

Gospel partnerships



Bishop Rod Chiswell and Reverend Julie Cook, Diocesan Deacon for Women, celebrate with our new deacons and presbyters outside St Peter's Cathedral in Armidale

Bishop Rod Chiswell

ENJOYING PARTNERSHIP IN THE gospel is one of the greatest delights of my job as a Bishop.

Travelling around the Diocese to visit clergy and spend time with church families each weekend gives me lots of opportunities to see God's people working together to make and grow disciples of Christ. I'm often meeting new believers who have been introduced to Jesus and witnessing their baptisms. I'm also regularly enjoying the privilege of confirming young people who have been nurtured in the faith. Sometimes I even get to climb into a water cube to conduct a full immersion baptism, as I did late last year when my granddaughter Rosemary took the plunge to declare her allegiance to Jesus as both Saviour and Lord.

The apostle Paul also found joy in gospel partnership with the churches he planted and took care of. In his letter to the Philippians Paul says, 'I thank my God every time I remember you. In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now, being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.'

(Philippians 1:3–6) Paul clearly loves gospel partnership, and the promise here is that what God has started he will finish.

There are many levels of gospel partnership of course. One that I am currently very thankful to God for is the strong partnership between Moore Theological College and the Anglican Diocese of Armidale. Each year Moore College sends a mission team to one of our 33 parishes, and most years that experience of country ministry leads to one or two team members exploring the possibility of full-time ministry in North West NSW. I'm particularly excited by this year's mission to Lightning Ridge as it will serve to promote a three-way partnership between Moore College, Bush Church Aid (BCA) and the Armidale Diocese. Remote rural ministry experiences like this one enable us to promote a pathway into remote rural ministry settings. The goal is to ensure that gospel-poor communities right across this vast country are supplied with capable clergy that love God's people, preach God's word faithfully and lead God's family in reaching out to their communities with the life transforming good news of Jesus.

To that end, on 21st February at St Peter's

Cathedral in Armidale, many from around the Diocese joined in celebration as 11 men and women were ordained for service, 10 of whom have completed studies through Moore College: Reverends Trace Akankunda (Narrabri), Caleb Torrance (Wee Waa), Cameron Maxworthy (Inverell), Cody Bros (Gunnedah) and Adrian Cheung (South Tamworth) were ordained as presbyters with Ally Thomson (Narrabri), Fiona Thomson (UNEchurch), Samuel Ogg (Lightning Ridge), Chris Tompkins (Cathedral), Timothy Chan (West Tamworth) and Hayley Boag (Calrossy Chaplain) ordained as deacons. Three out of these four deacons came at one time or other on a Moore College Mission to our Diocese (and the other got a taste of country ministry in the Anglican Diocese of North West Australia).

Diploma of Biblical Theology

I'm also greatly encouraged by the willingness of Moore College to partner with the Armidale Diocese in establishing the Armidale Moore Diploma of Biblical Theology.

This is a face-to-face locally delivered version of the online diploma course and gathers a cohort of students from around



Zoom and means there are no written exams or essays, making the study less daunting for those who may not have completed tertiary studies previously.

This locally delivered Moore College diploma qualification will help equip lay people for preaching, youth and children's ministries, Bible study group leading and chaplaincy roles in schools and hospitals. It could also be the perfect preparation for taking on part-time ministry roles on church staff teams. For some it could even be the pathway to prepare for overseas mission work. Regardless of the means, our goal is to see godly men and women trained and sent as workers into the Lord's harvest field, not just in the Armidale Diocese but right across Australia and into the wider world as well. In 2026 the number of students enrolled in the Armidale Moore Diploma of Biblical Theology course has grown to 13 students, which is very encouraging.

Conferences

Other opportunities within the Diocese to partner together and hone skills and knowledge occur through conferences we hold throughout the year. A couple I'd like to mention in this season are: 'Next Phase' faithful and fruitful after 50, at St Peter's, Armidale on May 15th/16th with Reverend Sam McGeown, returned CMS missionary to Japan and minister of a thriving church in Brisbane, giving talks on the book of Ruth under the topic *'Redeeming Love: Unlikely people, Dependable God'*. Author Steve McAlpine will also offer four seminars around engaging our culture as we aim to make the most of the growing interest in Christianity.

the North West together in Tamworth. Lectures are presented to students in two separate three-day blocks each semester, and assessment is carried out verbally via



Rosemary, Rod and Sam Chiswell

Tickets are on sale until May 4th, with early bird tickets available until April 6th. There will also be excellent training in Barraba once more during the 'Lay Preaching Day' on May 30th. Please see the Diocesan website for details: armidaleanglicandiocese.com/news/events

May God continue to bless gospel partnerships across our Diocese, and may he particularly bless our ongoing partnership with Moore Theological College, BCA, CMS and other Anglican Dioceses around the country.

With love in Christ,
Bishop Rod Chiswell.



On February 7th, Bishop Rod Chiswell, Dean Chris Brennan and the Reverends David Robinson, Tim Stevens and Tom Melbourne gathered with the congregation of St George Anglican Church for the commissioning service of the Reverend Steve Cimarosti to the parish of Parkes and Peak Hill. Bishop Mark Calder of the Bathurst Diocese expressed his gratitude for what he sees as, "a great and tangible sign of a growing gospel partnership between the two dioceses," writing:

Thank you so very much for making the trip to Parkes... I recognise and appreciate the cost involved. By being with us, you honoured Steve and Louise, you honoured the work of the gospel in the Bathurst Diocese, and you honoured me. I was so encouraged by the presence of you all.

In presenting Steve to the parish of Parkes and Peak Hill, Rod said:

"It is a privilege to present the Reverend Steve Cimarosti to you today. The Diocese of Armidale and the Diocese of Bathurst have a strong relationship and a lot in common. Bishop Mark and I are on about the same thing: we want to see godly clergy who will love God's people and preach the Scriptures faithfully placed in as many towns as possible across country NSW. Steve and Lou Cimarosti are just the kind of people we like to find and place.

Steve took on the vicar's job in Warialda about the same time as I took on the Bishop's role in our Diocese, just over five years ago. Steve had done great work at St Peter's Cathedral in Armidale prior to going to Warialda, but when he arrived at Warialda Anglican Church he was like a duck to water and the parish has thrived under his steady leadership.

"I was with the congregation in Warialda a couple of Sundays ago, and to be honest, they were pretty sad to lose Steve and Lou and their delightful family. They told me how grateful there were for Steve's five years of ministry and spoke of how much they had appreciated his preaching and administrative skill. It became clear also how much they love Lou who has been very actively engaged in ministry both in their church family and in the local school. All that said, they were gracious and understood the wider gospel needs in Country NSW, and that the Bathurst Diocese needs godly clergy families as well.

"Warialda's loss is definitely the Bathurst Diocese's gain, but Steve and Lou and their family come to you with Warialda's blessing and mine too. We pray that they will be a tremendous addition to the Bathurst team and have a wonderful ministry in their town of Parkes."