

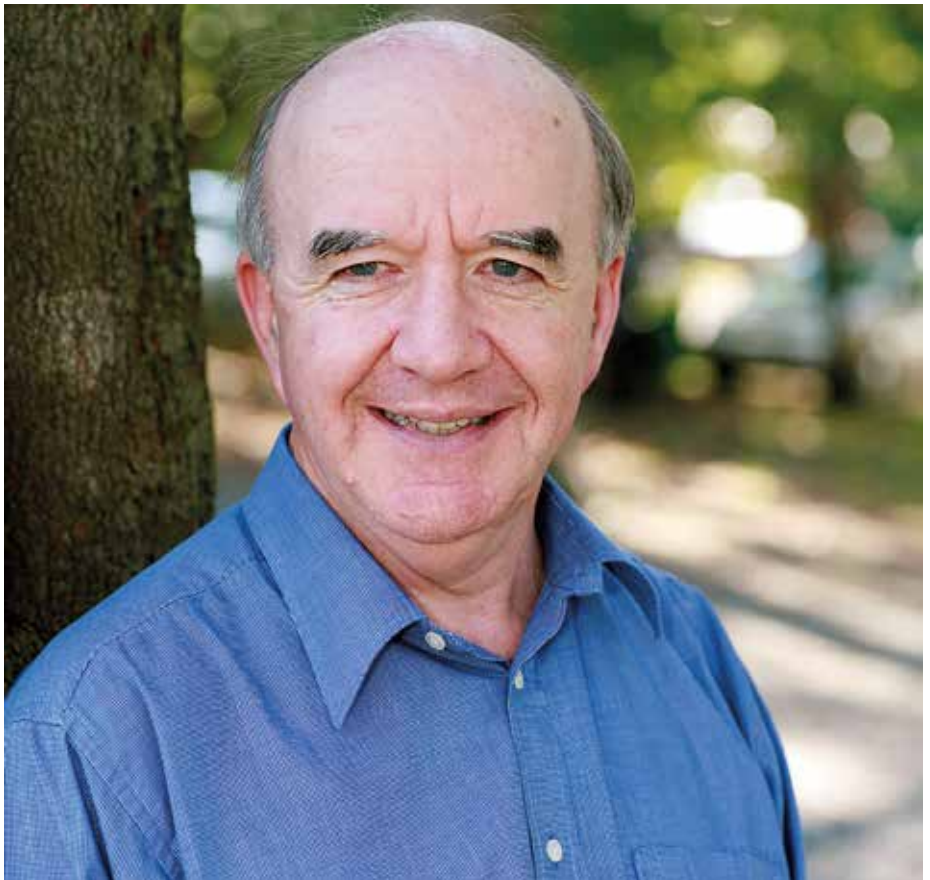
Adam hits the plains

The Rev. Daniel Avenell

IF YOU'RE LOOKING FOR AN EVENT that will have a big impact on your church and community, the first thing you have to do is give it a flashy title, - something like *New Life Impact* or *Finding the New You*. Whatever you do, don't call it a *Teach In*. The next thing you do is find some neutral space - hire a venue and give it 'lights, camera and action.' Whatever you do, don't have the event at church, on a Saturday afternoon or evening, or as part of your normal Sunday services. Next, and most importantly, get yourself a charismatic speaker - preferably loud and slightly exotic (perhaps with an accent). Whatever you do, don't ask Peter Adam. He has all the charisma you'd expect from a theologian and former Bible college principal. At full volume and animation, he sounds like a wise grandpa, speaking gently, kindly and personally to his children and grandchildren. Well, I'm pleased to say that Moree's *North Western Plains Teach-In*, got conventional wisdom entirely wrong. For once again (and not surprisingly) the foolishness of the gospel and the weakness of the cross, were wiser than man's wisdom and stronger than man's strength.

For though *Teach-In* doesn't sound very attractive, for those who have eyes to see, and ears to hear, this was a feast that filled the heart and soul and mind. It covered the whole book of Colossians in one weekend. It went to a depth that's rarely possible in a 20 minute sermon. It answered big questions and gave plenty of time for discussion and reflection. It encouraged us without allowing us to feel complacent. And it challenged us, without allowing us to feel despondent. As one parishioner said to me: "Peter Adam's talks made me want to be a better Christian: more holy; more wanting to read my Bible; and more wanting to serve my Saviour."

The North Western Plains Teach-In is a bi-annual event held at Moree All Saints Anglican



The Reverend Dr Peter Adam

Church. This year it happened on the weekend of 14-16th October. Invitations were sent to all Anglican Churches in the diocese, and all local churches in Moree. Attendees came from many churches in adjacent parishes and local denominations. It was particularly pleasing to have the Rev. Phil Cogan and so many of his congregation join us, and combine the event with their annual church camp.

These events are invaluable to clergy, because they allow us refresh our hearts and restore our souls as we come under the ministry of the very pure word of God. They are invaluable to our congregations, because they encourage them to dig deeper into God's word, so that they might grow in their salvation, now that they have tasted that the

Lord is good. They are invaluable to our parish and community because they keep the gospel at the forefront of our ministry, and they send out labourers into the fields, ripe for harvest. And they are invaluable to our diocese, because they bring a quality of scholarship and Bible teaching that rarely finds its way outside the metropolitan East coast.

The single biggest thing that I learned from Peter Adam, is that 'being *in Christ*' gives this preposition a wealth of meaning and promise that I can only begin to fathom. If you would like to begin to fathom something of the riches of being 'in Christ Jesus', then Peter Adam's talks on Colossians are available on youtube at 'Peter Adam Colossians' (watch on the net at <http://bit.ly/Moreetalks2016>).

For the here and now and the there and then



Bishop Rick Lewers

AS I REFLECT ON THE PAST, THE present and the future I find myself like Pilgrim in John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*. At the beginning of October I was called upon to rescue two of my clergy from a bog at Copeton Dam during our clergy training days. For the sake of reputation I can only record my own actions in the rescue.

"...they being heedless, did both fall suddenly into the bog. The name of the slough was "Despond." Here, therefore, they wallowed for a time, being grievously bedaubed with the dirt;..."

Personally, my lack of true humility will probably see me remind these intrepid farming and exploring types why I am the Bishop.

The "slough of despond" was of course much more serious for Pilgrim whose sin and guilt saw him sink deeper into the mire. There is no doubt bishop, clergy and lay people have, in the past year, had to push through some difficult times while in truth being pulled on and out by a gracious God.

Personal sin and the sin of others is sadly part of our past, is part of our present and will be (at least for a time) part of our future... but not for all eternity. So as I reflect on the year behind and the one ahead I am mindful that our ministry remains the same. It is a ministry to those loaded down with sin and guilt. It

is the ministry of Jesus Christ who lifts the burden of sin with forgiveness and it is the ministry of all who are drawn in this earthly life to walk in partnership with Him. Today, we can celebrate a year when Christ touched lives through Christian friendships and where preachers were heard and hearts arrested by the Lordship of Christ. I am thankful to know that God is keen to do this again and again and I look forward to the mission of the Gospel in 2017.

Our Diocese may be small in population and humble in productivity but small and humble is consistent with the life of Christ, beginning in a stable and ending on a Cross. Of course the encouragement that followed small humble things, from Jesus' first Christmas to the Easter of Jesus' death, was the saving of life and the coming of hope for life.

The last year and the next year offer the same challenges to introduce people to Jesus and, like Pilgrim, help each other on our journey to heaven. The year ahead will bring personal challenges and, I am sure, some moments lost to sin. But the delightful truth we rest in is that God is the same yesterday, today and forever.

That truth has sustained the church throughout history and in a year that has threatened the peace of Christians with worldly novelties and rising persecution,

we have all been challenged to consider our Christian stance. The year ahead presents similar challenges and I expect that some may well fall away from Christ under the pressure of a world that hates Christ without cause. Fear, intimidation and compromise certainly saw people abandon Christ and his church in the letter to the Hebrews. The writer of Hebrews urged his readers not to harden their hearts, or drift away or neglect meeting together. I imagine a year ahead where the fellowship of God's people will be a precious defence against all that threatens. I pray that none of us would neglect such fellowship gatherings but give ourselves to loving and spurring each other on in Christ.

In John 14 a treasury of truth about Jesus is recorded for those who have passed through, or find themselves in the slough of despond, living in a world that hates Christ without cause. Jesus says, "I go to prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am." As we think about the future Jesus has the "there and then" of life covered. But in the "here and now" he promises to send His Holy Spirit so we need never know a time without Him and all His comforts. The past has gone, the here and now with the Spirit presents us with joyful possibility, while in the there and then God awaits our welcome home.

Church in the front yard



Bringing the gospel to Coledale with fun, food and fellowship.

The Rev. Rod Chiswell

OVER THE PAST SIX YEARS, ST PETER'S South Tamworth has been striving to reach people in Coledale with the good news about Jesus.

Let me tell you the story so far.

Coledale is a lower socio-economic area of Tamworth with just over 3000 residents. About 31 % of that population are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. We began in 2011 with six people meeting in a home in Glen Street, Coledale. In 2012 with the help of the Diocese and Bush Church Aid funding, we employed Geoff Chambers to work part time to help make that group a base for further outreach into the Coledale community.

We started a fire-pit outreach in the front yard each Wednesday after the Bible Study. This group attracted only two to five outsiders each week (including children) during the first three years. Though Geoff saw limited fruit in the early work in Coledale, he and the Home Group he led managed to establish a vital "beach-head" and gained the trust of the community in Glen St.

In mid-January 2015 I began visiting contacts made in Coledale with Annette Gill. Two key people were recruited to join the Coledale Home Group Outreach team: Robert Love who works for Wycliffe and is a skilled Bible storyteller, and Jo Shumack who is a primary school teacher at Hillvue School. Following a re-group meeting it was decided that we would begin the front lawn outreach meetings again just up the street from where we began. That first evening saw four adults, ten children and five team members. We enjoyed a BBQ, sang "Jesus Loves Me", had

a Bible story from Robert, then I spoke for a few minutes and prayed. It was a positive start, and we were thankful to God. Over the term, numbers fluctuated but grew, eventually to 40 people.

The meetings were often chaotic and the kids fairly unruly, but towards the end of Term One they started to find a more steady shape. During the year the fire pit was replaced with outdoor gas heaters and a PA System, lights and extra BBQ were added. A keen Aboriginal Christian man named George Fergusson joined the team and started playing guitar.

By the end of 2015 a real sense of ownership by the residents was now evident. We began calling our meetings "Coledale Front-yard Fellowship".

A major breakthrough later in the year happened when our host stood up at the end of one meeting and announced that no adults were to bring alcohol to the gatherings anymore. This was brilliant for the ministry and although we lost a couple of adults, the quality of the meetings and communication with adults improved immediately.

The beginning of 2016 saw numbers grow slightly. We changed the way we set up the yard and discovered a far better feel to the meeting was achieved. St Peter's Home Groups were rostered on to prepare and serve the food each week, reducing the load on the Coledale Home Group team. This had the added benefit of engaging the wider church family in practical and prayer support for the Coledale work.

In first term we focussed on Bible storytelling from the gospels.

In second term we started using Kidswise dramas and sharing the upfront leadership. St Peter's Trainees Jack Harvey and Young-Hun Han began to help leading the singing.

These changes have been helpful in a many ways. The ministry load is distributed to make it more sustainable; and the quality of input has improved. The numbers attending the Coledale front-yard Fellowship have now grown to around 50 each week including Coledale adults and children and St Peter's people.

As I stand back from this work I am acutely aware of how messy and, at times, how fragile it is. Recently we had a stabbing incident at the end of Glen St on the evening of our Front-yard Gathering. Some of our team were the first on the scene. While we were all a bit shaken our host insisted that we continue with our meeting. I think it helped reassure both children and adults of God's love and power despite the sinfulness of those who choose to hurt others. In God's providence the events of that evening have strangely strengthened the fellowship and led to several significant conversations at a deeper level.

With regard to the future of the Coledale Front-yard Church, only the Lord knows where it will go. My hope and prayer is that we can sustain and grow this work in Coledale into the future. Please pray for this ministry: for wisdom, love and strength and for protection for the team and all who attend each Wednesday night. Most of all, please pray that God will help adults and children alike to respond wholeheartedly to Jesus as both Saviour and Lord.

A not-so-cool acronym



The Rev. Joshua Bovis

SOMETHING I HAVE NOTICED IN OUR Anglican culture is how often we use acronyms. We seem to have acronyms for everthing! Sydney Missionary and Bible College is SMBC (which some think stands for *Sydney Matrimonial & Bridal College*), Moore Theological College (MTC), Ministry Training Scheme (MTS), and there is the strange one, Katoomba Youth Convention (KYCK – though for the life of me I have no idea what the final ‘K’ stands for).

But there is a new acronym that has gained popularity in recent years, particularly amongst Baby Boomers which is increasingly becoming disliked amongst Gen X and Gen Y people, and that is the acronym which is a also a verb for sliding down a snow covered slope. It is the acronym SKI, and it stands for:

Spend

Kids

Inheritance

So when a retired couple say “we are going skiing”, they may not mean that they are going down to the snow, but rather, they are going to blow their money on a mobile home and travel around Australia, then go on a cruise in the Pacific, then take a trip to South America led by the famous Alpaca Whisperer Bruce Maclean to learn his techniques and then finish up with a week of fine wine and dining at Doyles on Watson’s Bay in Sydney.

As a Gen X-er it is easy to think about retirement and cultural stereotypes and present a picture of retirement which is ridiculous as it is inaccurate, just like the one I have given above, but what is not inaccurate is how easy it is to let our culture dictate how we as God’s people should use our retirement, while remaining blind to God’s Word.

So what does godly retirement look like? Does God want me to use my retirement to rest, and spend and play? Is God really concerned about my retirement?

As helpful and as appropriate as these questions are, the first important thing to acknowledge is that retirement as we know it not mentioned in the New Testament. Historically the majority of people worked until either they could not work due to illness or injury, or until they died. Secondly it is also important not to deduce from this that Biblical silence on this issue equals Divine apathy.

The Lord Jesus Christ is Lord, and because he is Lord, this means his rule permeates and is to govern not only all aspects of life but all aspects of life in *every stage of life*.

Secondly, retirement as we know it means

There was once a very selfish and wealthy old lady who died and reached Heaven and was told that she would be taken to the house that had been prepared for her. She passed many beautiful mansions and saw in them people whom in this world she had known and despised. Finally, way on the outskirts of the suburbs of Heaven, she was shown a very small and undistinguished house and she was told that it was hers. She complained and protested but was told quietly “That is all we could do for you with the materials you sent ahead.”

that we retire from paid work, but we do not retire from the work of the Lord.

Thirdly, retirement is a blessing from the Lord. Why? Because it offers time for ministry where previously perhaps your paid work took up the time. Have a look at these counter

cultural words from the Lord Jesus Christ:

Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, [20] but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

Matthew 6: 19-21

It is very easy for us in this world to clutter up our lives with material things, and to starve our place in Heaven because we had not invested in things of eternal worth because we get so caught up with career, yet retirement grants us the opportunity to work in a different way, to work for eternal treasure. There are many ways in which the Christian can use their retirement for work of the Lord, prayer, Bible studies, (hosting or leading), perhaps doing an online Bible course (through Ridley College or Moore College), encouraging the young adults in your parish, opening up your home for hospitality, being part of the service where those saints who are in the thick of work and kids, whom you can befriend, love and support; or even finally being able to make yourself more available to be on the roster at church for the plethora of ways in which one can serve.

It is very easy for us in this world to clutter up our lives with material things, and starve our place in Heaven because we had not invested in things of eternal worth. There is an old hymn entitled *Consider Christ*, I suspect most of you know it, but have you considered your retirement? Have you considered how you can use it for Christ? When one yields their retirement to the Lord Jesus, what a wonderful blessing awaits!

Stories from our own backyard

While retirement for many people is a quieter and less busy time of life, for some intrepid souls, retirement presents a chance to step up to something else. Here in the Diocese of Armidale, there are many opportunities for people to use at least some of their retirement years to jump into or begin new ministries that were not possible during the hectic working-for-pay years. For the people featured below, this meant travelling many, many miles and using the gifts and skills given to them by God, and honed over years in the workforce. While we know that not every retired person could (or even *should*) take on such lifechanging roles, the retirees in this story want to encourage and inspire others to think about how they might serve God in the active years of early retirement.

The Richards and the Kennedys

It's nice to have good neighbours. It's even better when those good neighbours become great friends. For some years Warren and Jan Richards and Pat and Jenny Kennedy lived on opposite sides of a suburban Sydney street and attended the same Anglican church. So when Warren invited Pat to take a little trip up the country to paint an old church building, it seemed like a nice chance to get out in the fresh air for a few days. Neither family knew that a great ministry could grow out of a paint can.

Warren takes up the story: "We went to Ashford to paint the church, but we very quickly came to love the place and the people, so Jan and I (at the urging of Bishop Rick Lewers) decided we would take three months to go up there to live. We would help out with church services, Scripture and youth group and see what happened. We ended up staying for two years."

Warren's career was in banking and financial work, but at the time of the fateful paint job, he was working for Anglican Aid. He negotiated with them to continue work remotely, and to return to Sydney for occasional meetings while ministering in Ashford. Eventually, the time came for him to return to Sydney fulltime.

Meanwhile Pat and Jenny Kennedy had joined in the ministry with their old friends. Pat was part of the group which painted the church, and occasionally filled in when Warren and Jan went on holidays. Rick Lewers was aware of Pat's background in media and public relations, so had him give some media training to the clergy of the diocese. On one trip around the Diocese, Pat and Jenny dropped in at Bundarra. Jenny's words were,



"God has a bigger plan for us", and the seeds were sown for a ministry tree change. After a three month trial, Pat and Jenny will be returning to Bundarra to live for a year or two, to minister to the church and the town.

Pat says, "I want to encourage people in other churches to think about doing something like this. It's hard work, but a great lifestyle and a wonderful opportunity to make a difference in a small community."

For Warren, serving the people of Ashford has been "a great privilege—something I never thought I would be doing. When we first went to Ashford, Bishop Rick said that our job description was to be Christians in the community...any Christian should be able to do that. But I really never could have dreamed that I would come to paint and stay to minister."

Ron and Robyn Perry

Here's a question...What does the Head of Commonwealth-State Relations in the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet do when he retires? The answer, of course, is that he heads off to run a country Anglican diocese!

That's exactly what Ron Perry decided to do in 2012, after 40 years in demanding government jobs. It's also a good illustration of what it means to be a good friend of Bishop Rick Lewers.

Ron told us, "It all began in the 1990s when Rick was the minister at our church in Wanniasa, Canberra. He asked me if I would ever consider working with him some time in the future. He and I worked well together, so the seeds were sown. When the Registrar's position became vacant I was interviewed for the job, and soon my wife Robyn and I had committed to spending three years in Armidale, helping Rick as he began his time as Bishop. At that stage, we had no idea just how huge the job would be. Nearly four years later, I hope that my contribution has been to strengthen the diocese and to help fulfil its mission. Now, as the prospect of a second retirement looms, I know that when I leave, I will miss the people that I've worked with, I'll miss the clergy and the warmth and generosity in fellowship with the laity. This diocese has a strong collegial spirit and I'll miss being involved in a small part of the national church."

Robyn has had her main ministry in Armidale at St Peter's Cathedral. She has been active on the women's ministry committee, with the International Students Ministry and in the MU (Mothers' Union) branch, as well as being the Diocesan Secretary for MU. She has relished using her gifts through MU to build up marriage and family life, a subject about which she is passionate. She has also assisted Ron with tasks at the



Registry and has found those tasks particularly enjoyable.

When they first arrived, Ron and Robyn noticed something written on a welcome card: *Welcome to Armidale- same family, different place*. That has certainly been their experience. So attached to this new family have they become, that even though their time in Armidale is running out, they don't believe they will ever truly be separated from the friends they have made here. While they intend to spend the next part of their retirement seeing a bit more of their children and grandchildren in Canberra, the Diocese of Armidale will continue to see the Perrys and benefit from their ministry.

Time to say goodbye

Dan and Jenni Avenell

Daniel and Jenni have been working in the Armidale Diocese since 2012.

Before moving to Moree, Dan was the Vicar of Boggabilla Parish, and worked part time as School Chaplain and teacher at Yetman Public School, until 2015.

In 2017 Jenni and Dan will be moving north, to Brisbane to take up responsibilities as carers for their elderly parents as well as doing some part-time work.

Dan is grateful for his time in the diocese. He said, "The best thing I learned in the diocese is to expect God to show up in the most unlikely circumstances, people, places and times. It's always good to remember that the gospel stands at the very heart and soul and centre of all that we do. The gospel brings us to life. It prevents us from being proud, and it delivers us from despair. The gospel is the A to Z of our life and ministry. It is the word that is near us: it is in our mouth and in our heart - it is the word of faith that we proclaim."



Peter and Maree Stavert



Peter and Maree arrived in the Armidale diocese in 2009. Prior to that they had enjoyed long ministries in the parishes of Campbelltown and Sutton Forest on the edges of the Diocese of Sydney. As well as their ministries at St John's, Tamworth, Peter has been the Chairman of the Board for Calrossy Anglican School, President of the Minister's Fraternal- Tamworth Churches, and the President of the Tamworth Choral Society. Maree has been strongly involved with Mother's Union, both locally and as vice president of the Diocesan MU and nationally. She has also been committed to Know Your

Bible, leading the group at St John's and editing and sometimes writing the study note booklets.

They approach the newest stage of life with very mixed feelings. Peter says, "Serving in Armidale Diocese has been a constant delight as we have seen all the parishes working together in the fellowship brought about by the gospel of our Lord Jesus. A highlight has been to see the continual growth in godliness, grace and love of our wonderful church of St John the Evangelist, Tamworth. Together, we have had to battle with how to grow our church into the needs of the next generation, without losing our heritage handed down from the past. At times it was a battle, but together, with much grace and love, we, the members of St Johns, have seen a whole new and vital St John's emerge. It has been a joy to see the reintroduction of such ministries as family service, Sunday School, playtime, multiple Bible study groups, and the huge outreach and evangelism of our op shop. We have learnt that we are "better together."

"The verse that we have both felt special during these years has been Proverbs 3: 5 and 6

*Trust in the Lord with all your heart
and lean not on your own understanding;
in all your ways submit to him,
and he will make your paths straight.*

"In January, we will be moving home and entering the next chapter of our lives.

"We rejoice as the Reverend Joshua Bovis begins as new Vicar of St Johns. We give thanks for the team we have experienced at St John's, with the Reverend Danny and Jeanette Morris and Reverend Gillian Jones. We will be living in Cambewarra in the Shoalhaven region and being involved in the ministry at St Peter's Shoalhaven Heads, with occasional visits and perhaps locums in our beloved Armidale Diocese.

"Please pray for us as we pray for you. Thank you St John's Tamworth, and thank you Armidale Diocese, for taking us to your heart."

So long and farewell to Elisabeth Jackson

Lou Davies



MY FIRST MEETING WITH ELISABETH JACKSON (OR EJ AS we affectionately call her) was when I was being interviewed for a position as a Chaplain at the Secondary Girls Campus of Calrossy Anglican School. I hadn't been in the principal's office since high school, and that wasn't a pleasant experience! However, as I walked into her office Elisabeth welcomed me with a cheerful smile and a handshake, and I instantly relaxed. This warm smile would continue to greet me each time I saw her at work. It was usually followed by a cheeky remark such as "What trouble have you been getting up to this week, Lou?" Of course, it was usually followed by an equally cheeky reply from myself. It was often during these informal meetings with Elisabeth that I not only saw her as the principal of Calrossy, but as a work colleague and a friend.

Before Elisabeth commenced her time at Calrossy Anglican School in Tamworth, she had 14 years of experience at Macquarie Fields and in Darwin. This was not only as a teacher, but in key positions of leadership within the schools which would ultimately begin to prepare her for her time at Calrossy. Elisabeth first started working at Calrossy in 1985. She started out as a Music and Art teacher, was then the librarian where she introduced computers into the school, became Deputy Principal in 2001, and then Principal in 2002. Elisabeth is the longest serving principal since 1919. In her time, she has seen the amalgamation of the Secondary Girls, Secondary Boys and Primary into one school. Calrossy also has Secondary Boarding and a farm, all under the leadership of Elisabeth. This is certainly not a small task, but one which she has performed with humility and a Christ-centred heart.

In a recent conversation with Elisabeth I asked her how she had seen Calrossy change over the years. We then had a conversation about how schools no longer just teach reading, writing and arithmetic, but that it has become the responsibility of educators to pick up society's needs. The well-being program at Calrossy did not exist before Elisabeth's time as it does now. This, Elisabeth says, is one of the main changes she has seen during her time working in education.

There are two main things Elisabeth expressed as some of the fondest memories of her time at Calrossy. The first is being able to teach in the class room; "I love teaching. That's why I'm a teaching Principal". Despite a long list of things to do as Principal, her desire to continue teaching in the classroom remained. The second is the relationships she made with staff, students and families, many of which I'm sure will continue after her time at Calrossy.

Christian, Personal, and Caring are three words which are fabricated into our school. I can say with confidence that these words also describe our Principal and her leadership. Her Christian faith lead her

to ensuring that Calrossy has Christ at it's centre, which enables gospel ministry within every aspect of the school. Elisabeth's leadership of the school was clearly under the headship of Christ. This was seen through the godly example she has been to thousands of students, families and staff across the years.

Finally, on behalf of the staff, students and families associated with Calrossy, we thank you, EJ. Thank you for your commitment to our school, and most importantly, your commitment to seeing Christ's name at the centre of all we do. We pray for God's blessing on your future and we look forward to seeing how God uses you as you seek to serve Him.



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We are bound for North Kigezi!



FOR MANY YEARS, KATOOMBA CHRISTIAN CONVENTION (KCC) has been running the Next Generation (NextGen) conference to equip and train youth and children's leaders, (as well as future leaders), to have Bible-focussed ministries.

NextGen Uganda evolved from a visit from two North Kigezi Ministers to the NextGen Katoomba Christian Convention. From there a partnership emerged between North Kigezi, and the Armidale Anglican Diocese, with KCC kindly allowing The Armidale Diocese team to use their branding and material. 75% of the Ugandan population call themselves Christian and 30% of those attend an Anglican Church. Though the numbers are staggering there is a real need to develop the necessary skills to understand and teach God's Word, especially while so many are hungry to hear, understand and serve.

Uganda is very quickly becoming more and more secular with all the negative influences on the gospel that go with that, however the NextGen conference is having a significant effect on the Ugandan church. There has been an increased focus on children's and youth

ministries in parishes and the Australian team has noticed a significant increase in numbers of youth in churches visited.

Team Leader for 2017, the Reverend Scott Dunlop is looking forward to the next trip to Uganda, especially as the team will be there in time for the installation of the new Bishop of North Kigezi. He said, "We have heard that the consecration of a bishop in Uganda is equivalent to the coronation of a queen in the western world! The Ugandan President will be attending and all the motels are starting to book out already. We are all very excited about the privilege of being able to be there when Benom Magezi becomes the new Bishop. We are thrilled that 180 Ugandan delegates (about two from each parish in North Kigezi) will be attending the conference. This presents an enormous opportunity to train and equip Ugandan leaders to be able to run the NextGen Conference themselves in the future."

Another first is that Simon Reeve (from St Peter's Cathedral in Armidale) and Scott will be speaking on radio. They will be given the opportunity to preach to a listening audience of 5 million people in Uganda, the Congo and Rwanda. "Please pray for us as we give evangelistic talks. Please pray that people would be converted to Christ, that the gospel would be God's power for salvation! This will be my third trip to run the Next Gen conference and my second time leading the team. It is a great privilege to go and represent our diocese and have the support of our diocese behind us. On past trips the prayer support of people around the diocese has been very evident in many ways, not least of which is the impact the conference is having among the next generation of church leaders. The collective prayers of a praying diocese are an incredible thing! Please pray for the impact of the conference among delegates attending and their future service of Jesus."

The travels of Lisa

NextGen team member Lisa Newnham moved out of the Armidale diocese in early 2016. However, this geographical glitch won't stop her from heading back to North Kigezi for the 2017 NextGen Conference.

"I was born and grew up in Moree, attending All Saints Anglican Church there. I went to University in Newcastle to study Speech Pathology and moved to Lightning Ridge in April 2013 where I worked for the first time as a Speech Pathologist. I was there for almost three years before moving to Muswellbrook this year.

"I had the privilege of doing a short term mission trip to India as part of a team while I was at University, so I knew how blessed we are with our knowledge of the Bible and what a blessing it is to share that and equip our brothers and sisters all across the world. I knew about the partnership our diocese has with the North Kigezi Diocese, so when I was asked if I would like to consider going, I was able to speak with a number of previous team members about their experience. I accepted the invitation gladly and my first trip to Uganda was in January 2015. I am now preparing for the January, 2017 trip and am really looking forward to continuing relationships which began two years ago. I hope I can put into practice the things I have learnt about how to better teach and relate to our Ugandan brothers and sisters.

"While we are in Uganda our primary focus is training youth leaders to understand the Bible and write a Bible study. I will be co-leading a strand group as we go through the NextGen material and focus on a New Testament Bible passage. We will also visit local churches where I will have the opportunity to give my testimony which will be translated.

"I think the trip is a wonderful opportunity to be encouraged in your faith as we meet with and learn from Ugandan believers as well as a great opportunity to serve the global church. I am going back to Uganda because I see it as a wonderful opportunity to see God's Word proclaimed and understood to better equip the global church. For me, personally, the trip really encourages and challenges me to better live for Jesus."



Lisa and her Ugandan friend Evas.

Veronica's vision

ANGLICARE NORTHERN INLAND WELCOMED VERONICA Rodenberg as its new CEO in July. We asked her to introduce herself to readers of the Link, and to outline her vision for the future of ANI.

"I was born in Quirindi- my parents were wheat, sheep and cattle famers on the Liverpool Plain, between Spring Ridge and Premer. When our little bush school at Colly Blue closed down we came in to Tamworth to school; living in town during the week and going home to the farm on the weekends. We did this until my sister and I finished high school.

"In 1978 I started work at NEN-9 as a Producer Co-ordinator; learning how to operate all facets of television production before moving to Melbourne to work at GTV 9. I worked on live TV - The Don Lane show and Hey Hey it's Saturday; quiz shows like Sale of the Century; dramas such as the Sullivans; and my big interest, news and current affairs. I felt called to change career paths in 1990 and began working in marketing and fundraising for the Mission to the Street and Lanes, Melbourne's oldest Anglican welfare agency, which is now part of Anglicare Victoria. I went back to study in the evenings and obtained Marketing, PR and Journalism qualifications and worked my way up to CEO positions in faith-based and community agencies.

"Once again, I felt a strong calling to come home after 35 years, 25 of those years learning my trade in community sector management, following 15 years in Melbourne and 10 years in the Pilbara region of Western Australia where I worked in Aboriginal Communities.

"I felt my faith, experience, skill and sense of belonging to the region were a perfect fit for Anglicare Northern Inland.

"My goal for the future is to improve ANI's capacity to provide relevant services to the most vulnerable among us in the New England North West region. The community service sector is now very competitive, where charities are all chasing the same shrinking government and philanthropic dollar. Coupled with particularly complex needs of clients, multifaceted compliance and expectations that we will do more with less each year, the difficulties of managing community service organisations today are compounded.

"Size does matter, and growing ANI to be sustainable and able to weather changes in governments through election cycles, competitive tendering, changes in government funding models (relying more on outcomes funding requiring large cash flows) and keeping pace with the needs of children and families for counselling and support is an important goal. Whether we like it or not, the community services sector is now just as competitive for income and resources as the next business.

"For Anglicare Northern Inland to keep providing holistic and critical counselling and support services into the future we will be improving our profile. We need to be more visible in the community and ensure our stakeholders understand what we do. Our unique range of services that provide real and positive outcomes for families and individuals struggling with marriage breakdown, grief and loss, anger, suicide and gambling problems are all issues that impact on the health and wellbeing of families and their ability to function and parent their children.

"The quality of services provided by the highly skilled staff at ANI is very impressive. They have a deep commitment to their clients; their safety, wellbeing and eventual recovery. They are also committed to their practice development and to ensuring they have the very best information and skills on board and present for their clients and the community.



Veronica Rodenberg addressing the 2016 Synod.

"I'm very proud to be taking up this position at Anglicare Northern Inland, and to be working alongside passionate Christian people who have made me feel welcome, and together we will continue to make a positive difference in the lives of vulnerable and distressed people across the Diocese."

Please pray for Veronica as she leads this vital ministry. If you (or someone you know) feel the need to speak about any of the issues Veronica mentioned, please call 6701 8200.

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What Has God Joined Together?

Bishop Rick Lewers

HUMAN SEXUALITY AND MARRIAGE HAVE BEEN HIGH ON our national agenda. Indeed, they have been high on the western world's agenda. And while decisions in this country on "same sex marriage" are currently in a holding pattern (due to the delay in plans for a national plebiscite for the moment), the holding pattern allows us the time to become better informed. The enormity of this issue makes it imperative that Christians are across the issues and understand God's perspective as given in the Holy Scriptures.

Michael Stead (Bishop of South Sydney and Chairman of the Archbishop's Plebiscite Committee) has, together with others, produced a book called *What Has God Joined Together?* to help the average church attender do business with God on the issue. The book serves us in a number of ways: it deals with questions people ask; educates people as to what God says in the Holy Scriptures on the issue; and clarifies the consequences for families, children, gender and freedom of speech in moving away from history's and the Bible's long held views on marriage between a man and a woman.

The book is small but not insignificant. A number of these books will be sent to your church at no cost in early 2017. I strongly urge you to read it and to apply your mind to the issues as we continue to strive to honour Christ and present His case to the world.

In his preface to the book, Archbishop Glenn Davies writes:

...Australians are hearing voices say that marriage is not about a man and a woman; that gender doesn't matter at all to marriage. A new definition of marriage is being put forward, which claims that it's simply about two people who love each other and want to commit to each other.

This is a big change. And it's a long way from the good picture of marriage given to us by Jesus and the Bible - that God gave marriage to men and women, for their own good, for the good of children and for the good of human society.

If we love our neighbours we will want good things for them. So we should be prepared to speak up for God's good plan for marriage in the conversation our country is now having.

But how do we do this? How do we explain the relevance of God's pattern for marriage to a secular nation? What does the Bible really say about marriage? And how can we answer questions people have - especially from those who don't believe in God?



What has God
joined together?

Parting words from the Swans

WHEN DAVID AND ELIZABETH SWAN arrived in the Diocese of Armidale eight years ago, it was largely because of Scott Dunlop in Gunnedah. David had gone to Gunnedah on a mission, as a part of his fourth and final year at Moore Theological College, he had met Scott and had been deeply impressed. One of his college lecturers had said something which really resonated; "When you finish college, don't worry about what the first job is called, worry about the person who will be training you in that job!" David decided then and there that he wanted to be trained by a man like Scott, so with a theological degree in his pocket the Sydney Western Suburbs boy headed north to Gunnedah.

Now, eight years have passed - four at Gunnedah, and the final four at Bingara - and the time has come for David, Elizabeth and their four children to go back to Sydney, to the Anglican Parish of the Lower Mountains.

As he prepares to leave, David reflected on what he has learned.

"We are a really diverse and spread out diocese, yet we really are one team. When



The Swan family.

you catch up with your mates at clergy conferences and Synod, everyone is out to encourage you, not compete with you. I think that is something I want to foster in any future role I have. In the country you often don't often get to specialize, rather you need to be able to do the funerals, the weddings, the pastoral visits, the preaching and teaching. You get to run kids clubs, youth groups and seniors events, sometimes all in

the same day. I think that makes you learn to think on your feet and hopefully it means for me in the future I won't get all caught up in my own ministry but remember that there other important things going on around me. But most of all I have learnt that ministry happens in all spaces and places. Seeing my wife Elizabeth and our children discover that and seek to reach out to those around them in all sorts of ways has been truly wonderful."

Diary of a new vicar

You turn up to church every Sunday morning, and there is the Vicar. He's on time, he's prepared, he's reliable. Sometime, you might take him for granted just a bit. But do you ever ask, "Where did he come from. How did he get here?"

Over the next few issues of *The Link*, we will be dropping in from time to time on a new Vicar, Tim Stevens, who is about to leave his job as a curate at St Peter's South Tamworth, to take up responsibility for the saints who meet at St James' Anglican church, Mungindi. We have asked Tim to keep a diary, so we can travel with him in his first year as a Vicar of the Armidale diocese. His first entry gets us up to speed with the beginnings of his journey to this point.



Tim and Kirsty Stevens with their son, Will.

Kirsty's and my love of the Armidale diocese started in 2012 during a Moore College mission trip to the parish of Guyra. We were long-time residents of Sydney, focussed on doing ministry in the city and found the whole idea of "heading bush" for the week to be very exciting. But as God has taught us over the past few years, His plans are much more exciting than ours, and so during the week He slowly and dramatically changed our hearts and our course.

That changed course saw us gain some great friendships within the Armidale Diocese. It saw me doing a 4th year Moore College history project on the Diocese. Though more importantly, it saw us come to St Peter's South Tamworth in July 2015 and will now see us move to Mungindi in February 2017.

We are not people to keep secrets, so keeping such news under wraps was tough. One benefit of not being able to share the news publicly meant that we had lots of time to think and pray about the changes that will be coming. We are very excited about all the new challenges Mungindi will bring, but are also sad because we will soon be saying goodbye to the weekly fellowship we have enjoyed with the saints at South Tamworth. With this in mind, sharing the news of our move was an emotional experience. Other people that we have spoken to about announcing news like this tell us that their experience was the same. But announcing our move was a relief, and the prayer support we have received from the congregations at St Peter's has been a great encouragement to us.

Lots of people have been genuinely excited about our move, but the question that many of them ask soon after is "where on earth is that?". Mungindi sits on the NSW/Qld border, 120km North West of Moree. Most

of our immediate family live in the northern suburbs of Sydney, so we've been grappling with the reality that we'll soon be moving even further away from them. Like everything regarding our move, we're praying that God will give us wisdom and continued relationships despite the distance.

Another challenge with relocating to Mungindi is access to medical care. A couple of years ago I needed to have a pacemaker implanted which requires regular monitoring. My cardiologist understood the challenges of living in a rural setting because his father was a Presbyterian minister in Port Pirie. Because of this, he set us up with a new remote monitoring program, so I have to travel to Sydney for checkups only once a year. Another area of challenge is that - God willing - we are hoping to have more kids in the future. Mungindi doesn't have a maternity unit, so we'll have to make the 120km drive to Moree if God blesses us with more children while we are in Mungindi. These aren't big issues, but they reflect some of the challenges that we will face.

At the moment we feel a bit like we've got our feet in two places. St Peter's is a busy place in the lead up to the end of the year, but we are starting to organise removalists and cleaners for February. Also, Kirsty and I are acutely aware that Mungindi will be very different, and the increase in responsibility will be a steep learning curve. But we're encouraged by King Solomon who, in the context of being intimidated by the task of leading God's people, asked for God to give him wisdom, which he then received (1 Kings 3:1-15). As our departure from St Peter's, and our arrival at Mungindi approaches, we're praying that God will give us wisdom for everything that lies before us. His care for us is so great that he knows what we need the most before we've even asked.

Of course, there is another side to this story. What of the people who are to be on the receiving end of this new Vicar's ministry?

David Goodman is part of the congregation at Mungindi which has been praying and waiting for someone to take over from Dick and Michelle Ferguson since they left in April, 2016.

We were ecstatic! We didn't really expect to get a minister at all, let alone a young one!! We have heaps of kids in town, and we need someone who can really relate to them. Tim and Kirsty's most important task as they settle in will be just getting to know the locals. We have a regular congregation of about 18 people (25 if you count everyone who comes). The town's population is only 700 or so, we do pretty well. It's going to cost quite a bit to maintain the Stevens family, and while some people

are a bit scared about that, we have many generous people here who are so excited to have them. Dick and Michelle renovated the vicarage, so Tim and Kirsty and Will will have a very nice house in AI nick!

I hope that, in time, they will be able to get into ministry at the school, but for now, we hope that people will pray with us that they will love us and we will love them.



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

John Bunyan

Ali's story



ALI LOCKYER'S STORY BEGINS AS ONE WE HAVE HEARD A THOUSAND TIMES before; country girl goes off to university and, now free of the shackles of childhood and parental supervision, decides to live life to the full. Parties vie with study as the most important part of the week. Life is full, and good, and fun, and a little bit dangerous.

This is how Ali, from Walcha, began her adult life at the University of New England in Armidale. But her life took a different turn when a chance meeting in an unlikely place set her off on a different path.

“I grew up going to church every week. Although I was regularly attending a church I never really heard the gospel. To be honest I never really understood why Jesus had to die. My view of God was that He was a kind of genie in the sky, who would answer your prayers as long as you were a reasonably good person.

“Then one night I went to a college party, and when I got tired of dancing, I noticed a girl from my college, so I started talking to her. I thought she must have been a Resident Fellow at my college. I didn't know that she was involved in one of the Christian groups on campus. We talked, but to be honest, I was pretty drunk at the time, so I only remember one thing from the conversation; that she invited me to church.

“The day after that conversation I went to a university event called ‘Lifesaver Day’. There I saw a childhood friend from Walcha. He was working at the ‘Christians United’ stand. I started talking to him and told him that I had met a Christian the previous night. When I mentioned her name he told me that she attended his church, St Mark’s UNE, and offered to take me there the next Sunday if I wanted to come. I didn't take up his offer of a lift, but he gave me directions to the church, so then I actually knew where it was.

“I started going to church out of curiosity (the girl I met at the party and my old friend were such nice people) and as a bit of a social thing. Another girl from my college went there, we became best friends and would go to church together every week.

“I had been attending St Mark’s for quite a while and I noticed how the people there were different to the rest of the world. They took living for God really seriously. I knew that I wasn't living this way, so I tried to stop sinning, but I couldn't.

“I prayed to God that he would make me a Christian. In my mind a Christian was someone who didn't really sin, but unsurprisingly I couldn't stop sinning. A few weeks after I went to a friend's house and we listened to the testimony of a girl in America, I was driving away and it hit me that it was Jesus dying for us on the cross that made us right with God. I felt so free, I knew that I didn't have to be sinless to be right with God, Jesus did that for me.

“I became a Christian that night, but obviously I am still far (very far) from perfect. Being a Christian means that I trust in God to justify me, and not in myself and my own goodness. Sometimes I feel like the worst and most sinful person, but that just reminds me of how good and loving God is, that he would send his Son to die for someone like me.

“My life has changed a lot since that night of the party. Now I trust in God's grace. I'm involved in campus ministry myself; I saw first hand how God is using that ministry to save young people, so I think it's a really important ministry, and I am so happy to be a part of it.

“Really, I am just starting out on my Christian life. I don't know what will happen in my future, but I know that God will bring me home.”

About

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Anglican Diocese of Armidale
PO Box 198 Armidale 2350
T: 02 6772 4491 F: 02 6772 9261
www.armidaleanglicandiocese.com

Editor: Robyn Powell
E: robyn@redropewriting.com

Art direction and assistance from
Stephen Mason and Anglican Media Sydney.

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