



# FOUR RIVERS

(a publication of the Diocese of Riverina)  
*A river flowed out of Eden to water the garden  
and there it divided and became four rivers.*

Winter 2018

FOUR RIVERS

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## Diocese Farewells Bishop Rob and Janine Gillion

On Saturday the 21st of July at St Albans Cathedral Griffith a thanksgiving service was held to farewell Bishop Rob and Janine Gillion. Parishioners, friends and Clergy came from far and wide to say goodbye.

Neville Bamblett of Bidgee Boxing Narrandera gave the Welcome to Country.

The Most Reverend Glenn Davies, the Metropolitan of New South Wales, gave a blessing to Bishop Rob and Janine. The Bishop of Bathurst, The Right Reverend Ian Palmer, also attended.

The Sermon preached by Bishop Rob follows:

*The Diocese of Riverina encourages ministry of Biblical proportions both Old Testament and New.*

*The magnificent skies, the rich red earth, the deserts and plains and the ever unfolding experiences of God's creation.*

*But we have also experienced plagues of flies, locusts and mice; faced drought, flood and fire; and travelled almost as far as Abraham and Moses! Everywhere in this vast Diocese we have encountered small yet beautiful pioneering, courageous hope-filled communities of faithful Christians from Griffith to Tibooburra, from Tocumwal to Lake Cargelligo.*

*The Diocese of Riverina reflects the pastoral nature of Jesus as Shepherd of His flock and serving a precious corner of God's vineyard. As your Bishop, I have been given a shepherd's staff like Moses. A symbol of servant leadership.*

*"What is in your Hand?" asks God of Moses. "A rod". All He had in His hand was a simple Shepherd's staff. A dry dead stick. But to God it was much more than that.*

*When I was consecrated as Bishop in this very Cathedral by Archbishop Glenn I was handed a 'dry dead stick' albeit a rather ornate Crozier. Later, I was presented with a travelling Shepherd's Crook which happens to*



*our far flung flock, the Christian Church should be the last to leave the Bush. It is called rather to find new and creative ways to sustain the spiritual life of the few who make it their home. In God's economy there are no little people and no little places. His grace and His love would reach out to find all, to include all, renew all and to serve all. The purpose of a diocese such as this, I suggest in part, is to share experiences and celebrate our ministry to the often isolated and depressed. Hope springs eternal.*

*We are called to nurture the seeds of goodness in the small places.*

*So I have carried a shepherd's staff into my ministry. I have loved going into our schools and explaining its meaning. It has, for me, specific functions; to discipline, to rescue, protect and hold me firm. Discipleship and Salvation!! Love and discipline. To remind us of Jesus the Good Shepherd and Saviour.*

*Moses held his personality and his gifts in his hand. His shepherd's staff to guide, lead and protect the sheep. He was after all a Shepherd in the early days. His staff used to support him and help him climb up and down the steep mountains. But still it was just a dry dead stick. But when the stick was handed over to God it became a living thing. He took his life in his hands when he was told to pick up the snake by its tail. We know that's not a good thing to do. But God challenged him to trust him, to defeat the enemy and glorify God. God took that insignificant stick and literally worked wonders with it. Everything we hold in our hands is either a burden or a blessing. For the most part, this office of Bishop of Riverina has been a blessing.*

*Moses climbed that mountain that day with a dead stick. He carried it around for many years thinking to himself perhaps that's all he would be,*

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*be the same age as me and has accompanied me everywhere throughout our vast Diocese visiting my far flung flock!*

*I have seen despair turn to hope. I've seen the care and compassion of rural folk supporting each other. I've seen the church community being a beacon of light. Hope rising.*

*The rural church as part of the body of Christ has a function and contribution to make to the life of the wider church. First, it bears witness to the power of belonging and the importance of supportive communities. Small companies of people gather as God's Church in little churches, unpretentious halls and homes to utter a prayer, to sing a well known hymn and participate in worship recognising Jesus in their midst. When worship is over they discuss the weather, the crops, the state of the markets, the health of someone in the community, the progress of the kids at school and the arrival of newcomers to the district. They are people who have come to value one another and to accept each other's differences.*

*The rural church points us to an idea that is near to the heart of God. The emphasis of the Christian community is not on status or size. The sheep that was lost was sought simply because it was loved. In this,*

Bishop Rob's Sermon continued.

a Shepherd keeping another man's sheep. Sheep belonging his father-in-law, Jethro. Moses had a calling to be the Shepherd of God's flock. It was good training. God was determined to equip him for God doesn't call the equipped he equips the called. I have held on to that truth throughout my life and ministry. I commend that thought to all of you. God invites us to use our skills and talents in His service.

I have often been nervous to use my acting skills for ministry, especially as in my ordination Bible was the quote Preach not yourself but Jesus Christ as Lord! As I toured around the Diocese with my one man show 'The Visit' I was so thrilled that so many said that Jesus was at the very centre of the drama. All our gifts should be used in His service.

I was also clothed in Bishop's attire at my Consecration. As a one-time actor some might say I love my props and I love dressing up. The truth is that an actor always dresses appropriately to the character he is portraying.

Once again I took it to heart when after my first sermon in a small country parish in Norfolk a lady shook my hand at the end of the service and said,

"I understand you were an actor before you were ordained?" "Yes that's right".

"So we won't know whether you are telling the truth of just pretending!"

"I Hope we'll get to know each other, and you will judge for yourself".

Authenticity is key to any ministry. I also relate my Bishop's clothing to the armour of God which as a Christian I need to put on at the beginning of every day. The helmet of Salvation, the breastplate of righteousness, the belt of truth, the shield of faith, the shoes, of peace, and the sword of the Spirit? to break through the darkness to bring the light of Christ. Finally we add the polish of prayer. All of which we heard about in our New Testament reading. All enfolded in God's love.

The robes and props in themselves are nothing, unimportant, but like Moses' dead stick they take on a spiritual significance when used in

God's service to tell the good news to each generation. They remind me of an aspect of servant leadership and the authority under God that has been given to me as a Christian leader. I have been so blessed by Gaynor, a parishioner here at the Cathedral, who lovingly made my 'non crushable' robes with skill and artistry. Her gift of ministry in her creative hands.

We are invited in Paul's letter to the Colossians to "clothe ourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Forgive as the Lord forgives us and over all these virtues put on love which binds them all together in perfect unity."

Of course all of the material robes can be stripped away for we came into the world naked and we will leave this world the same. But as spiritual clothes their significance remains.

Jesus was clothed before His crucifixion with a royal robe of purple and a kingly crown to mock him. But the significance was powerful, for all they left Him with was a crown of thorns and a robe of His spilt blood. The symbols of costly suffering for the sins of the whole world.

Finally, the book of Revelation reveals Jesus clothed in Glory in Heaven. Reaching out His loving hands to welcome us to abide with Him and in Him for eternity.

I am invited in this service to lay up my Diocesan staff representing the office of Bishop of Riverina, but not my own Bishop's staff, for once a Bishop always a Bishop.

So here is my simple wooden staff given to me by a Scottish Shepherd many years ago. It has now been exquisitely painted by Scott Lyons, an aboriginal friend from the town I have called home - Narrandera. He has combined the staff of Moses with the snake wrapped around its stem with the Shepherd's crook of Jesus and it will remind me of the rich culture of this land of Australia.

My challenge for us all is what has been put into our hands needs to be given to God so He can take it and turn it into an asset for His glory. What you have may seem insignificant like Moses' dead

stick, or the dead wood of a Cross. But God transformed the Cross into a symbol of His unconditional love. Jesus' last words sum it all up. "Into thy hands I commit my spirit".

Let us give our whole selves into His hands, both in suffering and glory, and await with anticipation what life has in store for us.

*For everyday is a gift from God how we live it is our gift to Him..*

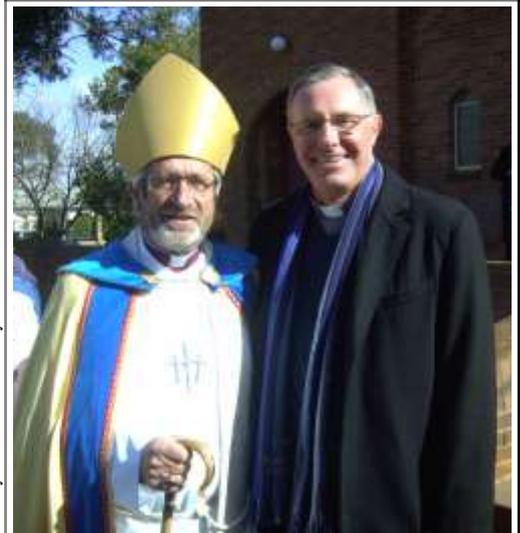


Photo: Bishop Rob Gillion and The Reverend Glenn Maytum, after the farewell service at St Alban's Cathedral Griffith.

The following is a thank you message from Bishop Rob and Janine Gillion.

To  
The Diocese of Riverina

Many thanks for the photograph of the Tibourna God Mine. It evokes wonderful memories of our visits to the far west and 'our far flung flock'. It is these outback journeys that have been such an adventure.

Wishing you all every blessing for the Diocese of Riverina  
Yours in Christ  
Bishop Rob & Janine

### From London to The Riverina

Leaving London's Grandeur.  
Where palace, cloister, hall  
Give sense of ancient history.  
There comes another call.

A call to proud Australia  
A vast and open land  
Where skies as wide as heaven,  
Cause us in awe to stand.

By day a blue so seamless  
Perpetuates the skies  
By night a myriad of stars  
Come new to awestruck eyes.

When light at dusk is fading  
As the close of winter nears  
There is magic in the air  
As golds and pinks appear.

Through trees, light falls in pathways.  
A promise and a sign.  
On brick speaks transformation  
Turns mundane to divine.

Driving through the country  
In farmer's fields we see.  
The colours of Australia  
In canola edged with green.

The proud gum forests also  
Sits in seas of emerald green  
Marbled bark and shady boughs  
Stand ancient and serene.

In winters of old England  
Colour hides in bark and ground  
But not in bold Australia  
Here colour shouts out loud.

We seek no competition.  
Thank God and give Him praise  
For the wonder of creation  
So infinite in His ways.

Poem by Janine Gillion



The Anglican Women of the  
Anglican Diocese of Riverina  
(AWA)  
will be hosting the NSW Provincial  
Biennial Anglican Women of  
Australia Conference at St Alban  
the Martyr Griffith from 17th—  
19th May 2019.  
Enquiries to Judith Nolan  
Email: [judith.nolan@bigpond.com](mailto:judith.nolan@bigpond.com)

### A Sabbatical Journey An Edited extract from The Very Rev Rob Harris' Journal

I had the great pleasure of spending four days at Seminari Theoloji Malaysia (STM) attending the Short Course Intensive, 'Dynamics of the Spiritual Life: Legacy of Henri Nouwen.'

Dr Wil Hernandez from the USA conducted the course from the 10<sup>th</sup> to 13<sup>th</sup> of April 2018. Having spent several days in Kuching, my wife Shanti and I arrived at STM and I attended the lectures from 8:00am to 6:00pm each day while Shanti has some rest and recreation. We were hosted most graciously by Principal Rev Dr Philip Siew,

staying in his apartment for which we are most grateful.

Over the several days, my lasting impression was of the warm welcome I received not only from

the staff, but primarily from many students who during lectures and at the canteen would stop to ask me why I was at STM. They also cheerfully engaged in conversation about their own Christian journeys from which I learnt so much.

I therefore had the opportunity to tell of the family connection with STM, why I came to attend the lectures and why I was spending several months on leave from my Ministry position as Dean of the Anglican Diocese of Riverina.

I have been Dean of the Cathedral Parish of St Alban the Martyr Griffith for over ten years.

So what of our family connection to STM? The answer is Rev Dr Canon Steven Abbarow's wife, Anne, and my wife Shanti, are first cousins. Last year while visiting the Abbarows, Rev Canon Dr Steven invited me to consider attending one of the English Theological Education by Extension (TEE) courses.

In the four days spent at STM I had many comparisons and memories of my own Theological Education. Why? Because I attended the Brisbane College of Theology (BCT). BCT is also an ecumenical college with students from

the Anglican, Uniting and Catholic traditions, along with some Independent students. So at your Thursday Chapel, the fond memories came flooding back of my college days with students and faculty from varied denominations, worshipping and sharing liturgy and communion. Yes, from different faith traditions, but all bound by *our love of Jesus*.

I certainly appreciated the invitation from Rev Canon Steven to participate in the course as an audited student. It gave me the flexibility to just 'be' rather than 'do'. Too often in our church life, we are always doing. I have, at times, preached on the Ministry

of Doing and the Ministry of Being; a very

Nouwen theme of a spiritual life.

To be an observer and step back, relating my Ministry context to my learning, in essence

was an exercise in theological reflection. I must admit that I came to the course with some practical experience in the dynamic of the spiritual life in working with my own Spiritual Director, a Roman Catholic Mercy Sister. During 2017, we studied the Nouwen text 'The Road to Daybreak, A Spiritual Journey'.

So Dr Wil's lectures certainly reaffirmed my previous reading which Nouwen called the *Trilogy of an Integrated Life, Solitude, Service and Prayer*. I must say I would certainly recommend lay and clergy consider taking this or a similar course.

We are returning to Australia in May and I will resume my position as Dean but also as Diocesan Administrator and Vicar General. In doing so I take responsibility for the Diocese in the interregnum as our Bishop has now retired and we enter the process of discernment for a new 'Shepherd' to lead our Diocese into the future.

I go away from STM with memories of new friends and feelings of renewal and refreshment.

*Rob Harris.*



## ORDINATIONS

On Sunday morning of the Diocesan Synod the 17th of June, the Ordinations of two Priests and three Deacons were held. A joyous occasion with family and friends joining Synod representatives for the service.



*Photo: Bishop Rob Gillion with the newly Ordained Priests Jocelyn Heazlewood who will serve in the Parish of the Rock and Kenneth Dale who will serve in the Parish of Culcairn-Henty.*



*Photo: Bishop Rob Gillion with the newly Ordained Deacons, Mary-Ann Crisp who will serve in the parish of Wentworth as a Honorary Deacon, Jenifer Bedding will serve in the parish of Narrandera as a Honorary Deacon and Timothy Kelly will serve in the parish of Mulwala, Berrigan with Oaklands, as a Student Minister.*



*Photo: The Diocesan Synod was held in Griffith, commencing on Friday the 15th June with representatives from most of the Diocesan Parishes attending. The Diocesan Synod is the authority on all matters and things concerning the order and good government of the Diocese.*