

Country clergy compassion and commitment



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I have been a part of our Diocesan community since January last year, after moving from regional Tasmania. I have been serving in ordained ministry since 2002 — in Ballina in northern NSW and then in Buckland and Glenorchy parishes in Tasmania.

In my Anglican Church Southern Queensland role as a retired priest I support Bush Ministry Fund supported clergy in our Western Region, especially The Rev'd Courtney Smith in The Parish of Allora-Clifton and The Rev'd Rick Gummow at The Parish of Drayton.

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She makes the Bible message relevant in today's context by presenting the Gospel in a life-giving and accessible way. As her "training supervisor", I was at the first funeral that Courtney conducted. She did three funerals in a fortnight soon after her commissioning. The funerals were held for quintessential "country" families. After one of these funerals, a parishioner approached Courtney in tears sharing with her how moved he was by her ministry, particularly how she had reached out so lovingly to the bereaved family. He approached her again after a Sunday service more recently, thanking her for her compassion and dedication. Such unsolicited responses are very telling.

Courtney ministers to people who face unique challenges. Many of her parishioners are current or retired farmers and graziers. Sorghum, various legumes and barley are just some of the crops grown by her parishioners and wider community members that feed fellow Australians. We all know that farmers and graziers do it tough in inclement weather and mounting debt, which is a key reason why the Bush Ministry Fund is so vital.

As a retired priest who is licensed through The Parish of Drayton, I also assist The Rev'd Rick Gummow when needed. I preside over a monthly service at All Saints', Cambooya and support Rick when he takes leave. When Rick needed to take leave to receive treatment for cancer last year, I was struck by the genuine concern expressed by his parishioners — not so much because they missed his ministry, which they did, but because they were so worried about him.

Rick is beloved for a reason. He has an innate ability to touch people's hearts with Christ's love. He is a wonderful listener and is often observed taking time with his congregation members to just *be* with them. I especially witness him taking this time after services to yarn over a cuppa or on the church's doorstep, as well as at parish functions.

I encourage *anglican focus* readers to donate or [bequeath](#) to the Bush Ministry Fund. The Bush Ministry Fund solely funds rural ministry in the Anglican Church Southern Queensland, and it is the only fund that financially supports rural ministry in our Diocese. By supporting the Bush Ministry Fund we are directly supporting our Diocese's priests as they minister to parishioners and outreach to wider communities where they serve.

Editor's note: The Bush Ministry Fund money boxes are a fun and easy way for individuals, families, parishes and schools to donate to bush ministry in our Diocese. Order your BMF money box today by emailing Helen Briffa in the Western Region office via helen.briffa@anglicanchurchsq.org.au or by calling 07 4639 1875.