

The Link

ANGLICAN DIOCESE OF ARMIDALE

2024 FEBRUARY/MARCH

Ministering through ships



Hope and the written word

How do Christians living in an inland diocese come to be serving on ships around the globe? For **Mish Dunlop** the seeds were planted five years ago when her parents asked her what she thought she might like to do for God. At the time Mish didn't know and her parents suggested that after she finished Year 12 she consider ship ministry – something they found to be a transformative learning experience.

IN 1997, AFTER A COUPLE OF YEARS OF BEING A CHRISTIAN, MY MUM DECIDED to join Operation Mobilisation's (OM) ship, *Doulos*, for a year. My parents were already dating and in the November my dad joined the ship on a short-term mission as a carpenter for two to three months. They were married the following October and thought that the ship had simply been a nice season of life.

In 1998 however, while my mom was on the *Doulos*, my grandfather had been contacted by OM because they needed marine engineers. He was told he'd be on the *Logos II* in Mexico for a month. My grandparents ended up serving with OM for 13 years. My grandfather actually helped design and do all the engineering for the *Logos Hope*. The current chief engineer worked for my grandfather when he was chief engineer and they

continued on page 2

from page 1

were converting the *Logos Hope*, and now I work for my grandfather's colleague in the engine department! My favourite part is that I am the third generation in our family joining OM, but it's not because I feel obligated.

Logos Hope is the world's largest floating bookfair. For two to four weeks, communities at each port are invited onboard to access quality literature at an affordable price relative to the country, and to visit the Hope Theatre for productions, lectures, exhibitions or to learn practical skills. Teams from the ship also partner with local churches and organisations to identify the needs of the community, including providing some medical assistance. It's intentional and there's also discipling, rather than just evangelism.

There are about 70 nationalities among the 400 volunteers, with the majority aged between 18 to 25 and most signing up for one or two years. I have a friend from Newcastle who grew up onboard the ship and she is joining me as a volunteer. I'm excited to get to know so many people who are like me, but so different. I've been learning Spanish for about three years and I'm looking forward to making friends who can speak Spanish.

I think the hardest aspect of joining the ship will be not seeing my

family who I'm really close to and not being here for things like friend's weddings. Ultimately, that's the great commission – it's like, 'Will you put aside your comforts so that other people can hear the good news of Jesus?' If that means I have to miss a few special events at home, that's the sacrifice that I've chosen to make.

In his faithfulness God has provided an abundance of what is needed in raising my financial support. He has continually, overwhelmingly been revealing to me that this is what he wants me to do for whatever reason and that's exciting. We moved to Moree fifteen years ago and All Saint's Anglican has been my church family since then. There have been lots of people pouring into me since I was very little and they get to still walk by me from 1000s of kms away and that's really encouraging. It's also a testimony to God's work in the young people in our church and the older mentorship.

I'd love prayer for my family as I'll be leaving a Mish-shaped hole in their lives. It'll be a big change for all of us. Please also pray for safety, smoothness in adjusting to this new chapter and that people we minister to will be receptive.

Since 1970, OM's ship ministry has been visited by more than 49 million people in over 150 countries. Email Michelle.Dunlop@om.org for updates.

Influential relationships

Matt and Kay Knights are long-term members of St Mark's uneChurch at the University of New England in Armidale and in October 2023 moved across the country on an empty-nester ministry adventure. Matt has been employed full-time as an Assistant Chaplain to the Port Hedland Mission to Seafarers Centre while Kay volunteers part-time in the Centre's cash office. Kay is a physiotherapist and Matt an office worker. They have two adult married children involved in church work in Sydney as well as three grandchildren under three.



WE MOVED TO PORT HEDLAND IN October 2023 for an initial six-months with a view to a possible three year stint. The Mission to Seafarers (MTS) is an international mission agency of the Anglican Church. Port Hedland is one of 28 Mission to Seafarers Centres in Australia, with over 300 Mission to Seafarers centres across 71 countries worldwide. MTS aims to provide pastoral, practical and spiritual welfare to Seafarers of all ranks, nationalities and beliefs. Around 100,000 seafarers visit Port Hedland each year.

The Port Hedland Centre started in 1971 and provides onshore recreation, currency exchange, counselling, communications and shopping services for seafarers that crew the

iron ore ships taking ore primarily to China, Japan and South Korea.

All this came about as Matt ruefully claims, "because you happen to be good mates with a bloke who ends up becoming a bishop, knows you're empty-nesters and has holes to fill!" Out of the blue in April 2023, we received an 'encouragement' from The Venerable Darrell Parker (now Bishop of the huge Diocese of North West Australia) to apply for the role.

We said, "thanks, but no thanks," especially given: the distance from family, including our three grandchildren and Kay's 91 year old father; leaving the New England for a remote, hot, dusty, barren, industrial environment; leaving our familiar and treasured church

family; long-term friends; and creative musical camaraderie (for Matt). However, we immediately regretted shutting the door and after more thought and prayer, discussion with family and friends, decided to go and check it out in July, then two and half months later made the big change to the other side.

Our weekly routine involves Matt heading off to the Seafarers Centre first thing, checking in-port shipping movements, seafarers' in-bound/out-bound transfers, sorting emails and organisational tasks, going out on the shore leave launch to collect seafarers for some downtime on land, and being friendly and open to chat about whatever. They all know MTS is a Christian

The Link, Number 89
February/March 2024
ISSN 1834-0741

Anglican Diocese of Armidale PO Box 198 Armidale 2350 02 6772 4491 armidaleanglicandiocese.com
Editor: Rachel Doran rachel@editoria.com.au
Art direction and assistance from Stephen Mason and Anglican Media Sydney.
Thanks to all photographers who contributed to this issue.

The Link is published by the Anglican Diocese of Armidale as part of the Diocesan vision to "Introduce all people to Jesus and help them home to Heaven".

organisation and this gives Matt as a Chaplain a ready licence to speak about Jesus and the big stuff of life, which happens now and again at varying levels. Bibles are free and available in a variety of key languages.

Kay goes to a gym class most mornings then helps run the money-change and cash office at the Centre from 11am till 4pm. Many thousands of dollars pass through the Centre every week, with official processes and government compliances to be fulfilled. Currently, the Centre employs eight staff and two volunteers and we try to be an encouragement to all.

We're living on the same residential block with folk we work and church with, which is very different to our country space. The local Aquatic Centre has become our daily retreat for an hour or so at the end of each workday and on weekends. There's precious little else to do unless you like wandering aimlessly through an air-conditioned shopping mall, and given the heat and sea creatures that could sting or chomp, the pool is the place to go – to swim, chat, eat and just look out to sea.

Some highlights so far have included: the good lifestyle; gospel chats and praying with seafarers—some facing medical and family issues. For example, Matt walked into work one morning and met a 45 year old Filipino Chief Engineer heading home on compassionate leave after his 21 year old daughter committed suicide. So, so hard, but a privilege to be his friend in that moment with solid ground to stand on together—making friends with locals; and Kay growing a small productive garden in an otherwise red dustbowl.

We have been challenged by the heat – it's regularly in the 40s as summer progresses! We miss parts of our New England lifestyle and closer proximity to family. There are limited options for outings and R & R that doesn't require air-conditioning. Some relationships have also proved quite demanding.

We give thanks for a Bible-based church family, friendly natives :) the local pool and the Lord's faithfulness, promises and enabling. Please pray that we'll continue to rely daily on the Lord's faithfulness, promises and enabling; that we'll be salt and light among seafarers, staff and the local community; and that we'll have wisdom in decision making about our future here come April.

Ministry to seafarers is the ultimate itinerant ministry, with seafarers finding Christmas the most difficult time of year. Last year 2,000 bags containing sweet treats, Christian literature and handknitted items were given out between December 24 – 26 in Port Hedland alone. People from all over Australia donate to this ministry. To find out more you can visit phseafarers.org/ or mts.org.au/christmas-appeal to find knitting patterns for needed items.

FEBRUARY/MARCH 2024

Mercy in Africa

Gail Wheeler

WHEN I WAS CHILD I SAID TO MY mother, 'I'm going to be a nurse, I'm going to be a nun, I'm going to marry a doctor and I'm going to go to Africa'. And my mum said, 'Well then, you're not going to be a nun!' I didn't grow up in a Christian home but at age nine I decided that I wanted to go to church and I took myself off to the adult service at St John's in Tamworth every Sunday. I guess God just wanted me to go. I was confirmed when I was eleven and stayed at St John's until I was 19 and joined the Navy as an enrolled nurse.

I first heard about Mercy Ships through Lyn, a scrub nurse, who went to care for a sick friend for eight months. When she returned to Tamworth Hospital she said, 'While I was away I went to Africa and worked on a ship'. That was in 2004 and I thought, 'I could do that for a month to see if I like it'. At the time they didn't have enrolled nurses on the ship so I worked in the galley, and then again in 2006 for two months. Later Mercy ships contacted Lyn to ask if she knew any enrolled nurses who could do anaesthetics. I applied and I've been working as an anaesthetic nurse on the ships ever since.

I've worked in Africa eight times now: the first time I was in Freetown, Sierra Leone for a month, then Liberia for two months, then back to Sierra Leone for five months in 2011, the Republic of Congo for two months in 2014, Madagascar for two months in 2016, Cameroon for four weeks in 2018, Senegal for five weeks in 2019, and once again in Sierra Leone for seven weeks in late 2023. I've been in Freetown on a different ship each time which is rather novel. First the *Anastasis*, then the *Africa Mercy* and more recently, *Global*.

In Africa there are only so many doctors for millions of people, and often people can't afford to get the surgery or they can't get to a hospital or the hospitals can't perform big surgeries. Mercy ships have to be invited by the government of a country to come and they stay for ten months, sending out messages and flyers before the ship arrives in port. One day a week ship staff go out and screen people. They repair a lot of cleft lips and remove cataracts. Doctors always try to operate on the worst cases and kids and babies.

One man, I think his name was Sam had been trying for years to get help for a pillow-sized tumour on his back. He'd sold a rice field but he couldn't get the operation. He heard the ship was coming and his friends carried him for a few days to get to the ship. They



Gail Wheeler, centre, with the anaesthetics team.

have MRIs and CAT scans on the ship but the surgeons had to say to Sam, 'Look, you might die because we don't know until we get in there how much the veins are tangled in with everything else'. And Sam said, 'Well, I'm not living now'. The surgery took hours and hours and Sam haemorrhaged and had to be given a lot of blood but he survived. Mercy ships staff returned Sam to his village and got to watch him walk home hand in hand with his wife.

The patient I remember most was a young guy, just eighteen. He was a healthy looking guy, but he had a cleft lip and palette and he'd always been tormented because people around him believed he had a demon. After surgery he had the bandages taken off and only some cream on his stitches remained. He was handed a mirror and the look on his face is something I'll never forget. His life was changed forever by one operation. It's pretty humbling. It makes you realise how much you have. They've got nothing these people and they're just so thankful. When they realise that you don't get paid to be on the ship but that you have to pay to be there they are shocked. Over 90% of the staff are Christians. We explain through the translators, 'God wants us to come to help people like you.'

I was upset for quite a while when I was younger because my friends all got married and had babies, but I don't think God wanted me to get married. I've worked in Africa and in England as a nanny. I've had so many trips and I've got friends all over the world. It's been a privilege. I don't worry about not being married anymore. I spent my 60th with friends from Mercy ships and I'm about to go over to see them for my 70th in March.

The age limit for nurses on the ship is 70 and I'm not planning on keeping up my registration. It is sad that it's over. I probably won't go back, but you never know...

Gail is a loved member of St Paul's West Tamworth. To learn more go to mercyships.org.au

Kingdom visions



Bishop Rod Chiswell, with The Reverends Jared Lidgerwood, (St Peter's Cathedral), Nathan Tuckwell, (St Mark's UNEchurch), Reuben Birchley (All Saint's, Moree), Matt Hearne (Barraba Anglican), Dan Rowe (Narrabri Anglican), Jo Benham (The Armidale School Chaplain) on February 17th at St Peter's Cathedral in Armidale.

Bishop Rod Chiswell

GREETINGS FROM ARMIDALE IN A DELIGHTFULLY RAINY summer season. God has been kind to us in the north west of New South Wales. What was shaping up to be a dry and dangerous bushfire period has turned into a great time of refreshment, and so the countryside all over the diocese is looking superb.

The summer holidays are often a time to pause and catch your breath, to stop and think about the year ahead. I was afforded more thinking time than usual this year with the last-minute cancellation of CMS Summer School up on Mount Tambourine due to devastation by wild storms. Whilst I was sad to miss the opportunity to gather for fellowship, teaching and a glimpse of the bigger picture, I was glad to have more time to pray, think and plan.

The fruit of this reflection found voice in a conversation I had with a good friend. He was back in Armidale for a time, having been prevented from a return to the mission field due to political unrest. We got talking about the war in the Middle East and the sadness of the situation there. We talked too of the aftermath of "The Voice" referendum and what might come next. Having talked at length but come up with no simple solutions to these problems my friend asked me a very helpful question. "What would you like to see happen this year?" The answer to my surprise came almost immediately.

"Firstly", I said, "I would like to see the Coledale Frontyard Church Project completed in the first half of this year, and new gospel outreach initiatives among Aboriginal people start up all over the Armidale Diocese. Secondly, I would like to find the right person to take up the role of Archdeacon for Women so that we can move forward with proactive promotion of women's ministry within a complementarian

framework in our diocese. And thirdly I would like to see a theological training campus started in Tamworth so that we can get on with the vital work of training and sending godly, competent, well-trained country ministers all over Australia and into the wider world mission field as well."

My friend was a little stunned but managed to be encouraging. He said "Well, good on you Rod, they are all great things." I'm not sure whether he thought they were realistic dreams or pipe-dreams, he was kind enough not to say.

But here's the thing: proactive gospel initiatives must start somewhere. In my experience they begin with prayer for wisdom, they then become ideas that grow. Ideas when shared and prayed about then sometimes become visions. Visions with further prayer and small but deliberate steps, then become gospel initiatives that find life, and eventually grow to bear gospel fruit. Now while not all of our hopes and visions will be realised this side of heaven, God encourages us in his word not to be fearful but to trust him and get on with the task at hand. The Apostle Paul sums this mindset up well when he writes to Timothy saying, "God has not given us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love and of self-discipline." (2 Timothy 1:7) For me all of this leads to a way of thinking that has always served me well – "Pray for wisdom and have a go." My clergy team have heard this before, but I think it's worth saying again as we launch into another year of gospel partnership. May God strengthen each of to pray for wisdom and have a go as we persevere with introducing all people to Jesus and helping them home to heaven.

With love in Christ, Rod Chiswell.



Julianne Lilley

Counselling Program Manager
Anglicare New England North-West

GOD DESIGNED US WITH INBUILT NEUROBIOLOGICAL (BRAIN and body) mechanisms to help us survive and find safety. Parts of our brains, like the amygdala, are always on the lookout for stressors or threats of danger: work deadlines, family dramas, and ongoing life pressures. Or it could be more acute: a car crash; the out-of-control bushfire. These situations trigger our body's stress response. We produce stress hormones. The nervous system might enter the survival states of Fight/ Flight/ Freeze/ Shutdown if the situation feels sufficiently threatening. These responses help us manage or overcome the stressors so that we can return to a calm and safe state.

However, some circumstances can feel so unsafe that they leave a longer-term impact on our lives. The amygdala becomes hypervigilant and over-reactive. The world feels much more dangerous. The body's stress response is chronically activated. The body and the brain become stuck in the survival states, not able to return to feeling calm – responding as if the distressing event is still happening. This is psychological trauma. In severe forms, it is known by the clinical diagnosis PTSD (Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder). Symptoms can include flashbacks, intrusive thoughts, stronger emotional reactions and difficulty maintaining daily functioning.

Anyone who is exposed to a traumatic experience can develop trauma. It could develop from a one-off event, or from ongoing circumstances in which the world feels inescapably unsafe. It could develop vicariously, through witnessing or hearing about someone else's experiences. The development of trauma is linked to the erosion of a person's sense of safety and agency. Trauma is more likely to develop when we feel the world is unsafe, unreliable and beyond our control.

There is good news for trauma survivors: healing and recovery are very possible. Empirical research shows certain therapies are highly effective for treating trauma. Referring to professional support is beneficial. But overarchingly, two of the most important ingredients to recovery are building safety and personal connection. Since people develop trauma because the world feels unsafe – whether physically or psychologically – the body and brain need to experience that the world is safe again. Strong personal connections with a trustworthy

and reliable support network are integral to rebuilding safety. Because of this, having connection, love, and belonging in a church community can be powerful for someone who is stuck in the isolating overwhelm of trauma. For this, the church needs to be an emotionally and psychologically-safe place, showing Jesus' radical love in both practical and relational ways: making space to truly listen; patience to hear and believe the survivor's story; minimising judgement and advice-giving; holding confidentiality; making mandatory reports where needed; having room for the messiness of a life impacted by trauma; and unconditional acceptance of the child of God who is trying their best to survive in a world that feels overwhelming.

For someone who is living with trauma the thought of going to church, facing a lot of people, and fielding questions can be distressing. It could feel too unsafe. It could feel easier to stay away and not engage. If you notice a person has been absent, call them. Visit. Be intentional about connecting with them and being part of their experience of safety. Instead of saying "Let me know if you need anything", ask: "What would make a difference to you? How might I be with you in a way that is helpful?"

Some signs of trauma can overlap with symptoms of other mental health conditions, such as anxiety or depression. You might not know what specifically is underlying, for example, the person's sleep disturbance, emotional reactivity, or withdrawal from the world. However, the presence of these symptoms indicates that something about the person's life feels unsafe, overwhelming or distressing. This tells us to act with care and compassion to build safety and connection.

God's heart for the suffering, the disempowered and the oppressed of all kinds is evident in Scripture, and a large part of Jesus' call for us to live out the kingdom of God on earth. Let us, as a church, be His hands and feet caring for those who are living with trauma, loving them like Jesus.

Anglicare has highly trained Christian counsellors experienced in working with trauma based in Tamworth, Moree, Inverell, Tenterfield, and Armidale. Phone and video appointments are available across the New England North-West. To access Anglicare's subsidised counselling, contact Anglicare on 6701 8200 or tamworth@anglicare.org.au

Unique training

The unique partnership shared by **The Reverend David Fisher** and **The Reverend Matt Hearne** is as a result of Bishop Rod Chiswell's creativity in seeking to fill as many parishes as possible with incumbents.

Matt completed his theological studies in late 2022 and returned to the Armidale Diocese where he and his wife, Chloe, had grown up and had a good understanding of rural parish ministry. David has been ministering in the diocese since he moved from Kulnura in 1999 to study in Armidale. He and his wife, Steph, have been very grateful for the opportunities, training, time and nurture they have received from godly mentors in this diocese and in Sydney during their time at Moore College.



DAVID:

As the sole minister in the Parish of Manilla, my role is very varied and there is a range of serving opportunities from teaching Scripture, to being a co-leader for our youth group, coordinating our men's outreach events, leading men's and senior's Bible study groups, nursing home services, funerals and of course preaching and other roles in our Sunday services. The parish has four centres with Manilla and Attunga having weekly services and Somerton and Halls Creek having Christmas and Easter services only. Across the parish we have about 75 regulars in our church family from babies, children and youth through to two 100 year olds!

My key concern when Rod first proposed this training partnership was that I hadn't trained another minister before. I was also aware that for many aspects of Matt's ministry – particularly his Sunday responsibilities – I wouldn't be able to lighten his load. Furthermore, I was concerned about how I was going to give Matt helpful feedback when I wouldn't be able to see him preach or lead services etc. Lastly, I wasn't quite sure how I was going to be able to invest adequate time into training Matt. It has been an enormous help to both Matt and me to have had The Reverend Hugh Cox – a wonderful, godly, experienced retired minister – as part of the Barraba parish for most of 2023. Matt and Chloe are also blessed to have a terrific group of servant-hearted men and women in their Barraba church family.

There have been a number of benefits of partnering with Matt including being able to discuss various issues that we're working through in our parishes and taking time to consider why we do what we do. Matt has also brought fresh eyes to ministry and I've really appreciated his new ideas. When Matt first started at Barraba I was able to meet his Parish Council and hear a bit about the parish and Matt came to one Parish Council meeting in Manilla. Since then we've been blessed to have the Barraba youth group join with ours on a number of occasions and this term, with Matt and Chloe expecting a baby, the Barraba youth kids have been invited to join our youth group. We have a photo of the Hearne family on our notice boards, a prayer point in our news-sheet and we pray for them regularly in our services.

I think that church partnerships are a very important way to foster

sustainable gospel ministry and share resources and expertise. The goal of the organisation Reach Australia is '...to build a growing network of theologically driven, spiritually vibrant, evangelistically urgent and practically skilled church leaders' planting evangelical churches where they're needed. In 2018 I attended one of their annual conferences and was greatly helped by their focus on strategic planning in ministry. Since then I've attended three more conferences and some online 'Learning Labs' and have continued to be encouraged and equipped to serve Christ better. A number of clergy across the diocese are now enrolled in a Reach Development Program.

MATT:

I am excited to be ordained as a presbyter while also feeling the weight of responsibility that comes with the role. Over the last 12 months, Dave and I have been working through the curate training manual and I'm grateful for Dave's wisdom and leadership in helping to equip me. We plan to continue meeting together and perhaps now we will focus less on the practical ministry tasks and more on the planning and strategy areas of being a senior minister.

Hugh and Barbara Cox have been a great support, with Hugh leading services, preaching, and administering the Lord's supper. Hugh has also been an excellent person to bounce ideas off and has given me great wisdom and help in dealing with tricky pastoral issues. We were very sad when they told us they would be leaving but if it had been a year earlier I'm not sure how we would have coped!

The lay preachers at church and around the diocese have also been a huge help. Having people preach for me allows me to get other important planning and training done as well as giving me a rest to keep going throughout the year. I think the strength of this partnership is that I get the best of both worlds. I have the one-on-one training that a curate would normally receive, but I also have the freedom to make my own decisions and learn by doing. As well as that, Dave and I are able to give each other ideas and reflect on our own ministries so we can improve. We also get to open the Bible together and grow as brothers in Christ which is always a great joy and encouragement.

Preaching partners

DAVID COOK IS A NAME THAT WILL BE FAMILIAR TO MANY, either through his chairing of the Katoomba Christian convention between 1991-2004 or during the 26 years he was Principal of Sydney Missionary and Bible College (SMBC) where he lectured in preaching. He has also maintained some close relationships with those he pastored as a young Presbyterian minister in Wee Waa.

David (right) is a graduate of both SMBC and Moore Theological College and for over 40 years, God has used his ministry to strengthen the faith of Christians through expository preaching, and to train thousands of preachers to do the same. David has a deep commitment to the power of the word of God — the sword of the Holy Spirit — to save the lost and to feed the church. For this reason, David has a particular passion to see pastors preaching carefully, engagingly and with clear application for everyday living.

After leaving SMBC, David and his wife, Maxine, set up the Expository Preaching Trust in order to encourage faithful and engaging preaching of the Bible and to make David's ministry and resources more accessible. This includes the running of four Preaching Clubs in Armidale, Abbotsford, Sutherland and Wahroonga, called 'Lather and Shave', which consist of 12-14 preachers meeting quarterly to encourage one another in preaching.



Preaching Club comments



'It's great to come together, iron sharpens iron. Over time it's easy to develop bad or lazy habits. The feedback process can hurt but you know it's worth it. It's very generous of David Cook to come and invest in preaching in the northwest — he is full of pearls of wisdom and great illustrations!'

The Reverend Tory Cayzer, Kootingal/Moonbi

'I like two things about Preaching Club: One, the opportunity to hear God's Word preached for a whole day. Two, that our preaching is as pastors in similar situations in small country towns.'

The Reverend Graham Barnes, Walcha

'At Preaching Club we get more helpful feedback than "Nice sermon, pastor," at the door. For me, the beauty is meeting up with other brothers, and encouraging each other to keep our eyes on Christ in this preaching ministry he has given us.'

The Reverend Steve Cimarosti, Warialda

The Reverend Nick Stone explains how our diocese came to be blessed by this partnership.

I FIRST KNEW OF DAVID COOK WHEN I arrived at SMBC in 2012 where he had just retired as principal. Towards the end of 2020 I had been a sole pastor in a parish for three years and could tell that my preaching was plateauing. I knew I could improve and I wanted to be able to handle God's word better and preach it more faithfully, more clearly and in a more engaging way.

I knew David ran the Expository Preaching Trust and I saw that he was starting up the 'Lather and Shave Clubs' in Sydney again after the initial COVID outbreak. I was aware David had a previous connection in this diocese, so I sent him an email to see if he was interested in running a club in Armidale. Yes, he was keen if I could muster 14 guys — and so we began in 2021.

Each Preaching Club normally meets four times during the year. The typical structure is that David will begin by sharing one aspect of preaching. Then six guys will preach a 20 minute sermon (either the previous Sunday's sermon or one they have coming up). After

each sermon we 'lather' (discuss what was good) and 'shave' (consider what could be improved). There's good food and coffee thrown into the mix.

Personally I've found it a great help. In many ways going back to the basics of what I learned about preaching at college has been a real benefit — assessing: What's the big idea/ What's the big question of this passage?, as well as sharpening my application. One benefit for this region is that 14 guys from across our diocese (and others) have been committed to improving their preaching and are grateful for the opportunity to do so.

The word of God is the bread and butter of good gospel ministry. God builds his church through his word and so it is incumbent on those who handle God's word to feed his people well. I'm thankful that it is a focus in this part of God's kingdom.

The Expository Preaching Trust is also joining with the Armidale Diocese to run a Preaching Conference on the 6th & 7th of May. eprtrust.org.au/2024-armidale-preaching-conference/



Nurturing faith

Youth Muster '23 at Carinya Christian School in Tamworth.

Elliot Chapman

Diocesan Youth Encourager

THE LAST 12 MONTHS IN MY ROLE AS THE YOUTH Encourager have been incredibly encouraging! There have been many exciting things happening around the diocese in youth ministry. The most obvious of these is seeing and hearing about young people who have committed to follow Christ, either at diocesan youth events or in their local parishes. In the last year, five young people decided to give their lives to Christ and thirteen recommitted to following Jesus as Lord at diocesan youth events alone.

Another highlight of the role is seeing the joy that youth leaders have in faithfully teaching the young people in their churches about Jesus. Each event run by the Youth Ministry Committee is a window into the weekly discipleship that is occurring in so many churches across the Armidale Diocese. I'm convinced that most, if not all, of the fruit we see at our events is as a result of what happens on a parish level.

On top of this, there continues to be a steady flow of youth and young adults who attend local youth groups and who are now stepping up to lead at youth group, serve in numerous ways at church, or are even in full-time paid ministry in our diocese and further abroad. The fruit of consistent, Christ-centred youth ministry in churches around the diocese is evident.

Over the past 12 months there have been a number of youth events in the diocese. In March last year, 190 youth and leaders met for the *Barraba Bash*. Then in July, 115 young adults joined together for the first *Future Focused* conference. In November, over 250 youth and youth leaders gathered together to have fun singing praise to God, learning from his word and connecting with one another at *Youth Muster '23* in Tamworth. It was a brilliant weekend as Matt Sheridan from St Marks' UNE Church and Sam Talbot from Hunter Bible Church and Newcastle opened the book of 1 Peter with us.

We are currently gearing up for another big year of youth ministry in the diocesan calendar. *Barraba Bash* is right around the corner on March 23rd. This will be an exciting day as youth from all over the diocese gather together to dive into Hebrews 12 with Phillip Van't Spyker from Moree, and consider how we can have *Endurance* as Christians.

In July we will once again gather together young adults from right across the diocese for the second *Future Focused* conference — a day aimed at challenging and equipping young adults to think about

how to serve Jesus with the rest of their lives. This year Mike Dicker (Principal of Youth Works College), will be joining us as we think deeply about time and how we can make the best use of our time for God's glory.

Please continue to praise God for the youth that have come to trust in Jesus as their Saviour during 2023. Please also pray that upcoming events present the good news of Jesus' life, death and resurrection clearly and that more youth would come into a personal relationship with him through these events and through local youth groups.

Pray that these events — particularly *Future Focused* — would be one of the links in the chain of raising up godly leaders for ministry who desire to see Jesus glorified and his kingdom grown.

Finally, please pray that God would sustain the Youth Ministry Committee and that God would give us clarity in long-term decisions regarding how we can best support youth ministry in our diocese.

As you can see, God has chosen to use our churches to bring many youth into a relationship with him, and he is in the business of raising up others from this diocese to continue this work all over the world. Can I encourage you to keep recognising the value of children's and youth ministry? Continue to spur on those involved in these ministries, invest in them, and even consider becoming involved, wherever possible!

To stay up to date with youth events visit armidaledioceseyouth.com

Quotes from Future Focused

Before the first talk I wasn't sure which seminar I wanted to attend, and not even sure what kind of serving I wanted to do in ministry then something Scott said flicked a switch and made me start genuinely considering going into MTS (Ministry Training Strategy).

The Bible talks were a great challenge and encouragement.

So Bible focused!

I thought the talks were relevant, interesting and engaging. Scott did a great job.

I found the Bible talks really helpful and challenging.

Thanking God for his work through Scotty Curtis!

This session did really help me to consider my future, what the important things in life are, and the things I can be doing now to be an active Christian.

Growing new fruit

After nine years serving in the diocese at Calrossy Anglican School, the Price family have recently moved to Orange for **The Reverend Stephen Price** to take up the role of Deputy Principal at Orange Christian School. Steve reflects on their journey to this point.



Amy, Madeleine (4), Becky (7), Steve and Jacob (10) Price.

AMY AND I GREW UP IN SYDNEY AND MET WHILE ATTENDING Christ Church St Ives and we are incredibly thankful for the solid grounding in the faith that we had from attending this youth group and church. Soon after finishing high school, I was asked to lead a youth group at St Matthew's West Pymble which ignited a passion for ministry that continues to this day, especially regarding evangelism. This was developed further when a friend suggested I apply to be a youth minister at The King's School in Parramatta. This amazing experience combined my passion for evangelism and country ministry (due to the large number of boarding students).

After we were married, I moved to Barker College to work in Chaplaincy and teach Christian Studies and Science, and began studying at Sydney Missionary and Bible College part time with the support of the school and Amy working as an Occupational Therapist. Early in my time at Barker College I met a Christian boarder named David Buster with connections to the Armidale Diocese and Calrossy and he suggested that I speak to Joe Goldsworthy. We had heard stories before college and during it, of the Armidale Diocese being a wonderful beacon of evangelical Anglicanism and a place with a rich history of preaching the gospel well.

During my final year at college I was approached about a role in Sydney at a large church and having prayed through it, Amy and I decided that if the Principal of Calrossy, Mrs Elisabeth Jackson, offered me a contract we would accept it. We were passionate about country school ministry and felt a clear direction from God that was where he wanted us to be.

I began at Calrossy as the Secondary Boys' Chaplain of William Cowper, before becoming the School Chaplain and then Head of Calrossy Junior Secondary School, and there have been many wonderful experiences of seeing students coming to faith.

After moving to the diocese we began attending St Peter's South Tamworth and between us have served on Parish Council and in leading Bible study groups, Toddler Group, kids and youth groups, Sunday services, St Peter's Preschool Committee and the Calrossy Prayer Group. I also served for a number of years alongside The Reverend Tim Stevens on the Youth Committee and we praise God for the wonderful way in which the youth ministry has flourished, so

much so that people in Orange have heard about the good things the youth team are doing.

We have been utterly blessed to be part of the Armidale Diocese and are incredibly sad to leave. Amy has been encouraged by the support and connections of the ministry wives group and we love the camaraderie that there is in the diocese. I also loved every time Bishop Rick Lewers preached at a clergy function, setting the tone for the diocese. A challenge was the difficult seasons of drought followed by COVID. Funnily enough the tough years of drought were also fertile years for the gospel at school as farming families really responded to various calls to pray for rain.

It's amazing to see now, how God was making connections for us between people in the Armidale Diocese and people in Orange. We are leaving so many memories, so many good people and friendships and an amazing diocese that stands firm for Jesus ably lead by a bishop who is incredibly hardworking, faithful, passionate and as solid as a rock in his Christian faith. We will really miss Rod and Jenni Chiswell. In God's sense of humour, about three streets away from our new house in Orange is "Chiswell Ave" and this reminds me to give thanks to God for them!

We are excited to meet Christian staff and families in a new area, and see how we can support them in their growth and be encouraged, contributing to the wider Bathurst Diocese as it goes through a significant and exciting change under the leadership of Bishop Mark Calder. Orange Christian School is half the size of Calrossy and I feel that there is so much that God has prepared me and our family with so that we can contribute to this new school community. While initially all three of our children were sad to be leaving friends and connections at school, in Tamworth and across the diocese, they have also been open to us expressing our desire to serve God wherever he has placed us and in each season. Jacob is excited to check out the mountain bike tracks in Orange!

We would value prayer that we will all settle in and build relationships quickly and that God would direct us to where he would like us to be at church. Please also pray that the kids would handle the transition well, that we would build strong connections in the communities we are part of and be a witness to them.



"I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord"
Philippians 3:8

Unified in musical festivities

Howard Barnes

IT STARTED A LITTLE OVER 30 YEARS AGO WHEN TAMWORTH Christians affirmed, "The church should be part of the Country Music Festival". A tent, a coffee urn and a few performers got it started and it has been growing under God's blessing ever since.

The name was recently changed from Country Music Mission, to Jubilee Café (JC), reflecting 50 years of the Country Music Festival, with the additional theme of forgiveness.

This year, the big tent had a commanding place in Hands of Fame Park, where volunteers from 18 churches served drinks and home-cooked delights to the accompaniment of live country gospel music from 10 till 10 each day. Others mingled with the visitors or ran the kids' program. An estimated 2,300 cups of tea/coffee/cool drink were handed out over the five days. One couple shared, "We've searched all over town for a decent cup of tea and authentic home-cooked food and we found it here."

As well as showing Christian love and hospitality to locals and visitors, the Christian volunteers helped Tamworth Regional Council with a free kids' craft spot.

The Council expressed their appreciation for all that the Christians contributed, saying "*The biggest thank you to you and your wonderful Scripture group. We couldn't have done it without you and your support. Everyone I have spoken to has really enjoyed the conversations and support you have given.*"

Add on a bush dance, JC's got Talent, puppets and balloons and there's something for everyone. A special moment was the official Australia Day service in the Town Hall, with music from Strange Country, a message from Mayor Russell Webb and address from singer, The Reverend Steve Messer.

Organisers said, "The week is a lot of work and it's hot and noisy. But it is God's people rolling up their sleeves and taking the message of Jesus' love in word and deed and song and food. The experience of linking arms and working side by side with brothers and sisters from other churches is inspirational."



Nextgen leaders at Bishop Patrick's house in January.

The Reverend Lou Davies.

IN JANUARY THIS YEAR, EIGHT Australians (six leaders and two helpers) from our diocese headed to the North Kigezi Diocese in Uganda to run Nextgen. Over 200 delegates, including some clergy, attended the conference with the aim of learning to teach the Bible more accurately in their ministry roles.

Andrew Kananura (the main Ugandan Nextgen Organiser) said that it is getting to the stage that after many years you can tell by their preaching who has been to Nextgen. To finish the course, the delegates must complete both Strand 1 and Strand 2 twice — a total of four conferences. The main conference is held with help from the Armidale Diocese in January each year, with Andrew running mini conferences in Uganda in schools and churches throughout the year.

In January 2024 there were a total of nine Ugandan group leaders and eight Ugandan

Trainees. This is a fantastic position to be in as every group had a Ugandan as their main leader. The aim is for more Ugandan leaders to be identified and trained to lead Strand Groups during the conference, thereby increasing their ownership. There will always be a small group of Australians going over to assist, as it is an important partnership which we value immensely. Having the majority of the leadership team being Ugandan however, has been the goal from the beginning. It is encouraging to see so many highly competent Ugandan leaders and trainees being raised up.

The future of Nextgen Uganda is looking bright!! We praise God for his faithfulness. As Ugandan's say "God is good, all the time, for that is his nature, wow!"

You can watch an interview about Nextgen with Lou Davies and Andrew Kananura on the North Kigezi Diocese YouTube channel: youtube.com/watch?v=Vq1AnJ3zaHQ



We give thanks for the life and generosity of John Neville Trestail, who passed away in late January. John willingly gave his time to the Diocesan Finance Committee for 32 years as well as contributing as a Corporate Trustee and a member of the Coventry Home Committee. John was a member of St Peter's Cathedral in Armidale before moving to Brisbane five years ago, and is survived by his wife, Diane, and their three children.



Embracing ministry

Lisa Newnham

I GREW UP IN MOREE WITH MY MUM, Dad and two sisters. As a family we regularly went to All Saint's Anglican church, where the Bible was faithfully taught and I was encouraged in my faith. I can always remember knowing that Jesus was my Saviour and Lord and the hope that he brings. I am thankful for Sunday School teachers, youth leaders and my church family who encouraged me and taught me to read the Bible myself as I grew up.

This weekly time in God's word and with his people, along with camps and Christian friends, helped me stand firm and grow in my faith. As I moved away from my family to go to university in Newcastle I was aware that I had to make the decision to keep following Jesus. By God's grace I kept growing in him and was challenged that following Jesus affects every decision I make.

While at university I first heard about Ministry Training Strategy (MTS) and although a number of friends explored it as an option, I didn't as I was planning to return to the country, work as a Speech Pathologist and serve the local church.

In God's goodness, I got my first job as a Speech Pathologist in Lightning Ridge. The Reverend David Piper and his wife Joanne had been placed at Lightning Ridge Community Church and were a great encouragement to me. I was blessed with opportunities to serve the Lord and continue being discipled so that I would keep growing in him. I was reminded of God's faithfulness, that I could, and needed to, rely on him.

While in Lightning Ridge I was part of a team that went to Uganda to run the Nextgen conference. It was here that I first met Scott and Jo Dunlop, as they were leading the team.

I then moved to Muswellbrook for work and was challenged again about doing MTS. In God's good timing, as I was thinking this through I was also preparing to return to Uganda, again with the Dunlops.

I made the decision to move from Muswellbrook to Gunnedah to do full-time MTS for two years. It was a joy to do MTS with a country church and to be better equipped to serve God and the church.

As I was finishing MTS God opened the door to be part of North Tamworth Anglican, a church plant, and experience working part-time as a speech pathologist to help support part-time ministry work. During the past



Lisa Newnham, centre, with Scott and Jo Dunlop.

Jo and I thank God for Lisa and her partnership in the gospel with us over the past six years in Gunnedah and then in North Tamworth. It's been encouraging seeing Jesus enabling her as she has stepped out in faith serving him. Lisa has played a foundational role in helping North Tamworth Anglican Church plant get started and grow to become a more established church over the last four years. Through her Women's and Children's Worker role, Lisa pioneered our children's ministries which are up and running, and flourishing. She will be missed but it's also exciting to be sending her to be further equipped to serve Jesus and bear fruit for His Kingdom.

The Reverend Scott Dunlop

four years, as the church grew a role with the church did too and I have been involved with youth, women's ministry, the Sunday service and reading the Bible one to one with women as well as heading up children's ministry. I love working with children and seeing them understanding the gospel, grow in Jesus and express their faith in him is always a joy!

Over the past six years in ministry I have learnt a lot, however I had also become aware of how much I still do not know. I prayed about and explored the possibility of going to Bible college to be better equipped to serve God in the future, wherever he places me.

I consider it a privilege to now have the opportunity to go to Moore College and pray

that God would use it to grow me in him, that I would faithfully serve his people. I still have a heart for the country and children's ministry and look forward to seeing where God will lead me.

After living in the country for most of my life, moving to Sydney and getting back into study will certainly have its challenges.

The best way you can support me is certainly in prayer. Please pray that I would settle in well to studying and life in Sydney. Pray also that God would use this time to train and equip me that I would humbly serve him.

If you would like to receive my regular prayer letter updates, please contact me at lisa_newnham@hotmail.com