



May-August 2016

Australian Indigenous Ministries

Planting — Partnering — Participating



80 Years of Ministry

When someone or something reaches 80 years it is always worth acknowledging. We want to recognise with thanks to God that this year marks 80 years of ministry of AIM in the Northern Territory.

Missionaries *Arnold Long and George Taylor* began an overland road trip from NSW to Darwin in March 1936. On August 9th they arrived in Tennant Creek, camping near a waterhole and the Aboriginal camp about seven miles out of town (about 11kms). They reported that they were *'welcomed by the people, most of whom had a very limited knowledge of English and none at all of the Word of God'*.

Tennant was celebrating the first £100,000 worth of gold mined there when the men arrived. The news of the event seems to have been shared among the aboriginal people in their ways unknown or understood to the Europeans as tribes had gathered in from other areas, including some from out west.

Before the tribesmen from the west started back to their home country the two men held a gospel meeting which this group attended. *'We had to speak to them through some of the other people interpreting the stories for us.'*

As they listened, they sat on their weapons which they brought with them'.

The missionaries showed magic lantern pictures (like a slide projector) of the life of Christ.



Arnold Long

When they brought out the portable organ the people didn't know what to expect and moved back in alarm! But soon they were quite fascinated with the sound. And George's fiery red hair intrigued them. One old man slipped up behind the organ and ran his fingers through the red hair then nodded and smiled as though satisfied that it was actually real.

They stayed several weeks in Tennant then the men proceeded on to Darwin. Along the way they stopped and held meetings at Newcastle Waters, Katherine, and Pine Creek. George was then assigned to Darwin, becoming the first AIM worker of the NT. One of the first to become a believer through his ministry was a blind man called *Harry Foster*. He was soon a great helper to the missionary and in the ministry too.

George went by rail on outreach trips to Katherine. Once when he was waiting to depart on a trip, Harry had someone take him to the railway station. He then gave George an envelope that contained nearly enough to cover the entire train fare. What a sacrificial gift from a man who had very little income — what an expression of his love for his Lord and the Lord's servant. Harry himself later travelled to Katherine and other places to share God's message and love with others.

Shortly after Arnold and George arrived in Darwin, *Les Weston* arrived by coastal steamer. Then on 9th November he and Arnold returned to Tennant Creek and Les became the first resident AIM worker there. He held meetings under a bough shelter and soon reported that the people were eager to learn God's Word and also how to read. They were attending the hour and a half lessons three days a week, and Les used those who were able to translate to help the others. Over the past 80 years, many other missionaries were to follow in working in Tennant Creek and the surrounding area.



Les Weston



George Taylor, Harry Foster and friends



making crowbars

In 1974 an upstairs mission house was erected with *Elizabeth Ham, Merna Carlo* and her daughter *Becky* being the first workers to occupy it. Ceiling fans and floor-

to-ceiling louvres made for a pleasant and spacious area underneath the house for church services. The people found this a nice change from the meetings being held in the camps.

As the years went by the congregation and the needs grew and in the early 1980s a separate church building was proposed. Building regulations made this very expensive so AIM Council recognised the need to assist. At the same time Council also saw that the church would be strengthened if local believers had some ownership and responsibility as well. Thus a goal of \$5000 for the church to pay for the concrete floor was suggested as a tangible and achievable goal.

At the meeting when this was announced, not one person said, *'We can't!'* There was a long pause, then one church member volunteered, *'I can make crowbars and sell them'*. From another, *'I heard that if we collect empty drink cans we can get money for them — and clean up everywhere too!'* Others made artifacts to sell, and they gave from their own income.

And so it was that the current church building was built and dedicated in September 1984, and has been celebrated with a birthday weekend most years since.

The church has grown in strength, numbers, faithfulness and faith since that first sharing of God's Word 80 years ago.

They have been faced with challenges regarding their traditional ways and have made some decisions that have cut across cultural ways. Some of these will be shared in other issues.

Since the Darwin work began back in 1936, many workers have been involved in and around the area. God's message continues to be shared there by AIM workers, Aboriginal leaders and believers. Pictured on the front page is *Don White* and his granddaughter *Scarlett* from the Aboriginal Community of Bagot within Darwin. She loves learning of God's love as Grandpa reads to her from her well-worn little Bible.

Thank God for the 80 years of AIM ministry in the NT. Please continue to pray for the Indigenous leaders and believers and workers there.



God's Church in TC 2009

New Role – New Opportunities

John and Rita Keane's names had only appeared in one issue of this magazine when there was an opportunity for a deputation meeting. So they happily attended a meeting of the 'Pennant Hills Senior Christian Fellowship' in their new role of AIM Representatives for the Sydney region. They both enjoyed a lovely afternoon with this group. It is made up of folk from Pennant Hills Baptist, Leura Gardens Christian Retirement Village, and the Pennant Hills Brethren Assembly. These folk and the young pastor leading the meeting were very interested and very responsive as John shared about God's work among Aboriginal people through AIM.

Another opportunity opened up last year for John at SMBC (Sydney Missionary and Bible College). On most Tuesdays the College holds two 'Missionary Matters' sessions when various mission representatives speak. John has been attending most of these. Several AIM workers have shared in such opportunities in the past and later this year others will also be taking part.

On John's first Tuesday in attendance this year, a photo of an old Aboriginal man and the AIM logo came onto the screen in the auditorium. There was also the wording that John was in attendance and that any students interested in ministry among Indigenous people should speak with him. He happily followed the request that he stand to be identified.

At the end of these sessions he was able to catch up with *Ellyn Rowe* who has gone on several Awareness Tours and has spent a few weeks at several AIM centres. He also had some time with Alice Schroers who had been a TEAM Partner in Alice Springs the last couple of years. She was able to share a little of her Alice Springs experience during the sessions.

John also had a number of good opportunities to share with several other students after both sessions. Among them was a fellow who, along with his fiancé, had been impressed with the Davies when they went to Canteen Creek with the SMBC team last year. This couple are considering ministry among Indigenous people when they finish their studies. Another couple had worked as teachers on Tiwi Island (out from Darwin) for five years and left the teaching in the hands of the local people when they left there.

As John has said, 'Let's praise God for these opportunities to make His work through AIM known'.



John and Rita



Both *Ian and Elaine Lindsay* (WA) and *Richard and Sue Davies* (NT) have recently resigned from their roles as AIM Representatives. We want to acknowledge with thanks the service they have given in this area of ministry.

Our apologies for the lateness of this issue. As you can see, there is a new look to the magazine which has taken some time to be worked through by the media team (*Stephen Bignall, Jono and Grace Wright, Jenni Alley and Rhonda Coats*). Our thanks to Springwood Printing Company and in particular *Rodney Crawford* for their help and hard work with the magazine.

Please note, that in order to fit into a more workable schedule, the timing of the magazine is also changing. This issue only will cover 4 months (May-August) to get us onto our new cycle. The next issue will be out in September.

Changing Face of Dubbo

by David Cox



The face of the Dubbo Christian Family Church is changing. We are now a truly mixed congregation, rather than a solely indigenous church. This reflects the changing face of the city of Dubbo itself. This also impacts how we minister in Dubbo. This has not been a hindrance to Indigenous outreach though. In fact, our Indigenous people are foremost in efforts to evangelise and serve as members in the church.

The Day in the Word is an event the congregation looks forward to twice a year. Our latest was held March 5th. The topic was 'The Church Militant: A Force or a Farce?'. The aim was to get people thinking about why the world today can so easily ignore the church. After all, the 1st century church once turned their world upside down. What tactics did they use that have been ignored by their modern brethren?

The program is intense. There are four sermons of 40 minutes each. These are separated by breaks for tea and coffee. The last talk ends about 1:30pm and a luncheon is provided by our amazing and tireless ladies. The program works well as long as the M.C. keeps people on their toes and in their seats on time (and the preachers)!

I was sceptical at first, when it was suggested to me. I thought four talks so close together would be a bit much. But I was prevailed upon and gave

it a go. I am happy to say, I was wrong. Our readers should consider doing something similar in their own churches. I have been encouraged to see how people will travel simply to learn God's Word. You can appreciate how little time is left for singing; which is usually such a large part of rallies etc. People will come just to hear the Word taught. And this is needed.

Recently we were asked to begin an outreach Bible study at Peak Hill. We agreed, of course, and have been driving the 70 km's once a fortnight. There are six locals that attend regularly, but others in the community are talking about a Bible study having begun. We hear this chatter, not from the attendees but through people who have family in the town and hear it from others.

Unfortunately there is still no Sunday school happening. One member had done it for many years but it was time for her abilities and energy to be used in other areas of serving. Sadly, no one else has taken up the opportunity, but we do make efforts to include the children in the sermon. The leaders of the youth ministry had to give it up due to family responsibilities. That indigenous couple continue to be a vital cog in the machinery of the church though.

Rose, Janelle and I are nearing the end of our 15th year of ministry here. There have been no spectacular leaps forward, but by the grace of God we are seeing growth. This has been more in maturity than numbers. We would love to see many more converted from out of the local community and we continue to pray for this. Would you join us?

You can find out more by checking out:
www.dubbochristianfamilychurch.org



Rose and David

Newspots

Health

Continue to pray for former worker *Eugen Freudigmann*. He was coping reasonably well with the cancer treatments and enjoying ministry opportunities through their church. At the time of writing he had suffered a setback with fluid building up again, causing him to be flown to Hobart Hospital to have it treated.

Please pray that Eugen and Ruth will know God's strength and peace each day throughout this journey.



For some time *Bill Power* of Rockhampton had been struggling with his health. When medication failed to work, he was sent to Brisbane to have a pace-maker inserted. The procedure went well and he was soon back home and using his renewed energy and strength to praise and serve the Lord. **Please continue to pray for Bill and the church where there are several members who are currently limited in their service by health problems and also family grief.**



In late April *Greg Piper* from Katherine NT underwent major surgery. Thank God that at the time of writing, all was going well with no complications. **Please pray that Greg will enjoy complete healing, and remember Debbie too, as she supports him and tries to keep him from doing too much as his strength and health increases!**



Death

The Cherbourg Community and the AIM Church suffered a huge loss with the homecall of *Alzira Conlon* on 24th March.

For many years Alzira lived out her love of travel and adventure — backpacking and trekking through Europe and Asia. In time she was drawn

back to Cherbourg to be among her family and community once again. Like so many, she knew deep grief, pain and suffering in her life, but she came to find love, forgiveness and strength from the Lord Jesus Christ. She then became a vibrant part of the Cherbourg AIM Church.

She served faithfully as church secretary for many years, and was often their representative at the Church Council meetings. And no one could sing Christian music with that jazz swing quite like Alzira!

The Ladies Fellowship of the AIM Church Council will miss Alzira very much. She was a valued member who offered great support and who always made a great contribution at the yearly conference.

She served her beloved community in part by her work in Aboriginal health. She had a particular passion and interest in the area of foetal alcohol syndrome. This opened the avenue to feed her passion for travel and experiencing other cultures as she was able to attend several international Indigenous health conferences in recent years. A great highlight of her life was to tour Israel. In 2008 she was one of a group of Indigenous believers who had the privilege of walking where Jesus had walked.

Alzira will be greatly missed but we thank God that she is now with the Saviour she loved and served.



Leave Extended

As was shared in the May-July issue last year, *Richard and Sue Davies* went through the tiring task of sorting and packing up their houses at Canteen and Tennant Creek, then relocating to Cootamundra NSW. They were then on six months leave to recover and adjust to these changes. Recently the Davies shared:



For various reasons, settling into life in Cootamundra has taken a lot longer than we had hoped. We are still creating storage places and there are a few more boxes to unpack — now mainly resource materials, but slowly its beginning to feel like home. We are so looking forward to everything having its right place!

I don't think either of us realised how very tired we were, and it has certainly taken six months for us to begin to feel that we are coming out of the 'mist'. It has been a battle to make decisions, go to the shops, engage with people, exercise etc. So, at the mission council meeting in February, we have been asked to take a further six months leave.

Though now on leave, they are continuing the process of writing Bible studies with guides for the churches at Canteen Creek and Epenarra.

Once their lives are more settled, Richard will be getting back into the Aboriginal English translation work which he and several others are involved in.

To help them in this time of adjusting and resettling they planned to attend a re-entry retreat in May.

Pray that this further six months of leave will be beneficial to Richard and Sue in renewing their strength and establishing their lives in Cootamundra.

Fiji Disaster

Sadly when Fiji was struck in February by their worst recorded cyclone, the home island of *Pastor Apenisa and Lolou Rabai* was in the eye of the storm. Their beloved village was completely flattened and suffered the most deaths in the disaster. It has brought heartache and devastation to their family as a number of their loved ones are among those killed. Others are still listed as missing.

The survivors will be traumatised by their experiences and face a long journey to recovery. Since the disaster struck, Apenisa and Lolou have worked hard to gather practical items to help their family and friends back home to rebuild their lives, houses, and livelihoods. Several shipping containers were filled and shipped in early April.

The Rockhampton AIM Church is currently endeavouring to make a contribution of Bibles for the people of Fiji.

Thank God for their concern and vision to help in this important way.



Lolou has travelled to Fiji for a month to grieve with and offer help and support to family and loved ones. Please ask God to strengthen and sustain them all through the aftermath of this tragedy.

Please pray also for Paster Irinale and his wife Fane who have been ministering on Palm Island. They too have returned to Fiji to help their people at this time. Please pray for the Christians on Palm Island while their pastor is away.

Ministry in Moree

by Erin Strahan

Towards the end of last year, we sadly said goodbye to *Neil & Wilma Robinson*. They were wonderful servants of the Lord's work in Moree. We are grateful to God for bringing them here for a time and the spiritual investment that was made into the local community.

Early last year, we had felt that God was prompting us to put more time into ministry work and less time in the business. It was a difficult decision, requiring us to trust God for many things — yet a decision that was full of His peace. Once we stepped out and made the decision to put the freight part of the business up for sale, it was only a matter of weeks before we had a buyer. Selling the freight part was a huge burden off our shoulders, especially for me as it was quite administration intensive.

Over the past eight months we have done a fair bit of travel as a family. After the sale of the freight section of our business, God opened a door of opportunity for our family to go away for some time of refreshing and refocusing on what He would have us do. And so it was that we headed off on an eight week, 16,500km trip around Australia! While we were away we also decided to sign over our main mail run contract, again taking away another huge burden and causing us to trust God even more with finances. With every door we have seen close, God has opened up many more, confirming His call to ministry work for this season in life.

Paul now works three days a week, and the other four include more ministry, visitation and service. We also travel to Walgett (two and a bit hours west) on Saturdays and support *Isaac and Eileen Gordon* with local outreach and prayer. Erin does the bulk of home-schooling on the days Paul works, which opens up Tuesdays and Thursdays to be more flexible and serve together as a family.

Unfortunately, due to a few other circumstances we encountered, we were no longer able to use the facilities of the local church we were attending. We have gone back to meeting in a home on a Sunday evening, worshipping, sharing and breaking bread together with other believers. Again with every door that had been closed — God has blessed us with many more that open.

One special blessing has been having our kids more involved in the ministry. Grace loves to be able to sing about Jesus and heaven, and has been learning the mandolin too. They all enjoy being able to share and contribute to ministry and grow in their walk with the Lord.

We now deliver the meals to the children on Thursday nights. While we were feeding 60-80 children when picking them up, we are now delivering over 100 meals, and the contact we have with adults has increased substantially. The fruit run that was taking about an hour to complete, now takes over two as parents and grandparents are wanting longer conversations — and so many of those are of a spiritual nature.

This term we are running a programme called 'Alpha for Our Mob' — which is like a yarnning circle where adults can come, talk and ask questions about different aspects of our Christian faith, while we enjoy a meal together. We are excited, as some of the adults are keen to come — something we would not have dreamed of a year ago!

We give praise to God for His sovereignty, strength, grace and comfort over the last year. We have learnt many lessons as a family, and continue to marvel at His continued provision and care every single day.



Paul, Erin and family



Neil and Wilma Robinson



Moree Mealtime

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New Series Volume 52 No. 2

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The Aim Magazine subscriptions are \$10.00 a year (inclusive of GST). Please send to AIM Office.

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