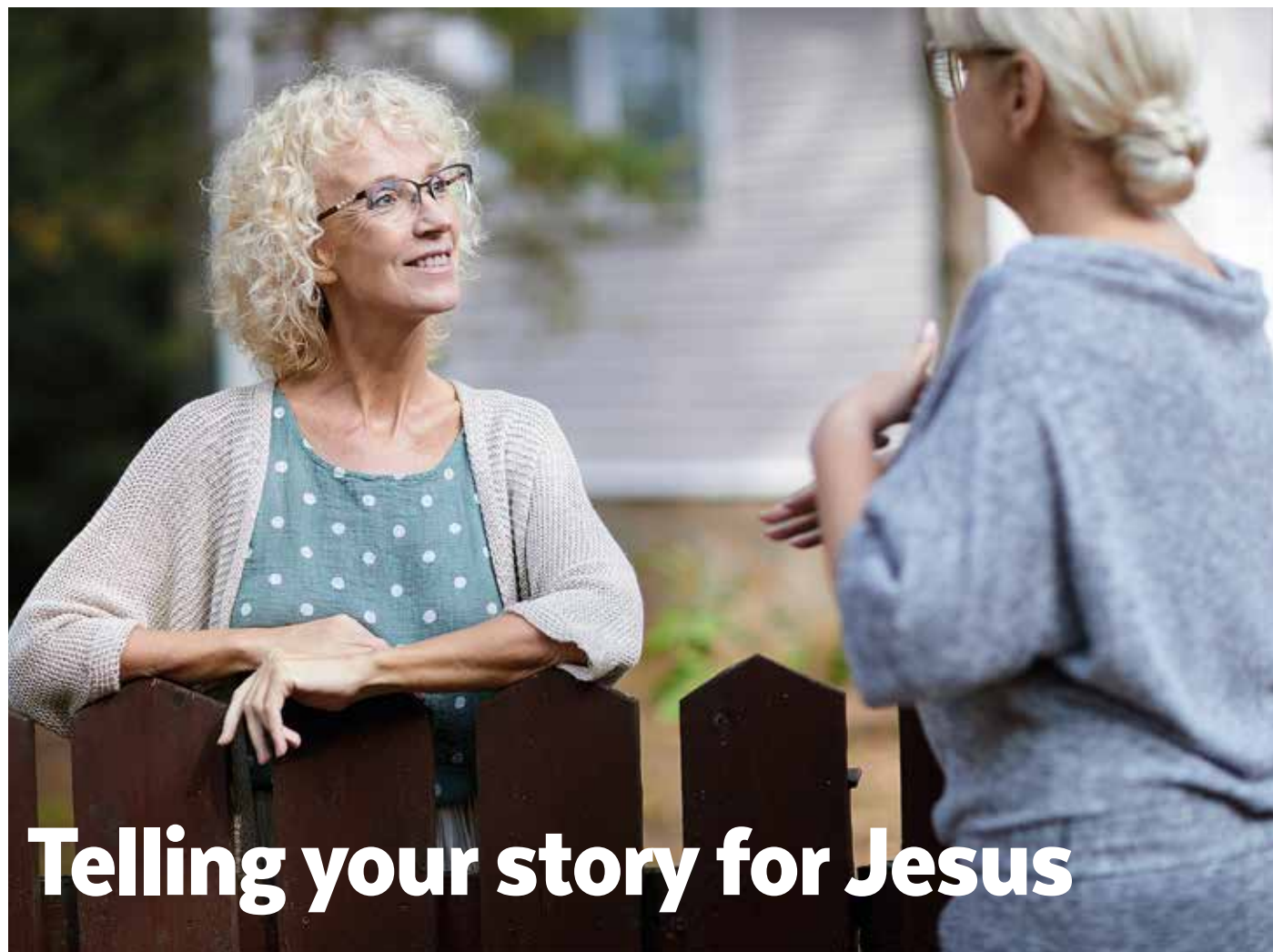


The Link

ANGLICAN DIOCESE OF ARMIDALE

2019 APRIL/MAY



Telling your story for Jesus

IN PREPARATION FOR THE YEAR OF evangelism in 2020, the Diocese is using 2019 to train and encourage everyone in our churches to really think about evangelism. A major element of this year's training and equipping is the visit of the Reverend Stephen Abbott, who has been invited to run a series of training events for both clergy and laity, based on his course, *Everyday Evangelism: A tool for creating Christian confidence*.

Evangelism can be a very scary word for many people but as Steve explained, his course is designed to help get over the fear and find a way to engage easily with those around us, as we speak about the good news of Jesus Christ.

"I was convinced that technique training was not the way forward for equipping ordinary

Christians in evangelism," he said. "You get some people who are gifted evangelists, but the rest of us, for whom it's not a natural gift, need to be equipped in the principles of sharing our faith. This is a great privilege and responsibility, so we need to find a way that fits with the way God has wired each of us, as individuals. We all have different gifts and capacities. Some of us are extroverts, while some are introverts. I designed this course because I felt we needed to find a way to train people so that they can find their own niche. That is the first fundamental.

The second fundamental principle is teaching people to share their own faith story. Your faith story is your own. You don't have to memorize it: you KNOW it! What most people just need to learn is how to talk about

Jesus as part of that story. It's a bit too easy to generically talk about God, but a real faith story will show how knowing Christ will make a difference in your marriage, in how you parent, in how you work on your farm or run your business. That really speaks to people. Often people don't come to Christ until they truly see that He makes a difference to your life.

So the course really is built around those two fundamentals...people telling their own story, but finding a way to communicate with people that fits with their own gifts and skills. Of course, the third important aspect of the course has to do with prayer and our reliance on the Holy Spirit, so we talk about that a lot."

Well, that sounds good, but it still keeps

Continued on page 2

From page 1

bringing up that scary prospect of evangelism. How on earth can I go out and evangelise the town I live in?

"I often say to people, it's a bit like taking pre-school kids to their first Little Athletics meeting", he said. "Would we say to them 'Now...to begin you have to jump over the one metre bar'? Of course not! They can't do that. I sometimes think that when we teach people 'techniques' for evangelism, we are setting the bar way too high. What most people need is something simple to get them started. The most frequent comment I get from people as I teach the course is 'I can do this!'"

Talking to Steve even for a short time makes you start to feel confident...maybe I really can speak about Jesus to my friends and neighbours. We asked him why he would like to see everyone come along to the courses he is running.

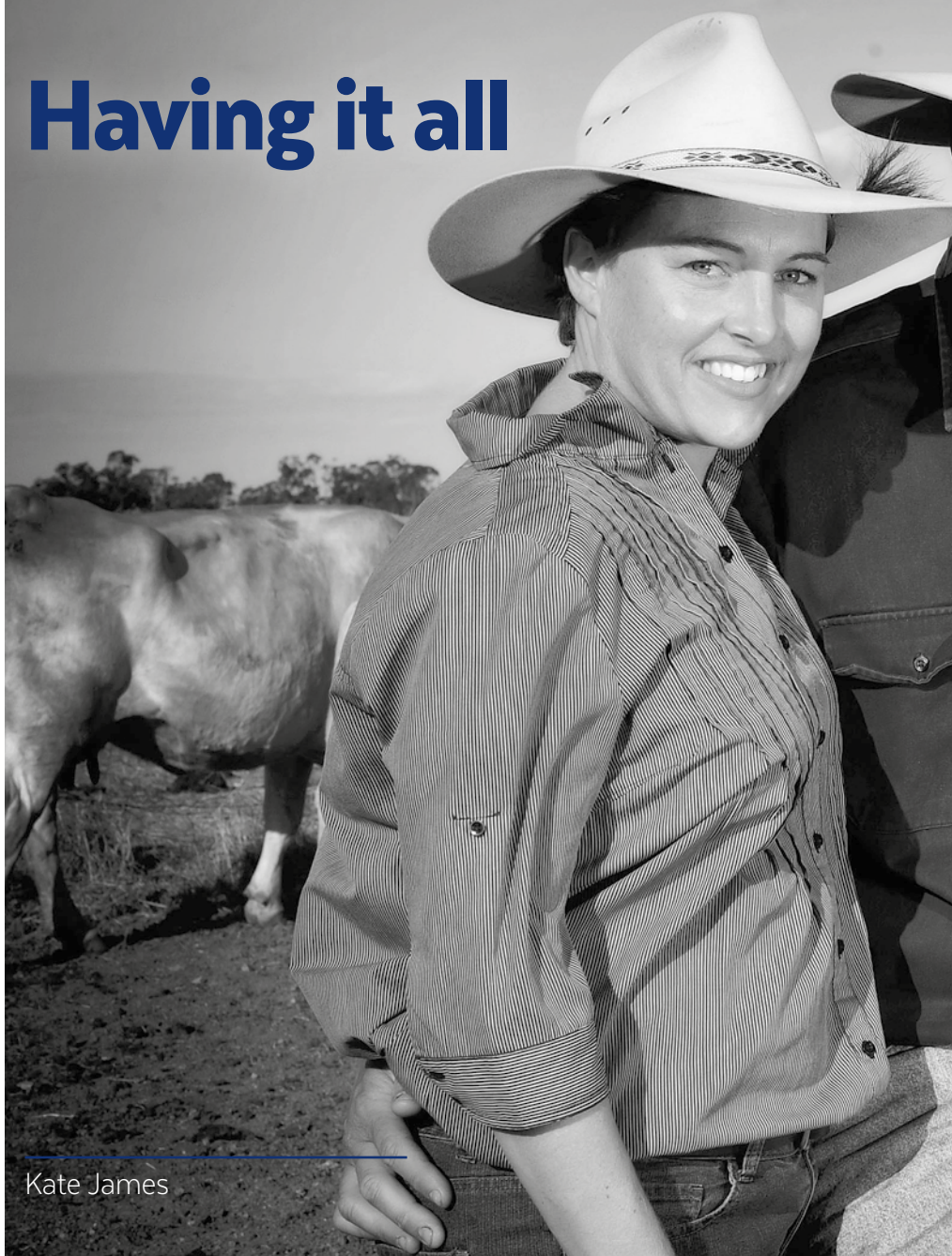
"First of all, if you want to be a follower of Jesus, you need to have His mindset", said Steve "He was absolutely committed to the salvation of lost people. We want to be aligned with Him, so being equipped to share your faith is part of being a disciple of Christ. Doing this with other people is extremely important. It helps you realise that you are part of a wider community, and for those in the smaller churches, being part of that larger group helps you understand that you are not alone. In learning from one another, we get greatly encouraged."



Stephen Abbott (above) will be conducting Everyday Evangelism seminars in five regional centres on consecutive nights for a three week period from 19 August – 8 Sept 2019; Tamworth Monday night, Gunnedah Tuesday night, Narrabri Wednesday night, Inverell Thursday night, Armidale Friday night. He will be doing some special clergy training in June, so ask your Vicar to tell you whether it is worthwhile going or not!

Please pray for Steve's health and stamina as he takes on this tour of the Diocese and gather a group together from your church to go and learn, be equipped and encouraged together.

Having it all



Kate James

Kate and Lachlan James.

"YOU CAN ACHIEVE ANYTHING YOU SET your mind to"

"Take every opportunity!"

"Follow **your** passion and achieve **your** greatest dreams and ambitions"

This used to be my mantra. I was a highly ambitious and driven businesswoman, focused on achieving success. Throughout my career, I was a 'things happen for a reason' kind of person "You **can** have it all – husband, children, business, farm..."

However, our first son suddenly required major surgery at 5 months of age. His surgery and post operation recovery was the most traumatic experience for me. I remembered praying to God at the hospital. Afterwards, I couldn't cope. I sold the business. We also left a bitter family farm conflict, bought another

farm and moved from Scone to Gunnedah. It was really hard.

New town, small children, not much support. Depression.

I went to Playgroup. I walked in on a cold rainy day to the hall not knowing anyone. Lisa Roach greeted me warmly and Rebecca Middleton had invited me over by the end of the morning. But I remember thinking "Why are these people so happy?" I was miserable. "I want some of that".

Over the weeks Bec asked me if I wanted to come to church or Bible study. After declining for a while the appeal of 'free creche' and my inability to cope with two small children saw me start going to Bible study. I found support and people prayed for me. Over the weeks I got to read many parts of the Bible I had never



known. My ears were opened and I heard God's Word. I wanted to read more and more but I had reservations and preconceived ideas about 'going to church'.

The first time I came to church I realized what was missing. There was a Jesus shaped hole in my heart. My life had been all about me and I was ignoring God's gift of salvation. I repented and wept, tears ran down my face.

Now I think things do happen for a reason because it's all part of God's plan. I realize that God has played an active role in shaping my life all along and I am grateful for all the gifts I have and that Jesus died for me.

Instead of asking for things, I pray for guidance to make the right decisions and I have an awareness of His constant presence and influence in me through the Holy Spirit.

I am no longer consumed by business success because I'm not going to be judged by my life's achievements. There is nothing I can do to assure my place in heaven, it is through God's grace that I might be there.

I come to church to praise and honour this amazing God and what He has done for me through Jesus. I come to connect and support other Christians and to pray humbly for help to become a better wife and mother to serve God.

I ask for your help to support me as I live in a way that is truly reflective of the joy I have found since opening my heart to the gospel and Jesus. And if there is a void inside you, a spiritual longing for comfort, an uncomfortable gap in your heart, I encourage you to do the same.

How to be involved

Scott Dunlop

Kate has a heart for evangelism and seeking to be a witness for Jesus. She is on our church evangelism committee and is secretary of Parish Council. I have also asked her to be our Lay Coordinator for the two-year *Seeing Jesus Clearly* Diocesan Mission. It is great to have her plugging the mission in church through a monthly five-minute evangelism training ministry spot in services. She will also play a key role promoting the Steve Abbott *Everyday Evangelism* training sessions and organising people to attend. As Lay Coordinator, Kate speaks with Tory Cayzer the Diocesan Prayer coordinator, and provides him with our local prayer points.

Seeing Kate relishing her role and its positive effect on the congregation I would encourage every parish to have a Lay Coordinator.

Here are just some of the things a Lay Coordinator could do.

- Help promote *Seeing Jesus Clearly* in the local parish – get up the front once a month to keep people informed.
- Be responsible for local administration of Evangelism Training (Aug/Sept 2019).
- Distribute the prayer notes that Tory Cayzer sends out.
- Encourage people to attend Steve Abbott's *Everyday Evangelism* training sessions.

There are lots of ways to be involved – such as hosting, travelling to a central location, or showing the videos locally. You can also –

- Keep plugging the mission in Church and through other groups.
- Give some thought to mission in your locality.
- Help to plan what your local mission will look like.
- Encourage people to pray.

THE BISHOP WRITES...

Finding hope beyond grief

Bishop Rick Lewers

PEOPLE CAN USE THE WORD “GRIEF” IN quite frivolous ways. For example, it was a great grief for the Principal of Calrossy and the Bishop of the Diocese to be beaten by their wives at cards. The only correlation between the flippant use of the word here and any real grief is in the word “loss”. Perhaps it is loss that is at the heart of grief. Who cares about card games when the Principal opposite me, with the school chaplain, has to deal with the grief that comes with a road fatality that touches the whole School community? Grief finds no flippancy for those suffering the effects of drought or in a Bishop who began this year dealing with the death of a beloved friend and clergyman, Stephen Millar. Those who know me, know I can be flippant but not when it comes to grief.

When asked to write something on grief I thought it such an appropriate topic in days of drought but I did not realise how difficult a task it would be. Grief is a little like love in the sense that it can't really be defined. It seems it can only be described. Grief is not a foreign concept to the Bible. In fact, we even have Psalms of lament that help us express grief. As I looked at my Bible it didn't define grief but it described it in terms we all understand – the bowed head of grief, eyes that grow dim with grief, bones becoming brittle, broken hearts that groan and souls and bodies weakened by grief. You may not be able to define grief but If you have ever truly grieved you know grief is a life shaker, a body crusher, a light darkener, a shame exposer and soul inhabiting pain that is desperate for a saviour.

The Bible also gives us a picture of the causes of grief.

The writer of Ecclesiastes says, “*with much wisdom comes much sorrow; the more knowledge, the more grief.*” Now there's a surprise. Who would have thought wisdom and knowledge would bring grief? Well that's something of the vanity or emptiness of life that the writer of Ecclesiastes explores. For all our wisdom and knowledge, the great

grief is that our wisdom and knowledge are not enough. From personal and deliberate sin to the sin of others we grieve knowledge not wisely applied. We know that a foolish son brings grief to a mother and that something as simple as a wink given maliciously causes grief. The Apostle Paul in his letter to Timothy warned in the context of the love of money that a person can pierce themselves with many griefs. All Christians grieve when we have grieved the Holy Spirit and all Christians grieve when we see others dangerously doing the same. You don't have to live very long before you realise how much grief we can visit on ourselves.

It may not be popular, but I have to admit that the Bible actually reminds us that the LORD Himself brings grief. In light of the darkness that covered the whole earth during the death of Christ on the cross that may not be surprising, but it is confronting. The drought, for example, is certainly one such grief. It has to be a grief the Lord brings, or allows, if God is sovereign over His creation. God's purpose in exposing us to such grief is only guesswork and one needs to be careful in one's responses: God may well be just resting the land for a time – a grief to our greed but a blessing perhaps for longer-term needs; He could be teaching us about dependence; offering discipleship in trust; judging or disciplining us as a result of our sinfulness, or all the above. Indeed, as in the life of Job, God may be doing something in the spiritual realm that we have no understanding of and – like Job – we may need to just let God be God and trust Him. What is significant is that while we may be unsure of the reasons for the afflictions that God visits upon us, grief will not be diminished should our affliction cause us to sin. There is no wisdom in sin only knowledge incorrectly applied.

Indeed, it may sound strange but at this point, it is worth hearing that God actually encourages grief. Encouraging people to grieve sounds ridiculous unless the grief is

to prevent something worse. In the fourth chapter of the letter of James he writes, “*Wash your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. 9 Grieve, mourn and wail. Change your laughter to mourning and your joy to gloom. 10 Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up.*” Like most people, I love the “lifting up” part but would like it without the grief. That is not going to happen! Reflected on t-shirts and bumper stickers, in expenditure and pleasures, the pride of humanity glories in its shame. If God is correct, and I believe He is, then grieving our prideful sinfulness is strangely the best medicine for a healthier future.

There is no surprise that the antonym to grief is joy. What is surprising is that these words can be found in partnership in 1 Peter 1⁶ “*In all this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials.*” Where does their rejoicing in the midst of grief come from? Listen to 1 Peter 1, 3 *Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, 4 and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade. This inheritance is kept in heaven for you, 5 who through faith are shielded by God's power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time.*”

The joy of persecuted Christians suffering the grief of trial comes with the hope we have. In the sermon to the Hebrews, we learn that they “*...suffered along with those in prison and joyfully accepted the confiscation of their property because they knew that they themselves had better and lasting possessions.*” Grief gives way to joy because of hope.

It is clear that God, circumstance, lifestyle, and a lack of understanding can cause grief. One very simple but crucial example is in Matthew 17 where Jesus says, “*“The Son of Man is going to be delivered into the hands of men. They will kill him, and on the third day he will be raised to life.” And the disciples were*



filled with grief." I am sure the disciples heard the "kill" part but I am confident that their grief failed to apprehend the truth in Jesus words that He would rise from the dead.

Fail to apprehend the truth of who Jesus Christ is and that He rose from the dead and there will be no relief for grief when you sin, when you suffer trials or when you encounter death. Where there is no hope there is only grief. Where there is Jesus Christ there is hope and in Him our grief will give way to joy.

This article displays the poverty of the writer who struggles with grief by way of understanding and experience. I am sure that others could say more and I would encourage us all to take the seasons of hardship and trial to consider again the God who rules over all our griefs.

To summarise, knowledge of God, and the wisdom of God to apply knowledge correctly keeps a person from many griefs. Knowing that the God of wisdom is sovereign over our circumstances (eg. our drought) and wastes nothing in His purposes has us looking beyond our grief with joy that is much more significant. Grieving sin is, and always has been, the door to forgiveness and the joyful reception of a grace and mercy we don't deserve. Knowing that death does not have the last say but the resurrection of Christ does is the truth that offers joy in the midst of our grieving. What does one say about grief to the grieving? We all encounter grief and we all need our brothers in sisters in Christ to help us in such times. It is a good question and with careful attention to God Word prayerfully we might respond with the Apostle Paul, "*May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. (Romans 15:13).*"

If you are struggling with grief don't become a recluse. Start with God, but He has also given us people to talk to who can help us - friends, church ministers, counsellors. There is hope beyond grief that does offer joy.

APRIL/MAY 2019

The key to opening what is shut

Tory Cayzer



There are many exciting things about moving into a new house. Getting a bunch of keys and having to work out which unlocks each door is not one. It can feel overwhelming and frustrating trying to open doors. I wonder if evangelism is similar?

We try opening doors by being culturally relevant, having the right words, the self-confidence, or the latest evangelism method. While some of these are helpful, God tells us prayer is the key to evangelism.

Prayer is the simple confession that we are utterly dependent on God. We need his strength in all things including talking to non-believers. The Apostle Paul urges the Christians in Colosse to *devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful* (Colossians 4:2).

Would *devoted* be a word that describes your prayer?

Me neither! So, let's start the day asking God to prepare the way for people to know Jesus. Continue throughout the day as we go about our work and talking with others. Prayer is powerful but is hard work, it takes perseverance and devotion. Dick Lucas comments, "...effective evangelism begins with persevering prayer."

Praying is depending on God and reminding us what we are here for. It's easy to forget what is truly important and urgent! So, Paul tells us to be *watchful and thankful*. Prayer reminds us we are in the Last Days - now is the time of God's favour, now is the day of salvation (2 Corinthians 6:2). That time will soon end.

Paul also urges the Colossians to *pray for us too that God may open a door for our message, so that we may proclaim the mystery of Christ, for which I am in chains* (Colossians 4:3). Paul had already said how only the word of God can save (Colossians 1:6) and now teaches that God must open the door for that word to enter. Presumably, he means the door to the heart and lives of individuals. Prayer opens the door. Only God can open what is shut.

And, of course, be *watchful and thankful* for when God does open doors. Many times, I have prayed persistently for God to open a door I had in mind (e.g. a friend, a colleague) and while I was so busy watching 'that door' I did not realise God had answered my prayer by opening 'another door.' Ironically, this was once a man who kept coming to our front door so much that I was getting annoyed by his persistence... "What does he want this time?!" Be *watchful and thankful* for the doors God opens.

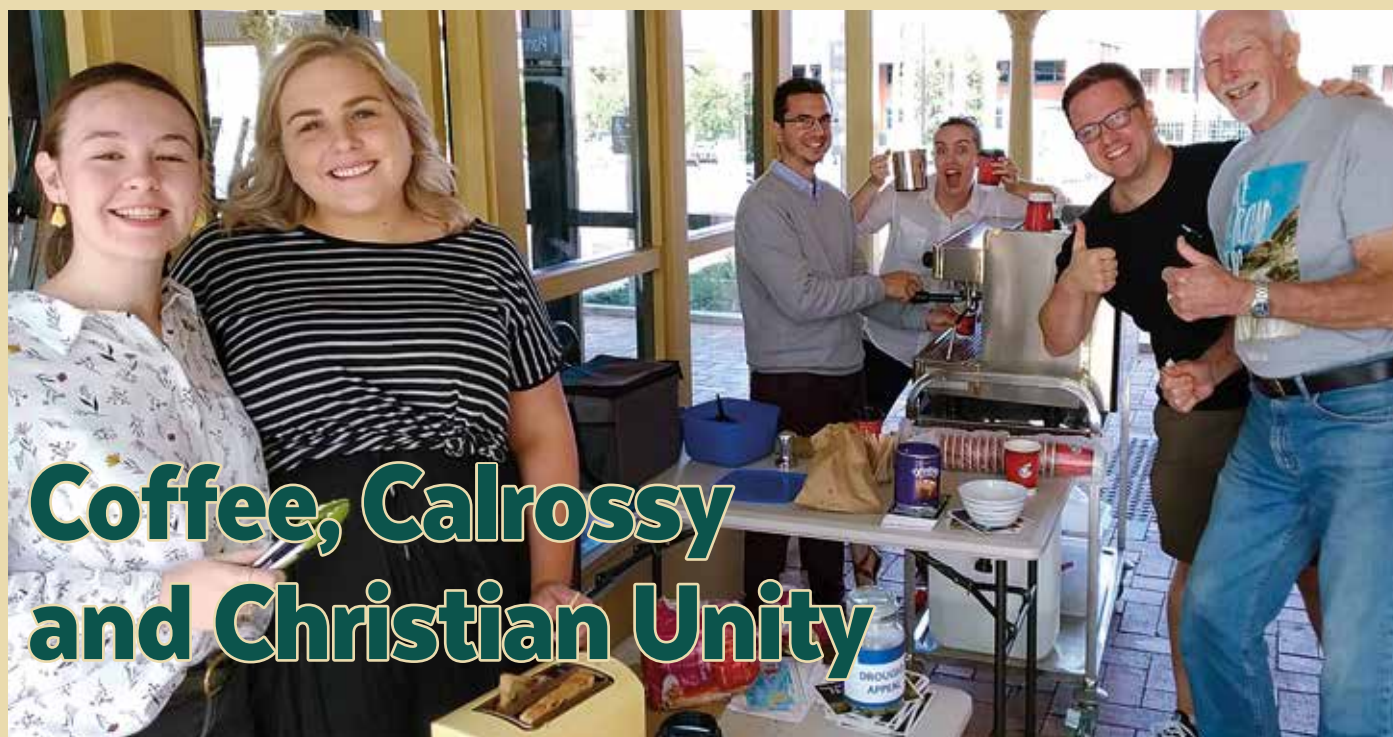
At the NEXUS 2019 'Evangelism: Let's Do Better' conference, a speaker noted how the Apostle Paul writes to the Colossians '*in chains*' from jail. Paul does not ask God to open the jail doors to be set free but requests God open doors for the gospel. You might not be in jail but may feel like this season in your life is jail. Being a young mum can feel like jail. Stuck in drought can feel like jail. Chronic sickness or being in hospital might feel like jail. God can use that 'jail' to open doors, and so pray asking that whatever the season he will use that 'jail' to open doors.

And finally, Paul asks, *Pray that I may proclaim it clearly, as I should* (Colossians 4:4). God uses our human words to make the gospel of Jesus known, and so ask God for help to speak clearly about Jesus.

Prayer is the key to opening what is shut. Prayer is the key to evangelism.

As we prepare for our 2020 Seeing Jesus Clearly Year of Evangelism our priority this year is prayer and evangelism training, and so please pray:

- That we remember the urgency of evangelism and not treat God's patience with contempt (2 Peter 3:9).
- For faithfulness in preparing for evangelism in our churches.
- For Clergy Conference (24-27 June) where Stephen Abbott will speak and our clergy will plan for our mission.
- That God would open doors as we proclaim Jesus clearly, and that many are saved.



Team members at the railway station.

Early in the year, students from Moore Theological College in Sydney head out to do a week-long mission. Some of them stay in Sydney. Some of them head overseas to places as diverse as Johannesburg and Hong Kong. But the really lucky ones get to come to the Diocese of Armidale. This year, it was the turn of St Peter's South Tamworth to host the group.

The mission group had a very busy week! To make sure they remembered it, they kept up a blog every day.

Here is what they did on Day 3.

THERE IS A TRAIN THAT LEAVES TAMWORTH RAILWAY station at 10.27am every day, headed for Sydney. To avoid missing that one train, many commuters get there early. Making the most of this opportunity, a couple of team members headed over there, armed with a coffee machine and toaster and read to chat. Some of our conversations went deep, with people sharing about deaths in their family, sickness and broken relationships. We were able to pray with them, share our hope in Christ, and invite them to seek out love and care at the church.

Another group then headed to Calrossy Anglican School. We met with the school chaplains who shared their philosophy of schools' ministry and about their vast roles, having hundreds of kids in their care (with 90 percent of those coming from a non-Christian background). We got to sit in a couple of classes and take part in a question and answer session. The students asked about us, and then some really encouraging (and challenging!) questions about Christianity: why Jesus had to die on a cross, when did sin enter the world, and how did God save people before Jesus was born? It was a great encouragement to see how God is at work in and through the chaplains there.

The grave business of evangelism

As the Diocese gears up towards a full year of evangelism in 2020, it is great to share ideas from those who are trying something a little different.

Over the Anzac weekend (26th-29th April) the parishes of Armidale, Glen Innes, Inverell and Tenterfield worked together to commend the gospel through a series on Anzac Memorial Dinners. The Reverend Dr Colin Bale, the Vice Principal of Moore Theological College was the guest speaker, presenting his research into Australian War Grave Inscriptions.

Since most of the men who died in the war were between 18 and 25 years old, these inscriptions were commonly chosen by mothers, representing their grief and their search for hope and meaning after the war. Colin highlighted how some chose Bible verses for their inscriptions to show that their hope was in Christ after the hopelessness of losing a son.

The idea for this unusual evangelism initiative came from a conversation between David Robinson and John Cooper. John says "We had been sharing

how both of us had good relationships with our RSL Sub Branch. It seemed like there was enough good will there to try some Anzac related outreach and we also felt that Colin's research would appeal to public interest."

The nights worked well because people could see that they would be hearing about something they were genuinely interested in. It was looking at the Anzac story but from a very different angle and that appealed to people. As we looked at the sadness those left behind faced, it allowed us to see why Christian scriptures were so often chosen for inscriptions and that provided a very natural introduction the gospel. Having four parishes involved was a great way to share our resources. Colin got to use his time wisely, it kept our costs minimal and allowed us to work together on promotion.

It also gave us an opportunity to talk with our RSL Sub Branches and get them involved. It was really pleasing to see our Sub Branches getting on board and to have faces we don't normally see coming along.



Mitch and Tim helping out.

In the evening, a special Aboriginal Outreach Forum was held for the first time at the church, with more than 80 church members from across the four services in attendance. The night kicked off with testimonies from two local Aboriginal Christian leaders about their experiences growing up. Moore College graduate, Jum Naden also spoke briefly about his life, before sharing about the church's ministry to Aboriginal people in Coledale.

Coledale is a suburb of Tamworth with 3000 people, of which 30 percent are Aboriginal (that's twelve times the state average!). Over several years, the church has built an informal gathering from a five-person home group to 30 adults and 50 kids meeting in the front yard of a local elder, where they sing, hear from the Bible and BBQ together.

At the end of the night, the local Aboriginal Christian leaders answered questions from church members about the work of sharing the gospel with Aboriginal people. It was humbling to hear about the pain of the past and hope for the future. In response to the question 'is reconciliation truly possible?' the leaders answered with barely a pause: 'of course! God has done it in Christ'. Amen!

Please join us and pray for:

- the broken-hearted in Tamworth, that they will draw near to God and find the love and security they long for in Christ.
- the two school chaplains as they love their students like Christ and present the hope of the gospel to them.
- God to continue blessing the Coledale ministry and raising up Christian leaders in the Aboriginal community.

Expect the unexpected

James Piggott is a third year Moore College student. He is a PK (preacher's kid) and a deeply thoughtful person who loved his taste of rural ministry so much, he is seriously thinking about going bush when he graduates! In a week of new experiences, two things were highlights.



James, Sarah and Betty Piggott.

"What stood out for me was that I had signed up to go on the country regional mission with the idea that we were coming up from the big smoke to give a sleepy parish a shot in the arm. But St Peters' is certainly the largest church I have ever attended. I got a shock...in the best possible way! To see everything firing on all cylinders and the huge engagement with the community was great. It was so encouraging that these things can happen even in the midst of hard times with the current drought and all the problems it has brought. To see the church looking to engage and reach out was inspiring.

The other thing that really amazed me was going to a Scripture lesson at Hillview school. We went with two Aboriginal Scripture teachers to a class that has an Aboriginal classroom teacher and about 30 per cent of the students were Aboriginal. The Scripture teacher asked, 'Who is coming to the Coledale Front Yard Church tonight?' A forest of hands went up, including the classroom teacher!

We had the privilege of doorknocking in Coledale, so I was able to see the area and understand it a bit better, so to then see 50 or 60 kids and adults come together on a Wednesday night to read the Bible and sing about Jesus was really something special."



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Muscular Christianity in action

Joe Goldsworthy

Pushing for more registrations at rugby camp.

IT IS TUESDAY 10TH JULY 2018 AND THE INAUGURAL SCRIPTURE Union Rugby camp is coming to a close, there are only 10 minutes to go and the Year 5 and Year 6 boys are playing one final game. Boys have come from all over the state but after 4 days and 3 nights of fun, great food and training, they are still going flat out. A car enters Tamworth Rugby Park and a mother steps out, hoping to collect her sons before returning to work. The boys' disappointment is audibly expressed; they wanted to stay to the very end, to the final whistle.

It is sometimes difficult to assess the success of such camps but the boys' desire to not leave even a few minutes early and to come to the next camp was a great encouragement for everyone involved. Fortunately, the opportunity to attend Rugby Camp in 2019 is available once again for boys in Years 5 to 10. The camp will be held between Saturday 6th July until Tuesday 9th July in Tamworth using the excellent facilities of Calrossy Anglican School and Tamworth Rugby Club.

They say 'rugby is the game they play in heaven'. One day I will find out whether or not that is true but what cannot be disputed is that its origin as an organised sport is closely connected to Christianity. William Webb Ellis, supposedly credited with picking up the ball and running with it at Rugby School, became an evangelical clergyman. The influence of men such as Dr Thomas Arnold (Headmaster of Rugby School) and the authors Thomas Hughes (*Tom Brown's Schooldays*) and the Rev. Charles Kingsley saw the playing of rugby being central to the development of 'muscular Christianity'

Kingsley, like many Englishmen, worried that the Anglican Church

and Britain were suffering from the evils of industrialization: among others, growing slums, poverty, secularization, and urban decay. Life was a battle, Kingsley argued, and Christians should be at the centre, actively employing their "manfulness" and "usefulness" against the evils of industrialization. Kingsley doubted that traditional morality would be able to cope with the effects of industrialization unless the Church reformed itself. He also deplored what many considered to be increasingly suffocating effeminacy within the Anglican Church and believed that muscular Christian men equipped with a cohesive philosophy consisting equally of athleticism, patriotism, and religion could rescue Church and country from sloth. (*Muscular Christianity* in Levick's *Rugby Football*)

Unfortunately, sport like many good things, can sometimes be a 'stumbling block' in our Christian journey. Instead of focussing on Jesus, we focus on sporting achievements. One of the main goals of the camp is for the boys to put God first in their lives, whilst at the same time encouraging the enjoyment of rugby through the development of their playing skills. It is no coincidence perhaps, that some of the best rugby players in their world are committed Christians who have had to stand up for their faith in difficult situations.

The morning talk are central to the camp. This year they are being delivered by Gary Speckman, the former long-term chaplain of the NSW Waratahs. The boys are divided into groups (based on Super 15 teams) with their leaders to discuss what they have heard before heading out to the training fields. The morning and afternoon sessions focus on



developing their rugby skills appropriate to their age and ability while the evenings involve a lot of good fun. The boys will also have the opportunity to increase their knowledge regarding the laws of the game, nutrition and fitness.

The boys certainly do not go hungry. Maria Buster is in charge of catering and any boy who has been to the Scripture Union Cricket Camp or went to Rugby camp last year knows how well he will be fed.

Coaching is of a high standard with Ofa Fainiga'Anuku, an ex Tongan international who has played overseas for Worcester (UK) and Bayonne (France) directing the secondary students and Josh Lamb running the junior programme. The camp directors are Dr Chris Trethewy and Mr Joe Goldsworthy who has coached NSW Country against the British and Irish Lions, South Africa, Ireland and Tonga.

Please do not let cost be a reason why boys are unable to come. There will be assistance available. Information regarding attending the camp should be available at your church or by contacting Scripture Union on (02) 9638 9000 or info@sunsw.org.au. Registrations can be done online at www.sunsw.org.au/rugbyunioncamp.

Last year a grandfather from Wellington rang to register two of his grandsons for the camp. He said he had been praying for such a camp for years and was really excited when he saw the camp being advertised. Please tell other people who may be interested in their boys or grandsons attending and especially remember to pray for the camp, pray for safety and that God's word will be clearly presented to each of the campers.



The gospel from a girl's worldview

Briony Freeman (above) is an accidental chaplain. While looking for casual teaching work in Armidale, the principal of NEGS (New England Grammar School) saw her CV and immediately offered her a position as a chaplain. Being a chaplain is a bit different to being a classroom teacher, but Briony relishes the opportunity to speak, particularly to girls, about the gospel. We asked her to tell us a bit about her job and to share some ways we can show the continuing relevance of Jesus to the current generation of girls.

"I get the amazing privilege of telling girls about Jesus and what he's done for us - many of whom have no other Christian presence in their lives.

The current generation of girls has not grown up with 'religion' or going to church. In addition, our society is increasingly jettisoning Judeo-Christian values. To the girls, religion seems archaic, Jesus is irrelevant and there is no reverence for the Bible.

Technological advancements, and overstimulation through excessive screen time have impacted upon this generation of girls' attention spans. It can make communication in a school context difficult. On the one hand, girls may wrongly believe the modern narrative that their worth and value is dependent on recognition from others based on their appearance or achievements. This colours their understanding of God. On the other hand, the radically different worldview of the gospel stands starkly against modern values and can be refreshing and bring hope to girls seeking acceptance based on personal attributes or performance.

The gospel still speaks to girls because human nature is the same, no matter what culture, age, or gender. The Bible has the same message for all generations. We are all, as the Bible describes, sinners in need of the Saviour Jesus Christ. We all have eternity in our hearts, and were all made to find true contentment, value and purpose in relationship with God our creator. At the heart of the gospel is unconditional love which girls crave.

Whether presenting the gospel to a 12 year-old, or an 18 year-old, I try to use simple, easily understood language, with illustrations and examples, not assuming that the hearer has any prior understanding of the gospel. With an older student I may be able to tease out the profundity or some of the implications of the gospel more easily. In terms of reception, a 12 year-old may be more open to hearing the claims of the Bible. Everything is new for them when they enter Year 7, and so they seem more accepting of hearing a new (for many) religious position. An older student may think they already know 'the Christian message', from past religious education lessons or influence of the media, and so be more dismissive.

We need prayer for wisdom in how to bring the gospel to a generation that is so far from understanding the basics, having had very minimal interaction with the Bible and Christian worldview. There is a mental health crisis amongst teenage girls. We need to pray for wisdom and opportunities to speak the Bible's truth into these broken young lives. We need to pray that the gospel would be perceived as relevant among competing values."

Going or sending?

Nick Stone

CMS - Northern NSW representative

Why would you go? Why would you leave everything that's familiar behind, to cross cultures, humiliate your way through language struggles and social clangers, and even risk your physical safety? Because God's desire is to bless the nations; and the nations are blessed as they come to faith in Jesus, and they can only come to faith in Him if those who know this blessing share this blessing. After all, how can they hear, if we all stay here!



Ania Braiding teaching the children about Abraham at Autumn Encounter.

A sunny weekend in Tamworth in April this year saw over 200 adults, youth and kids gather to grow in their mission awareness at CMS Autumn Encounter. Andrew Lubbock took us through Genesis 12, 15 and 17 - helping us to see a gracious God whose desire is to bless the nations - good news announced to Abraham many years ago. We were urged to take that blessing to the nations, as we proclaim the Lord Jesus Christ. From Vietnam to the Northern Territory, Austria to Uganda and Italy, we heard how God is blessing the nations through CMS workers. Carol Nolan shared about her time (along with husband, Rob, and family) serving as short term workers in Linz - the opportunities to reach out to refugees and share Christ with neighbours. Andrew and Margie Newman spoke about God's work in bringing them to the point of serving with CMS, life at St Andrew's Hall and hopes for serving in Uganda. Mark Fairhurst showed us the character of mission and ministry from 1 Thessalonians. Both Andrew Lubbock and Steve Etherington shared about lessons learned in evangelism - Andrew, from time in Italy, and Steve, from work in the Northern Territory. At Autumn Encounter, we were urged to consider our place in God's mission in His world - whether that is to go or to send. Where are you placed in God's mission to His world? Do you know God's blessing to the world in Christ? Are you keeping that blessing to yourself? Or is God urging you to consider how you might share that blessing with others? Maybe God is calling you to take that blessing across cultures? After all, how can they hear, if we all stay here!

Sending the Newmans; Going, going ...

ANDREW AND MARGIE NEWMAN ARE ALMOST AT THE END of their time at St Andrew's Hall, the Church Missionary Society's training facility in Melbourne. As they prepare for the next leg of their journey to Uganda, we sat down with them to hear how it has all been going.

The Link: So...how has the experience of learning to become missionaries been for you?

Margie: We have been quite stimulated...you might say OVER-stimulated!

The Link: What has been the best thing about your time in Melbourne?

Andrew: It has been very eye-opening to learn about the complexities of culture, and to see the beauty of other cultures and to appreciate them even if they are unfamiliar. The other very enjoyable thing is the community here. We have people here who will be going to Africa, Asia, the Middle East, Spain and South America. So we have most of the world covered! The other great thing has been the joy of being equipped by very godly and experienced teachers. What a privilege that is!

Margie: I think the highlight for me (among many) has been to understand that to learn the language is to learn the culture. That will be our job for perhaps the first three years...learn the language by which we will learn the culture. You can't do one without the



Andrew and Margie Newman flagging their work in Uganda.



Andrew and Margie with Ugandan friends Ronald and Agatha.

other. I thought it would be - learn the language, get to know the people, understand the culture; but it is not like that at all. Everything happens together and it is all part of our ministry.

The Link: So what happens once you leave St Andrew's Hall?

Margie: We graduate on 8th June, then we will be returning to the Armidale Diocese where CMS will help us to organise Home Assignment with our seven link churches. We will be spending two weeks in each parish and three weeks in our home parish, so that will take us to the end of the year. We should be able to have a little bit of personal leave, then it is off to CMS Summer School on Mount Tamborine in January. Then we will head out for Uganda at the end of January.

Andrew: We are not yet sure of where we will go to begin our language study, but we know that we will have to immerse ourselves in the language because our usefulness will increase exponentially after we can speak some of the language. When that happens, our focus will shift to the Bible College where we will both be teaching.

The Link: what can we be praying for you as you finish the first stage of your training, and get going on your new role?

Andrew: Please thank the Lord for the excellent training he's provided here at St Andrew's Hall and ask for his wisdom and endurance as we prepare our risk management, pastoral care and language plans. We only have a few weeks to go, so please pray that we will take every opportunity to learn well and that we will be able to say meaningful goodbyes to our fellow missionaries here at St Andrew's Hall.

Please pray that the Lord will continue to prepare our hearts and to steady them for the big transitions ahead.

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

John Bunyan



RALPH WOOD, AT THE AGE OF 78, STILL WORKS PART-TIME AS AN ASSISTANT minister at Narrabri Anglican Church. It has been an unexpected journey.

“I have prayed for guidance about big decisions in life such as which career to follow when it was between forestry, surveying or teaching. I went for teaching because I believed that God could use me better there. I prayed for God to have me appointed to the place He wanted me to be. In 1967 I was appointed to Wee Waa Central School. My former Sunday School teacher, Matt Burrows, was the Vicar. I joined two other teachers in leading services and becoming a Lay Preacher. For the first time, I served on a Parish Council and became Treasurer. I was transferred to Riverstone High at the end of 1969. It was during the next three years that I met and married Margaret, the culmination of over ten years of prayer!”

I kept applying for a position close to Wee Waa because of the great friendships I had formed there, and for the better opportunities I saw for serving God in a small town. In 1973 we were both appointed to Narrabri. From week one in Narrabri Margaret and I have been very involved in church life, including Bible Study group, lay preaching and Parish Council. In 2004, our Vicar, Mark Sutton, was frustrated about not having an assistant minister. Narrabri had not been able to afford a curate for about 15 years and was the biggest parish in the Diocese without a curate or assistant minister. The local undertakers had no funeral celebrants, so it fell to the churches to take all the funerals. The Anglican Church was often nominated by the relatives of many people who had died. Mark had to suspend other parish tasks for about a day and a half for each funeral service.

I retired from teaching at the end of 2000 and volunteered to do anything that Mark would like me to do for a couple of days a week. After a couple of weeks, during which I had occasion to attend four funerals conducted by Mark in the space of three days, Mark came back to me. ‘How would you feel about taking some funerals? You do not have to be an ordained minister.’ I confessed that funerals and visiting the sick and dying are factors which had put me off considering being a minister years before. But I had volunteered to do whatever he wanted, so I agreed.

Mark suggested to Bishop Peter Brain that I be ordained as a Deacon to serve part-time in the Parish of Narrabri. I committed to completing the Moore College Certificate of Theology as formal training and was ordained Deacon in 2006. I was ordained presbyter in 2009 so that I would be more useful to the parish and other nearby parishes when they are without a Vicar.

I trusted God to help me do the task. It has allowed me not only to assist in day to day ministry but also to do his tasks whenever the Vicar is absent or is called upon to be in two places at the same time. It is rewarding and sometimes exhausting.

I will retire from official ministry as my health deteriorates. At 78, I know that we do not last forever in our earthly bodies. I will not retire from encouraging people to put their trust in Jesus before I finally lose the ability to communicate with others. I am only sorry that I did not trust God sufficiently to undertake ordained ministry sooner in life.”

About

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