all the time God is good." Let us also continue to trust in God's purposeful sovereignty, knowing from His word that He is wise and just and good. May God strengthen us to all do this, that we might press on in the good work of "Introducing ALL people to Jesus and helping them home to heaven."

With love in Christ,
Bishop Rod Chiswell.

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Tim Stevens

Vicar of Guyra and Youth Encourager

A FUNNY THING HAPPENED DURING THE PANDEMIC, AND it has stuck with me for nearly two years. It's an incident that brought an equal measure of joy and heartbreak, mainly because it involved ministry to young people. Let me explain.

We arrived in Guyra in early 2020, and after only five weeks of face-to-face ministry, we closed our church for nine months. While not being the most fantastic start in a new church, it allowed us to try new things; things that an incoming vicar would generally be wise not to change until they'd been around a while.

Among many other things, our services became intentionally evangelistic, which was simply a reaction to the many non-Christians who were watching our services. Thankfully, this way of doing things has stuck and shown some fruit. At the moment, 30% of the people in our church each Sunday were not attending at the beginning of 2020. Praise God!

The other change involved music. In Guyra, we are short on musos. Actually, we don't have any musos! So during the pandemic, we turned to the generosity of CityAlight in Sydney and Norton Hall Band (The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary). They decided to waive the fee for broadcasting their music during online services. What a gift! Their youthful energy for serving God and His people was such an encouragement during a difficult couple of years.

I thought nothing of switching to this new way of doing music for church. After all, we hadn't been around very long to see how things had been done before. Also, I am from a generation where people will

change careers multiple times in their lives. Personally, in 12 years we have lived in seven different houses. You get the idea; we do change well!

Though for one elderly widow in our church, the change from formal and rich hymns to more energetic and less traditional congregational songs was almost too much, though not for the reason you might think.

When we were allowed, I made it a priority to go and visit her. I still remember our conversation so clearly. She said, "Now, I need to talk to you about the music you have been using in services". Expecting a complaint, I nervously replied... "Yes?". She continued, "It's great! I can't remember the last time I saw so many young people who were Christians and who were excited about belonging to Jesus!"

Far from being annoyed, she loved the chance to learn some new songs and was blown away by seeing Christians who were young. On one level, I was relieved that I didn't end up copping a spray, but then I was heartbroken. This sister in Christ has been friends with Jesus for most of her life, though she had come to a point in her life where she honestly thought that there were no young Christians left. (I hope she didn't mean me! I am only 38, a friend of hers, and most certainly a follower of Jesus.)

As I reflected on her experience, I realised that this is not an isolated view. For many churches, it might have been so long since you've had young people in your church that you despair of what will happen to the Christian witness in your town when the older generation is taken into glory. Not to mention the eternal ramification for a whole



generation who have not heard about Jesus.

On that day, I shared a few encouragements with my friend about how we could address this problem, and I thought I'd share them here as well.

Firstly, many young people are persevering with their faith, even though they are growing up in an increasingly secular world. They are so encouraging because they trust Jesus even though life is confusing. If you'd like to see them first-hand, we'd gladly accept anyone who wants to come and volunteer at any of our youth events this year. Or you could plan to get involved in any ministry to young people in your town. Yes, teenagers can feel intimidating, but you'll be so encouraged by their faith as you spend time with them.

Secondly, 2022 is a great time to introduce young people to Jesus after the last few years. Consistently, research keeps telling us that most people become Christians before the age of 20. Young people are all around us, and while they face different challenges and pressures to us, they are searching (especially after the last few years) for something that offers real and lasting comfort and security. Something that they can only find in Jesus.

In this edition of *The Link*, there are stories from the Generate schools ministry. Be encouraged by these stories, and join in God's mission to save young people, setting them up for a life and eternity of trusting Jesus. Can you spend 2022 getting trained so that in 2023 you can become a scripture teacher? Can you be a Christian presence in your local youth support service? The opportunities are endless.

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Thirdly, as ministry gets back underway for another year, it's a good time to think if there is anything your church can do differently to make the gospel available to everyone. For our church, we only have one weekly service, so we have had to learn to put aside our preferences for the sake of loving and welcoming new people into our church.

This meant that while the hymns came back, we kept singing the newer songs that we had learnt. Thankfully this variety in our fellowship has meant that we have welcomed younger and non-English speaking people into our fellowship.

Our God ***"wants all people to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth"*** (1 Tim 2:4). Why not use this year as the starting point where you make it your mission to see young people encouraged by and reached with the gospel of Jesus? May none of us ever slip into the thinking of my dear friend, and make it our mission to reach younger generations with the good news of Jesus.

Each year we run two simultaneous youth nights called YouthSurge. Because of COVID we haven't been able to meet for three years! So, in 2022, instead of running separate YouthSurge events, we're kicking the year off with The Barraba Bash. It will be a huge, one-day, combined youth event on the 26th of March at Barraba Anglican Church.

It's going to be a great day of fun, fellowship and learning from God's word, as young people from the North-West respond to God's saving grace in Jesus. Speak to your Youth Leaders and find more info at armadale-diocese-youth.com

Gospel workers for the harvest and why the bishop is excited

GOD HAS BEEN VERY KIND TO US IN RAISING UP GODLY young couples to serve in the life of our Diocese. I'm very excited this year at the prospect of Joel and Anne Jacob (Sydney Missionary and Bible College), Matt and Dee Stones (Moore Theological College) and David and Emma Thompson (also from Moore College) joining ministry teams in Quirindi, Inverell and Moree respectively. I'm also excited over God's timely provision of two new presbyters: with Andrew and Jess Bryan joining us to serve in South Tamworth, and Matt and Molly Borg joining us in mid-May to serve in Uralla. Thank God for raising up these church leaders and pray that He will grant them wisdom, love and strength to serve him well in the years ahead.

On the lay-ministry front the excitement continues as we look to recruit an army of willing volunteers with the *Next Phase* conference coming up on 6-7th May. In every season of life as followers of Christ we should be asking, "How can I serve God best with the gifts He has entrusted to me to further His kingdom?" The *Next Phase* conference 2022 is hoping to help people over 50 years of age answer that question.

My prayer is that, through encouragement from God's word, brought to us by former Archbishop Peter Jensen, and through sharing from keen lay-people, many will have their eyes opened to see possibilities for fruitful service in the life of churches all over the Armidale Diocese. With electives on pastoral care, technology teams, lay preaching, lay locum work, evangelism teams, leading Bible study groups and children's ministry, there will be opportunity to learn, ask questions and find pathways into training. If you would like to be part of the first *Next Phase* conference in our Diocese, simply go online to register armidaleanglicandiocese.com, or ask your minister for the *Next Phase* brochure, complete the application form and send it in.

Thank God for those He has raised up to serve in the gospel harvest field of our Diocese and continue to pray that He will raise up many more.

In other positive news, people are always on the move in our Diocese. Here is a welcome, a farewell and a move from the mountains to the plains.

A Welcome

Ian Millican has become Bishop Rod Chiswell's assistant, following Geoff Hearne's move to Moree.

I have moved up from Sydney – I was the Rector at St Mark's Berowra for just over 22 years.

I'm a Sydney boy but married to a country girl – my wife Melinda grew up in Tamworth. Melinda is with me and we have four adult children: Laura married to Ben (they live in Gosford), then Emma, Sophie and Hayden – who are all still in Sydney.

For me it was time to move on from Berowra, they needed someone fresh and I needed a change; and at the same time Geoff Hearne was moving on and Rod needed an assistant.

An added bonus is that Rod, Christopher Pears the Diocesan Registrar, and I were all at Moore College together! I think my gifts and skills complement Rod's so I thought that if I could help Rod out and free him up to do what he does best, that would be a good thing for the Diocese and God's kingdom.

Because I am not a vicar of a church it is very different for me, not having a congregation to get to know and love. Moving cities is hard too; we don't know many people and we need to take time to build relationships. However, on the plus side of my work – I get to preach at various churches around the Diocese as needed, and already this has been a great joy, seeing God's faithful people continuing to worship and praise Him and seek to reach out to their communities. It is a privilege to go and spend time with them.

Mind you – God has a great sense of humour – Melinda and I love warm weather, so to come to Armidale is quite unexpected.

My work is a mix of people and administration. I get to visit various churches around the Diocese, I am the Archdeacon for the New England, so I am trying to get to know the clergy around the Deanery. I am also the Examining Chaplain which means trying to get to know people who are interested in coming to minister here in the Diocese. Then there is the admin



– reviewing policies, risk management, safe ministry, COVID guidance, and a mountain more!

I value people's prayers, and so if you could pray that I (and Melinda who is working remotely from home for a small conveyancing company based in Berowra) will continue to settle in well, that we can make good relationships with people (especially at St Mark's, University of New England where we have decided to church, in the Registry office and as I visit other churches), that I can be effective in helping Rod in his ministry, and that I can keep a gospel focus in each of the areas of my work.

A Farewell

As Ian moves into the Diocese, **Gary Eastment** has moved out.

I have been in the Diocese 11 years all up, first as curate at St Marks, then as Senior Minister and Chaplain to the University of New England for the past eight years.

I have moved to Reach Australia, a Sydney-based organisation dedicated to supporting church leaders and planting and growing new churches. The move was prompted by an invitation and broad encouragement that I can be used for the cause of the Gospel well, along with a range of immediate and broader family reasons that will be well met by the move.

Serving on campus allows you to see plenty of fruit, including people turning to Christ so I couldn't single out a moment as the best. But I will always treasure the opportunities I had to speak about Jesus to so many non-Christians so consistently, some being called by God through that, and the deep friendships I have made with so many at St Marks.

If people wish to pray, please join us in gratitude to God for our time at St Marks, the continued prospering of that ministry under God and for the way we've been provided for in all things as we move down south.



A Move

Geoff Hearne has been a fixture in the Diocese for many, many years. He (along with wife Catherine) came to the Diocese in 1993, straight out of Moore College.

They ministered in West Tamworth and Lightning Ridge with Bush Church Aid, before becoming the vicar of Quirindi in 2000. In 2017 Geoff became the Bishop's Assistant, first with Rick Lewers, then with Rod Chiswell. He was the Archdeacon for the Namoi region for many years, and is now the Vicar General.

The move to Moree was a bit unexpected.

I knew of the need for a vicar in Moree through my role as Bishop's Assistant. During the vacancy, I was asked to preach over several weeks during January and February last year. During this time, we became more aware of the need for a vicar and the type of ministry the church was looking for. After Simon Waller took up the position of vicar at Gunnedah in October 2020, there was also no local archdeacon. It fell upon me in my role as bishop's assistant to help support Michael Allen (Stipendiary lay worker) and the wardens as they dealt with ministry, so I also had an insight into the concerns of the parish.

So after our time in Moree, getting to know people and a picture of the current ministry and future desires, we realised that my experience and style of ministry may be a good match.

We also saw the need for an experienced minister at Moree as it is a parish that can train curates. The vacancy was also affecting the wider Diocesan programme of training and development of clergy. Catherine and I prayed about it and saw that we were able to help the parish and we were in a position to move. We met with the presentation board, we were willing to come, and the rest is history.

I had really enjoyed my time as bishop's assistant, especially being a support to the bishop, able to support the clergy through visits and preaching if they were away, and through helping with administration issues. It was a refreshing time out of parish ministry. So, I miss that role I had come to settle into and the registry team, but feel refreshed to go back into parish ministry again.

Moree has several good ministries already happening, for which we are thankful.

The plan is to support and help those ministries continue to grow and develop so that we are working together as a church with a common goal. We are looking at ways in which we can invest in indigenous ministry. We



are grateful for the provision of David Thompson as our new curate, along with his wife Emma. I hope that will open up more doors for growth in maturity of the parishioners and growth in our evangelistic efforts.

Please pray for us to settle into the church and town as we get to know people and learn how to serve them well. Pray for the new team this year, and for the opportunities that will bring.

Pray for wisdom in reaching out to the indigenous community and the wider community with the gospel to see the lost saved.



A family extends over the summer

The Extended Family team.

IN ISSUE 23 OF *THE LINK*, WE DEVOTED SEVERAL PAGES TO foster care. One of the contributors to that issue was Hannah Dobos from Armidale who, along with her husband Caleb, is a foster carer, and who works with children in out-of-home care as part of her job. She told us that she was dreaming of doing a holiday camp for children in foster care and asked us to pray for the plans. God, as we know, does answer prayer, and He answered our prayers about this camp in a spectacular way!

“An Extended Family is a group of Christian foster carers in Armidale that meets about every six weeks for mutual support and encouragement,” she said. “Some of us had been talking for a while at the beginning of 2021 about how best to serve the foster care community in our area. The idea was suggested about a holiday program for kids in out-of-home care and after talking to our foster care agency, there seemed to be a big need for something for kids to do in the long school holidays. As parents and carers ourselves we knew how hard the long holidays can be, and especially for kids who need routine, structure and connection. After much prayer and planning, *An Extended Family Holiday Program* happened in January this year!”

A camp like this does not run itself! It needs a huge team to pull all the plans, communications and logistics together.

“From the initial idea to the end of the camp, we were very aware of God’s hand on the camp and all the different aspects of organisation,” Hannah told us. “Everything seemed to happen and happen relatively easily. We easily got the support from our foster care agency, and the leaders and funds we needed to go ahead. Throughout December and January it was obvious people were praying for us in that there was very little stress felt by those involved despite many unknowns! We approached local foster care agencies, the Department of Communities and Justice [the government department which oversees foster care]

and My Forever Family NSW, all of which were really interested in what we were doing and keen to pass the information on.

Then we needed helpers for organising food, registration/admin, making coffee for the adults, and mostly for working with the kids, running activities, getting to know the kids and all that comes with caring for them throughout the week. These helpers came from St Mark’s Chapel at the University of New England and St Peter’s Cathedral in Armidale, but we had support and prayer from further afield than that.”

In the end, children who are not just foster kids came to the camp. “We were initially planning and advertising for kids in out-of-home care, however we also ended up with some kids who either were in similar situations but weren’t formally in out-of-home care or kids from families who were working towards family preservation”, Hannah said. “We were so glad these families were brought to us as these kids and their parents or extended family members are in very similar situations yet without any of the formal support structures. Altogether, we had 21 kids join us for the week and 20 helpers. We were very grateful for this ratio as we had a lot of kids who really needed some one-to-one support. It was a blessing to be able to provide the support and flexibility that the kids needed. The program ran from 9am-3pm Monday to Friday in the second last week of the January school holidays at St Marks Chapel UNE. We concluded the program at lunchtime on Friday with a barbeque and invited the carers, caseworkers and parents. This was a highlight for me to see positivity and connections that were made throughout the week all in one place. The Chapel was a great venue as it gave us some space for different activities and it was a great opportunity to welcome a lot of people who hadn’t had much to do with church before into our building in a really positive way.”

With the ages of the participants ranging from kindergarten to late



The team and the kids know that old games are the best games.



Anyone for slime?

high school age, a wide variety of activities had to be provided. "In the morning we greeted kids with some informal activities that they could join into and settle in easily, like soccer, chalk drawing, and face painting. We had a coffee cart for adults and had a good number who hung around to chat with us. Then we spent the morning in age groups (K-2, 3-6 and high school) which did age appropriate activities. Some activities included making slime, making boats, and tie dying. The high schoolers learnt how to make coffee on our industrial machine,

learnt some circus skills and went bush walking. The afternoons were made up with activities that the kids could choose from. We offered jewellery making, macrame, tie dying, cupcake decorating, soccer, STEM activities, Bible Q&As and craft. The flexibility, choice and relationship building of the afternoons ended up being a real success and the best part of the week. The kids learnt new hobbies and had some really cool creations to take home."

We asked Hannah what she thought was the very best thing to come out of the camp. "The best thing was seeing God answer so many prayers in both the lead up and throughout the program week," she said. "Some of these prayers had been prayed for over a year and we had a team of people praying for us during the week. It was a very significant encouragement to me to see the Spirit working through those prayers. The other great encouragement was to see connections between Christians wanting to serve the vulnerable with those in need of support and love. The program gave a great opportunity for these connections and relationships to be made. The positive feedback from the week gives us a lot of reason and hope to run the program again next year. Everyone was really positive about it and some caseworkers noted that after having done it once the word was sure to get out for next year."

So what can we all be praying for the future of this camp? "Please pray with us that that God would continue to weave the kids, carers and parents stories with ours in the coming year," Hannah said. "We pray for ongoing connection with those families and that through things like this program these kids, carers and parents would be able to see a growing support network, community and family around them. We ultimately pray that those involved will see that the only reason we are in a position to love is because of the amazing gift that God offers by welcoming us into his family through Jesus."



Generating ministry

Generate is an organisation that you may not have heard a lot about. But you are sure to have heard about the work it does! Generate is a member organisation of Scripture Union Australia, working in New South Wales public schools supporting students and communities through the provision of chaplaincy and scripture.

Tom Magill works as Generate's Field Development Manager for the north-west of New South Wales (which includes the Diocese of Armidale), liaising with schools, supporting chaplains and teachers, raising awareness and partnering with churches, as well as advising local Special Religious Education (SRE) boards who fund and support the provision of scripture in schools.

We asked him to tell us a bit about the impact Generate is having on the lives of young people all over our state, and particularly in our Diocese.



***The Link:* Tell us a bit about why you do what you do.**

Tom: One of the joys of the role is serving local churches by inspiring and supporting them to connect well with local schools. This is my tenth year working with Generate. During that time I have been both a school chaplain and an SRE teacher. In the past I have worked in parish ministry both in youth work and congregational ministry in the Armidale and Sydney Dioceses.

Why was Generate established, and by whom?

A little over 15 years ago, Anglican Youthworks, Scripture Union NSW and the youth arms of the Baptist and Presbyterian churches established Generate to support the work of a number of independent SRE boards who were employing SRE teachers in high schools in NSW. Each board was dealing with recruiting teachers, employment law and human resources, the policies and procedures of the education sector, as well as fundraising for and supporting the teacher and it was thought that creating an organisation that specialized in the administrative and management aspects of SRE teaching could free up SRE boards and their volunteers to focus on supporting their teachers and funding the work. In 2007 with the start of the National School Chaplaincy Program, Generate started to provide school chaplains to public schools across NSW as it fitted within the wider schools

ministry, enabling Christian workers to bring both God's love and good news to whole school communities.

How many schools is Generate involved with through the Armidale Diocese and the NSW north-west?

The number of schools varies a little year to year but at present, we have either staff or a vacancy in around twenty schools. We also have a number of opportunities we are exploring to grow this number as the need to support young people and their families is great. There are about a dozen schools that have a chaplaincy program with Generate. Other providers are active in the area, including Tamworth Chaplains Board, so the number of schools with a chaplain is higher than that figure. There is about the same number of schools with a Generate SRE teacher, with some teachers working across two or more schools. This figure is only for employed high school SRE teachers however, excitingly, this year our first paid Primary SRE Coordinator will be employed in Armidale to oversee the large volunteer SRE teaching program in the primary schools there.

What makes a good chaplain or a good Scripture teacher?

A good chaplain is primarily a good listener and an advocate for the wellbeing of those they support. They are empathetic. Good chaplains

often provide a calm presence in turbulent situations. They offer hope to those suffering in the present that the future can be better. As a provider of Christian chaplains, Generate employs people who believe in the God-given worth of every human being and seek to care for, and support, students and school communities as we might imagine Jesus would.

A good SRE teacher knows the Bible well and has a strong desire to communicate its message to young people today. They relish the curiosity that young people bring and the challenge of answering their questions in ways that are meaningful to them. A good SRE teacher knows that they are a guest in the school sector and will work within its framework. They genuinely care for the students and seek to be a blessing to their school community as they have opportunity.

How often do you see schools being negative about chaplaincy?

Actually, schools enter the chaplaincy program voluntarily and are therefore generally well-disposed to chaplaincy. Occasionally a new principal unfamiliar with school chaplaincy might take over a school with an existing chaplain and they might have questions or reservations about the program, but most are won over when they realise that our chaplains are qualified, dedicated and truly care for the wellbeing of their school communities.

Just this week I had a school executive write and say, "I cannot speak highly enough of the program [our chaplain] has delivered." Each chaplain obviously brings their individual skills to their role and each school has different needs and ideas about what their chaplaincy program will look like. In one high school I worked with the chaplain who was particularly involved in getting students out into the community, gaining experience and self-esteem by volunteering with land-care groups and at day-care centres and aged-care homes. Another school had the chaplain invest significantly in supporting individual students with poor attendance records, giving the student a positive experience of school and connecting the family with local support services. Another school chaplain has been extensively involved in supporting students and their families through trauma, grief and loss.

I think many of us know some Scripture teachers who love the job more than anything they have ever done. Why do you think that is?

The Bible tells us that the message about Jesus is good news - no one likes to keep good news to themselves! And as schoolteachers know, helping others learn something new is exciting and rewarding. So, when you have the opportunity to help others learn about the exciting



Former Prime Minister John Howard, whose government brought in the Chaplaincy program, speaking at the 10 Year Anniversary of Generate.

good news of Jesus, it is no wonder many people find it something they love doing.

What specific vacancies in our Diocese are you looking to fill at the moment?

There was quite a bit of staff movement over the break and a number of vacancies exist in our area. We are looking for qualified chaplains in Gunnedah, Tamworth and Manilla.

What sorts of people do you want for these vacancies?

We want folk who believe their local school and the people in it are worth investing their time and skills and energy in, who see that supporting students through SRE teaching and chaplaincy can be life changing. We want people who are inspired to love and serve like Jesus, bringing light and life to schools and communities. This may sound daunting but one person using their God-given gifts can make a huge impact.

What can we be praying for Generate, especially in these uncertain times?

We would love to ask people to partner with us in prayer for whole school communities. There is so much anxiety and frustration around but as Christians we can bring God's hope and peace. Please pray for the provision of more school ministry workers and that God would place the right people in the right place. And please pray for all workers in schools, that they would have God's strength and grace, creativity and endurance to be able to serve schools well during this season and bring honour to God in all they do.

Coming this year - God willing!

May 6-7

Next Phase Conference

For those over 50 who want to think about how to continue a life of ministry.

At St Peter's Cathedral Armidale

Speaker:

Bishop Peter Jensen

August 5-6

Church Missionary Society *Mission Encounter*

Encouraging everyone to think about, and pray for mission.

At Peter Chiswell Hall at the William Cowper campus, Calrossy, Tamworth

Speaker:

Stuart Coulton, former Principal of Sydney Missionary and Bible College

May 19-21

Ministry Wives' Conference



Jenni Chiswell says:

"This is a fantastic time for the wives (and some of our female ministry workers) to get together for Bible teaching, sharing, and connecting time. This year we have Cathy Sampson (former CMS missionary, music teacher, clergy wife) speaking on "The Blessed Life", from Ephesians 1 and 2."



Katie's prayer

Katie Stringer is employed by Generate Ministries to teach Special Religious Education (SRE) in three Inner West Sydney Schools. She is passionate about sharing the good news of Jesus with high school students and her story is so good, we wanted to share it with everyone in the Armidale Diocese..



THE MOST AMAZING THING HAPPENED TO ME RECENTLY. I took my kids for an outing, and as I passed Balmain High School I prayed on the way that I might bump into one of my students. I had a feeling that I might see someone from my Year 10 SRE class. Then I forgot all about it. As I followed my children up a steep staircase, I noticed two young men sitting on a park bench overlooking the beautiful view of the Sydney Harbour Bridge.

I walked behind them and kept going but turned back when I distinctly heard the word 'scripture'. "Wow," I thought. I so rarely hear that kind of conversation amongst young adults. I drew a bit closer to hear more and wondered if they were from a Christian uni group or a local church, I tried to read one of the guy's T-shirts from a distance thinking maybe it had a Christian slogan or group on it, they just seemed to be openly talking about Christian stuff which is a bit rare for this part of town. One of the guys said to his friend, "It was Scripture but it was a lunchtime group too, it was so interesting to me and relaxed and fun." At this point I thought, "Isn't that so awesome that this guy has had such a positive experience, I wonder what school he went to?" He was talking about his friend 'Josh' and I thought that was the name of the scripture teacher, but then I heard, "Josh got a lot out of it and then when we went to the senior campus I asked for something, if there was something happening, but there was nothing, and then it all fell apart." The guy then took his shiny sunglasses off and looked right at me and said, "I know you right? Did you teach scripture at Balmain?"

Straight away he went from anonymous guy to a student I recognised. "Yes I said! Now I remember you!" Ankit is 19 now, and he was in my class three years ago. He's studying to be a police officer. We had the

most amazing chat high up on Ballast Point with his primary school friend of the same age, Harry, about faith and forgiveness and how important it is to get to have those conversations at school. "I look back on that as one of the best times, the people, the conversation, Mr K is the one who told me about it. Do you still do it? Please say hello to Mr K. I hope you still do it?" I was able to tell him that yes, I do! And that excitingly I'm about to add an extra school to my rounds; Scripture for years 11 and 12 at Blackwattle. "That's so good," he said, "There was nothing for us. I remember it in year 10 and it's so important, we need it, there are kids that will really need that." Ankit isn't currently going to church anywhere. In fact, I don't think he's ever been to a church but he said he and Josh from Scripture were just talking about it the other day about what they could do about that. I said how much I would like to be able to help connect him to a church.

"I'm 40," I said, "I know a lot of people and I'd love to help you find a church. I'll tell you a great secret, some of the best people I've met in my life are from church. I've met friends that are like sisters to me, I don't have any sisters, but because of the church, I do, and I love them like sisters. That's the connection you can make with people at church because you are just on the same page, you are on the same wavelength of what life is about. The people you meet at church show you what God is like, that He's forgiving and loving. "Yes", he said, "I want to meet people like that."

I cannot believe how God set that conversation up... that they were talking about Scripture class before I even got there! Please pray for Ankit and Harry (and Josh) to be so encouraged by it. Pray for them to be part of the kingdom and be welcomed into a church family.

God is so amazingly good!

"...there's no discouragement shall make him once relent his first avowed intent to be a pilgrim..."

John Bunyan