

TOP CENTRE

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THE ANGLICAN DIOCESE OF THE NORTHERN TERRITORY



Diocesan Synod
at Riyala





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SYNOD.

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

Jeremy Greaves becomes our Archbishop

Anne Lim

With the election of Bishop Jeremy Greaves as the tenth Archbishop of Brisbane, Darwin can reflect on how many of the previous deans of our Anglican Cathedral have gone on to serve as diocesan bishops.

Jeremy, who served as Dean of Christ Church Cathedral in Darwin from 2007 to 2013, will be installed as Archbishop of Brisbane and the Metropolitan for the Province of Queensland, at 10.30am on December 16 at St John's Cathedral in Brisbane. Bishop Greg Anderson will attend the installation service as our Diocese is in that Province.



Previous incumbents in Darwin who went on to be diocesan bishops include Keith Joseph, Clyde Wood, Gerald (Ged) Muston, Hamish Jamieson and Ken Mason.

Bishop Jeremy is currently Bishop for the Northern Region based in Buderim. He will move with his wife, Josie, and two of their adult children to Brisbane, along with border collie Paddy, by the end of the year. As Archbishop of Brisbane, he succeeds Phillip Aspinall.

Matt and Kate say farewell with mixed emotions

Eight months after their devastating car accident, Matt and Kate Vinicombe announced that they have resigned from the Church Missionary Society, finishing up at the end of August. This brings to a formal end their time on Groote Eylandt.

Kate suffered significant upper spinal cord damage in the high-speed accident that happened while the family was on home assignment. She lost most of the use of her limbs; however, there is hope that she may regain some use of her arms.

But not being able to return to Groote has been a significant grief for the couple.

"It was with great sadness that we wrote that email because it means an end to our formal time as part of the CMS and our time on Groote. With this we want to specifically take the time to thank those who have financially supported us during our time on Groote over the past four-and-a-half years. We could not have done this without you," they wrote to their supporters.

In September, Kate finally made it out of hospital care to live with the family again – Bethany, 8, Chloe, 6 and Amos, 1. They have moved into a house that was bought for them and fitted with all the necessary modifications to allow Kate to function in a wheelchair operated by her chin.

"It was the second week of school holidays so there was opportunity to do some things as a family in the midst of adjusting to this new life. It's gone really well so far and we're all really glad she's back," writes Matt.

The Lord is near the broken-hearted;

He saved those crushed in spirit. Psalm 34:18





Bishop Greg writes...

I was speaking with somebody today about why we go to church. What is church for? There will be many possible answers to that question. A common one is to worship God – I myself would add to that answer to worship God *together* because individually our whole lives are to be given to God in worship all the time, as Paul writes in Romans 12:1-2. Our bodies are living sacrifices to God – this is our ‘spiritual’ worship. But the people of God have followed the pattern of coming together to worship God corporately since the people of God became a gatherable group. We read about this in the Bible from Exodus onwards. Certainly by the time of Jesus, the Jewish people met weekly in synagogues, alongside the pattern of temple worship through sacrifices and festivals, and that practice continues in the New Testament, as well as being written about in the earliest post-Bible documents. The old Morning Prayer and Evening Prayer services remind the congregation of the importance of confessing our sins to God as we meet together, but also add further reasons for our gathering – to thank God for the many good things we receive, to offer God praise, to hear God’s word and to ask for what our bodies and souls need. The psalms often speak of the importance of interacting with God in the company of others: Psalm 22:22b “in the congregation I will praise you”; Psalm 35:18 “I will give you thanks in the great assembly”; Psalm 116:18-19 “I will fulfil my vows to Yahweh in the presence of all his people”. We have all heard people say that they don’t need to go to church to worship God – they can be out in nature, or home alone – and that is true because our whole life is worship. But not being with others is out of step with the pattern of God’s people over the ages.

My conversation partner today pointed to the significance in the Bible of the people of God gathering to hear God speak. I think of the people of Israel at Mount Sinai as God spoke to them in Exodus 20. Their response was great fear (20:18-23) – it was a powerful experience. Hebrews 12:18-25 looks back to this experience and implies that our own gathering to hear God speak is even grander and greater than Sinai. God has something to say to us and wants us to listen. Hebrews 3 recalls Psalm 95: “Today if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts”.

Although God’s voice is frighteningly powerful (as well as full of comfort), we want to hear what God is saying, don’t we? God’s voice gives us direction, but also tells us God’s plans for us and the world. God’s word reveals God’s character. And what God has to say shapes our thinking and our feeling so that we are seeing and acting according to God’s perspective.

That shaping is designed not just to be for us as individuals, but for us as gathered communities, seeking to fulfill God’s purposes for us in our networks and neighbourhoods.

Our Anglican services are designed to enable us to hear God speak – as the Scriptures are read and preached about, as our liturgies and hymns pick up the Bible’s language and message, and in the ‘visible’ promises of the sacraments.

What is church for? Among other things, but very importantly, to hear God speak. Jesus quoted Deuteronomy 8:3 when Satan tempted him: “we don’t only live on bread, but on every word that comes from God’s mouth”. May we listen carefully, and not only be hearers but doers of that word.

Nungalinya College turns 50



Greg Anderson

Nungalinya College's allocated number as a training and education provider in the Northern Territory tells its own story: RTO 01. It is a remarkable story, unfolding over the last half-century. On the balmy Dry season afternoon and evening of August 19th, several hundred people gathered to celebrate the milestone of Nungalinya's 50th anniversary.

The college began as the Anglican and Methodist missionaries of the Top End saw the need and importance of local Aboriginal leaders being raised up for their communities and churches – communities that had in most cases begun as mission stations in the preceding decades. A series of combined training events in the late 60s and early 70s in Darwin, spearheaded by long-term missionaries Jack Goodluck and Barry Butler gave the impetus to find a permanent place for leaders to be trained in community development and Christian ministry. An allotment of several hectares was acquired on the growing edge of Darwin's spreading suburbia, now the heart of the residential northern suburbs at Casuarina. The name Nungalinya was gifted by the Larrakia, traditional owners of Darwin's land and waterways. It refers to a significant Dreaming ancestor, present in the land/seascape as a rocky shelf off Casuarina beach, clearly visible at low tide. Larrakia could see the link between Nungalinya rock and Yahweh God as the 'rock of our salvation'. The College remains grateful for this connection with Larrakia, particularly because the first Aboriginal principal of the College, from 1995, was a Larrakia man, the late Rev Wali Fejo. At the anniversary celebration, his daughter Lynette provided the Welcome to Country.

In 50 years, Nungalinya College has seen enormous growth as well as changes in its offerings. The celebration day provided tours of the grounds – including traditional food trees that had been planted as the College was rebuilt after being physically wiped out by Cyclone Tracy in its second year, but also much more recent developments: a Bible garden with plants from the Middle East, a symbolic Garden of Eden and a Way of the Cross passing by Gabbatha and Golgotha and culminating in an empty tomb.





But of course the anniversary was more focused on people. All the students and staff who had participated in the College were listed, and a film documentary produced by Warwick Vincent looking back and forward was launched. Many former teachers came back, many from interstate, to see how Nungalinya has continued to develop. After a shared meal, a typical fellowship/worship meeting, characteristic of Arnhem Land church life since the Elcho Island revival of 1979 took place. Many groups shared danced items to recorded songs, kicking up the sand with traditional foot movements, and waving colourful flags and performing actions that at the same time connect with centuries of ceremony and with contemporary Christian worship. What was so apparent was that this is a genuinely Indigenous college, which Aboriginal people (and the occasional Torres Strait Islander) from across Australia, and especially from the Northern Territory, love being part of and are thankful for. They are proud of sharing their language and cultural identity with one another, across the dozens of language groups that people are from. The College is also proud of this multicultural context – each day's chapel service uses multiple Aboriginal languages, in the songs, prayers and Bible readings, as did the anniversary celebration.

The courses have morphed over the five decades of Nungalinya's history so far. From the original Bible and community development courses, the late 80s and early 90s added bicultural life skills and textile art courses to bridge the distance between traditional ways of being and the modern world, and to provide opportunities for employment and income generation. In the last twenty years, with increasingly strict requirements for accreditation, courses in literacy and numeracy, media production, music, translation, chaplaincy and family wellbeing have attracted many students. Courses have been structured so that many students are able to continue to come to the College over a period of many years, benefiting greatly from the nurturing and stimulating Christian environment as they progress through courses from pre-Certificate level to Certificate IV and beyond in the Australian Qualifications Framework. In the early decades of Nungalinya, many students came full-time and lived in cottages on the College campus. Now all students come for short-term residential blocks between two and four weeks, with several hundred students coming to one or another of the courses in any given year.

With additional funding from philanthropic donors, the College is now able to expand the number of Aboriginal assistant and trainee teachers in all of the classrooms and courses. This will not only build Nungalinya's capacity, but will add a great gift of training and on-the-job experience for these people as they return to their churches and communities.

Congratulations to current Principal, Dr Ben van Gelderen, to staff and students, for providing such a great anniversary celebration, not just showcasing Nungalinya's 50 years of achievement but pointing forward to the future that the College will continue to develop into.



Heat, debate and ... a joey



Anne Lim

You know you're at the Northern Territory Anglican Synod when you're in an open-air meeting even though it's 39 degrees and a speaker as great as Lois Nadjamerrek (Priest-in-Charge of Gunbalanya) gets upstaged by ... a joey.

So remarked Suzie Ray, Rector of St James, Sanderson, who acted as a secretary for the three-day synod at Riyala in September.

Yes, our very serious deliberations were derailed by the increasingly bold appearances of a pet wallaby called Teddy. After hopping through the crowd at speed, he became increasingly curious and started nibbling people's toes and posing for photographs. He even enjoyed being fondled and cuddled, to the great delight of Zeke, the son of CMS missionaries Josh and Stephanie Mackenzie from Numbulwar, and Laura Wolfenden, children's minister at St Peter's Nightcliff.

The diocese's brand-new registrar, Martha Stewart, was thrown into the deep end after just two weeks in the job, providing impeccable backup to president Greg Anderson's leading of the 38th diocesan synod. For the first time, the meeting was held from Thursday evening to Saturday afternoon to allow participants to return to their churches for Sunday services.

Over the two days, we heard reports from each of the 15 parishes in the diocese, ranging from the thriving ministry of St Peter's Nightcliff to the struggles of fragile remote parishes such as Umbakumba and Ang urugu. It was wonderfully encouraging to see how faithful and resilient the church leaders were in those remote communities but it was poignant how fervently they sought for support in prayer.

The business of synod included elections to the Diocesan Synod. The DC is a council of advice to the bishop and the executive committee of the synod, and meets several times a year. Clergy elected to the DC were Rob Llewellyn and Suzie Ray, who join Glenys Hannah from Katherine, who remains for the next term. Kristen Chisholm from Alice Springs and Mick Tong from St Peter's Nightcliff join

“The pet joey enjoyed being fondled and cuddled.”



Gnano Kandiah as its lay members. The administrator was removed from the council and the Registrar was made a non-voting member.

Agreement reached on emotionally charged topic



Anne Lim

The political heart of the synod focused on several motions that addressed the current debate in the Anglican communion about what to do about same-sex unions.

There were three motions, adopted from our National Anglican General Synod, which were moved by Christ Church Cathedral's Dean Rob Llewellyn. Two affirmed the definition of chastity and singleness respectively, as agreed by General Synod.

These united the NT diocese with the Australian Anglican Church, but put us at odds with certain elements of the worldwide Anglican communion, who have affirmed to some degree same-sex unions.

Another motion also moved by Dean Rob lamented the need for the formation of the new Diocese of the Southern Cross which has split from the Anglican Church of Australia over this issue, prayed for all faithful Anglicans and affirmed our call as Anglican Christians to be faithful to the Bible and its expression in the doctrines and teachings of our Australian Anglican formularies.

The three motions were passed without dissent.

There followed a motion that caused the most lively and prolonged debate of the entire Synod. Moved by Michael Tong, a leading lay member of St Peter's Nightcliff, it called on our diocese to cease paying funds to the General Synod Special Assessment and redirect those funds to "organisations in keeping with our mission" such as Nungalinga College, the Territory's training college for Indigenous church leaders.

The rationale was that part of this optional payment of \$5000 a year is given for the work of the Anglican Consultative Council (ACC). The ACC is an international Anglican body and one of the Anglican Communion's "instruments of communion (unity)". It has called on Anglican churches throughout the world to "walk together to the highest degree possible and learn from an ecumenical conversation, how to accommodate differentiation personally and respectfully." This was interpreted to mean that those who believe same-sex marriage is wrong should walk alongside those who believe it is not.

"There followed a motion that caused lively and prolonged debate."



Read on to find out what happened ...

Debate began during Friday evening and continued through most of Saturday morning, with many shades of opinion expressed. Some supported the motion as “putting our money where our mouth is” while others said they were not convinced the time had come to distance ourselves from a body that had not explicitly endorsed same-sex marriage.

On Saturday morning, an amendment was moved that requested General Synod not to give our portion of the special assessment to the ACC and to give an equivalent amount of money to Nungalinga College.

Unity was not forthcoming, however, on this motion, especially given the extra \$5000 that it would take from the budget. And the amendment was defeated on the voices.

Some people felt the debate should be postponed or discussed in small groups so that everyone could be on the same page about it.

Eventually, a second amendment aimed at simplifying the proposal was put which used the language of charity law to impose an obligation rather than making a request.

This amendment stated that the payment to the General Synod Special Assessment was given “on the basis that it is to be applied for the general purposes of the General Synod but not for any purpose in support of the Anglican Consultative Council.”

After gentle and kind discussion, even with disagreement, the meeting then passed the amendment 33-14 by following the example of parliament where the Yeses moved to one side of the room and Nos to the other side of the room.

The upshot was that we will keep paying our Special Assessment to General Synod, but telling them that it's for certain purposes, not for the ACC.

Clockwise from top left: Kristen Slack, Mick Tong, Suzie Ray, Kristan Chisholm (praying for the Gunbalanya church mob) and Glenys Hannah.

“Discussion
was gentle and
kind, even with
disagreement.”



“The best part is those sheep bobbing in the water.”

Local *LEGO* enthusiasts win big

Anne Lim

Among the super excited winners of the 2023 Zenos Media Big Family Build was Rev Suzie Ray, who with her daughter Lydia won the “hat-trick” prize for their LEGO model of the Old Testament story of Jonah.

Suzie, who is the Rector of Darwin’s St James’, Sanderson, is a longtime LEGO enthusiast who ran a Bible LEGO competition at her previous church and hopes to set up an online LEGO competition for the churches in the Northern Territory Anglican Diocese.

Zenos Media’s three judges Caleb, Andrew and Josh (former contestants on the TV show LEGO Masters) said they were blown away by the quality of this year’s builds in the competition, which had the theme of “journey”.

Joshua and Susan won the top prize for their build, “Crossing the Red Sea”, which the judges said set itself apart. They were particularly impressed with the dynamic movement created in the waves, layered in different colours and shapes and directions.

The hat-trick prize is given to people who have entered the Big Family Build at least three times, and Lydia and Suzie have entered the Big Family Build every year since it began in 2019, creating scenes such as Jesus’ baptism and ‘Wisdom as the fountain of life’.

“We researched Assyrian and Phoenician ships to give our Jonah 1 scene some historical accuracy,” Suzie says. “The sailors have thrown all the cargo overboard, and as Jonah is flying through the air towards the water, the big fish is lurking waiting to swallow him up. It is titled “Assyrian sailors see the power of Yahweh.””

The judges loved the historical accuracy of their build this year, which they achieved by researching Assyrian and Phoenician sailing ships. The judges also praised the different colours of blue for the water and the creative techniques used to create the sails. “But the best part, though, is those sheep bobbing in the water,” said the judges.

“It gives a way of going deeper into the text.”

“We read the passage of Jonah 1 where they threw all the cargo into the sea and that’s how we had the idea of the drowning sheep,” Suzie explains.

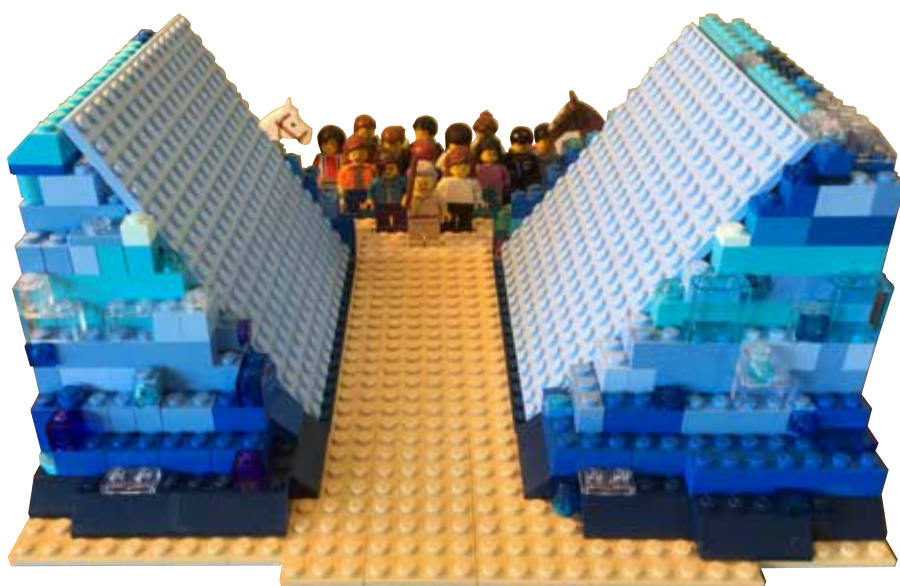
She believes building a LEGO model helps children reflect more deeply on Bible stories.

“It gives a way of going deeper into a text, thinking about meaning – what emotion am I going to bring out? What details am I going to bring out? What would it be like to be there? What would people have been thinking and feeling? So it’s in some ways a great Bible study tool to actually build a model and a scene.”

Suzie also loves the community-building aspect of sharing and seeing other people’s builds to see what details they brought out.

People from St James’, Sanderson saw the build when Suzie preached a series on Jonah in September.

“We brought it into church to help everyone see that the Phoenician ships had eyes, like they were almost a living thing. It gives an idea that they were worshipping their gods even in the way they built this ship. So we’re just recognising that these sailors that Jonah was on the boat with didn’t know Yahweh until Yahweh stilled the storm. A LEGO model brings that to life in a powerful way, and in a way that I hope will be helpful to my church.”





Grateful for Church with a capital C

Bethany Zwag

What an experience! Ten days in the Northern Territory – exploring national parks and God’s call on our lives. The 15 of us who came up with CMS Victoria last July found it an absolute privilege to witness life and ministry in the Top End.

Our first few days were spent sightseeing. Visiting Litchfield National Park, Mindil Beach, and the Darwin Waterfront was a lot of fun, and formed a strong bond of trust and camaraderie among our team. Many of us were young adults who had never visited the Territory before, but we all wanted to learn more about our place in long-term cross-cultural gospel work. This trip – named Go!Explore – aimed to provide us all with a small taste of life in a different culture.

Spending time at Christ Church Cathedral in Darwin was a highlight. Bishop Greg Anderson, Simon Koefoed, and Naomi Ireland shared their heart and vision for the NT Christian community. We were deeply encouraged to hear about the increase of clergy committed to raising their families in the Territory.

This was the reason we were invited. The growing number of young people in clergy families led the NT Diocese to ask CMS Victoria for a team that could run a children and youth program for Clericon (the diocese’s church worker conference). Ministers and their partners could enjoy fellowship, solid biblical teaching, and strategic planning sessions while knowing their kids were being cared for. Meanwhile, we from Victoria were given the chance to grow in our abilities and discern where God might use us in the future.



Although we were all excited about the opportunity, we had no idea what to expect. How would we cope with an unknown number of children we had never met, for several long and hot days on end? Additionally, we were unsure of how they might respond to our program. Not every young person whose parents work for the church is interested in Jesus themselves. Some actively oppose Christ. What would we find?

It was a delightful surprise for our whole team to discover the depth of faith in these ministry kids. Firstly, this reflected the young people themselves. They had a clear desire to know God personally – not just to walk in the footsteps of others. From an outsider’s perspective, it seemed that they have thrived amid challenges and responsibilities that others would flee from. Please pray that children and youth across the NT Diocese will continue to walk along the narrow road that leads to life (Matt 7:13-14). In a world that calls for distraction and compromise, we must ask God to help them

hold firm to the truth that they have been taught (2 Thess 2:15) with endurance and strength.

However, the faith of these children is also an enormous credit to their parents. I have seen many elevate vocational ministry over family ministry, to great detriment. Whether we have families or not, it is easy for us all to do 'good things' in the wrong order or from the wrong heart. Thus I was profoundly encouraged to witness church leaders who had purposefully invested in the discipleship of their children. The fruit of this decision was evident and overflowed into inter-generational family ministry.

Another highlight for our team was hearing from CMS missionaries. It was fantastic to learn from their vast experiences and contexts about the joys and challenges of serving God in the Top End. Meeting them in person and understanding a new layer of what their lives look like helped us put ourselves in their shoes. The idea of cross-cultural ministry – in Australia or beyond – becomes more real when interacting with those for whom it is their 'normal'.

Given the often intense and difficult context, I was impressed by the relational depth of community among the NT clergy. I am aware that my visit was only brief and that no church is without its troubles. Yet the faithfulness of these leaders, their urge to proclaim the gospel, and the strength of the church culture were striking. Our team felt welcomed into this unity despite not being 'Territorians' and with some (such as myself) not coming from an Anglican background.

I left this trip with immense gratitude for the 'Church with a capital C'. I am grateful for my home community, Red Church, who supported me with prayer and finances. I am grateful for our team, who came from a variety of traditions (Anglican, Baptist, Church of Christ, and Presbyterian), but shared one goal. I am deeply grateful to the NT Diocese, for inviting us, their faithfulness to Jesus, and their commitment to serving people here. This picture of partnership is something like a foretaste of heaven.

As an introvert, one of the greatest challenges I found was the absence of solitude to recharge, being constantly surrounded by people. Nonetheless, I sensed God sustaining me through each day. I was surprised at how much joy and energy I gained from interactions with others in this environment. It felt like God was gently encouraging me that I might be more suited to pastoral ministry than I had previously anticipated. Thank you for providing a formative environment for a young 20-year-old like myself to learn and grow.

Others on the team were ready to race home... so that they could finish studying and return to the Top End as soon as possible. What an encouragement it is to watch people my age seriously considering working for God in the NT!

Although we came to serve at Clericon, those present did a great service to us. This experience has been deeply formative for me and others. The opportunity you provided us with, to serve God in a new context, will surely bear fruit in future. I hope Go!Explore 2023 is the first of many more



Middle photo: Emily Jerram, Sophie Altmann, Sam Clarke, Dani Carr; Bottom picture: Hannah Rouse, Solomon Perecharla, Greg Lampard, Shravya Nagaraja.

partnerships to come.

Please pray for those who went on this trip. More than that, please pray for the next generation around Australia – from Minyerri to Melbourne – that many would know God deeply and serve him with all their hearts.



Roll up for the best week ever



Anne Lim

"Best week ever!" enthused a group of Year 2 kids when asked how they had enjoyed Mega Kids Club held at St Peter's Nightcliff during the recent school holidays.

About 100 primary school children lapped up the fun, fellowship – and Bible knowledge – at the church event, which this year had a circus theme.

After slapstick circus skits which played for laughs on the theme of "I told you so", the kids spent time learning about who Jesus really was, what he said he came to do, and how he completed his work of forgiveness by dying on the cross and coming back to life.

The whole week the children learned that Jesus can forgive your sin and offer life forever after you die. And while you're waiting for Jesus to come back, you can move forward to that life, tell other people about Jesus, so they get that forever life, too.

On the final morning, after watching a video of the resurrected Jesus showing himself to his disciples, Laura Wolfenden, children's minister at St Peter's Nightcliff, asked the children what Jesus did to prove that he had come back to life as a real human being, not a ghost.

The kids got the message spot on – he let his friends touch him so they could feel he was a real person and see the nail marks in his hands, which also proved it was Jesus.

"What was the other thing he did to prove that he was a human? He ate food, that's right. So, after he'd eaten food, Jesus explained to them what was going on because they were really confused," Laura explained.

"And Jesus said, 'This is what I told you.' Jesus was saying that all of the Old Testament scriptures had been pointing to the fact that Jesus would die and come back to life. Jesus was saying that it wasn't a shock to God when he died. In fact, it was part of God's plan all along. Jesus had to die to pay for sin.

"Now that Jesus is alive, what does he say needs to happen? He says, repentance for the forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations beginning at Jerusalem. So Jesus is saying, forgiveness of sins is now possible and you need to tell everyone. So Jesus' friends needed to tell everybody, but also that's what we've been doing at Mega."

It was so heartening to see how well these children were being taught and that most of them had perfect answers to Laura's questions.

"Who knows what repent means, Alex? Perfect answer. Turn away from your sin when you say sorry for your sin. You are turning away from it and you are saying sin is not going to be the boss of you anymore – Jesus is going to be the boss."

Laura assured the children that even when Jesus is your boss, sometimes you'll still sin. But when that happens, "you can be really sure that Jesus has paid for that sin already. All of your future sin has been paid for on the cross. And so you can ask God for help, and you can say sorry, and you can know that sin is forgiven."

The rest of the morning was taken up with group discussions by year level, activities and craft followed by lunch.

FILM REVIEWS

Three movies about power

The New Boy

From examining Australia's colonial past, and the place religious institutions have had in shaping ideas, fears and misunderstandings, comes a very personal film from Director, Writer and Cinematographer Warwick Thornton.

In *The New Boy*, Thornton draws from his own story of being taken from his family and traditional lands at Alice Springs and put into a Catholic boarding school in New Norcia, 130km north of Perth, far from all he knew and loved. The amazing cinematography graphically demonstrates the dust and distance of Australia.

This film opens with shocking symbolism and historical reality, as the New Boy is hunted down and captured by a colonial figure on a horse. This nameless (until the final scenes of the film) child is then handed over to "authorities" to be taken to an isolated, rural religious boarding facility, where all is not as it seems.

Quasi-comic head nun Sister Eileen (Cate Blanchett) has taken the reins of the tiny institution – boarding and church – after the death of their priest. Sister Eileen hides the fact of this death, and leads the congregation of young boys, with Aboriginal nun "Sister Mum" (Deborah Mailman) and Indigenous farm helper George (Wayne Blair). Sister Eileen's loving heart – for God and the boys – is quaint, misplaced, and mischievous, as she knows very well that under church law, she should not be administering the sacraments.

The New Boy is himself not irreligious. He has spiritual powers from his Indigenous ancestors and seeks to know how to use these. Adventure and trouble ensue, and he falls in love with the suffering Jesus of an enormous crucifix that Sister Eileen has purchased. There is a battle between the power of Jesus, and the Indigenous spiritual power that the New Boy has. Sister Mum – giver of jam and treats – understands, but holds back, and George understands but seems frightened and repelled.

Sister Eileen takes power and tries to use it for good – even if in strange and disobedient ways – to run the little community that she has inherited. She uses whatever means possible to keep hold of the power she has – letter-writing, play-acting, and prayer. She is passionate, kindly and fragile, with scenes of agonising over her little flock. She is excited by the love the New Boy has for Jesus and takes this as a sign of God's favour on her leadership.



As a film, *The New Boy* demonstrates the lasting effects of religious power on the Stolen Generations, and specifically this "New Boy". He is taunted and teased by the other boys but then takes back his power using his Indigenous spirituality. He seems to relate to the suffering of Jesus on the cross and seeks to redeem Jesus – in his own misguided way. The limited, childish power of the New Boy is contrasted with the power of the church, and what happens in the final scenes.

The scenery is iconic outback Australia, the acting is superb, and vital questions are raised about the place of church and institutions at a time when understanding the trauma of Stolen Generations is just beginning. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples make up around 3.2 per cent of Australia's population, with 54 per cent describing themselves as 'Christian'. There are strong Indigenous-led church groups and many who have found healing, freedom and forgiveness in Jesus Christ who now share this with others, including in our own diocese.

This is a beautiful and moving film, with some "laugh out loud" moments, as well as tears – have tissues handy.



Barbie

What is left to say concerning Barbie? What is this movie even about? Is it satire, political statement, revenge upon men, doll porn, utopia or fantasy?

The opening scene (far too long, IMHO!) shocks the viewer into realising that this is not a sweet little movie. Stereotypical Barbie, the main character, is having problems in the perfect, pink world of big corporation Mattel's making. Doubts, death, cellulite, and failure to conform (think, feet for high heels only!) have no place in the dream. The 'plastic-fantastic' set made me squirm from the get-go, and I wondered where the film would take us.

This film clearly sets out to question social norms and to make anyone uncomfortable who thinks patriarchy – or matriarchy – are the answers. Using exaggeration and a bit of absurdity, preconceptions are challenged without any new answers being given. That is a certain use of power – should a film tell us what to do to solve humanity's issues?

There are negative power-plays at work in the seemingly perfect BarbieWorld™ too, as 'Weird Barbie' seems to be both dishonoured by the other Barbies, and looked up to, for her "special" knowledge and abilities.

The unreal pink paradise of BarbieWorld™, the sidelining of characters of colour, and the unmistakeably capitalistic



push for merch – sales of Barbie have soared – are the main criticisms. It may be a little bit comical but this film makes us consider how power is used and abused, by males especially. Cue America Ferrera's amazing speech about the impossibility of being a modern woman.

Ken is both anti-hero and a developing character. He breaks free from being just Barbie's "plus one", yet has to grapple with The Real World and all its problems too, without finding a satisfactory long-term solution.

Yet, are things better with only women in charge? Are women always good team players? Aren't we – all genders – equal when it comes to flaws in our bodies and personalities? Where can we go for answers but to the Maker?



Oppenheimer

The power of knowledge applied, and knowledge held close, comes to light in this incredible story. The scenes move back and forth across the years, meaning the viewer has to pay close attention. Fading, lighting and background movement are wonderfully utilised in a variety of ways to examine and exaggerate moments in the life of the main character.



Based on a true story, this is an amazing film about harnessing the power of science for making bombs, and the power of politics to bring people down and end careers. J. Robert Oppenheimer, a theoretical physicist, became known as "the father of the atom bomb".

The US government is eager to use his knowledge and expertise, but equally eager to hold on to questions regarding Oppenheimer's personal associations and beliefs, and to question everything. How much was Oppenheimer's doing – was it he who flattened two cities? Where should loyalties lie when mass killing is on the table?

Oppenheimer pursues the science and, though having a few doubts about the destructive power of The Bomb, seems not really concerned by it. The overall impression left on this reviewer is that he suffered more from the FBI-CIA/White House committee questioning of his patriotism than from the destruction and death in Nagasaki and Hiroshima he had a hand in.

The movie makes the life of this scientist and his colleagues come alive. For this and the historical background of developments in the New Mexico desert, it is worth the price of admission. Oppenheimer the movie keeps alive the need for ethical and moral discussions around the use

of any sort of power – nuclear, military, scientific, medical, social and relational.

We all have some degree of power, or ability, to change and influence ourselves and our situations. We can choose to do this positively, by the way we think, talk and act. How are you using the power that you have?



PODCASTS WORTH PONDERING...

Shifting Culture

Want to hear about wonderful literature? Interested in antidotes to "bad religion"?

Intentionally seeking quality podcasts is now a major non-work goal of mine.

It's a pleasure to find deep-thinking and purposeful conversations such as Shifting Culture provides.



Experienced in cross-cultural and missiological analysis, Joshua Johnson leads discussion on the current concerns of church and Christians in society. He is executive director of training and sending organization, All Nations Kansas City.

The conversations are robust and deep, critiquing and 'digging in', and all linked to the practice of what Jesus followers must be pushing to demonstrate: Christlikeness, in every time and place.

The question flowing through every episode is: what is of Culture (21st century America and western countries) and what is of Jesus (see the four Gospels)?

The episode with US author and commentator Karen Swallow Prior focused on her work with literature and how Christians can use the arts, ensure words match our actions, and truly love our neighbours only by refocusing everything on Jesus.

In his discussion, New Testament scholar Nijay Gupta challenged understanding of the roles of women in the church today by returning to the New Testament and the early church. As the child of immigrants and well-respected scholar, Gupta is well placed to examine the evangelical status quo from inside as well as out.

Other notable guests on Shifting Culture include Christopher J.H. Wright (International Ministries Director

of Langham Partnership International), Andrew Root (Professor of Youth and Family Ministry at Luther Seminary in St. Paul, Minnesota), Scot McKnight (Professor of New Testament at Northern Baptist Theological Seminary, Illinois), British theologian and author Lucy Peppiatt, and our own Christopher Watkin, author of the award-winning Biblical Critical Theory, and Australian pastor Mandy Smith, currently at St Lucia Uniting Church, Brisbane.

This is a podcast for reimagining and shifting culture – both that of church and society. Have a listen soon!

www.shiftingculturepodcast.com

Jo Vandersee lives and works on Larrakia land. She serves as Staff Chaplain for Anglicare NT. Jo speaks French fluently, and enjoys singing, reading, beach BBQs and Darwin's multicultural activities.

Suzie Ray's Good Friday LEGO build



UPCOMING EVENTS AROUND THE DIOCESE

October 19, 2023

Ordination as deacon of James Woods at Urapunga.

October 20

Ordination as priest of Edwin Rami at Numbulwar.

December 3

Advent Sunday: first week of North Australian Lectionary Year 4.

December 16

Installation of Bp Jeremy Greaves as Archbishop of Brisbane and Metropolitan of the Province of Queensland.

January 20, 2024

CMS SA/NT Summer Conference, Edwardstown Baptist Church, Adelaide.

March 23, 2024

CMS SA/NT Darwin world mission event, Nungalinga College

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