



# The Link

ANGLICAN DIOCESE OF ARMIDALE

DECEMBER 2018 / JANUARY 2019

## Christmas and the drought

### **DROUGHT. CHRISTMAS.**

Here are two words we hear a lot at the moment. Open up any newspaper, turn on the television and you will be bombarded with messages to buy, buy, buy in order to make everyone happy at Christmas. But alongside those messages, there will be stories about those who are doing it tough because of the drought.

What are we to think? Should we cancel Christmas in solidarity with our friends and neighbours who will find it hard to celebrate this year? Or should we forget about everything; eat, drink and be merry?

Many people and organisations within our

Diocese have discovered ways to show the kind of love that we celebrate at Christmas: the love God showed in sending his own Son to live amongst us. Here we highlight just a few of these things.

Brett O'Neill is a mechanic in Moree. He is one of the small business people who has seen first-hand the effects of the drought on a town.

"Almost every single business in Moree has been affected. There has been a big downturn in money coming into the town, and a big downturn in accounts being paid on time. The biggest thing I've noticed in my business is just trying to find staff. People leave when things dry up. There is a mine only a couple

of hundred kilometres away, so a lot of people go there. That means you have to pay more to get people to come to your town to work...and not everyone wants to come to a small town."

And what we do to help little towns like Moree? "One way to make an impact is to donate money in the town. That way you know the money will stay. A lot of the churches have some drought relief programmes, so they are good places to donate. And use some of the businesses in small towns. That helps keep the money in town as well. We have had a little bit of rain over the past few weeks and that has really lifted our spirits. A bit more

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rain, a harvest to reap, and it could be a good Christmas."

Please keep small business owners in our towns in your prayers, and look for opportunities to sow back into these vital small communities.

## NARRABRI REACHES OUT

A team from Narrabri Anglican Church has been out and about looking to help whomever they can. Ally Thomson is co-ordinating the team. She told us, "We received money from the Diocese of \$2,100 and a Bush Church Aid donation of \$5,000. We also received \$1,100 from non-farming church members. Parish Council asked me to head up a drought assistance team. I made an announcement at church, and pretty soon a great team had gathered.

"We decided to give out packs with dog food, money (gift cards cost too much at \$6 each, so we gave cash instead), and some Christian material...Two Ways to Live and Mark's gospel. We also produced a card explaining who it was all from, a few Bible verses, and times of our church services. We also take cake, because cake makes a suspicious meeting much more relaxed! We visit farms and have always been



Left: the Narrabri team gets ready. Right: Claire Dunlop.



greeted kindly. We have been able to share about God's provision and what Jesus has done for us.

"The drought has allowed our church to meet with people we would not normally have contact with and help us to be bold in our sharing of the gospel."

## ANGLICARE HELPS

Claire Dunlop is the Regional Manager for Anglicare, Northern Inland. "I think the first

thing to remember is that the drought affects not just the farmers, but small businesses too. It affects everyone in a small community! What happens at Christmas is that everyone will prioritize and decide what they will miss out on. Will they pay their bills or buy presents for the children? A big problem is that bills often don't come in until months later, and people can find themselves suddenly facing a mountain of bills. At Anglicare we have financial counsellors who can work with

## Bush drought leads to bush dance



On Saturday 10th November 85 people from the Tenterfield and Deepwater communities gathered at Bolivia Hall for a barbeque and Bush Dance.

"The aim of the night was to lift the spirits of those affected by the drought," said the Vicar of Tenterfield, the Reverend John Cooper. "We wanted to put on a night that showed our farmers that we care about them and are praying that they will have the strength and resilience to get through the drought."

"The night came about when some clergy in the Diocese were sharing ideas about what they were doing in their communities to support farmers. Matt Knight from (the band) Patterson's Curse was watching this email exchange and asked if anyone could use a bush band," John said.

"When I talked about the idea with some farmers in our congregation, it got us thinking about how much of farming is a mental and emotional battle. We wondered if an evening like this could be a way to refresh our farmers, so they can keep going."

It certainly seems to have done what it set out to do. "It was a great to see farmers coming off their farms to catch up over a BBQ and enjoy a laugh as Armidale bush band Patterson's Curse got everyone moving", John said.

"The community really seemed to appreciate that we would go to this trouble for them and it gave us an opportunity to pray that God would be the one who meets our need for rain, resilience and forgiveness."



people who are affected in any way by the drought.

Another wonderful thing is that we are bringing in 150 Christmas hampers from Sydney. We will partner with other organisations to distribute these according to the need that we see.

“Everyone knows that we provide counselling services, but perhaps what is not so well-known is that people affected by the drought can have that counselling service, free. We know that good Aussie farmers and business people are often not good at putting up their hands to ask for help...often because they are just so busy doing their job, they think they don't have time to do anything else. So we are planning some courses which will make it easier for people to get some help. We are hoping to base some of these courses in churches, to give church people better skills at talking helpfully to people. In the near future, we are looking at a course called ‘Managing strong emotions’. Sometimes people are put under immense pressure from bills and even their lifestyle, and their emotions might start getting out of control, so this course will help them to identify when that happens, and put some strategies into place to control those emotions. We hope to run this course early next year out of our main centres...Tamworth, Moree, Inverell and Armidale. For anyone interested in doing that course, they can call our main number, 6701 8200 and we can let you know how to sign up.”

Claire's tips for helping friends, family or neighbours who are struggling during this time.

- Be a listening ear-sometimes people just need someone to listen, without offering advice. People really appreciate a yarn about the ordinary things of life as well. We call it ‘leaning on the fence’. Just talk! Not everyone needs formal counselling, and by taking the time to chat, it is an opportunity for us to just be Christians, and to allow God to speak through us.
- Hold a pot luck supper, at your church or somewhere else. Invite farmers and small business owners
- Buy someone a cup of coffee and send it to their workplace. That will help that small coffee business as well
- Spend money in our small communities. Encourage your friends in the city to come and be a tourist in some of our small towns.
- Donate to Anglicare, and know the money will reach those who need it most.
- Pray. Pray for those who are suffering...so often in silence. Pray for God to show you how you can help. And don't stop praying for rain.

# How to smile at each other

Bishop Rick Lewers



**AUSTRALIA'S BI-CENTENNIAL YEAR** was 1988. It was the year I turned 30, the year I was ordained as an Anglican minister and the year Janene and I saw the birth of our first son. So if you are paying attention, 2018 has seen me clock up my 60<sup>th</sup> year on the planet, 30 years of ordained ministry and a thirty year involvement in children's education. I remain uncertain as to who was being educated, parent or child. Hopefully both.

What has surprised me is that parenthood and priesthood are not that much different. As a Christian you can't abdicate your responsibilities in either and both are a privilege given by God. Both have the potential to make you smile and both have the capacity to produce sorrow.

It would be sad if a parent spoke of parenting simply as their profession, their work or job. A true parent speaks of parenthood as a precious relationship. From the moment of conception the child extracts from the parent an undeserved love that is instant and just limitless. A parent's commitment increases with birth. Loving nurture to maturity is a parent's delight to offer and their joy to watch. When it's done well and received well a parent smiles at their child and the child smiles at the parent.

Like parenthood it would be sad if a priest spoke of the priesthood as simply a profession, their work or job. A true priest speaks of priesthood as a precious relationship. While not all people become parents, in the first letter of Peter and the second chapter, all Christians are a holy priesthood. It is not a profession or a job.

Before the foundations of the earth God knew us, in creation he conceived us and while we were dead in our sins the undeserved and limitless love of God saw Christ bear our sins in his body on the tree

to build us into His household. There is no doubt God has smiled upon us and every reason for us to smile at God.

Parents and priesthood have their ways of making you smile but what about church?

Wouldn't the Christian life be wonderful if it only ever brought a smile to our faces? Every edition of the Link reminds us that within the priesthood of all believers some are called to be clergy while others are called to sit under their leadership and work in partnership for the glory of God. Those stories in the Link of laity and clergy have often inspired us and made us smile. So what is it that makes the clergy smile at the laity and the laity smile at the clergy?

I think the answer lies in the experience of parenthood and priesthood. Within the priesthood of all believers clergy are set apart by God to nurture Christians to maturity in Christ. When the clergy see a growing maturity they smile at the laity with a deep and joyful thanksgiving to God. Equally, within the priesthood of all believers, when the laity realise that their clergy are helping them to grow to maturity in Christ there is always a smile at their clergy with a deep and joyful thanksgiving to God.

None of this should be surprising. What makes God smile is a people who respond rightly to Jesus and grow to maturity in Him. What makes us smile at God is His ministry to us in Christ to make us mature.

Implications! If you are clergy and you want to bring a smile to the laity then make your life and ministry all about Jesus Christ. If you are the laity and you want to bring a smile to the clergy then make your life and ministry all about Christ.

The smiles only disappear for clergy and laity with the distance we put between ourselves and Jesus Christ. Of course, in Christ the smile is eternal.



# What Christmas means to me

Meg and Annika

## Getting priorities right



You would think that Meg and Annika Foster, being PKs (preacher's kids), should have a good idea about the true meaning of Christmas. But it only takes a few moments of speaking to them to realize that here are two young people who are not just repeating what they have been taught, but who truly see what all the razzle-dazzle of the world and all its material charms manages to leave out.

Meg, who is 12 loves their Christmas tree. "We always get a real tree," she said. "It may not be the best-looking tree, but I love it. On Christmas Day, we open our presents, then go to church."

Annika, who is 10 chimes in, "We moved to Quirindi from Narrabri this year. It's been a bit sad missing our old friends, but we have some cool new friends. And one of the best things about living next to the church is that we can stay at church longer on Christmas Day!"

After church, the Foster family heads off to Gunnedah where Vicar, Paul Foster's family still lives. "It is my favourite time of the year," said Meg. "Christmas is not all about presents and food, though they are all fun. But Christmas has a great feel to it because that is when Jesus was born, and we can remember that He was born into the world to save us. We should put Him first".

This year, the Foster family has grown by one, with baby Florence joining Paul and Michelle, Meg, Annika, Xanthe and Louis. "It is really fun at Christmas, with all the lights and the cousins visiting and everything but really, you should be thinking of God," said Annika. "What Christmas means to me is that a long time ago Jesus was born, and now even though you can't see Him, He is still there, watching over you. You can always know that you are never alone."

Carmel

## When the young can teach the old

Carmel MacKenzie teaches mathematics at Calrossy during the week. You would think that might be enough contact with children, but not for Carmel!

"I am one of the kids' church leaders at Manilla Anglican Church. I have been keen to get the kids singing songs of praise. The kids enjoy the actions involved and love singing. One highlight this year has been learning "Stop what you're doing and pray to Jesus", which I think for all of us is an important reminder to STOP in this busy hectic life we are in and PRAY.

This year, I am very excited (along with others) to be taking the kids to Menallae Lodge in Manilla (the aged care facility) to sing an item: 'The Ho-Hohemian Christmas Rhapsody' by Colin Buchanan. It is a compilation of various carols like Away in a Manger, Noel Noel, etc. We will also lead the old people in some carols and have some brief bible readings by the children. The children will be giving some of their hand-crafted Christmas decorations to them as well.

The kids usually present an item once a term to our congregation, which is loved and well received. I was keen for them to see that living a Christian life can go further than just their little world of church and we could share their joy amongst the elderly folk in Manilla.

I hope that this visit will show joy, happiness and love. God willing, I hope the people will know that it comes from God! I want the kids to experience



the joy of giving and reaching out to others and sharing their love for Christ, especially at such a special time like Christmas. I hope they might appreciate and engage with elderly folk and the wisdom they have.

The birth of Christ means everything to me...if it were not for Jesus' birth, His miracles, death and resurrection, I would not be the person I am today. I try to live my life in dedication and service to Him everyday, Though I fail regularly. Knowing He forgives me when I repent lets me move forward, I often have to be reminded to do the same! Christmas is a very special time of family, friends, gifts, food and joy which all comes from the celebration of Jesus' birth and the basis for my faith."

Fay and Clarrie

## Standing room

Fay and Clarrie Betts are long time members of the Moonbi/Kootingal parish. They are eagerly looking forward to the arrival of a new Vicar early next year (*hint...turn to page 8 to see who that will be!*). But before that happens, they are praying at Christmas what they pray for every week... "standing room only!"

"Our church is an older congregation," said Fay. "At Easter and Christmas we give out invitations to everyone in the villages to join us at church. But even though Kootingal in particular is growing, there are still not enough people in church with us! We have a great Kids' Club on Thursdays, and are trying to encourage the kids who come to that to come to church as well."

Fay likes to quote a minister of theirs from many years ago who, as he finished preaching at Christmas would say, "Now look here.... once Christmas is finished, don't go putting Jesus away in a box with all the tinsel!"

Fay and Clarrie certainly don't have Jesus in a box. When we asked Clarrie what Christmas means to him, he said, "It means everything to me...the birth of our Lord. He means everything to me now."

Please pray with Fay and Clarrie that there will be standing room only at all the churches in our Diocese this Christmas, and that the many who do not yet know Jesus, will discover this year, that He means everything to them.



Tam and Bronte

## Different, but the same

Tam Ramsay and Bronte Dorrington from Armidale are housemates from very different families and backgrounds. But they are in agreement about Christmas.



Tam: Christmas was always spent with my family, but now that I live seven hours north of Sydney, we don't always spend the actual day together. Christmas Eve would always be spent with my German godparents (who celebrated Christmas on 24th). My godfather died in 2016 and my godmother passed away only this year so it is with great sadness that this will no longer be our tradition. These days, the actual day is not so significant to me - as long as we get time with mum and dad sometime in that Christmas period, we're happy. Much as I love a good handful (or two) of chocolate-coated almonds, the absolute best thing about Christmas is the time we set aside to reflect more deliberately on the birth of our Saviour King.

When I hear people talk about Christmas as just a time for family and fun and food I have a mix of emotions. In part I envy those who participate in huge Christmas lunches with their families. Being an only child and being single, Christmas can sometimes feel a bit small. I am, however, frequently jolted out of my idealised Christmas fantasy as friends recount the drama

of family Christmas behind closed doors. Even if we are blessed to enjoy Christmas with people we love, where relationships are strong and everyone is agreeable, if we make people, presents, holidays and feasting the objects of our celebration, we will always be left wanting.

Family, fun and food are good gifts from God but ignoring the true meaning of Christmas empties the celebration of its biggest joy. Christmas without Jesus is like hosting a party without the most important guest - the one who just happens to bring the greatest gift of all, Himself. My favourite part of the Christmas narrative is the short speech given by the angel to a bunch of terrified shepherds; "Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord" (Luke 2:10). The Saviour of the world had arrived, and just to prove that He had come for *everyone* and *anyone*, the very first recipients of this message were a bunch of humble herdsmen! From the outset God made clear that Jesus was born unto the likes of you and me - the average, unimpressive and sinful - who desperately need a Saviour.

Bronte: I am really thankful that, having been raised by Christian parents, Christmas has always been about celebrating Jesus our Saviour. However, as I've grown up, I've moved from passively participating in this celebration with the people around me, to actively using this time of the year to spend more time with God in the Word, and using celebratory gatherings as an opportunity to show His love to others.

During my time as a student, the ministry of St Marks, University chapel has helped me understand more about Jesus through the 'mundane' - the week in, week out meeting together. Being in community brings encouragement in learning, in being challenged, in serving and allowing yourself to be served - it brings a far greater breadth of perspective of who God is and how He relates to His people.

The spirit of Christmas isn't merely an annual celebration, but a day in, day out reality. It is always worthwhile (and of the utmost importance!) to figure out where you stand with God. You can do this by asking Him to reveal Himself to you, by reading a Bible (online, or the old-fashioned way!), by popping in to your local church, or maybe by reading the Bible with or talking to a Christian, or a group of Christians, you know.



# Unravelling the mystery of archdeacons

**THE REVEREND SIMON WALLER** HAS BEEN REJOICING THAT Warialda has recently moved from Special District to parish status. As well as his usual parish duties, Simon – like most clergy in the Diocese – does double duty with another Diocesan job. Currently, he is the Archdeacon of the Barwon. While we all have a pretty clear understanding of what a vicar does, the job of an archdeacon is one we probably don't much think about. What do archdeacons do?

"That's a good question", he said. "An archdeacon may be someone you go to if there's trouble in the parish and you can't talk to the vicar and they are the first people to pastorally care for clergy in the deanery. There are five regions or deaneries: New England, MacIntyre, Barwon, Peel and Namoi. There are about five or six parishes in each. We are involved at a much broader level in care for parishes. For example, all archdeacons are having continuing input into what we can do to ensure we are meeting the goals of the vision to have Bible-believing Christian community in every town. There are discussions about how to make that happen both as archdeacons together with the Diocesan commissions and Diocesan Council (DC). We also have a level of responsibility to make sure the clergy are doing well in their parishes.

"At our regular meetings, we meet with the Bishop, and we talk about strategic issues that are coming up at DC; anything from papers that have been prepared, to wider diocesan plans, legal issues and particular pastoral concerns with clergy. Sometimes we are asked to do a report on something. We were all asked to come up with a model for maintaining ministry in small parishes. This allowed the bishop to bring plans to Synod for further discussion. We have looked at specific proposals from parishes for evangelism, for expansion of the Youth Director's role, and from committees for ministry to parishes without a full-time clergyman. We are organising a year of training across the Diocese for outreach for 2019 and a year of evangelism in 2020, in consultation with the Commission for Evangelism and Discipleship (CED). Last time we met we were asked specifically about how we were



*Simon Waller could be called a model archdeacon!*

copied in our own parishes. That was enlightening. It seems I'm not the only one tired, and frustrated by the lack of response to gospel where we live! Play until you die seems to be the attitude in rural Australia at the moment. At least, do anything other than discuss eternity."

So the work of an Archdeacon seems to be just that...work! But Simon, like all the senior leadership of the Diocese, has a longer view. He reflected on how he might look back on his life's work. "What I will remember most is my many friendships with godly, faithful, obedient, lovely people," he said. "They are the heart and soul and keep me going. Some of them we'll even share our retirement with. I hope to see people in heaven that I didn't know I had some influence over. Evangelism can be hard work out here, but maybe there will be people whose lives were changed by something I said to them or did for them."

Please keep the archdeacons in your prayers. They have a vital job which is not often seen or recognised. As well as Simon, our other Archdeacons are Darrell Parker (Peel), Geoff Hearne (New England), Bernard Gabott (Namoi) and Adam Draycott (MacIntyre).



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# Evangelising the modern way

**THE FOLLOWING IS AN EXCERPT FROM THE BOOK NEVER too far, never too few – 100 years of the Bush Church Aid Society.** BCA celebrates its 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary on 26<sup>th</sup> May 2019. Churches throughout Australia (including those in the Diocese of Armidale) will give thanks to God for a century of bringing the good news of Jesus to rural and remote Australians. James Daymond (above) is working with BCA in Narromine, just south of our Diocese's border, as an evangelist.

*From 1919 to now, lots of things have changed, but the good news has not. In these days of mass communication what is the best way to get the news of Jesus out to people? Get active on social media? Podcast? Set up a Youtube channel? While all of those things have a place (and are certainly used by God to draw people to himself) in the deep country areas of Australia, speaking to people face to face, is still the very best way. Sadly, two things often come to mind when the word 'evangelist' gets mentioned. First, we can have images of fire and brimstone preachers, beating people over the head with a Bible. Conversely, we can be filled with terror at the idea of approaching people to talk about such deep personal matters.*

*But not James Daymond.*

*James Daymond does not fit the picture of an old-time evangelist. There is not a hint of fire and brimstone about him. He looks exactly like what he is...a young man brought up in a well-heeled northern suburb of Sydney. His moleskin trousers are immaculate; his checked shirt, ironed with sharp creases; his riding boots, shining with spit and polish. He speaks precisely, carefully and politely. His smile comes out to meet you before his hand is extended. His childhood and youth in Mosman were as you would expect. He was educated at good private schools, and went off to university to prepare for the kind of professional life Mosman boys usually live. But a visit to a farm at the age of four changed the course of his life.*

*"Through my childhood I developed a great love for the country because of a family friend who lived on a property at Boorowa, in southern New South Wales. In 2003 there was a terrible drought and my friend had to go droving in order to feed his cattle. I was on a break from university, and asked if I could go with him. I joined him in Warren in the central west of New South Wales and we drove the cattle throughout that district. Looking back, I can see the providence of God that allowed me to ride all around the area where I now work. One of my jobs was to collect water every couple of days. I would have to drive up to farms and ask if we could have some water. I had the best conversations with people! I was*

*not a Christian at this point, and when I did become a Christian, I was kicking myself, because I thought I had so many missed opportunities. But now I see God's purpose, because I know it can be done! I realize now that I can still go up those driveways, and instead of asking them for water, we can give them water...the water of life."*

*It was only a short time after this experience that James began attending his local Anglican church and joined a Bible study group. In November 2004, he became a Christian and his life changed in every possible way. A few months later, he realized that he did not want to spend the rest of his life as a lawyer, and that God was calling him to a life of ministry...and most specifically, to evangelism.*

*"I started to do some one-to-one evangelism, just on my own. Eventually, my minister gave me some helpful cards to hand out, and I began to wonder how I could train for a lifetime of evangelism ministry. I joined the staff of my church, St Clement's, Mosman in 2008, and the next year something very significant happened. The Diocese of Sydney embarked on a year of evangelism called Connect '09. It was like a hand fitting a glove...it was me to a tee! I did all the training, and became the evangelism minister at my church. Eventually, I went on to theological training at Moore Theological College and the Sydney Missionary and Bible College."*

*But the nagging memory of that cattle drive, and the conversations at farmhouse doors would not go away. James realized that there would be many, many farmers throughout the country who did not know Jesus. It was while he was pondering on the best way to reach people like that, that God gave him a vision for the central west of New South Wales... the very country he had driven the cattle through all those years ago.....*

*That is the beginning of James' story. The chapter goes on to recount James' work, evangelising his parish, which consists of the towns of Narromine and Trangie as well as the many farms in the surrounding district. It is an incredible story of God's love for people, and of the transforming power of the gospel in lives. To give away just a bit of the end of the chapter; after two years work, James and his fellow workers at the church have over 300 people who have responded in some way to the gospel's call! That is a lot of people to follow up, and a wonderful problem to have. James' story is an encouragement to know that people will still respond to God if given a chance. Please pray for James as he evangelises in Narromine, as well as everyone within our own Diocese, who is taking the water of life to thirsty travellers along life's highway.*



# Goings and goings

**AT THIS TIME OF YEAR, THINGS ARE WINDING DOWN AND** closing up. It is a time for many partings as people leave old jobs, and move on, ready to start somewhere fresh in the new year.

In our Diocese, it is often a time when church staff move on, giving us some comings and goings. There will be a number of new clergy beginning work in the Diocese in 2019, and in later editions of *The Link*, we will welcome them, but for now it is time to say either 'goodbye', or 'see you down the road'.

**Tory Cayzer**, Vicar of Walgett/Collarenebri is moving east, to Kootingal/Moonbi. His feelings are very mixed about the move.

"Small towns get a grip on your heart that is hard to describe," he said. "And so, we leave Walgett/Collarenebri with heavy hearts. 'With much love comes much grief,' as they say. We will miss the small group that gathered on Sunday at each church, sharing lives in Bible studies, and the partnership we shared with you in kids' ministry and maintenance. As the local vicar, it was a privilege to be trusted into people's lives across the broader community in many circumstances. Often, we have laughed and cried as we have shared people's lives through adversity, drought, death, the history of Aboriginal people, and 'local ways' of doing things. The highlight was seeing people appreciate God's grace in Jesus and seeing the cost people paid for that good news. Countless times we've said we wouldn't be here if not for the support of a Diocese that loves Jesus and is generous to His cause. Thank you all. As a family we are convinced this is the right time to be moving, and we look forward to the next adventure serving Jesus and loving His people in Kootingal and Moonbi."



After 21 years in the Diocese, (minus 4 years in Canberra) **Tim Baxter** is having a gap year! He spent the past 11 years in Narrabri, but will be spending the next year in Port Macquarie, as his wife Natasha begins her nursing career there. He said, "I am having a year off



parish ministry. But I will be doing some chaplaincy with the Army Reserve Singleton. Chaplaincy is something I've done before, though not for the past six years. I hope to find a bit more part time work in Port Macquarie as well. We are leaving very happy as we have really enjoyed our time here. It has been great to see God at work in people's lives, and we have always felt very supported by everyone. We do hope to return to the Diocese, God willing. We are leaving two married daughters here in town, so we will be around! I'll be coming to Men @ Glen next year, and when you think about it, we will only just be down the hill!"



**Bernard Gabbott** is moving too...just a little way down the track to Narrabri.

In early January 2010, Bernard and Anita Gabbott, with Seth and Baxter, started work at Wee Waa Anglican Church as the Assistant Vicar. With the focus of starting an evening service, they had moved there from farm work in Mullaley. In 2012, Bernard succeeded Simon Carter as Vicar.

Now, nine years later, in early January 2019, Bernard and Anita, Seth, Baxter, Elsa and Sage will be moving down the road to Narrabri, to follow the work of Tim and Natasha Baxter. They have treasured their time in Wee Waa, where they have loved the small community, the close relationships, the opportunity to teach God's mob about Jesus, and to offer Jesus to the wider town. Narrabri is a larger enterprise - both town and church - but the job remains the same: introducing people to Jesus.



# They come, they stay, they serve

A particular feature of the Diocese of Armidale is the great loyalty the clergy have to the area. We asked Bernard Gabbott to explain why he thought this happens.

**I WAS ASKED THE OTHER DAY, 'WHY DO CLERGY IN THE Anglican Diocese of Armidale stay so long? Why are they so committed – to their parishes and to the Diocese?'**

It is a good question. Although I have not done extensive research (none!) and although I think it rests on anecdotal evidence (many of our clergy do move outside the Diocese, usually to areas of greater need), it does seem to touch on a certain 'reputation' that our Diocese and clergy have.

Here are my three suggestions about why this is the case (and let me stress that they are my opinion only!).

First, I think that many of our clergy are committed to community. They are committed to community with Christ – which is the essence of the Gospel and its fruit. They are committed to bringing the goodness of this community to the areas that they live in – the towns of rural north-west New South Wales, and they are committed to the communities they are in.

In essence, community is what we are about. We want people to meet Jesus and to enjoy community with Him and His mob. Our desire is for that community to grow in the communities we live in. We love our towns and localities. The long-term growth of these communities can only come through long-term commitment. In fact, a close friend of ours within the Diocese once observed that, 'The smaller the town, the longer you should stay'. Personally, we have seen that fruit from

that community commitment.

Second, I think that the clergy of our Diocese – and their families, and ministry teams – enjoy a close collegiality. The common social interaction we have with each other – through Deanery meetings, Clergy Conferences and the gatherings clergy wives enjoy, the Sector Conferences, and Synod – builds a level of community closeness that is probably unrivalled across most of the Australian Anglican community. This is due to a number of reasons – for example, the remoteness of some of our positions. But it is also connected to our common purpose – introducing people to Jesus.

But the collegiality is not just clergy-focussed. I greatly appreciate the many and valued ways that clergy and laity partner in the same work. The delight of Synod, where we meet, sit, eat and relax together is a tangible example of this partnership. Overall, then, this collegiality (in my opinion) fosters longevity and partnership and deep relationship.

Finally, I think country living is a crucial factor. There are so many opportunities for relationship and 'rawness' that rural life gives that benefit relationship and Gospel-work. Where else can you take a funeral for dear friends, followed by coffee with dear friends, after which you teach SRE to the children of the same dear friends – all within walking distance? The result is not just community, not just collegiality, not just community, but deep relationships which bear fruit for Christ.

## Vale John Dowe

**Graham Farley**

John was a quiet unassuming man, and was a very faithful pastor and his influence was felt in all the areas in which he served in the Diocese. He was a firm believer in long term ministry and served ten years in each of the parishes of Walgett, Uralla and Narrabri, totalling a remarkable 30 years of faithful service. He was a great pastor, majoring on visiting his parishioners at home and in hospital, and kept in touch with members of his flock long after having left the parish.

He always had a keen interest in the rural scene and rural people and bringing the gospel to them. In the 1970's he addressed a Moore College mission team at Uralla about the opportunities, encouragements and pitfalls of country ministry. This interest and support of country ministry continued long after his retirement. His was a ministry that took place in all seasons – times of prosperity, drought and flood.

John had a very dry sense of humour and during the grim drought of the early 1980's he quoted the old farmers maxim about the black soil plains – 'if you stick to it in the dry, it will stick to you in the wet!'. On another occasion with a straight face he told of the day there was snow in Walgett. To his somewhat incredulous audience he explained 'it came over on the back of a truck from Coonabarabran!'

John was a foundation member of the Parish and Ministry Development Committee – a think tank on rural ministry and he hosted the group in

Narrabri for a number of years. His wisdom and experience was greatly valued as the committee grappled with the problems of declining numbers in the small towns and looked at the best ways to continue ministering to people in these difficult circumstances.

John was a humble man and few knew of his academic achievements, being both a Greek and Hebrew scholar. These gifts were to come into sharper focus later in John's life. After many years of country ministry, when perhaps some would be thinking of retirement, John and his wife Clare responded to a call from the Church Missionary Society for a lecturer at a theological college in the Solomon Islands. They spent the next three years in service there where John lectured in Greek and shared from his wealth of experience in pastoral ministry to young men preparing for ministry. It was a great mark of his dedication to his Lord and his flexibility that he should take on a new and demanding ministry at that stage of his life. Many people from the Plains to the Tablelands will have fond memories of John, and give thanks to God for his ministry and his service to his Lord.



*The photo of John Dowe which hangs on the vestry wall of St John's Uralla is a constant reminder of his years of faithful ministry in the Diocese.*



# Into the past

David Robinson  
Vicar of Glen Innes



**AT OUR 11PM SERVICE ON CHRISTMAS EVE WE HAVE TRIED** to engage with people by stepping back in time a little bit. We haven't done anything too out of the ordinary, we simply use the 1662 Prayer Book and the King James Bible. The service isn't too different from what we do each week in our traditional communion service. It really is just the language that we use. Christmas is still a time when people will visit church even if they are not regular churchgoers. The 11pm service had struggled in recent years, so I felt there was room to try something a bit different to our usual practice. My experience of those later services on Christmas Eve was that they tended to appeal to older generations, so I thought that doing something a bit more traditional

might be a way to engage people who we weren't normally seeing at Church.

The response has been really positive. In 2016 it was twice as big as it was the year before, and it was slightly bigger again, last year. More importantly as I talk to a number of our regular members who come, they tell me they get a lot from the service. I think this service works for several reasons. On one hand it is a little bit different from what we do week to week and I think that always gets people a little more engaged in the service. We also live in a town with an older demographic which means that many of the people who come grew with the language and style of the Book of Common Prayer and the King James Bible. I'm sure that many of our visitors are drawn by the familiarity of the service.

As a church we have only one gospel that we are to proclaim, and that never changes. The challenge is to work out how the gospel can be best communicated in a particular situation. That is why a nursing home service is different from a holiday kids club. Equally, different times of the year bring different opportunities to communicate the gospel. Christmas and Easter are obvious examples but there are others. For instance many churches in our Diocese ran services to mark Remembrance Day. When you have a whole nation reflecting on themes like the horror of war, peace and sacrifice you are presented with a great opportunity to show people that Jesus is the answer to the kinds of questions that people are asking.

## God remembers

Tim Stevens

**I'LL BEGIN BY BEING COMPLETELY HONEST: BEING THE** (young) vicar of a tiny town in the grip of an intense drought has had its moments. Though, I'm not sure what kind of experience could prepare a young family, formerly of Sydney (where the economy continues despite rain, hail, or shine), for the difficulties faced by a rural community when crops cannot be harvested.

Firstly there is the rarely spoken about emotional toll that prolonged time without rain brings. It's been disheartening as regular efforts to provide physical assistance and emotional support have been met with a "Nah, mate. There's others doing much worse than us". I long for the day when I meet the person that is doing it worse than everyone else. Finally, that will be someone I can help!

Secondly, it's been difficult to see regular mainstays of the community close their doors as the local economy struggles. Significantly for this small town, earlier this year we saw the Mungindi RSL Club close its doors. We're told that it's permanent: their debts too great to trade. They have lost their RSL club and therefore their Chinese restaurant. By definition, is Mungindi even a town anymore?

Mungindi RSL club is a proud institution. Their ANZAC day services are always well attended, and the remembrance of soldiers past and present is something the community takes great pride in. Many of the people here still remember boys that left and never came home. The closure of 'The Club' was a significant moment for the town. It also was a moment of stress: the 100th anniversary of the conclusion

of World War One was approaching, and Mungindi had no obvious place to hold a service.

At this point, it would be unfair for me to accept any praise for what follows. At our mid-year clergy conference our Dean, Chris Brennan, suggested that we offer churches to Sub-Branches for Remembrance Day services. Recognising that God is sovereign in all things, He ordained that the 100th year of Remembrance Day should take place on a Sunday. What an opportunity!

Understandably, Mungindi Sub-Branch said yes. But we were unsure if anyone would come. Remembrance Day in Mungindi is always less attended than its ANZAC counterpart in April, and the thought of walking into a church is too much for some.

So you can understand my complete surprise when the church slowly filled at 11 am, well past our regular 15, to the point where the church filled up with around 70 people! What could have been a complete failure, turned out to be a huge, God-honouring success. We sang songs, had moments of silence, reflected on God's word, prayed in thankfulness to Him, and were encouraged by the greatest sacrifice of all: Jesus.

I'm always reminded in ministry that it is God who provides opportunities and the growth. All up, this was a beautiful reminder of that truth, and it was a moment where God's church was able to minister to the whole community as they face some challenging times. Praise Him!



# When love gets difficult

Janene Lewers

**LOVE IN HARD PLACES** WAS THE THEME OF THE RECENT New Life conference. More than 450 women gathered in Tamworth to hear Jenny Salt from Sydney Missionary and Bible College and Margie Newman from Tamworth. Under the sovereign hand of God the topic 'Love in Hard Places' was timely as our region struggles in the midst of drought. The program which included interviews and testimony from women in the north west, complemented the strong Bible talks from Jenny on the book of Ruth and Margie on the topic of friendship.

Jenny helped the women see God's sovereignty and goodness through the relationship of Naomi and Ruth. Women were challenged to think on a familiar story in the Bible and look afresh how it points to Jesus. The sacrificial love between Ruth and Naomi a pre cursor to the perfect love of Jesus.

Margie encouraged the women to find their friendship in Jesus so that they can be good friends to others. Local farmer Janelle Tongue shared how she has given and experienced friendship in the midst of drought, a testimony to her friendship with Jesus.

Women also heard of the new life that Jesus brings from personal testimonies and were challenged to share that good news both here and across the world with input from the Church Missionary Society (CMS), Scripture Union (SU) and the Commission for Evangelism and Mission (CEM).

New Life 18 was full of wonderful fellowship enjoyed by all from Woolgoolga to Coonabarabran. One of the conference attendees Ruth France from Walcha said, "I've seen so much suffering lately and I've been asking God about it all. To be honest struggling to get my head around the depth of the suffering (not my grief, I'm just an onlooker). God really used this conference to remind me he is sovereign and he is there in the midst of the pain. And I've been spurred on (from Margie's talk) to be a better friend, a servant hearted friend!"

Save the date; New Life 19 is Saturday 24<sup>th</sup> August and the speaker is Lizzie Smallwood from the United Kingdom.



*MC for the weekend, Tam Ramsay and speaker, Margie Newman.*

# Being fed for the summer

Nick Stone

CMS Northern NSW representative

**WHETHER YOU ARE YOUNG OR OLD, WE GROW AS CHRISTIANS** as we become more aware of what God is doing in His world. It is a terrific encouragement to our faith as we hear Christ being proclaimed faithfully to the nations and men, women and children finding life and hope in Him.

The Church Missionary Society's Summer School is a great opportunity for this. Plan to come to CMS Summer School at beautiful Mount Tamborine from Friday 4th-Wednesday 9th January 2019. If you ask me, it will be a great way to follow up celebrating the birth of our Saviour, a Boxing day test win in the cricket and beginning a new year. Be fed from God's Word as Simon Manchester takes us through Song of Songs – "Pursuing Love", and hear what God is doing throughout the world from CMS missionaries. We will be challenged and encouraged as we hear how God is reaching Buddhist people with the saving news of Jesus. We have youth and children covered too – they will hear from God's Word and from missionaries, plus there will

be games and activities and opportunities for them to grow in their mission awareness.

Another opportunity to grow in our mission awareness is Autumn Encounter. Mark the date – Friday 12th-Saturday 13th April 2019. This one is closer to home, in Tamworth. Andrew Lubbock, Senior minister of Arundel Presbyterian Church on the Gold Coast and former CMS missionary, will speak from Genesis 12-17 – "Blessing all nations". If you want to stay longer to enjoy more fun and fellowship, join us for a barbecue on the Saturday night, as well as church and lunch at St John's Tamworth on the Sunday. We are calling this extra bit of fun 'AE+'. In Revelation 7 we are given a wonderful picture of a great crowd gathered around Jesus "from every nation, tribe, people and language" (v. 9). God, in His grace, is gathering this crowd together, as His people share the good news of Jesus. Will you pray with me for this world to know Jesus? I hope to see you at Summer School or Autumn Encounter or both!



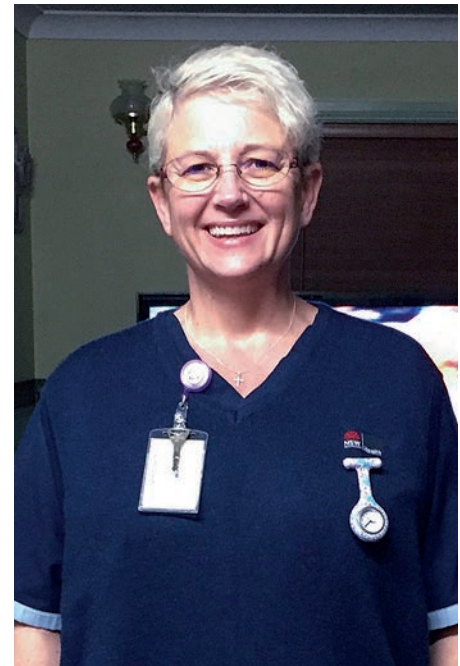


“...there’s no discouragement shall make him once relent his first avowed intent to be a pilgrim...”

John Bunyan

## Lauren’s move

**LAUREN AND ROD CRAWFORD** LEFT Sydney to move to Narrabri early this year. It is just another turn in Lauren’s surprising pilgrimage.



In 1990, Rod and I had our daughter Erin and we weren’t married. We didn’t feel right about being unmarried so we thought it would please God if we got married, even though we were very naive about who we thought God was. We wanted to check out a church, so we went to St. Luke’s Liverpool to enquire about getting married. We snuck into the 8am service which totalled about 10 elderly parishioners, all of whom sat up the front. We sat down the back trying to look inconspicuous. For the first couple of weeks we thought we’d managed to pull it off! We would get to the end of the service and then we’d basically bolt out of the door so we didn’t have to talk to anyone. But on the third week as we tried to run out the side door there blocking the doorway was this rather tall guy who wasn’t going to let us go anywhere without introducing himself to us. He was the Associate Minister, Rick Lewers. After telling him why we were there, Rick offered to go through the gospel with us by doing Christianity Explained. I guess he wanted to dispel some of the concoctions we had in our minds about God and what part Jesus had to play in it all. I really was ignorant of God, I thought he was there, but that was all I knew. I had only gotten through three sessions of CE and decided that was for me. I asked Rick if I had to wait till the end of CE before I made a commitment. Actually I had decided by session two that I wanted to become a Christian but I was too afraid to say anything. So at the end of the third session I made my commitment to Christ and Rod followed that afternoon. We haven’t looked back since then.

We moved to Narrabri out of a desire to do Christian ministry, which came from a challenge from Rick Lewers to come and serve in the country.

I thought Narrabri would have a smaller population and be full of country folk who ran farms! I expected it to be a tight knit community that would see us as outsiders and hold us at arm’s length. But Narrabri is more eclectic than I expected. There are people from all walks of life. As for being aloof, it has been anything but! People seem genuinely pleased that we’ve come and very welcoming.

I’ve left behind my children and my grandchildren, it breaks my heart not being around for them or being able to care for my granddaughters as I used to. And of course, I miss our dear church family. There are people who have been very precious to us over the years, people we’ve shared our lives with, and while they are not out of our lives now, it is different and it can get rather lonely being away from everyone you’ve loved. For now I will have to remind myself of Jesus’ words:

*And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or fields for my sake will receive a hundred times as much and will inherit eternal life Matt 19:29.*

All these years of being a Christian, I’ve said I will trust God, but I have never felt it as poignantly as I do now. I’ve had to trust God that he will look after my children now that I’m not there and that he will look after Rod and me as well. I’m thankful that our Lord has broad shoulders and can deal with my doubts and fears and is only too quick to forgive me when I bring my worries before Him in repentance. I am thankful that God has given me a husband who knows me so well and is ready to prop me up when I need it. I am thankful for supportive family and friends who believe in what we are striving to do. I am thankful for the generosity of people around us. There is much to be thankful for.

### About

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