

The Link

ANGLICAN DIOCESE OF ARMIDALE

DECEMBER 2023 – JANUARY 2024

Hearts for the nations

Grace Yomada
International students pastor

INTERNATIONAL STUDENT MINISTRY AT THE UNIVERSITY of New England (UNE) has had a long, thriving history, beginning in 2007 under Polly Wong when she undertook the role of International Student worker at St Peter's Cathedral in Armidale. I was fortunate enough in my Ministry Traineeship (MTS) to work and learn under Polly for a couple of years before she moved back to Hong Kong in April 2020 to care for her ageing mother. Since then I've overseen the ministry through St Mark's church.

Originally the majority of International students were Chinese. Since COVID-19 the largest group of students is from Nepal, with India, Iran, Sri Lanka, Nigeria, the Philippines, Japan, Burma, Cambodia and many other nations represented now. The bulk of our ministry involves connecting with the overseas students on campus and inviting them into community through our International Student

Bible study, social events and church. We have a great relationship with the English Language Centre which allows us to participate in their English conversation support groups and let international students know about the events we hold. We run stalls on campus, connecting with students by offering soup, homemade blankets from our partner church Narrabri Anglican, conversation and invitations to events. Our aim is to link students with Christians who will introduce them to Jesus.

A highlight from this year has been the ways we've seen our International Student Bible study grow with seekers, and people coming to Jesus. Rey, in particular, is the fruit of his wife's prayers and evangelism. Vivian became a Christian through the ministry in 2018 and soon after returned to China to marry Rey. Vivian, Rey and their

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Kohei and Grace Yomada (front) with members of the Kanazawa mission group.

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two kids returned to Armidale in Oct 2022 for Vivian to complete her studies. Vivian was still going strong in the Lord and had been praying for and sharing the gospel with her husband. After coming to Bible study, church, and a one to one meet up for a few months, Rey decided to put his trust in Jesus. In his testimony, he said that he's so grateful that his kids will now grow up in a Christian family – unlike himself and Vivian in China.

I grew up in Deepwater and had seeds of faith sown in Scripture class in primary school. Because my youthful understanding of faith was about what happens when you die, it didn't have very much impact on my life in the present. That was until my Scripture teacher, Mary Lou Doe, invited me along to a Bible study in mid high school where I was trained and discipled in reading God's word, and realised that He wants a relationship with us now and has great works to include us in.

I was studying Japanese at the time and Mary Lou made a comment once, to the effect that I should go and do mission work in Japan one day, which really stuck with me. I accepted a five month exchange in Japan in my gap year to get a better grasp on the culture and language in preparation to serve there long term.

After this I moved to Armidale to study at UNE, thinking I would stay for one year then transfer to Sydney. I loved UNE and St Mark's church however, and chose to stay in Armidale, becoming more and more involved in ministry and I committed to do a ministry traineeship.

Just before starting it I met Kohei, who was at UNE doing a yearlong exchange from Kanazawa. He was living at Mary White college and a girl from St Mark's introduced us on his first weekend in Armidale. Kohei hadn't had any exposure to Christianity before moving to Armidale, but he got involved in church life and became a Christian midway through that year.

Kohei returned to Japan after his exchange and we tentatively began to date via distance. He was still a young Christian at this point so we took things slowly, but over a couple of years we had the opportunity to visit each other a few times. We really wanted to put God's calling on our lives as individuals first and so the big question for us was whether we shared the same vision for serving God in the future. After much deliberation we married in 2020, knowing that we both wanted to serve Japanese people with the gospel.

Well, who thought getting married over Zoom in the middle of a pandemic after not seeing each other for almost 12 months, with Kohei

moving to a new country and starting MTS would be straightforward? Our first year of marriage was tough. We had a lot of expectations and cultural baggage to work through, and training in ministry is tough at the best of times! God sustained us and grew us through the trials and through support from our church leaders and family, and we continued to benefit from great training and leadership as we learnt how to be a ministry family.

In the midst of this we also welcomed our son Noah, who created a learning curve even steeper than ministry, but one that is ever so joyful and rewarding. Noah is now 16 months old and is such a happy, funny, cheeky little delight. We have caught him preaching on his step at home, though he doesn't speak either English or Japanese yet.

In early December, Kohei and I are taking a team of nine young adults—school leavers, university students and young workers—to Kohei's previous church in Kanazawa to experience life, ministry and university Christian groups for Japanese Christians. All of the team have an interest in Japan, and are open to exploring the idea of long-term overseas mission in the future. We pray that the trip will give them a taste of the great needs in gospel-poor countries like Japan, and sow seeds in their hearts for gospel work that God would use whether they live overseas or here in Australia.

Kohei's passion for serving Japanese people with the gospel has really grown through seeing how well resourced we are in Australia. We feel convicted to share what we have learnt and received so well in Armidale, and in our broader networks – in the diocese, the Australian Fellowship of Evangelical Students (AFES), and Reach Australia.

In preparing to serve cross culturally, we have decided to study at Sydney Mission and Bible College (SMBC). On the other end of college, our hopes are to be involved in church ministry in Japan, or in a part of Australia densely populated with Japanese people.

One of the biggest struggles we feel in heading off to college and serving further afield is the relational loss. Not only will we deeply miss our church family and connections here, but being away from my family (who now all live in Armidale) and having my parents experience health struggles this year, make it hard for us to leave.

We'd appreciate prayer that we will have wisdom and strength to love, honour and serve our families to the best of our capacities. Whilst we are confident that God will provide for us, financially resourcing Kohei's studies as an international student is another matter for prayer.

Jesus, the ultimate king

Bishop Rod Chiswell



GREETINGS FROM ARMIDALE AS WE move into the Christmas season. In our household we start preparations early in readiness for the clergy families' Christmas picnic at our place. The tree is up, the nativity scenes are out and the lights are on. I'm not sure why we have three nativity scenes, but I'm glad that we do, because it reminds us at every turn that the baby born in the stable to Mary and Joseph was, and still is, the main game, no matter what time of year it is.

Parish Visits

Visiting parishes continues to be the joy of my job as bishop. In the lead up to Christmas I'll be with congregations at Inverell, South Tamworth and St Peter's Cathedral in Armidale during December. Christmas Eve will see me and Jenni join the 10am service at North Star Anglican church and the 6pm service at St James in Mungindi. The same evening The Reverend Christopher Pears will join with the congregation of St Andrew's in Tingha at 7pm. Jenni and I are looking forward to being with the North Star church family, particularly following the loss of our dear sister Jenny Mitchell. I had the privilege of attending her funeral at the end of October. The gospel was clearly preached by The Reverend Brian Kirk and the service was a wonderful testimony to a life lived well for God's glory. We continue to pray for Ran and the family in their grief.

The Coledale Frontyard Church Project

During parish visits I have also been seeking to promote the Coledale Frontyard Church Project. The Coledale work is an outreach

ministry that seeks to address the heart of the problem for Aboriginal people in North West NSW. The recent referendum shows us that as a nation we're unsure of the best way forward in helping a group of people who are struggling in communities right across our country. From a Christian point of view, we know there is only one way to bring real hope and lasting transformation – through the Lord Jesus Christ. The Coledale Frontyard Church Project seeks to consolidate a platform for ongoing gospel outreach to Aboriginal families in the city of Tamworth. To that end I have been encouraging people in parishes across our diocese to give generously to this project as it is a concrete way to show love for our neighbours in a way that will bring hope and change both now and forever.

Recruitment and clergy movements

I'm very thankful to God for recent answers to prayer with regard to ministry vacancies within the diocese. I'm particularly excited that Dave and Anita Thomas have moved from Tamworth to Inverell to work alongside Adam Draycott as full-time lay ministry workers. I'm also delighted that Ben Cook, currently employed as Head of Abbott Boarding House, has agreed to serve alongside Acting Chaplain, Jo Benham, on the TAS chaplaincy team. From the start of 2024 they will both be appointed as chaplains at TAS, providing an excellent interim solution as we seek a permanent chaplain.

Another answered prayer has also come internally at North Tamworth Anglican church. The Reverend Allan Beaven (formerly Vicar of Cockburn Valley parish) has agreed

to serve two days/week, and lay person Kelly Hitchcock will be employed as a Children's Worker one day/week. We also rejoice that Lisa Newnham, who served for two years doing a Ministry Traineeship (MTS) in Gunnedah and then a further four years as a children's and women's worker at North Tamworth, is going to Moore College for theological training in 2024.

God continues to be kind to us in raising up workers for His harvest. At the start of next year the following curates will land in the diocese: Reuben & Kim Birchley – Moree, Jared & Erin Lidgerwood – Armidale Cathedral, Nathan & Bonnie Tuckwell – St Mark's church Armidale, and possibly one more who will most likely head to Tamworth. The ordination service for all of these men will be held at St Peter's Cathedral in Armidale on Saturday 17th February, 2024.

In 2025 we are expecting a further three or four curates to join our team. Please pray for ongoing wisdom for me in the recruitment and placement of clergy in our diocese.

As we head towards Christmas remember the words of the angel Gabriel to Mary, "You will conceive and give birth to a son and you will name him Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over Jacob's descendants for ever; his kingdom will never end." (Luke 1:32-33.) The good news is that Jesus was and still is the ultimate King. Let's continue to trust him as Saviour and live with him as Lord.

With love in Christ, Rod Chiswell.

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Blessings in community

The Reverend David Robinson
Holy Trinity, Glen Innes

UNDER A CLEAR BLUE SKY ON THE LAST SATURDAY IN October, Holy Trinity Glen Innes held its annual fete. It is an event that seems to be almost as keenly anticipated in our community as within the church family and is, in so many ways, a blessing to our church.

The fete has been a fixture in our calendar for decades and draws loads of people together. For days beforehand our buildings are filled with people arranging flower displays, sorting through donations, cleaning up the grounds, and simply enjoying being with one another. On the day of the fete, dozens of people arrive as the sun is rising to help set up marquees, fire up the BBQs and man the stalls. By 9 am, everything kicks off. We enjoy the entertainment from local schools and community groups, we eat loads of great food and by the time we're ready to begin packing up at around 2 pm, several hundred people have passed through our grounds over the course of the day.

But is it all just an excuse for a good time? Or a chance to raise funds? Thankful though we are to God for those blessings, the fete is far more than either of those! The fete provides an opportunity for many of us to use our gifts to serve our Lord. Let me share a few of my personal highlights.

I am encouraged by an organising committee that seeks to ask how this event might better honour Jesus. I marvel at the creative gifts of those who fill our church with beautiful flower displays adorned with verses of Scripture. I am encouraged when I see people pulling together for a common cause: everyone from the 12-year-old kids selling fairy floss to the 90-year-old ladies seeking to show genuine hospitality to our guests. I am thankful for the boldness of our MC in opening the day with prayer and finding opportunities to constantly remind people that it is the love of Christ that motivates our church family.



From bands playing and groups dancing, to the buying and selling of plants, cookies and much more, the grounds of Holy Trinity bustle with activity.

In recent years, it has been wonderful to have teams of students from St Mark's UNE join us for the fete weekend. Not only do they take the opportunity to encourage our people, but their injection of energy has allowed us to run evangelistic events over the weekend. This year that included a university student takeover of our youth group, a men's dinner on Thursday evening, and a women's dessert night on Saturday.

Perhaps the greatest highlight is the opportunity it affords many of us to have dozens of meaningful conversations with people we might find hard to catch at other times.

After eight years at Glen Innes, I honestly believe that our fete has been a vehicle for much that is good. Tiring as organising and running an event like this can be, I'm thankful for those who so willingly give their time and energy towards it. And I pray that God might help us to forever strive to use the wonderful opportunities our fete creates to bring glory to his great name.



Steph Hunt
President of MU Armidale

WHAT IS A GOOD DEATH? IS THERE SUCH A THING? WHAT does our culture say is a good death? What changes do we anticipate as legislation changes in NSW in regard to Voluntary Assisted Dying and how are we to think about this as Christians?

MU Armidale hosted an event at St Pauls, West Tamworth (thanks for a delicious morning tea ladies!) with Robyn Bain, who addressed these issues head on. I found it thought-provoking, confronting and very reassuring. Robyn is equipped to speak on this issue: she has worked as a medical doctor, she helps teach Christian Ethics at Queensland Theological College (QTC) Brisbane with her husband Andrew Bain (vice-principal of QTC) and she writes for the Gospel in Society Today (GiST) website – the social issues committee for the Presbyterian Church of QLD.

Robyn outlined the cultural story we're told with regard to death which is that because we're terrified we want options. We need to feel in control and have choices because the process scares us, the suffering scares us and the potential need for dependence on others scares us. These are understandable and natural fears and it was interesting to reflect on the increase of these fears as the majority of society has become distanced from the dying process. In most other cultures and previously in the West, loved ones died in the home and the family cared for them and washed and prepared the body for burial. It's intriguing to note that it is our developed nations with ready access to a range of palliative care measures who are the ones asking for a quick out. The modern approach to death is neatly summarised in the Exit International tagline 'My Life. My Death. My Choice'.

But do we really have autonomy? We have the ability to make many choices in life but we are ultimately dependent on others for so many things, and often in circumstances we do not choose. Our parents, teachers and employers reared, taught and instructed us in things we need to be able to do and often against our will but for our good! (I'm so thankful for my Mum - she taught me what servanthood looks like and I'm somewhat less thankful to Mrs Young for teaching me Pythagoras' theorem but I know it was a good thing for me to learn).

And of course we are most dependent on a good and merciful God for every breath we breathe, to the last. He gives us life and promises



Before delivering her address, Robyn (right) is interviewed by Steph.

eternal life if we are in Christ. This is where Robyn's talk is so rich – upturning the cup of dregs left from our current cultural story, pouring those out and refilling it with the sweet nectar of the gospel.

God provides a bigger vision: the person of Jesus. Humanity at its best! At the point of suffering and deprivation in the wilderness (Luke 4:1-13) Jesus is given choices to end the hardship and take matters into His own hands. Yet He holds fast to God's good plan and purposes. He knows the devil's offer of release won't free Him but will in fact put more locks on the doors. But the reason He refuses autonomy here is because He knows submission to the Father's will is the better way. It has been chosen in love and with a much bigger picture in mind.

If we are in Christ, God has promised an ultimate end to all suffering and the restoration of our bodies when we are united with Him in heaven. And while we wait, He has promised never to leave or forsake us. There is so much more to say. You really have to watch the talk.

The next combined MU event, 'For such a time as this', will take place at St Andrew's Cathedral in Sydney on February 23, 2024 and can be attended online. Please see this website for details:

musydney.org.au/events/for-such-a-time-as-this





Hospitals present a vast mission field and our chaplains are finding opportunities to preach the gospel into dark areas where people desperately need hope.

Shining light

The Reverend Brian Kirk

Armidale Hospital and Aged Care Chaplain

“I’M NOT RELIGIOUS” OR “I DON’T GO TO CHURCH” ARE probably some of the most common responses I receive from patients when I introduce myself as the Hospital Chaplain. So why the need for a Hospital Chaplain in this increasingly secular age?

When patients are given a fatal diagnosis, despite their religious beliefs or practices in the past, many turn to the Lord for help and guidance. In these moments, which are often initially characterised by darkness and despair, they welcome the hospital chaplain as he/she sits with them.

In the last 12 months, I have had the privilege of conducting eight funerals in Armidale, Uralla, Bundarra and Glen Innes directly related to hospital and aged care ministry. One of them was for a woman I had seen once in palliative care. As I was leaving a funeral meeting with the family, the son spoke to me in confidence. His mother was a woman of faith. He had become a Christian some years ago but had drifted since then. He indicated to me his intention to renew his faith and to go back to church.

Another time I was asked to visit a man in the hospital in his 80s who seemed anxious and scared about the future and death. He had a belief in God but felt guilty about not attending church. He shared some of his struggles and his uncertainty about his future, especially about his health. We talked about putting his faith and trust in Jesus and he prayed with me, a prayer of faith.

There are many other stories of encounters with people from the hospitals and aged care centres, such as the elderly Christian woman who looks forward to being encouraged each week from God’s Word; an elderly man who is lonely and has been deeply hurt by family and now feels rejected after being placed in an aged care facility; a man who receives me warmly each week and is happy for me to pray for him; or

a single man who was initially indifferent to spiritual conversations but was happy to talk about his life. I invited him to join our monthly worship services. He was hesitant at first but now never misses.

These are just some of the 138 people I see each month. I’ve also worked with the Social Work department and the Aboriginal Liaison officer on several occasions. Monthly services are held in Bupa and the Ken Thompson Lodge Aged Care Centres with the help of volunteers, and I visit each centre most weeks.

In December 2022, a Christmas Service was held in the Hospital Chapel (the first since the pandemic ended) and attended by patients, staff and outside visitors. About 20 people sang Christmas carols, listened and reflected on the Christmas event from three readings in the Gospel according to Luke, and prayed. We are planning another such service for the Hospital Chapel in December 2023.

I am grateful for the support of the Armidale Hospital’s Chaplaincy Steering and Support Team (AHCSST), and the many supporters who pray and/or give financially because they see the value of this ministry and want to see God’s blessing on it. As a result of increased generosity, the Diocesan Council has agreed to extend the ministry from two days to three each week. We have also been able to place 100 Bibles in the Armidale Rural Referral Hospital which were removed at the start of the pandemic.

Please pray for the Tamworth Hospital Chaplain, The Reverend Gus Batley, and me as we work through how to pastorally respond to and support patients, families and staff with the implementation of the Voluntary Assisted Dying legislation (VAD). Please pray for God’s Spirit to be at work in the hospitals and aged care centres; for our good health and for God to provide the finances that are needed to sustain these ministries.



Holding out life

The Reverend Gus Batley
Tamworth Hospital Chaplain

NEVER IN MY TIME IN MINISTRY HAVE I HAD SO MUCH contact with so many people of no faith. There is no easy slipping into church jargon. Nevertheless chaplaincy can be a visible reminder that God is not uninvolved in our worst human circumstances. To represent Jesus and to offer Jesus in such places completely repudiates the cultural caricatures of a soft, feel-good, prosperous and harmless, or judgmental, Christianity. Patients experience kindness, serious attention and grace. We want to care for the patient and family, such that their eyes might be opened and they see their need for a Saviour, and so turn and trust in Christ alone.

I am blessed by the support of three steady, experienced, life-wise Christians who have all shared in the joys and deep waters of life, know the faithfulness of the Lord, are unafraid to be in the hospital room, and take opportunities to share Jesus. John, Cheryl, Terry and I meet regularly to debrief, and this mutual support is priceless.

We prayerfully go to meet hospitalised strangers in need, we take time, we listen well, we seek to learn what really matters to the patient/family and to connect those matters of significance to matters of gospel significance. We don't piggyback our conversation or experience onto theirs, and we won't shut down feelings, stifle strong emotion, or leap to correct misconceptions immediately.

Together we aim to make sure every department is covered, from Emergency, Intensive Care and Rehabilitation to the Banksia Mental Health, Nioka Palliative Care and Hilltop Dementia Units. The Lord continues to provide numerous opportunities to pastorally support staff, pray with them and advocate for them as well as patients.

Over time, people discover they have permission to be honest about the things facing them; our goal in that context is to assist them in discovering the meaning of actual hope where, humanly speaking, there is none. The failing human body, on its own, leaves no option but despair: we offer a hope imperishable through knowing the One who, even as he faced an undeserved death, entrusted himself to his loving Heavenly Father.

The legalisation of Voluntary Assisted Dying (VAD) has caused me to reflect afresh on the potentially immense significance of the bedside

encounter, in particular for the family or friends of the dying. My own experience with families encountering death only reinforces what we already know: these moments hurt precisely because we care. The pain experienced by the bereaved at the time of death (or in anticipation, leading up to it) is almost always the voice of love. This is the bond of love finding expression. Generally it is never rehearsed, it just happens spontaneously. As one woman memorably said, "the pain is the love".

One of my concerns around VAD is that this priceless opportunity for the expression of love is short-circuited, along with other, unseen issues. Research tells us how patients have often discovered that what they really wanted was not a foreshortened life, or no pain, but for other intangible yet crucial issues to be addressed. Once they were, the thoughts of VAD/euthanasia/suicide tended to become irrelevant.

But unless they had done the hard yards, they would never have known this. Personal experience tells me that patients deeply desire to be heard and understood; to be accepted as valuable and worthy of respect right up to the end; to be assured of their family's love; to have past painful conflicts brought to some kind of resolution; to have found a relationship with God, or to have it renewed; to have their families' grief understood and acknowledged.

We all instinctively back away from suffering and pain, and yet our world seems deeply interested in putting even greater distance between itself and uncomfortable moments, just when intimacy is crucial. Our love for others of necessity comes at a high price and whilst Voluntary Assisted Dying appears to hold out the promise of compassion and dignity to the dying patient, it is at the long-term expense of the community, and lives may ultimately become devalued.

Be assured there are numerous medical and nursing staff, both of faith and none, who are opposed to such a practice, let alone having to be on a shift while it happens on their ward. For those of us offering pastoral care to the dying and their families, our goals will not change.

It has always been a special privilege coming alongside you dear people in the most unwanted or unexpected circumstances. If you know of someone coming to Tamworth or Armidale Hospital (or Tamara Private), please let us know.



Uniting in Prayer

Dean Blomfield

Member of the Commission for
Evangelism and Mission (CEM)

BEFORE I HAD A GOOD GRIP ON THE GOSPEL, THE DEPTH OF my sin and the reach of God's grace, I'd learnt that my parents, the people I trusted most, knew to trust God. They prayed in the family home, with reverence and confidence. I learnt that God was holy and good. He listened and responded to those who spoke to and trusted in Him.

By the age of 12, I'd learnt that we can bring big matters to God. I expected that he would remove my Dad's cancer. At 13, I'd learnt that sometimes God says no to our prayers. My Dad died, but I saw that my mother continued to talk with and trust in God. The Lord, with whom I now spoke, held me through and beyond Dad's funeral with a peace I didn't expect and couldn't comprehend except that I knew it was a gift, for me, wrapped by my God.

At 16, I learnt that sometimes God says yes to prayer and a resounding no to medical boffins who had scoffed at him and my mother when she turned to him in prayer. I'd given myself severe brain damage in a fall from my motor bike. There was widespread prayer from family, friends and people we didn't know. God restored my brain function and paralysis and, conscious again after some weeks in a coma, I was healed.

At around this time, I understood that for me, the greater healing and restoration happened when Jesus took my place on a cross. Praise God for the prayer which helps bring a sinner to understanding.

In the 42 years since, I've come to know that all I need to understand about God is contained in the Bible. But I've also learned that my walk with God can lose traction and progress when I don't pray about what I've read from God's word. I need to set myself away from the issues of the world to concentrate on the things of God. In Matthew 6:6 Jesus says "Go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father who is unseen." Praying like this, I'm removed from farming worries and my tendency to feel weak, living in a world with strident opposition to Christianity. The Bible also urges me to be praying with other believers, where we encourage one another towards God as my parents did me. The Church was established and thrives in such prayer. (Acts 1:14)

I know that some find it difficult to pray, and more so to pray aloud, in the presence of others. Please be encouraged. We are directing our hearts to 'Our Father who art in Heaven'. The power in prayer comes from God and it's his way to make things which may appear weak and foolish to be powerful in his hands. Let's make it our habit to meet with our gracious God in prayer.

"For where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them" (Matthew 18:20)

There are many rich opportunities for communal prayer within the diocese, whether during a church service or Bible study, in prayer partnerships or triplets, prayer groups over Zoom or in larger groups that cross parish and denominational boundaries.

The solidarity that comes from acknowledging our mutual trust in God's provision for our needs, the comfort that arises when a fellow Christian can express in words truths that our wounded spirits need to hear, the joy that is amplified when

we share our concerns and see God's merciful answers are all part of his kindness towards us.

CEM have developed resources designed to aid and equip us to be prayerful and these can be found under 'resources' on the diocesan website: armidaleanglicandiocese.com/christian-education-and-discipleship-resources

We can also to join in prayer with Christians on a global level through receiving prayer updates provided by missionaries or their sending partners, and through organisations such as Prayercast or

The Joshua Project who equip Christians with up-to-date prayer information on a country by country basis.

When we need others to join with us over immediate concerns, there is pastoral care available in our churches as well as ministries such as the Brooklyn Tabernacle church 24 hour prayer band in New York - who are rostered to meet together and pray for submitted prayer requests for 30 days. You can find their prayer form here: brooklyntabernacle.org/prayer/prayer-form

Mungindi Magnets



Patrick and Jenny Kennedy first began serving in the Armidale diocese after Bishop Rick Lewers, who had been their vicar at Engadine Anglican church, asked them to undertake lay ministry in Bundarra.

They later became involved in volunteer ministry at St James Anglican church in Mungindi and once the parish could no longer afford to support a vicar, offered to serve at St James for a couple of months each year.

Patrick and Jenny Kennedy, Warren and Jan Richards and Ian and Elizabeth Campbell volunteer each year at Mungindi Anglican Church.

Patrick Kennedy

Lay Ministry Leader

SADLY I AM A MAGNET FOR DOGS WHETHER I'M OUT WALKING with my wife, Jenny, or riding my pushbike around Mungindi with its very friendly (humans at least) population of 600. On our last visit to this isolated town, north west of Moree on the Queensland border, I was walking with Jenny when two vicious hounds, with teeth bared, raced out of their property wanting to eat us for breakfast. These were not the sorts of dogs we see on our walks back in Heathcote, in Sydney, on the edge of the Royal National Park. No, there are no Labradoodles or Shepradors in Mungindi, just snarling, snapping killer canines. As the two scary dogs skidded to a stop at our feet preparing to devour us, rescue was at hand.

Suddenly, a man dressed in shorts, singlet and thongs (Mungindi's version of Indiana Jones) stood between us and the dogs and cracked a huge whip sending the canines yelping back into their owner's front yard. We thanked our outback hero who just nodded his head, curled up his whip and headed back to his front verandah. When we told the story to other Mungindi residents, they did not seem impressed. One man says he carries his own personal whip to keep the local dogs quiet. He offered to lend me a whip on our next trip.

But what Jenny and I really want is to be magnets for Christ. We have been going to Mungindi for six years, and recently have been joined by two other couples from our home church in Engadine in Sydney's south. Ian and Elizabeth Campbell, Warren and Jan Richards and Jenny and I at various times throughout the year, travel the 750 kms to Mungindi to serve in the St James Anglican Church.

Mungindi is the only town in Australia which straddles state borders. Oh, how difficult this was for locals during the COVID-19 epidemic when the hospital is on the Queensland side as are many

of the congregation.

At different times of the year the Richards, Kennedys and Campbells conduct the Sunday services, preach, lead, run Bible studies, visit the hospital to pray with people and all the things you would expect of a rural Ministry Leader. One of my highlights this year was to speak at the local school about what it was like to be an author and while I was there I told them about Jesus!

Not long after we began serving at Mungindi God blessed us when our daughter, Bec Langmead, and five of our grandchildren, moved to 'nearby' Lightning Ridge where her husband Kurt was appointed as the minister of the town's church. And they are so close, well by country standards, just three hours away.

We are blessed to be able to tell the people of Mungindi about the saving grace of our Saviour Jesus Christ. As we do we have had many trips out onto the farms of graziers, wheat farmers and cotton growers and enjoyed hearty country meals and good conversations. All the while I try to keep clear of their farm dogs who sniff me out wondering if they can take a quick bite. My magnetic attraction continues well beyond the town boundaries!

While none of us have a background as professionals in ministry, God willing, our three families from the 'Big Smoke' will continue in 2024 to be magnets for Christ.

Will readers of this article prayerfully consider if they too can help, if not in Mungindi, in another place in need of lay leadership? You can always approach your vicar or Bishop Rod Chiswell (who was once the minister at Mungindi when he was a younger man!) if you have questions. If I can ever assist by chatting about the rewards of becoming a magnet for Christ, I would be delighted.

Gifts for a much-loved world

In a time of need

‘Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people... a saviour has been born to you... You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.’

Luke 2:10b -12



Life can impact in unexpected ways and as a result Christmas time is not always joyful for people. Feelings can be amplified over the holiday period and being aware of this gives you time to put help in place.

If you are alone over the Christmas period, include yourself in Church activities that will be running and where you can chat to other people. Invite someone to spend Christmas lunch with you at your house or invite them to a picnic in the park. Volunteer to help at different Christmas events in your community.

If you are unable to get out or find socialising difficult, tune in to Christmas services on TV or schedule in a phone call with someone for Christmas day. Make a plan for how you are going to spend the Christmas week/day, choose your favourite food, music and scenery and enjoy your own company. If you are a believer in Jesus

perhaps read your favourite Bible verses and listen to your favourite songs and have one on one time with Jesus.

Anglicare is privileged to bless many people in our community who are doing it tough and throughout the year we have a range of different ways we can help emotionally and physically. If you live in the Tamworth area, anyone can access our Mobile Community Pantry for wholesome food at affordable prices – the pantry can be accessed via St Peter’s, St Paul’s, Oxley Vale and Kootingal Anglican Churches. Over the Christmas and New Year period when everything shuts down there are still phone numbers you can call to speak to someone if needed. Please see the inset.

“When we assist someone to get back on their feet, it makes us realise we really are Jesus’ hands and feet in this world,” says Anglicare Regional Manager, Claire Dunlop. “It takes a lot of courage

for a person to receive help and to admit that they’re struggling.”

If you would like someone to walk side by side with you, or to help you find financial assistance please reach out to us:

6701 8200 or anglicare.org.au

If you would like to donate financially to help Anglicare walk beside someone doing it tough, you can do that here:

go.anglicare.org.au/donate/northern-inland

- Lifeline: 13 11 14
- Kids Helpline: 1800 551 800
- MensLine Australia: 1300 789 978
- Suicide Call Back Service: 1300 659 467
- Beyond Blue: 1300 22 46 36
- Headspace: 1800 650 890
- QLife: 1800 184 527

Christmas in the diocese

Closer to home, there is the option of inviting a friend, neighbour, colleague or acquaintance to join you for a light refreshment, a meal or to attend one of the many Christmas events or services run throughout the diocese. A simple invitation can represent Jesus’ love and care to someone who is hurting or lonely, and even those who appear busy have a deep need to be known and accepted.

Last year Warialda Anglican church invited the townsfolk not only to their Christmas services but also to a share in a ‘no strings attached, come as you are’ meal in the parish hall on Christmas day for anyone who didn’t want to be on their own. Afterwards, one family who had not previously attended the church joined Sunday services every week until they moved away from Warialda eight months later.



Operation Christmas Child

Samaritan's Purse is a non-profit, Christian organisation which provides emergency relief and development assistance to suffering people around the world under the leadership of Billy Graham's son, Franklin. Through their programme 'Operation Christmas Child' they aim to provide God's love in a tangible way to children in need and, together with the local church worldwide, to share the Good News of Jesus Christ. Since 1993 Samaritan's Purse have delivered more than 178 million gifts in shoeboxes to children in over 160 countries and territories, with 35.4 million of those shoebox recipients having participated

in the 12-lesson discipleship course, The Greatest Journey.

Last year Australia and New Zealand together donated 228,104 shoebox gifts: 75,509 were distributed to Cambodia, 73,687 to the Philippines, 31,931 to Papua New Guinea, 10,815 to the Solomon Islands, 24,429 to Fiji, 10,706 to the Ukraine, and 6,998 to a country which cannot be identified.

This Christmas, Christians within the diocese coordinated the collection of more than 2,250 shoebox gifts for Samaritan's Purse in preparation for distribution to the countries listed above. To watch children receiving these gifts or to learn more visit: samaritanspurse.org.au/what-we-do

For further opportunities to show Jesus' love to those around the world this Christmas you could consider:

- supporting a project through Barnabas Aid who seeks to provide hope and aid to suffering Christians barnabasaid.org.au/latest-needs
- joining with churches in over 70 countries to give to someone living in poverty through the Compassion gift catalogue compassion.com.au
- contributing to strengthening churches and transforming communities in over 39 countries through the work of Anglican Aid anglicanaid.org.au/becauseofjesus



Christmas is a homecoming – one where the broken of humanity are given access to the home they were meant for in Christ.

Ruth Chou Simons

Christmas Services



Around the diocese there will be many Christmas services taking place.

Please see the diocesan website for details: armidaleanglicandiocese.com/christmas-services

a kid like me
needs someone
like you



If you... have time to care for a child, have experience in working with or caring for children, can instil hope in a child and help them have a better future...**YOU** could be that someone!

We'd love you to start this conversation with us on **9890 6800**, or email us at foster.care@anglicare.org.au to be that someone.

anglicare.org.au/fostercare



Anglicare

Supporting your independence with home care



Anglicare At Home is here to support you with quality care that is tailored to your needs.

Our care workers are carefully selected and expertly trained to help you live a full life at home and in the community. If you are aged **65+** years or **50+** years and of Torres Strait or Aboriginal descent, please give us a call. Services range from help around the home to high care nursing support. We also offer complimentary pastoral care services. New England services are available in Tamworth only.

Call **1300 111 278** or visit anglicare.org.au/at-home



Anglicare



In love and gratitude

Wendy Smith

ON OCTOBER 30TH A LARGE GROUP OF MOURNERS GATHERED in Goondiwindi to honour the life of Jenny Mitchell.

Jenny was born in Trundle NSW in 1938. It was on the family farm in Trundle, and later in Coonabarabran, where Jenny spent much of her childhood and her love for the bush developed. After the family farm was divided into soldier settlement blocks, Jenny also lived some of her early years in Sydney. Attending Wenona Girls High school, Jenny was deeply impacted by the school motto; 'that I may serve.' She put this into practice for the rest of her life.

It was at Wenona that Jenny met Ran's sister and found herself visiting their family farm at Crooble many times. Needless to say, a country romance blossomed. Jenny did not finish her final year at Wenona, but instead had a brief stint nursing at St Luke's before going on to a secretarial course and then a job with the Australian Inland Mission. Jenny and Ran married before they were 21 and moved to "Leyland" North Star where they raised five children – two of whom were fostered and later permanently adopted.

At a young age Jenny joined the Country Women's Association (CWA) as a means of meeting and socialising. Over time Jenny would serve in the CWA at local, state, national and international level, including 12 years on the global executive where she was deputy world president for a time.

Jenny's involvement with the CWA saw her travel extensively across the world, rubbing shoulders with Ambassadors, Prime Ministers, and dignitaries. Jenny also brushed shoulders with royalty. She attended the coronation of the Queen of Malaysia, and sat and chatted to the late Queen Elizabeth II at a private dinner party. Yet, despite living a life that some may consider illustrious, Jenny continued to undertake everything she did with grace. Jenny was awarded both the Centenary Medal in 2001 and an OAM, showing the level of commitment and hard work that she put into not only the CWA but into all of life. Despite these accolades Jenny remained humble and kept quietly serving, never losing sight of the significance of grass root branches and the importance of supporting local, rural women.

Alongside her work in CWA, Jenny also served at Ran's side. Together they were founding members in the early years of the Anglican Counselling Service, providing key leadership. During 2014, both

Ran and Jenny were engaged as Drought and Family Support Workers through Anglicare and Bush Church Aid to support people like themselves – people suffering at the hands of a devastating drought. They understood the challenges that farmers and rural folk faced and were well equipped to care for those doing it tough. Many reflect that Jenny was known as a great listener and when she asked, 'How are you?', she really listened and wanted to know the answer – no matter how long it might take. Previous CEO of Anglicare Northern Inland, Larry Apthorpe, noted "Jenny was someone for whom no task that gave her an opportunity to serve her Lord and others, was too large or too small for her to get involved in. She would give everything 120%. Jenny was a godly, caring, supportive, generous and honest lady."

Jenny's life of service was motivated by her love for the Lord Jesus. When her family was young Jenny taught Sunday school in the North Star Hall every Sunday for many years. She also travelled to North Star, Tullooona and Yetman schools teaching Scripture. Through a succession of vicars over many years and through long and frequent vacancies between clergy appointments, Jenny and Ran were the backbone of the local church, always ready and willing to cover the services and preach across the seven churches in the parish.

Jenny served on her local Parish Council, on Diocesan Council for six years, on the Parish and Ministry Development Commission (PAMDC) for nine years and was a Synod rep for sixteen years. Jenny also accompanied Ran to Synod when he was a sitting member. For many decades Jenny was a living, breathing example of what it means to love God as she served and loved people around her. She was a life member of Mother's Union and an avid supporter of the Church Missionary Society Autumn and Summer Schools.

Only 12 months ago, Ran and Jenny made the difficult decision to relocate to a retirement village in Goondiwindi. Jenny's health was declining and age was against them both. Bishop Darrell Parker wrote in his motion of thanks to the 2022 Diocesan synod, "This diocese is greatly indebted to Ran and Jenny Mitchell for their decades of distinguished, selfless, sacrificial and Christ-centred service."

Jenny will be deeply missed by many and we thank God for her wonderful witness and life of service, motivated by her love and gratitude to her saviour.

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

John Bunyan