

My challenging role



(L to R) Clare Ogilvie, Kevin Slabb, Joan Sweet and Evelyn Parkin

It's been nine months since I started full time work at Wontulp-Bi-Buya College as Theology Teacher. Yes, it also has been full on getting into the role of things, preparing for the student blocks and then getting to know each one of them (wonderful friendships happening).

At this stage we have had three blocks with our students who come from the Torres Strait Region which includes Bamaga, Mer Island, Kubin Village, St Paul's Community. Cairns/Gulf/Cape Region includes Edge Hill, Holloways Bch, Lockhart Rvr, Mossman, Manunda, Napranum, Pormpuraaw, Westcourt, Whitfield and Yarrabah Townsville Region includes Cranbook & Ingham. Rockhampton Region includes Woorabinda and Brisbane Region includes Fingal Heads and Quilpie.

Mentioning the communities as above, gives you an understanding of the wide range of students from

around Queensland who attend Wontulp-Bi-Buya College.

One of the most important things that the College does is to help the students to contextualise the study of theology (the study of God, Jesus and the Holy Spirit) to their own respective communities. This is in relation to language, religion and cultural backgrounds.

It is a wonderful challenge to find God living right where you are at, to see him amidst the usual everyday things, to see the Lord in your own Indigenous cultural background, in the soil of the land and to say, hey! He's been here all the time and a flicker of the heart says "we always knew".

To give the students an opportunity (which they may never have otherwise) to visit places while they are here at Wontulp-Bi-Buya College, we decided to go for a day trip on the Sunday. The first visit was to the Mossman Aboriginal community, we were fortunate that one of our student came from there so, Clare accompanied us and then took us to the Gorge where she spoke to her Ancestors to let them know that we were there on a visit. We walked up the Gorge and then sat down and had a picnic lunch by the flowing river, absolutely beautiful.

The second day trip was to the Laura festival. We left at five on Sunday morning for over the 300 km journey. Arriving at the festival, we were so glad to be part of this wonderful gathering.

The dust flying in the air engulfing us as the dancers performed, seemed to me that we were being included in the atmosphere of the festival and the spiritual welcoming of the land of the Ancestors.

Each group had shown their own style of dance and we were fortunate once again to have a student in one of the groups from Lockhart River, Fr Brian Claudie. I tell you, it was magic to see him and his community there participating. You just cannot explain how it feels to be part of this cultural festival, to see the young children right through to all ages getting in there with so much pride and energy.

We only hope that this might be a continuing thing and who knows if we work our timetable right for our studies we might be able to camp for the three days next time.

Evelyn Parkin



The Rev. Brian Claudie, Priest-in-charge, St James Anglican Church, Lockhart River, at the Laura Dance Festival.



Diploma of Theology students in class during residential study block DT2.09



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THE DAY THE KING CAME



Recently I was a volunteer support teacher at Wontulp-Bi-Buya College, an Indigenous College in Nth Qld where tertiary students from local and remote areas study Community Organisation and Theology incorporating their culture.

One day when all were conscientiously working on their studies Rev Victor the Acting Principal and general organiser of everything came in and asked to speak with the class.

In his usual gentle manner he announced, "In one hour The King of Tahiti is coming to visit us. He is interested to see what we do here. Please make him welcome, don't be afraid to come up and speak to him but be humble" That was it! Rev Victor returned to his many and varied duties.

The student representative swung into action telling her classmates "We will welcome him with favourite songs and actions that Wontulp is famous for." We encouraged them to think of questions.

One great grandmother, an elder from Mossman, seized the opportunity announcing "I will sing to him in my language" and preceded to borrow a guitar "Prima Donna" laughed some others. "Diva"! They jokingly teased her.

A small table was encircled with chairs, water and glasses set out. There was no fuss and study continued quietly until interrupted when the King and his entourage strolled in with Rev Mick Connolly.

He spoke no English and I'm sure it was a little confusing when his interpreter introduced him as "The King of Kings".

These were Theology students who maybe, for a moment, wondered if it was real! Eventually this was clarified as "King of all the regions".

The King was of average height and simply attired in grey slacks, a blue shirt and some beads. His bodyguard wore a traditional garment with a tee-shirt top. His friendly interpreter was tall and handsome with long curly hair; he wore a stylish white shirt and slacks.

All enjoyed the spontaneous welcome in song and Clare's singing in her language went on and on as she made the most of her moment of fame.

Land rights, original custodians and the need to plan for some island communities to be relocated due to rising oceans were discussed as common interests. Rev Eddie asked "What are you doing about Theology and Indigenous culture in your country?" The short answer was "nothing, we are interested in what you do". He was very disappointed.

Victor had found time to change into a Wontulp shirt and presented the group with similar gifts. Prior to departure many photos were taken amidst friendly hugging whilst the young official on the mobile phone tried desperately to usher him on his way.

Later Clare summed it up "I can't believe I met a KING" and I wrote in my journal "ME NEITHER".

Rev Victor whilst driving me to class next morning commented, "There you are Joan, something to tell your children eh. What will they think?"

I replied, "They'll be chuffed. Wontulp is full of surprises.

Joan Sweet



Top left photo: (L-R) King of Tahiti and his interpreter.

Above: Diploma of Theology students singing and performing action chorus.

Acting Principal's Report



Firstly, my acknowledgement to the traditional owners of this land and to our Elders both past and present that have contributed to the life journey of our people. I would also like to apologise for the lateness of this newsletter due to extra courses being offered around the same time this was due for publication.

Well, it has been just over 12 months since I have commenced here at Wontulp-Bi-Buya and I can honestly say that this is an enjoyable journey so far. Yes, there are ongoing challenges but through prayer and support of others we can meet the objectives that Wontulp-Bi-Buya was called to do.

Many of our Theology students are also equipping themselves in the areas of Community organising and community work, family health and home management just to name a few. This enhances their skills to be effective role models for their people.

Courses:

Ongoing consultations and partnerships with key stakeholders ensure that Wontulp-Bi-Buya College (WBBC) maintains its' focus with current trends in the training industry. One of these key stakeholders is QIRTOA – Queensland Indigenous Registered Training Organisation Association; WBBC is a member, with myself as the representative on the association and the many benefits are having roundtable discussions with Government department representatives in the education and training sector.

Some of our current developments are in the areas of our Theological courses. Our Certificate III in Theology expires at the end of this year and our Diploma of Theology in December 2010. Our key stakeholders in this review are Nungalinya College (Darwin), our four Ecumenical partner churches and local sponsors of our students. Through this review and with the Assistance of other key personnel we are currently having discussions on what is the best

possible action to take.

The TAA40104 Enterprise Trainer and Assessor Skill Set course commenced late August with 10 students. These students are past graduates wishing to return to seek further professional development and contribute to the teaching of other students in the College. Our thanks to Reverend Barry Paterson and Reverend David Thompson for their continued assistance in the Academic life of the College. I am extremely happy with our current staff and hopefully in light of the current transition-taking place they may view their time here at Wontulp-Bi-Buya College enjoyable and providing a commitment for many years to come.

Visits:

We've had a quite number of guests and visitors to our College within the last few months most notably Bishop James Foley of the Catholic Diocese of Cairns. Bishop James met our Diploma students and talked with them and was also able to answer any questions. I believe this is Bishop's Foley second visit to our College and he was so overwhelmed by the commitment of the students in their study that he now intends to visit regularly at least once a year.

Nungalinya College:

Our partnership with Nungalinya College is facing challenging times with new conditions in place from the Commonwealth Government. While an interim arrangement is in place for 2009 both Nungalinya and Wontulp have begun discussions with State and Commonwealth authorities as to what we may envisage in 2010. Please pray for us as we discern what the Good Lord is showing us which path to take in the future. I also express my appreciation of thanks to Rev L Lee Levett-Olson and Mrs Catherine McLeod of Nungalinya College for their ongoing communication with the Commonwealth Government on this issue.

Students:

Our students are travelling well in their studies and we need to continue to support them in whatever way we can and encourage them to grow in their gift and ministry in their community and church; an example of this was the ordinations at Yarrabah in April. (See opposite.)

The first level of new courses of Certificate III in Alcohol and Other Addictions and Certificate IV in Alcohol and Other Addictions Counselling are well underway. There are 33 students enrolled who find the course beneficial to their

current employment. These student will continue on in the Certificate IV in 2010. Our Community Organising and Development course continues to grow with another 12 intake of students who commenced in May and our 2nd year students are due to graduate in November.

As I conclude, I remember my very first report on "organisational pain" or more commonly called "growing pains"; and this is where we currently stand. With this comes the added pressure of renewed focus on our mission statement, maintaining a high standard of accountability to stakeholders, expressing our desire of sharing our Indigenous Theology and most importantly spreading the Good News of our Lord Jesus and training our Indigenous leaders of tomorrow to be workers in the harvest field of our Lord.

Blessings,

The Rev. Victor Joseph
(Acting Principal)

*Below: 1. Visit of Bishop James Foley (Catholic)
2. Anglican Bishops and
3. State President of Lutheran Church, Rev. Graham Harms, with College staff*



Ordination of two Diploma Students



I recently attended the ordinations of Edward Murgha as a Priest and Dorita Wilson as a Deacon, both of St Albans Anglican Church Yarrabah. This was my first attendance of another Indigenous cultural ordination and I will remember this as an unforgettable experience; and a mother and son taking up their calling. A great time was had by all who attended and in true cultural style this ended with traditional dancing and singing.

Wontulp-Bi-Buya College congratulates them both on their ordinations and we know that their journey is only just beginning.

I said at my conclusion of my speech on that day that in the words of our College name Wontulp-Bi-Buya (Faith and Light) they too now have become the Faith and Light of Yarrabah. God Bless them in their labouring for Christ.

Rev. Victor Joseph

Field Officers visits

Revs Mick and Val Connolly have completed support visits to Mackay and Woorabinda and Lockhart River in the first half of the year and have just completed visits to 5 other Cape York communities. The photo below shows L-R , Mrs Veronica Piva, the stalwart of the St James

Anglican Church in Lockhart River, Mrs Amelia Claudie, Fr Brian Claudie P-I-C, Ms Moira Macumboy, Field Officer, and Stanley Butcher. We are discussing the times for Bible Studies and having general discussions on local church issues.



Photo 1 on the top right shows some of the group at Bible studies in St Ambrose Anglican Church Hall, North Mackay. Standing are Revds Henry Kennell and Mick Connolly Seated L-R: Madeline, Lucy and Felicia (Joy) Kennell. Photo 2 on the bottom right shows more members of the attending the bible studies L-R Lucy Kennell, Kenneth, Gabriel Quakawoot, Simon Hapea, Pastor John Kennell, Revd Mick Connolly, Mrs Mabel Quakawoot, Madeline Kennell.



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