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**aim**



*Australian Indigenous Ministries*

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# right place — right time

by Cliff Letcher

How might you feel if you found yourself 1,000 kilometres from any significant sized town walking in dense bush, unable to see anyone or even a road? Perhaps you would feel a bit nervous or at least isolated and want to see someone you could talk to. Many of our AIM workers and Aboriginal Christian leaders may not be alone in the bush in that sense but they can feel alone in terms of having someone they can trust who will listen or help them with some jobs that need doing.

Carolyn and I completed a trip to the Northern Territory of almost 15,000 kms. Clearly it was God's timing as we found ourselves in the right place at the right time for a number of people who shared deeply from their hearts about things concerning them.



Those things were not just ministry related. Family, long term plans, health and other issues were discussed. Grief and joy were shared. Both Carolyn and I felt that God had opened up a new door that He had been preparing us for and it was good to be able to focus on sharing with people without the added responsibilities that my earlier role involved.

It was a delight to visit many of the Aboriginal communities and receive a genuine and warm welcome. For some of these folk there is a limited opportunity for Christian fellowship with anyone from outside their own community so it provides a chance for them to explore their ideas about being God's people in their own community.

One example of our timely visits was to Tennant Creek where we were able to provide some practical help for *Richard and Sue Davies* as they prepared for their move to NSW. A few weeks later we found ourselves back there for their final packing and to send them on their way.

AIM has recognised the importance of this support for workers. While they have appointed us for three years they are looking for suitably gifted people to move to the NT and take up this role on a longer term basis. Please pray with us that God will raise up the right people for this. The challenge for the future is great. The harvest is plentiful but the labourers are scarce. If we are to see an increase of the needed workers (both Indigenous and non-Indigenous) we need to provide the necessary support to help them continue in their work.

One thing that is often mentioned by workers is how helpful it is to receive a phone call, letter, email, card, or these days, even a Facebook comment. These various forms of contact remind our workers they are not forgotten and that people are praying for them. They also express how valuable prayer support is. Without this vital ministry no one could continue in this important work.

When you live in isolated places contact with others is crucial. Visits can be a good source of encouragement but they need to be carefully planned in consultation with both the AIM office as well as the workers themselves. If they live close to the tourist path and people just 'drop in to encourage the missionary' it may turn out to be a burden rather than a help as there could have been a number of others who have recently called in.

We both feel very privileged to be able to undertake this role. Please pray with us that we will continue to be in the right place at the right time providing the right kind of support needed. Only as Lord enables us will His work continue to develop in His way.

# celebration

by John Keane, Council Chairman



The Lord blessed in every way as about 60 people gathered in Winmalee NSW on August 1st to celebrate AIM's 110 years of ministry. It was a great testimony to the work of the Lord through AIM over the years, while still acknowledging the opportunities and challenges before us. Our theme '**Great is Thy Faithfulness — Our God is Able**' shone through clearly.

It was wonderful to have input through song and sharing from Aboriginal Christians *Isaac Gordon (Walgett), Henry Louie (Gilgandra), David, Rose and Janelle Cox (Dubbo), and Harold and Kaye Dalywater*

*(Elliott). Trevor Leggott, Stephen Bignall, Peter Smith, Arthur Nicholson and Bob Quinn from the mission and former leader Howard Miles all shared as well.*

The folk from Winmalee Presbyterian were just so helpful. All of their contributions were greatly appreciated. There were a few former MPA folk who attended and a number of long-time supporters of AIM. It was such a good time of warm fellowship.



Janelle, Rose, and David, Cox, Dubbo



Henry Louie, Gilgandra



Isaac Gordon, Walgett



Harold and Kaye Dalywater, Elliott

***(A special thank you goes to John Keane for organising and leading the 110th celebrations.)***



# te birthday

cooking kangaroo tails



Christians in and around Tennant Creek gathered for the Church Birthday Weekend in late September. *Jono Wright* from Camooweal used the story of Joseph to open up New Testament teaching on suffering and trials. Singer — songwriter *Steve Grace* was a popular addition to the Saturday night sharing.

The local Christians worked hard to prepare and serve Sunday lunch. The church bus broke down at the start of the weekend but the locals worked together to get people to and from the meetings. It was wonderful to see the organisation and teamwork of the church family that helped make the weekend a very special time.





Lewis, Richard Driver, Michael Jones, David Duggee with AIM workers: Strahan family (Moree), Wright family (Camooweal), Stephen Bignall (western NSW), Dixons (Tennant Creek), Rhonda Coats (Darwin), Alice Schroers (Alice Springs).



Steve Grace, his wife & fans



our journey

tc

by Peter Dixon

**O**ur leaving Sydney earlier this year was rather like Abraham in the Old Testament — not knowing where he was going, but trusting God's direction to go. We believed that God would guide us to the right spot by opening up a teaching position for Karen.

While doing our orientation in Humpty Doo, Karen was able to do some relief teaching in a variety of schools in the Darwin region. During a week with Richard and Sue Davies in Tennant Creek in June she enquired at all three levels — primary, secondary and tertiary — if there were any positions available. Nothing seemed very promising, except a likely vacancy at the Primary School.

As people across Australia and beyond prayed she did apply for a couple of vacant positions there. These jobs went to teachers who had worked there previously, but the school did say that if we were in Tennant Creek there would probably be pretty constant relief work between them and the High School. Karen said that did not seem the right way forward but that she would get back to them.



At the beginning of Term 3 she advised the Acting Principal that she was not available to go to TC to get any relief work that 'might' come up. She was then asked to come down for a fortnight of relief teaching as there would be in-service training happening for the staff. So that was agreed to, and during its course

the Principal asked if a maternity leave relief contract would be of interest. His comment was that she was there 'at the right time' because such opportunities are quite rare. We understood Who organised the right time. During that fortnight Karen spent a few days teaching the particular class being vacated by maternity leave.

We see that God worked this out to give Karen an introduction to the school as an outsider, and to become a little familiar with both its running and with the new class. Her time as the relief teacher began in mid-September and the contract goes until the end of next year.

#### **Field Director Stephen Bignall shares:**

*Peter and Karen have been commended to the care of the Tennant Creek Church under the oversight of the church leaders. The intention is that the church members will share their experience of Christ's gospel and grace, as well as unique cultural perspectives and knowledge. The church leaders will determine ways in which the Dixons may serve during their time there. Peter will also visit the Elliott community, especially the Dalywater and Dixon families. The primary focus is on learning from Aboriginal believers and building good relationships in Christ.*



#### **RESIGNATIONS**

Dennis and Glenys Tranter have resigned from AIM and are now involved in ministry with Global Recordings Network. We pray that God will bless their ongoing service to Him.



The Council has received the resignation of Merv and Elizabeth Topp from their role as AIM Representatives in Victoria. We are grateful for their many years of faithful service in this ministry.

# connections

by Rhonda Coats

I had been enjoying some special 'connections' God had arranged here in Darwin through seemingly random meetings in the shops and also hospital visiting. Now I was looking forward to what God had in store as I set off to visit some centres in September.

Saying goodbye to a friend of over 30 years in Elliott who is moving south was difficult. As missionaries we focus on building strong relationships, so when we face good-byes it is hard. Pray we can keep our focus on our (and their) connection with Jesus as being most important.

Plans to visit Borroloola were changed by funerals. Deaths can seem so constant in our work and leaves a cloud of grief and sadness hanging over communities. Several places have recently held multiple funerals in one week – and sadly this is not unusual. Believers get tired from their loss of loved ones along with trying to minister to others. As workers we can find it saps our emotions and energy as we often had relationships with the deceased and have carried a burden for their souls — fearing many face eternity without Christ — as well as caring deeply for those left to grieve.

It was good as always to connect face to face and chat over a coffee with *Jono and Grace Wright* in Camooweal, and then with former worker *Dauhne Kuss* in Mt Isa. While there it was good to connect *Hazel Lauridsen* with more MPA and Bible Society resources for her mobile bookshop.

A lady I disciplined in Darwin had moved to Mt Isa and went through some very deep and troubled waters. Her mobile number and home address had changed since my last visit. Miraculously the Lord reconnected me with her through a stranger. What a thrill to hear how she has remained strong in her faith through all

of the truly difficult things she has gone through.

While a regular prayer request is that you ask God to raise up new believers (and PLEASE keep asking), we also want to give thanks to God for those who have walked with Jesus for years, often through very hard times. Being with *Bill and Lesley Power* in Rockhampton was a good reminder of this. They, like so many others are asking the Lord to bring younger ones to Himself and to their fellowship.

One day a saleslady in an outback town shared her pain of putting her mother into care. It was good to listen and show concern to this stranger. Some of us on the field have already suffered the loss of our parents, while others carry the burden of separation from them and concern for their increasing age and limitations. Others are separated from their children. These things add to our need of having you connect with us in prayer as we serve Jesus in the various parts of this land.

Plans to travel south were diverted so I was able to go to the Tennant Creek Birthday Weekend. It was a joy to re-connect with the Christians there and see them handling the responsibilities of God's work. While there it was great to make connections with *Alice Schroer* from Alice Springs, and the *Strahan family* from Moree on their around Australia trek. It was a special connection to find that Erin was from the same town in New Zealand where my Aunty had lived.

While vast distances separate us, as workers we share a connection of being called into this work of our Lord. We have connected joys, sorrows, burdens, and struggles wherever we are on the field. Please pray that we will all find strength in the joy of God's love, keep closely connected to Him, and keep trusting Him to build His Church among the Aboriginal people.



Some of the Rockhampton group

# looking for joshua

by Rhonda Coats



Several years ago *Michael Jones* commented, 'When this church was built (1984) the paint was good but now it's fading — just like my hair. It used to be dark, but now it is grey. It's the same for *Driver*.' Yes, over many years now *Richard Driver* and *Michael Jones* have been following Jesus and giving godly, faithful leadership in the Tennant Creek Church.

At the recent Birthday weekend I asked how things were going there. 'Good,' replied *Michael*. 'But we're still looking for some *Joshuas*.'

He went on to explain, 'Richard and I are like *Moses*. We are getting older but we are still strong. We've been leading our people for a long time now. But

we need younger men to come along so we can teach them and train them up — like *Moses* did with *Joshua*. He worked quietly alongside *Moses* — listening and watching so he could learn. Then at that right time, God passed that leadership over to him. That is what *Richard* and I want — some younger men to come to the Lord now so while we are still strong, we can teach them and train them up as leaders.'

**This is a cry going up in churches across the AIM field. Please join the church leaders in praying that younger ones will turn wholeheartedly to Christ and willingly learn from and be trained by those with years of wisdom and faithfulness to share. Pray that tomorrow's leaders of the Indigenous Church will begin being faithful followers today.**

## with the Lord

On 18th July, *Muriel Bowen* went home to be with her Lord. Her many years of service and ongoing contributions to AIM were shared last year in celebration of her 100th birthday. We are grateful to God for her faithful life, and for the doors her faith and love opened for others in ministry among Aboriginal people.



Former Administrative Secretary *Vernon Smith* went home to the Lord in August. During his time with AIM he visited numerous centres trying to familiarise himself with the people, places and work of the mission. A severe back injury cut his service short but he always maintained an interest in AIM.



*Norma MacIntyre* passed away in September. She and her husband *Colin* had worked at *Retta Dixon Home* and *MPA*. While at *MPA* she developed a valuable ministry of correspondence to readers of the *Today* magazine which she continued for many years after her retirement.

The sympathy of the AIM family is extended to *Rose (and David) Cox* of the *Dubbo Christian Family Church* following the homecall of her father *Neville Naden Sr* in October. Please remember *Rose*, her mother *Ruth*, and other family members in their loss.





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