

December 2017 – February 2018

AUSTRALIAN INDIGENOUS MINISTRIES

Planting — Partnering — Participating



Thank God for His love for all the world



Cedric Jones, Richard Driver, Michael Jones



Ladies sharing from their painting

September in TC

Each September there are some big events held in Tennant Creek. One is the footy grand final which always draws a big crowd. People come into town from communities hundreds of kilometres away. Then the lure of 'things' in the town or the lack of funds for returning home sees them staying in town for days, weeks, or even months after the event.

There is another gathering each year in September. Sadly the big groups from outlying communities don't attend as they used to, but some still come to 'Gather Together Unto Him' for the AIM Church Birthday weekend. This year several from Epenarra joined in the celebrations of the 33rd year of the church building and the Wright family from Camooweal attended the Saturday meetings.

The speaker was *Henry Louie* who shared on the chosen theme of Discipline. The evening meetings were rich with people sharing from God's Word using a drawing they had done on canvas, as well as songs in their language that express their faith in Jesus.



Cedric Tennyson and Jono Wright





Henry Louie with banner made by TC Christians



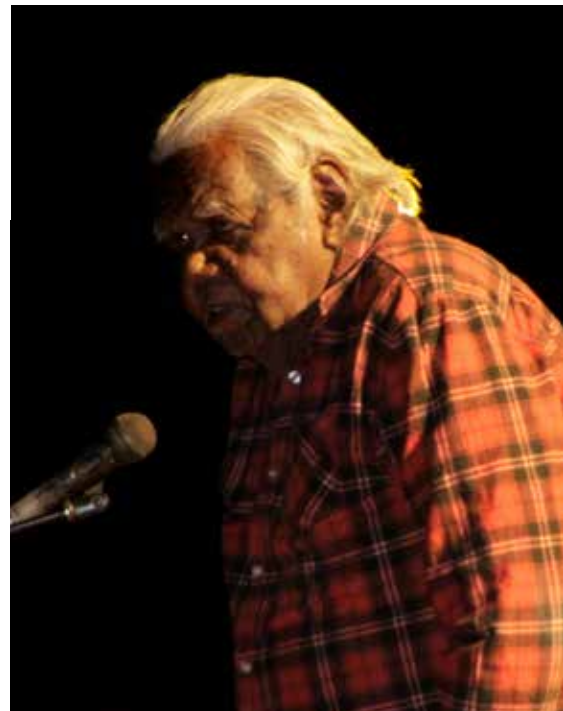
Kevron



Henry being a tourist



Peter and Karen taught the kids



Michael Jones



Some Thoughts from Humpty Doo

by Yane Damanik

It's only mid-afternoon, but from my window, I can see the sky has already turned dark. My room feels like a sauna although I have the fan on full blast. I can hear rolls of thunder hollering at each other from a distance. I wish for the rain to come soon even though I know there is a fair chance it won't. This is the time of year when I join the rest of the Top End community scorning these extreme weather tensions known as the 'build-up'.

I am sitting on my desk reflecting on the past six and a half years of living in Humpty Doo. Our family will soon leave this area that, apart from its humidity, we have come to love and call home. Looking back and reflecting on where we are now, I am grateful for so many blessings and experiences. Certainly, there have been challenges along the way but even in these we have seen God's faithfulness over and over again. One of the most recent examples was the way in which He provided a house for us through the local church, even before the AIM property went up for sale.

I thought back about the first year we arrived. We did not know anyone back then. Now the hardest part about going for me is leaving our friends with whom we have shared meals, stories, laughter, tears and joy together. I am grateful for the ways their lives have touched mine, as I hope mine has also touched theirs. These connections and ministry are hard to let go. I must say I feel a sense of sadness and even guilt. Like today, when yet another friend wiped away her tears after I told her we are moving. To keep things in perspective, **I needed to remind myself that letting go is also an act of faith. Because in letting go, I am allowing my friends to take on a different journey with God which I am no longer a part of, because I too have a different journey to take with Him.**

A question that people usually reflect on at the end of a phase is, 'what have I achieved'? The same question did cross my mind. I had given it some



thoughts but decided that this was the wrong question to ask. Does it really matter what we have achieved? **Our real calling is to be faithful.** So, I chose rather to reflect on a different question — 'how have we lived'? In comparison to eternity, six and half years is close to nil. Even so, I hope that during our time of serving the Lord with AIM here in Humpty Doo we have lived in such a way that our children have experienced God's amazing love for them. That somehow our life as it is lived in its every day mundaneness has been a reflection of God's goodness, forgiveness and grace to the people around us. I pray that even in times when we have failed to shine our light, God in His mercy has used those failures for something good.

I know I will miss this place. This is a special place where the sound of the monsoon rain and thunderstorms are reminders of God's power in nature. A place where the graphic view of the bright red sun setting in late August as you drive on the Arnhem Highway cannot but point you to the divine Artist — a place where encounters with the nation's first people continues to remind me of God's unending love.

A new chapter and a new journey is waiting for us. I look forward to where God takes us next. As our family takes twelve months away with our church family in Bethshan NSW, as Ryan and Edith begin a new school, Roni takes on a new job and I continue my research study, **I know in my heart that where ever we go God will be with us. That to us is all that matters.**

Closing of Woolanining

by TEAM partner Marian Quinn

To all those who have prayed over the 15 years of Woolanining School, may God bless you for the faithfulness that has supported us through so many crises. Most of you will know the school has now been closed. This was a shock to most of us. Maybe we should have seen it coming, but we have been in so many difficult times and seen God's delivery in each one. However this time was different, God had another plan.

We found out at the beginning of term 5. We were all back on site and ready to get organised for the term, starting as always with a whole college meeting which began with prayer and enthusiastic singing. A number of staff from Head Office were there as well, which is not unusual as they would often come to support us. However as I looked around and noted how many people had come, my stomach fell.

As a representative from the board stood up his face showed that his news would not be good. *'I have to give you some difficult news. Woolanining is closing, effective from today.'*

He went on to express his sorrow for the decision they had to make. The CEO was there and struggled to control emotions as she explained the factors leading to this response. We know that Head Office have done everything they could to make things work.

There was a time of stunned silence as people tried to take in what they had heard. When we could speak again it was good that no-one responded in anger or accusations. Everyone's first response was concern for the students. *Where would they go? How would they manage in a mainstream school? What about the seniors who needed to finish their units in order to graduate?*

Many of our indigenous staff were especially upset, pointing out how the students grew and changed in the time they were there because they were cared for and supported. *'There's no other place like this'* they said.

The CEO sent the following letter to all the schools in our organisation to explain the decision:

Woolanining Homeland Christian College is a secondary boarding college, catering to 60

indigenous youth from across the Top End. The College has been in operation since 2002 and in its early years of operation enjoyed a strong partnership with Woolanining Community Incorporated (WCI), with high levels of Government support.

The partnership with WCI has weakened in recent years. This is coupled with the NT and Commonwealth Governments delaying decisions regarding making a sustainable financial commitment to the clearly identified issue of significant underfunding for indigenous boarding programs.

Despite the great work of WHCC, we find ourselves without meaningful partnerships in order to continue delivering education, training and care to our students at the College.

I would just like to add that most of the community supported the school. Only a small group opposed it, and sadly they were the ones with the authority.

On that first day we all walked around in a sort of limbo. All the preparations normally done were now unnecessary — no kids would be coming in, what do we do with ourselves?

In the end, Head Office agreed to bring the seniors back to finish their units. So a small group of students returned for a last term. They worked very well and all put in the extra work needed to complete the units.

Although we all feel a strong sense of loss at the closure of the school we also recognise that we have been blessed to be a part of God's work there. We could see God at work in providing housing and work for most of the staff. An added blessing was that due to the hard work and help of the office staff many families found openings for their children in other schools.

Praise God for the impact the school has had on many of the students who have come. Praise Him for the opportunity He has given us to be part of this work and for the relationships that have developed.

Pray that our students will remember what they have been taught, and that the seed planted will continue to grow. Pray that God will provide strong role models to guide and support them.

With the Lord

In 2001 *Eugen Freudigmann* began work in Tennant Creek as an audiologist. He and his wife Ruth were thrilled to hear Christian songs filling the air as they went for an evening walk on their first Sunday. They followed the sound which led them to the AIM Church where they were warmly welcomed. Before long they felt at home and became an important part of God's family there. They joined AIM as TEAM Partners and became much loved and appreciated members of the family.

His work took Eugen to many communities in the Barkley area. He quickly and easily made friends, especially among the Christians in the isolated places to whom he was a great source of encouragement. But it was at the AIM Church in Tennant that he made deep and lasting relationships as he supported, encouraged, taught, and challenged the Christians — especially the men leaders.

He often used his practical skills to the benefit of the church and the believers. They still make great use of the barbeque he custom built for them. The multi-purpose bus shed stands in tribute to his skills, as well as his ability to gather the men and involve them in the practical work. There are countless other touches of his handiwork that will long be reminders of his practical contributions.

They left Tennant for Tasmania at the end of 2014 and sadly Eugen was diagnosed with incurable cancer at the beginning of 2016. However it was a thrill for Eugen and Ruth and the Tennant Creek people when he was able to return as the speaker for the Birthday Weekend later that year.

The struggle of the limitations, pain, and illness of this life ended for Eugen November 14th when he went to be with the Lord whom he loved and had faithfully served for many years.

Eugen and Ruth had been fellow workers for Christ throughout their many years of marriage then she lovingly cared for him in their home until he went to be with Jesus. Please pray for her as she now adjusts to life without Eugen. The love and sympathy of the AIM family is extended to Ruth and the family.

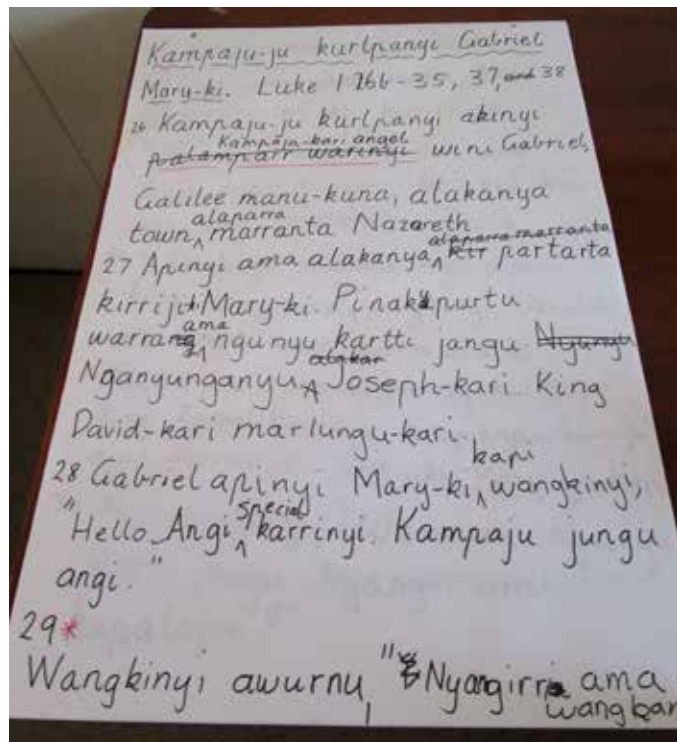


Cedric Tennyson, Eugen, Richard Driver, Michael Jones

Newspots

Translation Work

Translation work is underway in Tennant Creek for the local Warumungu language. This is happening under the encouragement of *David Blackburn* (SIL) who works in the Alyawarr language. The work was initiated by *Brian Gibson* who is a retiree, graduate of Moore College and AOG pastor who has spent many 'dry seasons' in Tennant Creek. He is now based in NSW but is spending extended time in TC to keep a keen watch on the translation.



With the work taking place each Saturday it means that *Karen Dixon* (along with *Peter*) is able to be a part of the team and translation work — which has been a long held dream of hers. Local speaker and AIM church leader *Michael Jones* is a key member of the team. *Rosemary Plummer* who works at the school where Karen teaches and her sister *Marlene* are also part of the team. The translation work has seen the two of them starting back to services at one of the other churches in Tennant.

The team has been working on the Christmas story. They were encouraged with the progress made by mid-November.

Cherbourg

Wille and Christine Moses will conclude their ministry in Cherbourg on 31st December. With two of their children already involved in ministry in *Townsville*, *Willie*, *Christine* and son *Daure* plan to join them in



early January. Their youngest son *Moses* trained as YWAM staff in *Townsville* two years ago. Their daughter *Retta* is also based in *Townsville* and heads *Paradise Production* targeting PNG and the Aboriginal youth.

We thank God for the service they have given the Lord and the church in *Cherbourg*. Please pray that God will guide them and provide the person of His choice to pastor the church into the future.

Health Update

Last issue we shared about *Jane Letcher* whose pregnancy was complicated by a blood clot in her heart. The Lord wonderfully answered prayers and at 36 weeks, *Laura Dorothy* was safely delivered via caesarean in *Adelaide*. Thankfully the clot did not cause any complications and it has now been dissolved. *Tim*, *Jane*, *Ruth*, *Anna* and *Laura* returned to *Epenarra* in mid-November where they serve with SIL/Scripture Union. They are grateful for the prayers and support of the AIM family.





Resignation

Word has just been received of the resignation of *Stephen and Fiona Bignall*. They joined AIM in 2011 and were based in western NSW. He spent a year as acting Field Director then was appointed to the role in 2014. He traveled extensively in this capacity, but maintained strong connections in the Gilgandra and Dubbo areas and was often a popular speaker at the Dubbo 'Day in the Word'. Stephen shared: *The past seven years of missionary service have been a privilege, in as much as we have been granted the blessing of sharing life and Gospel ministry alongside many aboriginal brothers and sisters, and local communities, in company with other choice believers called to the same.*

Please pray for the Bignalls as they take up church ministry in Wee Waa NSW in 2018.

Sadness In Rocky

Over recent months, waves of sadness have washed over the Rockhampton Church with the loss of three valued and faithful members. *Rob Smith* passed away and one of his areas of faithful service was teaching RE in the state schools for nearly 45 years.

Manny Cressbrook went to be with his Lord at the end of August. He had a burden for the lost and often went to the parks to witness. He was a valued member of the church and is greatly missed.

In late September *Patti Conlon* went to be with her Lord. She always made a church luncheon something special.



60 Years

The 25th June marked 60 years since the opening of the current Katherine AIM Church building. At the Sunday service greetings and memories from some past workers and members were shared. The following Sunday a church barbeque extended the celebrations.

Thank God for all those who are faithful in this fellowship and pray that they will remain so. Pray too that God will continue to build His church numerically and spiritually to His glory in Katherine.

Weddings

In September *David and Rose Cox* gave thanks to God as their daughter *Janelle and Lincoln* were wed. Two sons of *Phil and Fiona Spiers* were also recently married. Please pray that God will bless each couple as they seek to be faithful witnesses and establish Christian homes.



Rose, Janelle, Lincoln, David

Patti was the mother of *Faye (Chambers), Max and Goma*. Our sympathies to these and all the other family members.

Please pray for the Rockhampton Church and thank God for the leaders — *David Chambers, Lesley Power, Jandalyn Mitchell* and church elder *Bill Power*, and please uphold them in prayer.

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NSW John and Rita Keane

Liverpool NSW 2170

Phone: 02 9602 4573

Rhonda Coats

PO Box 40555 Casuarina NT 0811

Grace Wright

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Springwood Printing Company

Phone: 02 4751 6119

spc@springwoodprinting.com.au

www.springwoodprinting.com.au



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