

## DEACON NICK KERR

I'd been ordained just a couple of weeks when I sent in my profile for the NAD website in 2009. Now that I'm NAD chair I thought I should update it.

Archbishop Philip Wilson ordained Deacon Pat Edwards and me on 12 September 2009. Pat's at Glenelg Parish. I'm deacon at St Francis Xavier Cathedral.

I was a religious journalist until 2007. I started out as a reporter on the Adelaide Southern Cross – it was a weekly then. I ended up being editor and director of Catholic Communications. In 1986, the paper was closed.

It later reopened as a monthly. I left the diocesan office to become a features writer and SA correspondent for the Sydney Catholic Weekly and an editor for St Paul Publications. Then the Uniting Church invited me to apply for the position of SA communications officer and editor of the monthly, New Times. I enjoyed my 17 years there. My wife, Eveleen, was a teacher at Loreto College, Adelaide, for many years. Centrelink thinks we've both retired.

We have two children, Christian and Mariot. Our son's a political journalist in Melbourne. Our daughter designs costumes for films and TV commercials. We have two grandchildren. We're doting grandparents.

I've always had a strong ecumenical streak. I'm a member of the Leaders of Christian Churches in SA (it used to be called the SA Heads of Christian Churches) and the Diocesan Ecumenical and Interfaith Faith Commission. In recent years the diocese's involvement with Muslims and Jews has blossomed. We've formed some wonderful friendships. It was great having Jewish and Muslim friends, and some Orthodox friends at the ordination – to say nothing of a strong contingent of Uniting Church deacons.

Both Eveleen and I are involved in social justice issues. As a journalist I've tried to help people tell their stories to the church – giving the voiceless a voice. We've both been involved in Indigenous, refugee and asylum seeker issues.

We befriended some of the first group of Sudanese refugees to come to Australia and sponsored ("proposed") a number of refugees ourselves. In all we've had 13 young Sudanese living with us at different times – some for just their first few weeks in Australia, one for a year, another for two and a half years.

In 1998 the World Council of Churches asked me to join its communications staff for its World Assembly in Zimbabwe. Afterwards I went to Nairobi to meet Sudanese refugees. I've been back to Africa for the National Council of Churches in Australia twice since then. Spending time with refugees – in the Nairobi slums, in Kakuma Refugee Camp and in displaced people's camps, as well as here in Australia – has been a transforming experience. I've come to know many people who have been tortured rather than renounce their faith. What a privilege! Some of these young people now see themselves as part of our family. And our family sees them as part of the family. We're immensely proud of them. We're also proud of the young people from different parts of Africa who have come to Australia and are now outstanding pastoral leaders in the African Catholic Community. The African Catholic Community meets at the Cathedral. We have three African choirs and many different activities centre around the Cathedral parish. These young leaders are wonderful young people. Each one has terrible stories to tell of life in wars and refugee camps – and they're so generous and ready to help others.

Eveleen and I work together a great deal – especially with the young Africans. She has been a prayer companion working with the Retreat in Daily Life movement. She has also developing friendships with many of the international students who come to Mass at the Cathedral.



Many young African-Australians are getting into trouble with the police and are going to gaol. Eveleen does some gaol visiting with me.

I was rather overwhelmed when Pope John Paul II knighted me (Knight of St Sylvester) for my work in religious journalism; when the Australasian Religious Press Association gave me the Gutenberg Award for excellence in religious communications; and when the Australasian Catholic Press Association gave me life membership.

Eveleen received an Archbishop's Award in 2013 for her work in the archdiocese, the parish and especially with the African community.

Many people our age find their horizons are shrinking. Ours keep expanding – and very satisfying it is, too.