

TOP CENTRE

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THE ANGLICAN DIOCESE OF THE NORTHERN TERRITORY



Celebrating 40 years
of St James, Sanderson



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Front cover: Suzie Ray with parishioners of St James, Sanderson at the Thanksgiving Dinner

Back cover: Bible camp at Bickerton

Please feel free to submit your ideas for stories to the editor.

St Mark's Blessings church, Bickerton Island



Bible camp at Bickerton

Violet Huddleston

The St Mark's Blessings church of Bickerton Island held a three-day Bible camp in May 2022. The main aim was to encourage each other from the story of the Samaritan woman (John 4) and from Romans 6:1-12. We invited all the Aboriginal parishes. People came from Numbulwar, Angurugu and Umbakumba. It was a good and enjoyable time. We want to continue to do this camp each year. Please continue to pray for us.



We had communion under Rev. Yulki Nunggumajbarr and Rev. Colleen Mamarika on Sunday morning.



Night time fellowship



Bishop Greg writes



It seems strange to write about the death of Queen Elizabeth in this edition of Top Centre, when it was in only the previous edition that I wrote about her Platinum Jubilee celebrations in June. But her death and the reaction to it were remarkable and worthy of further reflection.

I myself feared her death was close when I read on the night of September 8 that she was ‘under medical supervision’, that her doctors were ‘concerned for her health’ and that her children were all making their way to Balmoral Castle. But there was still a sense of shock when I read the next morning the news that she had died. Although we were all aware of the Queen’s increasing frailty – hardly surprising in her mid-90s – her ability to continue at least some of her royal duties until so close to the end, and that her death appears to have come quite quickly, seem to me to be great blessings. The outpouring of grief in the United Kingdom and around the world is not so surprising given the consistency and stability of her public role, and the genuine way she related to the huge numbers of people that it was her duty to meet.

It is also not surprising in our divided and polarised world that there have been concerns raised in many places, including Australia, about the role of the British Crown in colonial history, and questions about whether the Queen could or should have done more to address these longstanding matters. I suspect that some people imagine that the Queen had more power than she really did; but we must all acknowledge that throughout the whole of human history, people and nations have a habit of wielding power in bad ways. I think the record shows that on the whole the Queen exercised whatever power she may have had with integrity and compassion. At the same time, working out how to deal with the evils of the past is an ongoing challenge.

For Christians, there has been the encouragement of knowing that the Queen’s faith was sincere and deeply held. Many have commented that her Christmas broadcasts in the last years had been more and more explicit in drawing attention to Jesus as the world’s saviour, as well as the Queen’s own commitment to following his teaching and example. Apparently, she had arranged all the ingredients of her funeral, and the Bible readings and hymns attested to her confidence in God’s saving love through Jesus. Many have remarked that the Archbishop of Canterbury’s sermon at the funeral was true to the Queen’s own faith, in setting out Jesus as the way of salvation and the

sure hope of the resurrection. I was moved that one of the final prayers at the service referred to ‘our sister Elizabeth’ – regardless of our social and political hierarchies, in the end we are really all on the same level.

At the Memorial Service at Darwin cathedral, I remarked that we don’t often unpack the word ‘save’ that is used in the Royal Anthem ‘God save the Queen/King’. But at the heart of it is the recognition that the sovereign as much as anybody else needs rescuing and reconciliation with God. God is the one who provides that salvation, through Jesus Christ: it is not something we can achieve ourselves, even if we are the most dutiful, law-abiding, self-sacrificial and exemplary people. And this salvation begins now but lasts forever. The Bible has many ways of describing its fullness – people sitting under their own vines and figtrees (yum!), the countless multitude in the throne room of heaven worshipping God and the Lamb, living in the many-roomed mansion that Jesus is preparing for us; but they are all pictures that express peace, rest and good relationship with God. In Christ, we have already begun this fullness, and we seek to express it in our churches; but until Jesus returns, for Christians death is the labelled door that opens into that final and everlasting reality.



40 Years of ministry and community at St James, Sanderson

Suzie Ray, Rector

The year 2022 marks the 40th Anniversary of St James Anglican Church, Sanderson. Ours is a story of partnerships, of community connections, of multicultural and intergenerational gospel ministry, of people who have put down deep roots, and of many passing through Darwin for short periods who have been blessed, built up, and sent out.

The Parish Council of St James was keen both to celebrate the richness of our heritage, and look forward to the future with confidence. We were thrilled that our founding Rector, Rev Bob George, was able to fly to Darwin with his wife Rigmor. On our celebration weekend we held a Thanksgiving Dinner on the Saturday night, featuring a spit roast cooked by parishioner Christos Kastaniotis. Rector's Warden Bjorn Christie-Johnston wrote a song, "Rejoice" (inspired by 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18), which he and Blessita Jenu played on the bagpipes as we all joined in singing.

All former Rectors or their spouse had sent in a reflection to share on the night, photos had been collated, and long-term parishioners shared about each era. We finished the evening with some reflections from Bishop Greg Anderson on the strategic place St James has in the Diocese today, followed by action dances from Indigenous members. Then on the Sunday morning George preached, focusing on the significance of "40" in God's big story. In a "God-incidence", Bob had chosen that same 1 Thessalonians 5 for a Bible reading on the Sunday, so we sang Bjorn's celebration song again!

St James grew out of a Bible Study at St Peter's Nightcliff, and became a church plant. The initial funding for the Rector's role came through a fruitful partnership with Bush Church Aid. Land was obtained from the NT government, and the church saved money on building costs by stripping out of the build contract everything that parishioners could complete themselves. For a full year, most Saturdays were taken up with working bees, from digging trenches to



Above: Bjorn Christie-Johnston and Blessita Jenu play the bagpipes at the Thanksgiving Dinner; below, a specially framed drawing of the church building in the early days.







Greg Anderson

Annette and I attended the Lambeth Conference in England for 12 days in July and August, being sponsored by a bursary from the organisers. The Conference brings together Anglican bishops (and in recent decades their spouses) from across the world for fellowship, corporate worship, discussion and prayer.

It has been held about every ten years since 1867, although controversy and COVID meant there was a 14-year gap before this year's event. Expectations around Lambeth 2022 were mixed. About one-quarter of the world's Anglican bishops boycotted the conference, as an expression of their disagreement with Anglican dioceses and provinces which have allowed same-sex marriages. This issue was always going to be controversial, and in many ways polarised the conference, with many delegates wearing rainbow lanyards and many other delegates attending the meetings of the EFAC (Evangelical Fellowship of the Anglican Communion)/Global South grouping.

The Archbishop of Canterbury was keen to stand in the middle. He endorsed as Anglican teaching the famous Lambeth Resolution 1.10 of 1998 which encouraged listening to the lived experience of gay Anglicans but did not agree that same-sex sexual relationships were in keeping with God's revealed will. But he also said that the Anglican provinces that had departed from Lambeth

Reflections on the Lambeth Conference

Above: Canterbury Cathedral: "mother church" of the Anglican Communion



Greg and Annette with Archbishop of Canterbury Justin Welby and Caroline.



Plenary session, Lambeth conference

“My own small group of six bishops represented four continents.”

1.10 had done so prayerfully and with careful thought and he was not going to cut them off from the Communion. Standing in the middle like this was itself controversial.

Amid the tensions, and the recalibrating of debate processes as the conference went on, there were many encouraging encounters. Having breakfast, lunch and dinner with bishops from so many different places gave us insight into the joys and challenges of ministry across the world. I attended a seminar on church planting across the Anglican Communion, which revealed successful gospel-hearted efforts in very different cultures.

Annette was in a small fellowship group with many South Sudanese women, who have endured so much trauma and trouble while still trusting God. My own small group of six bishops represented four continents, as well as some tiny islands in between, and was a microcosm of the wider Communion’s differences; and yet fellowship and Christian concern were evident. We just formed enough of a relationship to be able to carry discussions on beyond Lambeth. A significant factor that comes from the once in a decade timing is that very few bishops attend more than one or two Lambeths, and so there is little continuity; despite this, or maybe because of it, the organisation of the whole event was incredibly thorough and detailed.

The question arising in my mind from the conference was how the Anglican Communion as a whole can move forward, given that the theological differences across it are so profound. There was only the



Canterbury Cathedral ready for the Bishops' retreat

slightest beginning of discussion about so many issues, and so little opportunity to really engage with one another at a deep level. However, I haven't given up hope that such engagement can still occur, although it may not lead finally to institutional unity.

Coinciding with the end of the Lambeth Conference was the Australasian GAFCON (Global Anglican Futures Conference) conference in Canberra, which brought together conservative Anglicans from our region. The launch at the conference of the Diocese of the Southern Cross (DSC), with Glenn Davies commissioned as its interim bishop, was widely covered in the media. Headlines like "Anglican Church splits over same-sex blessings" grabbed attention. DSC was established as a parallel entity for people or parishes who feel that, in conscience, they can no longer remain under their current diocesan leadership but want to continue as Anglicans. (So far, there is not a parallel movement for churches or people wanting to leave conservative dioceses and remain Anglican, but perhaps that moment will come.)

In my view, "Anglican Church splits" rather overstates the situation. So far two priests have left Brisbane Diocese and many of their congregations have joined them. But because of the way the Anglican Church of Australia is set up, there is no reason for a diocese to leave it. The question will be what the nature of fellowship is between dioceses at different points on the theological spectrum, and what the consequences will be of some dioceses being in fellowship with the DSC while others regard it as schismatic.

As I write this reflection, I look ahead to the meeting of Australian Anglican bishops in Melbourne from October 10-12, which will have the opportunity of talking more together about all these things, and trying to find a way forward. I urge you to pray that Anglicans around Australia and the world will be faithful to what God calls us to be and do, in all aspects of our lives and ministries.

"In my view, 'Anglican Church splits' rather overstates the situation."

Reachout 2022: *Notes from an aspiring NT missionary*



Lachlan Webb

It was my first time at the Reachout NSW missions conference this year, and I'm not sure what I was expecting. To meet mission reps and missionaries, I suppose. To hear a couple of good talks, certainly. As a Bible translator in training, I was also there to catch up with what the Wycliffe and AuSIL teams from Darwin are up to. It's a somewhat shorter trip from Wollongong to the Blue Mountains than to the Top End!

What I didn't expect was an exhilarating road trip through the wide range of mission groups who are planting and nurturing the gospel in the Northern Territory. It was very encouraging to meet so many who are putting in great effort to see the good news of Jesus spread through our little corner of the world.

So join me as I re-live my condensed tour through the dusty red Territory, experienced vicariously in the crisp mountain air and muddy fields of Katoomba Christian Convention centre.

The first on my little trip is AuSIL – The Australian Society for Indigenous Languages. AuSIL is in many ways the beating heart of Bible translation in the NT. Over the past 60 years, they've spearheaded and supported translation work in many Indigenous languages. One of their current projects is the Plain English Version (PEV) – a translation of the Bible that follows the dialect of English spoken by some Aboriginal Australians. To my surprise, the PEV seemed to pop up in conversation all over the weekend, well outside the radius of the AuSIL stall. Ministry workers across Australia are excited by the fresh

“Ministry workers across Australia are excited by the fresh potential of reaching Indigenous language speakers.”

potential of reaching Indigenous language speakers with God's word. The forthcoming PEV Mini-Bible is eagerly awaited.

From there we travel to Wycliffe. Wycliffe Bible Translators are a partner organisation to AuSIL in Australia. Several of the AuSIL workers in the NT have come through Wycliffe training and are supported by them on the back end. It's been a long and fruitful relationship.

Moving along to something non-translation related? Joking! Next was Global Recordings Network. While not located in the NT, their reach certainly extends there. As the name implies, they produce and distribute Scripture recordings and other audio resources to encourage engagement with God's word. Their website lists over 100 different Australian language recordings, which really blew me away. You can probably guess some of the organisations they partner with in Australia. Go on, guess!

Across the Divide provided me with respite. They are a short-term mission group that rounds up city slickers like myself and brings them to the outback to observe and experience what God is doing in remote parts of



Alan Rogers and Susanna Baldwin at the AuSIL stall at the Reachout conference in Katoomba, NSW

Australia. I'm not a camper by nature, but they assured me they could convert me. I remain sceptical on that front, yet the prospect of being able to visit such far-flung places and participate in their ministries is pretty enticing.

I travelled far less to my next stop at YWAM. Youth With A Mission is a youth focused mob (who knew?) that takes teenagers and 20-somethings on life-changing adventures in mission. They have a centre in Darwin that brings youth from all over Australia to experience the Top End and join in God's work there. I'm certainly a fan of opening the eyes of young people (and me, the not-so-young!) to the ministry taking place around them – it can lead to great things in the future. I also have to give them a shout-out for putting me up at Reachout when my accommodation fell through. They certainly help the unfortunate!

The next place I visited was CMS. The Church Missionary Society has a whole bunch of people operating in Darwin and the wider NT. Their work is very varied, perhaps the most of all the groups I visited on my little trek. They supply teachers to Darwin's Nungalinga College, post church support workers to remote Anglican parishes, and even partner with other missions to do Bible translation (you knew I couldn't stay off the subject too long). In all these things, CMS is committed to strengthening and equipping Indigenous Christians, churches and communities for the glory of God and the growth of his kingdom.

My tour ends with Australian Indigenous Ministries. They work with Indigenous Australians throughout our country, extending from Cootamundra to Darwin. Many of the ministries represented at Reachout have links with AIM – like AuSIL who collaborated with them in the early days of the PEV, or Across the Divide, which is an offshoot of AIM. They're a long and storied group and were very happy to have a coffee and natter about mission in the NT, which is great! Also, about the quality of gluten free bread up north, which is not. It's good to see that the work of AIM continues on, ministering among Indigenous Australians in a number of places and contexts.

Reachout is just a snapshot of God's missional work in Australia and beyond. I'm sure there are other people and ministries at work in the NT, and I'm looking forward having a whole new set of interesting conversations at next year's conference. For now, it was extremely encouraging and motivating to hear about all that's happening for God's kingdom in our own backyard. Hopefully the other people who came will be as excited to join the crew as I am!

“Reachout is just a snapshot of God's missional work in Australia and beyond.”

A true win-win for Mission to Seafarers Darwin and the environment

Heather Ferguson

Mission to Seafarers (MtS) is a worldwide Anglican charity that supports the welfare of those working at sea. Usually working in terrible conditions, seafarers are often far from home and living in basic conditions aboard ship. For the past two years, many seafarers have been even more isolated than usual, enduring long months at sea without communication with family. Most have been shipbound even when in port.

Christ Church Anglican Cathedral assisted to establish the 29th Australian MtS Darwin in 2015, providing a part-time chaplain and volunteers to help furnish a small, dedicated facility at the East Arm Wharf. Seafarers could connect to the internet for communications with family, relax a little off ship and enjoy the company of a friendly local. COVID-19 restrictions, however, significantly curtailed the activities of MtS Darwin.

Some 1800 ships and 70 cruise ships come into Darwin each year, which equates to over 50000 seafarers. Services provided by MtS Darwin can include assisting contacting family through supply of phone SIM cards and top-ups, leaving the port, renewing personal supplies, health services access, counselling and spiritual support. Now that crew members are allowed off ships, MtS Darwin would welcome more volunteers, along with funds and goods to help refurbish and supply the centre at East Arm.

An exciting new MtS Darwin can/bottle recycling program has reactivated capacity post COVID-19 restrictions to raise important funds for the seafarer support program. The goal is to employ a part-time chaplain to assist seafarers while in port and provide pastoral care as needed.

Empty cans and bottles for the NT 10c container deposit scheme are collected and recycled from APT's MS Caledonian Sky, which cruises from Darwin to Broome throughout the dry season. An enthusiastic group of volunteers pick up the empty cans/bottles from the ship at the end of each journey, sort them into clear glass, brown glass, aluminium cans and others as required and take them to the Envirowork recycling centre to collect the container deposit. Zoe Mahoney, Manager of Opal Fibre Packaging, has provided a large trailer, warehouse space close to the port and use of a forklift for sorting the recyclables after they are unloaded from the ship every 18 days.

This program is in its initial stages and provides a real win-win for MS Caledonian Sky, MtS Darwin and the environment as all items were previously dumped in landfill. The project has the potential for further expansion. The congenial working environment helps maintain the momentum of enthusiasm among volunteers. The season has just finished with over 22000 items collected and recycled. APT will also be making regular donations to MtS Darwin for providing this service for their ship.

MtS Darwin would like to thank Wilhelmsen Shipping Agents and the Master of APT's Caledonian Sky, Captain Bill Fenelon, for their enthusiastic support and assistance with this program.



From top: loaded trailer; loading the bags of cans and bottles from ship by crane; happy volunteers.

To enquire about volunteering for this valuable program and support at the Welfare Centre on East Arm Port, please contact Carl Stephens 0428 803 935 or email MtS on missiontsdarwin@gmail.com. If you would like to make a donation to support MtS DARWIN or invite a speaker to talk about the Port of Darwin and the work of Mission to Seafarers, please contact the MtS Secretary, Miriam McDonald, on 0419 039 414 or email missiontsdarwin@gmail.com.

Donations to Mission to Seafarers Darwin Inc can be made to Westpac Bank BSB 035 302 Account 517523V



Clericon – the diocesan clergy conference – was originally scheduled for early May 2022, but amid COVID uncertainties, it was rescheduled for September 12-15. Even that was a risky decision given Bishop Greg was at the Lambeth Conference and on leave in July and August and Diocesan Children’s Minister, Naomi Ireland, had booked leave late August and early September. When I was unable to avoid a commitment down south in the first half of September, it seemed we were scheduled for a disaster! However, Naomi generously cancelling some leave combined with the amazing administrative skills of Miss Aish Ray saved the day and I am happy to report a successful and encouraging clergy conference. Mary Martin and David Ray’s guidance and support in the office on various details and especially finances were invaluable.

In some ways simply gathering about 40 clergy and church leaders at peaceful Riyala from the vast corners of the Diocese can be seen as success in itself. Many people valued the pace of the conference which balanced scheduled program activities with time and space just to be together.

“It was such a special time being with people with similar experiences and just feeling very cared for,” said one delegate, and another: “I loved the impromptu running/walking group” and another: “I was really encouraged by the confidence and courage of our Indigenous brothers and sisters speaking out more publicly.”

Our time together began on Monday afternoon with registration, dinner, and an Introductory Session led by Bishop Greg. This is traditionally a general get-

THE VALUE OF WHAT LIES BETWEEN

*Simon Koefoed
Archdeacon of the Northern Territory*

Simon Koefoed, front left, with Greg Anderson and other clergy relaxing at Riyala during Clericon



Zoe Creelman, front, Joanna Vandersee and others during worship at Clericon.



Prayer time and anointing

to-know-you session but includes slightly more in-depth interviews with newcomers to Clericon. It was wonderful to hear from Josh Mackenzie (Church Missionary Society, Numbulwar), Zoe Creelman (CMS, Ngukurr), Andrew Knox (RAAF Tindal, Chaplain), Jo Vandersee (Sanderson/Anglicare), James Woods (Nungalinya/Urapunga), Jesse Morrison (Associate Minister, St Peter's Nightcliff), and Steve Walker (Rector, Fred's Pass). I am sure I was not the only one to marvel at the goodness of God in his provision of these enthusiastic and dedicated gospel workers in the ministries of the diocese.

The pattern of the two full days of the conference was breakfast at 7:15 followed by worship and Bible study. Worship had a mix of songs, prayers and Bible readings from the various languages of the diocese, and a highlight was William Hall leading Ailibala Preya Sebis from the new Kriol Preya Buk.

Our Bible studies were ably led by Rev'd Kevin Simington, a former Baptist and Church of Christ pastor now ordained in Anglican ministry who is working as a consultant for Bathurst Diocese. We are always stretching any preacher who is asked to minister to the diverse people, cultures and leadership contexts of our diocese. Kevin's thorough preparation held him in good stead, and I doubt there was anyone who did not derive benefit or challenge from his four-talk series entitled "Ministry Lessons From The Master".

Before lunch we had topical sessions which included: 1/ Diocesan Strategic Plan (Greg Anderson), 2/ Anglicare (Dave Pugh), 3/ Evangelism & Connect NT (Ben Staunton), 4/ Introduction to ProDRAS – Professional Development, Reviews and Supervision (Simon Koefoed), and 5/ What is happening in the (worldwide) Anglican Church? (Greg Anderson). After lunch we had a brief time of Small Groups Sharing and Prayer before an extended downtime, including, sleeping, book browsing, shopping trips, swims at Berry Springs and more sleeping! After dinner we would have a final study or session followed by supper together

catching up and chatting with our colleagues from around the Territory.

For myself the opportunity to be face to face with ministry leaders from around the diocese, discuss the challenges of gospel ministry and to worship and pray together was an incredibly valuable time. The Bible studies, other sessions and even the mealtimes simply provide the context for being together. The program is important and frames our time, but the real value is what happens in-between. Examples would be an out-of-session discussion on the strategic plan, several unstructured conversations with the Aboriginal ordination discernment group (I work closely with this group throughout the year) and hearing from our ministry units who are more remote and isolated.

We look forward to Clericon 2023 where ministry workers and families will be invited! Our first count of whitefella children in this group reached about 43. We might double that with the blackfella children and then there are the adults! The disaster is scheduled for the last week of the July school holidays... (to be confirmed).

“A highlight was William Hall leading Ailibala Preya Sebis from the new Kriol Preya Buk.”



Enjoying catch up at the church

Return to Numbulwar

*Owen Webb
Nephew of Earl Hughes*

It was my pleasure to take Earl and Julie Hughes on a return trip to Numbulwar where their last visit was almost 40 years ago. I had been looking forward to this trip, learning about Earl's life at Numbulwar from 1956 to 1972 where he was based as the second missionary to be appointed there.

We were fortunate to be staying with current CMS missionary Josh Mackenzie who was an absolute pleasure and source of information on the surrounds and Indigenous people. There was also a refurbishment underway at the "Holy Spirit Church" with three of Josh's friends from Bendigo area in Victoria doing carpentry, cleaning and painting.

We had continual visits from Elders and people who remembered Earl when he was there or had heard of his good work in the 60s and 70s. I saw many photos and listened to many stories of how the mission was started and progressed to a wonderful community. We also visited many houses where we held a service for Galiliwa, an elder who had returned home to pass and be with his family. He was excited to see Earl, remembering some great times from the past. We also caught up with teacher Anna Welch who has a genuine love of the area and we discussed plenty of history with her. The community has a good school and hopefully progress with attendance and learning into the future.

One of Earl's closest confidants in the beginning, "Elder Madi" and his people, were living in Roper River and had run dry of water so they went looking for continuous water and settled at Rose River estuary. This was all confirmed and after a few years Earl knew the local beach was named Numbulwar and they



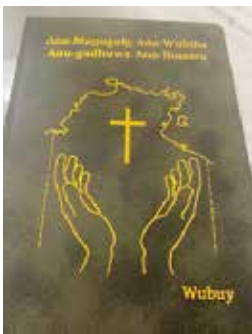
Earl gives a sermon at a church service



Earl and Julie enjoy fishing



Josh Mackenzie with Earl and Julie



decided to give the community/mission the Indigenous name “Numbulwar”. Earl was instructed to teach the people in English during his time but after several lessons under the paperbark tree he said, “This is mad – I need to learn their language so I can teach the gospel.”

He would go out walking with the Aboriginal people and ask, “What is this? How do you say that?.” Over several years, he learned to speak their language of Nunggubuyu, or Wubuy, and compiled a whole dictionary. He also translated a large part of the Bible into Wubuy which is recognised nationally and still used today, though many young people speak Kriol.

One of the unfortunate things was the demise of the garden in the community. In Earl’s time they had several acres of a flourishing market garden where they grew most of the food, vegetables and fruit for the whole community. I was also stunned to learn how they built the airstrip by hand with pick and shovel. It is built on the only rocky area and they had to heat the rock up and cool it quickly with water to break up the rock. This would have been unbelievably tough work in the heat with little equipment, but still is in great shape and used most days by personal planes and Careflight aircraft. I was amazed how well everything was built, out of the ground and bush, with little equipment and minimal skills but they learnt and taught along the way and showed what can be achieved with dedication and hard work.

Earl also told a few stories where he got caught over his time up there. He went over to Groote Eylandt one day and a cyclone came up. They had lost power on the boat, hooked up some towels to make a sail and drifted into shore. Another time they had run out of fuel up the Roper River and had to walk 20km back to camp through crocodile-infested rivers, swamp and rough bushland. Earl obviously had formed a strong bond and trust with the

Aboriginal elders and they shared some incredible times and experiences.

When the painting was complete on the church, we held an afternoon communion service conducted by Yulki Nunggumajbarr with Earl doing the sermon. There were more than 50 people there to see the “new” church, chat with Earl and Julie and look at some of the old photos. A few of the original buildings are gone but the church that was cut out of the bush in the late 50s will be there for many years to come with the latest refurbishment.

“They showed what can be achieved with dedication and hard work.”

When Earl wanted to go fishing during this visit, Josh made it happen and they had a great experience of the beautiful beach near the old jetty. There was a lot to take in and reflect upon. Earl thought it was not the same as the old days but Josh reassured him that this is still a really good community which reflects on his hard work over the 16 years he was based there. I was also interested that the elders of this community originally invited the mission to be part of their community so they could improve health, education and learn new skills. I feel blessed to have taken them back to Numbulwar for them to reflect on their achievements and also make new friends and support the community into the future.



Locals gather to look at early Numbulwar history

Interview with Earl Hughes in Darwin in September after his visit to Numbulwar. Earl, now 94, was chaplain at the Numbulwar Mission from 1956 to 1972.

Anne Lim

While Earl and his wife Julie Hughes stayed with me in Darwin, I took the opportunity of asking him to tell me some of the stories from his early years in Numbulwar.

Anne: Tell me about the time you encountered the crocodile at Blue Mud Bay.

E: He didn't get me! I was faster than the croc! As we walked up the river, there was an island in the middle of the river and I thought, "I'll go across to the island." I got halfway and the water was up to my knee when I decided to go back and get a stick in case there was a crocodile. I envisioned him coming with his mouth open and I'd put the stick in his mouth. So I got the stick and I was about halfway across to the island again, and there's a big splash behind me. I looked around and here's the crocodile coming on the top of the water. I couldn't put the stick in his mouth because his mouth wasn't open. I looked at the island. The trees were about a metre high. That's no good. So I quickly doubled back and raced up the bank and shouted out for the Aborigines to come. They were fishing for barramundi and I got ahead of them and I shouted out and they came rushing up with their spears. The croc had slid up on a rock, and was sitting there watching us. But they didn't want to get involved. So we left him there. I didn't feel like being eaten by a crocodile.

Anne: I gather you got lost for days on several occasions.

Once on the work boat, we were about to go in the entrance to Roper when there was a big bang. The engine had stopped, and we couldn't restart the motor. So we were stuck out to sea, not even in the river, and we wondered what we could do. The only thing was to float and wait for the tide to be running up the river. That's what we did. But we'd been reported missing and the plane came out looking for us.

A: How long had you been floating out there?

E: Several days. We ran out of water and food. The Aborigines wouldn't drink the distilled water because they thought it was acid. They went looking for wild cattle to get some beef and find water. And then eventually the plane found us and Roper mission sent a boat down to get us. The crank shaft had broken on the motor. That's why we couldn't move.

A: What was the most frightening experience that you had?

E: John Mercer had built a 12-foot flat surface boat and he said, "Could you go to Roper and get me a drum of fuel." I thought "A 44,000 drum in this boat is very dangerous." Anyway, we went. The boat had an outboard motor which hit a rock near an island and that put the motor out.

Here we are stuck. What do we do next? Make a mast and set up a sail. So we did. We had made it to the Roper by the time they came and rescued us, fixed up the motor. Then we set out to come back to Numbulwar with the big drum of fuel.

It was a very slow trip because we couldn't get out to sea while it was rough. We had to wait till the wind dropped. It took about three or four days to get back to Numbulwar.

Another time I took some people fishing and I told them to put fuel on board, but they didn't put it on. They spent so long – they didn't want to leave the place, there was so much fish there. They kept fishing and fishing. I said, "Look, we've got to get back." It's getting later and later on the way back

the motor stopped. "Where's the fuel?" No fuel.

So we went to shore and camped there, and then I said "It looks like somebody's got to go back to Numbulwar and let them know what we're doing. They'll be worried about us. So I'll go back with an Aborigine." So I set out the next morning to walk back and we just got back as the plane took off looking for us.

Another frightening incident happened in 1960. I was taking a group over to hear Festo Kivenjere at Groote Eylandt. The Gulf often gets cyclones and we set out on Friday afternoon in a 24-foot boat with a dozen people on board. We camped overnight and it was very wet during the night so I asked whether we go back or keep going, they said, "Keep going," so we set out for Groote Eylandt.

Got to Groote, had a good weekend with Festo, but it was too risky to go from Groote to Numbulwar, to go across the coast and down the coast. When we got out, it became very wet, windy, with big waves – we didn't know there was a cyclone. There was nowhere to go because the rivers were very shallow to get into and we couldn't get into the rivers. We knew we had to go through a point where there were rocks for kilometres out to sea – it was very dangerous to get through those rocks.

It was Dirrijuna's skill at getting the boat in and out of those rocks. Dirrijuna (son of elder Madi, Earl's friend) was on the tiller and I was on the engine and our lives were in Dirrijuna's hands because he had to get through those rocks. And skilfully, he made his way through those rocks so that we could pump the sump out and get ready to go back to Numbulwar.

Madi had dreamt we'd all been drowned. They came looking for bodies. But they found us.

A: Was that the closest you came to death?

E: Yes, it was a very testing time, getting into boats and cyclones and we had 16 women on board.

PODCAST REVIEWS

In praise of good-content podcasts...

A confession: I do not listen to every episode of every podcast (except for the Mark Driscoll one, *The Rise and Fall of Mars Hill* – sad, but very necessary for learning - see below).

First, 'Preachit!' is a podcast by Dr Alan Stanley, New Testament scholar and theologian, of which I have heard the majority of episodes. I had the privilege of learning and growing in Alan's classes at Brisbane School of Theology: *The Synoptic Gospels*, *The Triune God*, and *Paul and his letters*. He also lectured on *The Work of Christ*, *Acts and selected epistles*, *Greek (variety of NT exegesis)*, and *Biblical Theology and Interpretation*. Alan became a close friend and is someone I greatly respect. He now resides in New Zealand where he cares for vulnerable people through a job in his local hospital.

I was honoured to be in the 'small group' when Alan did a quick survey a couple of years ago to check the vibe and feel of the name for his podcast. 'Preachit!' won the day and is aimed at helping anyone – from the beginner to the veteran – preach better sermons: sermons that are Christ-centred. The topics are varied and practical, and those interviewed are among Australia's premier Christian leaders (Mike Raiter, Michael Jensen, Kara Martin, Megan Powell du Toit, Mandy Smith) as well as from Alan's contacts from around the world, for example, Darrell Bock, Pete Santucci. Alan's conversational style, clear and dry Kiwi humour, and depth of questioning are inviting and at times intriguing. I am always inspired, challenged and enthused to keep on trying to preach "better" – more Jesus-focused – sermons. For "down under" issues and approaches, I highly recommend Preachit! for pastors or parishioners.

The second podcast that I want to share about is 'The Alabaster Jar', hosted by Dr Lynn Cohick, New Testament scholar (Northern Seminary, USA), and two colleagues, also with PhDs in their respective fields. Their aim is to "take on current issues impacting women at the intersection of faith, theology and ministry". It is Christian orthodoxy with a thinking cap on, some fun and laughter, and dollops of serious scholarship. They are friends, speakers, wives, mothers, and scholars. In their podcast they reflect upon and discuss how all of our belief concerning God, Jesus, the Bible and the church affects women.

Women make up the majority of the church worldwide, carry the backbone of support services for the church, and give disproportionately in terms of wealth and land

ownership to support the church. I have studied world mission history and served overseas – this is the reality. The hosts and interviewees on this podcast are passionately serving Jesus and caring for his Bride, the church. I dip in and out of 'The Alabaster Jar', listening to the episodes that most interest me. Whatever your secondary theological or doctrinal issues, you will always find intelligent and respectful conversation for and about God's people. It's a podcast worth your time.

In support of difficult content...

The world is full of wonderful and interesting people and places, and – as the Bible tells us – is also marred by sin and full of trouble. A difficult and depressing topic has "done the rounds" recently, as many writers have sought to understand the "why" of the Mark Driscoll phenomenon. [If you don't know what I am referring to, God bless you, you have been spared.]

A long and comprehensive podcast was planned for and produced by Christianity Today, called 'The Rise and Fall of Mars Hill'. It consisted of 12 episodes (including one full-length trailer), eight "bonus" episodes, and one "special" episode. They were hosted by Mike Cospes, Christian writer and producer of the podcast. Mike has been lauded, applauded, criticised and cursed as he laid bare the workings of Mark Driscoll's leadership at the now-defunct Mars Hill church in Seattle. He interviewed many former staff, and survivors of the harsh leadership style that Driscoll became known for. He brought up many questions that all of us need to consider as we live in media-filled worlds that record our every move and note all the words that we should not have said.

What can I say about this podcast that has not already been said? A quick search via your preferred search engine will give a variety of angles and views, mostly from the US. Over the course of the podcast, threads were woven together that SHOULD cause every Christian leader to stop and think. How did this happen? Why did this happen? And – hasn't this happened BEFORE? Any student of church history, or anyone awake during the scandals of TV evangelists and other "big names" of the 80s, 90s and 2000s would realise the inherent dangers of big crowds and big voices. Or is that just me?

This podcast is difficult – both in content and in the exposing of unhealthy Christian culture. Sadly, we have been here before! And we, as sinful human beings, will go there again, except by God's grace and a LOT of work to remain humble, with eyes on Jesus and not on numbers, noise and nice suits or trendy haircuts.

This podcast has been severely criticised as Christian gossip – muckraking – as a variety of detractors and those squeamish about the public airing of the church’s ‘dirty laundry’ accused Cosper of a “just sharing for prayer” sneakiness. Cosper, as a committed Christian, does not gloat about this dirty laundry. He comes across as desperately saddened that this has happened to God’s church, in God’s name, hurting masses of God’s people. And this is why the podcast!

Nearing the end of the episodes comes an unusual turn in the proceedings. Leadership at Christianity Today was exposed as damaging, and a senior leader was accused of harassing women. Mike Cosper, working for and with Christianity Today, lays all this on the table, and more. He says sorry to a musician whose beautiful music he interspersed with Mark Driscoll screaming abuse at someone. He removes that screaming and restores the poignancy of the beautiful song that opens and closes each episode. Cosper is clear but not overt in his aim: we are all sinners needing redemption, so let us all come to Jesus with heads bowed and hearts open. The laundry has to be washed, and that can only happen if it is pulled out into the light.

There is no real “end” or definitive conclusion to the story of Mars Hill church. People who attended that family of churches heard the Bible preached, and by God’s grace some were saved. By God’s grace, some still follow, and by God’s mercy many more need healing and pastoral care from those brave enough to not shoot the wounded, but to carry them home.

There remain so many questions still unanswered about the destructive nature of certain styles of leaders, about personality cults, about accountability, and about church life and growth. How can Mark Driscoll (or insert name here!) carry on in church life as a leader after hurting so many? This podcast isn’t just difficult; I feel it is necessary to listen and to learn from. It is vital that all Christians keep holding ourselves and each other up to the standard of Jesus Christ: the one who stripped himself bare and knelt down and washed dusty feet.

In response to learning, understanding, and praying, all Christians must keep on thinking, asking, discussing and never enable rude or rough speech to be “okay” in the name of God, or in the name of anyone! That may be just one lesson from hearing these podcasts, but I think we must not be ignorant of the pitfalls and problems that could just come our way also.

FILM REVIEW

The Drover’s Wife

People can do their own research – books, internet, opinions of friends – but what would happen if “research” included listening to descendants of actual people involved in events? What if the bones of those who had lived in the “good old days”, and who had suffered war, injustice, tragedy and deprivation could talk: would we – you and me – just be quiet and listen?

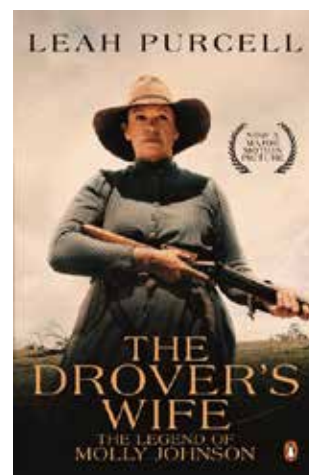
The Drover’s Wife is a retelling of just some of Australia’s history by actor, playwright, film director, and author Leah Purcell. It sort of follows the poem of the same name by Henry Lawson, but this time, the Drover’s Wife is revealed as an Aboriginal woman.

The plot centres on the disappearance of said Drover, and the suffering of Molly, his wife, and their kids, who represent all women and children in early colonial Australia. Brutality, drunkenness, rape and violence are depicted with shocking realism. The impacts of white settlement upon Indigenous families and lives is also laid bare.

Why see a film like this? Because this is our Australian history. The violence perpetrated upon the land and peoples of Australia is our shared legacy. Some may say “I didn’t do it, so don’t bother me about Indigenous issues”.

Indigenous Australians who share their stories would like you – invite you – to listen. As Christians, we have a role in reconciliation which starts in understanding, and that comes through quietly listening and bearing the pain.

The Drover’s Wife: The Legend of Molly Johnson is a strong Indigenous-led story that needs to be heard as we realise the pain that continues in our land and in our First People’s lives.



Obituaries



Greg Anderson

We mark the death in the last few months of four people prominent in the life in the Diocese, and pray for God's comfort for their families and churches, confident of the effect of Jesus' resurrection for their lives and our own lives now and forever.

Janine Morrow was a key lay person in the parish of Katherine for decades. She married Bruce Morrow after the death of his first wife, joining the family of four children, and then having one son Philip. Many will remember Janine as the organiser of the food canteen at Katherine Christian Convention for the many years it was held at Morrows Farm on the banks of the Katherine River. Janine also ran the resource centre opposite the church (which the Morrows built). She had huge involvement not just in Katherine but throughout the Roper region in teaching and resourcing children's ministry at Sunday School and RI in schools.

Jack Schatz (pronunciation guide for those who don't know the family: "Shots") was also a member of St Paul's, Katherine, for decades. Jack was a CMS missionary as a single man, in Darwin, Oenpelli and Angurugu, and married Yvonne on Groote Eylandt in 1969. As a couple they joined the Summer Institute of Linguistics as missionaries, serving in Victoria and then back in Darwin, although Cyclone Tracy disrupted this work for some years. They moved to Katherine in 1983, where Jack was a vital member of the church. Many will remember him as the man who took responsibility for cleaning and maintaining the toilets at the Morrows Farm for Katherine Christian Convention.

The **Reverend Michael Millar** was the priest-in-charge at Minyerri, from 2009 to 2019, following the death of the first Aboriginal priest there, Felix "Nathaniel" Farrell. Michael had studied at Nungalinga College and was prepared to take on the ministry that God called him to. He was a stable presence in the Minyerri church, and always showed commitment to his people. Michael and his wife Julie were also significant members of the Kriol Bible translation team.

Galiliwa Nunggarrgalu from Numbulwar was a key lay church leader in that community for many years, particularly between the retirement of Rev. Rupert Nunggumajbarr and the ordination of Rev. Peter Gundu. He faithfully led Sunday services and evening fellowship for many years before his wife's declining health meant they had to move to Darwin. Galiliwa's wife, Ginyibuwa, was the daughter of Madi Murrungun who invited CMS to start a mission at Numbulwar (then Rose River). In Darwin, Galiliwa and Ginyibuwa worked on translation projects into Wubuy for the Numbulwar church, as well as being significant leaders in the Urban Aboriginal Ministry at St James', Sanderson. Galiliwa returned to Numbulwar following his wife's death.



UPCOMING EVENTS AROUND THE DIOCESE

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10 December



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