

Anglican Deaconess Ministries

2022 Annual Report



“I thank my God every time I remember you. In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now, being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.”

– PHILIPPIANS 1:3-6 NIV

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

Anglican Deaconess Ministries acknowledges the Gadigal people of the Eora nation as the traditional custodians of the land on which ADM stands. In his wisdom and love our Heavenly Father gave this land to them as caretakers on his behalf. We pay our deep respects to their Elders past, present and emerging and extend that respect to the many indigenous peoples of these lands now called Australia.

Contents

Inside you'll find inspiring stories of Christian women serving God faithfully in a variety of contexts and spaces. We pray that their stories, while demonstrating the value of Anglican Deaconess Ministries, Mary Andrews College, The Greenhouse and the Mental Health and Pastoral Care Institute, will also encourage and spur you on as you serve God where he has placed you.

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1

We developed and shared ADM's five-year Strategic Plan

2

We established The Greenhouse as a flagship program in implementing ADM's Strategic Plan

3

21 women graduated from Mary Andrews College, many having completed their study amidst extended lockdown

7

We re-packaged *Press On: Building Resilience + Mental Wellbeing* for churches to run the course in small group settings

8

Three units were taught in the *Graduate Certificate of Pastoral Care for Mental Health*

4

43 students enrolled to study at Mary Andrews College

10 things we're thanking God for

5

A grant was awarded to the women of the Aboriginal Evangelical Fellowship for stage two of their grief, loss and trauma care workshop program

6

39 Christian women were awarded Fellowships and Grants

9

Almost 3,000 couples took part in the MHPCI's *Building a Safe + Strong Marriage* course – through churches running the course in person or couples signing up to do it online.

10

Our team and the way we've all worked together over the past year





Note from Interim CEO

It is exciting to have the opportunity to re-engage with the ADM and MAC communities as Interim CEO. I continue to praise God and to be inspired by the desire of the members, the staff and the Board to be stewards of the heritage and core mission of Anglican Deaconess Ministries. This is supported and enabled by strong capital stewardship.

Together these two elements, combined with the new Strategic Plan, mean that the future holds boundless opportunities for ADM and MAC to see women equipped and encouraged to serve Christ and his Church in the Sydney Anglican Diocese and far beyond.

MARYANNE DAVIS
INTERIM CEO

Letter from the Chair

We are so thankful for God's provision over the last year and the opportunity as Board and Management to develop the Strategic Plan and to begin the process of implementing the plan into our ADM ministries and structures.

The Board has been encouraged by the ongoing faithful ministry of Mary Andrews College, the Mental Health and Pastoral Care Institute, the Fellowships Program, our grants, and our Women in Ministry Support Scheme. It is incredible to hear the many stories of how womens' lives and ministries are changed and empowered by these ministries of ADM. We are very excited about The Greenhouse and for the opportunity to expand the number and variety of women who we can encourage and equip in their service of Jesus in their varied and complex lives.

We were also encouraged by our members engagement in our new Constitution and for the passing of the constitution at our March extraordinary general meeting. We pray that this document will be a helpful guide for the future of ADM.

This year it is important to note the contribution of Rev Philip Wheeler who has stepped down as a Director this year. Philip served on the Board for the last 16 years and we are thankful for his faithfulness, wisdom, and warmth over so many years of service. I would also like to particularly thank Rev Jo Gibbs and Stephanie Dunk for their role in the development of the strategic plan. We also are thankful for our faithful staff who have persevered and stepped up in unsettled times.

I wish to extend my deep thanks to each of the ADM board members who give generously of their time and skills and for their deep commitment to seeing ADM flourish in serving Jesus.

We look forward to continuing to implement the strategic plan so that every woman in every church can be equipped and engaged to serve Christ. As members of ADM please join us in praying that we might have significant impact on God's Church and His world as we see women grow in their love and service of Jesus.



REV. CAROLINE ANDREWS
CHAIR

Farewell to Rev. Jo Gibbs



In late May 2022, Anglican Deaconess Ministries announced that Chief Executive Officer Rev. Jo Gibbs had resigned from her role at the organisation.

Rev. Gibbs joined Anglican Deaconess Ministries as CEO in 2020. During her time with ADM, Rev. Gibbs was responsible for overseeing the development of the new ADM Strategic Plan. This involved extensive consultation including twenty listening forums with participants across Australia. Rev. Gibbs led ADM through the COVID period while also deepening relationships with key stakeholders including evangelical Anglican bishops and developing new strategic partnerships. Her spiritual leadership of the organisation showed her heart for the gospel and passionate concern for discipleship to be woven throughout her work.

During her time at ADM, she developed key new initiatives including a training group for developing Bible talks with key women across Sydney and

the Illawarra. She also oversaw the development of a number of resources for church ministry teams and advocated broadly for the needs of Christian women.

In reflecting on her decision to leave Anglican Deaconess Ministries, Rev. Gibbs commented:

"I'm so thankful for the incredible staff team I've worked alongside, who have brought such a high level of expertise to their work. It has been such a privilege to connect with Christian women across Australia, and to dream together about what a great future could look like. I have loved the work of equipping and engaging women for serving Christ, making spaces for women to use their gifts and grow as disciples of Jesus. It is work that I will be continuing as I leave ADM. I look forward to seeing the new opportunities that God opens up as I continue in Christian ministry."

The ADM Board is very thankful for Jo's contribution and hard work. Our prayers and warm wishes go with Jo for the future.

Where we came from

Anglican Deaconess Ministries (ADM) began 130 years ago when an Anglican Minister, the Reverend Mervyn Archdall, and his wife Martha set aside a quarter of Archdall's stipend for the equipping of Christian women. The Archdalls set up a lay order, the 'deaconesses', modelled on a similar order in Germany, and in 1891, ADM was born.

Through prayer and partnership, sacrificial serving and giving, our work grew from small beginnings over many years to include hospitals, nursing homes and schools. Always at the centre has been a foundation built on Jesus Christ and serving him.

As our society has changed over the years, so has the shape of ADM's work. ADM continues its legacy through a diverse range of innovative programs and events for Christian women, to see them equipped and encouraged for gospel work. This includes Mary Andrews College (MAC), the Mental Health and Pastoral Care Institute (MHPCI), Mercy Ministries, the ADM Annual Public Lecture, Fellowships, and a range of programs and funding for Christian women.

We remain committed to seeing women flourish in Christ, being built up as they serve the Lord and provided with the resources they need to reach the world for Jesus. We are privileged to share some of their stories through this report.



Deaconesses outside the women's college

What we've done

In 2021, the ADM Board and staff worked across the year to plan for the next phase of our organisation. We asked a number of significant questions, but at the core of our inquiry was: "What should ADM be doing, under God, for the next five years?". We asked this question of key stakeholders and of each other.

We heard from Christian women across Australia in local churches, in the workforce and academia, serving in their homes and communities, and across a range of backgrounds, ages and levels of leadership. We also heard from senior ministers about the challenges and opportunities they see for Christian women in their churches, and hosted forums which welcomed input from the wider community. It was an exciting, rewarding and stimulating conversation, which informed the way forward for ADM.

Where we're going

In November 2021, the ADM Board approved the new Strategic Plan for 2022-2026. At the core of this plan are the ADM Strategic Priorities and Principles which form the foundation for all of ADM's undertakings over the next five years.

This Strategic Plan was specifically designed to address the challenges identified and make the most of the opportunities perceived by Christian women.

OUR STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

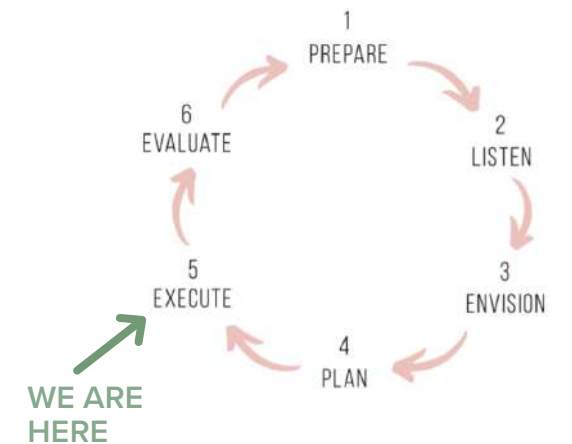
- **Every woman** equipped and engaged in serving Christ in the Church, the community and the world
- In **every church** an integrated discipleship-focused mercy ministry
- Through **every endeavour** a sustainable, innovative and effective organisation capable of achieving our goals

OUR STRATEGIC PRINCIPLES

- Working in, through and for women
- For the greatest gospel impact
- In partnership with local churches
- Using faithful inputs and towards measurable outcomes

EXECUTING AND IMPLEMENTING

We're now up to step 5 of the strategic planning cycle: Execute. That means it's time to think big, make bold plans and, under God, step forward into a new season of supporting, equipping and championing women.



In this Annual Report, you'll get a glimpse of where we're headed, and of some of the opportunities we have to move forwards under our new Strategic Plan.



Want to find out more about ADM's new Strategic Plan? Scan the QR code to visit our website.

Creating a place for Christian women with The Greenhouse

As part of implementing our new Strategic Plan, ADM began the innovation and development of a new program area in 2021, The Greenhouse. The Greenhouse is designed to support Christian women through a range of training masterclasses and networks (Greenhouse Guilds) for women in different industries, ministries and life stages.

The Greenhouse exists online as a digital community – reaching out into regional areas and across Australia – as well as hosting in-person events. In 2021, ADM received a grant of \$55,000 for The Greenhouse towards the set-up of the digital platform and the hire of a part-time Program Manager.

Interim CEO Maryanne Davis says, “The Greenhouse is a key program in ADM pursuing its new Strategic Plan over the next five years, bringing Christian women together to support each other to grow and take the gospel out into the varied contexts in which they live, work and serve.”

In alignment with the Strategic Plan, the vision of The Greenhouse is to see “Every woman equipped and engaged in serving Christ in the Church, the community and the world”.

We’ve heard from many Christian women that isolation is a significant challenge as they serve across different vocations and contexts. One of our big dreams for The Greenhouse is that it will be a place where Christian women can get together. It’s also what’s driving our commitment to make The Greenhouse a digital platform, so women can join in no matter where they are or what their accessibility needs may be.

The core offering in The Greenhouse is the Guilds. Greenhouse Guilds are small groups of Christian women with something in common – they work in the same industry, have similar key relationships, or serve in the same ministries at different churches. They meet monthly to support, encourage and challenge each other to grow and develop as Christian women where God has placed them. In between meetings, Guilds connect online in a safe and private chat forum to provide ongoing support and encouragement.

Starting in 2023, The Greenhouse will also offer professional development and training across a range of areas, bringing Christian women together with top-quality teachers, thinkers, trainers, industry professionals and ministry leaders.



LEARN MORE ABOUT THE GREENHOUSE:
[DEACONESSMINISTRIES.ORG.AU/
THE-GREENHOUSE](https://deaconessministries.org.au/the-greenhouse)



*The Greenhouse Program Manager,
Dr Katrina Clifford*

We are delighted to report that Dr Katrina Clifford has been appointed Program Manager of The Greenhouse.

When searching for a Program Manager in early 2022, we were thankful to God for bringing Katrina to apply for the role and for the expertise and passion she brings to it.

Katrina says, “What I love about The Greenhouse is that it takes investing in women seriously and practically – how can we love and support Christian women in ways that actually do support them, so that they can be emboldened to live out their gifts and their calling, in the Church and in the world?”

Katrina has always been passionate about supporting women and hearing their voices. In her previous role as the Dean of Academics at Robert Menzies College, she has been an advocate for better training and support for female student leaders. This led her to be appointed a 2022 ADM Senior Fellow, where she worked on developing a training program to support young women as they move into positions of leadership.

Katrina is excited by the potential of The Greenhouse to raise up and support Christian women all over Australia, and to better equip them to live for Christ in their communities. She says, “I’m looking forward to watching women invest in each other, raise each other up, and support each other, and to seeing The Greenhouse go from being an idea to a reality that makes a difference in the lives of real women. And I’m looking forward to seeing what God does with our efforts. If we do this well, God willing, The Greenhouse has the potential to impact not just women today, but future generations of Christian men and women too.”



*The first Greenhouse Gathering
with speaker Valerie Ling*

Bringing the gospel to South Asian migrants

WITH JERI JONES SPARKS



ADM Grantee Jerulin (Jeri) Jones Sparks

Jerulin (Jeri) Jones Sparks has a difficult name on purpose. When she married her husband, Andrew Sparks, she decided to keep her name, Jones, too.

A few generations back, the colonial influence of the British Empire redefined the cultural landscape of South India. Within living memory, Jeri's great grandparents converted to Roman Catholicism, and under the influence of colonial India, future generations were given 'Christian' names like Jones.

Her parents also experienced the impact of colonial Christianity, and when they came to Australia they brought their cultural faith with them. Jeri says, "While my parents were pious people, their faith was cultural and unquestioned until they moved from Chennai to Sydney. It was an unlikely meeting with a group of Indian Christians that gave them the opportunity to wrestle with the Bible for themselves."

Through discipleship, rigorous Bible teaching and theological training, Jeri's parents developed a relationship with the Lord Jesus. Saturday nights spent with Indian Christians in a Merrylands lounge room changed the trajectory of her family.

Now Jeri is the Assistant Minister for Outreach at St James Anglican Church Croydon, carrying the history of her family's faith.

Jeri shares, "When I discuss my faith with Indian friends, they will often carefully ask a version of this objection: isn't Christianity the white man's religion? This question has warrant. Of course, Indian Christianity today is connected to the effects of colonisation – but there is much more to the story."

Knowing the need for the real Jesus among South Asian communities, Jeri pitched for and was awarded a grant as a part of ADM's Annual Funding Event. This grant of \$18,000 is to direct and develop a course of eight evangelistic videos in Tamil and Hindustani. This course will reach and empower South Asian Christians to share the gospel with their friends and neighbours.

At St James, Jeri runs four evangelistic courses and while they all have their strengths, their common

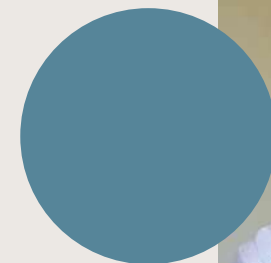
weakness is that they speak to the dominant culture and its biases.

"They" take a propositional approach – putting forward a concept, running through a flow of logic and then asking for a response from the hearer; that just doesn't 'land' for migrant groups from the global south," Jeri explains.

"Talking vaguely Eastern cultures, those are just not the questions that people are asking. It's not landing from a values or world view, especially that first generation of migrants."

Where the history of colonisation has weakened Christian witness, the gospel proves more potent still. Where Biblical truth has been obscured, the Holy Spirit is powerful to illuminate. This is what makes Jeri's course such an exciting project.

Jeri says, "To diminish the story of Indian Christianity to a simply colonial capitulation fails to explain the reality I've lived. 20-something years ago, our family found something truer and richer than whitewashed religion when we found Christian orthodoxy – the Way, the Truth and the Life. We are connected to a



Jeri and her fellow members of the Board for South Asian Outreach with ENC

“If the gospel is good news for all people, then, we need all kinds of people to enact and proclaim the gospel to all kinds of people. This passion and conviction have been a core part of my calling to ministry: it has kept me pursuing ministry when it has been difficult to do so. I also understand theological formation and integrated faith to be crucial in leadership – I deeply appreciate that ADM provides pathways for women to be such leaders.”

– Jeri Jones Sparks



Jeri with her father Joseph

Christian heritage from 2000-something years ago, even (and especially) as we eat Dum Biryani with our hands to celebrate Christmas.”

The core content of the course that Jeri will develop, in partnership with theologically astute and creative people from each cultural group, is based on a methodology for explaining the gospel that her father Joseph has developed and tested over the past 12 years.

“I grew up watching my dad develop this content and it’s been super-super-effective,” says Jeri.

“There’s been a constant feedback loop of understanding what people respond to and what hits home. So I feel really confident about the core framework.”

Using the Alpha course as a product model, the Good News Course will have three distinctive elements – heart language, cultural resonance and robust reformed theology. Jeri is partnering with City to City Australia, a church renewal and church planting network, and Crossview, experts at video production.

Jeri reflects on her 'spark' for the course. She says “I really saw that the missing piece in the power dynamics happens when the beautiful, well-meaning white minister is running a course and expects the migrant down the road to cross all these cultural barriers to come to a Christian setting, to hear the gospel from him in English. Like that makes no sense. I think we have to do better at that.”

Diversity has always been a defining feature of Christianity and that was never just a happy accident. Jesus sent his Spirit-filled followers, like Thomas, to the ends of the earth (Acts 1:8) and he sends us still to reach people of all nations.

Jeri’s experience as the daughter of Tamil-speaking migrants from India with a ‘white Christian’ name has complexities, but it also reflects the faithfulness of God.

She says, “I confess that I’ve sometimes been jealous of my Tamil friends with their lovely, rhythmic family names. I’ve sometimes been relieved to escape the ‘difficult’ Tamil family name that the English-speaking tongue falters on.”

But the history of her name speaks to the history of her culture and the faithfulness of God to her family. Jeri says, “I’m keeping Jones because it tells me who I am. Jones traces my family line which now carries the wonder of God’s redemption within it. Jones echoes the faithfulness of God who begins good work in His people and will surely carry it on to completion.”

Keeping evangelism at the heart of everything we do

Supporting Jeri’s work epitomises ADM’s new strategic principle: “Working in, through and for women for the greatest gospel impact”, which includes aiming for the ‘multiplier effect’.

Compelled by the urgency of the gospel and shaped by our deep biblical convictions, we keep at the forefront of all our work our desire to see the greatest number of people coming to know Jesus and grow in him, and the greatest number of women effectively equipped and engaged in this task.

THE CONTENT FROM THIS ARTICLE HAS BEEN ADAPTED FROM TWO PREVIOUSLY PUBLISHED ARTICLES:

‘Seeing a Sri Lankan man become Archbishop made me weep’
by Anne Lim, *EternityNews.com.au*, 24 September 2021

‘Why Jones is my Indian Christian Family Name’
by Jeri Jones Sparks, *EternityNews.com.au*, 30 June 2022

We are concerned not only with gospel proclamation, but with a gospel-centred framework for our work and lives as disciples of Jesus, as we seek to know, speak and live out his gospel.

We always look for a multiplier effect, prioritising what will grow the greatest number of mature disciples and have the greatest impact for God’s Kingdom.

Deaconess Dorothy Black

BY REV. JAN DONOHOO
FORMER ADM CHAPLAIN



Dorothy Lennox and Jean Standfield being set apart as deaconesses in 1951

Deaconess Dorothy Black (nee Lennox) recalled collecting memory verse cards as a child at the local Anglican Church in Lithgow. The Sunday School stories she heard sparked her interest and years later, after she became a Christian, she simply wanted to learn more.

Determined to learn not just the tools for ministry, but of God and his purposes, she moved to Newtown to study at Deaconess House, now known as Mary Andrews College.

Deaconess House enabled women to be formed theologically and prepared for ministry and mission. The Deaconess Institution Ministry had been set up by the Reverend Mervyn Archdale and his wife Martha in 1891 to help Christian women respond to the crucial needs around them with the good news of the Gospel, to offer hope and a hand to those in need.

Deaconess Mary Andrews, who served as Principal of Deaconess House from 1952 to 1975, supported Dorothy and other women who were keen to serve their Saviour, the Lord Jesus.

At the time, deaconesses worked in parishes, visited people in their homes, nursed the sick, taught Sunday School and Scripture in schools, and ran evangelistic meetings.

Having worked as a missionary in China, Mary Andrews urged her students to undertake two years of rigorous theological education, paired with practical experience with real people in the rough and tumble of the real world. "The measure of what you can do for the world will simply be what you allow God to do with yourself," students recalled Mary telling them.

Dorothy's parish experiences began with little of the security or pay rates that ministry workers receive today. She worked first in parish ministry in Alexandria (a branch of Waterloo) with the rector, the Reverend John Dahl, from 1949.

Dorothy and Jean Standfield were 'set apart' as deaconesses for Christian service on 11 March 1951 at St Andrews Cathedral Sydney by the then Archbishop Howard Mowll. Today, this is referred to as 'ordination', yet at that time there was a real sense of being 'set apart', to wholly commit to live and work, serving the Lord Jesus, through the Anglican Church.

There were few securities except God's faithfulness to be with his precious people, as promised in the Bible. That was a true comfort when difficulties arose, particularly as Dorothy moved from parish to parish.

Dorothy worked across nine different parishes from 1949 to 1987 – Alexandria, Ashfield, Katoomba, Newtown, Manly, Greenwich, Darlinghurst, Yagoona and Blacktown. She was the warden for two girls' homes – Pallister House in Greenwich and But-Ha-Gra in Croydon.



Archdeacon Di Nicolios and Deaconess Dorothy Black

She loved teaching Scripture in public schools, but also ran women's meetings, including Mothers Union, Youth fellowship groups and home Bible study groups. When the need arose, like other deaconesses, she conducted church services and baptised infants. Dorothy regarded this as a particular privilege and took it seriously and prayerfully.

As a CMS missionary, Dorothy worked on Groote Eylandt, the largest island in the Gulf of Carpentaria, from 1974 for 11 years and briefly in PNG with Asia Pacific Christian Mission.

Dorothy's work often meant sacrifice, taking initiative and self-discipline. Some of it was tough, but she kept on, confident in God's protective care and provision.

This impressive list of duties was not done to bring congratulation or praise to her. Rather, Dorothy wanted to bring others under the gospel of grace, which she experienced at a deep level.

She knew she wasn't perfect, and she knew she needed the forgiveness won by the Lord Jesus. Dorothy was no 'plaster saint', but a real woman gifted by God to bring honour to the Son – and so she committed her life to serving him.

To her great delight and surprise, Dorothy married Brian Black in 1997. She had met Brian 34 years earlier, when working as a deaconess in the parish of Yagoona. He was the rector and his first wife Joy, who later died, had been a dear friend of Dorothy's.

Dorothy's testimony was that she wanted to learn more about God. She did that and grew in maturity and experience, no longer a young naive girl, but a woman who learned to know God and be known by Him. Truly an honourable witness, and a life devoted in service to Christ.



Chaplaincy to the deaconesses

ADM is responsible for the ongoing pastoral support of the deaconesses. In late 2021, our chaplain Rev. Jan Donohoo retired from her position, and a new chaplain is to be appointed in the near future.

Supporting these committed women of Christ is a great honour for ADM, and we are glad to continue in gospel partnership with them as they live for God's glory.

A new chapter for ADM and the Aboriginal Evangelical Fellowship

ADM and the AEF partner together for Phase Two of the Our Story: Finding Hope Beyond Grief workshop program

Since 2016, ADM has collaborated with a wonderful team of women from the Aboriginal Evangelical Fellowship (AEF) to deliver the *Our Story: Finding Hope Beyond Grief* workshop program. *Our Story* is a clinically informed workshop program supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women as they explore and process their experiences of loss, grief and trauma. The workshop program facilitates healing through creative expression and a biblical framework anchored in the love of Christ.

Following the collaborative development of program materials, and the training of 10 workshop trainers from the Aboriginal Evangelical Fellowship, an initial pilot of the program saw the workshop delivered by the AEF in locations across Eastern and South Australia. These workshops were a huge success, and provided safe and supportive spaces for many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women to begin to process their experiences of grief, trauma and loss, and to anchor this in the love and healing that Christ brings.

New funding and support awarded

Following the successful rollout of this first phase of the pilot program, ADM is delighted to provide funding and support towards the next stage of the program in which the workshop program will now be piloted in Western Australia and the Northern Territory.

New Master Trainers will receive training, and the workshop will continue to provide culturally safe spaces for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women to explore grief, trauma and loss, and to move towards healing together.

We would love you to join us in prayer for the women of the AEF as they continue to bring Christ's love to their communities in countless ways, including through this workshop program. Pray for the Master Trainers who will deliver this phase of the workshop program, and for each and every one of the women who will attend these workshops.

Grief, loss and the love of Jesus

WITH SHARON MINNIECON



Sharon Minniecon at her Mary Andrews College Graduation

Aunty Sharon Minniecon is an Ugar (Stephen Island) woman. Sharon was born in Ayr in North Queensland as one of 13 children, and is a fifth-generation Christian. Now her three children are the sixth generation of Christians in her family.

Sharon has dedicated her life to ministry, especially ministry to her community, and has been instrumental in discipling many people across a life of faithful service to Christ. In her work she has had first-hand experience helping other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people navigate their unique experiences of grief and trauma, as well as dealing with her own as an Indigenous woman. Sharon reflects, "It's not only our journey, it's everybody's journey, 'cause we didn't create this, you know? And I think that's very important to understand. We got here just because of who we were."

Even amidst so much ongoing pain and loss within Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, Sharon has the hope of Christ and the strength of God to sustain her. She says, "It comes back to God being with us. He uses people to help us."

Growing up, Sharon was conscious of her Christian parents' sacrifices for their ministry. She saw how important their work was, not just because it was kingdom work, but because there were so few Indigenous ministers. She shares, "Our mum and dad were very good role models for ministry. We could see the cost there, but also the joy and how it would help

people. How when people found the Lord, their lives turned around and changed."

This faithful example placed the path of ministry on Sharon's heart early on in her life. She describes knowing her future as a ministry worker as a 'real revelation' when she was 15 years old. Sharon reflects, "The Holy Spirit was preparing me at such a young age. It wasn't a big thing in one way, you know? But it was just picking the right partner to do it with."

A few years later, Sharon met Ray Minniecon, and they eventually married. Ray went on to Bible College in 1977, studying through the Commonwealth Bible College in Katoomba, now known as Alphacrucis University College – Sydney.

After finishing college, Ray sought a ministry position. Despite his peers getting approached by churches, Ray and Sharon weren't able to find a place for them to join. This experience led them to join the Aboriginal Evangelical Fellowship (AEF). Sharon shares, "We knew that we wouldn't get picked because we were Indigenous people. And then we heard about

Aboriginal Evangelical Fellowship. So we had a talk with [AEF] and they said 'Yes, we're looking for someone in La Perouse and we'd love to have you.'"

What started in a church in La Perouse is a long career of faithful ministry that continues to impact people today. After La Perouse, Sharon and Ray were called to work in another AEF church – this time in Western Australia, where they worked among three churches and an Indigenous community south of Perth. Sharon also worked as a manager for a hostel in Perth, helping shepherd girls in Years 11 and 12 through their senior years.

In 1991, after almost a decade of ministry in Western Australia, Sharon and Ray returned to Sydney when Ray was asked to be the Director of World Vision's Indigenous Programs. Here they settled and continued to raise their family and engage in Indigenous ministries both in and out of their local church. Both Sharon and Ray were also instrumental in founding the Gawura School for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, which has recently celebrated its fifteenth anniversary.



Sharon and family celebrate her graduation

When the AEF and ADM partnered in 2016 to develop and deliver the pilot *Our Story – Finding Hope Beyond Grief* workshop program to support Indigenous women in healing from grief and trauma, Sharon's many years of experience ministering with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities made her an obvious choice as one of several workshop Master Trainers. The *Our Story* workshop program focuses on helping participants to begin identifying and healing from their own distinct experiences of grief, loss and trauma, and then enabling them to help others to do the same.

This program responds to significant and ongoing needs within Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, who continue to navigate a 'valley of grief' in the wake of colonisation. In reflecting on the scale of Indigenous experiences of grief, loss and trauma, Sharon says, "It's not just 10 years, it's intergenerational."

As a Master Trainer in the workshop pilot program, Sharon saw the real impact on the women involved. She reflects, "We could show them the policies of colonisation and the effects on our people, why we are in this mess of loss, grief and trauma, and what the ways are we can get out or go beyond – even as these things are still happening."



Sharon and the women in one of the pilot workshops



Sharon speaking at her graduation from Mary Andrews College

A few of the women who attended the program were from the Stolen Generations, and although some of them were Christians, they all felt they couldn't trust the Church as a result of their trauma. This is something Sharon was able to begin to unpack with them, to support them in working through their significant trauma. In acknowledging their experiences, she also helped them to understand how to "be doers of the word, not just readers". There is the hope that as they continue processing their grief, they will be able to feel safe and comfortable attending a church in the future.

Now that ADM has awarded further funding to the AEF and this workshop program, Sharon is excited to see her daughter, Larissa, take on the role of Program Manager. She says, "It's really beautiful to see it kind of rolled over and the younger generation leading, and also ADM believing in the younger generation too, with our guidance. Because obviously, we know our community well. And that's one of the good things about ADM, that they allow us to do it on our own, but with [their support]."

Sharon has also recently graduated from Mary Andrews College (MAC), where she studied theology. Theological study was something she had 'always wanted to do', but had been unable to due to financial and family commitments. To attend MAC and graduate with her degree was a great accomplishment for Sharon.

She says her study helped her to "hone her skills" and taught her practical things like counselling, how to better listen and engage with people, biblical history and how to understand the Bible better. Sharon shares that her studies gave her "different things that were

useful to equip me with the tools that I needed to add to the ministry that I was currently doing, so I could sharpen up."

Sharon's love of Christ is so evident in her ministry to others, and the compassion he has gifted her continues to extend the love of Christ across many churches and communities. In reflecting on counselling Indigenous Christians who are struggling with the church's role in colonisation, and with healing through grief, trauma and loss, she says, "I said [to them], God is in you. He knows your heart. He knows your circumstances. You can love him wherever you are – inside the building, outside the building, he dwells in you."

Trusting God's provision on an 'unconventional' ministry journey

WITH NAOMI DE VRIES



WIMMS Grantee Naomi de Vries

Naomi de Vries is quick to acknowledge that her family doesn't look like the 'typical' ministry family in Sydney Anglican circles.

Naomi's husband Russell is a stay-at-home dad, currently dedicating himself to raising their four children Ewan, Lewis, Wesley and Gwen. In their marriage, it's Naomi who works in full-time, paid ministry – she's the Assistant Pastor for Children and Families at The Bridge Church (formerly known as Church by the Bridge).

Naomi's journey into ministry also didn't follow the 'typical three or four years at college, then ministry job' pathway.

Amidst university and her early years of work, she started out as a ministry volunteer at Crossroads Church in Canberra, then undertook a short-term mission in children's ministry in Bolivia. Naomi recalls, "I came back from that going,

'Yes, I want to go into children's ministry.'" But she remembers thinking, "If I'm going to do children's ministry, I need training and I need experience."

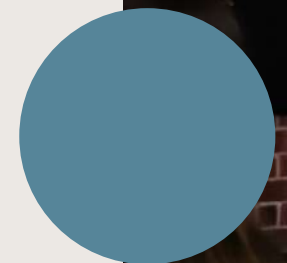
So on her return to Australia, Naomi moved to Sydney and then did a one-year Advanced Diploma of Ministry and Mission at Moore College. Soon, she and Russell married and joined Church by the Bridge in its early days as a church plant.

But while her passion for children's ministry remained, and she still really wanted to do more theological study, Naomi went back to working as an occupational therapist, which was what she had trained in at university. Naomi and Russell were committed to seeing Church by the Bridge thrive as a plant, but in order to live in the wealthy inner Sydney suburbs where the church operated, they needed her to be earning an income.

Furthermore, because it was a new church, there weren't actually any children there yet for her to minister to! Plus, Naomi recalls that at the time, "The census said there were 50 kids in Kirribilli." So Naomi pressed 'Pause' on her study and vocational ministry goals for a time. But she prayed that as the church grew, families would emerge from the woodwork to join them, and she would get to do ministry among them in a greater, and hopefully paid, capacity.

The de Vries babies began arriving shortly after, and families did begin to join the church as Naomi had hoped and prayed. So ten years ago, Church by the Bridge decided to employ her to lead their ministries to children.

In 2016, Naomi finally returned to theological study, this time at Sydney Missionary & Bible College (SMBC), and finished her Bachelor of Theology part-time over the next few years, all while working at Church by the



Naomi leading the Sunday Kids Spot at The Bridge Church

Bridge and having and raising her children. “It took me fifteen years to finish my degree!” she laughs.

Her role at church grew to full-time as the church expanded into new services and sites, which is what eventually led to Naomi and Russell deciding that he would lay down his career to care for their children and enable Naomi to commit herself full-time to ministry.

Today, The Bridge Church has three sites in Kirribilli, Neutral Bay and Macquarie Park, with ministries to children operating out of all sites. That makes Naomi’s job very busy, but she loves it, and is deeply committed to her ministry.

So it made sense when last year, Naomi’s senior minister encouraged her to consider being ordained as a deacon in the Sydney Anglican Diocese.

“He thought this would be a good idea for a few different reasons,” Naomi explains. “Firstly, it would recognise the role that I have in full-time ministry. The process of ordination is also helpful in terms of making commitments and promises as I am set aside for ministry. And he also wanted to make sure I had other avenues and ways of serving in the diocese if I wanted to in the future.”

To do this, Naomi would need to undertake a specific subject in Anglican liturgy in intensive mode at Moore College, to qualify her for ordination, but it was going to cost several thousand dollars for her to complete.

Thankfully, Naomi was forwarded some information about the ADM Women in Ministry Support Scheme (WIMSS) funding at the perfect time. She realised she could apply for a grant to cover the cost of the intensive, which would enable her to complete her ordination requirements in a much more timely and convenient manner.



Naomi and her family at her ordination ceremony



Naomi as a part of a skit for children at The Bridge Church.

In February this year, Naomi did her intensive subject in Anglican liturgy, paid for with the WIMSS funding from ADM. And she’s now an ordained deacon, continuing to serve at The Bridge Church.

Over the years, through her ‘unconventional’ journey into ministry, and her family’s ‘unconventional’ approach to work and child-raising commitments, Naomi has been aware that while women’s contributions in churches are extremely valuable and needed, it’s definitely not always easy for women to find the pathways and space that they need to enable them to serve God to their fullest potential.

Naomi remembers times sitting in staff meetings where she was the only woman, and really having to push herself to speak up and make sure her voice – with her unique female perspective – was heard.

But she’s also deeply grateful that the men on the ministry team at The Bridge Church have made it possible for her to continue in ministry through all the ups and downs of motherhood.

She remembers a time when the church team was going away on a staff retreat, and she was still breastfeeding one of her babies. But the senior minister encouraged her to bring the baby, set up the portable cot for her, gave her a private comfortable space for feeding, and made sure that Russell could come along too, to care for the baby when Naomi was busy with work.

This support made all the difference as Naomi returned to work from maternity leave – a season that in itself was a bit of a challenge as the church had needed to write a maternity leave policy for her, the first female staff member to have a baby!

“I’m so thankful that ADM is there to support and advocate for women. There are so many imbalances, including funding imbalances, for women in ministry. It’s great to have ADM helping practically but also advocating for and encouraging women in ministry.”

She’s thankful, too, for ADM’s support of her in ministry. Of her WIMSS grant, Naomi says, “This scheme and funding recognises the financial constraints that can impact or prevent women from participating, investing as freely or initiating new ministries. This funding recognises the immense value, opportunities and gifts that God has given women to serve him and those around them.”

Above all, Naomi is grateful to God for the doors he has opened for her and the journey he has brought her family on – as unconventional as it may have been.

“We’ve just been surprised so many times by God. Sometimes we can only see a little bit, but we just have to be faithful and do what God’s given us to do now, and we just keep seeing God provide for us in really significant ways.”

It’s her confidence in God’s goodness and his plan – and the proof she’s seen of this in her life, from finally getting to complete her theological degree, to the blessing of her children, to even this recent WIMSS grant from ADM – that keeps Naomi going in ministry even when things are challenging.

Naomi was one of 20 women awarded funding across Australia as part of ADM's 2021 funding round of the Women in Ministry Support Scheme.

The Women in Ministry Support Scheme offers individual grants to women in ministry, including those in ordained ministry, in lay ministry, in mission work, and serving in paid and unpaid roles. As Christian women minister faithfully across a wide range of contexts, including through evangelism, discipleship, pastoral care, compassionate ministries, church-based ministries, and Christian organisations and initiatives, WIMSS funding helps to provide the resourcing and support they need to continue in ministry.

Lauren Mahaffey teaching a Nurtured by God's Word course to members at Summer Hill Church



PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND MINISTRY TRAINING

Amelia van Netten – Kids Ministry Worker, Hope Anglican Church, Leppington

Kaysia Younes – Ministry Apprentice, Hope Anglican Church, Leppington

Lara Penrose – Operation Mobilisation (OM) Australia

Lauren Mahaffey – Assistant Minister, Summer Hill Church

RESOURCES

Alisha Moyle – Pastoral Care Worker, Warragul Anglican Church

Angelica Smith – Cross-Cultural Ministry Apprenticeship (CMS)

Ellyce McKirdy – Children's and Families Ministry, St Marks Anglican Church, Berowra

Emily Brown – Children's Ministry Coordinator, St George North Anglican Church, Bexley North

Katherine Thompson – Melbourne School of Theology, Eastern College

THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION

Jocelyn Bignill – Assistant Minister, All Saints Petersham

Layah Conry – Youth and Young Adult Ministries, St Clements Anglican Church, Kingston

Madi Daugaard – Ministry Training Strategy, EV Church Erina

Naomi de Vries – Children and Families Pastor, The Bridge Church

Kimberley Bailey – Student Youth Minister, Bulli Anglican Church

SET-UP EXPENSES FOR A MINISTRY

Jennifer Boyd – Community Chaplain, Sydney Anglican Diocese

Sandee Batelic – Honorary Student Pastoral Minister, Jamberoo Anglican Church

CONTRIBUTION TO LOST INCOME DURING MATERNITY LEAVE

Alice Warren – Director of Children's Ministry, St John's Ashfield

Anna Grummitt – Youth & Schools Coordinator / Social Media Producer, Centre for Public Christianity

Kate Stace – Director of Operations / Next Gen Minister, Vine Church Surry Hills

Olivia Robson – Children's and Families Minister, GyMEA Anglican Church

How listening and caring serves Jesus

WITH ALISON COURTNEY

Alison Courtney saw the connection between caring for the mental health of others and caring for them pastorally during her Master's study.

Alison undertook a Masters of Counselling at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary in the USA. She says, "I had the opportunity to learn how to be a counsellor, but in a context where I was integrating it with biblical studies and theology."

This expertise and experience are what so perfectly qualified her to start writing for the Mental Health and Pastoral Care Institute (MHPCI).

As the mental wellbeing ramifications of the COVID-19 pandemic continued to become evident, Alison's work centered around how the MHPCI could support Christians struggling with mental disorders, navigating caring for their mental health and trying to learn how to care for each other.

Highlighting a Christian voice in the mental wellbeing conversation is extremely important to Alison. Providing clear information about mental disorders like depression and anxiety is particularly important from a Christian perspective.

She says, "It's really helpful when you've got a friend or you are experiencing difficulties with mood and you're thinking, how do I make sense of this? And also, what does this mean? What does it mean that I'm a Christian with depression or I'm a Christian experiencing anxiety and how does my Christian identity, play into this? What does God have to offer me in this moment?"



Writer and counsellor Alison Courtney

Alison has also seen that Christians have experienced and responded to the pandemic differently, depending on their circumstances.

For some, the pandemic has exposed weaknesses that hadn't been a problem in 'normal life'. For others, it revealed strengths they didn't know they had.

Throughout lockdowns, 'languishing' became a common experience for people. The pandemic put a spotlight on what we rely on to protect us and help us thrive, and this is something that people everywhere are still processing.

Alison explains, "People are still coming out of that experience. I've even noticed myself having flashbacks to a year ago when we were in lockdown and feeling like I just don't want to be there again."

The MHPCI course *Press On: Building Resilience + Mental Wellbeing*, has been helpful to Alison in clarifying her own thinking about mental wellbeing. Alison says "You can think about mental health in terms of the presence or absence of illness, but you also can think about mental health in terms of mental wellbeing versus languishing."

After having done the course herself, Alison saw the benefits of running the course in a small group. She says, "In a group setting, you bring in mutual support and accountability."

Alison is eager to see other churches and individual Christians do the course. She says, "It's really beautifully put together. It is such good quality that I feel confident speaking to it publicly. I really wish this had existed when I was at uni. I experienced a lot of burnout after moving out of home and being involved in ministry and there are just so many tools and ways to understand how to live well that I would've benefited from a long time ago."

The MHPCI is more than a job for Alison; it is a resource that has encouraged and supported her in her Christian walk and an avenue for her to minister to and care for others too. As well as mental wellbeing, Alison is particularly passionate about encouraging Christians to be good listeners.

She shares, "My counselling training and experience highlighted to me how transformative being seen and heard is for people. I think the degree to which our church communities can cultivate an attitude of genuine curiosity towards others and the skill of listening well is a measure of how authentic and safe they feel for the individuals within them."

As she continues to work with the MHPCI, Alison wants to further weave her counselling experience and pastoral understanding into her writing. Resources and training that support and equip Christians to better listen, as well as other skills, will ultimately serve Jesus and his Church.

Alison says, "Listening is something we can all work on, and I see it flowing out of how God is towards us. In Jesus, we have both a compelling reason and a compelling example to strive to be good listeners as we love those around us."



VISIT THE MHPCI WEBSITE TO SEE ARTICLES THAT ALISON HAS WRITTEN AND OTHER RESOURCES THE INSTITUTE HAS ADDED OVER THE YEAR.
MENTALHEALTHINSTITUTE.ORG.AU

Caring for our mental wellbeing in a pandemic world

Over the last couple of years of pandemic life, feeling somewhat 'blah' has been a common feeling. This feeling has been called 'languishing', the sense of muddling through our days rather than flourishing. Through this experience many have gained a new understanding of the importance of caring for our mental wellbeing to continue in faithful service to our Lord Jesus Christ.

Press On: Building Resilience + Mental Wellbeing is a course launched by the Mental Health and Pastoral Care Institute as people were emerging from an extended period of lockdown. The course draws upon psychological science, but also acknowledges the rich resources that Christian faith offers for mental wellbeing. It was initially developed as an online course for any Christian to work through at home. But with churches expressing an interest in using this material in a small group setting, it has been 're-potted' as a seven-session video course for ease of use in a small group setting.

The different ways in which churches and organisations have sought to support people through recent times is extremely encouraging. It's been wonderful that many have seen the importance of addressing mental wellbeing.

MHPCI staff Sarah, Sarah, Keith and Alison holding the Press On booklets



Keith Condie's public talk at Christ Church St Ives on managing stress

Here are some stories of what churches have done

A PUBLIC TALK

Christ Church St Ives invited Co-Director Dr Keith Condie to speak on the topic of "Managing stress for a healthier lifestyle". One Bible study group from the church decided to work through the Press On course together after hearing this talk.

Here is some feedback from participants:

"I enjoyed being reminded that our body, mind and spirit are all connected, making up the whole person. We need to look after all three parts and keep them healthy in order to be useful in serving God."

"I have learned that I can cope with stressful circumstances by changing my focus. I used to feel trapped and powerless but I am learning to change my focus by choosing to think about all my blessings and praying for others. I also found the sessions on setting boundaries and allowing for margins very helpful."

"It's good to see and have practical strategies alongside biblical principles."

A PANEL AND CONVERSATION

Christ Church Inner West hosted an event called "Wine, Cheese, and a Conversation about Mental Health and Wellbeing and God", inviting their community to come and ask their questions. The panel included a Christian Clinical Psychologist and Dr Keith Condie. After this event, people were invited to take part in the Press On course.

Alison Courtney facilitated the first group of those who responded. A range of motivations led these ten people to participate, including navigating life's difficulties and looking to better be able to cope, wanting to be upskilled in caring for the mental health of themselves and others, having a genuine sense of curiosity about the topic, and more.

A JOINT GATHERING OF WOMEN LOCALLY

Each year, the Anglican churches of the Southern Highlands run the Southern Highlands Women's Conference. After a two-year hiatus, they invited Co-Director Sarah Condie to give two talks focusing on mental wellbeing. Her first session, a Bible talk titled "Hold fast to the one who is holding you fast", explored John's letter to the church at Philadelphia (Rev 3:7-13). The second talk was a more practical exploration of the topic.

Building safe, strong marriages

How churches have managed to support marriages during the pandemic and lockdowns – over a significant period of time

Over the last year, the pandemic and long periods of lockdown have not stopped churches from seeking to support married couples by offering *Building a Safe + Strong Marriage* in creative ways.

Between July and October 2021 alone, 189 couples participated in the course. Thirteen churches used the online course and let couples work through the course on their own over a ten-week period. Sarah Briant, who works for the Mental Health and Pastoral Care Institute as Course Administrator, said, “Some churches made it more special by mailing people the booklet, chocolates or coffee vouchers. It was positive as it gave couples a lot of privacy to have discussions.”

Other churches ran the course ‘in person’ using Zoom, and couples would mute and turn off their cameras during the couple discussion times.

The pandemic has shown how flexible the course can be. Churches are able to offer it as a five-week course in person at their church or via Zoom. A number of churches plan to continue using Zoom as it makes it easier for couples with small children to take part without the worry of organising childcare. Couples who are motivated can also

sign up and take part in the course using the online platform and do it at a time that suits them.

Churches and organisations such as Mothers Union and CMS have offered the course across regional NSW, Australia and internationally including in New Zealand, Singapore, Hong Kong, the United Kingdom, South Africa, Spain and Slovenia.

Couples who took part in the *Building a Safe + Strong Marriage* course responded positively, whether they took part online or in person.

“Excellent – so good to have an Australian program full of practical strategies.”

“This course has helped my marriage massively. Thank you!”

“It’s been great. I think even making the decision to do the course was a step in expressing to each other our desire for a better marriage and in itself has made a positive impact.”

Equipped to care for the broken hearted

WITH JOCELYN BIGNILL

Jocelyn Bignill was born into a Christian family, to parents who decided to take their faith seriously following the birth of their daughter. Jocelyn was very aware of her parents’ faith. She shares, “I grew up with an amazing example in the way that they practised their faith and served. They were consistent and contributing. Faith was very important.”

At university, Jocelyn studied teaching, and at first her career took her to Tamworth to work. There she joined St Peter’s Anglican in South Tamworth where she got involved in serving and embedded herself in the church community. After a few years at St Peter’s she was ‘tapped on the shoulder’ to do MTS, an in-church ministry apprenticeship through Ministry Training Strategy, designed to help people explore vocational ministry.

Jocelyn says, “I actually didn’t even know what that was, and I wasn’t sure because I hadn’t been



Jocelyn Bignill, Assistant Minister at All Saints Petersham

teaching for very long and I was really enjoying it. But in the end I decided to take two years out and do MTS and then thought I could go back to teaching after that.”

However, her experience of doing MTS changed the direction of Jocelyn’s future. She shares, “I’d never been at a church that had a woman on the staff team before, as the church I grew up in was quite small. This was the first time I saw what the role of a woman on a staff team in church was, and how it could be something really useful.”

Jocelyn worked at St Peter’s for three years doing MTS, honing her ministry skills and listening to God. Through his guidance and the encouragement of others, she decided to pursue vocational ministry and went to Moore Theological College in Sydney.

After studying at Moore College, Jocelyn took up the role of Assistant Minister at All Saints Petersham in Sydney where she still currently works. After the difficult years of ministering to people through lockdowns, Jocelyn was feeling a bit flat. She says, “I was feeling kind of uninspired in my ministry. Stuff was getting done that needed to be done, but I wasn’t taking initiative. I felt the way lots of people were feeling.”

Then Jocelyn attended the Youthworks House Conference. She found it helpful and refreshing, and this put her on a new path: the pursuit of more professional development. She says, “I wanted to do some learning that would help me to be refreshed and also to improve the way I do ministry.”

So when her Rector Ben Gray showed her an advertisement for the *Graduate Certificate of Pastoral Care for Mental Health* at Mary Andrews College, it was the right time for Jocelyn. She had experienced the teaching of lead course teacher Dr Keith Condie before, while at Moore College, and had respected and enjoyed his tutelage.

Jocelyn says, “Mental health is such a huge part of ministry these days. It was something that felt really pertinent and useful to be more equipped in from a Christian perspective, and to think through different aspects of mental health and how to be caring for and loving people.”

When she signed up for the Certificate, her plan was to study on campus at Mary Andrews College, but the long NSW lockdown of 2021 determined otherwise, with the first semester of the course being conducted entirely online.

Jocelyn found that a few things were “a bit of a lifesaver” during that lockdown period, including doing the Certificate class online and having different people to meet with each week. “And doing some learning about mental health,” she adds, “was even more pertinent during that period.”

Putting her study into practice with a church women’s book club on Zoom during lockdown

In 2022 the cohort, including Jocelyn, was able to transition to studying in person at Mary Andrews College. Being able to meet with her fellow students in the learning environment of Mary Andrews College has been a welcome and positive change. A wide range of people are doing the course, including other ministers, chaplains, church lay leaders and ministers’ wives.

Jocelyn says, “Connecting with all those people has been really valuable as well. It’s also been great having that one time in the week [attending college], and that one block of time has fitted in well with my schedule. It’s been really doable while doing full-time ministry.”

Having said that, though, the online delivery of the Certificate is something Jocelyn sees as extremely important to continue. She reflects, “Having been in Tamworth for five years, and then been in Sydney now for almost eight years, you realise that in Sydney, we just have access to so many resources and opportunities for learning and development that you don’t get when you’re somewhere like Tamworth. So it’s great seeing that there’s people from Orange and from all over the place that are able to join in online and be part of the course who wouldn’t have been able to if it was just in person.”

What she has learnt so far has built Jocelyn’s confidence and ability to minister to her members in their unique situations. She feels more equipped to care for people and walk alongside them.



Jocelyn with friend Hannah at her ordination

“The graduate certificate has been helpful and encouraging. It has grown in me a little bit more confidence in understanding mental health. Having more knowledge and a bit more perspective as well has been helpful in being able to talk to people and think through their mental health struggles or joys with them.”

Graduate Certificate of Pastoral Care for Mental Health

The Graduate Certificate of Pastoral Care for Mental Health offers specialised training in pastoral responses to mental health and wellbeing with a focus on preventative and reactive strategies. It is designed to be a professional development course for men and women who work in ministry, professional health care workers, and Christians working in schools. The course also aims to equip students with a rigorous theological framework for mental health and wellbeing that is biblically grounded.



LEARN MORE:
MAC.EDU.AU/GRADUATE-CERTIFICATE-OF-PASTORAL-CARE-FOR-MENTAL-HEALTH/



Knowing Jesus more and applying his compassion in church

WITH KATH THORNHILL

With a passion for knowing Jesus better, and keen to see the Church improve its accessibility for all of God's people in all their diversity, Kath Thornhill is currently studying remotely at Mary Andrews College.

Although she was born into a Christian family, Kath didn't come to know Jesus personally until she was an adult. As a teenager, she understood the Christian faith to be just rules and regulations. She remembers, "I seemed to spend my whole life trying to do the right thing without much to show for it."

Seeing her peers living what seemed to be a "carefree, rule-free, consequence-free, fun life", she sought the pleasure of the world. But just as many others living this life come to understand, Kath realised that what she perceived as a better way to live "wasn't all it was cracked up to be".

So she returned to church and started to hear God's word and meet with other Christians. Kath shares, "I understood what Jesus was really about, that the missing piece that I'd been searching for wasn't the law – it was God's grace. That I was actually a child of God and I could have a personal relationship with him."



Diploma Student Kath Thornhill

Once she understood grace, Kath became eager to know God and his word better. This eventually led her to do a certificate of theological study in her home city in Western Australia. Kath loved the experience of studying theology in this way, so was eager to do more.

Soon after this, Kath and her husband moved from Western Australia to New South Wales so he could complete his Master's Degree at Sydney Missionary & Bible College (SMBC) and commence a career in vocational ministry. After his study was finished, they moved to Coonabarabran in western NSW where her husband began work in a local Anglican church.

Kath was keen to do more theological study, so she began researching what was available. Given her remote location, studying online wasn't just a 'nice-to-have' – it was a 'must-have'. Although COVID-19 brought many challenges, one positive effect it inadvertently had was the provision of more online options for Kath and others like her living in regional places.

She reflects, "I had a look around to see what was on offer and MAC [Mary Andrews College] came onto the

scene. I loved the idea that they had smaller classes and the fact that we're all women as well. So there are women of all ages. And I love the fact that we are able to bring different experiences into our classes."

Without the remote learning options that MAC created due to the pandemic, Kath would never have been able to access the study she is undertaking now. Her experience of MAC over the last year has been extremely positive.

She says, "Originally I thought learning remotely could be quite lonely, but it actually hasn't been lonely at all. It's been fantastic being able to develop friendships online and encourage each other. I actually get a little bit blue after the semester ends because I don't have that weekly fellowship with students and the staff."

One of the things Kath values highly about MAC is the practical and applicable assignments: "A lot of assessments that I've done are not just written assessments that you file away that you might refer to later, but they're actually creative assessments that I can actually share with people."



Kath and her family at their church in Coonabarabran

"Originally I thought learning remotely could be quite lonely, but it actually hasn't been lonely at all. It's been fantastic being able to develop friendships online and encourage each other."

A particular assignment of this sort was a booklet on Autism and the Church that Kath produced. Through her study, Kath says she has become more aware of God's bigness and her own smallness, and has also noticed, more and more, the brokenness of the world.

Kath says, "The [subject] that has really kind of hit me most has been the one of disability in the Church. It really opened my eyes to the wonder of the body of Christ in all of its glorious diversity and how, as a Church, we don't do disability really well at all."

Both of Kath's children live with a disability, so she found it a blessing to be able to do research on a subject that was close to her heart. Kath shares that her son has autism, and she observes, "There are so many of our young people who live with autism to varying degrees. And I think our churches just have very little knowledge on how not to just include young people, but actually how to welcome them into our gatherings. We are ingrained in doing what we know or doing what we have always done."

Her project is a great example of the innovative research and resources that Kath and other MAC students like her are producing in the course of their studies. For Kath, the booklet she created is just one resource. There's still lots of work to be done.



Kath and her family finding rest at the beach

She knows it is hard for churches, but encourages them to be always learning and trying to be mindful. Kath shares, "People want to include; they want to welcome. They want to embrace people. But they just don't have an understanding of how to do that when it comes to physical disability as well. It is a heart issue, but I think we also need to learn how to love these people differently. And look, it's something as a mother that I'm learning every day as well."

Kath believes that churches are aware of the need to care for those with a disability, but there's more to think about. "I think the big thing is that it's not just about ministering to people who live with a disability," she adds, "but it's actually letting them, or helping them, minister to us, otherwise we are missing out on so much blessing from a part of the body."

God's call for a new career and ministry path

WITH SUE SCHABEL

For Sue Schabel, studying at Mary Andrews College involved a leap of faith. Feeling called to a career change in her fifties, Sue left work in health to pursue training in pastoral care.

After experiencing workplace bullying and being pushed from her workplace and career, Sue dedicated her time to looking to God for guidance. She shares, "I spent a considerable amount of time in prayer and said, 'What is it that you want me to do, God?' There was a significant period of submission for me to try and trust where he was leading me."

During this time, Sue was on long service leave, and her prayer led her to resign and take a new path. This was a difficult decision for her and her family, as Sue's husband is a missionary and they had been relying heavily on her salary in health.



Sue Schabel on campus at Mary Andrews College

But, as Sue puts it, "I felt that I needed to trust God. And so I resigned and I felt a huge burden lift off my shoulders. And then he said, I want you to study pastoral care."

The call to pastoral care was extremely surprising to Sue. Describing herself as blunt, or a person who says what it is, she thought, "Are you really serious, Lord? I don't think I've got the gifts or the skills to do pastoral care work." However, God kept laying this call on Sue's heart, so she searched for a place she could study, and found Mary Andrews College (MAC).

When investigating pastoral care subjects at MAC, Sue found out about the *Certificate of Theology* and began to consider it. She recalls, "I hadn't studied for 30 years and I was feeling quite apprehensive about it, but I had a long weekend to think, and I went away camping with my husband and thought and prayed about it. When I came back I had decided to enrol."

Initially, Sue thought she would complete the Certificate over two years, but family, life and world events intervened. Around 12 months into study, her mother fell ill, and Sue had to put her studies on hold to care for her.

She shares, "My mother is six hours away from where I am in Sydney. I pretty much spent the whole of 2019 going up and down to Coonabarabran and packing up a house, selling it and moving her into aged care. But through that experience, God sort of gave me lots of pastoral care opportunities and observations through the lack of chaplaincy in hospitals."

In 2020, Sue picked up her studies again and finished her Certificate of Theology amidst the pandemic restrictions, taking two subjects over Zoom and one face-to-face. After she finished, Sue turned to God in prayer to guide her in the use of her training, and he



Sue graduating from Mary Andrews College with her Certificate of Theology

created opportunities for her as a pastoral carer in aged care. After her experience caring for her mother in illness and lifestyle transition, this is a role that God has very much put on Sue's heart.

Sue shares, "I've gained a job as a pastoral carer in an Anglicare aged care facility and I'm putting into practice what I've learned at MAC in a practical way."

Sue works three days a week for Anglicare and is also studying again at MAC this year, doing her Diploma of Ministry. She says, "I loved studying so much so I'm doing a *Diploma of Ministry* now to further deepen my knowledge of pastoral care and ministry to the aged."

Despite her apprehension about returning to study after 30 years, Sue has thrived at MAC and credits the staff and students for her experience. She says, “The staff are amazing. They have all the time in the world for you to help you through understanding how to write an essay and understanding footnoting and bibliographies.”

Sue has also experienced deep fellowship through MAC and has made friends who will stay with her long after their experience of studying together has ended.

The unique nature of MAC as a theological college for women is also something Sue values highly. She shares, “There’s something very precious about the sisterhood and fellowship that you get, not just with the students, but with the lecturers as well.”

Studying at MAC also grew Sue’s confidence in her personal Christian faith. Before attending MAC she felt like other people had greater knowledge of the Bible than she did, which meant she wasn’t suited for small group leadership. But being equipped at MAC gave her the confidence to step in and lead a group that wouldn’t have gone ahead otherwise.

She shares, “Now 18 months into leading this women’s Bible study group, they’re all incredibly grateful. I’ve got ten women that I lead that are all quite mature Christians, and I can lead them because of the study that I’ve done at MAC.”

Although challenging experiences brought her to MAC and family circumstances disrupted her study, Sue can clearly see the hand of God guiding her in study and work. As she continues to study at MAC and work in pastoral care, she trusts in God to make his paths known to her and continue to work in her all the days of her life.

Hybrid learning at Mary Andrews College



Welcoming Rev. Kate Snell

The Mary Andrews College team is very excited that the new Dean of Students, the Reverend Kate Snell, commenced in early 2022. Kate plays an integral role in supporting and caring for students as they learn more of God and deepen their relationship with him through their theological studies at MAC.

Kate has a Bachelor of Theology and is ordained as a deacon in the Anglican Church. She also has teaching qualifications and has served as a high school teacher of Legal Studies and as a school chaplain, most recently at Barker College. She has served as an Assistant Minister in parish ministry, has taught Special Religious Education (SRE), and is a member of St Philip’s Anglican Church, South Turramurra, where her husband Brian is Associate Minister. Kate and Brian have two young daughters, Zoe and Lydia.

Kate believes that theological education is a joy and a privilege. Unlike so many other ways of studying these days, it’s not just a means to an end, but an investment in doing life God’s way. Kate says, “It equips you for every sphere of your life, whatever your season, whether you are in vocational ministry or not. The opportunity to understand God and his word better will never be wasted.”

Whether it’s helping students deal with managing their time, their competing priorities, and their stress around exams and assignments, or delighting with them in God’s word as they grow in their faith, Kate does her work equipped by the Spirit for the task to which he has called her. As she was reminded during the process of applying for this role, “We do not do anything in our own strength... when we are weak, God is strong.”

Serving all God's people, all around the world

WITH MARLIES HARTKAMP



ADM Fellow Marlies Hartkamp

Marlies Hartkamp came to faith in Jesus as a child and, like many, was challenged to own her faith for herself at university, in her home country of the Netherlands.

During her time at university, she remembers reading a biography about a Christian woman who went to work overseas and being very challenged by that book. "I began to pray, 'Lord, where do you want to use me? If it's overseas, I'm willing to go,'" she recalls.

Following university, where she majored in special education, Marlies' first job was for an organisation providing residential care for people with disabilities. But the thought of working overseas remained with her, and when her boss came to her with a proposition, she had to think hard about it.

Marlies reflects, "My boss wanted me to specialise in a certain field of disability, whether it was diagnostic work or working with people with autism, so I asked for time to think about that. And in the back of my mind was, 'If I sense that the Lord wants me to go overseas, this is the time.' And so I started praying. Then within three weeks I knew the time had come. So I said to my boss, 'I'm not going to specialise. I'm going to leave!'"

"I needed to answer the question 'Where is my place in God's story and what is he doing in the world?' And that question especially gets very clear at crossroads in your life."

Marlies moved to Asia, where she began to work with children with disabilities and others at risk. She worked alongside local Christians, striving together to, in her words, "bring hope and bring light in a hurting world."

Throughout that time, Marlies was involved in a number of projects and programs, including inclusive preschool education, foster care homes and programs, and parent support organisations – all with the goal of bringing dignity to children with disabilities.

For 20 years, Marlies worked in Asia. During that time, she met and married her husband, an Australian, and they started their family.

Looking back, Marlies believes her passion for working with people with disabilities stemmed firstly from the fact that she herself had been very sick as a baby, and there had been a strong possibility she would grow up with severe disabilities. "When I was 12 or 13," she says, "I watched a documentary about children with disabilities who needed full-time care. It hit me at that point that I could have been one of them."

God placed deep compassion in Marlies' heart for children with disabilities and their families, further encouraged by the modelling of her parents who showed their family what it looked like to respect and include others, no matter their abilities or backgrounds.

As Marlies worked in Asia, she regularly thought about how her faith and work intersected. Eventually, she began studying again and came across the area of disability theology.

"I always wanted to know, what does the Bible actually say on the topic of disability? And how do experiences of disability speak into how we see and read the Bible?" she says.

"I always wanted to know, what does the Bible actually say on the topic of disability? And how do experiences of disability speak into how we see and read the Bible?"

Marlies enrolled to undertake a PhD in this area, through a seminary in Asia.

In her doctoral studies, Marlies is looking closely at the intersection between how the Church views and addresses disability and how the world does this. She is also interested in how, as Christians from a Western country like Australia, we can learn from how other countries work with people with disabilities.

She is asking important questions. Marlies shares, "We have such an amazing message as Christians – a hope and life-giving message – but what do we do with this practically? In the end, does it make a difference for God's Kingdom?"

"In some Asian countries, we see churches meeting the needs of people with disabilities. In Australia, the government or other services often meet such needs. So what is the role of the Church here? Also, in Western culture, we can be private and reserved. Do we welcome other people into our lives? Are we truly hospitable?"

Marlies is convinced that, "we have to learn to translate between contexts so we can learn from other cultures and churches. In Asian cultures, people with disabilities tend to face many challenges. So, in some way, it's clearer to see what the role of the Church can be. How can we translate that into the Australian context? How do we bring hope in our communities and context? There is still so much to learn. How can we live out the

gospel in a more genuine way? Drawing on my cross-cultural experience and theological reflection, I hope to be a unique and clear voice in that discussion.”

In early 2020, Marlies and her husband decided to move permanently to Australia, his home country. After settling in Sydney, and throughout the early months of the COVID pandemic, Marlies worked on her PhD and wondered what God would have her do next.

That’s when she discovered that a friend was undertaking an ADM Fellowship. Marlies was instantly intrigued. She found information on ADM Fellowships online, printed out the page and stuck it on her bookshelf to think and pray about.

In mid-2021, she applied for a 2022 ADM Fellowship to write several journal and magazine articles drawing on her research. She also wanted to develop a resource for Christian organisations to encourage the active engagement of people with disabilities in ministry.

After several rounds of applications and interviews, Marlies remembers her surprise at receiving a call from ADM confirming she was being awarded a Fellowship. “I said, ‘Are you sure?’ I was very nervous!”

But Marlies set aside her nerves to make the most of the

opportunity, and she has been delighted with the opportunities the Fellowship has provided to her so far.

She has written for *The Gospel Coalition Australia* and *Jericho Road* (so far). She’s been able to meet with mentors to help her think through her project and grapple with the idea of vocation. She particularly appreciated the opportunity to participate in a workshop on ‘voice’, as she considers how she can find and use her unique voice in the disability theology space. She’s had the opportunity, with the credibility she says she has been afforded by the Fellowship, to connect more widely with people working in her field and related fields. She has also been able to contribute to the Mary Andrews College subject ‘Disability and God’s People’, sharing some of her experience and research with the class. And there are still months to go of her Fellowship!

As Marlies finishes her Fellowship and her PhD, she’s not quite sure what is next – perhaps academia or theological education. But she is extremely grateful for her Fellowship, and all that it has provided to her in this stage of her work. “I’m just really thankful that the Lord has opened this door for me,” she says. “It’s inspiring to work alongside other women who love the Lord and are passionate about making a difference for his Kingdom.”

Marlies was one of five women awarded a 2022 ADM Fellowship in our sixth annual Fellowships cohort. ADM Fellowships provide six-month or one-year Fellowships for Christian women to complete a focused project to engage a sceptical and hurting world with the gospel. Fellows are provided with office space and a bursary, as well as a tailored professional and theological development program.

ADM Fellows working side-by-side in the ADM office

READ ABOUT THE OTHER FOUR 2022 FELLOWS:

DR KATRINA CLIFFORD

Former Dean of Academics at Robert Menzies College
Developing training for female student leaders to see them equipped for servant-hearted leadership.

MADELEINE GALEA

Recruit and Assessment Manager for Reach Australia
Researching hiring practices across Australian and US churches to produce a set of hiring tools for churches in Australia.

DR LAUREL MOFFATT

Writer and researcher with a PhD in English Renaissance Literature
Writing a book for a general audience that explores the theme of brokenness, and the sure hope and renewal found in the suffering and restoration of Jesus.

PENNY REEVE

Award-winning author
Writing a collection of fictional short stories for a mainstream Young Adult audience that explore questions of faith, doubt and belief, to show it’s okay to wonder about spiritual things and to engage with the wrestling of doubt.



Marlies working in the ADM office in Sydney



Embracing the dignity of our limits

WITH STEPHANIE KATE JUDD



*Stephanie Kate Judd Annual
Public Lecture Speaker*

The ADM Annual Public Lecture recognises and provides a platform for Christian women who are established leaders in their fields and who have developed a distinctive approach to engaging our world with the good news of Jesus. The lecture serves the Church and wider public in Sydney and beyond by inviting lecturers who can enrich the public conversation about Christianity and who can inspire and equip Christians with imaginative ways to make the gospel intelligible in their own spheres.

In 2022, the ADM Annual Public Lecture was delivered by Stephanie Kate Judd, a lawyer based on Gadigal land in Sydney. Stephanie briefly read theological studies at Oxford, where she pursued an academic interest in disability, dignity and human rights. Her abiding interest in limitations stems from her experience of living with a physical disability for more than half her life. She was an ADM

Senior Fellow in 2021 and relished the opportunity to spend more time writing for a broad public readership. Stephanie has written on human dignity in aged care for *Eternity*, written about life in lockdown for *The Sydney Morning Herald*, hosted an episode of the *Undeceptions* podcast on unhealthy anger, and had a poem published in *Meanjin*.

In her lecture, Stephanie chose to focus on the theme of 'The Dignity of Our Limits'.

The emotional register of the past year or more has been dominated by fear and frustration,

disappointment and despair. Plans in disarray, divisions inflamed, grief pervasive... our resilience is exhausted and so are we. The constraints imposed on us forced us to grapple with uncomfortable realities in our common life, in our relationships and in ourselves.

Moments like these, Stephanie argued, afford each of us an opportunity for reflection and introspection into how we are to think about the limitations that are inherent to human life.

In her Annual Public Lecture which traversed law and literature, philosophy and politics, boundaries and

The in-person attendees of the lecture at St Andrew's Cathedral



bioethics, Stephanie invited the audience to come alongside her as she explored what it is to be human and finite and very much out of control.

Writing for *Eureka Street* prior to giving her lecture, Stephanie shared, “There are gifts to be received from our limitations if we embrace them. To be human is to be limited, and that has a great deal to do with the fact that we don’t just have a body; we are a body. One of the difficulties of the ‘mind over matter’ mantra is that it is undergirded by a view that the body is just a lump of matter to be mastered and tamed, an instrument to be used by the ‘real me’: my rational, autonomous will. It gives priority to the mind over the body in a way that I think neglects the full range of the human experience. It is as bodies that we make our way through the world. And because of this, there are certain challenges that we all face: we are finite and subject to vulnerability. Our physical bodies experience fatigue and frailty and pain. There are certain given realities about our bodies that we did not choose and which shape much of what is possible for us in how we express our agency. To be human is to be embodied, and inherent to our embodiment are certain constraints.”

Rather than resisting and railing against them, Stephanie contends in her writing and her lecture that perhaps it is in embracing our frailties and limitations that we come to inhabit a fuller, truer version of humanity – one that befits the dignity bestowed on each of us by a loving Creator and illuminates our place within the Christian story.



Stephanie delivering her lecture

Speaking with *Eternity News* prior to the lecture, Stephanie shared, “When you look at the Beatitudes, it says ‘blessed are the poor in spirit’ – those that recognise they need help. So when you no longer see independence and autonomy as the only good, when you realise that dependency is actually an opportunity for connection, then that’s really profound and that’s just deepened the intimacy that I have with Jesus.”

*“It was such a great night Steph!
Thanks for your wisdom and insight.”*

– POLLY BUTTERWORTH

*“Congratulations on a wonderful talk,
beautifully delivered, with a live audience
of well over 200, and more than 400
views. Looking forward to watching
your influence widen.”*

– KARA MARTIN

*“Loved listening to this, so much insight
and depth. I found the line from the poem
‘every riven thing he’s made sing his
being simply by being the thing it is’
was a lovely way to emphasise the beauty
and relief in just being – individually and
in relationship – in contrast to the impulse
to do and achieve.”*

– JODY LIGHTFOOT

Thanks for the encouraging evening for those in-person and online





Our team of staff

We are thankful to God for our team of full-time and part-time staff, who work diligently through Anglican Deaconess Ministries, Mary Andrews College, The Greenhouse and the Mental Health and Pastoral Care Institute.

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Acting Principal,
Mary Andrews College

DR LOUISE GOSBELL

Principal, Mary Andrews College

REV. DR KEITH CONDIE

Co-Director, Mental Health
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Co-Director, Mental Health
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DR ANNETTE PIERDZIWOL

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DR KATRINA CLIFFORD

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REV. KATE HAGGAR

BDiv
Primary School Teacher



AMY SMITH

BA
Chief Advocacy Officer

Are you with us?

As we seek to see every Christian woman using her gifts so that God's Kingdom will grow across Australia and the world, we hope you'll join us in bringing our work before God in prayer.

Here are some points you can use to uphold ADM in your prayers:

- Thank God for the legacy of the deaconesses, who encourage and inspire us to serve God wholeheartedly, humbly and faithfully in all circumstances.
- Thank God for the ADM Board, and pray for wisdom in their decisions to guide the organisation forward.
- Pray that as ADM seeks a new CEO, God would reveal the right person to lead us through the next season of ministry.
- Pray for Mary Andrews College, that God would continue to use it to give women – especially those for whom traditional theological study would be difficult – the chance to dig deeply into his word.
- Pray for the Mental Health and Pastoral Care Institute, that God would work through it to equip the Church to engage better in conversations about caring for the vulnerable, supporting those who are mentally ill, and strengthening our godly resilience through different seasons of life.
- Pray for the development of The Greenhouse, that this program would be a fantastic resource and source of support for women as they strive to serve God.
- Pray that recipients of funding from ADM would use their grants faithfully to complete projects and build programs that bring honour to God and point people to Jesus.
- Pray that Christian women across Sydney and beyond would know their value in God's Kingdom and make the most of every opportunity to serve with courage, conviction and clarity in the roles God has given them to play.

Connect with us

Want to find out more about ADM, provide feedback on this report, or just have a chat about opportunities for Christian women? Here's how you can stay in touch:

EMAIL: HELLO@DEACONESSMINISTRIES.ORG.AU

PHONE: 1300 896 530

FAX: (02) 9261 2864

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The ADM office is accessible to people with disabilities. Please consider calling ahead before you drop in, as our team enjoys working from home from time to time and we wouldn't want to miss out on meeting you!



VISIT THE ADM WEBSITE:
DEACONESSMINISTRIES.ORG.AU

Working in the ADM office



The ADM team from many ministries and programs

The ministries and programs of ADM

mental health
& pastoral care
institute



The Greenhouse

