

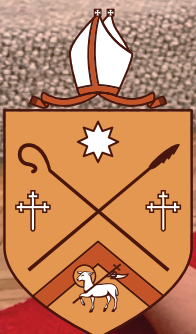
TOP CENTRE

issue 24.1

THE ANGLICAN DIOCESE OF THE NORTHERN TERRITORY



Ministry building
in Alice Springs





Jose turns 100

Greg Anderson

It is not every day that a Territory Anglican turns 100. Jose (pronounced Josie) Petrick OAM reached that rare milestone on February 14, 2024. She is a well-known local historian in Alice Springs, where she has faithfully attended Alice Springs Anglican Church for many decades.



For me, there is a close association between Jose and the heritage-listed mural in the chapel at the former St Mary's Children's Village south of the Gap. She wrote a book about this iconic artwork painted in

1958 by Robert Czako, and over the years has given dozens of talks at the chapel, describing the history of the mural and explaining its component panels that draw on biblical, legendary and historical narratives.

I remember the first of these talks that I witnessed, where the sparrow of a woman in her early 90s was so focused on the painting that I had my heart in my throat fearing she would fall backwards down the chancel steps. I needn't have worried – she knew the space so well. But beyond the church, Jose has also delved into historical information in other domains. She published a local history *The History of Alice Springs through Landmarks and Street Names*, in 1996, revised in three later editions, as well as an autobiography in 2017 and other works. Her contribution to the Centralian community was recognised with a Medal of the Order of Australia in 2000.

Jose arrived in Australia 74 years ago from England and in 1952 married Martyn Petrick from Mt Swan (now MacDonald Downs) Station north of Alice. Jose was widowed at the relatively young age of 50, and moved to Alice, where she worked as a journalist. Although she moved into residential aged care just in recent years, she is still physically and mentally remarkably strong. A week of various celebrations marked Jose's centenary, culminating in a morning tea with birthday cake at church and prayers thanking God for his blessings on her and committing her remaining years to God.

On behalf of the Diocese, I express our congratulations to Jose on reaching 100 years and trust that whatever time remains to each of us, we may follow her example of faithful Christian commitment.

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TOP CENTRE

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Front cover: ALICE SPRINGS ASSISTANT MINISTER TOPHER HALLYBURTON LEADS KIDS' CHURCH.

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



Bishop Greg writes...

In the last issue of Top Centre, I started unpacking the Vision of our new diocesan strategic plan *Growing communities in the love of Jesus Christ*. I wrote about a number of ways that we want to see communities in our churches and around our churches grow. But there is a particular kind of growth that we are looking for – *in the love of Jesus Christ*. What does that mean? There are two elements, and they fit together well.

The first is that we want our communities – our churches and the neighbourhoods and networks around them – to grow in this truth: Jesus Christ loves us. I hope we never lose the wonder of this statement! Jesus Christ, who is truly God and truly human, who is the one whom God has appointed to be king, judge and saviour in God's kingdom, loves us – each one of us individually, and all of us together. Perhaps it is more usual for us to think and talk about how God loves us. The most famous verse in the Bible begins "God so loved the world". But that truth becomes clearest in God sending Jesus. Romans 8 talks about God's love for the world in Christ in v. 39, but in v. 35, Paul says that nothing can separate us from the love of Christ. In Galatians 2:20, Paul speaks very personally of the Son of God, "who loved me and gave himself for me". In Ephesians 3:18-19, we read Paul's prayer for his fellow Christians that they "may have power, together with all the Lord's holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge". In John 15:9, Jesus himself declares his love for his disciples, and he urges them to live in his love.

Ordinary humans seem to live so constantly with insecurity – unsure if they are really loved deeply or whether they have to earn that love. A key antidote is to know that whatever other people may think about us, Jesus the King loves us. He loves us as we are but does not leave us there; he loves us so much that he wants to change us more and more into his family likeness. He sends us his Holy Spirit when we give our lives to him, so that we have power to understand his love and to do what pleases him. Knowing that Jesus Christ loves us, through the challenges and chances of life, is so comforting and encouraging. It is like a foundation for our place in the world, which keeps us steady no matter what happens. What a blessing for our communities to grow in their appreciation of this truth – to know it and to feel it! An outflow of this knowledge and feeling is that when we know that Jesus loves us, we can afford to love others, rather than having to protect our own interests as our primary concern.

The second element of growing in the love of Jesus Christ is for our love of Jesus to grow deeper and to develop greater breadth. 1 John 4:19 reminds us

that "we love him because he first loved us". Jesus' famous encounter with Peter after the resurrection, near the beach barbecue, recounted in John 21, has Jesus asking Peter three times "Do you love me more than these?". It is Peter's love for Jesus that expresses his restoration to Jesus and his ministry, after having denied Jesus three times in the early hours of the first Good Friday.

How can we express our love for Jesus, especially when we aren't actually physically with him, as contrasts with our other beloved friends who live close by? We can still spend time with him, in prayer, reading the Bible, meditating on his character, words and work, and thinking carefully about how each part of our life is responding to him. Jesus himself also tells us that we express our love for him by keeping his word (John 14:15, 23). And to Peter, Jesus says that the consequence of loving him is looking after his flock.

We also want the communities around us to grow in their love for Jesus. For that to happen, they will need to know enough about Jesus for him not to be a stranger to them, and that might require us to be ready to share stories about him. There can be creative ways of doing this; maybe watching *The Chosen* together and talking about which parts of it are from the Bible and which are made up. Jesus is a really attractive character, and he invites people to come to him and to respond to him. We can pray that he will use us to introduce him to others, as Andrew and Philip did in John 1.

Let's continue to pray that we will be growing communities in the love of Jesus Christ.



A receiving as well as a sending nation

Anne Lim

As former missionary Tamie Davis considers the big picture of missionary work, she is excited by the demographic characteristics* of World Christianity, which show that it is by and large young, black and female.

“Does it really matter what the makeup of World Christianity is?” she asks.

“I think it does because ‘young, black and female’ might not be who we most readily think of when we think of World Christianity, but that’s precisely the point! These are not the powerful people in society, or those who are lauded or respected, or whom we think of as leaders, including leaders of World Christianity.

“But God is a God who often turns up in surprising ways or works at the margin, who is working in the unlikely places, with those the world considers foolish, weak or lowly. If we know the character of God, I suspect it will not come as a surprise to us to find him especially at work among the young, black and female.”

Davis, who spent ten years in partnering with the Tanzania Fellowship of Evangelical Students (TAFES) with her husband Arthur, is now Mobilisation Lead at the Church Missionary Society South Australia/Northern Territory (CMSSANT).

In her upcoming keynote speech at the CMS Top End Global conference in Darwin on 23 March, she will talk not only about World Christianity but what she calls the World Not-Christianity.

“The World Not-Christianity part of the equation is the 3.2 billion people in the world who have no access to ever hearing about Jesus. There are 5.5 billion people in the world who are not Christians, and 3.2 billion of them haven’t had the opportunity even to hear. That’s mind blowing,” she says.

“That’s not who we think of when we think of a missionary, right?”

Pictured above: Tamie and Arthur Davis with Callum, left, and Elliot.

“And how can they hear if no one reaches to them? When we think about this unreached world, we’re trying to think about who missionaries are and who reaches this unreached world ... Obviously, God uses all kinds of people in his mission. No one’s saying that if you’re not young, black and female, God can’t use you. Part of what I’ll be trying to do is to show us how the missionaries in God’s world are people from all kinds of different backgrounds ... Part of what we want to do with CMS is recognise that we’re part of a global missions movement that includes all kinds of different people, including young black and female. And we actually might not quite be the centre of this; we might be joining in with something, which is a much bigger movement, in which the Holy Spirit has gone ahead of us.”

Davis said Australia should see itself not only as a sending nation for missionaries but also as a receiving nation.

“Darwin for CMS has been both as a sending location, and a receiving location. CMS sends missionaries to North Australia, has done for a very long time and yet also we want to encourage believers in Darwin to see themselves as people who can be used in God’s global mission as well. That sense of Darwin being both a sending and a receiving location in some ways we think of as unique, but we ought not to think of it as unique to Darwin. We ought to think that all of our locations are sending and receiving locations.”

She pointed out that while Tanzania received her and Arthur as missionaries, “they have now, in their estimation, sent us back to Australia as missionaries to Australia.

“But also, Tanzanians are sent out from Tanzania to other parts of the world ... And in today’s world, where the vast majority of world Christianity is young, black, and female, we might actually want to think about ourselves as receiving locations as well. And, as this reverse migration happens from the majority world back to the West again, there’s a sense of the Holy Spirit sending them, and moving with them.

Davis said that CMS was always keen to promote mission education and to help people see themselves as part of a much bigger world.

“In part, that’s because the more you see yourself as part of a much bigger world, the more you want to be involved in that much bigger world. And hopefully, also you are involved in it in good ways rather than in destructive ways. We all know that missions history is certainly mixed.

“There have been great examples of missionaries who have gone into God’s world and have brought hope and healing and all kinds of things, but others who have been very destructive. And sometimes those things have coexisted. Sometimes the things that brought hope and healing have actually come at the cost of others. A great example of that is missionary wives. Husbands have done great things, but there has been collateral damage along the way.

“So, we want to help people to think about being involved in God’s world in good ways. And we want to help people to think about how to be co-workers with others who are involved in God’s world rather than just seeing it.”

Davis said she had only recently discovered that Aboriginal advocate Lowitja O’Donoghue, who died aged 91 on 4 February, had been a Baptist missionary to India as well as all her other achievements.

“That’s not who we think of when we think of a missionary, right? This young Aboriginal woman. I was so surprised when I heard that part of her story before. We’ve got to keep telling those stories, got to keep hearing those stories so that we can actually see ourselves as part of that. And also think about who are the people who we’ve previously not thought about as missionaries or as people who are part of God’s world who actually God is using, and so that we can actually help them and, and mobilise and support them as well.”



*67 per cent of Christians live in the majority world. 25% are in Africa - this is the largest demographic piece of the pie, which is why the ‘black’ part of it, but in some ways that’s a stand-in for ‘non-white’.

40 per cent of Africans (that is, the biggest part of World Christianity) are under the age of 15. Only 3 per cent are over the age of 65.

Worldwide, women outnumber men in Christianity in every country in the world except Qatar (because 75 per cent of Qatar’s population is male.)

Statistics quoted from Women in World Christianity by Gina Zurlo.

Wei-Han Kuan, Executive Director of CMS Victoria, will give the other keynote speech at Top End Global. Buy your tickets here. <https://cms.org.au/event/top-end-global/>

From Nebraska with love

Anne Lim

Meet Martha Stewart, the new General Manager and Registrar of the NT Anglican Diocese. An experienced executive in the Utilities and Energy Industry, Martha took the reins in her new position just before last year's Synod in September. US born, Martha had a passion for all things Australian from an early age, as she explains here.

I was born and grew up in Nebraska, a farming state in the middle of the USA. Lots of cows, corn and tractors. My family was a normal small-town family. Mom was a nurse and dad was an agronomist. My grandparents were dairy farmers on one side and beef farmers on the other side. It was all very rural.

I went to Nebraska Wesleyan University, in Lincoln, Nebraska, and I was the fourth generation of my family to go there. I decided I was going to do a theatre major but my dad said, "Yeah, you can do a theatre degree, but you're also going to do a business degree, because theatre will never feed you." And he was absolutely right.

So I did both. And after I graduated from university I went into Arts Administration. My first role was as managing director of a dance company. I was good at math and had a business mind, so I got to combine the best of both worlds. I love the theatre world, but I could still do a balance sheet, which has served me well in my current environment.

When I was about eight, I watched *The Man from Snowy River* and I fell in love with Australia. After that, I always wanted to go to there. I found AB "Banjo" Paterson's poems and couldn't consume enough of anything about Australia. I loved to travel and when my dad passed away when I was a freshman at university, I had early on that sense that life is short.

In 1999, when I was 23, a friend and I planned to go backpacking. She pulled out, so I went by myself. I caught a flight to Melbourne and I went straight to the high country. I was here for about six weeks, left, and couldn't wait to come back. In those days, Australia only gave away 300 working holiday visas to Americans. So, I entered a lottery through an agent and I got one. I was going to go work in the theatre industry in Melbourne, but first I wanted to see a bit of Australia.

I wanted to see Uluru and the cheapest package was to do a tour. I got three days at Uluru, three days drive up to this place called Darwin I'd never heard of. And a three-day trip to Kakadu, also a place I'd never heard of. And then I'd fly



“I fell in love
with Australia.”

back down and work in Melbourne. I had such a great time on the tour. I got all the way up to the top, did Kakadu, got back into Darwin and I just fell in love with it. I went into the tour company office, and said, "Can I have a job?" Two days later they sent me out to a place called Point Stuart Wilderness Lodge. It was a fishing lodge, and I did house-keeping, washed dishes, worked in their office, waitressed and worked in their bar. My future husband, Dan, was a ringer on the buffalo and cattle station next door and we were the closest pub. So when he came over I was a captive audience.

I later learned that he had done pack horse trips to the high country and all those things that I loved and enjoyed in the Outback. He was raised on a farm" New South Wales, came up here as a station hand/ringer, and worked up the Kimberley. It took quite a long time for us to get together but he was persistent. When I was back in the States, he just kept ringing. I got back over to Australia in 2001 and we went out to the Kimberley, just as friends. After that trip, I decided he was pretty cool and I decided to stay with him. He's very smart and down to earth. We were married 22 years ago and we've stayed up in the North that whole time. I've never lived down South. I gave up the idea of a theatre job in Melbourne and just stayed.

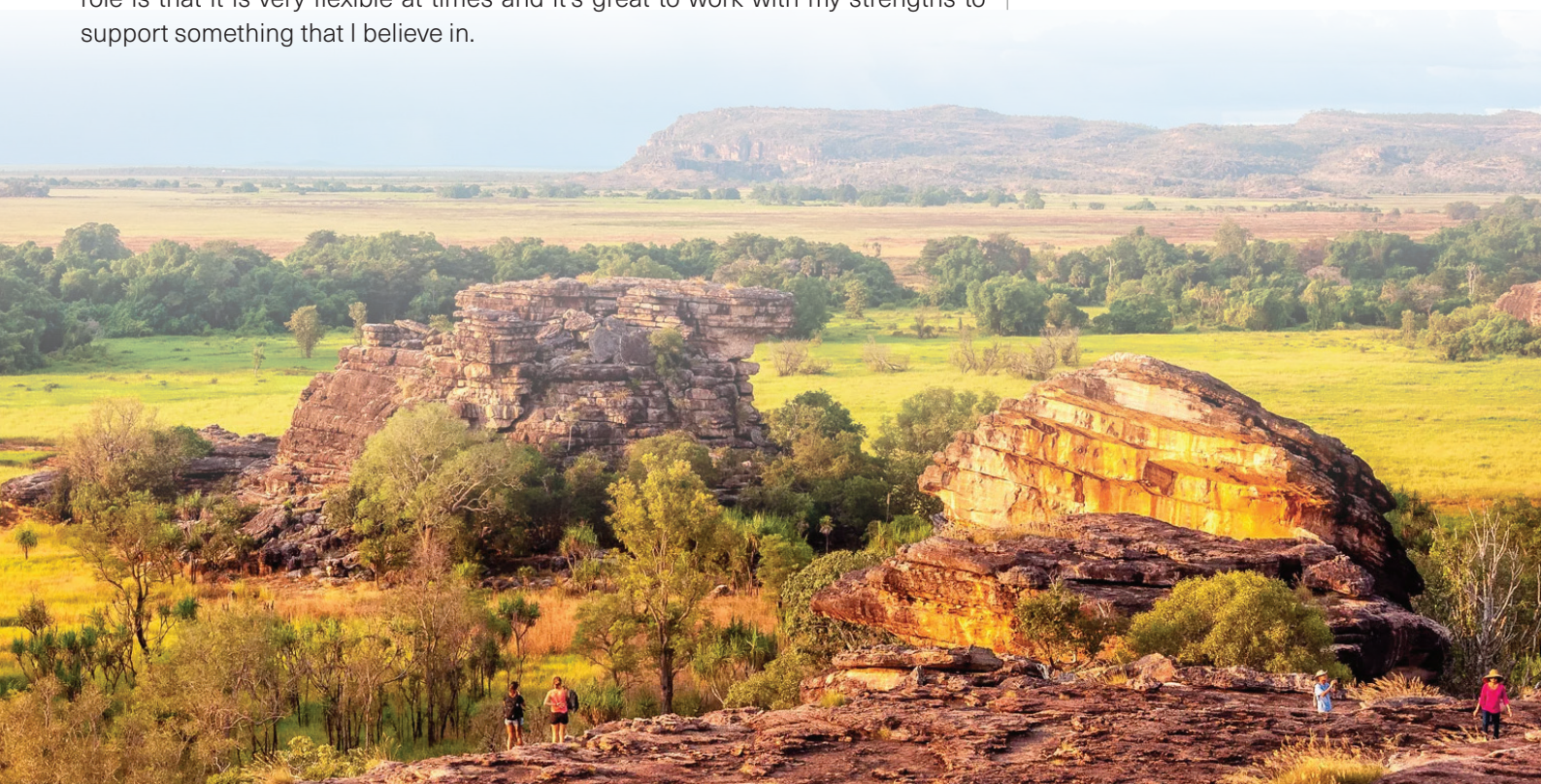
Australia's been very good to me. It's been a great country to live in. I've thrived in Darwin - became an accountant and did my CPA [certified public accountant] and then got my master's degree. I worked for Heytesbury Beef as an accountant for a couple of years, then worked for Cridland's Lawyers, a local law firm in Darwin. In 2007, I went to work for Power and Water Corporation and stayed with them for 15 years. I started as a financial accountant and ended up as their Chief Financial Officer. It was intense and I enjoyed it a lot. I loved building teams and watching young members of my staff flourish. But working as an executive with a young family takes a lot out of you. We did IVF for my daughter and that was really amazing and I wanted to make sure I spent time with my little miracle of a redhead. That, along with needing to support family down south meant it was time to move on and reset some of that work/life balance, which is part of why this role has worked out well.

We live in Humpty Doo and have attended church at Fred's Pass Church of the Good Shepherd since around 2012. Fred's Pass has been a great family to me.

The challenging part of this job is it can be quite consuming. So you can spend your day and then also an evening or a weekend at the office. And then you go to church on Sunday and you talk about work again. But one of the upsides of the role is that it is very flexible at times and it's great to work with my strengths to support something that I believe in.

Personally, I would value prayer that when I'm challenged by difficult situations, that I would always step back, and consider what would be the right response in this situation from a Christian perspective.

Professionally, I need prayer for resilience. Parishes are struggling. There are difficulties financially. There are difficulties spiritually – there's division with the theological world at the moment, even in our small, little diocese. And so cooperation and resilience and patience are all really important things for everybody, but definitely for me. I've got my own ideas about things, but sometimes you need to listen to what God's saying and trust he's always got your back.





Raise the rent!

Anne Lim and Greg Anderson

A remarkable opportunity has come up in Alice Springs, that offers great help to the parish and also to the Anglican rector, Kristan Slack, and his family. The rectory on the church site has a number of features that make it challenging for a young family, including that they are the only residential family in the town centre, the roof is uninsulated and leaks, and the configuration of rooms. At the same time, the church building does not have adequate space for the burgeoning children's and youth ministry. A generous family became aware of these challenges and have made the decision to buy a house in the Alice Springs suburbs for the Slacks to move to, so that the current rectory can become a ministry centre that will enable the church to meet its needs in a much better way.

The use of the house comes on generous terms although still under a commercially viable arrangement. Because the opportunity was seized quickly, the church had not budgeted for this outcome, and so the Diocese is supporting a fundraising campaign seeking 52 people to pay a week's housing allowance for the Slacks – \$550 – to cover the first year. The Diocese's Facebook page will launch the campaign, and we would be grateful if church people across the diocese could share this on their own social media as we try to cast a wide net for support.

“I want it to contribute to long-term ministry.”



The knock-on benefit of this move is that the rectory, which is sited directly behind the church, will be freed up to create much-needed additional meeting capacity. At present the church has no alternative meeting space other than a small front gathering area where kids' church is held, and a tiny study for assistant minister Topher Hallyburton, in what used to be a photocopying room.

Says Kristan, "We have nowhere where we can grow on this site because we're just hemmed in. And so our thinking had been from some time ago, we can just move us out and use the one building we have and expand into that and repurpose it. So this purchase immediately enables that as long as we can find the funding for it."

Kids' ministry was growing strongly in the church last year, which increased the impetus to create a suitable space for it. Kids' church is smaller than it was last year after 30 parishioners left town, but the midweek group still attracts between 16 and 20 children, many of whom are not from the church.

"The kids' church was really big and we had no room and now it's gone back to a smaller group again. But all the prevailing lack of space issues for ministry are still there," says Kristan.

"Eighteen months ago, when we were starting to talk about this, we called it the building ministry project. We didn't want to just call it the building project because we care about increasing ministry, not just property and buildings. This move to get us out will totally change our experience and enable us to stay here longer. And it will also immediately provide space that we can then work out what things we can do, what things we can add, if even if we can't do that at the moment."

The four-bedroom home in the suburb of Braiiling, pictured above left, has a pool and a lawn.

"It's among neighbours, which we don't have here, so that will be lovely as well. It'll give a bit of normality for the kids who, being minister's kids, don't have a normal experience of life anyway. It's been a family home for another family of five; our kids are ten, the twins are about to turn nine in a couple of weeks and our daughter is five.

"I can only imagine how it would have helped us through this last summer, if we could have had them burning off that frustration in the pool and on the lawn. I'm most excited about the fact that there is a big lawn so they can kick the ball around.

"If we left, I don't think another family would agree to move into the rectory. We could have looked into buying our own house. But I've been wanting to make it a parish-centred change. I don't just want it to be about us, I want it to contribute to long-term ministry."

For any further enquiries, please contact the diocesan office and ask to speak to Bishop Greg or our General Manager, Martha Stewart.



"The move to get us out will totally change our experience."

Raise the Rent!

To donate a week's rent, make an electronic transfer to

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Acc: 322646

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Partners in the Gospel

Maree Vines of St Alfred's Church in Melbourne, writes about hosting Edwin Rami on his recent visit.

Former Church Missionary Society gospel worker Wendy O'Brian (nee Lewis) was overjoyed when she caught up with her former Numbulwar Primary School student, Edwin Rami, at the recent Victorian CMS Summer Under the Sun Conference.

Edwin, ordained in 2023, is now the minister at the Church of the Holy Spirit at Numbulwar. He was in Melbourne as part of his ongoing Professional Development. CMS missionaries Josh and Steph Mackenzie, who work alongside Edwin at Numbulwar, are link missionaries with St Alfred's Blackburn North. When Josh contacted the parish to see if we could host Edwin so that he could attend SUTS and spend time at St Alfred's we had no hesitation in welcoming him into our home.

During his two-week stay, Edwin attended all the Sunday services, and on the second week read one of the lessons in Wubuy, the original language spoken at Numbulwar. As someone commented, "It was an eye opener to hear him read the Bible at church and to realise how hard the language that he spoke was and so presumably, how hard it was to learn."

Edwin shared his desire to reach out to the young people and to teach them how to read the Bible. He was particularly interested in the all-age liturgy for Communion that was held on the first Sunday for this reason.

Sharing with Ben Clements in celebrating Holy Communion that day, they spoke about the value of using words that everyday people understand to explain Christian ideas and practices. This highlights the importance of Bible translation into Indigenous languages and the challenge of ministering in a multilingual community.

Another priority Edwin shared was the need to train up leaders to do ministry in the church. In particular, he was working to empower people to contribute to the Sunday service by having public speaking roles. While talking to René Pfitzner, who leads the evening congregation, Edwin likened the process of training lay leaders to following a recipe. "Once you've explained how to do it, they can follow the steps and do it themselves." For Edwin, making this process clear was important for growing and encouraging leaders in his church.

"It was an eye opener to hear him read the Bible [in Wubuy]."



Edwin Rami with Wei-Han Kuan, above, with Maree and Graeme Vines, below left, and Matt and Kate Vinicombe, below right.



Senior Minister Peter MacPherson commented, "It was a pleasure to welcome Edwin to St Alfred's. As we talked, it became clear that there was a huge contrast in our ministry contexts. My office is next to the offices of my Associate Minister (Ben) and my Senior Associate (René). If I want to talk to either of them, I can just walk a few steps. If Edwin wants to talk to a clergy colleague he has to jump in a car and drive quite a distance."

As well as spending time talking with staff, Edwin shared his vision for ministry in a remote community along with its challenges with the Cross Cultural Prayer Group and the Reconciliation Group. Each group welcomed Edwin over a meal.

One of the many positive things to come out of Edwin's visit was to see how our support of Josh and Steph Mackenzie is contributing to Edwin's ministry and the building up of the church at Numbulwar. Now we have a much more informed idea of how to pray for this work. It is hoped that a group of people from St Alfred's may be able to make a return visit to Numbulwar. Edwin's visit was the start of building relationships between our two churches and becoming partners in the gospel.

"I thank my God every time I remember you. In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now." Philippians 1:3-5 NIV



Edwin with Wendy O'Brian

Maree Vines was a missionary for 28 years. She worked with her husband, Graeme, alongside Aboriginal people at Gunbalanya (eight years), East Gippsland, Vic, (13 years) and then at Nungalinga College, Darwin, (seven years) and Marrara Christian College.

Edwin Rami

Deacon at Numbulwar

In December, I asked Josh (my colleague and CMS missionary at Numbulwar) to help me find somewhere down south where I could go to learn and have a break from ministry. He along with Maree Vines helped me organise with St Alfred's and the Church Missionary Society (CMS) for me to go to the Summer Under the Sun (SUTS) conference in Victoria and spend some time with the St Alfred's community.

I appreciated the hospitality of Maree and Graeme Vines. They drove me around and organised most of my trip. I had many long conversations with Graeme – sometimes, we talked from lunch until dinner without realising it.

At the conference, I was encouraged by the talks from Sydney Archbishop Kanishka Raffel, and I was moved by the quality of the lyrics with which I connected. I also participated in the workshops, which gave me much to consider. God used the conference to lift me up, encourage me, and refresh me for the next year of ministry.

I was also thankful for the chance to be present when the CMS Victoria fellowship said goodbye to Matt and Kate Vinicombe, former missionaries on Groote Eylandt, and their children Beth, Chloe and Amos, and Zoe Creelman, formerly at Ngukurr. I am grateful for their ministry here among the remote communities of Groote Eylandt and Ngukurr and as part of the Missionary Development Team. You are very much missed, and we at Numbulwar Parish continue to pray for you all.

Another conference highlight was meeting my Year 3 teacher, former CMS missionary Wendy O'Brian. She was a close friend of my grandmother and family. They would often go hunting together. Wendy would always encourage me to go to school. When I went to school, she was like a grandmother, and I remember her always caring for me well. Education is my profession, and I think it has much to do with her, the positive role model she was and the connection I felt with her.

As part of the trip, I also got to start a conversation with St Alfred's about a potential parish partnership. I met their staff, toured their church, read my language in one of their services and presented at their Indigenous Reconciliation Group. They raised the money for my trip, which I am grateful for. I appreciated my time with the St Alfred's church community and look forward to continuing our relationship in the future.

I also toured the CMS offices, saw old missionary friends and made many new connections with Christians in Melbourne.

Thank you to everyone, particularly Maree, Graeme, St Alfred's and CMS Victoria, for making this happen. I appreciated the trip and have come home feeling refreshed for another year of ministry. I look forward to another trip in January 2025.

“There have been many precious opportunities to grow together in Christ.”



Changing seasons

Natalie Watson

After 20 years serving God in the Kimberley and Darwin through Bush Church Aid (BCA), and with much prayer and seeking God’s wisdom, Jim and I have decided to finish our time as BCA Field Staff and my formal role as Women’s Pastoral Ministry Worker with the Diocese. This decision brings lots of emotion but I have been challenged by James 1:5-6 to ask God for wisdom and to trust him for it. With changing family needs, I am looking forward to being able to visit extended family in New South Wales more frequently.

James 1:5-6 *“If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you. But when you ask, you must believe and not doubt, because the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind.”*

In the last edition of Top Centre, I shared a 2023 highlight – meeting with women in prison for Bible study. There have been many other precious opportunities to grow together

in Christ and support others in my role. These include individual pastoral ministry, visiting remote parishes and supporting clergy when they come to Darwin, engaging with others in Trauma Healing, hearing local wisdom about Domestic and Family Violence (DFV), coordinating training, and working with the diocesan DFV committee to open the difficult conversation and collaborate to care for each other better through prevention and response.

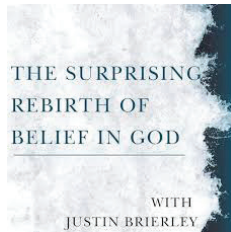
We arrived in Kununurra in 2004 with three-month-old Jesse and since then we have shared many changing life seasons with our BCA supporters, and our Northern Territory and North West Australia Diocesan family. We have received amazing support through prayer, encouragement and practical help. We cherish this – thank you. We praise God for your part in our ministry. We are not leaving Darwin, the Diocese or St Peter’s Nightcliff so we hope to see you around.

Visit to Gunbalanya - Natalie with Reverend Lois Nadjamerrek, minister of Emmanuel Church Gunbalanya, and Reverend Tracy Lauersen, National Program Manager, Families and Culture, Anglican Church of Australia

PODCASTS

The Surprising Rebirth of Faith in God – Justin Brierley, UK

Why would anyone believe in God? Why would anyone NOT? This podcast is intriguing, coherent, and mature. I usually give a podcast three episodes but with this one, I didn't stop after just three!



Nietzsche famously declared the death of God in 1882, while British broadcaster Justin Brierley declared that the death of The New Atheist movement occurred around 2016.

What was this movement of Richard Dawkins, Sam Harris, and co? What led to its rise and, more interestingly, what led to its decline and gentle fade from view?

The first episode pulls no punches – just a few shocks to set the scene of how non-belief became more dogmatic than the Taliban – and gives free lessons on how scathing derision of opponents is one way to not gain and keep followers. The main problem the New Atheists seemed to have with Christianity was that it is anti-science: but is this the case, and where were they getting that vibe?

Interviews, sound-bites, gentle atheists, books, converts, de-converts, agnostics, confused university students, and a populist ideology that raised faith in science to new heights, all combine for imperative listening by anyone who cares to carefully examine modern thinking.

The New Atheists appeared to invent a nouvelle religion, making science do and say things that it never aimed to do. They set up an atheism-science alliance as “final knowledge” with an arrogance that no one trained in the empirical method would ever come close to. They also moved confidently into philosophical ground that the vast majority of them were not trained in, and so compared apples with oranges – a first-year student mistake.

With this basis established, the subsequent episodes go on to individual topics and experiences related to the New Atheist phenomenon, moving towards what's happening now.

Podcast host Justin Brierley (justinbrierley.com/about), a respected Christian thinker-speaker-writer with many years' experience debating and discussing with atheists, among others, is well placed to bring the analysis. His calm and rational interviewing style lets the information speak for itself.

Most importantly in my view, the New Atheists hugely underestimated the human need for meaning, transcendence and emotional experience. Maybe feelings are only chemicals crossing a synapse, but the de-converted (ex-atheists) on the

podcast and in the book *Coming to Faith Through Dawkins* (eds. Denis Alexander and Alister McGrath) definitely don't think that's all there is to it.

This podcast is top-quality research, conducted by Christians, which in no way denigrates the beliefs or non-beliefs of others. If you have questions, or agnostic or atheist friends willing to listen, here's an opportunity to discover things about epistemology and the basis for living and acting in the world today.

Reach – a WEC Australia podcast wec.com.au

WEC International is a large (1900-plus workers, or “staff”) Christian mission organisation that started in 1913, now comprising over 80 nationalities in 90-plus countries, in all Protestant denominations, including Pentecostal and charismatic. Its goal is “Taking the Good News of Jesus where they don't know his name”.



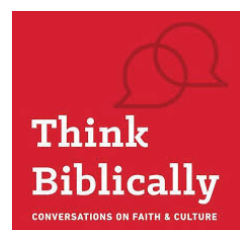
Australia's arm of this great band of believers continues to innovate and adapt to a changing world with workers involved in the arts, leading youth teams for cultural experiences, Bible translation, refugee care and outreach, student ministry in many lands, and mentoring and spiritual direction. The workers' stories are real and their lives are ordinary, undergirded by faith in an amazing and powerful God who works in and through them.

The podcast so far has included interviews with a few people who I know personally, so I can vouch for their love for Jesus, their heart to share the good news in ways that will be understood by the hearers, and that the training WEC offers is practical, biblical and engaging.

Richard Jenner, who along with his family previously worked in France, conducts the interviews in a casual Aussie style. There is honesty, fun, awareness of how much we need Jesus, and the desire to serve those who are marginalised, wounded, or have never heard and are in need of God's love.

Thinking Biblically – Biola University, US.

Here are no worn-out clichés or “Bible-bashing”. These are “thinking-cap-on” discussions with well-known and ordinary Christians who are analysing modern issues and current social media trends. While many may balk at just the title of the podcast, please read on!



Hosts Sean McDowell (son of the evangelist Josh McDowell) and Scott Rae, both professors at Biola University's Talbot School of Theology, get to terms with issues in ways that Christians can thoughtfully work through them:

What is it about friendship? Does Jesus "get me"? Is EVERYBODY leaving the church, or is that a big red herring? Is social justice a leftist, 'woke' diversion from Jesus? What happened to the Quest for the Historical Jesus? What is a 'person' – do you need to be taught that you don't have a soul, and why so? What is a Christian to do around politics, war, magic, other religions, and so much more?

The hosts engage with experts in their fields on current cultural movements, advances in science and tech – especially AI – and issues that Christians have to face at work and at home. All are tackled with respect and care.

I wanted to listen to all the episodes, yet the vibe is clear from those I selected: Sean is open to truly understanding those of divergent views, and demonstrates his flexibility of thinking and beliefs – admitting his departure from some non-foundational beliefs of his Christian apologist dad, who many of you may have grown up reading or listening to.

I was impressed by the wide variety of topics, and while there are adverts for Biola University courses at the end of each episode, there's no hint of American superiority that may put Australian listeners off. Agree or not with the content and conclusions, I think it's really worth your time.

THE BLOG

Marg Mowczko – personal blog MargMowczko.com

Australian Bible scholar, historian and New Testament-Early Church analyst, Marg Mowczko lets the evidence speak for itself. Always treading carefully to say what we may infer from the data, but not going further, she infuriates both complementarians for her egalitarianism, and extreme feminists for not going far enough – in their view, anyway.



I admit to a certain bias – I know Marg personally, and really appreciate her calm consideration of the Greek (she's qualified academically) and her steadfast commitment to stating plainly what we can learn from the inscriptions and documents of Christian history about the place and ministry of women in the New Testament and early church periods.

Marg continues to patiently reply to questions about her methods and her findings, as well as minister to hundreds of women who share their stories of mistreatment from ignorance or downright abuse at the hands of church leadership all around the world. The footnotes to every piece

that Marg publishes are worth their weight in gold for any scholar, writer or speaker.

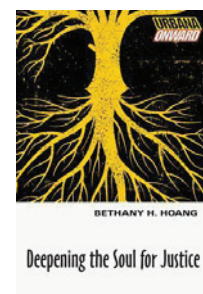
With blog entries expanding to include Old Testament women and "all the women of the Bible", Marg continues to source primary documents and quote eminent scholars but is now being quoted by high-level Christian university professors who know they can depend on her research and historical training. If you are looking for serious scriptural engagement around women in the Church, then here it is!

Find Marg's blog online, and see what she has to say about your favourite biblical women as you keep on serving God, knowing that like Paul in Romans 16, you are in good company.

BOOK REVIEWS

Deepening the Soul for Justice by Bethany H. Hoang (2012, InterVarsity Press)

"Seeking justice begins with seeking the God of justice", is the strong opening to a punchy little book on the place of Christians in working for justice in God's world.



When news headlines overwhelm us on a daily basis – domestic violence, human trafficking, addictions, refugees – where do we even start? When we want to pray AND take action, what are some godly, guiding principles and practices that will aid in long-term effective involvement in causes that grip the heart of God?

Bethany Hoang of International Justice Mission (IJM) has written a short – 42 pages – booklet, suitable for personal reflection or group study, that is firmly evangelical. She opens her message with joy that so many Christians want to be involved in social action to bring about just solutions for precious people who Jesus died for.

There is a clear biblical basis for fighting for the outcast and vulnerable, with the whole book a caution against rushing headlong into "saving the world" without grounding in God's word and wise self-care. Weaving unforgettable stories throughout, she suggests practices of grace that will sustain and nourish the Christian in any endeavour:

Stop – take a weekly 'Sabbath' and rest the body, mind and spirit;

See – look at the Bible, church history and modern stories of all that God has done and is doing; see justice issues from God's perspective;

Open – open your Bible each day and be open to God's mind on social issues; be open to learning and truly understanding

from the perspective of marginalised and hurting people;

Choose – there is the day-by-day and moment-by-moment decision to choose hope in the face of complex and ingrained injustice, as this is the only way to survive long-term in the work of bringing justice. Jesus IS that hope, and this is the foundation of Christian efforts and the source of resilience for those who fight unjust systems and abusive networks;

Ask – prayer is both the intake and output of the Christian as asking and listening form the conduit of God's voice. Christians cry out on behalf of the oppressed, and listen quietly to know God's will, as waiting times come. Being free to pour out distress and pain to our loving God that comes in the work helps keep the focus on the sustaining, listening God of love;

Proclaim – declaring, often in song, what God has done and how God's perfect character will bring justice helps push back the overwhelm in the long fight for justice. The psalms and prophets especially demonstrate the link between worship and justice;

Remember – we know and we tell of God's power as the Holy Spirit seeks to redeem and save until Jesus returns. Remembering is a discipline, for we easily forget God's goodness in trying and waiting times.

Hoang firmly trusts in the God of justice as she works and prays for change. Justice is the work of God's people – not alone, but communally – and this is the focus for her and IJM.

This slim volume has really encouraged me, and I fully recommend it as it equips Christians for long-term outreach in any arena.

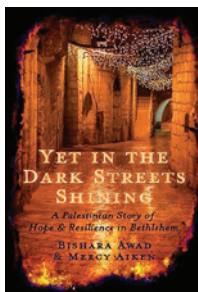
Let us continually recall that "Whoever oppresses the poor shows contempt for their Maker; but whoever is kind to the needy honours God." (Proverbs 14:31)

A Palestinian story of hope and resilience in Bethlehem

Tim Costello reviews *Yet in the Dark Streets Shining* by Bishara Awad & Mercy Aiken, a little-known story of Palestinian Christians through the heartbreaking but inspiring account of a boy who grew up to be a spiritual and community leader in Bethlehem.

Bishara Awad is a good, loving and godly man. His qualities shine through like a beacon in this autobiographical story of how he and his family face what many would see as insurmountable obstacles growing up in the Palestinian Territories.

With all that we have been seeing on our screens since the brutal Hamas attacks of 7 October 2023, Bishara's story makes the situation personal. Humanising those in distant lands is crucial if we are to understand their plight. To read



what Bishara and his family have experienced takes you deep into what life has been like for our Palestinian brothers and sisters in Christ for the past 75 years and how it is now.

Written as a first-person account, this book reads like a fast-paced novel. Bishara and his co-author Mercy Aiken have woven together the historical, political and personal. Bishara begins by describing growing up and experiencing traumatic events such as the Nakba, which means "catastrophe" in Arabic, and refers to the forced displacement of hundreds of thousands of Palestinians in the wake of the forming of the State of Israel in 1948.

A good storyteller will draw the reader into their life's sights, smells and experiences. This is exactly what Bishara does, with eloquent descriptions of sunny days with loving family and friends interspersed with dramatic and distressing descriptions of the difficulties his family faced when he was a young child.

Throughout this moving story, Bishara's faith is shown to be strong and resilient.

Particularly distressing is the story of the death of Bishara's father, who was shot down by an Israeli sniper while innocently going about his business. Bishara describes the disbelief he felt in the wake of this loss, as well as his mother's incredible perseverance, faith and love as she was left to raise the family.

Throughout this moving story, Bishara's faith is shown to be strong and resilient. A gentle soul, he can also be outspoken when he needs to be, but always in a way that is winsome and relational. He also describes clear "God moments" when things that others might call coincidences happen consistently. A major example is the beginnings of the Bethlehem Bible College, which he founded and for which he had a distinct sense of call.

The Awad family is well-known in Palestinian Christian circles. Bishara is just one who has lived a life of faithfulness and Christian servanthood. If you're looking for a deeply personal account of what life is like for Palestinians, *Yet in the Dark Streets Shining* is a beautifully written and rock-solid account of a life well-lived.

Tim Costello AO is a Senior Fellow at the **Centre for Public Christianity**.

Jo Vandersee lives and works on Larrakia land. She is a Staff Chaplain for Anglicare NT, and recently began as one of two part-time Prison Chaplains in Darwin. Jo speaks French fluently, and enjoys reading, writing, and Darwin's multicultural festivals, food, and films.



UPCOMING EVENTS AROUND THE DIOCESE

March 29
Good Friday

March 31
Easter Day

April 16-18
Clericon at Riyala

Between April 26 and May 3
Level 3 Safe Ministry Training
(face-to-face)

May 4-5
Katherine Christian Convention

May 11
Diocesan Council

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