

# the aim

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Australian Indigenous Ministries

August-October 2015



**Becoming Aware** — see article pages 2-3  
Ellyn and Zemyra





# becoming aware

by Grace Wright

In July an AIM Mission Awareness Tour set out from the Central Coast of NSW. After stopping in to meet Christians at Moree and Cherbourg, the 'big red bus' with its load of twelve people, stopped for a week at Camooweal, far north-west Queensland. The aims of the tour were to gain insights and experience into indigenous ministry and to run a program for the local kids with the theme *'God is the boss who loves you'*.

Some of the Aboriginal Christians were able to share their stories and testimonies as well as showing them how to prepare and cook a lot of bush tucker.

## Here are just a few of the thoughts from some on the tour:

'It's been great to get a hands-on experience and watch and learn ... It's given me a new perspective on mission and a better idea of how I can be partnering with missionaries when I'm back home.'

'This trip has made me realise how little I know about our indigenous culture and God ... It has been so encouraging listening to the older Aboriginal women saying how they can't live without Jesus every day, and their contentment and joy in trusting Him.'

'I have learned that you can have all the theological knowledge in the world but if you are not willing to listen, learn, and build caring relationships with individuals, your ministry is going nowhere.'

'This trip has been incredibly eye-opening and a joy to be part of. Being able to fellowship with older Aboriginal Christians has encouraged me so much ... and to see what doing church looks like in another cultural setting as another expression of a biblical gathering. I've been challenged in how I think about mission and relational discipleship, in how much I rest in the comfort of my own culture, and to do things I never imagined I'd be able to do.'

'Being able to grow, fellowship and learn with Christians whose lives are completely different from our own has been really helpful. I have been encouraged by the

patience and determination of missionaries and gained a better insight into what it is to be a missionary, especially in the context of Indigenous Australians.'

'Camooweal has taught me to slow down and observe... It has also brought up issues and changed me in ways I didn't expect.'

'This trip has been a real eye-opener. It has been a blessing to learn more about the Aboriginal community and the work God is doing in them... It was a huge blessing and encouragement to have the chance to just chat with Jono and Grace... I hope that one day very soon I can come back to Camooweal and spend more time with the people here.'

'This trip has brought me to humbling realisations about myself that could not have been achieved in a different context. I thought I knew about Aboriginal culture and people — I thought I knew about mission work ... but I can see this is not the case. Instead I have been provoked to listen and learn from a real mission front context. The trip has also allowed me to explore the idea of mission for myself in the future... Praise God for the work happening in Camooweal and through AIM.'

## And here's a few comments from some of the local kids in response to the question, *'What did you like most about the mob on the big red bus?!'*

'We liked playing soccer with the boys and having BBQ and asking them questions about how old they were and where they live. We learned a new song. I liked that story about when the son ran away from the Dad and spent all of the Dad's money. Then he went back to his Dad and his Dad ran up and hugged him and threw a party. Jesus died on the cross for us. When we say sorry to God He forgives us.'

And in answer to the question, *'When do we want them to come back?'* 'Tomorrow!'

If you or a group from your church are interested in joining a Mission Awareness Tour check out the ad on page five.









by Erin Strahan

**W**e have so much to thank God for in Moree. God shows us His faithfulness every day without fail. Some days are incredibly hard, wearying and discouraging — yet we are able to say, *'Though the fig tree should not blossom, and there be no fruit on the vines, though the yield of the olive should fail and the fields produce no food, though the flock should be cut off from the fold and there be no cattle in the stalls, yet I will exult in the LORD, I will rejoice in the God of my salvation.'* Habakkuk 3:17-18

One of the common questions we are asked is, *'Why is there no fruit?'* more specifically, *'Why aren't people being saved?'* Each time we have no idea how to answer, yet we are more and more sure of where God has placed us.

Recently I have been thinking that if we look for potatoes on a grape vine, we won't find them there, and if we look for oranges amongst an olive grove, we sure won't find them there. Avocados take something like 7 years to bear fruit from seed. So while the seed that was planted may be growing, the fruit can take time to be produced. While we aren't inundated with people repenting and being saved, relationships are being forged and the gospel IS being shared and we believe that it will not return void.

The seed might be the conversation with a child as they sit on your lap, unaware of what they have faced in recent days and nights. Or the conversation with a group of kids while being picked up or dropped off from Thursday dinners. Or a battered woman calling to you to come and rescue her. Our prayer is that as we invest in these relationships and seek God's wisdom and Word to share with each person, that God would bring the fruit of salvation.

## Church Amalgamation

Our Moree Community Church joined with Moree Presbyterian Church in September 2013. This has been a wonderful blessing with many lessons along the way too. In our particular ministry setting with AIM we are helping to equip the local churches to welcome, evangelise and disciple the local indigenous people, and inviting them to come and work alongside us, and build relationships with



the local community. Moree Presbyterian Church has come on board with Sunday school and Thursday night dinners, with a number of the congregation now helping run these programmes.

It may be necessary in the near future to have 'Cottage Churches' (Church being held in people's homes/street communities) as a way of introducing them to the bigger Church family. Our larger traditional churches can be quite confronting and uncomfortable to begin with.

We have continued to do open air gospel outreach in one of the local areas and included a BBQ and 2nd hand clothes give away. This has allowed us to meet with adults and reflect on the gospel message with them personally. After a short break, we hope to be doing this again soon.

## Fruit Run — Tuesday Afternoon

The fruit started as a prayer drive, but we found that being able to pray and hand something out was great way to





**Wilma and Neil Robinson**



**Leo & Ruth Strahan**

build relationships with the adults in the community — particularly the families of the children attending Sunday school. In the last year Woolworths have come on board donating their left over fruit each week. *Neil and Wilma Robinson* are gifted in knowing which children like certain fruit, and they love to be able to surprise them when that fruit becomes available!

Woolworths have also extended their generosity and started giving us left over meat, which has allowed Neil and Wilma to drop it around to families they know who are in need of a bit of extra help each week, as well as provide the meat for Thursday night dinners.

### **Thursday Night Dinners**

These continue during the school term, and with the addition of a second bus we are now getting up to 70 children each week. God continues to show us His faithfulness by providing volunteers who help with preparing and serving the food. We have a real need for people who are willing to invest time relationship building with the children. Kicking a ball around, shooting hoops,

skipping, singing and crowd control are an invaluable kind of help — especially on nights when children are unsettled and easily provoked to anger by peers.

### **Friendship Group / Visiting The Elderly**

Neil and Wilma have established a Friendship Group through our new amalgamated Church family. This has been a great way to introduce the 'retired' age bracket to the Church family and vice versa. It has been lovely to see some of the older indigenous people joining in on Church fellowship and watching new friendships being formed. Neil and Wilma do a great job of visiting and caring for this generation in particular.

***Please pray for refreshment as we have a break travelling around Australia, the Robinson's spend time on a building team in the N.T., and Leo and Ruth Strahan (Paul's parents who actually began the ministry we are all involved in here) also have a month away from Moree.***

are you or your church interested in doing a

# **mission awareness tour?**



***Come and see what God is doing in and through Aboriginal Australians and the opportunities to serve.***

**The MAT calendar for 2016 is filling fast!**

For more information contact  
mat@aimpa.com

# chairman's report

by John Keane

I recently visited the National War Memorial in Canberra. In my great grandfather's WWI record I found that once while overseas, he and some mates overstayed their passes in the town and were each fined a week's wage for going AWOL. I commented 'so he was a bit of a larrikin then?' The gentleman replied 'No more than any others. Remember, 75% of them were either killed or wounded. Their future was uncertain. It stands to reason that if they got the chance, they took extended leave.'

This year our nation commemorates the centenary of Anzac Day with services reminding us of the commitment and sacrifice of our service men and women. Many suffered all kinds of deprivation and hardship, and so many gave their lives. It is fitting that we remember their commitment and sacrifice.

This year commemorates another special day. On August 1st AIM has been serving the Lord among our Indigenous people for 110 years. This too is something to commemorate and we plan to do so. Please see the notice on the page eight.

I have recently been re-reading the AIM history books 'Celebrating Faithfulness' and 'From a Dying Race to a Living Church'. Our history contains stories of courageous men and women who were committed, sacrificed much, suffered all kinds of hardship, and all for the cause they believed in with all their heart — presenting to the Australian Aboriginal people the life giving message of the good news of Christ and the freedom found in Him alone. 'Neither is there salvation in any other, for there is none other name under heaven, given among men, whereby we must be saved'. (Acts 4:12)

Today we have a faithful team of missionaries, team partners, indigenous pastors and local Christians who minister sacrificially in our centres. We have recently welcomed Peter and Karen Dixon as probationary missionaries and have enjoyed interaction with them.

Prayer has always played a vital part in the life of AIM and our history shows that God has been faithful as we have experienced over and over that our God is a miracle-working and prayer-answering God. Those who support AIM with prayer have a vital role to play in the ministry of the mission. 'The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective'. (James 5:16)

The 2015-2016 Council consists of the following: Chairman: John Keane. Vice-Chairman: Bob Quinn. Honorary Treasurer: Neil Bootes. Prayer Convenor: Arthur Nicolson. Council Member: Robert Alley. Field Delegates: Richard Davies, Jonathan Wright, Henry Louie, Isaac Gordon. Ex-officio Members: Trevor Leggott (General Director). Stephen Bignall (Field Director). Apenisa Rabai (Queensland Church Council Chairman).

As a mission council, we have continued to work together as a team throughout the year, depending upon the Lord for His wisdom in dealing with the matters that come before us. 'If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you'. (James 1:5).

Following an invitation from Ronald Briggs of the Indigenous Services section at the State Library, some members of the AIM Council had a very interesting introduction to the archives and records a couple of months ago. There was an inspection of the AIM photographs and records stored there which have now been catalogued (some digitised) and held in a very acceptable way.



**Arthur Nicolson, Bob Quinn, John Keane  
Trevor Leggott, Ronald Briggs**

We have real challenges before us as we still have centres without personnel. We have aboriginal pastors and church leaders pleading for people to come out and help by standing alongside and providing encouragement. We continue to seek people equipped with sound training, who function well in a team setting, who are gifted to minister cross-culturally in often difficult situations and who have a supportive church background.

We look back over the past year with gratitude for the faithfulness of our God who has guided and enabled us and we continue to rely upon Him and His empowering with regard to the opportunities and challenges yet before us. We are not overwhelmed, because, truly, **'Our God is able'**.





# choosing forgiveness

Over the years Queenie faced strong opposition and many tests and trials to her Christian faith. Through it all she stood strong in her Christian faith and had a testimony that the whole community respected. At one time a ceremony man put a curse on her and one of her daughters. He was her daughter's father-in-law. While others in the community cowered in fear, Queenie was unwavering in her faith. She went and confronted the man about the curse — asking if he had actually put it on her. When he said yes she told him that the curse would not do anything to her — God would look after her. Then instead of staying away, she chose to go to his home and show the love of Christ to him and his wife.

Meals were prepared for them, and hours of cleaning up in and around their home was done. And all the while, people in the community watched and waited to see if the usual effect of the curse would touch Queenie. But rather than seeing the expected ill fate falling upon her, they saw the prevailing power of Christ! God's power not only protected Queenie and her daughter, but also gave her courage and love to serve the one who cursed her. No wonder people of the community would say of her, *'That one there — she's a true Christian.'*

Several years later as the afternoon was slipping away, an argument started between two drunken men. A knife was raised — and Queenie's son stepped between them to stop the fight. The knife was plunged into his flesh. Her son was dead. The killer was a relation — her sister's grandson...

Queenie had grown up in a system where payback and vengeance were expected. In that system, her family had the right to bring punishment to the killer. But Queenie was now a Christian and had experienced the Lord's forgiveness in her own life. ...**Which way would she choose?**

Family members gathered to share their sorrow — and begin planning payback. Queenie turned to her two remaining sons and told them which way she had chosen. *'There will be no payback. It would only make me more sorry.'* Their respect was strong enough that they honoured her request.

Barely a year had passed when her son's killer was let out of jail. Queenie was told that he was coming back to the community after such a short punishment and thoughts of payback came to her mind. But she quickly prayed, *'Lord you help me. I can't stand strong on my own. You help me to love that man who killed my son. If he comes to say sorry, help me not to say a wrong word back to him.'*

The day finally came when he faced Queenie. She shared, *'It was the same one who killed my son. I didn't like to shake hands with him. But the Lord helped me. I just lifted my hand up straight away. He said sorry to me and I was able to say, I forgive you.'*

As has been shared before — payback is always there somewhere as part of human nature — the sinful self-life we all have.

**We all struggle with the self-life and with choosing whether to give into it or to follow God's way.**

God has no favourites. His grace and strength to extend forgiveness and show Christ's love to our enemies is available to all — if we will **choose** to have it in our new lives. *'Jesus has the power of God by which He has given us everything we need to live and to serve Him. 2 Peter 1:3' 'God is working in you to help you want to do and be able to do what pleases Him.'* Philippians 2:13 NCV. Some sadly do face far more pressure in making such choices — but how much stronger and more effective is their witness when they **choose** to forgive and love rather than pay back...

Please continue to pray for our Aboriginal brothers and sisters to **stand strong in their faith** — and to **stand with one another for Christ**. And pray that as they stand for Him and choose to live His way, that their witness will cause others to accept Christ and His love and forgiveness — bringing change to more lives, families, and communities.

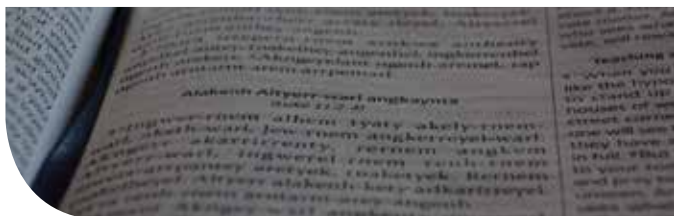
## Sandover Studies

Report from Jono Wright

One subject that is always worth studying is our own prayer lives. So I was delighted to be asked to take a series of studies on prayer for the annual Bible Study weekend held each year on the Sandover Highway.

People travelled from a few different communities around the place and the studies and informal times of fellowship went very well. We covered the Lord's Prayer and other key passages where Jesus teaches us both how to pray and what to pray.

It was great to be reminded of the huge blessing God has given us to be able to talk to Him anytime, anywhere and to be encouraged with the knowledge that God Himself delights in the prayers of His people.



## Health

Thank God for the good outcome following Bob McKerrill's surgery in May. Please pray for Debbie as she continues to suffer pain following her back surgery in January. Please pray for the correct diagnosis and treatment that will bring relief. Pray as they make decisions in light of their current circumstances and that through it all they will remain dependent on Christ and know His strength and guidance.

## QCC Ladies Conference

Report from Ruth Moffatt

We had a great time of fellowship at the QCC Ladies Conference hosted by Rockhampton in May. The accommodation in the coastal town of Emu Park was much appreciated and the cooks gave us wonderful meals.

The messages we had from Lesley Power were about strife — and there is a lot of that in this world today. We thought about how strife can cause sickness from the burden of worry — but thank God, He gives us His peace to rule in our hearts. We are to seek peace and pursue it. If you know God's peace, you will know God's blessing. In one of the messages we heard about the door of pride. Sometimes we let pride get in our way and this can lead to strife in our life. But we must keep looking to the Lord.

The Word of God instructs, encourages, and urges believers to keep strife out of our lives and live in peace. God wants us to have blessed, powerful lives and this is not possible without peace. *'And the peace of God which transcends all understanding will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.'* Philippians 4:7

## Sympathy

The sympathy of the AIM family is extended to Rhonda Coats following the homecall of her mother in USA April 25, and to Glenys (and Dennis) Tranter following the homecall of her mother in May.

## Townsville/Palm Island

Emmanuel and Agnes Fave have moved to Townsville to take up AIM ministry there. They would appreciate prayer as they seek a suitable place of worship as well as accommodation. Pray for the new Palm Island pastor, Irinale Tadulala from Fiji.

celebrating the 110th birthday of aim

# the faithfulness of God

our God is able



Isaac



Henry

**Date  
Time**

1st August, 2015  
12 noon — light luncheon  
1.00pm to 3.00pm — Celebration Service

**Location  
Speaker**

Winmalee Presbyterian Church 481 Hawkesbury Road, Winmalee  
Pastor Henry Louie (Gilgandra) and  
Pastor Isaac Gordon (Walgett)

**Music Items**

Rose and Janelle Cox (Dubbo)  
Harold Dalywater (Elliott)

**For further information contact  
John Keane on 0426 199 136**







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