

September – November 2018



AUSTRALIAN INDIGENOUS MINISTRIES

Planting – Partnering – Participating



Good Tucker – Kangaroo Tail and Bible Study!

Andrew Bob from Canteen Creek
See article page 4

Retirement at Last

Trevor (and Pamela) Leggott first joined AIM at the end of 1996 when he took on the role of Administrative Secretary. AIM became incorporated in 2004 at which time Trevor became General Director.

Over the years Trevor had to deal with some very burdensome matters such as the 'Bringing Them Home' national inquiry into the separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children from their families, then in appearing on behalf of AIM at the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse in regard to events that occurred at the Retta Dixon Home, followed by acting on behalf of AIM in the subsequent class legal action.

Now the RDH matters are finalised and AIM has a new CEO, he has been able to retire as of the end of August. We have appreciated his administrative oversight and involvement in steering the mission



through these difficult matters — and his willingness to put off his retirement to do so. Both the Leggott's and AIM have been grateful for the faithful support of the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia throughout his 21 years of service.

As he leaves, we recall his prayer for the members and work of AIM when he joined — and as that continues from him to us, so we would pray it in return to he and Pamela: **'The LORD bless you and keep you; the LORD make His face shine upon you, and be gracious to you; the LORD lift up His countenance upon you and give you peace.'**

New CEO/Director

The AIM Council has unanimously accepted Roy Hatfield as the new CEO. Chairman John Keane shares: *The Council has spent many months interviewing Roy and allowing him to understand the requirements of the role before processing his application. We have prayed much for we wanted to have God's choice in this position.*

Roy has a wide knowledge of AIM both past and present. He has a heart for indigenous ministry and takes every opportunity to be involved in mission to Aboriginal people. He is currently an elder of the South Grafton Presbyterian Church. He has been the head teacher in electro-technology at Grafton TAFE where he has supervised a number of staff, while also teaching. This has helped him develop skills in leading and working in a team environment.

A brief Profile from Roy

'I was born in Rockhampton with my father coming from Cherbourg and my mother from Woorabinda. I received Christ at the age of 22 and shortly after started to attend the Rockhampton AIM church.



Under the guidance of Brian Morgan, Bram Powell, Irene Fisher and Winnie Munns, I learnt and gained a desire for the Word of God. When Maurice and Judy Kuss moved to Rockhampton our friendship started and I continued in my development as a Christian. During this time I had contact with AIM churches at Palm Island, Woorabinda, Cherbourg, and Inala and was involved in the QLD Church Council. I also visited Darwin, Katherine, Elliott, Tennant Creek, and Camooweal.

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Thank You Arthur

No current members really know the AIM without the friendly face of *Arthur Nicolson*. He became a member of the AIM Council in the early 1980's, following in the footsteps of his father who had previously served on the Council.

The interest both he and his wife *Betty* have shown to workers over the years has been greatly appreciated. They did their utmost to attend every conference and visited AIM centres as they made their way there. Arthur also kept up with the ministry by phoning workers which was important in his vital role as Prayer Convener, and for many years he and Betty regularly went from their orchard in Glenorie to Sydney and Gosford for monthly AIM prayer meetings. **Thank you Arthur and Betty – you will be missed!**



Helpers Needed

We are looking for helpers to provide a Children's program for the Conference at Bethshan Wyee NSW January 11-14. You must have a current Working with Children Check. Can you help? Please contact AIM at: aim@aimpa.com

Sympathy

The sympathy of the AIM family is extended to *Peter and Karen Dixon* following the death of his mother August 15th. She would have been 94 in September.

Helping At Epenarra

Warren and Angela Laylin have been in Epenarra at the request of *Tim and Jane Letcher* who remain on leave. They shared the following:

The church mob are a faithful lot, mostly women and the occasional man and are an inspiration to us by the way they continually pray and rely on God

in all situations. What we have noticed is that along with the harsh climate the people have lots of hard issues to deal with. Many of them have relatives in jail, they're grieving premature deaths and struggling with serious health issues. They have been very welcoming and patient with our cultural blunders. We have been impressed by the canvas paintings they use to tell the gospel.

Please pray that the Christians here will continue to have the encouragement they need to keep going and growing in their faith.



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Then I moved to NSW and married *Roslyn Ferguson* at Collarenebri. We were involved in evangelism and teaching throughout the North West of NSW under the leadership of my father in-law, *Fred Ferguson*. We had contact with the AIM churches at Walgett, Gilgandra and Dubbo and other Christian communities including Brewarrina.

Over the past years we have attended Brethren, Baptist and Presbyterian churches. I have had nearly all roles in the church from cleaner which I currently do with my wife, to Sunday school teacher, Youth

Co-ordinator, Preacher, Teacher and Elder.

Our family have a long Christian heritage and association with the AIM. I haven't the space to name them all but our family have many friends and relatives who have served with the AIM.

I am looking forward to meeting you all and re-establishing some old friendships. There are many blessings and challenges ahead but victory is ours because **'Our God is Able'**.

Please join us in welcoming Roy and praying for him in this new role.

Time Up North

by Richard and Sue Davies

This morning strong, cool SE winds have sprung up and so ends a week of idyllic weather, consisting of cool to cold nights and balmy days. One behaves like an onion, shedding and replacing layers as the day warms up and then cools down. The 'Barkly Breeze' whistles through the gaps in our tin house, but we love living here. This affection is tempered by the knowledge that very soon the days will go way past 40°C, and so our time here finishes at the end of August.

What have we been doing?

The Church leaders in Tennant Creek asked me to run a Bible School on 'Who owns us?' Over the 6 sessions in the first week of July, an average of 35 people attended. It is always a stimulating time as the people interact with me while I am speaking, making suggestions and correcting me when I get a verse wrong. I love it!

We had hoped to spend time in Canteen Creek with people one on one to encourage them in their faith, but for a variety of reasons, this has been limited. School holidays, the Alice Springs, Tennant Creek, Katherine, Darwin and even the Mt Isa shows, intermingled with weekly football matches in Tennant Creek have taken their toll. The icy winds has convinced many to stay near their home fires rather than venture over to the church windbreak, where there may or may not be a fire. There are many distractions for people now — Wifi internet, mobile phones, games machines, gambling, and sadly some alcohol abuse. Once upon a time everyone in community came to teaching sessions. That was before 24/7 electric power, TVs etc.

On a positive note, Sue and I have finished translating John's Gospel into easy to understand English. What was being called the Simplified English Version is now the Plain English Version (PEV). Ten chapters of John have been road tested here, sent to our supervisor *Dave Glasgow*, and his suggestions have been incorporated into the text. We hope to get most of the other chapters tested before we leave.

While reading Jesus' prayer in chapter 17, one of the road testers burst out, *'That makes me want to cry.'*



'I can hear Jesus' passion!' The hours that have gone into this translation will all be worth it, if it speaks this clearly into people's lives.

Another positive is that the men and I have been going out next to a dry creek bed to talk and have Bible study while consuming roasted kangaroo tail. While this has started very late in our time here, it has been invaluable. Last week we discussed Acts 10 and how God had to change Peter's thinking so that he could use him to teach Cornelius and his household the Gospel. God could speak directly to people, but he has chosen to use people to tell others about the Good News!

One of the men asked us if it was alright for people who weren't Christians to talk about the Lord. An intriguing question. We told him that it was fine and asked if that happened very much. He answered,

'We talk about God all the time — when we are sitting around the camp fire, driving and hunting.'
Like Cornelius, there is a 'God' awareness here. We need more people to do what Peter did. The rest is up to the Holy Spirit.

On a personal note

As I walked in the hills the other day, I came across a small bush with very ordinary little flowers. It struck me that God had put that plant there and it was doing what it was meant to do without any show or recognition. God was reminding me that Christians must be God's people, living where God wants them, doing what God wants them to do. This is Kingdom Living!

When we leave, it will be with a deal of sadness on our part and I guess on the part of the small group of believers here in Canteen Creek. Nearly all the families here have been part of our lives for over 30 years, and some have never known a time when we weren't around. One small girl said, *'You're family for we, hey!'* Yes, we are family.

The community leaders have indicated that this little house will be available next year when we return. While we are here we hardly think of our home in Cootamundra but while we are there our thoughts are often for this community. We seem to move from one to the other as if we are moving from one room to another. The door is always ajar.

Praise the Lord

- for the translation work and for those who have helped with checking
- that there are finally men who can fellowship together
- for the renewal of familial relationships
- that the community have set this house aside for church use
- for the enjoyable time each Sunday night at Wetengnerr (Epenarra)

Pray

- that the people who only talk about God would be more curious and that the local Christians would be able to lead them into a deep relationship with Jesus
- that PEV translation will help people hear God speaking to them
- that the Christians will be diligent in teaching the children and that they will be 'Salt' and 'Light' in the community. Pray that they encourage one another around God's word
- that the church in Wetengnerr would continue to be a good witness. A number of the older church ladies have health issues and so please pray for a growth in numbers as well as spiritual maturity



Moree Ministry

by Erin Strahan

Paul, Erin and their five children are missionaries in Moree. For the last ten years they, and numerous volunteers have been evangelising the local Indigenous people through such means as providing meals, friendship, hosting holiday programmes and also providing gospel teaching to communities as requested in NW NSW. (editor)

We chose Ephraim House as a name for our ministry because it means 'The Lord has made me fruitful in the land of my persecution.' That's our dream and vision for the Moree community — that they would be saved through the Gospel of Jesus, and bear fruit through the power of the Holy Spirit.

The last 12 months we have been super busy! The National Disability Insurance Scheme work has expanded, and we are experiencing so much encouragement from being established as a Christian Service Provider. We get to share the gospel with those we serve and watch God at work in their lives. We have a young couple from Canberra (*Joel and Mink*) joining us in September. I am very excited as we hope to hand them a large portion of the NDIS administration work.

This year we have had three interns with us for different periods of time. They live in our home, and are involved in the NDIS work, and help with ministry activities. They have been a huge blessing and it has been a privilege to walk beside them as they explore their faith, grow their walk with Jesus and serve the local community. Part of this is meeting altogether with other volunteers on Wednesday evening to pray for our clients and share the blessings that God has given to us throughout the week.

Paul has started visiting the Dubbo Juvenile Justice Centre (740km round trip) once a month with a group of other men from town. God has given us favour with the guards and managers and they have just made attendance at our programme mandatory. One of the young guys gave his heart to the Lord last month. The men spend the time singing, sharing testimonies and praying with the boys. We hope that this will lead into a release support programme.

We have been invited into the town Mehi Mission to



have dinner and church together. It's fast becoming my favourite part of the week.

This term we have nearly 20 kids enrolled in our tutoring studio. I am overseeing three volunteer tutors who do an incredible job and have seen really special results — both relationally and educationally. We have also started a Bible Study for girls in years 5-9. We are going through the book of John, learning more about who Jesus is. Please pray for the girls as they are faced with faith decisions.

We have been able to participate in a few conventions out West. These are always a great time of teaching and encouragement with precious brothers and sisters in Christ. In September we are heading for the Doomadgee Convention and then look forward to a much needed family refresh, driving home through Alice Springs. Our van got written off last month, and we have replaced it with a Troopy, so we are looking forward to hitting some more dirt roads!



A Look Back

John Keane

1 Peter 4: 10-11 encourages and challenges us with the following: **God has given each of you a gift from his great variety of spiritual gifts. Use them well to serve one another. Do you have the gift of speaking? Then speak as though God Himself were speaking through you. Do you have the gift of helping others? Do it with all the strength and energy that God supplies. Then everything you do will bring glory to God through Jesus Christ.**

For 113 years the story of AIM is full of the accounts of men and women who committed themselves wholeheartedly to serve the Lord among the Aboriginal people of our land. Men and women with a love for Christ and for the people they were ministering to and a willingness to endure all kinds of hardships and deprivations in order to share the good news of the Gospel with the original inhabitants of our land.

Those with the gift of speaking, *did* indeed speak as though God himself were speaking through them. Those with the gift of helping others *did* indeed do so with all the strength and energy that God supplied. As a result, their lives and ministry did bring glory to God through Jesus Christ.

Empowered by God's Holy Spirit they went forth, looking to the Lord to supply their needs and found that God abundantly did so. As they shared the Good News of the Gospel, people came to faith in Christ, were discipled and then trained to minister to their own people.

As I look back over the past year, many of these dear faithful servants of the Lord have 'gone home' to hear the words of their Master: *'Well done, good and faithful servant, enter into the joy of your Lord.'* We remember them fondly. What a heritage is ours!

Today the work continues with the same passion and urgency as those early pioneer missionaries possessed. We praise God for our current faithful team of missionaries, team partners, indigenous pastors and local Christians who continue to minister to our indigenous people in all of our AIM centres with enthusiasm and love and with hearts set on seeing our Aboriginal brothers and sisters *'grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ'* (2 Peter 3:18). These folk are using the gifts God has given them with all their heart and as a result are bringing glory to God.

As a council, we have continued to work together well as a team throughout the year, depending on the Lord to lead and guide us in the decisions we have had to make. There are changes on the horizon. There has to be. Without change there is no growth. Change is never easy but it is essential.

This year we have had a change in administration: *Stephen Bignall* resigned as Field Director to return to pastoral ministry. Our General Director *Trevor Leggott* has retired and we praise God for his faithful ministry over 21 years. *Arthur Nicolson*, council member for over 40 years and our Prayer Convenor retired at our recent AGM. The contribution of these three men has been outstanding as they have used well the gifts God has given them. We will miss them greatly but thank God for their ministry and pray for God's richest blessing in the new sphere of their lives.

But through all of these changes, **OUR MESSAGE HAS NEVER AND MUST NEVER CHANGE!** We may change our methods, but our message remains the same. The message of God's love to mankind in sending His only Son to be our Saviour remains the central theme of our ministry. It is only as people receive the forgiveness that God offers in Jesus and begin a new and living relationship with Him, that their lives will be transformed and have purpose and meaning.

In closing, we look back over the past year with gratitude for the faithfulness of so many who support the work of AIM prayerfully and financially. They are a vital part of our team! **OUR GOD NEVER FAILS.** He will not fail us in the year ahead.

He has enabled us in the past and we can continue to rely upon Him and His direction with regard to the opportunities and challenges before us in the year ahead. Proverbs 3: 5-6 remind us to: **'Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding. In all your ways submit to Him and He will make your paths straight.'** Amen!



Dubbo News

by David Cox

Earlier in the year, *Rose* and I were reflecting on the fact that we had spent 17 years in Dubbo. This would suggest that we are at least half way through our time here — in other words, we most likely have more years behind us than in front.

This has highlighted the importance of making diligent efforts to prepare the next generation of leaders. With this in mind we have begun a training program very generously supplied by the Vocational Bible College, www.vbc.edu.au

We have found this material to be very useful and it stimulates some good discussions and participation from the six students we currently have. We are not able to offer the accredited course for several reasons but do enjoy the material provided. At the moment the students are going through 'The Introduction to the Bible'.

Our outreach to Peak Hill has not been happening this year, although the people of Peak Hill continue to meet and to hold community outreach events which we are happy to support. Pray for this small, dedicated group.

Other than the evening and morning worship on the Lord's Day, we also run a Wednesday evening Bible study. This has not been as well attended, probably due to the Bible class beginning. What is the future of this evening? We'll wait and see.

There is also a small Children's ministry that takes place for about 15 minutes in the time leading up to the morning worship. One of our young men has taken responsibility for this. Attendances are

inconsistent but the children have an opportunity to learn the important teachings of our faith.

The ladies meet Thursday morning under the watchful eye of *Jenice Hull*. A great variety of musical instruments are produced and utilized in this meeting! They have been challenged spiritually by studies based on a *Jerry Bridges* book, 'The Pursuit of Holiness'.

As you can see there is a variety of events on the church program, involving different leaders. We are happy for this but see the need for even more involvement from some others. It would be a blessing to *Rose* and I should we be able to see one from our own congregation take the reins one day.

We are mindful of the wonderful support through prayers that we receive and encourage you to continue steadfast in this privilege. Some points, in summary:

Praise

- For those who have stepped up to the challenge of leadership and responsibility.
- For the ministry of VBC who has very graciously offered use of their materials.
- For the continuing work by the Peak Hill believers.

Pray

- Particularly for young men to be raised up as preachers and leaders.
- That the various ministries will prove useful for gospel ministry.
- For wisdom concerning the day-to-day running of the church and the ministry of the Word.
- For an extended period of leave which *Rose* and I hope to enjoy over November/December.

