



Frontier Services
Serving Outback Australia

MEDIA RELEASE

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Meet a new friend in the Outback: Rev Colin Gordon

The 'church' where Rev Colin Gordon is minister is not your usual kind of church with four walls and a roof. He is posted to an area that covers more than 500,000sq km across half of the Northern Territory, more than double the size of Victoria.

As a roving minister, he will fly into far-flung cattle or sheep stations, drive to lonely roadhouses and visit remote mining sites and Aboriginal communities. He might pass on a message from family far away or share a cup of tea with someone who needs a friend.

Mr Gordon, a New Zealander, is the new Patrol Minister for Frontier Services assigned to the Centralian Patrol based out of Alice Springs. His job is to offer spiritual support and a helping hand to some of our country's most isolated people.

Mr Gordon joins a network of 22 Frontier Services Patrol Ministers which covers 85 per cent of the continent reaching some 15,000 families. The Patrol Ministers lead worship, conduct baptisms, weddings and funerals, but the majority of their time is taken up simply listening to people who face the daily challenges of isolation.

Mr Gordon comes to the Northern Territory after working as a Royal New Zealand Navy chaplain for eight years. As he makes the transition from working in the middle of the sea to the middle of the continent, Mr Gordon says he does not feel entirely out of place in the bush.

"I was brought up on a farm so I feel I am reconnecting with things that were important to me as a youngster," he says.

Mr Gordon's family ran a 220 acre sheep and dairy farm in the coastal Gisborne district of New Zealand. It was a far cry from the outback stations in Australia, but Mr Gordon says he feels at home with people who work on the land.

"I think farmers have a raw vitality about them that makes them who they are."

Mr Gordon says he was instantly attracted to the rich history of patrol work. The Patrol Ministry dates back to the origins of Frontier Services when Rev John Flynn established the first 'padre patrol' as part of the Australian Inland Mission formed in 1912. Flynn's mandate was to be a friend, counselor and advocate to the people of the Outback.

"His mandate is still a mandate to be held," says Mr Gordon. "We are there to be a friend, we haven't got anything to take, just ourselves."

Mr Gordon was inducted at John Flynn Memorial Uniting Church in Alice Springs on February 8, 2011.

Media contact:

Rebecca Beisler, Public Relations Officer, on 02 8270 1343 or 0450 790 218

Frontier Services is an agency of the Uniting Church and has provided services to people who live in isolated or remote regions of Australia for nearly 100 years.

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