

TOP CENTRE

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THE ANGLICAN DIOCESE OF THE NORTHERN TERRITORY

Remembering
'Saint Pat'





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Prayers for the Vinicombes

Greg Anderson

Many people across the Diocese have been praying for the Vinicombe family following their serious car accident on Christmas night in rural South Australia. Matt and Kate Vinicombe were serving as Church Missionary Society missionaries on Groote Eylandt, undertaking church support work, and making major advances in communicating in Anindilyakwa. They were visiting family for Christmas when their vehicle hit a kangaroo and rolled. The three children were uninjured in the accident, but Matt and Kate sustained severe injuries, particularly to Kate's spinal column. Kate is now breathing independently and is able to speak and eat, but the rehabilitation pathway ahead of her will be long. Please continue to pray for patience, resilience and support for each member of the family, and for confidence in God's goodness and trustworthiness, as well as for healing.



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



Bishop Greg writes...

I am writing from Groote Eylandt where I have come with Annette to meet church leaders and to give a taster for Nungalinga College study. Annette is teaching the Nungalinga Foundation Studies module on the Easter story. The session this afternoon looked at Jesus' Last Supper with his disciples. Jesus began with the Jewish Passover meal, which was the action that God gave the ancient Israelites to celebrate and remember his great rescuing work.

The Jews of every generation spoke as though they themselves were present as God's strong arm brought them from captivity to freedom. But Jesus took the bread and wine of the Passover and gave them new meaning – the great rescuing work for his followers to celebrate now was Jesus' sacrificial death. That rescuing work did more than delivering Hebrew slaves from the angel of death and the oppression of Egypt – it delivers people from the death of eternal separation from God and from being slaves to sin.

It is no accident that the old Anglican rules required people to take part in Holy Communion at least three times a year, one of which was to be at Easter. The action that Jesus gave his disciples to remember his death and to participate in it by faith, through sharing in the symbolic meal of eating his body and drinking his blood, is relevant throughout the whole year, but it corresponds so fittingly with the time in our church calendar that focuses on Jesus' death and resurrection.

It seems to me that there are two dangers for us around this sacrament. One is for it to become so routine that we take it for granted, participating mechanically or casually, just going through the ceremony but losing the preciousness of being able to feed spiritually on Jesus as we celebrate and memorialise his death. The other is to regard it as somehow higher than the other means God gives us to celebrate and recall his saving work, as though it brings us a particular blessing that nothing else can.

Jesus gave his followers this sign for their advantage, and if we neglect it, we are missing his intention for us; but he gave us other means as well for our blessing and we must not neglect them either.

One ancient word for the Holy Communion is Eucharist – the Greek word for thanksgiving – which reminds us that a primary motivation in taking part is to express our deep, ongoing and communal gratitude to God for all the benefits that come to us from Jesus' death and resurrection.

Just as the Jews each year might have imagined that they were the original rescued people, the apostle Paul says to the Christians of his time (and all times) that when Christ died, we died with him, and when he was raised, we were raised with him. We have been made one with him; we are "in him". In his death, we too have died, and we are spiritually already sitting with him in the new life of the coming age.

**"We have begun
the new life that
is to come."**

This means both that we have been transferred to the future, and also that our future has been injected into the present. We have begun the new life that is to come more fully one day, at the same time as struggling with the painful realities of a world that is still waiting for that day to come.

The blessings of Easter are great blessings, at the very heart of our faith, and it refreshes our souls to be reminded of them. I hope that every Christian in our Diocese will be refreshed again this Easter (a season that lasts for 40 days), as well as each time they join in the sacred meal of Christ's body and blood.

A COMMUNITY THAT TAUGHT ME TO BE A PRIEST

Murray Johnson

When Clyde Wood was elected the second bishop of the Northern Territory Diocese in 1983, he asked me to consider taking a locum ministry at Christ Church Cathedral.

Clyde had been the first Dean of the Cathedral but was appointed bishop after Ken Mason, first bishop of the diocese, resigned to take up an appointment in Sydney.

At the time I was considering my next steps after finishing a term on the staff of Nungalinga College and I saw the offer of temporary priest and pastor at the cathedral as an opportunity to regain some skills that would help me occupy a rectory somewhere down south.

I had been ordained in 1968 in St David's Cathedral, Hobart, and served as a priest in Tasmania until 1972. Then my wife Dianne and I moved to Melbourne for me to become Victorian representative of the overseas aid division of the Australian Council of Churches. That appointment, which lasted for the rest of the 1970s, brought me in contact with Christian people across the world who were advocating for people trapped in poverty or victims of human rights abuses. That helped me to see that our context, how we live, where we live, the pressures we face, life itself, all influence the way we live out the gospel.

So we both felt privileged to live in a new context at Nungalinga College,



enabling Aboriginal people to show us how to live the gospel.

While still living at Nungalinga, we moved to serve at Christ Church Cathedral, and the welcome there was overwhelming. Right from the beginning, we were asked, urged, requested, to accept nomination to be the next dean.

Eventually, we gave in, because it came to be seen as the right thing for us to do, and this was the right place for us to be. I remember Clyde expressing concern about my lack of pastoral experience, but he decided to take the risk and extended the invitation for me to be installed as the second Dean of Darwin.

Without denying the work I had done before in the wider church, this is where I found my true role in the church, as a parish priest, involved in the lives of a group of people, for whom the church was a community of faith and grace.

And I think that this community aspect of the life of the Darwin Cathedral is what is so important. I have visited many cathedrals, in Australia and overseas, and it seems to me that many of them are cathedrals first, and parish churches when possible. Christ Church Cathedral Darwin, to me, is a parish church that also

happens to be a cathedral. That means its strength lies in the fact that there is a group of people whose lives are tied to this place, so it is a community of faith and grace. I think it is truly symbolic that there is a remnant of the old Christ Church still standing, because the original church was not built to be a cathedral but as a parish church.

It soon became obvious that the heart of this community was expressed in its worship, especially at the Parish Eucharist each Sunday at 9 am. Here was a group of people who enjoyed being together for their corporate worship, who knew their way through the liturgy and yet were not stuck in the past, but were keen to try new liturgies, new music, new ways of doing things, such as liturgical dance.

It helped that we had a first-class organist who could take us through learning new hymns. There were many Sundays when we had visitors, many of whom expressed surprise that, here in this remote corner of Australia, there was a congregation that had created such a vibrant community being lived out in its worship together.

At the same time, this same congregation expressed its “belonging together” in our social life. Yes, we called them parties because that’s what they were. Many were held at the old Deanery under the banyan tree, neither of which exists anymore. Many were combined with welcomes to newcomers or farewells to those moving on from Darwin. But mostly, they were just times to be together.

For Dianne and me, ministry by and to women had long been an important aspect of church life. Di had hoped to organise a retreat for women, but it wasn’t until we came to the Cathedral that it became clear that this was the place and the time.

So, in 1986, the first Christ Church Cathedral Retreat for Women was held, with women from the Uniting, Lutheran and Roman Catholic Churches attending along with women from the Cathedral. This retreat was led by Dorothy McCrae-McMahon, then minister of the Pitt Street Uniting



Church in Sydney. Dorothy and I had been colleagues during the 70s, when we were both employed by our respective State Councils of Churches. There were 15 annual retreats, the last one in July 2000, when Di was invited back to lead it.

“It was a place for the nurturing and care of the people who belonged.”

A most interesting ministry that occurred during my time as dean was through an organisation called A New Start Towards Independence – or ANSTI. During my time as interim dean, a man called into the Cathedral



to talk about ANSTI, which he had set up to provide care for long grass people, itinerants. Renn Murray had been one himself and had wanted to provide help for people who were in a situation of homelessness and alcohol addiction. Renn had managed to get the NT government to give him a minibus which he had had converted to a mobile coffee shop and he would take it to various places around Darwin. But he wanted a base so he could provide breakfast, have a place for people to have showers and a clean-up, and a place where a doctor would be present to check up on health and provide prescriptions for medicines. Could the Cathedral allow him to use the Harbour Room two mornings a week?

It was not universally accepted, but most of the Cathedral people were keen for it happen, so on Monday and Friday mornings, the Harbour Room became the centre for ANSTI. It continued right through my time as dean and I was proud to be associated with it. Unfortunately, soon after we left in 1992, Renn died from cancer and ANSTI came to a sad end.

After nearly nine years at Christ Church, I accepted an invitation from the Bishop of Newcastle to become the Rector of Woy Woy on the NSW central coast, north of Sydney. This was so different from what we were used to in Darwin and it was clear we couldn’t simply do the same things. But we were able to encourage the creation of a caring community. We introduced Parish Retreats, for men and women together, and they had quite an impact on how the parish developed. We also had parties together and people began to get to know each other and to enjoy each others’ company.

Darwin’s Christ Church Cathedral taught me to be a parish priest. It was a place for the nurturing and care of the people who belonged, just as it was a place where the dean and his family were nurtured and cared for.

For all of that and so much more, I always give thanks to our God of grace and community for this place and its people.



Why the good news of the gospel must start with bad news

Joshua Kuswadi

Rector of St Peter's Nightcliff

Fight or flight.

They're the two choices we have when put under pressure. It's a great and caring part of the way God made us. When we feel under attack and the adrenaline is pumping, we haven't got time to weigh up pros and cons or do a cost-benefit analysis of various options. The brain overrides with two survival tactics. (Some people consider freeze a third instinctive response.)

In the lead-up to Easter at St Peter's, we were reading John 18-21. As Jesus and the disciples went into the night garden, Judas his betrayer came with a mob "carrying torches, lanterns and weapons" (18:3). Under pressure, Peter fought. He drew his sword and struck the high priest's servant, cutting off his ear.

Later that night, under the pressure of questioning by others, Peter chose flight, not fight, and denied Jesus three times. It's a famous story of his undoing. Only hours before he had zealously proclaimed to Jesus, "I will lay down my life for you." Then Jesus answered, "Will you really lay down your life for me? Very truly I tell you, before the rooster crows, you will disown me three times." (13:37-38).

Can you imagine the guilt and the shame when Peter denies Jesus the third time, and, "at that moment a rooster began to crow"? (18:27) Under pressure his courage comes undone. Under pressure he lets down his Lord and he lets himself down.

Most of us have reasonable expectations of ourselves. We're generally upright and decent. We live with integrity and want our words to be seen in action.

And so, we don't like failing. We don't choose to disappoint others. We don't want to let others down. It's hard when we're held to account. It's

confronting when others point out our blind spots. It's challenging when others know we've made mistakes.

It's very easy to self-justify bad behaviour or bad speech. It's so tempting to cover it up, so no one else knows.

The bad news at the start of the Christian journey is: "We have failed." To be brutally honest, this is the bad news of our everyday lives. Each day we wake up to a new day, a fresh start. Yet, it doesn't take long before we've dropped our standards, missed the mark, and let ourselves down. "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." (Romans 3:23)

Some days it's even in the form of denying the Lord Jesus. We want to be known as a disciple, following in his footsteps, but under pressure from a colleague, neighbour, or friend, "You aren't one of this man's disciples too, are you?" we can wilt like Peter and deny it, "I am not."

The good news of the gospel is that we fix our eyes upon Jesus. It's important to admit what we're like, and it's vital to see what Jesus is like in contrast.

Under pressure in that garden, Jesus is calm, confident, and in control. When the pressure builds, he seeks to defuse it, and protects his friends. "If you're looking for me, then let these men go." (18:8) How is Jesus so calm under pressure? He knows "all that was going to happen to him" (18:4). When the pressure bursts and Peter slices off an ear, "Jesus commanded Peter, 'Put your sword away! Shall I not drink the cup the Father has given me?'" (18:11) How is Jesus so confident under pressure? He knows what he has obediently chosen to do.

The cup is the cup of God's wrath. It is the judgment of God our failures deserve. It is the separation between the eternal God the Father and his only begotten Son, as Jesus cries out on the cross, "My God! My God! Why have you forsaken me?"

And yet, knowing all this, Jesus chooses to obey.

In humility, he allows himself to be bound and led away. He submits to unfair questioning, physical violence, and mockery. He is stripped of his clothes and nailed to a cross.

And he dies.

A public spectacle. A humiliating death. A miscarriage of justice.

But this is good news. This is the story that needs to be told and retold. The death of Jesus is the best news in the world. Why? Because Jesus died for his people.

Caiaphas, the high priest that year, spoke more truly than he knew when he proclaimed, "It is better for you that one man die for the people than that the whole nation perish." (11:50) Jesus died in our place. Jesus drank the cup that was reserved for me. Jesus faced God's judgment so we won't have to.

The bad news is we cannot live the life we want to. We let ourselves down. We let our Lord down – no matter how great our desire or conviction to want to

**"Jesus alone did
what we can't do.
He loved us and
died for us."**

lay down our life for Jesus. He is no more surprised by our failures than he is of Peter's. But he's done something about it.

The good news is that Jesus laid down his life for us. He knew what was going to happen, and chose to make it so. "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep ... No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord." (10:11, 18) Unlike a hired hand who cares nothing for the sheep, Jesus loves and cares for us. His death shows us the full extent of his love. "Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end." (13:1)

This Easter is another opportunity to tell the good news to everyone, and retell it to ourselves, for we all need to hear it. Under pressure. Knowing our failures. Aware of our own mortality. Jesus alone did what we can't do. He loved us and died for us. We need Jesus. Thank you, Jesus.





Minister seeks influx of Christians to Red Centre

Anne Lim

Kristan Slack, the Rector of Alice Springs Anglican, has made a heartfelt plea for more Christian workers to move to the troubled outback town in the face of a threatened exodus of long-term residents.

Kristan says his church has been praying for Christians to move to Alice Springs to encourage workers worn down by the crisis in violent crime that reached the national spotlight in recent months.

“We’ve been praying that God would send Christian workers here because even other staff need it as well. They need to see that Jesus brings hope and difference and change. If you want to make a difference, move to Alice, especially Christians, because we just need Christians to be light across all of society. There’s so much work to do. There are so many jobs of so many kinds in every field, but it’s expensive both to get here and to live. It’s hard to find houses, and then you might be afraid.”

Kristan acknowledges that it is getting harder and harder to get good people to come to live in Alice.

“There are people who have had enough; there are medical staff who have been here for 20 years who’ve said, ‘We just have to leave; we can’t keep doing this.’ They feel like the power is out of their hands and the only thing that’s improved in 20 years is that the kids are looking healthier,” her said.

“But you only have to go to the supermarket and you see many women with disfigured faces [from domestic violence]. I’m OK, I’m not under threat, and yet I despair. I don’t think there’s the political competency in the Territory or the political will nationally to actually deal with this.

“It shouldn’t be this way. Kids shouldn’t have to be on the streets because they’re afraid of the violence in their homes.”

While Kristan’s family feels safe because they live in the rectory tucked away behind the church, he said his wife would no longer go out to the supermarket after 7pm for safety reasons.

“We’re unaffected personally as a family, but it’s really sad. It’s frustrating that

“If you want to make a difference, move to Alice, especially Christians.”

it’s hit the national media and political spotlight now when domestic violence towards Indigenous women has been horrific for a very long time and that hasn’t been enough to get national media or political interest,” he said.

“There are some very racist elements who have been very vocal recently. There are political interests, even among some Indigenous groups, to present one side of the problem as the main side, and there’s a shame in acknowledging the domestic violence issue as well.”

Up to 14 out of 16 ICU beds in Alice Springs Hospital are occupied by domestic violence victims at times, he said.



Kristan preaching at church, left; Kristan Kathryn, Levi, Ezekiel, Jeremiah & Elianah

Kristan said when a group of Christian clergy met Northern Territory Police Minister Kate Worden earlier this year, “Everyone noticed the difference in the tone of the Christian leaders to all the other meetings because we actually care for the politicians as well as the police, and these kids and these families. We told the political people that every single person is made in God’s image. That’s at the core of how we’ve come to know God in the world, and that’s what we try to raise up amongst the members of our church family. We can’t affect the whole town, but we can [affect] a group of people who treat everyone with dignity. It’s sad when that is not happening.”

While Kristan confessed to having more questions than answers to the situation, he believed there needed to be a restoration of a system called Intensive Youth Support, which had shifted to a family support program and left a gap.

“I think funding needs to be put into programs we know have worked in the past, but have been pulled because it’s politically expedient to look like you’re doing a new thing,” he said.

In one bright spot, a new prison chaplain had moved to Alice Springs recently, who was being proactive in trying to be a bridge between prison staff, inmates and families, and thinking about what kind of faith formation could happen in the prisons.

“The churches rotate a chapel service there in the afternoons on Sundays when we can get in,” Kristan said.

“Our prisons don’t have climate control and they don’t have enough staff. Families can’t see people properly because they’re all understaffed and at their wits’ end. And there’s constant rolling political action at the moment.

“But there are remarkable people who have moved here to be Christians in this place and work. I do think that in the end, it’s that invisible yeast in the dough that will make the difference.”

The growth of Alice Springs Anglican Church youth ministry has led it to launch an appeal for \$300,000 to create space to continue to connect young people with Jesus and his family (its kids church space is full and the church has no hall).

“We are seeking to repurpose the on-site rectory for a ministry building and need to purchase a house elsewhere. All up this will cost \$750,000.”

If you are able to pledge an amount towards this ‘Ministry Building Project’ please do so through the QR code below – please share this as widely as you can as there will be many outside our church family who will be interested to give towards this project.

Please note that all pledges are handled discreetly by the Diocesan Registrar and not known to the parish (except by way of amounts of people and total amount pledged).

Alternatively you can email registrar@ntanglican.org.au or call 0418 689 170 or mail “Confidential: The Registrar, Anglican Diocese of the Northern Territory, GPO Box 2950, Darwin, NT, 0801”

Thank you for helping us connect people with Jesus and his family.



Tributes pour for the life of 'Saint Pat'



Bishop Greg Anderson speaks at Pat Williams' funeral at Christ Church Cathedral, Darwin

Patricia Aitken Williams 17/01/1935- 02/02/2023

Heather Ferguson

One of Pat Williams' favourite hymns, *Beauty for Brokenness*, summed up her lifelong love of God and of all people. It sings of social justice, dignity, peace, freedom, refuge, land for the dispossessed and care for the environment, all meaningful causes for Pat.

"Beauty for brokenness, hope for despair. Lord in our suffering this is our prayer. Bread for the children, justice, joy, peace. Sunrise to sunset your kingdom increase."

Pat ministered to an extraordinary range of people over many decades, every day of the week, providing a never-ending range of opportunity for those without hope. Bishop Clyde Wood reminded us that at the heart of it all was the life of the cathedral... "hers was an extraordinary ministry of inclusion, an enriching contrast to those who often in the life of Christianity focus on the exclusion of some." Her ministry extended beyond the Cathedral over decades to refugees, to those in prison and those in aged care. She was very active to the last, serving communion to residents of Pearl Aged Care Facility the morning she died.

Pat was born into a Christian family in Ballarat, Victoria. Her happy childhood was complemented by the loving example of her parents who both worked for the welfare of others. She was a bright and friendly student both at school and then at the Melbourne School of Nursing.

Married to Keith Williams for over 60 years (whom she called Keith Darling to distinguish him from former Dean, Keith Joseph, when there were two Keiths in her life!), they moved for Keith's YMCA work from Melbourne to Sydney, to Hobart, Newcastle, Broken Hill and Puckapunyal. Pat grew in independence as she worked full time and raised their four children, Robyn, Stephen, Meghan and Shaun. With Keith away in Vietnam for 13 months, she said "he had to adjust to having an independent wife". As a demonstration of her capabilities, she completed her Higher School Certificate over two years at night school while working full time, at the same time as Robyn, her eldest, completed her HSC.



Moving to Darwin in 1977, Pat worked at Royal Darwin Hospital, dedicated to special care nursery and midwifery and in later years as Inter-Faith Chaplain. Pat was a major player in achieving palliative care facilities at RDH and was active in the euthanasia debate. She was involved with the Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS) organisation, CRADLE (bereaved parents support) and Chaplaincy at the Prison. Until her death, Pat was designated "Chaplain, Prayer and Spirituality" on the Executive of the Darwin Branch of Mother's Union. In 2004 Pat was awarded the



Order of Australia Medal in recognition of her chaplaincy and counselling services.

Pat says she was never a radical, but her leftist political leaning was inspired by feminist writers in particular, and she took part in rallies to support women's action groups and women's shelters. She was very active in support of the Ordination of Women, which was finally achieved in 1992, enabling Pat to be ordained as an Anglican Priest in 2001. Ordained a Deacon in 1988, Pat was the first female Anglican Priest ordained in the Northern Territory but needed the encouragement of Bishop Clyde to finally take that step. Pat was held in such high esteem, there were no fewer than four Bishops present at her funeral. Pat's outstanding service to Christ Church Cathedral was recognised in 2020 when she was appointed Canon Emerita of Christ Church Cathedral.

Pat and Keith developed strong extended family relationships and were adopted as Mum and Dad by Aboriginal families in Gunbalanya. Their love for her was demonstrated in an extremely moving dance during the funeral service, seen above, representing the north wind carrying her to rest in eternal peace.

Pat's four children inherited her love of justice and her political leanings and learned from her practical wisdom. Robyn noted "how crucial a strong sense of social justice is, and that burns very deeply in all of us." Also we have seen how Pat was loving, compassionate and energetic but she was no walkover. Among many things, she taught Robyn to "be patient and gradually get your way."

Pat found joy in the little things and shared this joy with those she met. Stephen said that while many remarked on Pat's loving compassion it wasn't that she naively saw only the good in people. She was, in most cases, well aware of people's shortcomings, but she chose to give people the benefit of the doubt.



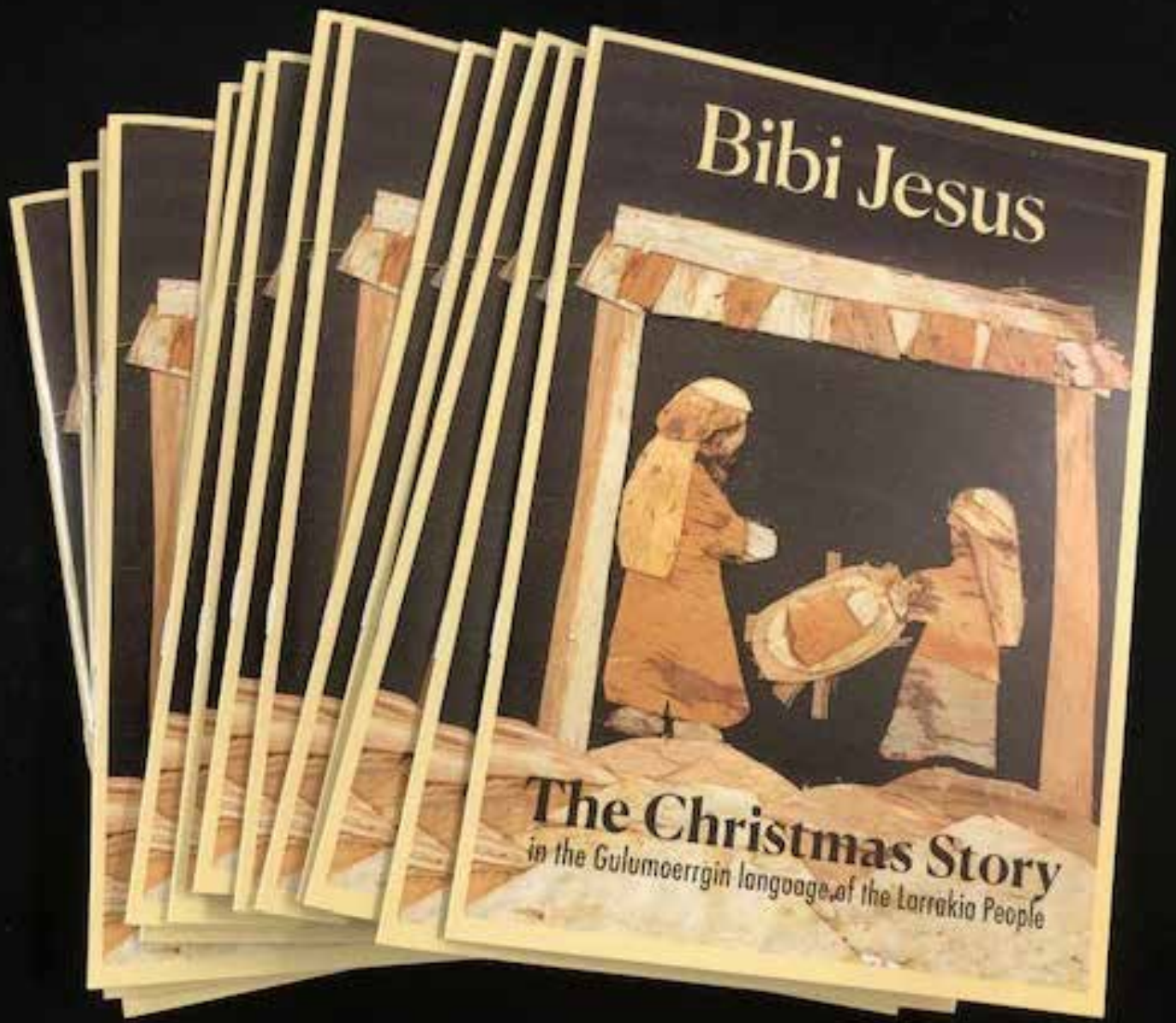
Pat kept abreast of current affairs and strongly expressed her frustration over lack of meaningful action on national and international issues such as climate change, care for the planet and the plight of refugees. She was a strong supporter of same-sex marriage, the Uluru Statement from the Heart and the Voice because "these were the loving things to do." Stephen added that she was also frustrated by those who resorted to dogma unthinkingly, when what such dogma decreed wasn't the loving thing to do.

Bishop Clyde also confirmed her strength and resilience, quoting from 2 Timothy 1:7 "For God did not give us a spirit of cowardice, but rather a spirit of power and of love and of self-discipline". He said: "There is no doubt that in the life of Pat, there was plenty of power and of love and of self-discipline, but always in the context of deep love and concern for the other."

Vivienne Hayward's Thanksgiving Prayer was: "Gracious and loving God, we thank you for lending us your servant Pat, a faithful and loyal disciple of Jesus in her untiring response to the needs of others. We thank you for giving us a dear colleague, a confidante, a pastoral carer, a doer-of-all-the-jobs around the cathedral, a friend and 'a co-conspirator in trying to make one particular corner of the church look a bit more like you might want it to be.' "

Pat is hugely missed, and even more so as we find out at the Cathedral that a myriad of things that used to just happen, just don't happen anymore. Tributes for Pat are exemplified by this from a long-term parishioner of Christ Church...

"Pat lived her faith with joy and conviction. She was our very own saint, a positive, practical, creative, wonderful force of nature. If there was a problem, Pat got it fixed one way or another. And she did it all with love, humility and a wonderful sense of humour. Pat was the embodiment of Christian love. She welcomed all and accepted all. It was a privilege to know her, and she leaves a huge gap in all our lives."



Waking up a sleeping language

The birth of Scripture translation in Larrakia

Susanna Baldwin

For the past two years, the Australian Society for Indigenous Languages (AuSIL) has been spearheading an exciting venture called The Christmas Project. The goal is to publish a book telling the story of Jesus' birth, as presented in Luke's Gospel (Luke 2:6–12), in as many Indigenous Australian languages as possible. Since the project's inception, AuSIL staff have been running workshops and meeting with members of Indigenous language communities to support them in producing their translations. For some of the languages represented in the book, this will be the first ever portion of Scripture published.

One such translator we worked with was Larrakia woman Lorraine Williams. Many Darwin residents will be familiar with the Larrakia name from acknowledgements of country, as well as the highly active community service body Larrakia Nation. They are the traditional custodians of the land on which the city of Darwin now stands, a strong and proud people numbering well into the thousands.

So it might come as a surprise, as it did to me, that the Larrakia language has been fast slipping towards obsolescence. Lorraine's father was a fluent Larrakia speaker, such that Lorraine absorbed the language into her heart and mind as a young child. He passed away when Lorraine was just five years old, and the family relocated to Arnhem Land to be with her mother's people. The last generation of

“Lorraine is quietly committed, under God, to turn this situation around.”

Larrakia-speaking elders began to die out. Today, Larrakia is classified as a 'sleeping language', meaning there are no officially recorded mother-tongue speakers anywhere in the world.

A committed Christian, Lorraine is quietly determined, under God, to turn this situation around. Undeterred by the statistics, she has a vision and passion to see the Larrakia language revived, spoken and taught once again. More than anything, she longs to see the Scriptures translated into Larrakia, so that her children and grandchildren, nieces and nephews, sisters and countrymen can hear God speak to them in words that tap deeply into their culture, history and identity. And she knows there is no time to lose. “If I don't translate it, nobody else will,” she says.

On a balmy dry season day in June 2022, my colleague Melody and I met with Lorraine to start piecing together her translation of the Christmas story: tracing down items of vocabulary from photocopied lists, figuring out the technicalities of sentence structure from a 50 year old grammar book, talking through how concepts such as 'manger', 'shepherds' and 'angels' should be represented in the target language.

Lorraine said she started the day feeling under a cloud. She sensed the devil was opposing her work and trying to block it—a common experience for Bible translators. Over the course of a few hours, we saw her gather energy and peace as the Holy Spirit brought to mind the words and phrases of her childhood, sentences formed on the page, angels delivered good tidings of great joy in a language that the world has all but discarded. The cloud started to lift. God had not forgotten the Larrakia language or people. We were all moved by the profound significance of seeing God's word take its first breaths in a new language, and so fittingly through the story of Christ's birth, the incarnation of God's eternal Word.

Over the next few months, Lorraine continued to painstakingly refine and improve her translation, with input from her older sisters and support from a linguist at the University of Newcastle, who has been undertaking an



Lorraine Williams with Melody Kube, top, and with Susanna Baldwin, bottom

extensive study of the Larrakia language. Their efforts were richly rewarded when, in December 2022, AuSIL published 'Bibi Jesus' – a glossy booklet containing the text of the Christmas Story in Larrakia, alongside the corresponding text from the Plain English Version (PEV). In a wonderfully personal touch, Lorraine created a series of beautiful paperbark collages to illustrate the story, inspired by landscapes of the outback that she used to see at markets as a child. The book rapidly became a bestseller at the AuSIL bookshop on Darwin's Nungalingya College campus.

Lorraine has no intention of resting on her laurels, and is already setting wheels in motion for new Larrakia translation projects. We look forward with eagerness to seeing more of God's work in this precious language and people group, until that day when it joins in chorus with all tribes and tongues around the throne in heaven.

To keep up to date with AuSIL projects and publications, or to make a gift to support Bible translation for Indigenous Australians, visit www.ausil.org.au.

BOOK REVIEWS

A Jesus to Know, and Grace for Growth

1. Gentle and Lowly: The Heart of Christ for Sinners and Sufferers *By Dane Ortlund*

I remember struggling with the humanity of Jesus. Not his deity – for me, that was clear – as the miracles and power of God through Jesus seemed to burst off the pages of the gospels that I grew up with. But there I was, in my first year of theological studies many years ago, wondering how this Jesus could relate to *me* – a weak and emotional human, a sinner, suffering from my own and that of others.

Church history tells us that the major heresies have come about from denying either the deity or humanity of Jesus. The Creeds were developed to deal with this, and they clearly pronounce that Jesus of Nazareth was God become human – born as flesh into time and space, lived, suffered, died, buried and bodily raised to life again. As really God and a real human, the suffering death, burial and resurrection of Jesus was for us and our salvation, so why this book?

The inside cover of this strongly pastoral, accessible theological work explains: Christians know *what* Jesus Christ has done – but who is he?

I have felt the beauty of the person and character of Jesus flowing over me from Ortlund's biblically-faithful and beautifully encouraging writing. This is Jesus, strong and gentle: this is Jesus sympathetic and wise; this is Jesus, both terrifying judge and empathetic advocate! These human traits (and more!) must never be separated, for the greatest miracle is that God became one of us – not in 'semblance' or shady mimicry pretending to be human – fully and completely; "our feeble frame he knows", as the old hymn goes. There are passion, emotion, feeling and power in Ortlund's writing, **coming straight from Scripture** about God and the present, daily work of Jesus the Son.

As I read this book, I was overcome by thankfulness, humility and joy that Jesus is so incredible as to stoop down for me – for us! It was that controlled strength (meekness) and compassion that sent Jesus to the cross for us – he gave his life for us out of love. We don't have to ignore the 'right and might' of God because when we run to him we find a warm embrace. They don't cancel each other out! We can and must hold all these things to be true at the same time.

There are so many precious pearls in this book. Here's a glimpse of how Ortlund makes his case:

Just as the purer a heart, that more horrified at evil, so also the purer a heart, the more it is naturally drawn out to help and relieve and protect and comfort, whereas

a corrupt heart sits still, indifferent. So with Christ. His holiness finds evil revolting, more revolting than any of us ever could feel. But it is that very holiness that also draws his heart out to help and relieve and protect and comfort. (p.69-70)

Ortlund stands firmly in the received orthodoxy of the centuries: Christ's deity – holiness, purity and rejection of evil – is perfectly combined in his humanity as saviour and compassionate friend, for Jesus loves, longs for and now, intercedes and acts now to help all who will seek him.

This is the good news we have received and are to proclaim! This is the beautiful message of this book. It has given renewed hope and joy in the gospel that is for sinners and sufferers like me. The focus of 'Gentle and Lowly' is on **Jesus**. Fall in love again with the wonderful Saviour as you read.

2. How does Sanctification Work?

By David Powlison

If you ever have been, or still are, overwhelmed by the word "sanctification", then this book is for you!

Take a moment to consider that big theological words are like the proverbial elephant – they can be eaten, but just one bite at a time. Here is a manageable bite:

Both Jesus and Paul used metaphors for growth – Jesus with seeds, and Paul with his references to babes and milk. Thus, the idea of growing and developing in the Christian life is nothing new. The word 'sanctification' refers to that expectation of growing in Christ-likeness that all who love Jesus would aspire to.

Unfortunately, Christians have not loved each other as Jesus commanded, but have set about with measuring tapes and rulers to check on each other's progress. The beautiful goal of sanctification has been used as a weapon, as thunderous sermons berated the faithful for many and varied reasons, some of which were sadly unbiblical.

This book, however, sets out to take back the beauty and the privilege of becoming more like Jesus. As Christians, we should want to be more Christ-like, and would be praying and working (using God-given brains, energy, and resources like pastors, teachers, counsellors, etc) towards this goal.

The work of sanctification is God's work in us, as we cooperate with the Holy Spirit to repent, make new choices, and to live out our salvation as grace-filled and gracious people. We cannot do it alone – we desperately need the daily challenge and encouragement of the Bible, the love and acceptance of fellow Christians, and the godly example and counsel of wise pastors.

We need both the challenge of Christ who has done everything for us, and the reality that we can do nothing for

ourselves to make ourself right or acceptable to God, as these pearls from Powlison reveal:

Justification by faith is comforting. Men and women who doubt that they are acceptable and accepted, who struggle believing that God could ever love them, who feel that they always fall short, or who sink in shame around God are foundationally helped ...

Justification by faith is also disturbing. Men and women who are overly self-confident; who try to prove themselves to God and others, and themselves by their goodness; who try to save the world by their efforts; or who busy themselves building a resume and crafting an identity are humbled.

There are no rulers or measuring tapes in this book. The pastoral care that flows from the heart of the author is clear: Powlison combines his training and experience in counselling with a theological question that has caused anxiety for many Christians through the years.

Here, in this small book anxiety and condemnation are banished. What you will find is the love of God, the hope of salvation's ongoing work in us, and the grace to grow.

FILM REVIEW

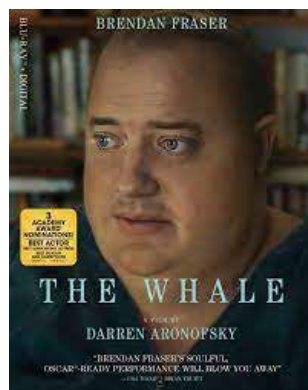
The Whale

(WARNING: rated R: Sexual Content, Drug Use)

There are many types of reviews, and many aspects of a film that can be critiqued and analysed: script, actors, direction, production and editing, music, setting/scenery, lighting, special effects, etc. There are also the philosophical questions that a film may raise; the parody, the satire, the mourning, the romance, the horror, the quirkiness – the list goes on.

The Whale is directed by Darren Aronofsky who is known for his tragedies. This film is certainly in that genre, and not only because a man has let his physical health decline to the point that the plot centres on his final days on this earth.

The central character, Charlie, is a divorced, gay, morbidly obese father of an angry, vicious teenager. Things have deteriorated to the point that Charlie can barely walk or



breathe, and now, as his vital organs struggle to keep him going, begins the descent into death. His weight and an allegory connect him to the epitaph 'The Whale', and this is hugely overdone to the point of boring repetition.

He had a wife and daughter and left them for his young male lover. Religion – Christianity – seems to be blamed for this as a major sub-plot. In another twist, his friend and nurse is strangely connected to a mysterious door-knocking evangelist who tries to "save" Charlie. It raises many theological and existential questions, including how anyone can 'save' another, let alone themselves.

The film is very dark. It is full of swearing and sweating and grief. Charlie's daughter is exploding with rage due to being abandoned and takes it out unmercifully on him. This is not easy to watch. It is fat-shaming and frankly horrendously abusive. But Charlie seems to be both the whipping boy – blamed for many things – and the hero. It is Charlie alone who keeps any sort of positivity alive, even as he dies slowly with the progression of the film.

This is just one sad story – one glimpse – of what is going on every day and night in homes and hearts everywhere. When I say "just", I mean that it is a fictional portrayal of the tragic actuality of life: humans are broken and in desperate need of saving. We have 'done it' – broken hearts, bodies, promises – to ourselves and to others.

The film ends with a comic and symbolic image of release from the body – of the whale – at the instant of Charlie's death. Yet, for me, there was no triumph and no release: the pain and the dysfunction were not healed. The darkness was not overcome, the doom was not lifted.

So, maybe there are amazing actors, director, production, lighting, etc, but what is it worth? There are many Charlies in our world and in our neighbourhoods – many, many angry children of divorce, many confused exes, many enabling friends, and many trying to do just that little bit of good to save themselves or another.

As a Christian who knows that God in Christ Jesus is the only hope, I believe we cannot save ourselves, nor anyone else. Our little 'good' will never be enough, even though we should not stop trying. We all need something outside ourselves yet who will come into ourselves to heal the deep hurts that we bear from the results of our sin, as well as the sins of others inflicted upon us.

The one positive is that films like this can give us greater compassion for people, and greater motivation to live out the love and hope of Jesus for a dark and desperate world.

Jo Vandersee lives and works on Larrakia country (Darwin). She serves as Staff Chaplain for a large community services organisation, and enjoys reading the Bible with others, writing, singing, and multicultural adventures.



Palm Sunday at Christ Church Cathedral

UPCOMING EVENTS AROUND THE DIOCESE

Aboriginal consultation group
(WALK – Wed/Ayakwa/Lhaawu/Kunwok)

April 11-14

Katherine Christian Convention
(Bp Greg speaking on Philippians)

April 29-30

Clergy and church worker family
conference, Riyala

July 11-14

Diocesan synod
September 21-23

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