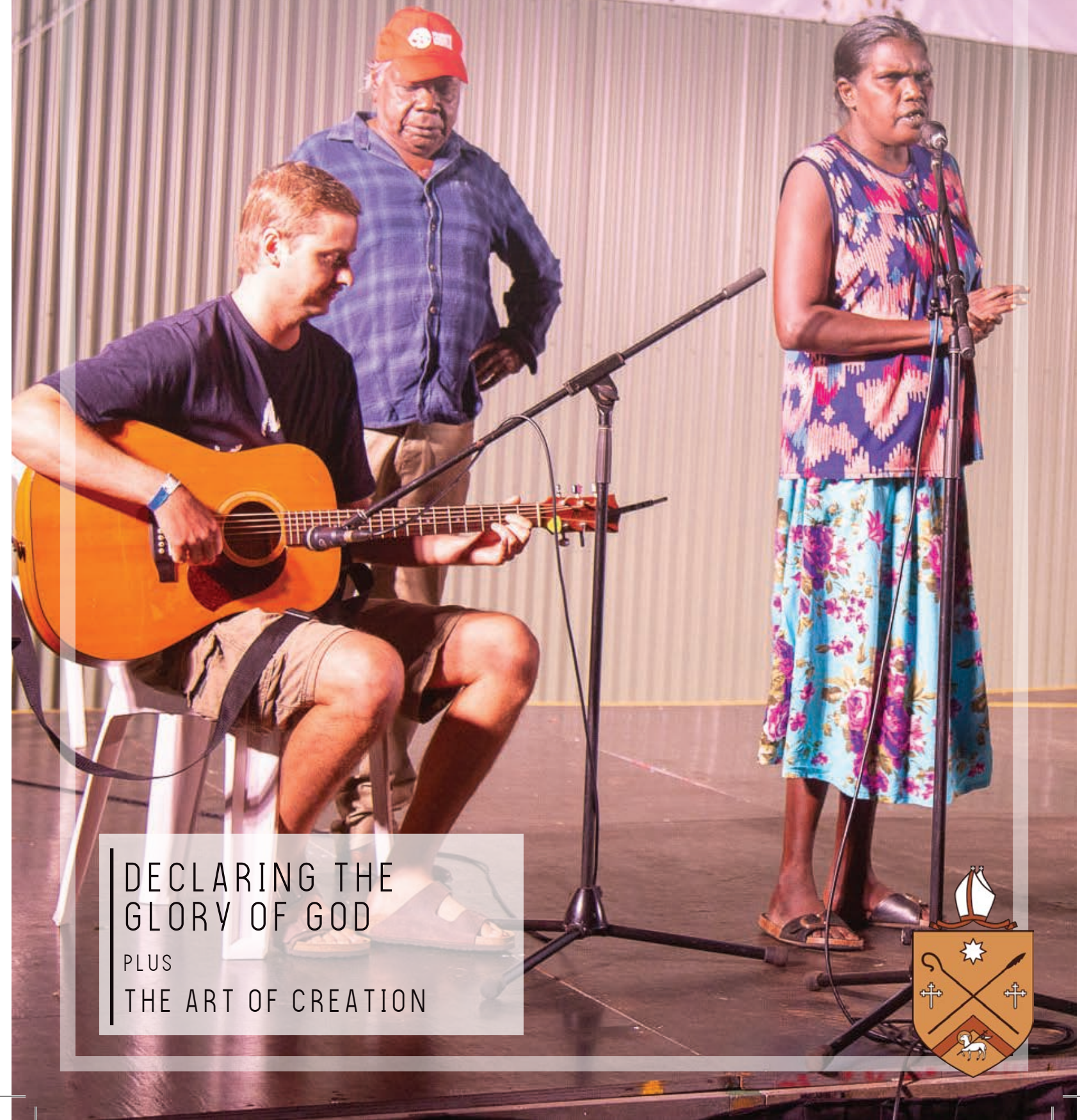


issue 21.1

# TOP CENTRE

THE ANGLICAN DIOCESE OF THE NORTHERN TERRITORY



DECLARING THE  
GLORY OF GOD

PLUS

THE ART OF CREATION



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## A BREATH OF LIFE

ANNE LIM

“When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting,” writes Luke in the Book of Acts chapter 2:1-2.

Two thousand or so years later, the combined forces of the Arafura Wind Ensemble filled the soaring space of Christ Church Cathedral in Darwin, opening the worship at its annual Day of Pentecost celebration with a heart-stirring fanfare.

The cathedral’s beautiful acoustics provided a spectacular vehicle to amplify the talents of the 23 members of the award-winning local ensemble, creating an exciting atmosphere to celebrate the coming of the Holy Spirit on the disciples and the breath (or wind) of God’s mouth that is still with us.

Commenting on the program, the band’s artistic director and conductor, Stephen Pevely, said the fanfare that opened the service was a rarely performed work dating from 1939 Ralph Vaughan Williams’ Flourish for Wind Band.

“We wanted to keep it contemplative and appropriate to the service and the fanfare that we opened with – there are not too many works like that out there and when I

found it a few years ago, I imagined it as a performance entrance for the Dean to commence the service with I thought it worked pretty well,” he said.

He said the band saw playing at Pentecost as an opportunity to play older, more contemplative works in contrast to the easy listening rock and pop that it usually entertains the public with at its outdoor concerts.

“Players really enjoy playing this sort of music because it’s much more intimate than what we normally play throughout the year.”

During communion the band played the 2nd movement of Gustav Holst’s 2nd Suite for Military Band, a folk song entitled I’ll love My Love (1922) and Air for Band by American composer Frank Erickson from 1955

To end the service, the band received enthusiastic acclaim after they played the first movement from Holst’s 2nd Suite for Military Band, consisting of three folk songs: Morris Dance, Swansea Town and Claudy Banks.

“It’s always very gratifying when people to come up and say thank you so much and it was great. It’s a satisfying way to spend a Sunday morning and get the bonus of the sermon as well.”

## TOP CENTRE

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FRONT COVER: Matt Pearson, left, William Hall and Leander Gurrabul at the Katherine Christian Convention

BACK COVER: Mandy Manggurra, Numbulwar

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



## BISHOP GREG WRITES ...

It is unusual for me to write about social issues in Top Centre, but this one is particularly timely and important. On June 9, the national Anglican Family Violence Working Group released its research report into how much domestic and family violence affects Anglicans in Australia. An independent agency carried out the research. You can find a summary of the findings at <https://anglican.org.au/our-work/family-violence/>.

Family violence is a terrible thing that touches many people in Territory communities. The statistics are shocking. The NT Council of Social Service has found that on an average day in the Territory, 61 incidents of domestic violence happen. Aboriginal women in the Territory are 18 times more likely to be victims of domestic violence than non-Aboriginal women. That means that if 57 women in the Territory experience violence on an average day, three will be non-Aboriginal and 54 will be Aboriginal. This is an appalling situation, and represents only the cases that the authorities know about – the reality could be even worse. The coronavirus pandemic has made the situation deteriorate. In some parts of the Territory, domestic violence increased by 25 per cent in 2020 compared with the previous year.

The Anglican Family Violence Research Report found that members of the Anglican Church in Australia experience more domestic violence than the general population, for both women and men. That does not necessarily mean that Anglicans are more likely to abuse or coerce their spouses/intimate partners or children, but it certainly does mean that Anglican churches need to be more aware of domestic violence than we currently are. We need to recognise the tell-tale signs, we need to create safety for victims to be able to tell their stories and seek help, and we need to equip church members and church leaders with skills and strategies to assist those facing violence, whether it be physical, financial, sexual, emotional, social or spiritual. Unfortunately, one of the research findings was that violence perpetrators can misuse Christian teaching to justify their actions.

It is perfectly clear that the Bible and Christian faith do

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not permit domestic and family violence. If you understand the Bible correctly, you cannot believe that you are allowed to physically or emotionally mistreat or coerce your spouse or other family members. God calls us to sacrificially love our spouses, not to be harsh with our children, to protect those who are vulnerable, to put others' interests before our own. If a Bible passage that we are studying in a small group, or which a minister is preaching about, has potential for being twisted or misunderstood, we must make it clear and explicit that violence and coercion are never allowed or justified.

There are many factors that make it difficult for those experiencing domestic and family violence to ask for help. They may fear further violence if they share their story. They may fear that church leaders or friends will not believe them. They may fear that others will blame them for what has happened. They may feel shame that they are in this situation, which is so different from what they imagined their life would be.

The good news of the Anglican report is that where churches have built up awareness of the issues around family violence, they do indeed create a space where victims/survivors are more ready to reach out and seek help. Christian teaching that discusses intimate partner violence can empower victims/survivors to begin a process towards positive change. Good relationships at church can reduce the isolation that victims/survivors may feel.

The Anglican Church of Australia has responded to the report by suggesting a series of commitments that churches and dioceses can adopt (see the website above). These include acknowledging and changing practices that have left violence ignored, teaching about equality and respect, and providing training for church leaders to equip them to respond well so that violence is addressed and ultimately prevented. At the heart of these commitments is the truth that all people – men, women, children – have the dignity that comes from God making them in his image. Working to stop violence and coercion is an important way of showing that we believe this, and that our belief leads into action (James 2:14-19).

# A SAFE PAIR OF HANDS

ANNE LIM

A former toolmaker who came to Christ while reading a Bible belonging to one of his tradesmen at Ford Motor Co in Geelong has joined the ministry development team of the Anglican Diocese of the Northern Territory.

Simon Koefoed moved to Darwin in January with his family after 17 years in Victoria pastoring a variety of churches, mostly in working, welfare and new migrant communities.

In his new role as Associate Ministry Development Officer, his major responsibility is tuning up the operations of Safe Ministry with ministers and missionaries across urban, regional and remote Christian communities.

What excites Simon about his new role is the opportunity to work with the ministry development team and particularly with Kate and Tavis Beer, who have been hard at work on a translation of the Prayer Book into Kriol.

“Safe ministry officer isn’t particularly my calling in life. But I have certainly noticed having someone with 17 years of ministry experience in the role actually is big help. People are breathing a sigh of relief that I know how it feels and they know I do,” he says.

“One of the things I’m really excited about is being able to relieve these guys [Kate and Tavis] of some of this administrative stuff that really doesn’t need their particular skills.

“So relieving Kate as the chair of the safe ministry reference group and relieving her of those duties that don’t really require the same level of cross-cultural skills – that excites me to be able to work with that team and help free up that kind of work.”

Simon is also excited by the mission possibilities in the Darwin area and has started a prayer group at Christ Church Cathedral, where he is an honorary priest, to pray about evangelism to the city.

Simon and his wife Claire are no strangers to moving far from home to pursue gospel opportunities. Early in their marriage they moved to Prince Albert,



Saskatchewan, Canada, hearing that there was a desperate need for Christian youth workers.

After 14 months working mostly for the Anglican Diocese of North Saskatchewan, Simon and Claire returned to Australia to train for long-term gospel ministry.

Simon says the back story behind their move to Darwin was the advocacy of Bishop Greg Anderson, who had wanted to find Simon a role here. When Bishop Greg spoke to Claire about it in Katoomba, in the Blue Mountains, he was not aware that the Northern Territory had been a long-term passion of hers. Greg asked just the right question at just the right time.

Claire, a teacher by training, has a full-time job with Catholic Education in literacy in complex language settings, not only in Catholic schools in Darwin, but also remote settings where there are a lot of different models.

As CMS short term workers, Simon and Claire are finding that the sense of mission has also rubbed off on their children – Luke, 17, Toby, 15 and Ben, 12, says Simon.

Attending youth group at St Peter’s Nightcliff, Luke has been heard to comment that his family is on mission and the children feel part of meeting that gospel need.

“And so he’s just talking really gospel language. And at 17 I’m feeling that it’s not so much in parroting what we say, but, you know, it’s a formation thing. So we’re pretty excited as parents about that.”



A group of Aboriginal Christians have discovered a new freedom in expressing their faith in fresh artistic ways thanks to a new course at Nungalinga College. Art and Faith is the College's first art course since the early 2000s and offers Certificate II in Visual Arts with an emphasis on integrating arts, culture and faith.

The course was designed to assist established artists develop their artistic skills, create and sell their own work in their local community art centres and also grow a market for Indigenous Christian art in the Top End.

Two groups of Aboriginal artists travelled to Darwin from 10 different communities to undertake four-week intensive classes in a renovated Art Training Centre, which provided a spiritually safe space for them to explore deep questions around art, spirituality and faith.

"The course balances the requirements of the formal VET sector Certificate II in Visual Arts course, but also teaching it from a Christian perspective and opening up the discussions of what people would like to express with their faith," says the College principal Ben van Gelderen.

"Those sorts of big questions about culture, faith, ceremony-life and what things are a bit taboo, come up in other courses – how much do I leave behind? How much do I integrate? But in art it's really pointed, it's right there.

"You have to make decisions. Am I going to draw with designs which come from a traditional understanding and have traditional patterns and powers along with them, or am I leaving them behind?"

The theme for the course was creation and the biblical account in Genesis 1-3 provided the inspiration for many of the drawings and paintings. Some artists chose to paint in a regional or clan-based tradition, others integrated distinct Christian iconography and traditions, while others

experimented with something completely different.

Trainer Salome Moes, pictured below, who shaped the course based on her experiences of teaching art in a small remote Christian school in Gäwa on Elcho Island, is delighted with the diversity and vibrancy of paintings the students produced. Many of the works are by brand-new painters, who came in as weavers or illustrators and discovered a new way of expressing their faith through painting and drawing.

A highlight of the course was a chapel service led by the Art and Faith class, who showcased their artworks and shared through word, song and dance about their growth in trusting our great God.

"It was a foretaste of what is to come when the class returns in August as we plan a Dry season outdoor public exhibition of art in our very own Garden of Eden at Nungalinga," says Ben.

Watch out for these exhibitions in August and October at which these works will be for sale.





## WINGS FOR THE LORD

ANNE LIM

People who know Phillip Zamagias used to declare confidently that he and his wife Leanne would never leave the Territory. The man who was once known as the Flying Bibleman, and served as a missionary pilot in Arnhem Land, had found a comfortable niche as senior minister at Fred's Pass in Darwin's rural south.

But that was the problem, Phil says. God doesn't necessarily call his people to a life of comfort. So when he received not one, not two, but three separate invitations to move to parishes down south, he began to have sleepless nights.

"I think God had to rattle the cage," he reflects. "People always said about us, 'You won't get them out.' But I began to wonder if that was obstinance or obedience. I took that to heart thinking, 'you can sit there and say, I'm digging my heels in my locality,' but changes present the opportunity for ministries to regenerate and navigate through a different emphasis and different resources.

So after five-and-a-half years at the Church of the Good Shepherd in Fred's Pass – as its longest serving minister – Phil and Leanne have moved to Echuca in regional Victoria, where Phil will be senior minister at Christ Church Anglican.

"The main thing for me is that it's an evangelical church that wants a Bible teacher to help them reach their community with the gospel. There is a young ministry team there and the church wanted somebody to help guide them. Maybe we can contribute to, and connect from, a different perspective," he says, noting that in contrast to the Northern Territory, it's "a very different demographic" but has a significant Indigenous population.

Reflecting on his early years, Phil remembers being pretty proud of himself when he got his pilot's licence while working as a Qantas engineer. From a Greek Orthodox

background, he had recently become a Christian and, fired with enthusiasm for his new faith, he boasted to a Christian colleague: "Oh brother, guess what? The Lord has given me wings!" To which this colleague replied: "Great! And how are you going to use them for Him?"

It wasn't long before Phil and Leanne found out the answer to that question. They had just moved to their local Anglican church from Sydney's Christian Life Centre, where they came to Christ, in the belief that church should be an expression of local fellowship rather than travelling across town.

"When we changed churches, as God would do it, we ran straight into the New South Wales secretary of Mission Aviation Fellowship [MAF]," Phil recalls with a chuckle.

"I don't think we managed to get in the door before he offered me an application for MAF."

Their mission started to take wings while attending their first Church Missionary Society Summer School, where they met the legendary American missionary Elisabeth Elliot, who went back to Ecuador after her husband was martyred and evangelised the tribe who killed him.

"When you're in the presence of someone's who's mission royalty you think, 'well, if she can actually forgive them and go back and translate the Bible and have them come to faith, why can't anybody else do like that?'" Phil comments.

"It was just an extraordinary thing, but of course, there were all the other CMS missionaries that we met at that same Summer School – especially missionaries who worked in Arnhem Land – and we thought maybe that's something we could do, using our practical skills to aid in mission."

Six years later, with a six-month-old baby in arms, Phil and Leanne moved to Oenpelli – now known as Gunbalanya – where Phil became the local MAF Base Manager.

Phil discovered that his flying prowess came secondary to time spent on the ground in visits to communities with Aboriginal pastor, Rev Peterson Nganjmirra.

“He would take communion and just spend time chatting, praying, reading the Bible and that sort of stuff. Great times. They were the best trips. I didn’t get a lot of flying done in those days because you’d only fly 20 minutes, spend three or four hours there, then fly 5-10 minutes to another place and spend three or four hours there before flying 20 minutes back.”

Phil, a master of the memorable anecdote, recounts how the Holy Spirit came into sharp focus at a weekend Christian rally of about 300 people from different communities organised by Peterson.

“On the second night, some people came out from the darkness and they’re all dressed up in their finery and they said to Peterson, we cannot continue the ceremony we’re doing, because the spirit that you people have rolled into this town is too strong for us.’ And they actually physically attacked him.

“And while they were trying to beat him up, he smiled and looked at me like ‘these guys, like, what do they think they’re doing?’ I was thinking of Stephen, but for some reason they just didn’t manage to really land a significant blow – they just stopped and then there was the sound of a pencil snapping and the atmosphere changed.”

Phil found Peterson’s lack of fear a wonderful witness.

“I learned a lot from Peterson, probably one of the most influential mentors I’ve ever had; he probably didn’t realise, but his confidence in the Lord was second to none. The church just powered on and more people started coming to church. His gentle, but firm stand emboldened everybody.”

It was during Phil’s seven years in Arnhem Land that the first mini-Bible in Kunwinjku language was launched. Observing that the local people were reluctant to use their new Bible, Phil discovered from Peterson that they believed it had been translated from English and was therefore inferior to the English version.

“And so I showed him my Greek New Testament. This is my people’s language. And this is actually what yours has been translated from, not the English one. So they’re the same generation. He goes, ‘ah, maybe you need to tell the church.’ And so I got up and I explained to them ... when they realised that the original Scriptures were not English, it made a world of difference. And then using the Kunwinjku scriptures became the preferred option.”

Feeling in need of a change, Phil took a job with CMS-NSW in communications and mission education. But after five years, God again spoke to Phil about getting too comfortable.

“I did deputations on behalf of CMS and one day I was preaching in Canberra-Goulburn Diocese and my text that day was, ‘and they left their nets and their boats and they followed Jesus.’

“At that time Bible Society had actually asked us to consider coming back up to the Northern Territory because the current Flying Bibleman was retiring. We weren’t that

keen because by then we’d become fairly comfortable.

“And then in the middle of my own sermon, I felt convicted that I can do this and I got really excited. I told Leeanne ‘I think God wants us to go back.’ She said, ‘yeah, I think you’re right.’ It was God’s hand showing himself.”

For Phil, as Flying Bibleman, it was an extraordinary time, servicing the needs of the church over 40 per cent of the country (see the photo below by Gordon Thompson.)

“We tried to keep costs down by doing ‘milk run’ trips. I’d be two weeks at a time out into Western Australia, down to south Australia, across to Queensland, covering three million square kilometres.”

One of the things Phil is proudest of is a Bible Society project for Indigenous children called ‘God’s Story for the Outback’ with 48 panels of stories giving an overview of the Bible. The book was published in seven Central Australian languages and was used in some schools. It came as a package with a CD of matching songs from Christian children’s singer-songwriter Colin Buchanan, a colouring book and coloured pencils.

What Phil enjoys most about the Territory is that it’s “a land of opportunity – it’s still very pioneering.” For example, people are willing to give new ideas a go and if they don’t work out, learn from it and move on to the next one.

“But there’s also so much opportunity that lots of things succeed. So it’s really exciting to be able to just look and if you’ve got eyes to see the opportunities, you can just go ahead and do them. I’ve really enjoyed that.”

*I learned a lot from Peterson, probably one of the most influential mentors I’ve ever had ...*









## A PERFECT FIT

ANNE LIM

“I’m really pumped, I’m really excited” is how Naomi Ireland describes her state of mind as she takes on the new role of Children’s Ministry Office for the Anglican Diocese of the Northern Territory.

Naomi admits she doesn’t quite know everything her job will entail except that she will spend a lot of time travelling around the diocese, visiting churches, mainly in remote communities, and identifying their needs.

Most recently Naomi was the Families and Children’s Minister at St Matthews, Manly, in Sydney, where she led a team of three staff members, 16 volunteer coordinators and about 150 volunteers.

At her farewell from St Matts, a colleague commented that if he had to write a perfect job description for Naomi, it would be this very role, which is funded by the Bush Church Aid Society.

But in fact, for most of her life, Naomi wanted to serve as a missionary in a Spanish speaking country.

A lifelong Christian, Naomi says she can’t remember a time when she didn’t trust in Jesus. She jokes that maybe it happened in the womb with her faithful parents and grandparents praying over her before she was born.

In any case, by Year 8 at Dapto High School near Wollongong, south of Sydney, she had already decided she wanted to be a missionary.

“A good friend of mine who was maybe two years above me went to the Dominican Republic for a year and came home speaking Spanish,” she recalls.

“I fell in love with the language. We also had link missionaries in Chile, and in Spain too, at the time, so I thought I might go to Chile ... that was right up until mid-Bible college when my mum bought a house in the south of France, and so I thought, ‘okay, well maybe Spain.’

That idea was reinforced when one of Naomi’s

closest Bible college friends, Tania Snowdon, ended up in Valencia, Spain, as a missionary with her husband Mike. While ministry in Spain did not come about, at the NSW/ACT Church Missionary Society Summer School in January 2020 Naomi bumped into NT Bishop Greg Anderson.

Now, anyone who knows Bishop Greg knows what a persuasive advocate he is for Christians to come and serve in the Top End. And in Naomi’s case, he was sowing into fertile ground.

“During my time at St Matts, we had a partner church in Broken Hill, the Living Desert Indigenous church. I’ve always had a heart for Indigenous Australians, and I think over the past five years or more, that’s really grown as I became really good friends with [Bush Church Aid’s] Neville and Kathie Naden, who were at Broken Hill during that time,” she explains.

“The ministry out there really encouraged me and spurred me on. I’ve always been eager to be a good ally for our First Nations people, so when this job came up, it made total sense. Everything just fit perfectly with who I was.”

Having just completed training at St Andrew’s Hall in Melbourne, Naomi says she found it valuable in prompting her to think about what is the difference between culture and Christianity?

“What is me being a ‘white Christian’, with my history and all that comes with the way I understand the world, and what is genuinely Christian? What does the Bible actually say? It’s been really helpful to think through missiology and crossing cultures, as well as doing some reading to get a little bit of an understanding about Aboriginal culture.”

Asked if she feels daunted by the challenges ahead, Naomi is cool-headed.

“I guess the answer is yes and no. I know there’ll be challenges, but I’m not feeling daunted at the moment; I’m excited. I’m really looking forward to getting stuck into life in the Territory and working out what the job looks like,” she says.

“It’s a brand-new position, so that’s tricky in the sense that I don’t know what it will end up looking like. But then that’s also the exciting thing about it, I’m able to shape the role and work it out and I don’t have to fit into someone else’s shoes.

“And that tends to be one of my strengths in kids’ ministry. So, I’m looking forward to that. I guess, I’m just excited at the moment. I’ll worry about the hard things later.”



## A CHRISTMAS SNOWBALL

ANNE LIM

A modest proposal for a Christmas book telling the story of Jesus' birth in many Aboriginal languages has ballooned into a giant Christmas snowball.

So says Melody Kube, publicist for the Australian Society for Indigenous Languages (AuSIL), in Darwin, who had the idea of using the translations of the past to build the future work of AuSIL.

Her first thought was to republish some of the archived Bible translations done over the years in a new and interesting way that would hopefully build new connections and workers for the future.

Each translation of Luke 2:6-12 – the birth of Jesus – would have its own page, with the first edition of a little coffee table book hopefully available by Christmas of this year.

“That was the initial thought. Let's do a Christmas book. They're easy to sell. They're popular and they'll communicate what's been done,” says Melody.

But the project began to grow new layers when Stuart Cameron, who has worked for AuSIL and Bible Society in Queensland, suggested adding a few languages that have very little or no Scripture.

“He also suggested perhaps we could even find people who could forensically piece together something from sleeping languages. I don't like to say extinct. We call them sleeping languages, the ones that are not currently being passed on to the next generation,” says Melody.

“That standpoint is quite powerful – if we can stand behind the communities who are trying to regain some of what was lost, then I think that's the right place to stand.”

That, of course, meant finding first-time translators in many cases and translators into languages that haven't had Scripture before.

Realising those first-time translators would need help, Melody created a workbook that sets out in a highly visual way the six steps to translating a Bible passage.

On the understanding that Indigenous communities prefer to work in groups, even if their projects are only related, AuSIL held a five-day translation workshop in May with support from Bible Society Australia. The workshop was attended by 11 full-time participants representing seven languages from different parts of the Northern Territory and Queensland.

Five of the languages represented completed the entire six-step process during the workshop and one more a few days later. This included a final check by a consultant to make sure it was not just a translation of the English, but a translation of the original Greek, to avoid creating a copy of a copy, and potentially losing accuracy,

Some of the translators had worked for many years on Kriol translations and were keen to bring their gifts to the smaller Aboriginal languages.

While there was tension around whether supporting these languages meant rejecting Kriol, Melody insists: “We don’t want that at all.” She says Kriol is a legitimate heart language, even though it’s relatively new.

She was surprised by how multilingual the participants were, being able to aid each other in “back translations” in which the Aboriginal words of the story are translated back into English.

The main difficulty was handling lack of literacy in the heart language. One translator, a Gurindji speaker, who was literate in English and fluent in Gurindji, struggled with how to write each word because her language had a published dictionary so she felt there was a right way to spell those words.

“Some of the other participants, if their languages have never been studied and never had a dictionary or grammar produced, then they have this freedom to just write the word however it feels best to them.

“But she had this conviction that there’s a right way and a wrong way because there’s a published book, so she really struggled.”



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*Bishop Greg Anderson with translator Miliwanga*

Fortunately, an expert came along who had written a few literacy readers in the Gurindji language while working as a school teacher in Kalkarindji in the 80s.

“She came and she was able to help get it down on paper. Thank goodness. But we don’t have those experts for all of the languages, you know, and I don’t have a good handle on how to make that step easier for translators whose literacy in their own language is still developing.”

With the book growing in scale – from 32 languages before the workshop to more than 40 now – the prospect has arisen that the project may not reach fruition by this Christmas but may need to be held over to next Christmas.

“I want to go carefully and have it produced so that it doesn’t give the impression that however many translations we manage to include are somehow an exclusive list. And that’s going to be difficult to manage.”

Melody sees two main purposes for the book – to encourage the use of languages in churches, and potentially in schools, to show communities that their language is valued.

“And the second purpose of the book is so that it can be distributed all over Australia and increase our knowledge and awareness of the need for Bible translation and how important it is.”

*Melody emphasises that the joint AuSIL/Bible Society project is still looking for Aboriginal languages from other parts of the country as well and encourages people who would like to receive a workbook to get in contact with her at the AuSIL Darwin office on 08 8911 1326*



# DECLARING THE GLORY OF GOD IN THE TOP END

SUSANNA BALDWIN

Golden shafts of sunlight stream through the doorway of the corrugated metal shed, illuminating long tables spread with books, posters and CDs. Two primary-aged children stand mesmerised as excerpts of the Jesus Film, dubbed into Kriol, play out on a computer screen nearby.

Their little friends are more taken with the display of jewellery and trinkets at the pop-up store on the opposite wall. Come the end of the weekend, more children than not seem to be gleefully sporting a shiny gold chain around their necks. Their energy and joy are a welcome tonic as my nights of tent-sleeping add up and fatigue starts to take a toll.

*Multilingualism  
is little short  
of a necessity  
in today's  
highly blended  
Aboriginal  
communities.*

But really, the early morning sunrises over the expansive fields of Katherine Showground are just as restorative. I'm starting to think there are few places the heavens declare the glory of God so magnificently as in the Top End of Australia.

The annual Katherine Christian Convention draws together believers from across the Northern

Territory for a weekend of Bible teaching, prayer and fellowship. They have come by charter plane and coach and in each other's cars: men and women, young and old. Gunbalanya, Tennant Creek, Beswick, Ngukurr, Jabiru: each community bringing its unique personality, history and traditions, yet all united in their love for the Lord, their hunger for his word, their delight at gathering with spiritual brothers and sisters from near and far.

I'm here as an extension of my work with the Australian Society for Indigenous Languages (AuSIL), which routinely hosts a bookstall at the convention. As the morning warms up, adults start to drift in and out of the shed, poring over our carefully arranged Bibles, dictionaries and Scripture resources. We hover ready to help without rushing them.

I'm a newbie in the world of Aboriginal culture and ministry, having arrived in Darwin from Sydney less than four weeks earlier. Still, my early training quickly alerted me to some important distinctives of communication and greeting here. Don't rush to ask somebody's name: that information is personal and powerful, and may not be given till a relationship of trust is established.

"Where are you from?" is more neutral and safer as an opening gambit. "And what languages do you speak?" I learnt to stop being surprised when the answer ran to four or five. Multilingualism is little short of a necessity in today's highly blended Aboriginal communities.

A bell sounds in the distance, counting us down to the start of the 3pm teaching program in the main shed. But we are on Territory time here. The session will get going when people are ready. Bodies fill seats at an unhurried pace. Several groups move their chairs outside, preferring to watch from the wings with some semblance of a breeze around them.

Our speaker is Jono Wright, a seasoned pastor and teacher of the Aboriginal church, now living in Victoria. There is only one glitch, but it's a big one: Jono developed cold symptoms on his flight up from Melbourne, and must now self-isolate while he awaits a COVID test result. The superhuman tech crew get to work arranging a Zoom link and large projector screens so Jono can deliver his talks from his motel room. The theme: 'Three Kings under One God'.

Jono's preaching voice is slow, compassionate, emotionally weighted. He speaks of the shameful failings of King Saul, the good intentions but tragic foibles of King David, and finally the perfection of King Jesus. Truly we have a gospel worth celebrating.

With the formal teaching sessions ended, worship continues well into the night as communities take turns to sing and dance on the floodlit outdoor stage. An extra treat in my weekend is running across several of my fellow Moore College alumni who have found their paths weaving to the Northern Territory over the past few years: the Anglican minister, the roaming evangelist, the family bedding into a remote Aboriginal community to help facilitate the use of the newly translated Scriptures.

People say there is something about the Top End that gets under your skin. Certainly, those of us with a heart for ministry see here a plentiful harvest and a dearth of workers. We long and pray for more preachers, pastors and translators to serve in this raw, beautiful and spiritually parched corner of Australia. Katherine Christian Convention serves as a powerful reminder of the work King Jesus is doing to draw people from all tribes, nations and languages under his rule, and gives a foretaste of the time when we will celebrate the completion of that work around his throne in eternity. To God be the glory!



*Nungalingya College present an item*



*Susanna Baldwin, left, and Kathy Dadd*



*Mandy Manggurra leads a flag dance*

# A FAIR GO

BEVERLEY BAKER

Have we come to the end of a fair go?  
Is it only for some, and not all whom we know?  
For those who have arrived on our fair shores  
Fleeing persecution, hunger, rape and wars  
They are not welcome: they weren't invited by us  
But neither were our ancestors who invaded the lands of the Indigenous.

Because desperate people risked their all in leaky boats  
While some lost their lives – their boats didn't float –  
Refugees now languish in internment camps for years  
While politicians seek votes and play on our fears  
Branding asylum-seekers queue jumpers – illegal arrivals,  
Instead of new citizens and enabling their survival.

We Aussies say we respect human rights and the United Nations  
But it seems only as long as it suits our priorities and expectations.  
See Australia – a signatory that allows refugees to seek asylum  
But only some, say politicians, can have this opportunity and freedom.  
Instead, many are not welcome, they are sent to Nauru to deteriorate  
For long, empty years while their youth, health and vigour dissipate.

COVID-19 lockdowns affected many Aussie citizens  
There were restrictions in place, lack of freedoms.  
Imagine being incarcerated for eight years and more  
No crime committed, no infection and NO JUST LAW!  
So please consider this simple plea  
And lobby to release all refugees.

We look at other countries and are happy they are not our lot  
With guns rife in USA, there is a high risk of being shot.  
A dictator rules in North Korea, military in Myanmar,  
Wars rage in parts of the Middle East, Africa; abject poverty in India.  
Communist oppressors in Russia, China; corruption in South America is endemic  
While all the world – except us few – experience a COVID epidemic.

It is the luck of the draw as to where we are born  
But we share a common humanity; in suffering all mourn.  
Whether in plenty or poverty, educated or not,  
We all have to eat and breathe; that is our shared lot  
Why differentiate, then, whether here by plane or boat?  
Is fear our motivator, or the political vote?

What has happened to our fair go – has it suffered death?  
Or been perverted and somehow become only an alternative truth?  
Does simple decency, love of neighbour, compassion not apply to people new?  
Has compassion, a concern for those less fortunate and charity disappeared too?  
Has it been swallowed up in shallow self-centredness, and hoping that by  
Ignoring problems and our fellow humans, they will magically away fly?

Meanwhile refugees languish in camps worldwide  
Some have successfully reached our shores – only to be deprived  
Of freedom – and after years remain incarcerated, some here in Darwin.  
They had hoped for medical attention, humane treatment, not a prison  
A chance to contribute to society – not to be brought low –  
To become Aussies who believe that they and everyone deserve a fair go.



*Beverley Baker laments the plight of a group of asylum-seekers who are still incarcerated adjacent to Darwin Airport a year after being brought there under the government's Medevac legislation. This group includes two families who have spent eight years in detention with no prospect of release into the community under current government policies.*

Bev is an Anglican representative on the NT Council of Churches.

The long and faithful contribution of Dr Michael Nixon to remote and rural medicine has been recognised in the Queen's Birthday Honours List for 2021, with a Medal of the Order of Australia (OAM).

A former Dean of Christ Church Cathedral in Darwin, Dr Mike said the great reward of his work was in seeing folk develop further and for the better in their physical and spiritual and mental health.

He cited in particular his ministry "to our Indigenous people – first as the Rector of the parish of Bourke with the people of the Darling River – and latterly as a Doctor here in the NT with our remote indigenous brothers and sisters."

Dr Mike said working as senior medical officer and surgeon in Papua New Guinea, 1985-1991, had given him the opportunity to experience some amazing hands-on medicine.

Though he was not a surgeon, he had to perform "heroic" surgeries such as craniotomies, amputations, multiple laparotomy and appendectomies, because there were no surgeons available and it was "do or die" because there was no access to air medical services.

Dr Mike recalled performing hundreds of Caesarean sections on small stature women who were unable to deliver through the birth canal because they had gestated large babies as a result of modern, carbohydrate rich and fattening diets.

Sometimes without access to the correct surgical instruments, he recalled having to use his pen knife to perform a tracheostomy on an unconscious patient with tetanus.

Also mentioned in his award citation were his work as previous Chair of the Menzies School of Health Ethics Research Committee and as a member of the National Royal Australian College of General Practitioners Ethics Research Committee was recognised, and his role as Senior Medical Officer, Manus Island Refugee Centre, 2014.

After working at Top End Health Service from 2005-2020, Dr Mike continues to work in his Private Practice in Casuarina with Dr Lionel Crompton.

"Good health is achieved by being loved and by loving, by belonging to a community of care and support, and by working – with the main aim of helping others," he says.

He recommends looking after oneself with a good diet, regular exercise and some form of spiritual support.

"For me the latter involves the amazing gift of prayer – not of 'I want this or that', but of constantly saying 'thank you' – for all the people, and things that support me in life.

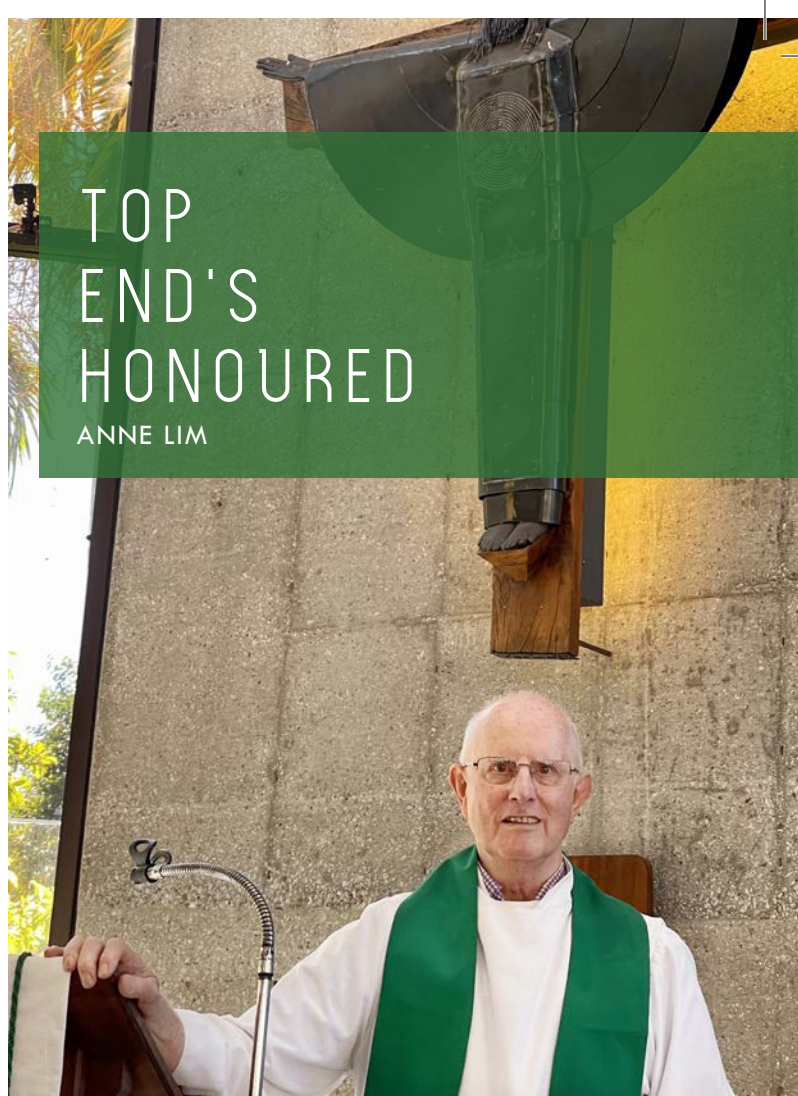
"I have indeed been blessed and am still being blessed by being able to walk with and share people's lives in their journey from birth to the end."

Also awarded an OAM is well-loved primary school educator, music teacher and community volunteer Lyla Wills of Batchelor, Darwin's rural south. A long-time member and current ministry assistant at the Anglican Church of St Francis at Batchelor, Lyla was recognised for her service to primary education, and to the community.

As well as working as vice-principal and music teacher at various Darwin primary schools, Lyla made her mark as

## TOP END'S HONOURED

ANNE LIM



Principal, Oenpelli Preschool, Primary and Post Primary School (now Gunbalanya School) from 1978-1981. Still active, she is the Batchelor representative for Christian Women Communication International and volunteer at the Coomalie Visitor Information Centre in Batchelor, as well as serving on the committee member of the Darwin Eisteddfod and a life member of Darwin Chorale

Dr Albert Tonga, a member of Christ Church Cathedral, has also been awarded an OAM for his eminent service to medicine through a dizzying range of roles in the NT, where he has been Practice Principal at Darwin City Medical Centre since 2008. His work has taken him to Tennant Creek and Alice Springs as well as Darwin. Among his many positions, he has been an Examiner for the Royal College of General Practitioners, 2011-2014, Visiting Medical Officer at many Aged Care facilities, been a CASA Designated Aviation Medical Examiner, Tennant Creek, 1993-2005, and was Secondment Medical Officer for the Royal Flying Doctor Service, 1985-1993.

Last but far from least, Dr Phillip Aspinall, Anglican Archbishop of Brisbane and Metropolitan (including NT), was made a Companion of the Order of Australia – one of only five recipients of this top rank – for eminent service to the Anglican Church of Australia, to the development of ecumenical relationships and professional standards, and through commitment to social justice and welfare. Formerly Primate of Australia, 2005-2014, the Archbishop's list of notable positions is extensive. Born in Hobart, he was consecrated a bishop in Adelaide in 1999, where he served until being ordained as Archbishop of Brisbane in 2003.

## UPCOMING EVENTS AROUND THE DIOCESE

**September 13-16**

Aboriginal Anglican Church Leaders Conference

**September 16-18**

Synod (NT)

**October 27**

Continuing Education Day with Tim Dyer

**October 28**

Church Leaders Day with Tim Dyer

**Safe Ministry Leader's Implementation Week:**

*With Peter Barnett, Diocesan Director of Professional Standards (2021 TBC)*

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May we shout for joy over your victory  
and lift up our banners in the name of our God.  
May the Lord grant all your requests.

*Psalm 20:5 NIV*