



Issue No. 77, April 2004



Northern Synod News

Members of "HMAS Presbytery" watching the boat races at the March meeting

'AT SEA' TOGETHER

Members of the Pilgrim Presbytery of Northern Australia gathered for their bi-annual meeting in March at Palmerston Uniting Church under the theme "HMAS Presbytery". The worship recognised the diversity amongst the members and congregations under the essential unity offered in Christ as the Head of the Church. The President, Rev Dr Dean Drayton, shared in the meeting before leading a retreat for the ministers at Lake Bennet (pictures on pages 6)

We are all in the one boat

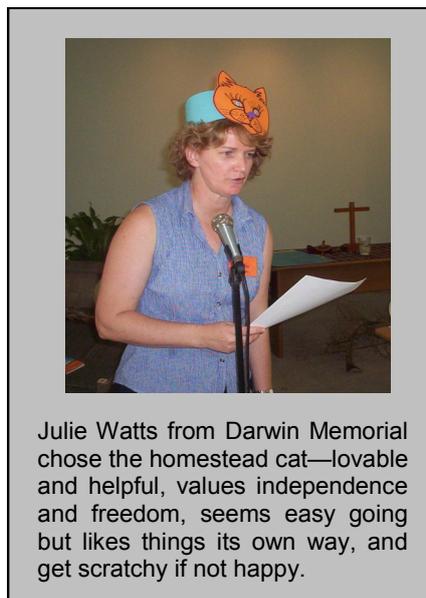
Using an illustrated children's story, Rev Kate Fraser made it clear to the members of the Pilgrim Presbytery that as members of the Uniting Church in Australia we are all in the same boat, and that our individual actions affect both the performance of the boat and the lives within the boat.

The story, *Mr Gumpy's Outing* by John Birmingham, tells of the animals desire to join Mr Gumpy in his boat for a day's outing. Mr Gumpy reluctantly agrees, but on the condition that the animals refrain from their natural tendencies—the dog is not allowed to chase the cat, who is not allowed to annoy the rabbit, and so forth.

All goes well, until the animals revert to type, and the inevitable happens—the boat

overturns and everyone ends up in the river.

The story ends with Mr Gumpy and his friends swimming to the bank, drying off and returning to Mr Gumpy's house for tea. A possible image of reconciliation at the Lord's



Julie Watts from Darwin Memorial chose the homestead cat—lovable and helpful, values independence and freedom, seems easy going but likes things its own way, and get scratchy if not happy.

table was not lost on the meeting.

In preparation for the meeting members of Presbytery had been asked to discuss with their congregations which from a range of birds and animals best reflected the dominate characteristics of the congregation (see page 8). Members of Presbytery then used the animal faces provided to create hats which were worn for the rest of the meeting. The hats helped the members recognise the different characteristics among the congregations, and that in turn helped the meeting work with the reality of different preferences in relation to mission and general life in the church.

The meeting workshopped a vision for the life of the Presbytery and then gathered a list of mission activities that caught

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Moderator Rev George Woodward

Finding God in difficult places

Some time ago I was talking to a minister who was leaving the Presbytery. I said something like, "I am sorry that you are leaving." The response I got was unexpected. The minister was not very happy and gave me an earful about how the Synod had not supported them.

I thought to justify myself and so I began to outline the things that the Presbytery had done to offer support to this minister. This was not really a wise move. What I now got was an even bigger earful of where the Presbytery had fallen down in its duties towards this minister. I now became a little concerned and wasn't sure where to turn. I listened carefully to what the minister had to say and then said something like, "I'm really sorry that you have had such a difficult experience with the Synod and the Presbytery. It is good that God does not let us down the way we let each other down." This minister did not know what to say to my concluding comment because I believe this minister had done little thinking about where God was in the issues that were being faced at the time of our discussion.

When I think about what we now know as resolution 84 I believe for many of us, if not all of us, we feel that in some way the church has let us down. We wished the Assembly had said something different. Yet God has not let us down. God is faithful and God keeps all His promises.

We can spend a lot of energy being upset with Councils of the church, made up of Godly people like you and me, and

forget that a wonderful, all loving, forgiving, holy God travels with us. It is in this God, who has come to us in His Son Jesus, that we find salvation and new life. It is in this God that we have our being and hope for living. It is this God who is with us today in the presence and power of the Holy Spirit.

It was exciting to be in one of our congregations a few weeks back and hear at a congregational meeting, "We have spent enough time on this issue. We need to be about what God is calling us to do in this place."

God calls us to journey on always responding to God's faithfulness and love, finding our faith and love renewed through that wonderful relationship we have with God in Jesus Christ. Through this gracious relationship we then are able to serve each other in the church and serve the community so that they might see and know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Our new Synod Receptionist

Gwyn Whelband started in the Synod Office on 17th March.

"I was born and bred in sunny Queensland and I have lived in almost every provincial city in that sunny state. A shift in my husband Gary's career meant a move to the 'fridge of Australia' – Canberra, where we lived for a total of five years. It has been a shock to return to the tropics, but with the help of God's greatest invention – the air conditioner, I am learning to cope!

"Two married daughters remain in Canberra and our fourteen year old son, Peter, has made the journey north with us. The first grandchild is on the



way so much happy clucking can be heard!

"When not looking after the phone or wrestling with the computer in the office, I can be found reading,

crostitching, patchworking or mucking around in the garden. I also collect old wares and anything to do with chickens.

"When asked I readily admit to a passion for Italian food, chocolate, cheesecake and good wine, all of the above tasting even more wonderful when shared with friends as the sun goes down.

"I think my life's motto would be 'Put your faith in God and hold on tight for the ride'. Just when life begins to feel comfortable God's whirlwind picks us up and off we go again. I look forward to the challenges that working for Him here in the Synod office will bring."

NNRC Area Ministry Councils meet



The Northern Regional Council of Congress has established area ministry councils in Arnhem Land, the Centre and Mowanjum. Shown above, the President, Rev Dr Dean Drayton, met with the Arnhem Area Ministry Council shortly after his installation as President.

What's The Buzz?

The Arnhem Land Ministry Council met at Milingimbi following an Easter rally from Tuesday 13th to Thursday the 15th of April. This was a rich time of fellowship and reflection on ministry in Arnhem Land. The Rev Bilanya Garawirtja was chosen as the new Convener for the Council.

Galiwin'ku congregation were pleased to report that

Sunday school is happening weekly now. There are mid-week women's and men's Bible studies and a youth night on Fridays. Thanksgiving time in March reflected on the theme 'Return To The Lord', and was a time of true blessing. In the near future the leaders hope to start visiting homeland centres again for fellowship together. It is the Church Council's wish to have Rev Jovilisi Ragata in part-time placement until his re-

tirement from ministry in 2005.

It was good to hear that at Croker Island fellowship & services in the homelands and the town have started again together with Bible studies. Rev Tebuti Tapera continues to live at Minjilang, working for the Council and giving leadership to the church.

Rev Walirr Garrawurra who is 'officially' retired was, at the recent UAICC National Elders Council meeting in Geelong, appointed Deputy Chair. His ministry together with his wife & family, across the three NRCC areas, continues to be active, vital and much appreciated.

A new suggestion brought forward was that Galiwin'ku link in with the National Day of Thanksgiving (29th of May this year – Pentecost weekend – see www.thanksgiving.org.au) and that one big celebration be held in Arnhem Land next Year.

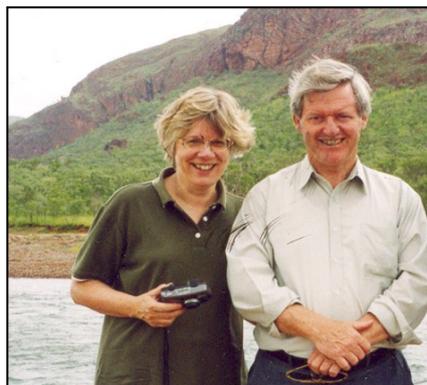
Rev Djawanydjawany Gondarra who is the NRCC Chair will step down from this position to take up a new placement of Ministry Development Worker for the Arnhem Land Ministry Council from July this year. Rev Gelung

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Welcome Bill and Jill Pickering

The Rev Bill Pickering was inducted into the East Kimberley Ministry on Sunday 15th February 2004. As a Frontier Services Patrol Minister Bill is ministering alongside the members of the Kununurra Congregation.

When asked about his call to Kununurra, Bill said, "After a reasonably long and successful ministry (12 years) in Perth both Jill and I had itchy feet to go back into the country, so when we saw the Kununurra position advertised we became excited with the prospect. After much prayer and discussion we applied and here we are, but not without sacrifice, es-



Rev Bill Pickering and wife Jill are delighted to be in Kununurra. Photographed here on the day of Bill's induction

pecially for Jill.

We look forward with real excitement at the prospect of becoming involved with the church in the Northern Synod and were disappointed at not being able to attend the latest Presbytery meeting, however the rain has been very welcome and has made the country look spectacular."

Jill is an ESL/ESD specialist teacher. Bill and Jill both taught in Laverton (far Northern Goldfields).

Bill's previous congregations were at Hamersley (Tom Price), Esperance and Bicton/Palmyra. Before coming into the ministry Bill worked as a fitter and turner in Norseman (Southern Goldfields) and in Wittenoom in the Pilbara.

RADIO SW1 5050 MOVES AHEAD

The ARDS Community Development Radio Service (CDRS) will soon be available in an easily accessible form for the Yolngu people of north-east Arnhem Land following a decision of the Australian Broadcasting Authority (ABA) on 1 April.

The Canberra approval will allow ARDS to place AM radio transmitters at Darwin, Nhulunbuy, Yathalamarra (near Ramingining), Groote Eylandt (to service the southern Laynhapuy Homelands), Galiwin'ku and Gapuwiyak.

The first location to transmit will be Darwin, using an aerial located at Humpty Doo. It is anticipated that during the first week of May the

ARDS Radio



ARDS volunteer technical consultant, Mr John Mitchell, will complete work on the antenna to allow the CDRS to be heard in Darwin on 1530 kHz on

the AM radio band. Mr Mitchell will then install the equipment needed in Nhulunbuy which will use the same frequency as Darwin—1530 kHz AM

YOUR HELP IS NEEDED

The other transmitters and their frequencies will be located at Yathalamarra 1557 kHz, Groote Eylandt 1566 kHz, Elcho Island 1593 kHz and Gapuwiyak 1503 kHz.

These will be installed as soon as it is possible financially, as ARDS is continuing to seek the financial support required to roll out the AM transmission network. This is a total cost of \$150,000 cost and ARDS would be happy to hear from anyone who is

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All in the one boat

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the imagination of the congregations. These interests were then worked into the goals for consideration by the Executive who were to feed information back to the Presbytery for further action.



The trophy says you can run President—but you can't hide.



Jarrah Brown from Casuarina UC led the President in a series of quick sprints in *The Pirates* to win the boat race trophy .



Sarah (left) and Jodie don't look convinced their ship has the right name. They showed great team work and won the crowd's acclaim.



Julie Watts and Sarah Jenner did the girls proud in their boat race heat. Water bombs thrown from the cheering crowd helped address the problem of heat exhaustion, even amongst the non-runners.

West Kimberley Ministry

The West Kimberley Ministry is a strange but exciting creature.

On the one hand there is patrol ministry in the West Kimberley area which is usually seen as belonging to the Pilgrim Presbytery of Northern Australia (PPNA).

On the other hand is the resource work/community development/ministry based in and around Mowanjum and its outstations which is seen as belonging to the Northern Regional Council of Congress (NRCC).

Of course each of these two hands belongs to the one body!! Both aspects of the work have been happening for years but the new thing is putting them together. It is early days in this new mode with Andrew Watts in placement.

The patrol ministry has been quiet over the good wet season with contacts being maintained through school of the air activities including the re-establishing of religious education classes.

This is a prayer point as the

person lined up to share this work with Andrew has pulled out and Andrew is keenly looking for someone else to step in.

Ministry has continued at Mowanjum over the last few months led by the community minister, Roger Burgu. Andrew tries to hover around in the background encouraging and resourcing Mowanjum people in their ministries.

Sometimes also he has been involved in facilitating communication between Mowanjum people and various other people or agencies. Kirsty Burgu continues her Nungalinya studies. One of the highlights for Mowanjum and Kirsty in the last few months was a mammoth production of a Christmas nativity play.

The cast and crew were basically everybody who could be found, under Kirsty's direction. The Mowanjum congregation have been involved in some significant pastoral care following some significant spiritual ministry in the community in February.

Our prayer for future ministry is for an ecumenical women's bible study group for Mowanjum, to regain cooperation amongst fragmented protestant denominations.



The Cast and stage crew for the Mowanjum Nativity Celebration

Frontier Services Still In The Saddle

A quick look around the Northern Synod will show a number of ministerial vacancies at present, a number of them Frontier Services Patrols, but they assure us that they are still in the saddle.

Indeed, vacancies have provided opportunities to look differently at the way a number of patrols might be handled right across the Top End. It started eighteen months ago with a strategic decision by Pilgrim Presbytery, Northern Regional Council of Congress and Frontier Services to look to developing a new ministry in the West Kimberley at Derby. In Septem-

ber last year, Rev Andrew Watts was inducted as the new minister to the West Kimberley, while Rev Bill Pickering made the move up from Perth in

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able to assist in any way. If you are not able to contribute finances then please pray that the money to implement the full service would be forthcoming quickly.

75% Coverage for Yolngu Communities

ARDS believes that commissioning of all the AM services will allow up to about 75% of the Yolngu population to receive the CDRS on cheap, easily accessible radios, including those in vehicles.

Further information about the radio service can be obtained from the Radio Service Manager, Dale Chesson, on 08 8987 3910.

January this year to commence work in the East Kimberley at Kununurra. Bill, and wife Jill have settled well into Kimberley life, and Bill has already

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Lake Bennett Retreat

Dean Drayton lead the Retreat on the theme *Leadership and the Holy Spirit*. With two teaching/discussion sessions per day there was also time for personal prayer and reflection.



A celebratory dinner before the President left for Sydney. From the left: Felicity Amery, Tony Davies, Dean Drayton, Brian Morgan, Thresi Mauboy, Lindsay Faulkner, John Rowland and Nalin Perera. Photographer—Gary Whelband.



Felicity and Dean encouraged visionary leadership

Members of the Presbytery (right) presented the President, Dean Drayton, with a length of cloth from Dunilli Arts in appreciation for his leading of the Retreat.





The Hawk and the Turtle

Tony "The Hawk" Davies hands over the chair of the PPNA to Felicity "Turtle" Amery

As an ordained Deacon in the Uniting Church, Felicity is Coordinating Chaplain at Berrimah Correctional Centre in Darwin. Employed by the Northern Territory Council of Churches, she works closely with volunteers from a number of Christian churches as well as representatives from the Muslim Faith community and the Buddhist Society.

In the complex environment of the goal she works alongside uniformed staff

and members of the rehabilitation team to ensure a holistic approach to service and care.

As some 80% of prisoners are indigenous, much of Felicity's time and energy is spent developing meaningful ways of connecting and caring for people separated from family, culture and support in their first language. Felicity's teaching experience in Arnhemland gives her some important insights into the needs of indigenous inmates and challenges her to be more creative in addressing their needs.

Felicity is passionate in her encour-

agement of the church to take up Christ's call to be in the world. While society defines the incarcerated by their badness, Christians have a response defined by God's covenant relationship with humanity, to offer love and care to all people.

Felicity brings some of this passion and creativity to her new role as Chairperson of PPNA. At its March meeting, the Presbytery undertook the challenging task of reflecting on what God might be saying to this particular council of the Uniting church. In an atmosphere of story, prayer, play and reflection, members of Presbytery discerned their vision for the next two years.

"The vision of the Pilgrim Presbytery of Northern Australia is to enable congregations to use their God-given gifts in walking with their community in the ordinary paths of life. We acknowledge our call to care for all, as salt in this wide red land."

Working with the Executive, Rev. Steve Orme, chair of the Mission and Congregational Services Committee, Rev. George Woodward, chair of the Pastoral Relations and Placements Committee, Rev John Rowland, General Secretary and Presbytery Minister, Jone Lotu, representative of Finance and Property Committee and newly appointed Secretary of PPNA Gai Nowland, Felicity has sought to put in place a series of goals. The Executive believes that the goals reflect the aspirations of presbytery delegates and will provide a criteria through which those called to serve the presbytery might act. A copy of the goals can be viewed on the Northern Synod web sight or obtained through the Synod office. It is Felicity's prayer that all members of presbytery might embrace this vision, seeking to hear God speak of justice, mercy and love for

Welcome Wendell and Mary

Rev Wendell and Mary Flentje were welcomed to the Casuarina Uniting Church on Friday 19th March.



Wendell, born in Melbourne, completed a degree in Agricultural Science at Melbourne University and worked for 7 years with the Victorian

Department of Agriculture as a Horticultural Extension Officer. Having made a decision to follow Christ at the 1959 Billy Graham Crusade and having gained some necessary work experience, in 1973 Wendell began a 9 year term as agriculturalist on Elcho Island in Arnhem Land. There he met and married Mary who was teaching in the mission school. Three of their four daughters were born at Elcho Island, the fourth being born in Canberra in the year after Wendell and Mary left the Territory.

During their two years in Canberra Wendell was accepted as a candidate for the Uniting Church Ministry of the Word. He trained in Sydney for

three years and his first placement was at Peak Hill in the central-west of New South Wales. After nine years there Wendell accepted a call to Belrose in Sydney and spent eight years there.

Wendell enjoys travel, photography, fishing, music, running, gardening and seeing people grow.



Wendell (right) was warmly greeted at his induction by the Hon Paul Henderson, MLA

CHARACTERISTICS OF CONGREGATIONS

In preparation for the March meeting members of Presbytery were asked to discuss with their congregation which characteristics best described their congregation.

1. **Blue Heeler** - busy and energetic, focused on working hard and increasing the common good, lots of energy for maintaining good order, can sometimes be overly critical and perfectionist

2. **Homestead Cat** - lovable and helpful, but also values its own independence and freedom, often seems easy going but likes doing things its own way, can get pretty scratchy if it's not happy

3. **Wedgetail Eagle** - enthusiastic, with energy for action and the will to get on with things, positive sense of empowerment, often successful and innovative. Can sometimes get caught up in performing to others expectations and jeopardize true self.

4. **Horse** - the noble horse appears strong but is often "smiling through the tears" as life has contained times of hard training, capable of turning negative expe-

riences and loss into beautiful pearls of wisdom, artistic and romantic, can sometimes get stuck in complaint and lament

5. **Tawny Frogmouth Owl** - sees and hears with focused attention, and has the intellectual capacity to understand profound truths, likes to remember and celebrate traditions and their meanings, likes to sit slightly removed from others and observe what's happening, can be overly concerned with security and find generosity difficult.

6. **Cattle** - very loyal to the herd and motivated to keep the herd safe from external threats, watchful and careful, reliable and dutiful, the cattle understands the importance of community, can become overly fearful and self protective.

7. **Butterfly** - flits around searching for new adventures and is motivated by

joy, demonstrates the beauty and lightness of Christian transformation, can lack focus and avoid hard issues, can be reluctant to pay the price of the serious inner way.

8. **Emu** - full of energy and vitality, the emu sees the big picture and is not afraid to assert itself, courage is one of the emu's great strengths, self-confident and often gifted in leadership, finds debate and confrontation to be energy-giving, sometimes not aware of how overpowering others might find it, can get locked into battles over control

9. **Turtle** - gentle and kind to others, the turtle cares for the environment and for the people it meets, intelligent yet non-aggressive, the mark of the turtle is peace, however gentleness can lead to indecision and stagnation, and when the turtle is hurt it has a long memory and can be very unforgiving.

AREA MINISTRY COUNCIL NEWS FROM NNRC

(Continued from page 3)

Gondarra who is the Deputy Chair of NRCC will be Acting Chair until the full Council meet in September prior to Synod.

Rev Dhalnganda Garrawurra has begun a new placement, based at Galiwin'ku, within NRCC as Teacher. His work will take him to the three ministry areas for Bible studies etc. He will link in with developments on the UAICC National Leadership Program and our relationship with Nungalinya College in Darwin.

Stuart McMillan will be travelling to the AP Lands for an Anangu'ku Area Ministry Council meeting shortly. So the next issue will have news from the Centre.

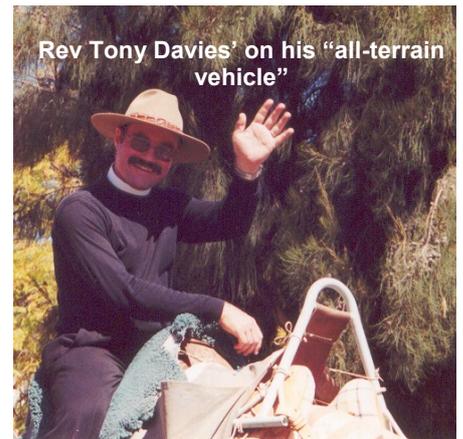
Frontier Services still in the saddle

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performed his first station baptism. When asked by the station manager if he would like a cup of tea after the service, Bill calmly turned away, removed his clerical collar, and replied, "I'd rather have a beer."

Further east, the vacant Jabiru and Tennant-Barkley Patrols have been advertised, with applications to close at the end of May. While these vacancies do stretch the resources for a time, efforts continue to be made to offer care to people in these regions. Moderator, George Woodward has made the trip to Jabiru on occasion to lead worship, while John Rowland and Tony Davies have travelled every few weeks to Tennant Creek to offer pastoral support and to lead worship. Tony Davies also "flew the flag" at the ICPA state conference hosted by the Barkley branch at Tennant Creek in April, reminding the people of the Barkley region that they have not been forgotten.

The Katherine region too is being considered for a new patrol. There are a number of stations that have not been visited for many years in this region, and judging by the response that Rev. Bill Pickering received from people in that region, they would welcome the return of a patrol minister



Rev Tony Davies' on his "all-terrain vehicle"

there.

So while camels are no longer required to transport the padres from one place to another, some things remain the same. Frontier Services is still committed to bringing the Gospel of hope, reconciliation and new life to people in remote areas.

POSITION VACANT

EDITOR

NORTHERN SYNOD NEWS

Interested applicants should contact the Administration Manager

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