

# The Link

ANGLICAN DIOCESE OF ARMIDALE

AUTUMN 2026

## Changing lives



On February 8th, Bishop Rod confirmed three members of Fireside in their faith: Greg, Bev, and Melissa (L), with Bev (front) also being baptised

### Dixie Skuthorpe

**WHEN** FIRESIDE STARTED IN URALLA IT WAS HELD THE first Sunday of each month at 5pm and has grown to the first and third Sunday of each month. Since Fireside commenced, we've had a number of people attend, with a core group of Indigenous elders who have faithfully attended and continue to be engaged with the teachings. Our core group participate in the lessons and more recently we've had two new people join. The lesson at Fireside is different to our 10am sermon and most of the elders who attend now also attend our mainstream service in the morning and then return at 5pm.

At the end of last year, we looked at *Christianity Explored* and began the new year studying the gospel of Mark; we're thankful to Reverend Matt Borg for preparing and delivering the lessons. There is a strong sense of belonging at Fireside and God has been working in people's hearts. After each service we all share a meal – each bring something to share. Every Christmas we encourage members to bring one or two family members or more to our Christmas Fireside, which they have done.

On February 8<sup>th</sup> we celebrated three of our elders show their commitment to the Lord, with one baptised and two confirmed in our church. What a celebration it was for our elders in making this commitment and we praise Jesus for his unfailing love and changed lives! The day was so special and the church full of God's love and peace. It was such an exciting and Godly time having three Aboriginal people make this commitment before their families who came to join with members of St John's. May God bless Greg, Bev and Melissa and guide them in being a witness to their families.

Praise Jesus for his Word and blessing upon Fireside, for those who attend and for the support for this ministry from St John's, Uralla. I would like to thank Matt, Molly and Isabel for their encouragement and prayer for Fireside.

Please pray for our Fireside services and our families who are part of this service – that they will continue to grow in their knowledge of God and the gospel and be an encouragement to their families. All glory and praise to God.

# Gospel gatherings



*Drawing together the nations for the Chinese Christmas Banquet in Lightning Ridge*

## Lightning Ridge and Goodooga

**Reverend Kurt Langmead**

**EACH** MONTH LIGHTNING RIDGE COMMUNITY CHURCH (LRCC) holds a ‘Gospel gathering’ in a nearby hall owned by the local Aboriginal Housing Corporation. We hold another one each month out at Goodooga as well, in partnership with Indigenous ministry leaders from as far afield as Brewarrina and Moree. The aim of these gatherings is to be ministering with and to our local Indigenous community.

On 22 October last year, LRCC hosted the second edition of our ‘Chinese Christmas Banquet’, with the generous support of Dr Daniel Sze (Baptist Mission Australia) and his team of visiting helpers from a number of Chinese Christian churches in Sydney. The Chinese Christmas Banquet was the final one of our gatherings for the year, and once again it was a great success. The evening began with the kids’ club, followed by the main event, including singing, Bible teaching, and of course... delicious Chinese food!

For me, the highlight was the singing of *Silent Night* in three languages – English, Cantonese, and Yuwaalaraay (our local Indigenous language). Despite the fact the banquet clashed with the Year 12 formal, we still had over 120 locals in attendance (and I still managed to sneak away to say grace at the school formal!). We thank God for the support of the Indigenous Ministry Committee, who provides generous grants to help support our gospel gatherings.

Please pray that we will continue to make progress in serving with and to our First Nations Peoples – in the Ridge, on the Rock!

## Coledale, Tamworth

**Jimmy Alley**

**MOVING** FROM SYDNEY IN 2007 TO WORK AT HILLVUE PUBLIC School, my wife Charmaine and I began attending the Baptist church and started a youth group on Friday nights with another couple which, through Hillvue school, coaching footy and other connections grew quickly to encompass a lot of the Indigenous youth from the Coledale community. Whilst running this ministry I learnt about Coledale Frontyard Church (CFYC) and how our ministries crossed over, including how we could support each other during the years.

I left Hillvue to do Ministry Training Strategy, then became youth pastor at the Baptist Church for about ten years. I returned to the school system in the early 2020s at a behaviour high school in Tamworth.

Over the years I’ve had a few chats with Reverend Xavier Lukins, then last year at the local NAIDOC debutante ball seated next to each other we chatted about life. This led to a coffee with Xavier, Charmaine and myself when he approached us about taking on CFYC. At this time, I’d been regularly preaching again at the Baptist Church and Youth camps, and we had been praying about what it would look like to go back into ministry part-time.

As we started to pray about what was next God was opening the doors and promoting us to CFYC. After visiting and seeing CFYC, being involved was a no brainer. It was in the heart of a community we have loved and prayed for over a number of years. Moving to a new church however took some more prayer and thinking to work through.

St Peters has great connections with the Coledale community

The Link, Number 99  
AUTUMN 2026  
ISSN 1834-0741

Anglican Diocese of Armidale PO Box 198 Armidale 2350 02 6772 4491 [armidaleanglicandiocese.com](http://armidaleanglicandiocese.com)  
Editor: Rachel Doran [rachel@editoria.com.au](mailto: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”.

## East Armidale

### Bishop Rod Chiswell

**LAST YEAR REVEREND DAVE FREEMAN AND I SAW A GOSPEL** opportunity flowing from an Aboriginal Auntie's request for us to run a Carols service in East Armidale in the lead up to Christmas (December 2024). We pulled a small team together and ran the carols event which, though also small, was much appreciated. As a result of that first gathering a couple of the Aunties asked if we would consider doing an outreach gathering more regularly. After further conversations and prayer Boomerang Church began on Sunday afternoons each week during term time. Of a similar format to Coledale Frontyard Church, we initially drew between five and twenty locals, mostly children and teenagers, but some adults as well to each gathering. We met under a couple of gum trees with the help of a good PA system. Christian songs with actions were sung, the Bible was read and a Bible talk given. There was a time of thanking God for things and bringing needs before him in prayer. A simple meal was shared, then birthdays were celebrated before concluding with more singing and a closing prayer. Boomerang Church reminded me a lot of Coledale Frontyard Church ten years ago.

As the weather cooled during winter numbers declined a little. We moved the time slot to Wednesday afternoons as winter turned to spring, but numbers didn't seem to recover a great deal. We persevered until the end of the year but decided that due to the lack of a committed core of locals and the absence of a regularly attending person of peace, it was probably best to fold the gathering and move to a different approach.



*Frontyard church has grown to embrace the new Cola*

through Scripture, the breakfast club at Hillvue, CFYC, the Anglicare food van and team members regularly visiting and door knocking. Through these ministries of St Peters, CFYC has gained a lot of respect in the community. Despite these connections one of the big hurdles CFYC faces is losing 90%+ of the kids between Year 6 and Year 7. From a ministry perspective, the next big questions for me then are: how do we engage with and continue the connections with the teenagers, and how do we grow connections with the adults in the Coledale community? The team is already asking these questions, with an example of this being that our Wednesday night Carols service last year saw a lot more adults attend Frontyard Church, so this year we're going to try doing it through Hillvue Public School with Carols by CFYC providing a great opportunity to grow those relationships and share Jesus to the community even more broadly.

Thankfully through the contacts made during the year we discovered a committed Aboriginal Christian woman who has now invited some of us to join a weekly small group gathering in her home on a Tuesday for a fellowship evening. Dave Freeman has been asked to be the Bible teacher with Hannah Dobos planning to attend as well. Our prayer is that this group will form a more stable base for gospel outreach with potential for a growing network of contacts into the Aboriginal community in East Armidale. God willing, we will be able to have outdoor outreach events periodically during the year starting with Easter.

Our experience in East Armidale over the past year is a good reminder of several things: Firstly, that trust with Aboriginal people takes time to build. Secondly, that each place is different and what works in one location may not necessarily work straight away in another. Thirdly, that having a committed person of peace is crucial to establishing effective outreach work. Such a person will bring with them a network of relationships that enables positive connections to be made and solid trust to build.

In all of this the Boomerang Church team are not discouraged. We trust that God is sovereign and has a good purpose and plan in all that has happened. We continue to pray for wisdom and have a go. And we would encourage you all to continue to pray for the next chapter of Indigenous work in East Armidale which will involve weekly fellowship evenings in an Aboriginal Auntie's home.

A long-term goal for me is asking how we create more ownership, so that this isn't just a ministry of St Peter's but is growing organically – having ownership within the Coledale community where we are seeing the community come to Christ and minister to their neighbours. Currently the core team involves St Peter's people coming into the community with a couple of local people who come and help sporadically. A prayer would be having locals as part of our core team.

St Peter's growth groups play a big part in helping prepare and serve the food each week. My hope this year is that they come early, not simply to serve the hamburgers but to play with the kids – whether it's kicking a footy on the front footpath or playing a bit of handball – just some extra engagement: to know the kids and families by name and be praying for them.

We love this community, we love Jesus and we're trying to serve and find ways of serving that are not only culturally appropriate but honouring to God as we share the life-changing story of Jesus. I'm looking forward to working with and leading the great team from St Peter's running CFYC on Wednesday nights, and the fact that we are a team that seeks God's lead on how we can better engage and share Jesus with the teens and adults in the Coledale community.

Marty Margery, one of the guys from St Peter's is employed one day a week through Anglicare as Chaplain for the Coledale community and looks after the food van ministry. He and his wife Cass have some great connections with the community. Our previous leader, Reverend Jum Naden and his wife Pip, continue to be part of the team and have a desire to be down in Coledale. Jum's now working for The Well Training, so while they may not be leading it, they're still in this ministry.

Jum will be speaking with Reverend Michael Duckett at the 'Indigenous Ministry Day – Raising up Leaders' in Narrabri on May 23<sup>rd</sup>. For details: [armidaleanglicandiocese.com/](http://armidaleanglicandiocese.com/)

# 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 15<sup>th</sup>/16<sup>th</sup> 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 4<sup>th</sup>, with early bird tickets available until April 6<sup>th</sup>. There will also be excellent training in Barraba once more during the 'Lay Preaching Day' on May 30<sup>th</sup>. Please see the Diocesan website for details: [armidaleanglicandiocese.com/news/events](http://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 7<sup>th</sup>, 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."

# Led to new ministries



---

## Philip van't Spyker

AS A YOUNG SINGLE MAN, I WAS VERY CONTENT DOING ministry in my spare time. I loved sharing Jesus with young people and seeing them find true life in him. Some older members of my church saw gifting in me, tapped me on the shoulder and encouraged me to do an apprenticeship in my church. As I did some study it blew my mind how big our God is – his holiness; that he cannot be boxed in. He is awesome.

After a few years of ministry in Sydney and then China, I met and married Jessica and we felt I needed some more theological study. We had to choose between some fine theological colleges in Sydney, and I signed up to study at Sydney Missionary and Bible College which proved a great joy. When I first met Jessica, she had been planning to serve the Lord in the Northern Territory with Indigenous Australians, and I had been planning to return to China to serve missionary kids. The Lord ultimately kept us in Sydney until our last child was one before we moved to Queensland to serve with a Presbyterian Church. For two years it was fantastic, then our third year was rough so we took what should have been a year out of ministry, but which turned into 18 months due to COVID. During that period several churches spoke with us about opportunities to serve in a full-time capacity but each time, I lost all confidence and didn't see how I could serve again. I visited a counsellor who specialises in working with ministry couples. He was very helpful and after seeing him, I felt I could return to full-time ministry.

In 2020 we accepted an invitation to go to Yeppoon (near Rockhampton, QLD) to serve with Bush Church Aid (BCA) in both an Anglican church and as the youth minister for the diocese. It was a great time where we were able to set up ministries in the local church and see young people come to trust in Christ. We also set up a youth leadership training camp, which continues to this day, to help teenagers across the diocese rightly handle the Bible. Sadly, this small church had limited finances and eventually we had to finish up. As we prayed and looked for where the Lord would have us serve next we talked with Bishop Rod who was very keen for us to serve in the Armidale Diocese, and we moved to All Saint's Moree for an agreed three years.

Rod has always encouraged us to go to dioceses where there are

needs for trained clergy and when we were looking for a new role, we saw the position description for St Stephen's Anglican Church in Dorrigo. While we were thinking and praying, several people reached out and encouraged us to consider Dorrigo. As we talked with members of St Stephen's it was obvious that they wanted someone who would teach the Bible and could also help them with their kids' and youth ministry. Dorrigo is a town with industries closing. The church has an older congregation working hard to do kids' ministry. Their after-school kids' club has 10 kids out of the 70 that attend the local school. As a small church finances are tight, yet they give away more to missions than they can afford: a wonderful reminder of 2 Corinthians 8:3: *For I testify that they gave as much as they were able, and even beyond their ability.*

We prayed about Dorrigo and spoke to our children about how there would be no teenagers at this church. They responded that it was okay and said we should still go and serve there. So, we agreed and have arrived in Dorrigo. The church has been without a minister for a year, but I am following a wonderful locum who has served the church well in preparation for my arrival. We plan to restart Bible study groups, start a youth group and continue the current ministries. I am looking forward to preaching every week. We pray that we can encourage lay ministry and build people's confidence in Christ alone and their ability to open the Scriptures for themselves.

We have had such a wonderful time in Moree and the Armidale Diocese. The sense of unity around the gospel is so clear. I have greatly appreciated the pastoral care of my vicar, bishop and all the archdeacons. I don't know if any other diocese (apart from Sydney) can gather 200+ teenagers around Jesus in their annual events. The commitment to worldwide mission through CMS, BCA and other mission organisations spurs me on. The fruit of gospel preaching is so evident, as does having so many pastors my age.

Please be praying that: we will have great wisdom in how to love the people of Dorrigo and our church; we would trust God with our finances and not let them make us fearful; St Stephen's congregation would know and live the gospel, and we would be Christian first and Anglican second.

# Fixing our eyes on Jesus



*Student at the Canon Beatrice Ruhinda Training Centre, Anxious, using her newly acquired sewing skills*

---

## Reverend Isaac Shumack

St Paul's, West Tamworth

I WAS THANKFUL TO BE FREED BY MY PARISH TO TRAVEL TO Uganda in January for the Next Gen conference, as part of the long-term partnership between our diocese and the North Kigezi Diocese (NKD).

I think the NKD bus, a donation from the Moree parish, has existed the entire length of the partnership and it's still surviving – just! In God's grace, it broke down at the airport when we arrived. We were planning a 12-hour trip and leaving six hours late meant we dodged a 28-hour traffic jam and only added two hours to our travel. God was very kind.

It was wonderful to see firsthand the changes of the last couple of years, with the Bible College's accreditation and their library improving

from year to year. Please do keep CMS missionaries Reverend Andrew and Margie Newman in your prayers. It was a great encouragement to meet with them. They're so well suited to the ministry there – they are very gentle and loving and compassionate, but they also care about the truth and honouring God and that comes out in meetings and times when somebody needs to speak up.

The Ugandans at Next Gen really gave everything when they prayed together, sang to God and were learning from God's word – they are so hungry to be taught. During the conference I heard people reflect on poverty a number of times. I think there are different levels of poverty and to hear people reflect on their needs, how God has provided and how they have realised that their biggest need is to be forgiven by

God was a wonderful encouragement. In my Bible study group, there was a question about a time we were saved. I couldn't actually talk by the end of the introduction because so many people were sharing heart-wrenching stories of their life, poverty or release from debt. Reverend Andrew Kununara from NKD shared about having no food to eat for a few days until somebody realised and gave him food for 30 days. He says it saved his life and he has always remembered that time. The poverty in Uganda can hit you when you don't expect it. All that said, they are a proud people and it's a wonderful culture with much laughter – I'd love to live there, but at times people struggle with not having enough.

One night at the conference our knees were touching the person in front of us, we were pretty tired and the smell of burning plastic rubbish outside was causing headaches when Andrew Kananura said this about poverty and blessing: "It's not about what you don't have in Jesus. You have all you need. Do not come to Jesus for material things. Your relationship with Jesus is what matters. The majority of the materially wealthy in our world, are spiritually poor. Blessed are those who fix their eyes on Jesus." It was a wonderful, rich reflection that blessings are all about being connected to Jesus and an encouragement and challenge to me.

It was great to hear such gospel clarity when it comes to poverty. We also had the chance to see one of the ways the NKD is seeking to be a blessing to those in need alongside their gospel witness, when two of us visited the Canon Beatrice Ruhinda Training Centre for Vulnerable Girls. Canon Beatrice Ruhinda was the wife of the first bishop in the NKD and she mobilised girls who did not have the opportunity to finish formal education. The Training Centre in her name has been left buildings, and girls in need can live in an onsite dormitory. They currently have access to training in hairdressing, basket making, knitting, handwork and dressmaking.

The 36 students were on a break when we arrived and we were shown around by Mother's Union coordinator of NKD and Principal of the Training Centre, Irene, and Patron Maama Florence, the current Bishop's wife. Irene said, "So many who have dropped out of school may be because of poverty at home. Around here we have a lot of alcoholism, their daughters often drop out. Many women are not in stable marriages.



Irene and Maama Florence (R) on the site for the kitchen

We have recently appointed a trained teacher in vocations. What is lacking now is the trained tutors we need to meet the national requirements, fencing for security and an updated kitchen."

The Training Centre equips girls with skills so they can find employment. On the day we visited, one of the students was making different items for the Training Centre to sell. Standing on land the NKD has given to MU for the Training Centre, Maama Florence put her arm around Irene and said, "We say together, 'The kitchen must be built. Amen. That is our catch cry. It must be built against all odds.' This is part of our bigger picture of a commercial kitchen that we are going to equip with modern equipment for our young girls to be hands on, with a dining room for all the girls and cooking area for them. Please pray with us and pray for us so that this bigger picture, this big dream, will be realised."

If you have ideas about how you might contribute to the Canon Beatrice Ruhinda Training Centre for Vulnerable Girls, please contact Reverend Tom Melbourne: [tomm@unechurch.org](mailto:tomm@unechurch.org)

To donate to the North Kigezi Partnership go to [armidaleanglican-diocese.com](http://armidaleanglican-diocese.com), choose donate and write Next Gen Uganda or Uganda sponsorship in the comments box.

## Prayerfulness

Reverend Bernard Gabbott  
Narrabri Anglican Church

One thing I struggle with is praying – the discipline, the dependence, the constancy, the content. One thing I am thankful for – older Christian role models, both men and women, who display the goodness of faithful service to God. One thing I delight in – when an older Christian role model offers wisdom on the things I struggle with. And, in *Prayerfulness*, Peter Adam does exactly this.

I was put onto this book by one of the clergy in our Diocese who I deeply respect, Reverend Geoff Hearne (if you want advice on books to read, he is a good man to consult.). I am so thankful that he did!

Adam is a man with a tried and tested track-record of faithful godly ministry, in a neck of the woods that hasn't always been easy. His work here is the obvious result of many years of faithful growth in prayerfulness. His writing is suitably succinct. His theology is sharp. His biblical references are too many to mention. His orthodoxy is high. His practical advice is earthy, manageable and applicable.

Four areas stand out for me.

1. Adam is unquestionably biblical in his roots, in his formation and in his practice. This is not pragmatically-driven prayer but theologically rich and biblically-shaped prayer.



2. Adam is one of the first authors I have read who has a chapter on the causes of a lack of prayerfulness – and it is incisive.
3. Adam peppers his work with sections of green – advice, prayers and services, all on green pages, which are an incredible resource.
4. Adam covers the full gamut of issues connected with 'prayerfulness' – from fasting through to practical issues about starting, into spiritual warfare and through the Lord's Prayer, and then into the nature of corporate prayer.

I have found this a wonderful, helpful and immensely thoughtful book – and I have only skimmed many of the practical resources. Already, the practice of writing my prayers has changed the time, content and shape of my morning prayer.

On an aesthetic note, I found the cover and the texture of the pages of this edition so enjoyable and tactile. The thickness of the pages was sensational – it meant my pen's ink did not seep through! I know, a random comment but sometimes aesthetics are worth noting! Highly recommended!!

A few extra books to consider: *Praying the Bible* by Donald S. Whitney; *The Lord's Prayer*, Kevin DeYoung; *Praying in Public: a guidebook for prayer in corporate worship* by Pat Quinn.

# Getting on with gospel growth

## Appreciating the DDF

IT WAS WITH A DEEP SENSE OF APPRECIATION AND THANKS to God that James Kahl, Chairman of the Diocesan Development Fund (DDF), reported to Synod in September that the DDF grew by 20% during the 2024–2025 financial year. This exceeded the projected targeted growth, with the Fund's total assets now exceeding \$15 million.

Loans continue to be provided to clergy and parishes, with one of our clergy recently commenting:

"It was such a blessing to have my loan application assessed by an organisation that understands Christian ministry and clergy pay. And to know that any profit the DDF makes from my loan will help the DDF in its support of our Diocese, well that's simply outstanding."

During 2025 interest distribution support throughout the Diocese increased too by over \$45,000 from the previous year, with \$99,094.59 sent to various parishes, ministries, and projects. The Fund also contributed \$45,000 to the general diocesan funds. This gave a total

distribution amount of \$144,094.59.

One reason for this growth was the introduction of the *Ministry Booster Low Interest Monthly Saver Account* – a new account initiative that enables investors to contribute half their interest income to various ministries of our Diocese. A minimum of \$50,000 is needed to open this type of account.

Responding to this new initiative, an investor said: "My bonus interest goes to support the North Kigezi Diocese. I find that it's a really simple and effective way to contribute to gospel ministry – I don't have to remember to do it, and I know that every dollar is used to grow and build God's kingdom."

To learn how you can benefit from the DDF and support the ministry of the Diocese contact Mrs. Samantha Brennan on 02 6772 4491, email [ddfaccounts@armidaleanglicandiocece.com](mailto:ddfaccounts@armidaleanglicandiocece.com) or visit the Invest with Us page on the Diocesan Website: [armidaleanglicandiocece.com/invest-with-us](http://armidaleanglicandiocece.com/invest-with-us)



A Ukrainian woman receives assistance from an ARDFA church partner in Kyiv

## Caring for widows and orphans

WITH THE WAR IN UKRAINE EXTENDING FOR MORE THAN three years, opportunities to support our brothers and sisters beyond the Diocese financially and through prayer continue to grow.

Whilst the Anglican Relief and Development Fund Australia (ARDFA) have been supporting Christians in the Ukraine since the beginning of the war, with no Anglican churches in Ukraine they have joined with two trusted, like-minded partners: European Christian Mission and New Life Evangelical Church, to send aid and relief to widows, orphans and war-affected families. A Ukrainian brother and pastor Anton Kaluzhny from New Life Evangelical Church writes:

"And still, I can say with confidence: God has been good to us. New people are coming. The war has stirred deep spiritual questions and longings, and while we don't always have the right answers, we are doing our best to maintain a God-centered perspective."

To learn more about ways to pray and support Ukraine through ARDFA, and to hear heartening stories of God's provision go to [ardfa.org.au/ukraine-crisis](http://ardfa.org.au/ukraine-crisis)

## The benefits of PrayerMate

Reverend Julie and Jim Cook

We first heard about PrayerMate years ago and I (Julie) tried to set it up on my phone. It all seemed a bit complicated, so it went on the back burner until around August last year. I'm not sure how we discovered it but perhaps PrayerMate was advertised somewhere, and we thought we'd give it a go!

It was simple to download the App from the Android/iOS app store, and it walked us through the steps for creating a standard prayer session, which we have not really used. People may wish to explore this further and add their own personal and family prayer points. This is something we would like to start to explore ourselves.

We have found that for us the most helpful way to use PrayerMate has been subscribing to 'lists' from various organisations and using their daily prayer points (which change every day), to pray. We love the fact that the prayer points, such as the Armidale Diocesan points, are kept up to date and we are mostly praying for current situations and events. We also love that there are photos of many of the people we are praying for.

Our routine is to read the Bible together each morning over breakfast and



then pray together through our subscriber lists. (See our list below.)

Once you are subscribed to a list the prayer points for the day are easy to find. You don't seem to be able to go back to the previous day's prayer points if you miss a day so that has encouraged us to make sure we pray through each day's points!

We certainly need to keep exploring PrayerMate as we are not currently using all the features it has to offer – but we love what we are using so far!!

We have downloaded the following lists, but there are many more:

- Armidale Diocese Prayer Diary
- Bush Church Aid
- CMS Prayer Points
- Anglican Diocese of NW Australia
- Ministry Training Strategy
- Open Doors UK
- Gafcon
- Anglican Diocese of Bathurst

To learn more about PrayerMate or find updated prayer points and resources go to: [armidaleanglicandiocece.com/prayer-diary](http://armidaleanglicandiocece.com/prayer-diary)  
For additional encouragement: [thegospelcoalition.org/article/struggling-prayer-god-help](http://thegospelcoalition.org/article/struggling-prayer-god-help)



# Introducing kids to Jesus

Thomas, Jonah & Ebony Sylvester (Oxley Vale) at Fishing Camp

---

## Dave Tankard

**TEN YEARS AGO, I PRAYED FOR ENOUGH CAMPS IN AND NEAR** our region that there would be at least one camp that appeals to every young person who'd be willing to come along. The Lord must have prompted this prayer, as it was way beyond what I could imagine – there were only two camps within cooee at that point, and ten in NSW. Now there are 30 of these fun and affordable camps in NSW, and half of these within or not far from our region!

Each camp has two aims: **making the good news of Jesus known to children, young people and families**, while simultaneously **helping people grow in Christian maturity**. Volunteers do the heavy lifting, cheered on by a tiny staff and volunteer Camps Committee who recruit, train, ensure compliance, etc.

Leaders are usually invited by a friend, perhaps to meet a specific need. Some bring ministry experience; others pick that up on the way. They make friends, discover and hone gifts and grow. There are roles up front, unseen or in between – for any person keen to share the gospel!

Campers often arrive eager for the activities that appeal to them or because a friend is going but are quickly struck by the love of the team, which helps prepare their ears for the good news they hear through talks, small groups, songs, and 'random' conversations. Bibles are open on boats, in sheds, around fires, among craft materials – you name it! An encouraging camp culture helps campers to overcome fears, make friends, enjoy serving, master new skills and sometimes step into a whole new life.

Here's a sample of what's on offer:

**Glenbawn Fishing Camp** near Scone happens each March, one of our short form camps during school term – late Friday until Sunday afternoon. It's been a joy to see God bring Christians who have boats

and love fishing into youth ministry, some for the first time!

Dan Pass (Gunnedah Anglican) and Jack Lockrey (All Saint's, Moree) are young husbands and dads who have teamed up to help lead **GENTS Camp**. This is a space for young men (Years 7 – 10) to get away together in a rustic setting (Lynchwood Scout Camp) and test themselves physically, while following the example of godly male leaders who share why it is that they follow Jesus.

**Rugby League Camp** has grown to now reach 70+ boys each year! Under the stewardship of a strong team including Janelle Tongue (St Luke's, Loomberah) and Jimmy Alley (St Peter's, South Tamworth) it attracts many unchurched boys as word of mouth spreads via footy teams and Scripture classes. Hughie McCowen (Tenterfield) is returning this year to teach about Jesus. More leaders are needed – you don't have to be male, fit or love footy – so long as your heart wants boys to know Jesus.

**Ride Like A Girl** – Bec Eastment (then at St Marks UNEchurch), and Julia Anderson (Tambar Springs) founded this camp and have since been joined as Directors by Jo Russell (Manilla) who hosts the camp on her family's farm. Girls come with their own horse or sometimes loan horses can be arranged. This camp fills so quickly, please pray that God will make a way for more girls to be involved, maybe through a second camp?

**Pins & Needles** began with a vision to teach sewing skills to young women while showing and teaching God's love for each one. It has boomed, with around 65 girls and 35 female leaders in 2025. Sue Boland has accepted an invitation to speak this year. Pins & Needles is connected to several other camps in practical ways, with Bake Off trained cooks helping last year and campers making gifts to bless other camps! Belinda Gonsalves (St Paul's, West Tamworth) and Yvonne



*Pins and Needles 2025*

Redman (Oxley Vale) lead the talented team.

**Bake Off Jnr** (Janelle Tongue again!) returns to the little rural community of Loomberah, sharing their country hall. The girls are in Years 7 – 9 and come from as far as West Wyalong! All meals are prepared and cooked by the girls themselves. The theme this year is 'From farm to plate'. The speaker, Sharon Ruigrok, will be focussing on 'From the beginning, through now until eternity God is with us.' Testimonies and powerful talks followed by meaningful discussions in small groups sees the beginning of some girls' faith and for others the deepening of their faith, taking them to another level. The recipes are delicious and nutritious, like reading God's word daily. In 2025 **Bake Off Snr** launched; please pray that God raises up two women suitable to head up the team and build on the momentum.

**Leadership Conference** – Harry Pallet (St John's, Tamworth) has stepped up to help direct the Leadership Conference (LC) team. LC is a melting pot, bringing together a sizable team of adults with keen believers in Years 9 – 12 for training and teaching in leadership skills. This year Reverend Ian Powell will teach from John's gospel, challenging the delegates to think through shining Christ's light at school, church, youth group and beyond. God has shaped LC to be a meaty time of teaching and wrestling with big questions, while retaining a vibrant culture, including loud games and much hilarity. The young delegates have chances to teach, speak, share a testimony, lead a group, write encouraging letters and more! Scores of (now adult) leaders at other SU Camps, Beach Missions and school groups gained the initial confidence to lead through LC!

**Football** (soccer!) Camp at Lake Macquarie is the newest of our ball sports camps, with James Thomson (St Mark's, UNEchurch) involved since the start and now helping to direct the team. This camp has

## Reasons leaders love these camps:

"(Fishing Camp) helped me appreciate differences between people and how their life experience dictates how they understand."

"A girl heard (about **Bake Off Jnr**) on Thursday, on Friday she said, 'I want to become a Christian', and on Saturday morning in quiet time with her leader became a Christian. Prior to camp she was not known to leaders, but God knew!"

"I had bitten off a task I wasn't qualified for, but the Lord helped me realise that I can do something good for others if I put my fears in his hands." (**Pins & Needles**)

"One boy started the week as a troublemaker causing problems but by the end he was caring for others and wanting to learn." (**Leadership Conference**)

"God consistently answered prayers! Having enough campers turn up and be genuinely interested in both Jesus and rugby was such a blessing!" (**Rugby Union Camp**)

"It was a privilege and challenge to watch young men faithfully and selflessly serving." (**Cricket Camp**)

"It was great to see kids telling Bible stories to each other as we explored 'Trusting in God' through different characters in the Bible." (**Jr Bike Camp**)

"It was clear that God had touched their hearts with the seminar on wisdom and social media." (**Reboot**)

"Two boys had meltdowns but with guidance and support you could tell they were listening after a couple of days. They engaged in Bible discussion a lot more." (**Dare 2B Different**)



Dan & Jack, GENTS Camp

enormous potential for reaching the many boys and girls who love the round ball game. Please pray that its strong start will be consolidated and even that more football camps might emerge around NSW.

**Golf Camp** nearly tee'd off in the last little while but still needs a dedicated person or two with admin nous and some spare hours. Sing out if that sounds like your thing!

Some people are gifted to pioneer new things, then God sends reinforcements to form a team. I wonder if you are one of his pioneers? If you have a concept for a new camp, please pray about it and give me a call: Dave Tankard, Associate Director: Camps & Missions 0401 571 978 [davet@sunsw.org.au](mailto:davet@sunsw.org.au)

## Responses from parents:

"My son has special needs, and the leaders (at **GENTS**) assisted him to be included in such a fulfilling, successful way."

"At **Ride Like A Girl** my daughter learned that our relationship with God is a bit like a horse having to learn to trust their trainer."

"My daughter invited a non-Christian friend who has been begging her parents to take her to church ever since **Pins & Needles**."

"Our daughter was encouraged (at **Bake Off Jnr**) with practical help on how to grow your faith. She's stuck the little laminated cards all over her wall."

"The fact that (our daughter) can play the sport that she loves whilst also learning more about Jesus is incredibly special!" (**Rugby Union Camp**)

"My child learned that God is the hero, not us." (**Leadership Conference**)

To learn more details, register interest or find out about an even bigger range of camps from diving or hiking to crafting and dads & kids, visit: [sunsw.org.au/camps/upcoming-camps](http://sunsw.org.au/camps/upcoming-camps)



# Jesus, rugby and riverbanks

Christian “Chippy” Petersen

St Augustine’s, Wee Waa

I WAS IN EARLY HIGH SCHOOL WHEN I FIRST STARTED calling myself a Christian. I had attended our localish youth group camp at Scott’s Head and during the camp had the gospel clearly explained in an engaging, relatable way. There was an opportunity to respond to Jesus’ call to follow him and I took it.

I’ve gone on to lead at youth camps myself since then and now direct Rugby Union Camp in Tamworth. It’s the ultimate fusion of two of my greatest loves: Jesus and rugby. The camp is for boys and girls in Years 5 – 10 with no previous rugby experience necessary even from leaders, as we provide tiered training from highly experienced coaches – often former professional rugby players. Anyone who loves Jesus has something to offer at Rugby Camp. Even though some previous leaders are unavailable this year, we’re trusting God has the right people lined up to fill those gaps.

Over the course of the camp, we talk about the Bible being like God’s game plan and how it always works better when you listen to the coach. In rugby every aspect of the game is a battle for possession, each ruck or maul, line out, kick, every part of the game has a side that wins that moment. Life is the same, as Christians we strive for Christ to win every moment, but just like rugby we make mistakes and suffer the consequences. The difference in life is that we know the end result.

My wife, Heather, and our two kids, Erica (13) and Aiden (10) have just clocked up our 10<sup>th</sup> January in Wee Waa, having relocated after a few years in Cowra for me to take on a role as Youth Worker/Chaplain/SRE teacher. It was a move that brought us both back a little closer to home.

I’ve been Chaplain at three of the four schools in Wee Waa for different lengths of time. Working in schools I constantly saw young people struggling with the system they were expected to function in: kids whose home lives would be politely described as fluid; kids with learning and development difficulties both diagnosed and undiagnosed; kids who just struggle to learn in a classroom. Often frustrations would boil over and end in suspensions which only exacerbated issues for those kids. I’d seen similar programs to RiverBank and decided that it was what Wee Waa needed.

RiverBank Youth Work is a not-for-profit company we started to address a growing need in our community to get alongside the young people in our town who are disengaged with traditional education and making choices with lasting negative consequences such as incarceration, injury or even death. Teachers, D C J and others can identify anyone under 18 in need and refer them to RiverBank where we provide them with a safe and welcoming environment for two days each week while they learn valuable employable skills, often metalwork and woodwork, alongside life skills they need to thrive. Whether they’re busy constructing something or fishing, it’s all building skill sets and relationship.

Early on in RiverBank’s journey, I had an Aboriginal lady invite me to speak at a meeting organised by the Aboriginal Education Consultative Group (AECG) for anyone who had anything to do with



the youth in town from preschool through to high school, including the police. When I explained in the meeting what I wanted to do the excitement from everyone but particularly from our Indigenous people was exciting for me as well. Their partnership and their willingness to work with me and let me work with their kids and the trust we have for each other to try to do the best that we can for these young people is a huge encouragement for me. I still go to AECG meetings. The Aboriginal Lands Council is happy to partner with me as well and we’re doing a couple of native gardens in town this year.

Working with people, particularly people who are hurting, is often a slog. For me the most encouraging parts are always where you see progress, whether a RiverBank kid persisting with a project or keeping their cool when something’s gone wrong, or having one of the young people I work with seek me out for a chat. Far and away the greatest joy for me is when they take steps toward or further into relationship with God. I was speaking with the parent of a young bloke I’ve spent some time with – he’d been through a period of making some poor choices and suffering the consequences. Somewhere something had clicked for him, and his mum was so thankful and excited about the changes she’d seen in him and his willingness to engage with God’s word and God’s people. I couldn’t tell you exactly what I’d done, but it had made a difference in this young guy’s life. That’s the sort of encouragement I think we could all use every now and then. A recognition that your steady, day-to-day struggle to follow God’s way has positively impacted someone else’s walk.

Working with young people is hard. Please pray that I would continue to have the willingness, energy and time to continue to do it well.

Always be praying for young people. Pray that they’d have wisdom beyond their years to make better choices, but also that even when those choices are poor, God would be at work to bring about his purposes.

Please also pray that RiverBank would find a reliable funding stream to maintain its impact and grow into the program it needs to be, giving thanks for the generosity of individuals keeping it functioning so far.

Above all, pray that no matter what I’m doing, God would be honoured in my life and that he would continue to grow his kingdom in all things.

To support RiverBank Youth Work go to: [riverbankyouth.work](http://riverbankyouth.work)