

TOP CENTRE

issue 22.1

THE ANGLICAN DIOCESE OF THE NORTHERN TERRITORY



Fred's Pass
welcomes
the Walkers
Pilgrims by
heritage





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TOP CENTRE

Published by the Diocese of the Northern Territory

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the new rector at Freds Pass

Back cover: Nungalinya chapel

*Our thanks to all photographers
featured in this edition.*

A matriarch leaves us

The sad news came through on Sunday March 13 that Deaconess Betty Roberts from Ngukurr had passed away, aged 88. A full story about this distinguished Aboriginal church leader will appear in the next Top Centre. Betty was commissioned as deaconess in 1984, along with her sister Dinah Garadji, by Bp Clyde Wood. If the ordination of women had been the practice of the Anglican Church at that time, Betty and Dinah would have been deaconed. Betty's parents, Elizabeth and Joshua, were key residents of the CMS Roper River Mission in its early decades, and Betty herself is the mother of Rev. Marjorie Hall at Ngukurr. She was a great church leader.

Recruiting process begins for Anglicare NT CEO

Dave Pugh has announced that he will be retiring as CEO of Anglicare NT at the end of 2022, after returning to the Territory for that role nearly a decade ago. Top Centre will tell more of the Dave Pugh story closer to his retirement. Anglicare NT has selected a recruiting firm to assist in the search for a new CEO, and is briefing the recruiters as to what the key selection criteria should be. Please pray for the recruiters, the Anglicare NT Governance Committee and the Anglicare NT Board as they make the way towards this very significant appointment. Anglicare NT is a separately incorporated company, with the Diocese of the NT as its sole company member.





Bishop Greg writes ...

This is the fourth edition of Top Centre with Anne Lim as our editor. It seems a good time to say something about Top Centre and its place in the Diocese of the NT, to draw attention to why we commit time, energy and money to producing it, and what value it has.

But first, some history. When I was in the diocese from 1995 to 2006, Top Centre was produced as a single page, double-sided, in black and white. It did not provide much room for stories, but gave the opportunity for the bishop to share something with the diocese, and one or two other snippets. When I arrived as bishop in 2015, Top Centre had grown to a multi-page document, stapled in the corner, colour-photocopied, and with many more stories. It was much more informative, but still looked very homely. In 2016, we made the significant change to a magazine-style format, with full-colour photos, properly laid out and professionally printed. Top Centre now had its own style and looked great, thanks to the work of Jai Chandler, who was bishop's personal assistant but had some background in magazine layout. The last step was in June 2018, when Kirsten Hart became the bishop's PA. Kirsten was very skilled in graphic design and completely re-set Top Centre into its present format. It is a magazine that members of the diocese can proudly pass on to family and friends because it showcases and highlights so much of what is happening in the diocese. Kirsten continued to lay out Top Centre after moving back to Queensland, but has now concluded her commitment with the last edition of 2021. I am very grateful for her work over the last three and a half years. Anne Lim moved to the Territory in 2021, with long experience in journalism and newspaper editing, and fortunately was willing to take on the challenge of producing Top Centre.

The diocesan office receives diocesan magazines and newspapers from all over Australia, and it is interesting to compare them. Those from the major capital cities tend to have much more in the way of wider church news and opinion pieces – this is hardly surprising. Many are available online, so people in other dioceses have easy access to them if they are looking for the broader view they provide. Regional dioceses, such as the Northern Territory, are more locally focused.

Top Centre aims to provide the diocese with news of the diocese – so that we can share together in the good things that are reported, pray and care where difficult matters come to our attention, and feel that we all belong in the work

that God is doing in the Territory. Each issue has a range of stories from across the parishes and other ministries, often focusing on individual people. Recently we have provided some stories relating to the history of parts of the diocese, such as the work in Alice Springs to help Aboriginal children, beginning in the 1930s. Milestones such as the arrival of new workers, the deaths of our great church leaders of the past, ordinations of ministers, and special awards received, are events that Top Centre celebrates and commemorates. I write a column in each issue that tries to encourage our spiritual lives, relating perhaps to the time of year, happenings in the wider church or world, or to a particular element of the diocese's life. There are other kinds of articles that we are looking to include, such as podcast or movie reviews.

Having a diocesan magazine reminds me of the importance of stories. Our Christian faith is based on a story – real, not made-up – comprising events that unfold the work of God in rescuing the world he made and loves, and that reaches its high point in the arrival, death and resurrection of Jesus. At the heart of the work of the diocese is sharing about this rescuing work that the Bible's narrative recounts. Our faith is not first of all a set of theoretical propositions but the acceptance of a story. My hope is that Top Centre will help us see the results of that story in this part of God's world.

If you have a contribution to make to Top Centre please contact the diocesan office.

The new assistant minister at St Peter's Nightcliff, Jesse Morrison, met his English wife Amy while they were both volunteering at Hebron Christian School in South India.

After parting, they dated long-distance for two years before Jesse visited Amy's family in Kent.

"I came and lived in Australia for a bit – and then we got married in England. Then we came back here, so we did a lot of back and forth," explains Amy.

This regular uprooting of their family made the decision to move to tropical Darwin not such a big step for the Morrises than perhaps it might have been for a more settled family.

"God in his kindness has given us an ability to move around more so than others," reflects Jesse as we sit in their welcoming rental home in Tiwi.

St Peter's children's minister Laura Wolfenden says Jesse, Amy and their sons Solly, 8, and Eli, 5, are the answer to many prayers over the past two years as the church searched for an assistant minister.

After finishing training at Sydney's Moore College last November, Jesse was ordained deacon later that month. In December, the family embarked on a road trip to Darwin, lasting a month and a half, farewelling friends and family on the way, arriving in Darwin in mid-January.

"It's amazing driving through the changes of landscape and starting to see it get lush and green as we neared Darwin," says Amy

Adds Jesse: "So I think that probably helped us with weather because we were in Mt Isa and it was 43 degrees. So by the time we got here, it was very hot, but we'd eased our way into it."

Members of St Peter's worked hard to find the Morrises a home before their arrival, but the tight rental market meant they ended up staying for a while with the Kuswadis – rector Joshua, his wife Jo and children Tom, Sophie, and Christian.

"It isn't conventional to stay with your rector when you first arrive somewhere. But actually, it was really special because we got to know each

A call to serve

Anne Lim

other so much faster," says Jesse.

"The kids had a whale of a time," interjects Amy.

Jesse continues: "I was waking up in the morning with sleep in my eyes and having a coffee with my senior minister, which was great."

In fact, it was getting to know the



ministry team at St Peter's over Zoom that convinced Jesse and Amy that this was the right move for them.

"The thing that was really important to us was the team that we worked with. We were much more concerned with the people than the position because it's all about working together to share the good news of salvation in Jesus," says Jesse.

"When we started talking to Josh, we were quite blunt that we hadn't thought about Darwin at all, but the more we got to know Josh and Laura and Jo, and eventually Zac [Laura's husband], the more we're encouraged that this is a team that is on about preaching God's word and about loving people."

While both Jesse and Amy trace their faith in Jesus back to childhood, they say their time in India was pivotal in their level of commitment.

"It was a real turning point in our

faith because while we were Christians, I think in different ways we both had been living a bit selfishly," says Amy.

"I'd been doing art at uni, and I wasn't really living fully for Christ. And then going to Hebron, you could see all these people who were sacrificially living for Christ and actually they'd given up incomes, they moved across the world and they were really living in a different way.

"And so I think for both of us, that convicted us of our own sin and selfishness, and also made us want to resolve to actually live sacrificially for Christ and think about mission in the future and think about ministry. So Jesse had been thinking about doing engineering and then he changed to teaching, thinking that would be good for gaining experience for ministry."

Asked what has been their biggest sacrifice in moving to Darwin, Amy is the first to answer.

"I think there's things that you feel like are sacrifices, but I think overall, we've been so blessed by the welcome the church has given us that I think it's just been fantastic here. So the pain of having to pack everything in boxes and move across the country isn't really a sacrifice compared to coming to the church here and meeting with those people."

Jesse adds: "I think we just feel the immense privilege of being in full-time ministry. I mean, really, what could be better than being set aside and being given the time and resources to open up God's word and disciple people?"

"So we feel the joy of that and the immense privilege of that, but we are the ones who have left and often transitions are harder for the ones that have stayed. So there is grief for those who have been left behind, and I've really got to talk about the courage of Amy at this point, having left her family and gone to Sydney, and then again, transitioned from Sydney to Darwin."

As for Solly and Eli, they have taken the move in their stride, says Jesse, "and I think they see themselves as part of this journey, which is great."

The successes and failures of *The Bungalow*

John P McD Smith



Top Centre continues the story of the Stolen Children of “The Bungalow” by John P McD Smith, son of Fr Percy Smith. In the first part, John described the setting up of the “Half Caste School” in Alice Springs which housed Aboriginal children forcibly taken from their families in a building called “The Bungalow” in 1932. After becoming the first resident priest in 1933 Fr Smith became deeply concerned about the welfare of the Aboriginal children in The Bungalow.

Trigger warning: the first part of this article deals with a disturbing incident involving abuse.

During his first few months at “The Bungalow” Fr Smith became concerned about its repressive atmosphere. The children initially would not talk to him. They would only talk in whispers with their heads down.

“Yes, Fadder, No, Fadder,” They would say. He sensed a certain fear. He wondered why these children had to be taken from their families. As he got to know the children, he found them charming and with an intelligence he deemed equal to any other Australian child.

It wasn’t long before the reasons for the repressiveness began to emerge. Fr Smith was disturbed to learn that the superintendent, Mr Freeman, was behaving towards the girls under his care in an entirely inappropriate manner. He was abusing a number of the teenage girls which spread fear and trepidation. Freeman would go into the girls’ dormitory at night and have the girl of his choosing. If the girls heard him coming, as many as possible would literally ‘head for the hills’ at the back of the compound and hide there until he had left.

Before Fr Smith could decide what should be done about this, one of the older girls, Tilly Tilmouth was able to smuggle out a letter addressed to the Deputy Administrator of the Northern Territory, Mr V Carrington, who was based in Alice Springs. She gave the letter to the butcher boy, who took it to Alice Springs. The letter was dated February 1934.

It’s remarkable that a teenage Aboriginal girl living in closed government institution and with no family support could have the courage to be so frank and forthright.



Joe Croft, left, with Charles Perkins, 1980

...he was accepted into Queensland University in 1942 to study engineering – the first Aboriginal person to enter an Australian university

Along with other documents pertaining to the Freeman case, Tilly Tilmouth's letter has been sealed in the National Archives. It was only about six years ago that the file was made available to the public. It's an amazing document. It's remarkable that a teenage Aboriginal girl living in closed government institution and with no family support could have the courage to be so frank and forthright. To think that her actions occurred over 80 years ago is even more remarkable.

To his credit, Carrington took the letter seriously. He discussed the matter with Dr F McCann, who was the Deputy Chief Protector of Aborigines, and showed a real concern for Aboriginal people. Dr McCann and Mr Carrington took sworn statements from some of "The Bungalow" girls, who made claims of abuse. Those statement redacted are in the file.

Freeman was immediately suspended and on 2 March 1934, Freeman appeared in the Alice Springs Court charged with carnal knowledge. The case was heard before two Justices of the Peace, Mr D D Smith, the resident government engineer, and Mr D Neck, a local businessman. Freeman was found guilty and fined, but he couldn't pay, so he was placed in the Alice Springs Gaol on 4 April 1934. He was released two months later, on 2 June, having been dismissed from government service.

An amazing consideration about this case is the fact that a group of teenage Aboriginal girls was actually believed about their allegations of abuse. The abuse of Aboriginal women in the Northern Territory had been commonplace for a very long time. On the odd occasions that Aboriginal women made a complaint, they were invariably not believed or listened to.

Fr Smith came to the conclusion that if these hapless children were to have any chance in life, then they needed to be in a better environment than "The Bungalow".

One boy at "The Bungalow" was Joe Croft, who had been taken from his mother further north. Fr Smith found him personable and intelligent. Joe had done well in the Qualifying Certificate, so the Native Affairs Department decided that Joe should go on to secondary education. Through Fr Smith's efforts, Joe was placed at All Souls Anglican Boys' School at Charters Towers.

Through the efforts of Fr Smith's brother, Mr C E Smith, a board member of All Souls School, Joe was accepted as a boarder free of charge. Joe was happy



From right, Charles Perkins and John Moriarty present artwork to then prime minister Bob Hawke and Hazel Hawke in 1983.



Charles and Ilene Perkins meet Malcolm and Tamie Fraser, in 1981

to go and fitted in well, staying with Mr C Smith during the holidays. He did well academically and became Captain of the School in his senior year. He was accepted into Queensland University in 1942 to study engineering – the first Aboriginal person to enter an Australian university. However, he did not complete his degree because he left in 1944 to join the army during World War II.

In later years, he worked for the Department of Aboriginal Affairs. Joe's daughter, Brenda Croft, is an artist and curator who holds a degree in Fine Arts from the University of NSW and is now studying for her PhD. She is active in a number of Aboriginal causes.

Another story concerns the famous son of Hetti Perkins, an Aboriginal woman who worked as the cook at "The Bungalow". Her salary was 6 shillings a week, but she never actually received any payment. While there, she gave birth to a son, Charlie Perkins, in 1936.

When Fr Smith established St John's Hostel in Alice Springs in 1941 for bush children to reside so that they could go to school, Hetti asked him if Charlie could stay there. He agreed and both Charlie and his younger brother Ernie came to live at St John's Hostel in 1944. From there Charlie went to St Francis' House in Adelaide in 1945 along with five other Aboriginal boys. Charlie Perkins became Australia's first male Aboriginal university graduate in 1966.

After the bombing of Darwin on 19 February 1942 the military ordered that women and children be evacuated from the designated war zone. Many of the children at "The Bungalow" were sent south.

Fr Smith, who was then a part-time army chaplain, was placed in charge of an empty troop train returning to Adelaide from Alice Springs. He took with him over 40 Aboriginal children and women. Most of the children came from "The Bungalow". They left Alice Springs in May 1942. The cost was 247 pounds, which was paid by the Commonwealth Government. When the children arrived in Adelaide, they were met by people from St Luke's Mission in Whitmore Square. Most of the children went on to Mulgoa, which was a Church Missionary Society home at the foot of the Blue Mountains in NSW, where they stayed for the duration of the war.

Fr Smith went on to establish St Francis' House, Semaphore South in Adelaide in 1946 where over the years until 1959 many Aboriginal boys from the Northern Territory gained a start in life. That is another story.

If you would like to know more, you can access the St Francis' House website, which is www.stfranchishouse.com.au or read Fr Smith's biography *The Flower in the Desert*.

Another story concerns the famous son of *Hetti Perkins*, an Aboriginal woman who worked as the cook at "The Bungalow".



Pilgrims from way back

Anne Lim

It's always been my belief that everyone who has lived long enough to encounter adversity or make a fresh start has an interesting story to tell of their life. And everyone has a unique ancestry of which they may be proud or from which they've had to break away.

My theory has yet again borne fruit in discovering the journeys of Gary Swan and Dr Teresa Schwellnus, who have been members of Christ Church Cathedral in Darwin city for the two years since they arrived in the Territory.

Though in some ways a marriage of opposites – she an academic and he a practical engineer – Gary and Teresa both come from pioneering heritages. Teresa is descended from a line of German Lutheran missionaries in South Africa while Gary comes from a pioneering family of pharmacists who moved from Britain to New Zealand, and then Fiji, thanks to their Anglican church connections.

Gary heard the story from an uncle in Fiji. James Butler Swann – Gary's great-grandfather – was a chemist who set up the first pharmacy in Fiji. According to family lore, James's wife Margaret had given birth to triplets on the voyage out from Britain to Christchurch, where the babies' births were duly registered.

Gary decided that James and Margaret Swann must have been missionaries – because why else would they uproot themselves from a prosperous, settled life in Leicestershire to join a new Anglican community in New Zealand in 1862?

However, according to a historical article Teresa unearthed from the internet, James Butler Swann took the momentous step as part of a wave of new British settlers to that part of New Zealand and were granted assisted passage.

Sadly, the article quashes Swann family lore that James's wife Margaret gave birth to triplets on the sea voyage. The family that arrived in New Zealand already had three small children – two sons, aged 5 and 3 and a two-year-old daughter – so perhaps this is how the story became embellished over time.

Certainly, the family were enabled to start a new life in Kaiapoi, 17km north of Christchurch, thanks to the close ties between the Church of England and this part of New Zealand. In fact, the Anglican settlers of the Canterbury region were known as Canterbury Pilgrims.

After five years, the family took a chance on earning their fortune in Fiji as cotton planters, but when that failed, James set up a successful pharmacy in Lekuva in 1870, which was eventually taken over by his third son, who was born in New Zealand. The second son became a pharmacist in Samoa and the first established his own pharmacy, AJ Swann, in Suva.

Gary's grandfather was Harold, who married a local girl whose father was the chief of a village in the north of Vita Levu, which means that Gary has royal blood!

Gary migrated from Fiji to New Zealand with his parents as a baby.

When Gary met Teresa in Christchurch, he was not a practising Christian – in fact, he felt rejected by the Catholic church as a child and disappointed in it – but through Teresa's silent witness as well as his own searching he has gradually come to a secure faith in Jesus. He realised he had always been looked after by God.

It was a course he did in his late 30s called The Art of Living which sparked the journey back to a belief in God. While it was not a Christian course, it gave Gary some tools to structure his thinking into more constructive patterns.

He learned to ask God for what he wanted, and discovered that often the simple act of asking was enough to see his desire fulfilled. He also learned to still his racing thoughts by taking one at a time, analysing its source and then dealing with the emotion behind it.

One of the main things that changed in Gary's life after doing the course was refraining from drinking alcohol which entailed leaving many friends behind.

Two years later, his life changed again when he met Teresa.

"I had Christian parents so we always went to church – that was just what we did in South Africa," she explains.

Teresa's father was the child of a Lutheran missionary, Paul Schwellnus, who with his brother Theodor was part of a movement called the Berlin Missionary Society. Paul translated the whole Bible and a hymn book into the Venda Indigenous language and was involved in Bible translations for several other Indigenous African languages.

"My father was the youngest of seven, but when he was two, his dad died. And then his mother, as a widow of the Lutheran mission, got a house in a town to bring up the children," she explains.

"The Lutheran missionaries mostly married each other; they were quite a proud group. My mother wasn't a Lutheran but she became a Lutheran after marrying my father."

Aptly for someone descended from Bible translators, Teresa has always pursued a daily Bible habit. Even now, as Associate Dean of VET at Charles Darwin University, she gets up at 4am each day to read the Bible.

"I must have read the Bible through a few times, but when I did "The Bible in 90 Days" last year, that was a life changer because you get forced to read so many chapters and it fills your head every day," she reflects.

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"The beauty of it is, because it is just Bible with no interpretation, it forces you to really work with the text. For example, I saw after reading all of it that Revelation still needed some revealing, so I did the Through the Word App on that and that opened some further understanding. But having only the Word and you meditating on that is a good experience in discovering what is really there.

"Also doing the intense 90-day program on top of working meant that in that time I also didn't read much else at all. So it was true immersion – all other voices in my life got silenced and the Word became my beacon. So I think that's a good immersion therapy even for us old Christians!"



A life lived in dependence

Anne Lim

For Steve and Liz Walker, moving to Fred's Pass with their children MJ, 5½, and Arabella, 3 was both extraordinary and ordinary at the same time.

In some ways, moving to the Northern Territory away from everything and everyone they knew in Sydney was a big and scary step.

But it was a step that Steve and Liz – who jointly embrace Steve's responsibility of being the new rector of Fred's Pass with Batchelor – were happy to make in faith, trusting in God's goodness.

"In another sense, we are very ordinary people. And this is just what normal ordinary Christians do – and that is to go where the Lord sends you. Our lives are his," Steve reflects.

"I mean, there's a lot of army folk up this way. They understand that if your CO (commanding officer) tells you to do something, you do it. Or if the army moves you to a new post, you go; it's not a negotiation so much as you get your orders and you obey them. And I think of it the same way. So we're ordinary people doing what normal Christians do, which is trying to live a life of obedience and dependence on the Lord."

At 35, Steve is young to be a rector – in charge of a parish – and it's a role that was very far from his mind when Bishop Greg Anderson approached him to suggest he think about a move to the Top End at the beginning of 2021.

Steve and Bishop Greg had met while Greg was lecturing at Moore College in Sydney, where Steve was studying.

But it was bad timing for the assistant minister at East Roseville on Sydney's north shore, which had just started a Friday night fellowship and brought on eight new leaders who were feeling very uncertain of their roles. "So there was a lot to do and to step out at that point would have been quite destabilising to that ministry," Steve explains.

But by the middle of 2021, with ministry at East Roseville at a stage where somebody else could come in and build on what had been started, Steve and Liz had reasons to think again about coming to the Territory.

"In another sense, we are very ordinary people. And this is just what normal ordinary Christians do – and that is to go where the Lord sends you. Our lives are his."



"Partly, we were thinking about family – our son starting school and our daughter starting preschool. It was like we can start that anywhere in Australia, so maybe that's actually a good time for us to move," Liz explains, adding that they had always been attracted to the idea of serving outside of Sydney.

When Bishop Greg suggested Steve apply for Fred's Pass, taking over from Phil and Leeanne Zamagias, the Walkers were attracted to the rural, outdoors lifestyle and the slightly slower pace. (They have set themselves up in the rectory with a menagerie of a dog, two kittens and some chickens.)

"So far we've loved being up here. I have friends who've told me 'we've always thought that you're a country boy in a city boy's body,'" says Steve.

"Fred's Pass gives us the opportunity to have the best of both worlds: we are close enough to the city that we can get in if we want to but we can enjoy the benefits of country life."

A big part of the attraction to Fred's Pass was how well they got on with the church wardens early on and excitement about the potential of the church.

"We thought, under God, that we might be a good fit for its next season. And a minister with a young family seemed a good match for a church right across the street from three preschools and two schools," he says.

Since arriving in early January – Steve and MJ drove while Liz and Ari flew – Steve has been taking church activities fairly slowly, partly because Liz is pregnant and may well be giving birth to their third child at Easter.

"We're in our first year of being a rector, our first year up in the Territory, so we're just trying to keep things simple in this first season and learn how to be a rector, learn the church, learn all the people," says Steve.

While it seems he has been on the fast track to becoming a rector, Steve didn't start out as the boy most likely to take this accelerated route.

In fact, in his early adult life he was a lukewarm Christian – someone who

called himself a Christian when it was convenient but who otherwise didn't have much investment in his faith.

Growing up in a non-Christian family, he had heard the gospel through a church youth group and at high school through the ISCF (Inter-School Christian Fellowship).

"It was a bit of a shock to me when I was taken to youth group and found out that firstly, being a good person didn't make you right with God. And also, I wasn't even a good person. So having those things stripped away from me, I was at a loss how to feel. If neither of those things are true, then where do I turn?" he recalls.

He became a Christian in Year 9 when he understood that salvation is entirely a gift of God's grace that we don't deserve, "but I was kind of in and out because there'd be parts of Christianity that attracted me and parts of Christianity that I didn't want to have anything to do with."

After leaving school in 2004, he deferred uni for a year and went to a summer camp in Lebanon, a tiny town in New Jersey. He had actually wanted to go to a sport camp but was sent to a Christian camp.

"I was still a lukewarm Christian. I was calling myself a Christian, but I wasn't living it out. I just wanted to get out and see a bit more of a world, and this was a good way to do it," he explains.

"But while I was over there the kids kept asking me, 'Why did you come all the way across the world to be a leader of a Christian camp?' And the honest answer was, I didn't choose to be here, actually, I just got placed here."

But while teaching and being taught the Scriptures, Steve realised that he was just playing around with Christianity.

"I realised I needed to either stop mucking around or jump in and get fully on board, so I forced God to make me a Christian," he admits.

"I knew in the Bible that God promised that if you repent and ask for forgiveness, he would accept



you. And so my prayer of repentance was not one I recommend, but it was something like, 'God, I know you promise that if I turn back to you, you'll make me a Christian. I want to be a Christian, so I guess you have to take me now.'

But Steve's repentance was based more on wanting to be on the winning team than through a love of God and wanting to be part of his family.

"My heart was not in full submission. I was just making sure I was secure on the team that would win. It just occurred to me as I was learning more about Jesus, that he either was who he said he was, which means he would win, he would come back, he is Lord, he is king, he's ruler of the whole world, that he would judge the living and the dead with eternal consequences and that was just an inevitability. And so I could either get on board with the winning team or I could keep trying to fight a sort of tsunami," he explains.

When Steve got home from the States and returned to his own church in Sydney, he found his standing before God being stripped away during a sermon series on the book of Romans.

"During the preaching series in Romans I had about four weeks of everything being stripped away, that you were not good, there's nothing you're bring into the table except your sin; any advantage you think you have means nothing to God. And I was left in despair," he relates.

"And then the good news came in halfway through Romans 3, about 'now a righteousness has been made known apart from the law.' And I understood for the first time that my contribution was zero. The only thing that I contributed was my sin and that salvation was all God's doing. If I would accept the gift, he would take me back into his family. That was overwhelming. I cried in that sermon.

"That was just like air to me. It meant everything. It was like I could move again. I could breathe again. And it was just so wonderful. It was like I was being asked to stand up without my legs. And then Jesus said, 'I'll pick you up. I know you can't do it, but I'll pick you up.' And, from that point I was just so thankful to be here."

"...and then Jesus said, 'I'll pick you up. I know you can't do it, but I'll pick you up.' And, from that point I was just so thankful to be here."

In his new enthusiasm, Steve jokes that he wore out all his friends trying to tell them about Jesus. He started leading in youth which he found very exciting. He also led an adults Bible study and then was asked to lead a church – all while he was still studying for a teaching degree.

His initial plan was to be a high school teacher and be a youth leader part-time but was soon persuaded take the steps towards full-time ministry. He went straight to a Ministry Training Strategy apprenticeship after finishing his teaching degree, then directly to Moore College and then into ministry. While he never imagined becoming a rector just five years later, he is excited about the possibilities that being a rector brings "and responsibility is a good thing."

"And I'm thrilled to be here. I'm so excited. It seemed like it happened quickly, because we weren't thinking about being rector for a long time before.

"I certainly would balk at running a church with three or so services on a Sunday and a team of staff to lead as well. But we've got Ruth Walton, she's helping to run the Batchelor church; she's honorary but she's ordained and she's fantastic. And she has a wealth of experience and is just really fun to work with. So I'm the rector, but I'm not on my own.

"There's a whole team here, a whole church full of Christians who are wonderful and are serving and making things happen."



When Zoe Creelman made a visit to Ngukurr in East Arnhem Land as an 11-year-old child, little did she know that God was preparing the way for her to serve in the church there, writes Anne Lim.

The imperfect missionary excited about her new life

The new CMS missionary to Ngukurr recalls how she and her family did a “Mobile Mission Maintenance trip up to paint the kitchen in the rectory” all those years ago and now, amazingly, she is living in the same rectory!

This fact has helped her family to visualise where she has committed to live for the foreseeable future and to support her reasons for going there as a church support worker, sent by the Church Missionary Society and accepted by the NT Anglican Diocese.

Zoe says her interest in missions began as a young child when her family spent a couple of years in Nepal with Interserve mission agency.

“That was just a really formative time for the family and seeing God answer the prayers of his people in pretty remarkable ways. We were in a church with a lot of very poor people. So a real poverty context, quite desperate poverty at times, and God would just pull through and provide in some miraculous ways. So as a seven-year-old, I realised he’s a powerful God, but he’s also an interested God.”

Early on she thought of working in agriculture but realised while studying theology that she preferred the pastoral side of ministry. But why did she land on working with Indigenous people in a remote part of the Northern Territory?

“It reframed the sort of mission context we were looking at when the Territory was suggested and it fitted really well with my heart for walking with

people for the long term through difficult things.”

As someone who lost her left lower leg in a boating accident eight years ago, Zoe Creelman has discovered that life doesn’t always go the way you want it to go.

“It was very frustrating as a 23-year-old who had been very independent and active to suddenly be so limited in what I could do for and by myself,” she said while in Darwin before setting off for Ngukurr in mid-March.

“But through it, God has given me a constant reminder of my weakness, which I think sometimes we forget because in our society we can so easily provide for ourselves and go about life, functionally, as atheists, even though we call ourselves Christians.

“And suddenly I realised that the gospel really has to be good news in



hard situations and that I was really looking forward to a resurrected body. And, actually, it was okay if I didn't live my best life now, because as Christians, our hope is in the Lord, we have a great future to look forward to. And so it means that we can go through difficult things now, and we can persevere and we can maintain hope, I suppose, in difficult circumstances."

As we talk around the kitchen table in her Darwin digs, Zoe seems very vulnerable despite her assuring me that she has run a half marathon – twice – since her rehabilitation and that the prosthesis is no longer an issue in daily life.

As a young white woman, Zoe hopes that her vulnerability will provide a bridge across cultures and help her to serve Indigenous believers.

"It's really helpful sometimes for whitefellas to have a visible weakness," she reflects.

"So being single and being an amputee, there's a bit of pity there and it's a bit like, 'Oh, we need to look after her' – which I'm fine with.

"I just really pray that that's empowering for other believers, that it's a bit of an equaliser. It's like my life hasn't been all shiny, hunky-dory either. We've had different paths, different challenges, but we both have testimonies of God's grace in the midst of struggles as brothers and sisters in Christ."

Pragmatically as well, as an amputee, I'll still be near prosthetists and come under NDIS, so that's really handy."

Ngukurr has a rich history as CMS's first mission in the Northern Territory back in 1908, when it was known as the Roper River Mission. The community about 300km east of Katherine was founded by three CMS Victoria missionaries and three Aboriginal missionaries from Yarrabah, Queensland.

"The church has had a history of Indigenous involvement in the leadership quite early on, which is really precious," says Zoe.

"The Kriol [Bible] translation work came largely through Ngukurr and there are many very solid godly people out there."

Zoe feels very privileged to be supported in prayer and financially by Christians "down south" who are sending her to Ngukurr with the initial purpose of forming relationships and learning language.

"That's one of the lovely things that going with CMS and the diocese is that they both recognise anything I do needs to be driven by the church in Ngukurr. It's really difficult when on deputation where people ask, 'So what are you going to do?' And you're like, 'I'm actually quite intentional in going with no set programs or agendas in mind so that people on the ground are empowered to make those decisions and I can support them as they lead the church.'"

Her first priority at least for the next few years will be learning Kriol, a lingua franca of Indigenous people across the Territory, especially in Ngukurr.

"Then I'll keep learning the rest of my life or the rest of the time I'm out there, but hopefully after a few years I'll have a good enough handle on it to be able to be helpful.

"I'm thankful there's a language centre out there and there's quite a few linguists in Ngukurr, which is really nice."

With a long-term commitment to cross-cultural mission in a remote community, Zoe has clearly made her peace with the sacrifice of walking a different path from many of her peers.

"I think there's a beauty and a grief in getting to see the world through other people's eyes or having a different lived experience to maybe what my life would have looked like back in Geelong," she reflects.

"I think it's such a privilege to be able to go into a context like this, but also means that my frame of reference becomes quite different to my peers; and where we've had so many shared experiences which have been uniting, I'm kind of stepping off the track and my life will look different. My priorities and my values and experiences will be different to the people that previously had been very much the same as mine, and so I'm very thankful to God for some very supportive friends and family who will continue to walk with me, and who understand that our experiences of life will be different.

"I'm also really thankful for CMS and the diocese that there are other people who have similar kind of life experiences. There are people who have years of experience in this areas and have been so kind in sharing their wisdom and insight in my orientation."



A rare opportunity to support SRI classes

Anne Lim

Interested in kids' ministry? Then you need to know about the Schools Ministry Fund, which was set up by the diocese in 2000 to support Christian ministry in government schools. Thanks to its educational aspect, the fund has tax deductible status and therefore offers a great opportunity to support Special Religious Instruction (SRI) in NT schools.

"In many parts of Australia, SRI doesn't happen anymore or not on scale it used to, while here in Territory we still have an amazing opportunity to go into schools and provide SRI and provide that wonderful space for students to learn about God," says Suzie Ray, rector of St James' Anglican Church Sanderson in Malak.

Despite being more than 20 years old, the fund is little known, which Suzie thinks might be because SRI happens during the week and so it doesn't connect with what people see when they come to church.

"People without school-aged children don't understand the ministry and how important it is. And because it's less common in other states, people in the Territory might not even know this is an option to support and encourage our churches to be in schools."

Although a small church, St James' Sanderson is fully committed to the ministry of SRI and supports Suzie and families and outreach pastor Jo Vandersee to commit time to teach SRI in two local schools – Karama primary every week and Leanyer primary three days a term. The pair also offer relief at other schools when their SRI leaders are away.

"One of the schools we go to has consistently low rates of literacy and numeracy in the NAPLAN tests because many of the students come from non-English-speaking background and have low or patchy school attendance so this is a great opportunity to get into the schools to encourage the staff and to encourage the students," Suzie says.

"Someone with foresight in the diocese back in the past applied to have this fund as an allowable purpose so it can receive donations and the money can be used to pay staff to go into schools and for resources needed for the programs."

Suzie points out that creating great craft activities and music activities comes with costs and the fund can be used to help with those.

As their funding was very tight, St James' applied for and received a grant from the Schools Ministry Fund to cover a portion of the salary costs for Suzie and Jo to keep their SRI commitments going.

"Without us neither of the schools we're involved with would be able to support SRI and those programs would cease," she explains.

"Because Darwin is such a transient area, it's really hard to get volunteers because by the time people settle in and find their feet, it's often not a long time before they move again, so getting long-term volunteers is a real challenge. So one way to make the most of the opportunity to have SRI in schools is to pay people to do it."

Having SRI teachers who are trained in kids' ministry means they can create and share resources and ideas, adding that she has created songs, story and craft ideas that can be used in multiple schools as a resource for volunteers.

A particular joy of doing SRI for Suzie and Jo is crossing paths with some of their students when out and about in the community.

"Jo and I have had the opportunity when at the local shops to meet kids who don't go to church. They see us and get excited that 'this is the person who teaches me about God' and we also get to meet the parents."





“My bargain with God was, ‘You make her better, I’ll go to church.’”

The deal that led sceptics to faith, mission and ordination

Anne Lim

When David and Jan Robinson married, they were considered among their friends the least likely to become Christians.

“When we got married, if anybody had told people that we’d become Christians, and that he’d be ordained, they would have rolled around laughing. We were so far from that,” confesses Jan.

“But when God got us, he got us good!” adds David, who is the retired Anglican Bishop of Rockhampton.

The softly spoken English migrant, who still speaks with a Midlands accent, is taking a break from retirement to act as locum at Katherine Anglican Church for three months.

It was his wife Jan who was the catalyst for their conversion to Christianity. While she was pregnant with their second daughter, she became convinced that there was something wrong with the baby.

“My bargain with God was, ‘you make her better, I’ll go to church.’ I believed she was unwell. I used to tell him something’s wrong with the baby and then it was like whoomph – I had a sense of her being healed and ‘the Lord is my Shepherd’ coming into my head! And then we started going to church and she was baptised.”

Although the Robinsons had had their first daughter baptised in the Uniting Church, the gospel message hadn’t got through to them.

But when they started attending an Anglican church “something about what the preacher was saying made sense and I decided I wanted to know more,” David says. They started attending a Bible study and “it just grew from there.”

David explains: “It was a gradual learning process. I had to process it in my mind and come to that point where to me everything was true. Jesus is real, true, the gospel is true.”

Adds Jan: “And if he was true, we had to do something about it. I think we’d only been Christians about eight years when we went as missionaries to Bangladesh, so we were pretty full on.”

“We’ve always been in, boots and all,” David confirms.

The Robinsons' daughters were 7 and 10 when they went to Bangladesh with the Anglican Board of Mission, living in a village with no power and no running water.

David describes the challenge they faced this way: "It's like taking everything you think you know and turning it upside down and giving it a good shake – a totally different type of lifestyle. We'd never experienced that kind of poverty before."

Jan explains that she had to become totally dependent on God.

"We couldn't have done anything without God helping every step of the way," she says,

"In the village, no one spoke English so I had to learn Bengali very quickly to deal with everybody."

After about six months the family managed to travel to the capital Dhaka, where they visited an Australian aid worker.

"They had a house with running water and a tiled bathroom and I sat in the bathroom and cried. I actually wanted to get back to the village – it was the most bizarre thing. I couldn't deal with all of these things ... I couldn't wait to get back because that was what had become real and I just wanted to be there."

On their return to Australia, the family moved to Darwin, where David worked with Indigenous students and studied theology part-time, working towards full-time ministry.

At the end of 1990, they moved to Canberra so that David could study at St Mark's National Theological Centre and was ordained in 1994. He then served as rector in parishes in Canberra, Gundagai and Wagga Wagga.

In 2007, they returned to Bangladesh to spend two years teaching at an international Christian school. On their return, David served as rector at Curtin Anglican in Canberra before moving into lecturing at St Marks in ministry formation training, among other things.

From 2014, he was the Bishop of Rockhampton, a role he found important but challenging.

"The bishop is the one who appoints people to positions so he sets the direction long-term of the diocese. It's also very challenging because not everybody wants to change. And the church is struggling with resources."

He has found it enjoyable to return to parish ministry in Katherine, but stresses that it's only for a while.

"I'm not sure what plans God has for this next stage of ministry, but I don't see myself doing a lot of long term locum ministries.

"I admire those people who have never really stopped being in full time ministry, their dedication to serve in that way is a real blessing. I would prefer going off and doing a month here and there in isolated rural parishes, so working with a Bishop like Greg or BCA [Bush Church Aid] for a month or two is great."

A highlight of their time in Katherine will be the upcoming Easter service, which will be a baptism service for three or more Indigenous church members.

When they approached David asking to be baptised, Jan offered to read the Bible with them after church.

"So I started doing that and they just love it. So I've really enjoyed doing that and now one of them has said her brother wants to get baptised, so we said bring him in! It might end up being the biggest baptism!"



"It's like taking everything you think you know, turning it upside down and giving it a good shake."

Reviving a rich tradition



Anne Lim

Lent is a time when the Anglican tradition calls people to self-examination, often marked by a period of fasting or abstinence (though not on Sundays!).

Christ Church Cathedral in Darwin was one of the churches in our diocese that marked the beginning of the 40-day period leading up to Easter with a traditional Ash Wednesday service.

This involved applying the physical symbol of ashes (created from the burning of last year's Palm Sunday crosses) on congregants' foreheads, "as a mark of remembering our mortality and the need to so act in this mortal life in a way that will have the best consequences for eternity," to use Bishop Greg Anderson's words during the cathedral service, pictured above.

But for the second year running Kristan Slack, the Rector of Alice Springs Anglican, held a Commination Service rather than a normal Ash Wednesday service.

He explains that there is no special Ash Wednesday service in the Book of Common Prayer, but there is a special service for the first day of Lent.

"That's the Commination Service, which makes an announcement of God's vengeance against sin and it specifically makes a connection not just to mortality, but to the fact that God is holy, and he's bringing his judgment.

"It runs through some of the curses in Deuteronomy to lay out the kind of things God is coming to judge us on, and it just uses a string of scriptural allusions to say that God is coming, and then appeals to people to make things right."

The service then moves through Psalm 51 – David's penitent plea for mercy – followed by a prayer for God to act in mercy to his people, even though we don't deserve it.

"On the whole, it's probably more sombre and makes explicit I think the things that an Ash Wednesday service doesn't have to," says Kristan.

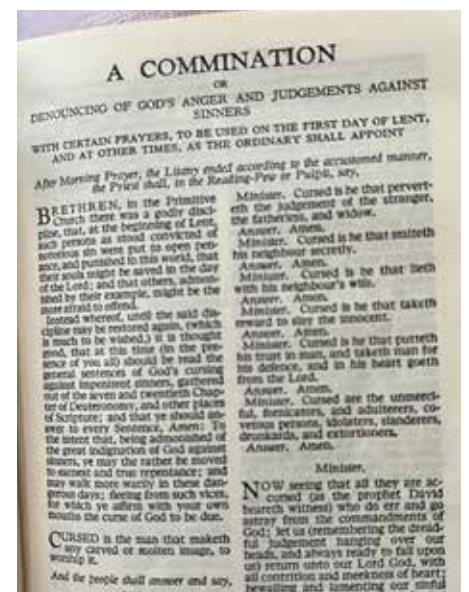
"It makes sure that there is both the holy God and the God of mercy in Jesus."

Asked why he chose to hold the Commination Service, he said he felt it was a beautiful and rich Anglican tradition that had been neglected because of a feeling that it's too serious, or archaic to announce God's judgment.

"But I think it marries God's judgment with God's mercy beautifully; the tone moves beautifully through to hope at the end. I think it kicks off Lent in a better way because if we want to deny ourselves, we also need to look to the cross because otherwise it's just self-denial without hope.

"Ash Wednesday could be construed as putting the emphasis on a person's individual repentance and whatever they are doing to expiate the guilt. Whereas a Commination is more explicit about how we are hopeless in our sins before God, and it's only by God's mercy that we can be reconciled.

"It ends with the God who saves rather than 'now go and try harder,' which is a horrible burden because you never know if you've tried hard enough. Given the past two years we've had with COVID, I think this is exactly what we need – a reminder that the answer to death is in Jesus, not 'we all need to be better people.'"





Nungalinya staff hit the ground running

Anne Lim

A delayed start to classes at Nungalinya College meant staff hit the ground running when students returned on 14 March with the lifting of biosecurity zones in remote communities.

Continuing caution was evident in lower numbers from some Top End communities, with proportionately more students from Lutheran communities from the desert region of Central Australia, said principal Ben van Gelderen.

Two Foundation Studies classes, Media & Music, Art & Faith, a Certificate III Ministry and Theology class and a final Languages Workshop were squeezed into a single month of teaching.

With new deans, a new Assistant Principal in Mark Holt (a member of Christ Church Cathedral) a new Student Services Manager and new Property Manager, the delay was helpful in allowing new staff members extra time to settle in, Ben said.

Before students arrived, staff took turns in sharing their expertise and knowledge with each other. There were mini workshops on phonetics, teaching both-ways, knitting, Aboriginal English, gardening, mosaics, art, library sorting, how to travel to/from a community, travelling in Africa, how to use admin software, pastoral care of prisoners, Hebrew for dummies and even cooking.

With the retirement of teacher/linguist Mally McLellan, Hannah Harper (from St Peter's Nightcliff) has been appointed to co-teach the First Language Literacy course, with the first group starting the one-year journey in June. This will prepare the way for a new Certificate II course in translation which the college hopes to launch next year.

"That will start a pathway there and hopefully we can grow that, to Certificate III and Certificate IV courses to keep growing people's expertise in translation," Ben said.



In April and May, the College will hold another Faith and Wellbeing course with the support of Tearfund, which will draw new students from the three communities that participated last year – Maningrida, Wadeye, and Ngukurr. It is hoped the Tearfund partnership will be long-term.

A highlight for all staff is the recent opening of three new residential units, which were delayed due to COVID and weather. In all, five new units have replaced the old asbestos units.

Other plans include the opening of the College's Garden of Eden space with artworks by students and QR codes to access information about the artists in their language. With the second year of the Art & Faith course focusing on The Passion, there are also plans to create a new outdoor learning area based on the Stations of the Cross with a trail of artworks and landscaping for people to reflect on.

UPCOMING EVENTS AROUND THE DIOCESE

May 6 or 7 (tbc) Diocesan Council

May 8-13
Anglican General (national) Synod

May 26 Ascension Day

June 5 Pentecost

June 28-Aug 18
Bishop Greg and Annette away for
leave and Lambeth Conference

September 12-15 Clergy conference

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