

I recently bought 'Grand Designs Australia' series one and two on DVD. One of my favourite episodes was the *Lake Bennet House* project in the Northern Territory. It was a most heart-wrenching episode, telling the personal journey of a young family struggling to build a tropical dream home against all odds.

I was fascinated to see how anyone could have tackled such a huge project single-handed. The host of the show, Peter Maddison, was also astonished with the sheer size of the project, commenting that it took, "guts, determination and a special connection with the land."

Homebuilder's Trevor's vision was a two-story house built in the shape of a fifty-cent coin, with a 300-year-old tree-trunk in the centre as the "holy grail of the house." He wanted his house to embody three main concepts: history, nature, and sustainability. It had to "work with the environment" and be as "open and as fresh as it can get."

Trevor built his house in his spare time, from the "inside out", on a very small budget, with the help of a few transient workers and backpackers. He had to cope with a tough building environment, steep access, rainy seasons with tropical thunderstorms, dry seasons with searing heat and bush fires, termites, and fire damage.

He also had to endure the stress of funds and materials shortages, plus external pressures from the bank and local government over planning and building permits.

I am in awe of Trevor's perseverance and determination to overcome so many constraints and limitations. He is a marvellous advocate for the great 'Aussie' pioneering spirit and a deep psychological connection with the land.

This particular episode of *Grand Designs* reminded me of the classical image of God as architect and master builder. For me it symbolised a God who creates beauty out of natural resources, a God who is resolute in shaping and reshaping creation into something unique and beautiful. It also brought to mind a patient God who waits and hopes that we will all take good care of the environment, make healthy life choices and live simply.

The *Lake Bennet House's* unique roof shape and open spaces enables birds and the tiniest creatures to come into the home. The house is a wonderful metaphor for the promise to all God's people – sung by the psalmist that "even the sparrow finds a home, and the swallow a nest for herself, where she may lay her young, at your altars, O Lord of hosts, my King and my God. (Ps 84:3 NRSV). Or put so poignantly by Eugene Petersen in *The Message*:

*Birds find nooks and crannies in your house,  
Sparrows and swallows make nests there.  
They lay their eggs and raise their young,  
Singing their songs in the place where we worship.  
God-of-the-Angel-Armies! King! God!  
How blessed they are to live and sing there!*