

TOP CENTRE

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THE ANGLICAN DIOCESE OF THE NORTHERN TERRITORY



Our voices at
the church
parliament





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Front cover: Mick Tong gives a bible reflection at general synod

Back cover: Bobbin Head's visit to Minyerri

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

Easter baptisms

Easter Day was an extra special celebration at St Paul's in Katherine with four "beautiful souls" baptised into their new lives in Christ, writes Jan Robinson, wife of David Robinson who served as locum earlier this year. Kaye Woodroffe, Rodney and Graham Ashley and Celinda Dhamarrandji have been attending St Paul's for some time. Keen to grow in their understanding of what being a Christian means, they undertook several weeks of Bible Study and preparation.



Bishop Greg writes



The first weekend of June saw a four-day celebration in the UK of the Queen's Platinum Jubilee – 70 years on the throne. At Darwin cathedral on February 6, we held a service to mark the actual 70th anniversary of her accession, but UK waited for their summer weather to hold their major events.

There is no doubt that the Queen's reign has been characterised by her remarkable sense of humble duty, self-sacrificial service and commitment to others, which she acknowledges have their source in her deep Christian faith. We can discuss and debate different forms of government, the wisdom or appropriateness of having a local person as head of state, the advantages and disadvantages of a hereditary leader rather than one chosen by merit, but it would be hard to argue that the Queen has provided anything other than a great example of carrying out a difficult and demanding role, almost all the time.

The Bible tells the story of many kings and queens, particularly those of Israel, and later Judah. There are not a lot of good examples. King David is frequently singled out for praise, including by God, and Solomon starts his reign well, but both behaved badly also with terrible consequences. Hezekiah and Josiah clearly tried to advance God's kingdom, and Asa, Jehu and Jehoshaphat also get brief positive mentions. The New Testament is under the shadow of the Roman Empire, perhaps not so different from the later British Empire in believing that it was doing good for the world over all, in providing stability, peace and infrastructure at the same time as using for their own advantage the lands they conquered and ruled. On the whole, the depiction of leadership in the Bible shows what it should not be like, rather than how it should be. However, God promised through the prophets a good and eternal king, and it is clear from the Gospel stories, from the very beginning, that Jesus is that king. The title Messiah or Christ (anointed one) attests to that, as does Son of God, and even the title Jesus often uses for himself – Son of Man, echoing Daniel 7's prophecy of 'one like a son of man' who is given an eternal kingdom (Daniel 7:13-14).

As Jesus' ministry goes forward, he gives signs of his authority as king, although he has no crown or palace. He stills a storm, casts out unclean spirits, restores outsiders by forgiving sins and healing broken or diseased bodies, and interprets the law. He speaks about God's kingdom, but others gradually recognise that he is king in God's kingdom, as we see when Peter confesses

Jesus as Christ. Jesus himself clearly acknowledges that he is the king in his trial before Pilate, before he is crucified. On the cross, the dying criminal next to Jesus asks to be remembered when Jesus comes into his kingdom.

Jesus stands out as the model king. If Queen Elizabeth's reign hints at what it is to rule well, King Jesus demonstrates it in full. The celebration of the Platinum Jubilee, because it is unprecedented and unlikely ever to be repeated, draws attention to the fact that earthly kings and queens have a finite time on the throne. King Jesus is king forever and over all, and his reign will never decline. Jesus never exercises kingship to his own advantage, but for the good of his subjects. Psalm 72's expressions about the cosmic blessings that the good king brings find their fulfilment in Jesus – as king, he gives life to the whole earth.

In the church, some of us have positions of leadership in various ways, and the challenge is to follow the example of Jesus (and perhaps the Queen as well) in self-sacrificial and humble service. But we all have the opportunity of celebrating the rule of Jesus as eternal and good king as we continue to show him our loyalty and love.



Men and boys at Numbulwar



John Mercer with baby Paul

Seventy years of mission

Anne Lim

As Numbulwar prepares to celebrate the 70th anniversary of its foundation on August 16, the NT Anglican Diocese is completing major refurbishments to its historic church and rectory.

The diocese has set aside \$150,000 for the work, about half of which will be spent on improving the amenity and safety of the Church of the Holy Spirit which was built in 1961.

“There are significant things happening from a spiritual viewpoint at the moment with large numbers attending Christian fellowship in the town and there’s a real buzz so the diocese is doing what it can to support the church and the Indigenous leaders there partly by refurbishing the building,” says Lee Walton, the diocese’s property manager.

The work includes replacing all of the windows which have been smashed, some because of general degradation of the environment and some through vandalism; strengthening a badly bowed wall; and improving the structure of the roof.

“The internal walls are in need of repair – they have holes in them and they haven’t been painted for a long while. It’s a hardwood-clad building and some of that cladding is missing, some has been damaged so that needs to be fixed properly,” says Lee.

Finally, the fellowship area where the church meets on weeknights for worship, teaching and general get-togethers will be refurbished.

“That is in a really poor state, tables are broken, there’s no lighting, no power, so they string a cable from the church and plug in a spotlight and amp. We will



Phyllis Mercer with Philip and Paul



Phyllis Mercer and her three-month-old son Paul were the first passengers to arrive at the new airstrip in June 1954.

put proper lighting out there, refurbish one of the shelters and provide tables and lighting."

It is hoped that further money can be raised over the next 12 to 18 months to complete the rest of the needed works. Two other fellowship shelters need to be repaired or replaced, disabled access installed into the church, the inside of the church needs to be painted and the external timber treated.

(The Numbulwar project is the first of two major building works the diocese is undertaking, with refurbishment of the properties in Gunbalanya later this year.)

Although The Church Missionary Society (CMS) handed over administration of the Numbulwar community to the local council in 1978, CMS still has a missionary presence there. Josh and Steph Mackenzie and their two children moved in as CMS missionaries at Numbulwar last September.

The couple developed a love for Aboriginal people while working as teachers on the Tiwi Islands early in their careers. But they have a remarkable kinship link to Numbulwar. Stephanie's great aunt and uncle Jane and Colin Gilchrist spent 25 years there. That ancestral link with the church meant that the Mackenzies arrived in the community already with family connections and skin names.

"That enabled us to hit the ground running," Steph says.

The work on their house includes replacing or refurbishing all the windows, which currently let in stormwater, replacing one of the supporting steel beams, and updating the bathroom, strengthening the floor and some of the internal and external walls because of damage from a termite infestation several years ago. Finally, there will be a new veranda and steps.

All of the work is being completed in consultation with the church leaders, Rev Yulki Nunggumajbarr and deacon Rev Edwin Rami.

The mission at Rose River, on the southeast coast of Arnhem Land, has a fascinating history in that it was established in 1952 in response to a request from the Nunggubuyu people themselves. A group of Nunggubuyu had had camped close to the mission at Roper River, now known as Ngukurr, during a time of severe drought, but they wanted a mission on their own lands further north.

The Roper River mission and the whole of Arnhem Land had been established

The Mackenzies arrived in the community already with family connections and skin names.



Numbulwar kids



The windows of the church all need to be replaced.

half a century earlier as a way of protecting Aboriginal people from pastoralists invading on their land and from exposure to destructive Western civilisation.

CMS had promised the Nunggubuyu in 1934 that they would have their own mission, but the Great Depression, World War II and lack of personnel had frustrated those plans.

Finally, in May 1952, a party of CMS people led by John (Jack) Mercer and about 65 Nunggubuyu people, led by their charismatic elder, Madi Murrungun, set off from Roper River to explore the area around Rose River.

Once they reached the corroboree area on the north side of the Rose River mouth, Madi invited John Mercer to start a mission there. CMS gladly accepted and on 14 August 1952, two boats sailed from Roper River to Rose River, arriving two days later 16 August.

Earl Hughes, who was chaplain to the mission from 1956 to 1972, says the name changed from Rose River to Numbulwar towards the end of his time there.

Earl was a giant of the early days of the mission, a pioneer in understanding the key role of language in building up the spiritual life of the place.

“CMS told me when you go, don’t worry about the language. Teach them English,” recalls Earl, who is now 94.

“When I gave my first service under the paperbark tree, I started talking in English and I realised they didn’t understand what I was talking about.

“So I got my notebook and I’d go walkabout with the Aborigines and ask them ‘What is this?’ And write it down. Eventually it became quite a big dictionary.”

Earl translated the church services and part of the Bible into Nunggubuyu (now known as Wubuy) with the help of Aboriginal colleagues and compiled a Nunggubuyu Grammar and Dictionary.

John Mercer’s son Paul notes that some of the teaching in the government run education centre today is in the Nunggubuyu language, thanks to its preservation from this early mission phase, although Kriol is displacing the spoken language among the young people.

Earl was also a pioneer in exploring the tribal lands around Numbulwar, recording their sacred areas and different clan territories. Earl explains that his tribal brother, Dirrijuna Murrungun, taught him a lot. He says his nickname was Ngaralu Murrungun, which means mud crab, because he was famous for loving to eat mud crabs.

“It was through their language that I became a member of their tribe and was treated as one of their members,” he explains.

“As a kid, every song we sang at the church was in English and Nunggubuyu. Earl had done all of that translation.”

Asked for his fondest memories of his time at Numbulwar, Earl says “the highlight was when a number of Aborigines decided to become Christians and were baptised in the little creek near the beach. They became the church and we built a church after that.”

From 1959 to 1960, Earl prepared and baptised 24 Aboriginal people from Numbulwar, then the Church of the Holy Spirit was built and held its first service on 11 January 1961.

Phil Gilchrist spent his first 17 years of life at Numbulwar when his father, Colin Gilchrist, replaced John Mercer as superintendent in 1959.

“What Earl did – it was nothing official, he wasn’t a trained linguist – but he had a passion to learn the language. He felt the best way to communicate the gospel and make friends was to learn the language; he also wanted to document the language and translate it so he could incorporate it into church services,” Phil explains.

“As a kid every song we sang at the church was in English and then Nunggubuyu. Earl had done all of that translation.

“He would preach the sermon in English and have an Aboriginal person standing beside him and repeating the message in Nunggubuyu. Earl learnt a lot of Nunggubuyu and spoke it very well, way better than the other missionaries, including my parents. Later CMS realised having linguists and incorporating the language into services was vital.”

Phil says he has nothing but fond memories of his time in Numbulwar, where he spent all his holidays while at boarding school in Sydney.

“My experience is that Nunggubuyu people were very generous warm people,” he says.

“It was a nice place to live and I felt completely known by everybody in the town, white and black, and knew everyone.”

His happy childhood memories include “playing outdoors for hours at a time with other kids, white and Aboriginal friends. We’d roam the bush or ride our bikes around town or out to the airstrip or out to the barge jetty.

“A couple of things I loved were the town had an outdoor cinema in those days and it was the town social event every week. Every Saturday the whole town gathered to watch movies. I used to love sitting out in the outdoor cinema with hundreds of other people.”

Phil says in those days the children would happily swim at the beach and in nearby creeks because crocodiles were close to extinction and not considered a threat.

“We were warned about box jellyfish at the beach and stone fish in the creeks but crocodiles were not a consideration,” he recalls.

Another happy occasion in early days of mission was Foundation Day in August, which was a combined sports carnival and fete.

“We’d go down to the town park and there’d be all sorts of fun activities happening, running races, tug of war, and we’d finish off with the Indigenous adults having a sport competition like a spear throwing or fire stick lighting competition and I used to look forward to those.”

Paul Mercer, who has documented the mission’s early days in his book, *Memories and Medicine in East Arnhem Land*, says conditions were primitive at first with accommodation in roofless grass huts, but his father taught the younger men in the community how to mill and build with the termite-resistant cypress pine of the area to create more substantial dwellings for the coming wet season.

According to Paul, his father formed a very close friendship with the elder, Madi, who “watched his back” as he led the work of establishing the new

township. Jack greeted Madi every morning as “uncle” while Madi called Jack “nephew”.

Paul’s mother Phyllis initially taught the children under a big paperbark tree which had a natural seating area at the base. This tree, called the bishop’s seat, was also where early Christian worship services and community gatherings took place.

Paul enjoyed watching local people creating pictorial stories through bark paintings, making rope and baskets, hunting and spear fishing, and canoe construction.

Paul, who moved with his family to Groote Eylandt in May 1958, recalls: “It was always exciting as a little boy to go with younger people and discover [turtle] egg nests,” he writes.

“These were fun-loving people who utilised the natural resources of the beach and the bay at Numbulwar ... Hours could be absorbed wandering over the mud flat searching for crabs.

“My childhood through to four years of age was an idyllic one. I am aware of the enormous privilege of growing up in this wilderness environment in such a carefree and natural environment.”

The chronicles of Clyde

First Dean of Christ Church Cathedral

Vivienne Hayward

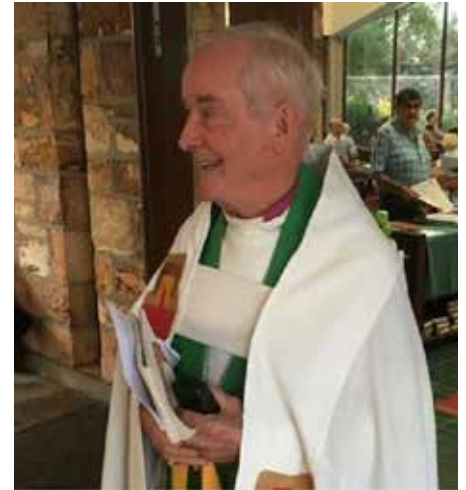
The Diocese of the Northern Territory is one of the 23 dioceses of the Anglican Church of Australia, right? And each diocese has a bishop and a cathedral, and each cathedral has a dean who is the senior minister in the diocese and usually the rector of the cathedral parish, right? And the Diocese of the Northern Territory was founded in 1968, right? But the first Dean of Christ Church Cathedral wasn't installed until 1978. So how come? Well, it's an interesting story.

In 1966 the General Synod, the legislative arm of the Anglican Church of Australia, passed a canon (a church law) enabling the Northern Territory to be carved out as a missionary diocese from the huge Diocese of Carpentaria which comprised the whole of Queensland north of Cairns and the Northern Territory. This was ratified by all the Australian dioceses and in 1968 it came into being. The Revd Ken Mason – who had ministered in Darwin as Brother Aiden, a member of the Brotherhood of the Good Shepherd in the early 1960s – was consecrated as our first bishop.

Readers of novelist Anthony Trollope's *Barchester Chronicles* will know that the relationship between Anglican bishops and deans has not always been cordial. Such was the case in Australia in the early years of the 20th century and bishops did not always appoint deans to their cathedrals. For whatever reason – which may well simply have been the smallness of the church and the population – such was the case here. The Revd Brian McGowan was rector from 1971-1973 and then in October that year Bishop Ged Muston (a former rector himself) suggested that the Revd Clyde Wood be invited to come from Melbourne to Darwin as rector for a three-year term. That suggestion was accepted, so Clyde, his wife Margaret and their three children – Karen, 15, Peter, 12 and Mark, 10 – arrived on Australia Day 1974 “in the midst of a torrential monsoon downpour” as Margaret remembers.

They lived in the then four-year-old rectory until December that year when Cyclone Tracy struck on December 24. Margaret says “The children and I had left the day before to have Christmas in Melbourne with our parents and other family members. Clyde was booked to fly down on Christmas Day. We had no way of communication for five days to see if he was okay.” The little church that had been there since 1902 was completely destroyed except for the portico, which had been added in 1944, and the cyclone blew everything in the rectory away apart from a bedroom wall and a wardrobe. The parish rented a house for them on Stuart Highway for two-and-a-half years until the new rectory was built.

As Darwin recovered from the trauma of Cyclone Tracy, planning for a new cathedral complex was undertaken. The design submitted by architects Wilkins, Klemm and Morrison was accepted in 1975, the building was constructed in 1976 and consecrated on 13 March 1977 with the Archbishop of Canterbury Donald Coggan and many others being present. Asked about the design, Bishop Clyde told Top Centre “The intention was that the eyes of people walking up Smith St would be drawn upward to the cross at the apex.”



50th Anniversary of the diocese, The spirit of Things ABC



Margaret and Clyde 2022

What about the narthex? A ‘narthex’ was a feature of early Byzantine churches. It was a covered porch at the rear of a church where catechumens could see in, although they were not permitted to enter until they were baptised. It was a gathering place which made the link between the church and the outside world. Bishop Clyde explained, “We wanted to have a large covered area where people could congregate for fellowship without having to go out in



The view from Smith St. Children used to ride their bicycles up the mound and onto the roof, so we cut out the chunk at the top of the mound to prevent it, as you see it today.



Dedication of the cathedral 1977

the pouring rain." The narthex still fulfils these functions. It is where the New Fire of Easter Day is kindled and where wedding cars and hearses pull up to allow wedding and funeral parties to enter the cathedral.

And why the open space? Two reasons. "To enable every breath of fresh air to come in [no ceiling fans in those days] and to make the point that the church is a sacred site set within the sacred site of God's creation: the gardens and the sea. You used to be able to see the harbour from inside the cathedral and you would often see people sitting praying quietly and glancing up at the seascape and the landscape," Clyde explained.

In its new building the parish was going well. Clyde was active in both parish and civic affairs. He had been instrumental in the establishment of Nungalinya College in 1974 as a Combined Churches Training College for Indigenous Australians, and in November 1978 he made a submission to the House of Assembly arguing against the establishment of casinos. The parish had a finance committee, a worship committee, a social committee and an outreach committee. But Clyde was still only Rector of Christ Church and not Dean of Darwin. Even before the cyclone, a number of parishioners had decided it was time to put this right, but the cyclone changed the parish's priorities. In 1978 the wardens approached Bishop Ken,

who agreed, and in so September 1978 Clyde was finally appointed Dean of Darwin.

Clyde remained dean until St Luke's Day, 18 October 1983 when he was consecrated as the second Bishop of the Northern Territory. Asked for his reflections on his time in Darwin on the 50th anniversary of the diocese in 2018, he commented along these lines, "The congregation has always been a welcoming family drawing people from all traditions of Anglicanism, and seeking to nurture their faith whatever stage of the journey they have reached from their past experiences. This is vital for a congregation in Darwin drawing people from all across Australia."

Asked recently "What did you bring to the parish?" he said, "Others would be the best judges of what I brought to the parish; however, my response would be a capacity to enable community, a strong sense of belonging and deep theological exploration." "What did you take away?" "I took away a great deal, I took away a lifetime of rich friendships created in what I would call home." Clyde and Margaret now live in active retirement on Toowoomba, Queensland.

Clyde Maurice Wood, visionary thinker, lover of God and people, straight talker, administrator, outstanding pastor and preacher, we thank God for calling you to us as our first Dean of Christ Church Cathedral, Darwin.



First NT Synod 1968

Transformed lives

Anne Lim

Christos Kastaniotis and Daniel Tetteh have witnessed many transformed lives since they began working as prison chaplains through Anglicare NT at the Darwin Correctional Centre in November 2021.

“One of the things which I’ve really come to value is that you’re working with people who have made some really bad decisions and they’re at a point in their life where they want to change and they want God to be a part of that change,” says Christos, who works two days a week at the prison and three days as chaplain of Leanyer School.

Christos, who is an ordained priest originally from Melbourne, visits the prison on Thursdays and Fridays and says he has encouraging conversations on each visit.

“There is one prisoner who I’m seeing at the moment and when she first arrived in prison, she was very unsettled. She’d been to prison a few times before, and she was withdrawing from her drug addiction. She had a faith when she was younger and she had continued to have a real sense of God’s presence. But she had made just a series of bad choices. And had found herself in a place where she wasn’t very close to God or wasn’t as close to God as she wanted to be,” he says.

“And so she came to prison and she saw it as a blessing because it was time for her to spend some time on herself and try and get things in order. So I’ve been meeting with her regularly, and just studying the Bible and she’s starting to make some positive decisions about who she is and the way she wants to live her life.”

Daniel Tetteh, who visits the prison on Monday and Tuesday, believes the greatest need of those who request to see him is hope.

“My desire is to help the helpless, those who don’t have many people helping them. The call to the prison ministry is not an attractive one because if you help the hopeless, it’s seen as a very good deed, if you help the poor, it’s a good deed, but if you help prisoners, they deserve to be dead, so it’s not an attractive ministry,” he says.

“But they are the people who are searching for hope the most because they have been abandoned by their families. The world has put a tag on most of them, if not all of them, that they deserve to be there, so reaching out to them you are giving hope to people without hope and people who are searching for hope.”

Daniel, who was born in Ghana and came to Australia seven years ago, worked previously for Prison Fellowship Australia, with whom he led a team that held church services in the prison on Saturdays, and offered programs during the week such as the Prisoners Journey, which explains salvation through reading a book in the Bible.

Christos, left, and Daniel at their commissioning service at Christ Church Cathedral.





“It’s very challenging and very rewarding at the same time, meeting people who have committed crimes in the past, so you have to go in with a sense of genuineness in your approach to them. They’re also needy people, they have nobody vouching for them or trying to help them, but you also have to know your limits ... But when you sit down and talk to a prisoner and you see their eyes are lit up by what you say, knowing that there is a future outside for them, that is very rewarding.”

Daniel says most prisoners say they want to be better for their wife or kids, but one man he has been visiting has changed his concept to wanting to be better for himself – which eventually will be better for his family.

“He said ‘In five years’ time I want to look at myself in the mirror and see a difference. I want to be better for myself,” he says.

Asked how the Christian gospel helps in this situation, Daniel says: “The gospel deals with the core human issue, which is I need to do something about the situation I’m in, but somebody else has already done something about the situation you are in and now you put your faith in that person and that person transforms you.

“By your own strength you can’t become kinder, better, more thoughtful and caring, but someone else has lived the perfect life and died for you so all you have to do is put your faith and trust in him and accept him. I can’t help but be changed if I put my faith and trust in him and follow in his direction.”

Christos sees the main challenge of prison chaplaincy as under-resourcing of staff and infrastructure.

“But one of the best things about it is just the people you meet. I’ve met some really amazing people who have a really strong faith and have made a real commitment to turning their life around.”

“I’ve met some really amazing people who have a really strong faith and have made a real commitment to turning their life around.”



The General (national) Synod of the Anglican Church of Australia was held on the Gold Coast from May 8 to 13. General Synod is held every three to five years, and it has been five years since the last one. Underneath General Synod is the Constitution of the Anglican Church, which sets out how individual dioceses join together into a national church, and how they can work to “make canons rules and resolutions relating to the order and good government of this Church including canons in respect of ritual, ceremonial and discipline and make statements as to the faith of this Church”. The Northern Territory sends to the General Synod three representatives – one bishop, one other clergy and one layperson. Our representatives this year were Bishop Greg, Rev. Kate Beer and Dr Mick Tong. They reflect here on their experience.

Bishop Greg

This was only my second General Synod. The big issue that we all knew was going to be controversial was the proposed Statement about the doctrine of marriage in our church (including whether this doctrine would prevent the blessing of same-sex marriages). There had been earlier plans to devote several days to discussing this issue in a non-synodical way when General Synod was to have been held in 2020, but COVID put an end to that. It is not news that

Respect for differences at General Synod



Mick Tong presents a Bible reflection at General Synod.

the Anglican Church of Australia covers quite a broad spectrum of theological opinion, even within the limits set by the Constitution in terms of the authority of the Bible, and our assent to the Book of Common Prayer and the 39 Articles of Religion. In that light, the outcomes of General Synod were not surprising. Some reporting and commentary about the marriage debate was sensationalist and inaccurate in my opinion, and the matter is not finally settled. There will be a further national bishops meeting in October to continue the discussion.

There were many other matters discussed at General Synod as well. A doctrinal Statement was approved that indicates that sexual intimacy rightly belongs only in a marriage of one man and one woman (and to depart from this is unchastity, and therefore against the Faithfulness in Service Code of Conduct). There were resolutions about a large range of things: an apology to LGBTI+ people for hurt caused by churches, action regarding climate change, action regarding domestic and family violence, help for struggling regional dioceses, affirmation of defence force chaplaincy, calls for religious freedoms.

What struck me about General Synod on the whole were some positives and negatives. The positives included the respectful tone of almost every contributor to debate, even when there was significant disagreement. The Primate, Archbishop Geoff Smith, did a superb job of chairing the proceedings with efficiency, humility and humour. Each day began and ended with prayer and Bible reading and reflection. There was a mixing of people across geographical and theological boundaries. There was clear collaboration across these boundaries as draft motions were hammered out behind the scenes. The main negative was that using parliamentary processes in our debates means that discussion is never deep or thorough enough. It left me feeling that General Synod is a very blunt instrument for achieving what we want to achieve in God's mission for the world. The good thing is that God will keep doing his work, with or without us. I want an Anglican Church of Australia (and a Diocese of the Northern Territory) where there is maximum overlap with what God is doing.

Rev. Kate Beer

I am grateful to have been able to represent the Diocese of the NT at the recent General Synod meeting.

What I expected:

I was well aware that the topics on the GS18 agenda were not merely matters of principle, but of deep significance to both representative members and those they held in their hearts and minds. Knowing that the synod process is governed by the rules of a parliamentary process, I went to GS18 prayerful and anxious that some, if not many people might feel bruised by the experience and outcomes. Formal debate is seldom a pastoral process.

What I experienced:

However, the tone of debates was mainly very respectful, which was encouraging. I was also encouraged by a number of personal conversations I was able to have with people who hold different views from my own. Trust has been built and real relationships begun through the commitment to genuinely listen and hear one another's stories.

I felt we were well-served by the Primate, who maintained a gentle tone that balanced clear leadership and a pastoral posture in his role. During the presidential charge, I was struck afresh at just how many significant and society-changing things have gone on since the General Synod last met. It was a reminder that we, the Church, find ourselves in a profoundly altered pastoral context than we were in even five years ago. No wonder many of us feel we have lived through a whirlwind!

I also felt honoured to be invited to join the gathering of Melbourne delegates, my new "tribe", together with Archbishop Philip Freier. They met at the end of the week to share their feelings and debrief their various responses to the event. It was evidently not something their delegates have done before and I felt

a pang of sadness that GS18 brings to a close my own chapter as a member of the Diocese of the NT, where such sharing is both regular and valued.

Looking forward:

It will be no surprise to any Anglicans reading this, that there are some differing views about important issues across our churches and dioceses. However, I find hope and reason to pray in the opportunity to build personal relationships across barriers at this national gathering. And I find myself wondering what might happen if the next General Synod meeting decided to take some leaves out of the Territory play book? Imagine if we had to stop business and wait till the rain stops, working together to move chairs and papers out of the wet-zone! Imagine if GS19 were to have celebration nights, like at Katherine Christian Convention, instead of evening business debates? Imagine if sharing a curated selection of exciting ministry initiatives from different dioceses was considered part of our core business?

In God's sense of humour, perhaps I will have my chance to do more than dream about such ideas, as I continue to serve the Diocese of the NT as a member of the General Synod Standing Committee for the next few years.

Mick Tong

I am thankful for the opportunity to serve the NT Diocese as its lay General Synod Rep. I was particularly humbled to be asked to lead a Bible reflection for the whole of Synod.

What struck me?

General Synod is a unique expression of the Anglican Church. There are representatives from all 23 dioceses across Australia, as well as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representatives. Representation has both a regional element and a church population element in the make-up of the General Synod, so it is a bit of a hybrid of the House of Representatives and the Senate. I'm still getting my head around it!

It was a pleasure to meet people from all of these dioceses and find unity in our Anglican heritage. I think it is good to be familiar with the framework of the General Synod and our own Synod because church structure ought to help us in our ministry.

How much was it like what I expected?

Attending NT Synod a couple of times gave me a feel for the flow of events day by day. A custom of NT Synod is for each parish to share a report, and these are scattered throughout the business of the day. We didn't have these at General Synod, but there was a Morning and Evening Prayer Service at the start and end of each of the five days. I had the immense privilege of sharing from 1 Corinthians 4:6-21 with the whole of Synod. I drew on our Anglican Church Constitution and my main point was that Anglicans should welcome Paul's apostolic authority. In response to my talk, many people encouraged me, including some who may have approached the passage a little differently. Business-wise, I had a number of people asking me "why does Synod go on for five days? Is there really that much to talk about?" I guess when there are about 250 people in the room, there's every chance that it will go on for a whole week.

Were there any surprises?

One surprise was that about 40 per cent of Synod Reps were first timers, and all of the Bible study presenters were chosen from this lot! However, it seemed to me that although about 250 were attending, the debate was dominated by a fraction of those present. The style of Synod proceedings lends itself to those who are happy to speak publicly into a microphone.

"Imagine if we had to stop business and wait till the rain stops, working together to move chairs and papers out of the wet-zone!"

What would I do differently to improve General Synod?

I think it would be good if there was some way to encourage more participation from the Synod reps apart from stepping up to the microphone. Imagine if the minds of every Synod member were clear to each other! Perhaps it is assumed that everyone attending is a confident and capable public speaker. But our debating skills should not be the reason we are representing our diocese – it should be because of our faithfulness to the risen Lord Jesus.

I also think that it would be helpful, particularly for the newcomers, to have a briefing on the significance of the General Synod well before Synod. As each diocese essentially operates independently, what is the purpose of it? Why do we spend so much effort on it? What are the implications for the outcomes at a General Synod? I'm sure there are good answers to all of these questions! And for those General Synod members understanding these things would help them to prepare well for all the interactions of a very busy week.

What's the big idea?



Ben Staunton presents a workshop on youth ministry.

Anne Lim

About 55 kids and youth ministry leaders took the opportunity to upskill while mingling with leaders in other churches during a Scripture Union (SU) training day on April 2 held at Darwin Chinese Christian Church.

About six of these were teenage leaders of primary school groups, and about a dozen came for the youth stream, which was offered for the first time.

SU NT director Ox Roberts explained that the youth component had been included this year thanks to the support of former youth minister Ben Staunton, a recent arrival in the NT.

He said after attending so many online conferences, participants valued the opportunity to meet people in other churches, share their challenges and offer encouragement.

Backed by her experience and success at growing kids ministry at St James' Sanderson, its Rector Suzie Ray led two workshops – one on cross-cultural ministry and learning styles, and one on leading small groups.

As a leader of a small Sunday school myself, I took to heart her advice not to cancel if only one or two children turn up and not to fall into the trap of getting older kids to help the younger ones. The risk of that is that the older kids disengage, so it's important to teach to the older kids and let the younger kids pick up what they can.

Naomi Ireland, the NT Anglican Diocese's new children's ministry worker also led two excellent workshops – one on how to design kids church sessions to bring out the "big idea" of the Bible passage being studied, and one on working with children and youth with special needs.

Ben Staunton facilitated two workshops on youth ministry while David Pohlmann, who recently resigned as SU's Schools Ministry Coordinator, led workshops on ways to improve teaching and learning, and designing a "killer" RI lesson.



Suzie Ray shares her wisdom in kids ministry.



Ben Staunton shares ideas with youth leaders.

Ox Roberts explained SU NT uses any opportunity to train up teenage ministry leaders for Sunday school and holiday camps, partly because there are hardly any Christian university students in Darwin.

"The way around that is to train and equip junior leaders because we hope they will do that for the rest of their lives," he said.

"The reality is most won't end up in Darwin – they go away to uni and a lot of them don't come back."

He said about 15 teen leaders would be part of the Darwin Kids Games in the next school holidays while half the leaders at a primary school camp in August will be teenagers.

"Most of them are serving in their local church's Sunday school because they see the importance of using their skills to serve in ministry.

He emphasises that the main aim of SU is to work with churches to support their growth and functions.

Fishing as a spiritual experience



Zoe Creelman

Zoe Creelman is serving with CMS under the Anglican Diocese in the Northern Territory. In her first year in community, she is focusing on learning language and building relationships. She prays that God will use her in her role as church support worker to encourage Indigenous church leaders in Ngukurr and surrounding areas.

My phone rings.

"Zoe, weya yu?"

"La main kemp. Wanim?"

"Ai wandi go fishing."

I have this conversation on an almost daily basis. Little did I know when I signed up to become a church support worker in remote Arnhem Land that so much of my time would be spent fishing.

I've been in Ngukurr for two months and it's been a mixed bag of emotions. The delight of being welcomed in and getting to know my Aboriginal family. The frustration of my 'baby language' as I learn Kriol. The natural beauty of this landscape. The constant trickles of sweat as daily temperatures vary between 38 and 40 degrees celsius. The fascinating lessons in bush skills from the church ladies. And all these emotions are rolled into one chaotic Technicolor kaleidoscope when we go fishing.

I finish up what I'm doing and pack the car. Hand lines, cold water, bait, billy-can, camping chairs, maybe some bananas if I'm feeling peckish and pessimistic about the prospect of fish. I drive to my friend's house to pick her up. Turns out her sister and niece are coming too.

*Fishing at Mission Gorge near Ngukurr.
Photo by Zoe Creelman.*

"An hour after I left my house, we're finally ready to drive out to the billabong."

Before we go, my friend needs to go to the shop. There we see my Aboriginal sister who asks for a lift home because it's too hot to walk. When we drop her off, her mother asks to come fishing too with her grandson. I have to tell her that we don't have room, but I'll try to take her another time. I drive off feeling satisfied with my culturally appropriate 'no' that didn't involve actually saying no, whilst mentally adding her to my ever-growing list of people I need to take fishing.

I listen, praying for wisdom and cultural insight.

An hour after I left my house, we're finally ready to drive out to the billabong.

As we drive, the ladies regale me with stories from their childhood. The old 'mission days' were hard in many ways, but there was a simplicity to their childhood and they talk fondly of the whitefellas who were safe people in a world that changed too quickly. They lament over their own kids who seem to be launching straight from children to adults. We discuss family and community life. I listen, praying for wisdom and cultural insight. I long to share life with these ladies and support them, but I know that trust takes time. So I listen and I pray.

"Wujei wi gada go?" I ask as we get to a fork in the track. It's the first Kriol phrase I learnt and has been one of my most used.

"Straight on."

I take the path I think is 'straight on'. Turns out it was the other 'straight on'. I pull up, reverse and take the other road. As the passengers laugh at my mistake, I take a deep breath and remind myself that vulnerable mission is the goal after all.

Others have got to the billabong before us, so we cruise the serpentine tracks until we find a quiet spot. In five minutes, everyone has found their spot and lines are in the water. For the next hour there is no movement and next to no talking.

No one talks, but all of creation is crying out. A brolga peruses the opposite banks, calling to its mate. The gums overhead rustle softly and an occasional barramundi launches from its watery abode. I wonder, idly, if they jump for food or just for the fun of it. There certainly is a joy when creation just exists as it was made to be. A turtle surfaces near a lily pad. My spirit is soothed as I remember that our Father in heaven clothes the water lilies of the billabong.

I am ashamed of my individualistic mentality as I reflect on the generosity of my collectivist-culture friends.

My private musings are interrupted by cries of delight. Someone has caught a big catfish! We'll eat well this afternoon. The search for firewood begins. It has to be walan if we're making damper, and if we're eating fish there is no question about also having damper.

Before long, the pleasing aroma of roasting catfish is rising and fat little cakes of damper are being patted to remove the ashes after cooking. Some relatives show up, they too are passed food. I have a pang of frustration at the injustice. They haven't done any fishing, so why should they share the bounty? Then, for the millionth time, I am ashamed of my individualistic mentality as I reflect on the generosity of my collectivist-culture friends.

Soon the sun is sinking low. Black cockatoos wrench the air with their cries. There's a reason they are called 'ngark ngark' here. Try saying it aloud, ngark ngark. Dragonflies frolic and I'm told it's a sign that dry season is on its way. Praise the good Lord. Fishing in 40 degrees takes more godliness than I have on some days.

As we make our way home, everyone is excited by our good feed, and I know the story will be retold many times in the coming days. But right now, I'm tired. I stink like fish bait and I'm longing for a cold shower. I came north

"The gums overhead
rustle softly and an
occasional barramundi
launches from its
watery abode."

to 'support Aboriginal church leaders and to encourage the next generation of Christian leaders'. It sounds impressive when you say it on a church stage. In reality though, today it has meant taking some Christian sisters fishing as they needed a place to clear their heads.

Sometimes ministry here means talking, sometimes it's sitting in silence and sometimes it's having a shared experience like fishing. We're not the first to experience the spiritual discipline of fishing. The resurrected Christ himself chose the stage of a lakeside fire, after a fortifying meal of damper and fish, to minister to his distressed disciples (John 21). Maybe today, as we broke bread together and shared a meal, Christ was in our midst, ministering to his people again.



A rich expression of reconciliation

Anne Lim

A profound expression of gospel unity has developed between the members of St Barnabas Anglican church in Minyerri, in the Northern Territory, and Bobbin Head Anglican Church (BHAC) on Sydney's north shore, according to Luke Woodhouse, senior minister at BHAC.

When Luke started at BHAC in 2015, he inherited a partnership with Minyerri that had been formalised in August 2014 at the invitation of its then deacon, Darryn Farrell, after BHAC members had made several visits to the community.

"Since that time, we've been a visiting Minyerri twice a year as a church, once usually at the beginning of the dry and once towards the end of the dry season," says Luke.

Now, after COVID forced cancellations in 2020 and 2021, the church is excited to be planning its first trip to Minyerri for almost three years at the end of June-beginning of July.

The team from Bobbin Head Anglican sees its partnership with Minyerri as one of mutual support and encouragement as disciples of Jesus. They consciously avoid an agenda of doing projects. They enter each visit in the awareness that they will be the ones learning and growing during their time together with the Minyerri church.

"At its simplest, I would hope from the Minyerri perspective, the partnership is Christian sisters and brothers praying for each other, committed to a deep and genuine relationship, to see regular visits from sisters and brothers all the way from Sydney, who have been praying regularly, encouraging the Christians in Minyerri to press on as followers of Jesus.

"And that's expressed by visiting twice a year. Some would say that's a lot and others would say it's not enough. From our perspective, we learn a huge amount about our own cultural lenses of the gospel and what are the things that we do that are just because of the way that we are and what are the essentials to Christian fellowship. And we were sharpened in that. Having a

week where we have our members genuinely ask other members of the church, 'do you think I could sit and read the Bible in Kriol with you and you could explain what it means?' – is mutually beneficial because they obviously have the knowledge of Kriol and often far closer cultural connections to various parts of the text.

"Me doing that as a pastor with just four or five other members from our church twice a year is a huge blessing for our church community as we sit and think through what disciple-making looks like in another culture."

Luke says that even asking what things they should be praying for the Christians in Minyerri is a really "sharpening" question.

"It really feels to me a lot like the ending of a lot of Paul's letters, how he does all those personal greetings and he's expressing his affection and partnership with the church in this place and that place. It feels a little bit like that with the church in Minyerri and the church in Sydney and their genuine interest in the gospel, how people are going in trusting Jesus."



Just hanging out at Minyerri



Studying the Bible in Kriol

Luke explains that, because the church building and the Christian fellowship in Minyerri is in the open-air (not inside a building) non-church-going people in the community “see that there’s a bunch of ‘whitefellas’ from out of town that aren’t fixing something or running a sports camp or a program, they’re just hanging out.... it’s quite counter-cultural for the community.”

He says that while there are other secular organisations possibly involved in something on the surface similar to their partnership, what BHAC are involved in is not driven by the more secular narrative of reconciliation. Rather it stems from something that has always been there in those who share in the Christian gospel which is clearly expressed in New Testament letters such as Romans, Ephesians and Galatians.

“It’s almost like our equivalent of the Jew-Gentile division, which would have just been so counter-cultural in the first century to have a Jew and a Greek sitting down and having deep, rich fellowship together,” he says.

“To have North Shore, predominantly white Anglo people sitting down and breaking bread and having fellowship with the Christians in Minyerri is an expression of a deep and rich reconciliation.

“I steer away from the word reconciliation in describing the nature and backdrop of our partnership, not because I’m against it – justice requires that past wrong be dealt with – whereas what I think we are involved in is something quite different, far more profound, a gospel unity and a genuine expression of sharing together as the family of God from every tribe, tongue, language and race.”

Luke, who is a Beatles fan, likens this to what happens when he meets another Beatles fan in a random place and feels an automatic bond with them.

“What you see experienced by the BHAC team is we go in and because we both love Jesus, you experience this immediate connection, despite not even being able to really communicate clearly as you’d like. And you feel it – you’re not manufacturing it, you’re not trying to create reconciliation – you just know and experience that there

is a reconciliation already in Christ, rather than something that has to be created.”

He says this is expressed beautifully when the Sydney mob sits down with the Minyerri mob to write songs together in Kriol - an activity they really love.

“So we write songs that we sing together and even just talking through what should the lyrics be? ‘How do we say that in Kriol?’ The first one we wrote was about Jesus feeding the 5,000. I remember discussing ‘what is it that Jesus gives, this special food?’; and we were talking through, ‘what is the food that really lasts?’ and just that process of us talking through what should the lyrics of our song be was really unifying and encouraging.

“Even though our language was different and how we express things is different, we both knew we wanted to say the same things. We want to say the gifts Jesus gives us are something more than physical bread. And that was quite amazing. And there was just a unity that existed because of Jesus and it started expressing itself.”

Luke is looking forward to the resumption of regular visits to Minyerri from Bobbin Head Anglican because the regularity emphasises that the Minyerri Christians are not alone – they’re part of the bigger body of Christ.



Sharing physical and spiritual bread



Ross and Lynda Webb

Gunbalanya Psalms checking

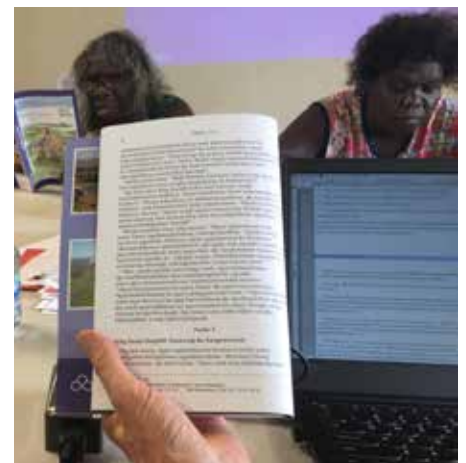
Ross Webb

Apart from a few months' work fling back in Cyclone Tracy days, the Northern Territory was new ground for me. But not that strange. I grew up in Papua New Guinea, and later my wife Lynda and I with our two boys spent 17 years helping a small PNG language group translate the Bible – with Wycliffe Bible Translators. Those were wonderful days of deep mountain bush cross-cultural living and ministry.

The next 10 years were spent in Vanuatu as leaders for Bible translation there, and the rest to the present as Scripture Engagement workers with four of those years in a village by the ocean with a wispy volcano in plain sight were icing on our life's cake. And then, Gunbalanya with a hundred crocodiles in the backyard billabong... How much icing can one eat?!

Somehow 'connections' (I still haven't unravelled them!) got me invited by Bible Society Australia to do the final consultant check of the Kunwinjku language Psalms, so they could be published and used in the churches in the area. The Kunwinjku New Testament was published in 2018 with that translation done by local speakers working with the Church Missionary Society's Steve and Narelle Etherington who lived and breathed Kunwinjku for many, many years.

The prospect of working with an Aboriginal language and community on the project excited me. One of our sons works with an Aboriginal church in Broome, and my father, a translator before me, had done some translation checking for some Australian languages a decade or three ago. And then there was COVID; for the past three years it had kept us from Vanuatu and PNG and we were missing the warmth, both physical and cultural. What an opportunity had come knocking!



Every word is pondered over.

Discussions with Bible Society, Bishop Greg and Matthew Pearson, the CMS worker in Gunbalanya, got the possibilities pumping. There are a lot of Psalms(!), and I had other jobs, but we agreed to an initial visit to Gunbalanya to meet the community church folk, hopefully gain some cred, and to get an idea of how we should proceed with the project. COVID put paid to our original plan and flight booking when Gunbalanya fell under its curse (with thankfully not too disastrous consequences). The way was opened again at the end of May and we eagerly left the misery of Sydney weather.

Going to Gunbalanya was overwhelmingly enjoyable. Somehow it seemed rather like coming 'home'. Warmth helped. The five-seater plane trip from Darwin helped. An Indigenous community and culture helped. A different language helped. Back to translation helped. Hospitality helped. Any apprehension about being accepted as an outsider quickly melted. Ten days was too short... obviously too short to finish the job, but too short all round!

The church people who helped with the checking got right into the checking session – in a way I've never experienced before. So much engagement – every word, it appeared, was occasion for a linguistic adventure. They seemed to be loving tweaking their language, and I loved seeing them do what no outsider could do. Every day a number of ladies and a faithful fellow or two turned up – some were learning the ropes and stayed quiet. Others were far from quiet. One knowledgeable lady was so keen she dialled in to our session from Darwin and was tracking all the way. Amazing! With a bit of guidance, I reckon we got the first 11 Psalms and Psalm 23 singing sweetly. There are a lot of Psalms left. We'll be trying to work out a way to speed things up without spoiling the fun!

The 'consultant check' on any translation is the last stage of quality control. It is the final realistic check for accuracy and communicability. But you might well be asking how can a person who doesn't know the language even be involved like this? Well, he wears a pair of 'glasses' called a back-translation – an English translation of the Kunwinjku translation that exposes the translation choices and hopefully nuances made in the original translation, but in a language the consultant can understand. Wearing those glasses, the consultant can make observations and ask questions needed to prompt tweaking of the translation where it might be improved upon, without messing it up where improvement isn't needed!

Our CMS hosts, Matthew and Lisa Pearson, have been in Gunbalanya for four years and are well on their way to learning the Kunwinjku language. Matt's thus-far grasp of it helped quite a bit in the checking sessions. Their role is to support the church in Gunbalanya in any way they can – and translation seems

to be a growing role for them. They arrived at the same time as did the Kunwinjku NT and have found that it's been quite instrumental in maturing believers. Anyway, their hospitality was super-duper, and their five kids were great fun!

As for the crocs... well, I guess they are satisfied with what they find in the pond. If the number of birds and hawks hovering around all day are any indication, fish are more than a few too. Back in the day they say, the local kids used to swim in that billabong. Not any more, sadly.

"They seemed to be loving tweaking their language and I loved seeing them do what no outsider could do."



Matt Pearson, right, and Ross Webb, third left, with Gunbalanya church members.

Remembering an untiring follower of Christ

Greg Anderson

The last Top Centre reported the death of Deaconess Betty Roberts at the great age of 88. Her funeral was held at St Matthew's, Ngukurr, on Wednesday May 25. A couple of hundred people gathered inside and outside the church to pay their respects to a remarkable woman.

Deaconess Roberts was the third youngest of the ten children of Joshua and Elizabeth, key mission helpers in the early years of the Roper River Mission, and the ancestors of the large Joshua family. She married Clancy Roberts, a Yangman or Manggarayi man, who grew up on Elsey station near Mataranka, and later worked for the Department of Aboriginal Affairs. They lived at Elsey Station then Bagot Reserve in Darwin. They had five children, the oldest of whom is Rev. Marjorie Hall, deacon-in-charge with her husband Rev. William Hall, at Ngukurr. Clancy and others founded Jilkminggan outstation in 1974 for the families of stockmen who had once worked at Elsey. As a widow, she returned to Ngukurr where she had been raised. She lived there until 2021, when increasing dementia forced her into a nursing home in Katherine.

This faithful Christian woman was commissioned as a deaconess in May 1984, by the then Bishop of the Northern Territory, Clyde Wood. Her older sister Dinah Garadji was commissioned alongside her. Their work was to support Rev. Gumbuli Wurramara, who had been the priest at Ngukurr since 1973. They led Bible studies, visited people in their homes, led church services and preached. Deaconess Roberts was remembered by Clyde Wood

as a very outgoing character with a mischievous sense of humour. On the day of her commissioning, she hadn't arrived at church until some time after the service was to have started. When Barry Butler eventually drove to collect her, she said 'I knew somebody would come to get me in the end'.

Betty was untiring in her commitment to Christ and the church. She retained an old-fashioned set of mission manners, as well as being a strong advocate for and repository of Aboriginal language and cultural knowledge for the Roper region. She was interested in the wider church as well as her own local parish, and outside the church was a highly regarded and exhibited painter, as well as an educator in traditional languages of the Roper region.



Photo by Derek Snibson



Father Stu: Provocative, confronting and grace filled

Rating: ★★★★★

Joanna Vandersee

Father Stu is a provoking and confronting movie. Full of the “f” word – don’t go if swearing makes you squeamish. This is a raw, real and revealing movie about the human condition – sinful and sin-affected – and the embracing, surpassing love of God in Jesus.

Stu (played by Mark Wahlberg) has a dysfunctional family that has left lasting wounds about identity, purpose and the meaning of life. Stu’s father Bill (Mel Gibson) is mean, abusive and alcoholic, and has left psychological scars so deep it seems not even God could make a difference.

Stu is an old boxer – old meaning approaching 40 – with no real hope for winning in the higher ranks of his sport. His mother (Jacki Weaver) is enmeshed in her dysfunction, including complex grief from the death of Stu’s younger brother. This whole mess is depicted as “in your face” and quite hopeless.

But Stu – I mean, BUT GOD – has other plans. This movie raises and pushes the concept of God having a Plan, and humanity is involved and purposeful because God wants it to be so.

Stu tries to be an actor, meets a girl, and the girl is a Christian – a Catholic. An accident, a vision of Mary, a talk with Jesus – Stu’s life is complicated, messy, motivation is questionable, and nothing is easy.

Briefly, Stu “gets the girl” but gets a lot of other things too. He gets catechised (lessons about the church and Christian faith) and then baptised. He gets a massive dose of grace and seeks to spread it around.

The message is loud and proud: the world is ****expletive deleted***** (not okay), God cares about this generally and very personally, sending Jesus who died for our sins, and with God there is hope. For me, the cross is made central – Jesus suffered and understands us in our suffering.

I highly recommend it.

Podcast

Run Like a Woman and Small Wonders

Susanna Baldwin

I’ll tell you my guilty secret. I usually baulk at Christian events, books or media with the word ‘woman’ in the title. I’ve never been a fan of ‘girly-girl’ Christianity (craft! cupcakes! miscellaneous floral things!) nor its slightly intimidating cousin, ‘girl-power’ Christianity (you are strong! you are beautiful! go you daughter of the kingdom!) and sometimes find myself quietly wondering why we Christian women can’t just be a bit more normal about everything.

I’m happy to say my cynicism was roundly knocked on its head by Run Like a Woman, a new podcast from the already highly-listenable Eternity network. Hosted by the eminently normal (though clearly very talented) Penny Mulvey and Bec Abbott, this is a smart, frank and engaging series of interviews with professional and academic Christian women on issues of work, health, family and faith. Episodes run for a full hour, yet each one left me wishing I could pop into the studio and ask just a few more questions of these immensely interesting, articulate guests.

From tracing long-forgotten birth parents to navigating a daughter’s suicidal depression; from a theology of women in the church to the path to becoming a female CEO; there is absolutely nothing clichéd or saccharine about the conversations on Run Like a Woman. Hosts and interviewees alike exude honesty, insight and realism. Not all the stories have a happy ending; yet underpinning each one is a bedrock of trust in the God who is ever at work in the messes and complexities of human life. I am grateful to the RLAW team for giving us a window into the hearts and faith journeys of some truly extraordinary ordinary women.

Compelling in a very different, almost visceral way is Dr Laurel Moffat’s podcast Small Wonders, from the Undeceptions network. Laurel stands and gazes at natural formations, at places and relics of her childhood, at the artworks of a favourite painter. She shares warm, thoughtful reflections on the emotions and questions these encounters evoke, quickly putting a finger on the anxieties and dissatisfactions that pervade the human heart and mind, then gently and winsomely leading our gaze back to God the Creator and Redeemer, in whom alone our restless souls can find peace. These pocket-size meditations, a mere 15 minutes each, are escapism in its best form. Laurel’s charming radio voice blends with quiet music and the sounds of nature to produce a podcast that is curiously relaxing, challenging, soothing and profound all at once. A ‘small wonder’ indeed. Do give it a try.



UPCOMING EVENTS AROUND THE DIOCESE

Bishop Greg and Annette on leave
and attending Lambeth conference
June 29 – August 19

Children's Ministry Workers gathering
July 11-14

Clericon (clergy conference)
September 12-15

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