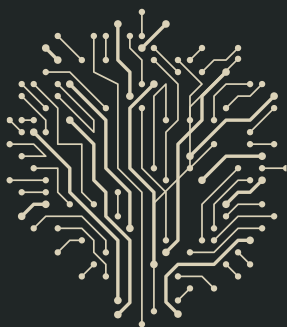


WINTER 2021

Ruminations

ALWAYS



SALTBUSH

UNITING THE SCATTERED COMMUNITY

Ruminations is brought to you as part of **Saltbush – Uniting the Scattered Community**. The Uniting Church Synod of NSW & ACT oversees this work as an encouragement to all rural Christian communities and their leaders, irrespective of size or location. You are invited to share this issue of Ruminations with others.

Editors: Mark Faulkner
Geoff Wellington
Tim Jensen
Monique Potter



Uniting the Scattered Community

PO Box 221 Canberra City, 2601

0477 720 151

saltbush@nswact.uca.org.au

<https://saltbushcommunity.uca.org.au/>

Please consider donating to support Saltbush – Uniting the Scattered Community and through it Ruminations.

©Saltbush 2021. All articles and images in this publication have been used by permission or purchase. Please get permission before reprinting.

What's in this issue of Ruminations?

Editor's Introduction	2
A word from the Moderator	4
Always - Rev. Mark Faulkner.....	5
Always - Nathan Tyson	8
Always - Rev. Dr. Chris Budden	12
A conversation with	16
News from Saltbush	19

Contributors

Nathan Tyson is the Manager, First Peoples Strategy and Engagement.

Rev. Dr. Chris Budden is a retired Minister with in the Hunter Presbytery. Chris' ministry has spanned across NSW and the NT and including working with the National UAICC.

Rev. Peter Boughey is the minister at Casino Uniting Church. Peter's ministry reaches way beyond the church doors to the community of Casino and Grafton working with young indigenous offenders.

Please consider financially supporting Saltbush; either as individuals or as a congregation.

Your donation will be directly used for the work of supporting Saltbush and the ways we are working to encourage smaller, rural congregations. You can donate generally towards Saltbush and this will include the cost of enabling the printing of Ruminations.

To donate please make a direct transfer:

Bank:	Uniting Financial Services
Account Name:	Uniting Mission & Education EFT Direct
BSB:	634-634
Account Number:	100035066
Payment Reference:	"Saltbush"



Editors Introduction | ALWAYS

Welcome to your winter edition of Ruminations with the theme of Always.

We often say 'always' to signal the depth of our commitment to the other. It is a word that may suggest a heavy burden of expectation and responsibility. The intent is admirable but as we know not always achievable. A married couple may not always love each other, a teenager might not always keep their room tidy, we might not always keep a promise. 'Always' can be transactional, I remember trying to bribe my parents with the promise of always walking the dog if I got a new bike. 'Always' becomes a word that is often used to exaggerate, as in the heat of an argument "you always leave your dirty socks right next to the laundry basket!". A very weighty word that signifies a level of commitment and loyalty but can also be misused to manipulate and malign, but not always.

When I was teaching at Barunga, an aboriginal community in Jawoyn country, I realised 'always' took on a more profound meaning. With the young women and men I taught, they carried with them the language, the stories, the traditions and the culture of country and their ancestry. It is always with them; always transcends our understanding of time or the restrictions of our own limited mortalities. Always is about connection with a timeless past which is lived now and carried into the future. In the documentary 'In My Blood it Runs' Djuwan a 10-year-old Arrernte boy says: "I was born a little aboriginal kid, that means that I had a memory, a memory about aboriginals. I just felt something, a memory. History. In my blood it runs." Always.

In our Winter issue, Chris Budden explores how the First and Second peoples understand their relationship to land and how the Christian story may enter into conversation about land. Chris identifies that 'land is central to the Biblical story... that land is a place that may bear for us the Spirit.' As Second peoples we have systematically deprived First Peoples of this connection to land. There is a need then to truthfully own the wrongs of the past and the present, to make amends and seek reconciliation. All of these are deeply significant Christian actions.

Nathan Tyson approaches the theme of 'Always' differently and asks: 'Will First Peoples in Australia always have to fight, rally, march and protest to seek our fundamental human rights?' Nathan explores how First Peoples continue to experience injustice in all aspects of Australian society. As Christians it is vitally important that we acknowledge these as on-going systemic and societal injustices and if we are to be ministers of reconciliation (2 Corinthians 5:18) then we begin with the truth and move to healing.

Mark Faulkner considers what 'Always' means in a self-obsessed society but that 'Always' lies deep within the human psyche. Always for First Peoples has the strong connection to place and how do we all then identify with where we are, our place. Then there is the God who is always. That we co-exist with this infinite God in the place that we find our belonging.

Peter Boughey from Casino speaks with me about the work of TCL (Toys Change Lives) and KOFY (Keeping our Freedom Youth). These have been incredibly successful initiatives working with young indigenous men and women to help equip them for future vocations and connect them to culture. Those who have been involved with TCL have gone on to apprenticeships and further education and raising families.

Geoff Wellington has a look back over the past months at the activities of Saltbush. From delivering smart televisions to hosting gatherings and retreats, developing a study for congregations in 'Talking about Salt' the various café's and so much more. Saltbush has been exploring the best ways we can be on the ground and on-line for all the scattered communities.

Thank you so much for your support, encouragement and prayers.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Tim", with a stylized, cursive script.

A word from the Moderator

Rev. Simon Hansford | Moderator of the Synod of NSW & ACT

During our regular conversation, my young hairdresser showed me the tiny handful of stars tattooed at the base of her thumb. I complimented her, then asked how her parents reacted.

'Dad said, "You know, it'll always be there"' She grinned, and paused. 'I can't comprehend what always means.'

For an eighteen-year-old, forever can seem like an impossible time to measure. And really, it's beyond all of us.

We worship a God who, we assert in faith, has always been. A God whose breath first shaped the creation, and who will be there when all things come to completion. Always. We struggle to find language which describes what is beyond our imagining – a God who is, always.

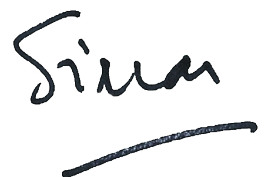
When I listen to First Nations people speak about a heritage, a history, which stretches two thousand generations and more, my mind begins to grasp a sense of what always feels like.

I have seen the campfire and midden history of Lake Mungo, as the original lake withdrew over thousands of years, and the gathered community followed the water's edge. I have seen some of the staggering piles of shells, from millennia of meals, marking the tides of a people's history.

I have heard some of those stories which have been told in community and around the campfire, on journey and in crisis, in a past almost beyond our reach and right now. Stories help us locate ourselves in our world, in our history, and into our future. Stories remind us who we are.

With all this in mind, I affirm my faith in Jesus Christ, in whom the promise of God is realised, for all of creation and all of history. There is none beyond the mercy of God, no one neglected, or forgotten.

Before Mungo's lake was full, or when the midden's first shell was placed, or the first story told, the God who scattered the stars into space, the God of Jesus Christ was there.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Simon', with a long horizontal stroke underneath.

And has been, always.

ALWAYS

Rev. Mark Faulkner | Director of Rural and Remote Ministry Initiatives

Nothing lasts forever, as the popular saying goes, which means the theme of 'Always' is hard for us to grasp. In our society full of disposables, where people may move regularly from houses, jobs and friendships, where living in the moment seems to be most important and security in its many forms is actually insecure, 'Always' is not something we think about too often.

Even within the life of the church, where we talk about the eternal God, primarily we are focused on ourselves and the moment in which we find ourselves, full of it busyness and business.



Yet deep within the human psyche there is an inner sense of 'Always'. From infinity to our connection to the land to pondering our mortality it's hard not to be touched at times and in ways with thoughts around 'Always'. Simply to look up at the night sky and see the Milky Way can bring us face to face with the vastness of 'Always', just as it did for the Psalmist... "When I look at the heavens... what are human beings that you are mindful of them..?" [Psalm 8].

“Place may of course be many things – it may be sea or earth or a spot in the firmament or on some distant world. And place may in many cases actually be land. But land is in all cases, and always, place”

And then in a flash our ‘Always’ becomes centred around the immediate and ourselves once again – what is ours – how important we are – what we own and shape – what we can conquer – from land and creation, to power and organisation, to consuming and domination.

However, at times, like a thread of reality, we are once more touched with that inner sense of ‘Always’.

Slowly over years I’ve realised the significance of ‘Always’ in terms of country and people’s connection to their country through the voice of Australian Aboriginal people. I think of refugees and migrants. I think of our modern history of dispossession – Palestinians and Uighurs. Of cultures and faiths, children and mobs forced to move away. I think of the significance of returning to country the remains of people once removed to museums and glass cases around the world. I think of the enduring connection world over that indigenous people have with their country; trees, animals, water, land and sky. And for me, in the place I find myself in and as much as I love the Australian land, stand in awe under its

great gums, sit on the banks of an ancient water course, I feel somewhat like a visitor.

I’ve been reading a recently published book titled “Land” by Simon Winchester. This book is obviously about land – formation, ownership, mapping, dispossession, preserved, destroyed – the world over. In his book, Simon Winchester writes: “Place may of course be many things – it may be sea or earth or a spot in the firmament or on some distant world. And place may in many cases actually be land. But land is in all cases, and **always**, place.”¹ The word ‘always’ was highlighted by Winchester (not by me) and of course he is emphasising that beyond ownership within the land/country we connect to spiritually, culturally, as community, there is ‘always’ a deeper, enduring connection. Land is always, place.

¹ Winchester, S. Land, Harper Collins, London. 2020. p.41

It's taken me many years to begin to ponder the 'always' place of land and the meaning that place always has for different people. I pretty much just walked over land, travelled over country, heard about it, sat on it, looked at it, bought and sold it, dug it and wanted it and only now am I beginning to see the 'always' of place to us as humans.

For me there is also a theological consideration of 'always' in terms of creation and country as part of the 'always' presence of God including the 'always' that we cannot grasp as humans – infinity. As God is always, then even in our finiteness and mortality, we co-exist in the always of God and the place that we are part of, the land, the country, the earth, the sky is equally part of our 'always' with God.

This alone is an invitation to us to consider the 'Always' that peoples have with their place and country and it's an invitation to us to consider how we tread, walk, care for and honour both those people and the land on which we find ourselves now. It is indeed good, like a thread of reality, when we are once more touched with that inner sense of 'Always'.

Mark .

Always

Nathan Tyson | Manager, First Peoples Strategy and Engagement

The word “Always” can conjure many thoughts. As an Aboriginal person of my age, I can’t help but instantly think of the Land Rights catch-cry: “Always was, always will be, Aboriginal Land”. This cry rings as true today as it did in the 1980’s when our people marched in the streets for recognition of our unceded sovereignty and the right to our ancestral lands. We marched in the streets in the 80’s for recognition of our rights as First Peoples, as our people had done for many decades, and as we still do today.

I would like to think about “Always” differently in this piece of writing – I would like to ask: Will First Peoples in Australia always have to fight, rally, march and protest to seek our fundamental human rights?”

As a young man I thought our Elders and our older community leaders had made some significant gains through their protest actions in previous decades. We had the Day of Mourning Protest leading to a National Aborigines Day and then to what we now know as NAIDOC Day, and we had the Tent Embassy and protests in Canberra. We had the 1967 Referendum to change the Constitution to recognise Aboriginal people as part of the Australian population. We had seen the introduction of the Race Discrimination Act (Cth) in 1975, the Anti-Discrimination Act (NSW) in 1977, and the introduction of Land Rights legislation in NSW in 1983. We had seen our people gain access to education, and particularly tertiary education, in slowly increasing numbers. As a young Aboriginal man in my 20’s, studying at University, I thought we were really getting somewhere.



Three decades on and I find myself often frustrated that the same issues of wilful ignorance, racism and discrimination, continue to adversely impact First Peoples and our communities.

In 1983 the Aboriginal Land Rights Act (NSW) came into force - a piece of supposedly beneficial legislation that was meant to see Aboriginal people have unused Crown land returned to them. In NSW there is currently a backlog of about 37,000 land claims for unused Crown land made under the NSW Aboriginal Land Rights Act². I note these land claims have been made according to the provisions of the legislation, on "unused Crown Land", not on privately owned land which is outside the scope of the legislation. This "beneficial" legislation is great ... except for when the Government then sets up systems, policies and processes that appear designed to stall and frustrate legitimate Aboriginal land claims.

In 2008 the then Prime Minister of Australia apologised for the policies and practices that saw the forced removal of Aboriginal children from their families. In 2021 Aboriginal families are having children removed at a higher rate than any time since colonisation. Many Aboriginal people see this as another (or ongoing) Stolen Generation. NSW has the highest rate of Aboriginal children in care: approximately 40% of children in out-of-home care are Aboriginal, nearly 10 times the rate of non-Indigenous children.

In 2019, the Family is Culture review of the NSW out-of-home-care system found "widespread noncompliance" with law and policy. The review also found that "child protection workers regularly gave "misleading" evidence to the children's court, often took the most traumatic option by removing Aboriginal children – including newborns – from their families, and operated in a "closed system" without transparency."³

In 2016, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people constituted just 2% of the Australian adult population but comprised more than one quarter (27%) of the national adult prison population.⁴ In NSW Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people represent about 3% of the population, and 24% of the prison population.⁵ In 2015, based on a comparison of available international data, Aboriginal people in Australia were the most incarcerated people on the planet⁶, and the non-reduction in incarceration rates of Aboriginal people in Australia would suggest this is still likely the case.

2 <https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2020/jul/10/a-national-disgrace-37000-aboriginal-land-claims-left-languishing-by-nsw#:~:text=There%20are%2037%2C000%20unresolved%20Aboriginal,a%20form%20of%20institutional%20racism.>

3 <https://tinyurl.com/zm9yakj5>

4 <https://tinyurl.com/hdtbtevt>

5 <https://tinyurl.com/hdtbtevt>

6 <https://theconversation.com/factcheck-qanda-are-indigenous-australians-the-most-incarcerated-people-on-earth-78528>

It's been 30 years since the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths In Custody (RCIADIC) issued 339 Recommendations designed to reduce the risks of deaths in custody, at least a third of which have not been effectively implemented. Many recommendations have not been implemented at all. At the time of writing 475 Aboriginal people have died in custody since the RCIADIC, 5 of these deaths have occurred in the last 4 months. Despite repeated Coroner's findings of neglect, poor practices, and repeated failures to follow established policy and procedures, no individual has been held accountable for any of these deaths in custody.

And then we have youth incarceration rates... young Indigenous Australians aged 10–17 remained 17 times as likely as young non-Indigenous Australians to be in detention on an average night in the June quarter 2020.⁷ Add to this situation the fact that Australia's First Peoples youth (5-17) commit suicide at roughly 5 times the rate of non-First Peoples youth⁸, and you begin to understand the dire situation, and levels of trauma, facing First Peoples families and communities.

And lastly, I'll highlight that Australia remains the only Commonwealth (ie. colonised) country that has not formed a Treaty with its First Peoples.

I could mention a range of other socio-economic data that shows the significant disparity between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal socio-economic indicators, but suffice to say we have a long way to go to achieve socio-economic equality for all Australians.

I began writing this piece on "Sorry Day", a day when we remember and lament the tragic events that impacted, and continue to impact, thousands of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and their families across Australia. If you haven't watched the Bringing Them Home video⁹ I would encourage you to do so... it is a powerful reminder of the terrible impact that the Assimilation policy of past Australian Governments has had, and continues to have, on our First Peoples families and communities.

I really hope that First Peoples and our allies won't have to "always" be marching in the streets to raise awareness of these issues, and to seek justice. So what can we do to heal and move forward? What can our Church and its members do to advocate for justice for First Peoples and make a positive difference?

In 1994 the Uniting Church in Australia issued the Covenant Statement¹⁰ - this statement is an ongoing call to action for all members of the Uniting Church. I ask that all members of the Uniting Church (and others who may be reading this) take the time to do some learning about Australia's First Peoples, as increased

7 <https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/youth-justice/youth-detention-population-in-australia-2020/contents/summary>

8 [https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lanchi/article/PIIS2352-4642\(19\)30034-3/fulltext](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lanchi/article/PIIS2352-4642(19)30034-3/fulltext)

9 <https://bth.humanrights.gov.au/media/video>

10 <https://resources.uca.org.au/resources/covenanting/item/135-covenanting-statement-1994>

knowledge will lead to better understanding and improved relationships between First Peoples and other Australians. The Synod of NSW and the ACT has a resource webpage that includes a range of useful links that can assist as a starting point, see: <https://nswact.uca.org.au/first-nations-resources/> .

Long before my people came to this land your people were here. You were nurtured by your traditions, by the land, and by the Mystery that surrounds us all and binds all creation together. My people did not hear you when you shared your understanding and your Dreaming....

From UCA covenanting statement 1994...

I ask that people use their newfound knowledge about First Peoples, our shared history, and the “truth” about various issues to help counter the myths and negative stereotypes of Aboriginal people that abound in our communities. Use your knowledge and voice to speak up against racism and discrimination, and to help educate other people.

I ask that people visit the Synod of NSW and the ACT website, <https://nswact.uca.org.au/> and use the link there to send an email to your local Member of Parliament to support the Statement from the Heart and its call for “Voice, Treaty, Truth”. It’s a small effort, only taking a few minutes, but it can make a difference.

And finally, I ask that people consider what being a Christian means if we don’t listen to the story of the Good Samaritan, if we don’t love our neighbour, and if we continue to treat the least of our community badly? Standing up for what is right is often not the easiest road, but it is the path we should choose because of our faith.

Thank you for reading, and for doing what you can to support First Peoples and to stand against injustice.

Always

Chris Budden | Retired Minister, Hunter Presbytery

For Second Peoples who have lived on land for generations, who have farmed and struggled, who have endured drought and bushfire, conversations about the sovereignty of First Peoples can be deeply disturbing. It is easy to respond with fear and anger to such language as “always was, always will be Indigenous land,” because there seems to be a threat to the land that has been worked for a long time.

First Peoples often do not have the right or possibility of living on land that had been the foundation for their culture, law, family relationships and economy for round 50,000 years. Invaded by a distant colonial power, denied their humanity, robbed of their land, abused and taken from parents, and yet still affirming both sovereignty and continuing rights to land.

How do two peoples – one dispossessed and marginalised, and yet refusing to cede their claims to this place, and the other who, from their perspective and according to European law, legally occupy land – relate to each other? How do we co-exist in this country?

What story does the church tell (others will tell other and different stories) in the face of what are both personal struggles and fears, and questions about the shape of the Australian nation? How does our story sustain hope rather than fear? What do we contribute to the national conversation about the relationship that should exist between First and Second Peoples; about land, the right to have a voice, justice and reparation, and the ways we learn to live together in the face in the face of tragic historical events that cannot be changed?

Any story we tell must be framed by love and grace, the need to love our neighbour, respect for the earth, and the centrality of justice and reconciliation. It is a story framed by Jesus who welcomed outcasts, crossed boundaries, brought healing to those destroyed by Roman occupation and harsh religious laws, and who stood with the very least.

Let me suggest how that Christian story might play out in our conversations about land in this country.

The first thing to say is that land/ earth is central to the biblical story, which begins with the creation or uncovering of earth, and claims that land is at the

centre of every covenant in the Old Testament. When God made covenant with the people, when God called people into a relationship and set out the terms of the relationship, there was always something about occupation of the land. Ellen Davis reminds us that the biblical texts of the Old Testament, in particular, are wrestling with not just spiritual things, but with how humans live in relation to the earth in the presence of God. That is, religious life is both about spirituality and an “elaborate land ethic, land reverence, and agrarian practice meant to safeguard the holiness of the land.”¹¹

The problem is that the Christian tradition has often removed God from the earth – into a safe and distant place called “heaven” – and been very critical of any idea that God can be known in and through the earth. This re-enforces the move in society to make earth property or real estate, something to be used solely for humans, and with no reference to either God or our mutual life with the rest of creation.

As Norman Habel¹² and others make clear, the creation story in Genesis offers another understanding of God and land. In Genesis 1 the earth is not created out of nothing by a distant God, but is uncovered from the waters by the Spirit. There is no reason to think that God moves away from that place but continues to be present in and sustain and nurture the earth. Whatever the place of humans in creation, we are always connected and inter-related. There is a mutuality in creation – Genesis 2:5 says the earth needs human caring and, clearly, we need the earth if we are to live.

So, the first part of the story we tell says that land is not simply real estate but is a place that may bear for us the Spirit. We are to care for and be custodians for the earth, not because we are the superior creatures who are stewards, but as part of our mutually sustaining relationship with creation. Our relationship – First and Second Peoples – is about being custodians who both sustain the earth and gain our life from it.

The second part of our story has to do with truth-telling, confession, and making amends. The story that was told when the First Fleet arrived in 1788 was that there were few people, and they had little connection to the land. This



¹¹ Wendell Berry. “Introduction,” to Ellen F. Davis, *Scripture, Culture, and Agriculture: An Agrarian Reading of the Bible* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009), xii.

¹² See, for example, Norman Habel, “Geophany: The Earth Story in Genesis 1,” in *The Earth Story in Genesis*, eds. Norman C. Habel and Shirley Wurst. *The Earth Bible Volume 2* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000).

was the foundation of the myth of terra nullius – empty and unoccupied. Not only did this mean that land was taken without treaty or purchase (contrary to international law of the time¹³), but there was a denial of the experiences of First Peoples. The wars, violence, massacres, and sexual abuse were denied and hidden. The people could not tell their story, or explain the trauma that continues to haunt many communities.

“The people could not tell their story, or explain the trauma that continues to haunt many communities.”

And Second Peoples have built their identity and national story on lies, and have made claims about sovereignty that sit on very shaky ground.

Christians claim that truth-telling is an important part of reconciliation, of building just and caring and inclusive relationships. As Second Peoples we need to listen to the stories of First Peoples and so affirm their history. As a nation we need to acknowledge the harm done, and the need to make amends.

Racism runs deep in this country. Unconsciously many people see First Peoples as lesser people. It is too easy to blame First Peoples for their present plight, rather than understand the impact of colonial history. It is easy to avoid any real engagement and friendships.

Too often Christians join the rest of the nation in saying that the taking of land was a past event, and we should simply move on and live now. But the reality is that the past continues to impact on the present. The claim of “always” reminds us that the past cannot simply be closed off; settlement did not simply happen once back in 1788 – it is a continuing conversation about how First and Second Peoples live together, who has a voice in determining the life of the nation, and how as a nation we share responsibility to care for the earth and its life.¹⁴

The third part of our story is about the importance of reconciliation to the work and hope of God. The Basis of Union speaks about the central work of God being “the reconciliation and renewal of the whole creation.” This is the task that comes to the fore when we hear language about sovereignty and “always.” How do we as Christians contribute to a form of co-existence that is just, inclusive,

¹³ For an excellent account of this and other issues around invasion and land and history, see Henry Reynolds, *Truth-Telling: History, Sovereignty and the Uluru Statement* (Sydney: NewSouth Publishing, 2021).

¹⁴ For example, conversations about access by First Peoples to land have usually assumed (as the Mabo judgement affirmed) that all land is Crown Land, and First Peoples have some continuing common law or legislated rights to land. But First Peoples insist that they have a prior claim to the land that is not ceded. The challenge of “always” is: First Peoples are not claiming a right to crown land, but to their own land – and this claim needs to be part of more serious conversations in this country.

truthful about history, respectful of the other as our neighbour whom we love, and makes the sort of amends that makes new history possible?

How do we honour the claim that God was in this place nurturing First Peoples for over 50,000 years before European's came? I think the claim of "always," with its assumption that land is not simply real estate or property has the potential to build bridges between First Peoples and farmers and the Christian story.

The "always" claim is centrally about the right to continue to honour and care for the land and for relationships to the Creator Spirit (while not ignoring the need to live). I think people on the land understand that, and that can be the foundation for new relationships.

The other thing is that "always" is local – a particular place, a local wisdom, a religious life attached to the earth. It is about local memory and wisdom; and this affirmation may help church's and farmers re-affirm the local against agri-businesses that see land as economy and not life.

Here is the real challenge in "always." How do we live in ways that love our neighbour as ourselves? How do we build relationships, nurture trust, pay attention to what people say, and forge imaginative new ways? How, for example, can people negotiate ways to share responsibility for land – to till and keep, and to be custodians of the stories that nurture land and Spirit, and to build right practices for economy, people, and land?

One final note. Christians often say that our relationship with Jesus has nothing to do with land; our hope is in heaven. But that is far too simple, particularly when biblical texts have been used to justify taking of land in both the USA and Australia. "Land does not matter to Christians" is the slogan developed to oppose claims by First Peoples to land.

The issue is not that land does not matter to Christians (or what would we be arguing about). It is that land is not property, and it is not owned; it is cared for on behalf of God. It is the place where we live, it is what makes life possible. The challenge for us as Christians in Australia is how a people of the land, who were made landless, can again share in caring for and benefitting from the land. It is about those who now farm the land can be open and trusting of others who have responsibilities for the land on behalf of God. It is about how, as a nation, we can help dispossessed people build new life. It is about building relationships, being truthful, working out of trust and not fear, and honouring the earth – and God - together.

A conversation with...



Rev. Peter Boughey
Casino Uniting Church

Rev. Peter Boughey is the minister at Casino Uniting Church but in many ways his ministry reaches way beyond the church doors to the community of Casino and Grafton working with young indigenous offenders. His work with these young people began sixteen years ago, where Peter was the chaplain in the detention centre for boys at Grafton. Peter then expanded his role as chaplain by giving them the opportunity of making toys and creating art works. He is well known in the community as Pastor Pete and his work has been recognised by the state government and media outlets who have been inspired by the stories of the success of these young people.

I visited Peter in Casino and we sat down to have a chat which I recorded for a later podcast but have transcribed part of our conversation for this Ruminations issue.

Rev. Peter Boughey: I have always been a believer in social justice and I have had the opportunity of working in jails and in 2005 I started in a youth detention centre in Grafton which was detention centre for 45 boys maximum between the ages of 14-20 and I use my faith to change lives. I keep on telling the boys in there, 'God didn't make any junk'. Faith is available, you can change your life. So I have done it in a practical way by offering them a job when they got out of detention where they could actually get paid. I have had about 54 boys, mainly, come through in the past 4 years. Most of them have got jobs or they have left here to raise a family which I think is great because they have probably come from a broken home. Really those young men helping to raise a family is probably just as important as having a job. The kind of jobs they have is in the meat works in Casino, macadamia farms, apprenticeships and work other parts of the country. One of the original young men went through the detention centre three times, worked here for 18 months, during this time he studied at TAFE and now he is a fully qualified youth worker and he has landed a job in Canada but is yet to get there due to the restriction on overseas travel.

The work I do is an expression of my faith and the call from God to do the job to work alongside youth and in particular indigenous youth.

Subsequently we are going to have aboriginal language classes here. We need to remember it's not just one common language but in Bunjalung nation there is probably ten different dialects between here and the coast. At the moment we are just learning the dialect that comes from Casino area.

By learning different things for all of us, no matter who you are or what you do the more you learn and the more confident you become. For these young people it gives them enough confidence to apply for jobs. They will see a job opportunity and think "I could do that" whereas before when they were in detention, I asked them what they wanted to do, they would shrug their shoulders.

At TCL I encourage them to apply for jobs if I can give them a reference or help them in some other way, I can do that as well.

In many ways it's about education and employment which really are the keys to a successful life. But sometimes a lot of these kids don't have a good education, so I put the employment before the education and they get educated on the job here. We had a kid here who was sent by the magistrate, I asked him what do want to do in life, he said he wanted to become a builder, at that time he couldn't read a ruler but now he has an apprenticeship with a construction company. In a small way we educated him here where we make toys, he needed to work out measurements in order to assemble the toys. He got to the point of being confident enough to go to TAFE and learn a lot more to prepare him for the construction industry.

The great thing about what we do at TCL and with KOFY is that it has an impact, it gets results, I just wish I had started this a lot earlier.

The website to Toys Change Lives and Keep Our Freedom Youth is www.kofy.org.au and there is also an opportunity to make a donation on this website.

TCL and KOFY have also appeared on the ABC, Prime and a German media outlet.

Our many thanks to Rev. Peter Boughey for taking the time to chat about this incredibly significant enterprise and expression of his faith.

News from Saltbush

Rev. Geoff Wellington | Saltbush Scattered Community Minister

Greetings to you all from the Saltbush Team

The past few months have been full of activities and travel for the Team as we have setup and given away a number of TV Units, cameras and cabling enabling congregations to connect with Saltbush, the wider Church and their communities. Christian Communities like Yenda, Harden, Nyngan, Chatham, Barraba and Manilla are now enjoying the use of some updated technology. A huge thank you to the individuals, congregations and presbyteries who donate to Saltbush that enables this to happen. It makes a big difference to our Christian Communities to be able to connect remotely and cut across the tyranny of distance and the feeling of being isolated and forgotten.



People from across Australia and via Zoom from New Zealand joined the Saltbush Team at the Uniting National Rural Gathering – Galong to explore rural ministry in all its forms. It was a wonderful time of learning and sharing together. There are some exciting approaches happening and Saltbush was encouraged by the feedback we received from our sharing of our experience with you.



The National Gathering was followed by the Riverina Presbytery Retreat also at Galong where people were encouraged to explore working in the Vineyard from the Parable in Matthew's gospel 19: 27 – 20: 16. If you didn't catch the video on Face Book check it out here <https://www.facebook.com/Saltbushcommunity/videos/207674094348117>



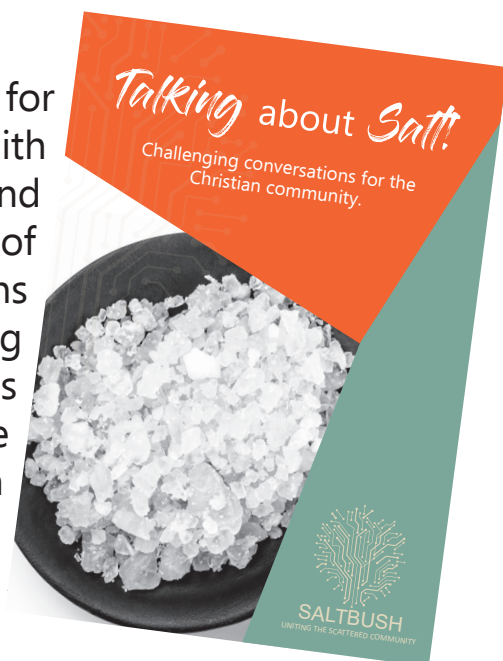
The Saltbush Team has also been pulling together our report and future plans in preparation for Synod21. This report will be available soon and we look forward to sharing some exciting developments in the near future for Saltbush as it continues to grow and develop across the land.

The Saltbush online Cafe are now running continuously every month to six weeks and currently Mark is hosting a Café "In the stillness of winter". It was great to have Rev Yvonne Ghavalas co-host a Saltbush Café "Creative Community – Easter to Pentecost" just recently and Tim has been looking at the lectionary for the week during April. Being part of a Café is a great way to connect with others, dig a bit deeper into your faith and life. Why not be in touch and join a Café in the coming months? New Cafés are advertised via our email contact list and online at the Saltbush Facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/> and the Website <https://saltbushcommunity.uca.org.au/>

The Saltbush Team have been working with Rev Nicole Flemming (Candidate Formation Coordinator) and the Candidates for Ministry and how they can explore Rural Ministry. The Saltbush Team is really looking forward to welcoming them to a time of rural orientation and opening up with them what God is doing in the

Rural and Regional parts of the Synod. Please pray for them and us as together we continue to listen to the call of God on our lives and continue to be formed as ministers in the Uniting Church.

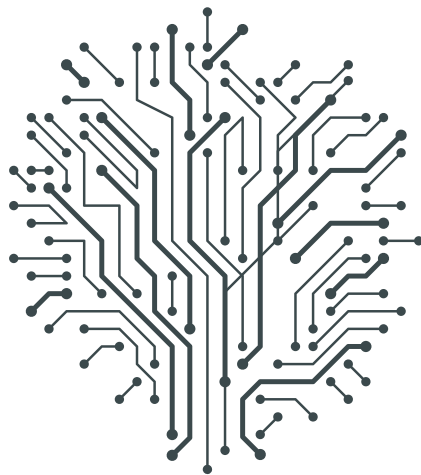
The Saltbush Team has been working on a new tool for Christian Communities as they explore their life and faith together – “Talking about Salt”. These can be difficult and challenging conversation at times but unless as people of faith we are prepared to have these sorts of conversations then we get stuck doing the same old things and getting nowhere. “Talking about Salt” offers Christian communities a way of exploring life and faith together and if you choose doing something about it. Presently the Saltbush Team is getting some feedback and checking things out with various people. We hope to launch “Talking about Salt” later this year, so look out for the launch.



There will be a Saltbush Gathering in Lismore on the 21st August at the Uniting Church and you would be most welcome to come along and explore life and faith together with the folks in the Far North Coast. The Saltbush Team along with the Far North Cost Faith Region will also be inducting Rev Peter Overton as their Regional Minister that day. Peter will become part of the Saltbush Team with his focus on the Region and we look forward to having Peter on the Team.

The Saltbush Team is also working towards a Saltbush Gathering in Dubbo in October this year. Stay tuned for more details in the coming weeks.

We hope that you enjoy reading this current edition of Ruminations and we look forward to meeting with you on our travels soon or online at a Café. The Saltbush Team is always happy to talk and be in touch via Saltbush@nswact.uca.org.au



SALTBUSH

UNITING THE SCATTERED COMMUNITY
