

The Link

ANGLICAN DIOCESE OF ARMIDALE

2017 AUGUST/SEPTEMBER



Tim Stevens
Youth Encourager

OVER THE WEEKEND OF THE 19TH-21ST of May, the youth groups of our Diocese gathered in Bingara for our annual Youth Muster. Now, any reasonable person could be excused for thinking that combining 200 teenagers and their youth leaders for a weekend at a muddy and rainy showground in Bingara would be a complete disaster. It

turns out that such a combination can be an excellent source of encouragement and fellowship. Even though the weekend was wet and muddy, this didn't dampen our spirits.

Youth Muster has been a regular feature of our Diocese over a significant period of time, and is in keeping with the overarching goal of the Youth Encourager's Committee of seeing

our young people encouraged and equipped to live for Jesus in a hostile world. We decided to spend the weekend learning from Peter's first letter.

1 Peter is an excellent book to study because it is beneficial for young Christians of today who are were facing many of the same issues the Christians of Peter's time faced.

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The Roxy Theatre fills up (above), Gary Eastment (below left) and Kurt Langmead up the front (below right). Cover photo: The kids muster.

From page 1

We first learnt how God, through the death of His Son Jesus, has created a new group of people. From that point, we went on to explore some practical implications of that truth. Those practical implications were that God's people should honour Jesus with their lives; that God's people can be confident of joining Him in heaven, and that heaven will be wonderful. Over the weekend scores of young people were encouraged to live for Jesus in every area of their lives, and some started following Him for the first time. In this regard, the weekend was a huge success! Gary Eastment (UNE Chapel) and Mike Dicker (All Saints, Petersham) brought us the talks on the weekend, and the weekend was an encouragement to them too. Mike Dicker said that he was "really encouraged by the work you guys are doing up there!" Gary also mentioned that it was a "super encouraging weekend".

On top of this clear spiritual growth, the weekend was also a huge encouragement because of the way that Youth Muster continues to grow numerically. In a rural diocese like ours this is rare, and something for which we should give God great thanks.

Over the weekend, we took over the town of Bingara. We used the Roxy Theatre in the centre of town for the main sessions and the Bingara Showground for camping and activities. It has been great over recent years to see how the different venues have become increasingly packed each year. Because of the rain, a special thank you went out to the people at Bingara Anglican Church who, at late notice, allowed us to hold the bush dance in their hall. But even these last-minute plans were a cause for great encouragement. Robbie Swatman, from Bingara Anglican Church, spoke of how exciting it was to



see the hall full of young people again.

Another great encouragement is how the whole Diocese comes together for the weekend. Some churches can send 30 campers, and there are others who only have a small number to send. The weekend is especially important for the young people in the small churches because this is often their only opportunity to get away for a weekend to be taught from God's word with other young people. One such church is Barraba Anglican, where Penny Blomfield attends with her son Will. Penny and Will participated in the weekend, and Penny said that "Youth Muster is great for small youth groups like ours. It is really encouraging to get together with other youth from around the Diocese and for our Christian kids (or kid in our case) to realise that they are part of something much bigger than what is happening at home."

The weekend is truly an all-in affair too, as people from all over the Diocese (and some from



outside) pitch in to help. The wonderful Kaylene McClenaghan from Narrabri assembled a catering team from out west. Our band consisted of people from St Peter's Cathedral, UNE Chapel and Hunter Bible Church. Our two Masters of Ceremonies for the weekend were Kurt Langmead from Armidale and Nick Stone from Inverell. There were also the many faithful youth leaders from all over the Diocese who looked after their groups. The final summary comes from Emily McIntyre from Inverell. She reflected on the weekend by saying, "Youth Muster is a great opportunity to come together with other youth in the area to strengthen our relationship with Christ. It's also a real encouragement to share our faith with like-minded people our age, and to help our walk as brothers and sisters in Christ."

There are lots of things to give thanks for after this year's Youth Muster, and we're already planning for next year!



Bishop Rick Lewers

PREPARATION FOR THE YOUTH LEADERS CONFERENCE AT Copeton Dam found me in 1 Kings confronted by a single prophet who was not hidden. Consider the context. Obadiah a godly bureaucrat, in the service of King Ahab, had hidden one hundred prophets of Yahweh from the murderous hands of Ahab's wife, Jezebel. Is that what happens to prophets when evil seems to be in ascendancy and power? Should prophets hide or be hidden?

Onto the scene bursts Elijah. He appears as an uncredentialed man with a heart for the glory and honour of God's name and is observably affected by the godlessness of his age, it's leadership and the plight of God's people. There he stands; one man, an uncompromised link to the truth of God. To Ahab, Elijah was a trouble maker; to Jezebel he was an endangered species; to God the signature of their doom; to Israel the voice of God and to the world, the message of salvation.

Well, I need not tell you the whole story because you can read it for yourself in 1 Kings 16-22. What I can tell you is that Elijah had the truth, and that he uncompromisingly spoke the truth and displayed the truth. God in His sovereignty confirmed the truth to His servant by provision through drought from ravens and a foreign widow. To the people, God fired up a drenched sacrificial competition between divines that confirmed His sovereign reputation. To an unbelieving king the prophet spoke and a sovereign rain fell as Elijah had forecast.

Oh what a difference the actions of God can make...or not make! Fires, storms and the death of the 450 priests of Baal didn't change the heart of Jezebel except to increase her murderous intentions for the prophet of Yahweh. Jezebel doesn't seem all that different from those who will not be changed even by someone rising from the dead. But Jezebel is nothing a fall from a window and some hungry wild dogs in service of God's judgement can't fix.

I am thankful Ahab and Jezebel are dead and gone but I am struck by the implications and applications for our day.

I know that none of us are prophets like Elijah but when those set apart to lead God's people enter into unholy alliances, compromising

God's Word and the witness of God's church should Christ's witness hide or be hidden?

I believe the answer is, "No". Any person with a heart for the glory and honour of God's name who is observably affected by the godlessness of our age, it's failing leadership and the plight of God's people must offer an uncompromised link to the truth of God. That can't be done when Christians hide.

With compromised preachers in pulpits, lost people everywhere and the judgement of God to come, the need for Christians to think God's thoughts after Him and link others to God's thoughts is urgent.

Of course the relationship between the prophet and Jezebel reminds the Christian that to link the world to the truth of God will not be without its detractors and persecutors. However, the relationship between the prophet Elijah and His God reminds us of the Christian's link to the sovereign care of the Almighty. Even the provision of life in the face of death has been established in the death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ.

In a Christian publication called *The Link* it should come as no surprise that every Christian is to be an uncompromising link to God's truth...and our age is desperate for that link.

Since the last edition of *The Link* I had a brief stint in hospital to address an infection. The events of my hospitalisation are unimportant but the conversations I had with hospital staff are not. Indefensible world views, blended religious thought, blurred understanding of the Christian faith, relational breakdown and defiant attitudes surrounded my bed. Such was this microcosm of our world, I wondered who was truly suffering from infection. While antibiotics was my treatment, the Gospel was their only hope.

Is this the world in which the Christian should hide or be hidden or should the Christian burst onto the scene like the prophet of old, taking the sovereignly appointed moment to be the link to God's truth no matter what the cost? If you don't know the answer, then you may need the prophet to address you.

The role of a vicar's wife...

In most parishes, the vicar has a wife. We just expect that. But do we have other expectations of our vicar's wife which we do not have of the wives of our local teacher or plumber or farmer? We asked Rick Lewers to say a few words about what the wives of his clergy mean to him, and we asked Bernard Gabbott from Wee Waa to see if the Bible throws any light on the role of clergy wives.

Bishop Rick Lewers

BEING ASKED TO WRITE A PARAGRAPH ON CLERGY WIVES is one of the most unfair requests. There is too much to say and even the longest paragraph I have ever written will not do the subject justice. To all clergy wives I ask for your forgiveness for the poverty of my celebration of all that you are within the Kingdom of God. Of course this intro is really a second paragraph but I hope the editor won't notice.

There is a group of people that should occupy poets and song writers. Their absence from poem and song is indicative of their status as the church's unsung heroes. They of course like it that way, for a humble obedience to God is more precious than all the accolades of people. I speak of course of the clergy wife. Please note the writer is not a clergy wife but a clergy wife's husband. Actually the bishop's wife's husband. A clergy/bishop's wife would never write like I do of themselves. The clergy wife is a parishioner with a difference. The difference is that she is a clergy wife. Well educated and professionally able, generally without stipend, she bears the responsibilities of the church alongside her husband as one equally committed to a ministry vocation. She prayerfully carries with him through the day and to the pillow all the concerns of the ministry, while carrying the concerns of her home which she must daily share with others under the watchful eye of all. She is not perfect and would be the first to admit it, but she is often surrounded by those whose expectations seem to demand it. In the past she was expected to raise the perfect children who behave impeccably in church; to free her clergy husband to be busy helping everyone else instead of herself; to keep an impeccably clean house to offer hospitality to all and sundry; to cook like a contestant on Masterchef while being the parish's women's evangelist, discipling every woman in town as well as being the unfortunate conduit for those who wish to pass on complaints to her husband. Thankfully those dopey expectations are mostly gone and the modern clergy wife simply stands herself among all Christian women seeking to be precisely that, a Christian woman. Other than Christ Himself the greatest God-given gift to a clergyman is his wife. She is to be loved by him and cared for by him before any other parish responsibility and when a parish loves them both enough to honour that then great ministry will generally follow. To all the clergy wives of our diocese I offer my applause and appreciation. To all the Christian women of our churches instead of applause take your clergy wife out and spoil her from time to time, write to her encouragements and daily pray for her as I am sure she seeks to do for you.

The Rev. Bernard Gabbott

WHAT DOES THE WIFE OF A VICAR DO? IN OUR TOWN, ONE of the jokes is that I work one day and rest six – it's a joke but it reveals a puzzle in many people's minds – what does a vicar do? I suspect for many in our churches, the same question applies for the wife of the vicar.

It has always struck me how silent the Bible is on the role of the vicar's wife. I know – the word 'vicar' is not in the Bible, but that does not remove the silence about the role of the wife of the elder.

I think that there are four solid principles that stand out for me.

First, the wife of the vicar is his 'helper'. (After all, that is the creation design – Genesis 2:18 makes this role of all women, and especially wives, clear.) Women are designed and created by God to work alongside their husbands in the creation mandate of ruling the world in God's way. If you like, man and woman garden together – the vicar's wife is his helper. This is an immensely important and crucial role. God himself is described as the 'helper' of his people (cf. Ex.18:4; Deut.33:7; Heb.13:6). The man cannot do this job on his own!

Second, if the vicar is the leader of God's people in a particular place, to help them know and love and follow Jesus more deeply, then the vicar's wife must be of the same heart and mind – she must be a disciple of Jesus. This has always been God's expectation of his people – that they marry people who are part of God's mob. (This does not seem to change as we move into the New Testament.)

Third, as the vicar and his wife are joined in marriage, I would expect that the model of marriage that God sets out in the Bible (cf. Eph.5) is dear to them. Thus, their marriage should be a public display of the love that Jesus has for his people – as should all the marriages amongst God's people. The vicar and his wife are joined in this common task – to display Jesus to the world.

And, fourth, I think that there are clear expectations of the vicar in regards to his 'first' church – his family. Here is a very clear role for the vicar's wife – to help her husband in raising children (if they are so blessed) to know and love Jesus, and to exercise hospitality as they can. In this sense, she lives out the clear command of Titus 2:3-5 to older women and younger women.

What does this mean in practical terms? Well, to put it simply, the role of the vicar's wife is to be a godly disciple of Jesus as a wife and mother in the place that God has put her, with her family. Her role in the life of the parish is no different to any other woman – serving where her circumstances, gifts and the needs of God's people require and allow!

One wife's story

Clergy wives come in all shapes and sizes. Some are city girls transplanted to the country. Some are home-grown. Some work outside the home and some do not. Some have been a clergy wife for years and years and years. Some are just beginning on that particular journey. Space does not permit us to hear the stories of all these women, so we want to introduce you to just one. Catherine Hearne is the wife of Geoff, whom you will meet when you turn over the page. She has been a minister's wife for quite a while, but her role is about to change in a big way.

"I was working as a speech pathologist and Geoff as an optometrist when we decided to go into full-time ministry. We worked in Sydney for some time, but when we began talking to friends from Armidale, they suggested we apply to work here. We began our ministry in this diocese at St Paul's West Tamworth, then went out with Bush Church Aid to Lightning Ridge. After four great years there, we moved on to Quirindi in 2000, and stayed for 17 years. Early this year, Geoff accepted the position of assistant to the Bishop here in Armidale.

It has been interesting to move around as we have done. Life in Tamworth was certainly not the huge cultural leap from Sydney. But Lightning Ridge was another story! We loved it there. There were so many community things where we could be involved. We had a lovely home there and were able to use it for ministry. Everyone knew us and we knew everyone, and we were enriched by the support of the BCA community.

When we moved to Quirindi, we had no idea we would stay there so long. I had a full ministry life there...I ran the playgroup and taught Scripture, and again, used our home for ministry. People there seemed to understand what I did....maybe it is a particularly country thing that wives work alongside their husbands.

But now, with Geoff's new role, everything has changed. Our circumstances have changed so much with the death of Dad in February this year, and our last child leaving home.

Not only is it just Geoff and me in the house alone, but I don't have a defined role except to



support Geoff in his job. There are many things I could be involved in but no expectation to be involved, so I have an open slather. All these changes are both good and bad, having no role is freeing and exciting, but hard because I don't know what I should do. Not having regular things during the week feels a bit unsettling. The days don't have the rhythm they used to have. Here, I don't have

any non-Christian friends in my life, so I need to work out how to open conversations about Jesus. The onus is now on me...it no longer comes to me. I would like us all to consider the fact that we are all serving Jesus. My role is to serve God and my aim is still the same even though my role has changed. We are all women in ministry, and we all have different ways in which to express that."



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The Reverend Geoff Hearne

I WAS GETTING MY HAIR CUT A FEW WEEKS AGO AND THE barber asked me what I did. When I told her that I was an Anglican minister, she asked if I was a new minister at the Cathedral. When I said no and I was here as the Bishop's assistant, she was confused as she always thought of a minister in a church, so she asked me what I did. She may not be the only one wondering what my role is.

In the last two months, I have taken up the role of the Bishop's Assistant based at the Registry in Armidale as well as taking on the responsibility of being the Archdeacon for the New England region of our Diocese.

Prior to taking up this role, I was the Vicar of Quirindi for the last 17 years, following four years at Lightning Ridge and three years as the assistant minister at St Paul's West Tamworth. The time my wife and I spent at Quirindi was a real blessing to us as we raised our family and were able to engage in a wide range of ministry opportunities that God provided over that time. I can honestly say that I love being a parish minister and the work it involved. Having said that, I also realized that 17 years is a long time, and it was time not only for me and my wife Catherine to look to new areas in which to serve Christ, but also for the parish to have the opportunity for new direction. With this in mind, Bishop Rick Lewers was able to offer me this role as his assistant, following on from Alan Hardy who had decided to pursue ministry overseas. We could see a benefit from my years of experience within the Diocese to offer support to Rick and to the clergy around the Diocese.

Changing from being a Vicar to my current role has taken some adjustment.

My role as a Vicar was fairly clear as it revolved around bringing the Word of God to people to introduce them to Jesus and to help them home to heaven. This was done through the building of relationships within both the church community and the wider town community. This meant much of my time was spent preparing sermons, preaching and leading church every Sunday, leading Bible study groups, teaching

scripture at school, conducting weddings and funerals, visiting people to pray and share in their lives at homes or at hospital.

In my new position, I don't have those same familiar activities. I don't have a parish in which to minister, nor do I have the same weekly opportunities to bring the word of God to people. I am not engaged in the same frontline ministry that a parish Vicar is as I don't have that same face to face connection with the community or the church congregation, nor the same level of opportunities to open the word of God with people and share in key moments of their lives.

Yet for the things I miss, I find the motivation behind this role is the same. The word of God is still central in all that I do, but I am now involved in helping and equipping others who are at the coalface of gospel ministry. My ministry role is to be there to support the clergy to be as effective as possible in their evangelism and discipleship across our Diocese. I am planning for my work to help clergy deal with issues that they face, to share some of the wisdom gained over my years of ministry, to support them in the growing amount of administration that they need to do, and to provide resources and training to strengthen their ministry. My relationships will also be with lay people of the Diocese, in helping to support those who are in vacant parishes. I will have the opportunity to help equip those who are in leadership roles. I have already had the pleasure and privilege of preaching and leading at some churches and am looking forward to getting to know the wider Diocesan community through this role as I travel around.

My prayer for this role is that I will serve Christ by serving those in parish ministry. To do this, I pray that I will be guided by the Bible in all the decisions that need to be made; that I can support Rick in his oversight of the Diocese by helping in the pastoral care of people and the implementation of the plans of the Diocese, and that I can be a support to the clergy. I also pray that I will find ways in which to be involved in direct evangelism and discipleship so I can continue to help people come to know Jesus and help them home to heaven.

Clergy Conference

CLERGY CONFERENCE WAS HELD AT LAKE KEEPIT FROM Monday June 5th till Thursday June 8th. Clergy conference is an annual event where the clergy of the Diocese and other church ministry workers gather together for teaching, encouragement and support.

The conference centres on a guest speaker who this year was the Rev. Simon Manchester, the senior minister at St Thomas' North Sydney. Simon led studies looking at 2 Corinthians 2-7 to encourage continued faithful ministry even in the face of persecution, rejection and false teaching by continuing to remember the power of the cross for salvation and the hope of the resurrection and eternal life.

The conference also included devotional times in the morning, prayer times, group discussion, information about indigenous ministry within the Diocese and a session on faithful preaching led by Simon Manchester. There was also time set aside for relaxed and informal activity as all work and no play makes ministers tired and grumpy.

In one sense, to take four days out of a week to attend a conference can be a difficult exercise. To forgo normal parish ministry with its many demands and regular weekly activities requires a fair amount of organisation. It also means that there will be a backlog of issues and phone calls that need to be dealt with on return, not to mention leaving wives and families for a time.

Yet, the time away is never wasted. It is a good time for the clergy and workers to be refreshed by good Bible teaching, to find time to be refreshed spiritually away from the business of parish ministry and to catch up. This perhaps is the major benefit of the time away. It provides a time where clergy can be supported and support each other. It is a time to share ideas, struggles and joys with people engaged in similar work. A regular comment of those who have come into the Diocese from other Dioceses is the great sense of collegiality, support and care for one another within the clergy of the Diocese.

The teaching is always good, but the fellowship and support is always better. Clergy conference encourages the clergy to continue their ministry to others within whatever sphere of ministry they are engaged in as it provides encouragement, refreshment and support for the task before them.

For newly-ordained assistant Daniel Hayes from Moree, it was his first experience of a clergy conference.

"I certainly enjoyed getting to know others in the diocese and gaining from their experiences, whether in the discussion groups after the Bible talks or in the more casual conversations over the time. There were some helpful opportunities to reflect on the bigger picture of ministry. For example, Simon Manchester made the point that preaching well can save a lot of time down the track, because it can help prevent other pastoral problems from developing. Phil



(Brown, Vicar of Moree) and I had a good discussion about this on the way home and felt it was a great encouragement for both of us."

And what is he looking forward to gaining from similar conferences over the coming years?

"There are some specific things I could point to from the conference such as Simon's practical tips on preaching, or ministry applications from 2 Corinthians. But perhaps the bigger impact is in taking the time to be simply a learner and a disciple. In ministry we are often teaching, but we are no use as teachers unless we are first and foremost followers of our Lord Jesus. Clergy conference was (and will be) a great opportunity to simply learn from the Word and from each other. The impact on ministry is, as Simon aptly put it, 'to go from having to say something, to having something to say.'"

For your diary...



'Parenting in a Connected Age' with James and Simone Boswell

Mothers' Union has invited the Boswells to help us come to terms with parenting in this cyber-age. From toddlers and tablets to teens and screens, we need to understand the influence of the internet age in the raising of our children. The seminar will be held twice in the Diocese.

Gunnedah:
Friday 27th October
Gunnedah Anglican Church
9.30 - 12.30
Cost is \$15
A crèche will be provided.

Armidale:
Saturday 28th October
Venue to be advised
9.30 - 3.15
Lunch is included at a cost of \$25 single or \$40 couple.
Crèche provided.

Watch for flyers in your parish, or contact Robyn Perry at rrperry@bigpond.com or 0409 314 011.

New Life Women's Conference

Carmelina Read and Christine Jensen will be speaking on 2 Thessalonians and Prayer.

August 25th-26th, Carinya Christian School, Tamworth

Cost is \$60 for the full weekend.

For more information, visit <https://newlifeconference.org.au/>



Beauty instead of ashes



Carissa Hutchinson

HUTCHINSON is a big name in Armidale. There is a bridge named after GS Hutchinson who was a Lay Canon at St Peter's Cathedral. GS's son Peter has continued the family tradition of service to the Cathedral community in a variety of roles over the years. The family also has a strong line of missionaries. Dr Paul White, better known as The Jungle Doctor was married to Peter's Aunt Mary and they served as CMS medical missionaries in Tanganyika (now Tanzania) in Africa. Paul's *Jungle Doctor* books are beloved of many generations of children and adults alike. They are still widely available and have been translated into many languages. Reverend Eric Bellingham and wife Dorothy (Peter's Uncle and Aunt) were also missionaries in India for many years, so it has been no real surprise that Peter and Inge's daughter Carissa turned to missionary service as an outworking of her own faith in the Lord Jesus. Carissa works as a volunteer with Iris Ministries in Nepal. As she is totally reliant on the prayers and financial support of friends to keep her in the field, she wanted to let those very supporters have a snapshot of her everyday life.

I WAS BORN AND BRED AN ARMIDALE GIRL, AND AM SO thankful to have grown up in such a beautiful town with so many opportunities and privileges at my disposal. I have a wonderful family whom I love very much, and my parents Peter and Inge Hutchinson have always gone above and beyond to give their children the best opportunities in life, for which I'm very thankful.

Whilst I was a Christian during my teenage years, it wasn't until 2004, that a relationship with God truly grew in my heart, and 2 Corinthians 5:14 'for Christ's love compels us' came alive in my life. I went from religion to relationship, and my whole life changed.

After completing a Bachelor Arts Communication (Advertising)/Business (Marketing) through Charles Sturt University in Bathurst, in 2010, I went on the 'World Garbage Dump Tour', where we visited five countries (Thailand, Cambodia, Philippines, India and Nepal). On this trip I visited leper colonies, slums, and garbage dumps which are mountains upon mountains of stinking, self-combusting trash. Many people live there, and pick through the rubbish, trying to find anything to sell (plastic, metal, wood, anything!), in order to make a small living. It was on this trip that my heart was ruined for anything else. I knew I found my calling, and my favourite people in the world; the poorest of the poor, who were not only my friends, but also my teachers.

Since 2010, I have done several short-term trips to Mozambique, South Sudan and India. I moved to India for a year in 2013, helping a local friend there with his ministry to the poor, and the rural, remote and unreached tribes of India. I came back to Australia in 2015 for the birth of my nephew, and while I was here I started a Masters in

International and Community Development, as I saw a need on the mission field to develop my skills and implement best practice within the communities with whom I work. By the end of 2015, I went to Nepal to visit Iris Ministries for three months. However, when I got there, I knew I found my new home, and it wasn't long before I committed to being a long-term missionary there.

The vision of Iris Nepal is to bring God's healing, hope, and salvation to Nepal's orphans, homeless, lost and poor, by being the loving hands and feet of Jesus. We have a children's home with 30 ex-orphaned kids and a 'Banquet House' which is a feeding program for up to 100 homeless people three times a week. We have a church which welcomes people that no other church will have. We do street evangelism, village outreaches, and are starting a Pottery House that provides a creative outlet for our homeless community, with a vision for occupational training.

Whether it's sharing a meal with kids in shredded rags on the streets, seeing Jesus heal the sick, sitting with the mamas and helping them pick through their garbage, hugging a leper, or stopping for the one person in front of me as I go about every day life, my greatest joy in life is seeing love, honour, and integrity returned to people from whom it has been stolen. Love looks like something, and often is practical and found in the 'insignificant' acts. Whatever the 'action', my goal is always the same. To love the unlovely, and bestow upon their heads a crown of beauty instead of ashes. To replace hopelessness with hope, mourning for joy, and indignity for dignity. It all comes back to love.

Thank you for your prayers and support.



Youth leaders get re-fuelled

Lou Davies and Emma Little from St Peter's, Tamworth.

THE CHILLY WATERS OF COPETON DAM SEEMED TO BE warmed by the presence of 60 or so youth leaders from all over the Diocese at their annual Fuel Youth Leader's Weekend. The Reverend Gavin Perkins, assistant minister at St Thomas', North Sydney spoke from the first three chapters of Paul's first letter to the church at Corinth to an appreciative audience of youth leaders.

He said "One thing which really stood out was the diversity of age at the conference. In Sydney, youth ministry is dominated by university-aged leaders, but in the Armidale Diocese, there are so many older and younger people. I've noticed over the years that country kids who come to university in the city are often more switched on to the practicalities of ministry. I also noticed a number of much older leaders on the weekend, and I think it is a very healthy way to see youth ministry. When you have only one age group in youth ministry, it compartmentalizes people in an unhelpful way. I think that in the Armidale Diocese, necessity has driven people to come up with creative solutions for resourcing and developing youth ministry in ways which are very healthy. They work out how we can do what we need to do. To get everyone together for a weekend like 'Fuel' is a great way to share what is working."

Lou Davies, chaplain at Calrossy and part of the organizational team, was thrilled with the way the weekend came together. "The take home message was that youth ministry is hard work! It can often present a lot of challenges, but it's worth it because in the end, it is God we are glorifying not ourselves", she said.

She also found it a great encouragement to see the great age-range in its youth leaders. "This weekend, we had people from Year 10, to some in their fifties! We are so glad that our leaders want to train kids to be disciples of Christ. If there was no ministry to youth, eventually all ministry would cease. So often it is in the high school years that people question things... who am I and what is my purpose? It is at this point in someone's life that we need to offer Jesus."

As well as Gavin's talks, Bishop Rick Lewers spoke and three workshops were offered; one on writing a Bible study using John Chapman's model, a mental health seminar and a Safe Ministry Refresher run by Janene Lewers. Lou attended the mental health seminar and was reminded about issues she faces every day in her chaplaincy work. "As Christians we need both the Bible and medical or psychological treatment. We need to direct young people who are

suffering to professional help, and then we need to hold out words of hope which they may not hear anywhere else."

The weekend was attended by leaders from throughout the diocese. Lou said, "Many of the youth groups in our Diocese are very small... just a handful of kids. Sometimes the leaders can feel quite isolated and that they are not doing very much, but when we get together we see how many kids we are serving, we can be encouraged to keep on going...serving the kids and our communities. It is always a struggle to get enough leaders for our youth ministries. The Fuel weekend is designed to equip the leaders we have. The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. We need more people to step up to this great ministry. You don't need heaps of experience. You just need to love Jesus and want others to know Him too.

Please keep your youth group in your prayers. Pray for the teenagers who come and the leaders who labour week by week. If you would like to see if there is a way you can contribute to youth ministry in your parish, have a chat to your Vicar or any of the leaders. Be prepared for them to hug you!

One youth leader who could not get to the Fuel weekend was Penny Blomfield from Barraba. She is disappointed she missed it.



"I am that 49 year-old mother of three who said she would never do youth group!

But I did because there wasn't anyone else. I really wanted my children to go to youth group. I never had that opportunity and I think it is such a great basis for growing faith. So, as I was already driving them into town, I decided to stay and help out."

Penny believes that youth is a ministry which older people should really consider. "We have such a great wealth of experience and knowledge. Half of the kids in our youth group are not yet Christian, and I think that having older leaders makes it look like being a Christian is an ongoing and long-term thing. While it is good for kids to see young leaders, it helps to give them a long-term perspective of what it means to be a Christian for life. Of course, leading youth group helps me as well. Watching the kids grow in their faith is a great encouragement to me, and I learn along with them. I once knew an 80 year-old lady who helped out with youth group for a while...you are never too old, never past it!"

From England's green and pleasant land... to Tamworth

DUB GANNON IS A COUNTRY BOY. HE GREW UP ON A MIXED family farm at Blighty, in the Riverina. He attended church as a child and professed faith in Jesus while still at primary school. But growing up and moving away to study at Hawkesbury Agricultural College meant that God was moved to the back of his mind. It wasn't until he began work as an agronomist in Dubbo that he began to go back to church, recommitted his life as a Christian, and started to live with Jesus as his Lord and Saviour. After getting more involved in ministry with leading services and preaching, he applied to study at Moore College and was offered a place in 2005. God clearly had plans for this country boy...but not necessarily in this country.

“During my last year at Moore College I was offered a post as Assistant to the Vicar in a group of three small rural villages in the county of Essex in England”, he said. “The villages were called Henham, Elsenham and Ugley. These churches were part of the Church of England. I worked there for five years before taking on a post as Vicar of six rural churches in Essex half time and the other half of my time I worked as Rural Evangelism Advisor in the Diocese of Chelmsford.”

Working in England brought challenges to Dub which seem quite amazing to us. “The Church of England is sadly a church where many of its members don't believe the Bible to be God's Word”, he said. “They are not prepared to sit under God's word, but rather to sit over it and pick and choose bits as they please. The majority of the church hierarchy doesn't believe the Bible to be authoritative in all areas of life. When one works in a context like this it can be difficult at times to stand up for God's word.”

So how did he do it? How do you stand up for God in a society which has turned its back on Him? He continued, “Despite the hardships, there is a good number of godly laity and clergy within the Church of England and we would stand together, side by side to encourage each other and pray for one another as we contended for the gospel. I would often meet with fellow clergy to encourage each other and we ran events and conferences to help encourage others. A former work colleague and friend, the Reverend John Richardson and I started an



annual national conference for the younger generation called JAEC (Junior Anglican Evangelical Conference) to encourage them to stand firm as they worked in the Church of England. This conference is still going and is now run by Church Society.”

Eventually the time came for a change, and Dub decided to move his family back to Australia. “A good friend of mine from Moore College, Bernard Gabbott, told me about some opportunities in the Diocese so we decided to apply to come to work here. The amazing thing about the Armidale Diocese is that it is evangelical and all the clergy are committed to preaching Christ crucified and reaching the lost. This agenda was not shared by everyone in the diocese I worked in. Here, there is a commitment to preach the Bible clearly and faithfully each week. This was not done on a widespread basis. How different was the recent Armidale clergy conference to those I attended in England. We actually opened the Bible and kept it open! Often the conferences in England would have a very fleeting look at the Bible.”



Green pastures in Essex (above), Dub Gannon (below left), and an Essex parish church (below).



Adjustment to life in Australia has been slow and gradual for Dub's family. He continued, "It is a big change for our children who only knew life in England. It has taken a while to adjust to the weather and to the Aussie way of doing things.' But there is so much for which he is grateful. " It is wonderful To be surrounded by people who love the Lord Jesus and who want to see people introduced to Jesus and want to help them home to heaven. It is also a great privilege and a blessing to be able to have a colleague, Darrell Parker who desires to see people converted and see Christians grow in their love and service of the Lord Jesus. I am enjoying working with the congregations at St Paul's in Tamworth and St Luke's out at Loomberah."

We are greatly blessed to live in a Diocese which honours the Word of God and actively seeks to proclaim Jesus. Please pray for our Christian brothers and sisters in Great Britain as they swim against the tide in seeking to do the same. Pray too for Dub, Deanne, Jack, Alice and Jessica as they settle into life in Tamworth.

Puppets in Boggabri



In the last issue of *The Link*, we featured the work of Quiz Worx, a Christian puppet company which has visited the Armidale Diocese many times over the past few years. Well, they have been, and have gone, and for the people of Boggabri Community Church, their appearance this year did not disappoint either the church members who organized the visit, or the families who attended the holiday childrens' club where they worked their magic. Boggabri Vicar John Cooper told us:

"There was no last minute school holiday boredom for the 56 children who came to the church's four-day Holiday Kids' Club. This is the fourth year the church has partnered with Quiz Worx to reach children in Kindergarten to Year Six with the gospel. Each day the children would pile into the hall to hear Kim Hayde, Rachel Miller and their puppet Banto share Jesus with them. There was craft, games, and more food than we could eat, but best of all was hearing children who have had little or no contact with church, understanding and even responding to Jesus' call to follow him! The week had a great feel and a big part of that was due to the dozen volunteers who laboured joyfully to make it a fun experience for everyone"

Please pray for the children who heard the gospel clearly during this time, that the seeds planted in them might grow and bear fruit. Pray also for the work of Quiz Worx as they continue their unique ministry of taking the gospel to children wherever they may be.



Kim and Banto at Boggabri (top) and the Cooper kids having fun at the Boggabri kids club.



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

John Bunyan



DR WARWICK STILLER LEADS THE CSIRO’s Cotton Breeding program in Narrabri. It’s a big job, and an important one. Not a bad career for a boy from the middle-of-nowhere Queensland! He is the friendliest scientist in the country...a bit of a departure from the stereotype of the humourless and slightly socially awkward scientist we often see on television. But even more importantly, Warwick is a Christian, and that is something we don’t always expect in a top-level scientist.

“The science field can be one of the most difficult professions to be a Christian. By their very nature, scientists are trained to question things, to look for proof and make an objective conclusion that will hold up to review by their peers. This can often be seen to be at odds with faith-based beliefs. It is quite obvious that some people think Christianity and science don’t mix. In addition, I often think that people increasingly see that a belief in God is a position held by an ignorant group of people to fill in the gaps in our knowledge where science just hasn’t quite got there yet. But science is an explanation of how the world around us works. Christianity tells us why we are here and who we are in relation to God

“Many of us have heroes of some description. An obscure guy called Mendel is mine. Mendel was born in 1822 in Heinzendorf, Silesia (it is presently part of the Czech Republic – and remarkably the same region my ancestors are from) and got the name Gregor after he joined a monastery of the Augustinian order. In Vienna, he studied physics and mathematics and also the anatomy and physiology of plants. It was, however, in a monastery in Brunn that he began his experiments with plant hybridisation with peas. His findings enabled him to formulate the Law of Segregation and the Law of Independent Assortment. These laws would later be known as Mendel’s Laws of Inheritance. Mendel himself did little to publicise his works. Furthermore, his responsibilities in the monastery left him

little or no time to pursue his scientific goals. In 1884 Mendel died aged 61, with his work largely unrecognised. The following century however, his work got the recognition it truly deserved and Mendel was acknowledged as the father of genetics.

“Thankfully, nobody had told Gregor Mendel that science and religion could not mix. This doctrine is quite recent and obviously false, at least in the case of the Christian faith which rests on sound historical foundations including multiple fulfilled prophecies, miracles and the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. Mendel is one example of many great scientists who have seen no contradictions between a deeply held Christian faith and honest empirical science.

“Like Mendel, knowledge of science also affirms my faith and I find it really easy to believe in a creator God. Even something as simple as a pollen grain landing on a flower in order to fertilise it – there are so many proteins interacting and hormones signalling just to enable that pollen grain to grow and eventually produce a seed.

“As I have looked more and have seen the intricacies and the fine tuning of these systems, I just can’t believe that the probability of having the world form by chance is very high. It just isn’t rational that this could all happen by chance. But you don’t have to have a deep understanding of scientific principles to come to this same conclusion. Genesis 1:21 says ‘... God saw all that he had made and it was very good.’ Every day the sun comes up, you look out the window and see the wonder of God’s creation. When I look at God’s creation whether at a microscopic DNA level or a universe level, I become more and more amazed by this God who chose to create this world and then chose to reconcile us to Him through his Son. Every day we should all take the time to look around and remind ourselves how amazing this world is and give thanks to God.”

About

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