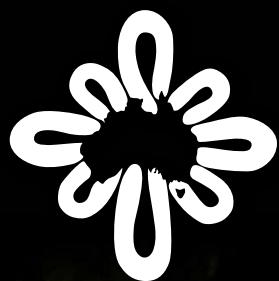


March — May 2019



# AUSTRALIAN INDIGENOUS MINISTRIES

Planting — Partnering — Participating



**Pray for Strong Christian Families**

Aaron Morton and Becky Bob from Canteen Creek with Kitty and Bartimaeus, Billy Boy, Philly, Lane, and Cara





**Rev Rex Rigby**



**Cuppa and chat time**



**Discussion groups were a welcome feature during the conference**

# Summer Conference 2019

The AIM Conference held in Wyee NSW January 11-14<sup>th</sup> ran smoothly in spite of some major hiccups to the well laid plans the week before. One of the major contributors to the gathering had to pull out at short notice. Council member *Yane Damanick* who was leading the organising, swung into action and that part of the schedule was filled with other interesting and helpful sessions.

Then it was not a case of *'too many cooks spoiling the broth'* but rather not enough cooks! Suddenly just days before the start of conference, those who had committed to the task couldn't come due to family circumstances. Council member *Neil Bootes* willingly stepped in and put his culinary skills to work and kept us 'fed up'. Thank you Neil! And thank you Yane for all your organising and oversight of the conference!

*Jenny Parsons* from the local church came along and conducted a program with the young ones. We thank God for her willingness to take on this task throughout the conference.

Looking back can sometimes help us look forward. And so during the first evening we took time to

look back at some of the good things in AIM history. Some slides were shared to briefly point out where we had come from — starting with the reminder that *Retta Dixon* already had eight years of missionary experience with Aboriginal people when she became the first Director. We thought of the hundreds of places AIM workers had gone and shared the Gospel, and the number of churches that were established. It was also seen that throughout the years there was a strong emphasis on training — and this had started with a request from the Aboriginal people.

We were reminded how the Aboriginal Christians in the past had formed the AUSTRALIAN ABORIGINAL MISSIONARY MOVEMENT (AAMM) which existed for many years. Local churches had joined this and gave, worked, and prayed to help send the Gospel to their own people. They financially helped students going to Bible College and would support the missionaries sent out from their own centres.

Though most of us had never met him before, we were immediately very tuned in as *Rev Rex Rigby* spoke at the evening meeting. The only disappointment was that his schedule only allowed him to share in two sessions!





**Jenny Parsons and the young people**



**A local prayer supporter enjoyed putting faces to names**

Rex is a gentle and humble man originally from the Brisbane area and he is the first Indigenous national leader of an Australian denomination. He serves the Lord through the Wesleyan Methodist Church as the South Qld District Superintendent, National Superintendent of Australia and as the President of the South Pacific Regional Conference. He had come to Christ at an AIM Church, then due to location, was encouraged to attend the Joyful News Church.

During his second session Rex shared about the Journey of a Leader/Shepherd. He gave wise and practical insights sharing many stories and experiences laced with humour that showed he was well qualified to share on this subject. He made the points that the journey of a leader/shepherd winds down the path of: pastoral care, facing impossibilities, giving generously, exercising faith with expectancy, depending on the power of God, following and walking with Jesus, and being a servant leader — leading through relationship and that it is stepping down not up to serve as a leader.

Important training sessions on safe ministry were held. The vibrant presentation from Safe Ministry leaders along with their practical inclusiveness and interaction with all participants kept us alert and involved in learning about this important subject.

AIM has partnered with Safe Ministry Resources P/L and our safe framework is an adaptation of the Safe Ministry Resources P/L — Safe Ministry Framework @Peter Barnett and CMI Vocational Training and has been issued to us by permission and for the purpose of child and people protection in AIM.

Over the past 18 months or more there has been much said and written about Pioneers and the future of AIM with some of the words leading to deep concerns among many. And so it was very good that *Ash Seaton* and *Rich Hadfield* from Pioneers leadership came and had an open conversation about what was and wasn't in their minds regarding future ministry and relationship with us. It was made clear that the terms 'take-over' and 'merger' were not part of their agenda or purposes.

Good discussions followed once those matters were made known in a clear manner. This opened up conversation for how we could work together into the future for the sake of furthering God's Kingdom among the Aboriginal people.

**Pray that in whatever role we fill in AIM, that all we have taken away from the conference will help us focus on doing that very thing — furthering God's Kingdom among the Aboriginal people. To God alone be the glory.**

# Memories and Thoughts

**L**orna Kleingeld, along with her husband and three children joined AIM in 1962 and served at the Retta Dixon Children's Home. We all enjoyed hearing her share the following when interviewed by Yane Damanick at the January AIM Conference.

## What was your most treasured memory working at RDH?

Miss Laelie Shankleton returned to Darwin from South Australia with Aboriginal women and children following WWII and started the Retta Dixon Home on Bagot Reserve in ex-army huts. She was loved by all who lived there. When she was invited to meet the Queen on her majesty's 1963 visit to Darwin, she planned to 'just make do' from her missionary wardrobe. We all rejoiced at the honour she was to have and joined in a combined effort with all that was needed for Laelie to be suitably dressed for the occasion!

## What was your greatest disappointment?

When we worked at RDH they were in their eight new purpose built cottages further down Bagot Rd. It was a thriving Christian community of over 100 people with a Supt. house, office, store, clinic, workshop, laundry, etc. When I visited a couple of years ago the RDH site was just an empty paddock... not a sign of any buildings. I was very sad till I realised that while no structure remained, all across the Top End and yes, around Australia were hundreds of people who had been RDH kids, who had the Gospel not only taught to them but daily lived before them by dedicated workers. Some had accepted the teaching, others not, but the seed had been sown and we had the Lord's promise that it will not return void.

## Were there specific people in your ministry who have had a significant impact on you? If so, who and in what ways?

The people that impressed me most were the single lady missionaries. I had come into the work with a husband and 3 children. They had given up the opportunity of a family life and all the ongoing joys of children's children and their children. They gave this up to care for other people's children in hot,



Lorna and Yane

uncomfortable, inconvenient conditions — many times having the sorrow of seeing a child who showed great promise claimed back to negligent situations when they were of an age to work.

Morning prayer meetings brought all together for the Lord's blessing on all aspects of the work at the Home and other areas in the Territory. We were blessed and encouraged by visits from workers from other centres with Dick Stretton being a special inspiration.



Laelie ready to meet the queen

## What advice would you give to us, who are currently serving with AIM or to people headed for ministry with AIM?

I think it is like asking the Wright brothers to give advice to astronauts! So much has changed in the 57 years since we arrived in Darwin. When we said PC it was translated as Police Constable. Now it would be Personal Computer or Political Correctness! And it is so necessary to be politically correct. We were in ministry before the citizen referendum, before our nation said sorry for national attitudes and actions that did cause great damage to another people's culture and way of life. Unless we are Aboriginal, our people came from somewhere else and we share the blame. We have benefited because our forebears came to start a new life in someone else's country.

The AIM has a proud heritage of preaching the Gospel in even the most remote areas, of training and equipping the Aboriginal people to assume positions of leadership, and of showing love and care to all people.

Be sure of your calling and when difficult times come, remember the text the founders chose as the AIM motto: **OUR GOD IS ABLE.**



# Making Plans

by Grace Wright

*'We can make our plans but the Lord determines our steps.'*  
— Proverbs 16:9



Looking back on our year since we left Camooweal, this verse comes to mind. We had planned 2018 to be a sabbatical year — a year for Jono to complete some theological studies, to have some rest and family time, to connect in with a church, to have some headspace to think about our future ministry. That was the plan. Some of those things happened, most of them not in the way we envisioned!

When we landed in Rutherglen, north-eastern Victoria, we discovered we were more exhausted than we realised. And then we found out that Jono had contracted Ross River virus, which laid him pretty low for a few months. While we have enjoyed the ease of life down here, with beautiful places to visit just short drives away, the cultural adjustments have been hard and we certainly feel like square pegs in round holes a fair bit!

So here we are in 2019 and still in Victoria! The plan we made for a year away has blown out to what will probably now be two. Now that Jono's studies are

completed and we are more rested, we hope this year we will have more time to reflect on our time in Camooweal and think through what is next for us. It will also give our kids another year in the same school without another major move.

So in the meantime, we both have been able to find work. Grace has a few hours as a teacher aide in Manoah's primary school down the road. And we are praising God for providing a full-time school chaplaincy role for Jono with Generate in two small primary schools over the NSW border. These are great opportunities to be a Christ-centred support for children and an influencer for good in the lives of the students and staff in these townships.

And so we have made our plans, but we are rejoicing in the wonderful and clear way we are seeing God determining our steps. Please keep praying for our family as we plan for the future, that we will be looking to Him and trusting Him to determine every step.

## Please Pray

- Please pray for the children of the AIM family. Some are now adults and raising their own children.
- Pray for faithfulness and wisdom for those who are believers, and for God to continue striving with those who are not yet trusting Christ.
- Pray for those who are still school age that they will follow Jesus and have His help as they cope with all that the growing years bring them.
- Pray that the parents will keep the right balance between family life and ministry.

## QCC CEO

**A**s a young boy, *David Chambers* was sent to Sunday school in Brisbane. But like so many, sport opportunities came along and took over from that. He went on to work as a tradesman, boilermaker, groundsman, and school chaplain. He is currently full-time carer for his wife *Faye* following her stroke.

David became a Christian a number of years ago. He has been on the executive of the Queensland Church Council and is now their CEO. He is also one of the leaders at the Rockhampton AIM Church. During the conference he shared how he is very glad he has the ladies there helping. He recognises and appreciates their wisdom and finds they are a great help to him.

In his role of CEO he has been visiting the Qld centres. He asked for prayer that there would be one vision, one focus, and all one in line with the Church Council constitution.



**Rocky Church leaders David Chambers, Lesley Power and Jandalyn Mitchell**

He is very burdened to see families torn apart by drink and drugs in Rocky as well as the communities he visits. There is a great concern for the children to be raised well and in homes where they are encouraged to learn about Jesus. He longs to see strong leaders for families and churches being trained up.

**Pray for David in his various roles, and pray his faith will remain strong as he waits for God to answer prayer for more men to follow the Lord and lead their families in God's way.**

## Cherbourg News

**M**ax Conlon has been overseeing the ministry at Cherbourg since the Moses family left. He started up a unique form of church outreach he calls 'Gospel-okee'. The number coming together to sing once a week has risen to over 100. Max and his wife *Tracey* started taking along some biscuits and now the people are bringing dampers, curries and other goodies and are really making a night of it. *Please pray that those who come will be challenged and changed by the Truth, and will personally know the One they are singing about.*

He has been emphasizing ministry to the men in order to see them become strong husbands and fathers. They long to see the change in the whole community through a good number of godly men and women being discipled and able to stand as strong faithful Christians in the community.

The Cherbourg Council has agreed to put the Christian radio station Vision on in the community. Pray that it will be effective in encouraging the believers and challenging the non-believers with the Gospel.

There is a need for people to step up and step into the role of Sunday school teaching along with working with the youth. The church building has been the topic of discussion for many years. They are considering either lowering and upgrading the current one or building a new structure.

**CHERBOURG AIM IS SEEKING A FULL TIME PASTOR. Please pray that God will provide the right person to come and further develop the believers and their gifts and abilities in serving Jesus — and in leading effective outreach into the community and beyond.**





# Remembering Bill Bird

**B**ill grew up in Cherbourg where he found his early teen years an oppressive time. White officials told him he was worth nothing because of his Aboriginality. He began to think it might be true and he got to the point of despair. But there were four Cherbourg ladies who had attended Bible College and they were a great influence and example to him. It was through the preaching of *Rachel Lacy* one evening that the Lord convicted Bill and brought him to faith in Christ at age 16.

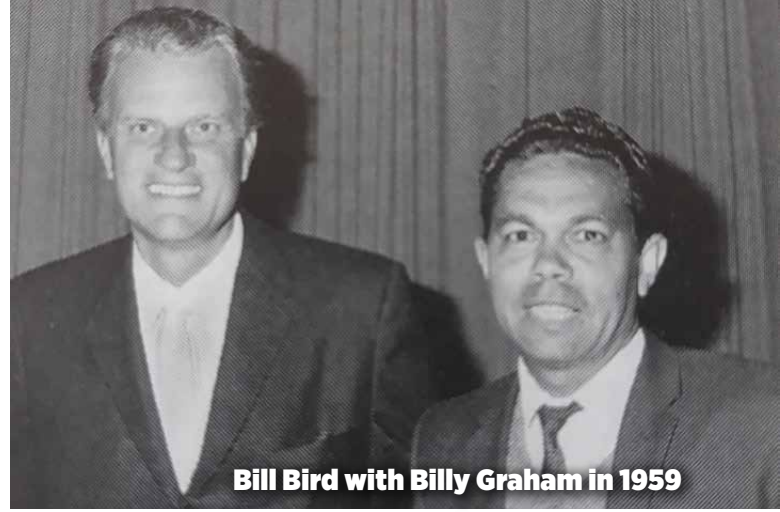
*My life was changed but I still lived on the reserve with all the oppression that I'd been living under. I never really dealt with the bitterness and the hatred in my life. My relatives, especially my uncles used to say, 'Never trust a white man. The best white man is a dead white man.' So that lived with me for many years.'*

Bill went on to attend Singleton Bible Training Institute. Then he and his wife *Joan* went out as AIM workers to Condobolin, Griffith, Woorabinda, Moree, and Redfern, joining the Anglicans during their time there.

*'When I was working as a missionary I saw how wrong the actions and attitudes of the white man had been to our people. My early resentment and hatred all welled up again and came alive because I had not dealt with it when I became a Christian.'*

After his wife died in a car accident in 1990 Bill put his whole self into the work at Redfern. He felt the Lord telling him to leave however his response was, *'But these people need me.'* He had a stroke in 1993 and then had to retire. He said, *'I should have listened to the Lord in the first place. It is a mistake to think that people need us.'*

Years later he attended a spiritual retreat with 50–60 white Christian men. He realised these men meant nothing to him and he didn't want anything to do with them. God spoke to Bill saying, *'You cannot have a worthwhile relationship with Me if you're not able to have a relationship with your brother whether he's black or white.'* They were about to take communion and the leader said, *'I want you to die to something which is hindering your development as a Christian.'*



**Bill Bird with Billy Graham in 1959**

Bill shared, *'I was trying to make excuses to the Lord to get out of it. I could hear the voice of my uncle saying, 'Don't trust the white man.' But God said to me, 'That's your problem. You've got to deal with that!'*

*I had always believed that the white man must fall down at the feet of the black man and beg his forgiveness for all the atrocities committed against us. In my heart I told God that I hadn't wronged the white man and that he is the one who must come and ask me for forgiveness. But God was saying, 'No, that's not my way! My way is that you go and ask him to forgive you for your sin, your resentment and hatred towards him. Once you've done that you'll be right with Me and you can walk with Me.'*

*It was a real battle but the call of God was so strong. I went forward and I confessed before all of them my sin of resentment and hatred. I cried out for God's forgiveness. Right then I felt a mighty deliverance by God.*

*Before we can be reconciled, there first needs to be love and forgiveness. To have that love and forgiveness we first need to know and understand God's love for us and the forgiveness He offers.*

Despite physical weakness the faith and witness of Bill remained strong until he went to be with the Lord in January. He had faithfully lived out the love, forgiveness and reconciliation he had experienced. We thank God for his life and ministry.

News was also received of the death of former Singleton graduate *Max Wright* in early December 2018. He and his wife *Naomi (Charles)* served with AIM from 1969 — 1979 having a brief time in Cherbourg, then Woorabinda, Palm Island and Moree. Max went on to faithfully served the Lord with other denominations. We give thanks for his life and service, and offer our sympathy to Naomi and family.

# Update on the Quinns

This past year for *Bob and Lucy Quinn* who are seconded to AIM from Pioneers has had highs and lows, and plenty of in-between.

It is with sadness that we report that in late November Bob received the news that his mother had unexpectedly passed away in Qld. Though her death came just six days before she and her husband *Bill* were to celebrate their 60<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary, she had been thrilled to have received congratulations from many dignitaries, especially Queen Elizabeth. Please pray for all the family as they adjust to life without her.

The Quinn household was busy for quite some time as they prepared for the first wedding in the family. *Lizzie and Robert Alexander* were married January 10<sup>th</sup>. It was a great effort on Bob and Lucy's part to then make it to the AIM Conference at Wyee early on the 12<sup>th</sup> — and thankfully with some photos to show of the big day!

Last year Bob and Lucy spent their Tuesday nights helping with English as a Second Language classes. They loved relating to people from various lands, teaching them from God's Word and helping the kids with homework. Their involvement in this ministry continues as 2019 unfolds.

Throughout the year Bob occasionally preached at their local church as well as at Living Waters Church in Redfern and was running two Bible studies at their local church. This too will continue this year. He has also been seeking to put together a Theological Education by Extension (TEE) curriculum for

Indigenous Australians. A potential opportunity has recently come about in this area about which Bob shares the following:

*In a recent edition of the AIM, David Cox wrote about a training course he was running at the Dubbo Family Church. This was a unit from Vocational Bible College. Col Adamson from VBC (whose brother Graham is a member of Dubbo Church) subsequently contacted Roy Hatfield and I about the possibilities of extending this more widely across the Indigenous Churches. This seemed an exciting prospect worth pursuing. I met with Col and we agreed to explore this idea.*

*The advantage of Vocational Bible College is that the training is at a more practical level. It also has more flexible assessment tasks than is often in academic institutions.*

*My idea at this stage is to run two pilot programs. One program will be run as an intensive block course over a two-week period and the other as a one night a week course over nineteen weeks. At the end of both programmes we would then review the results as to relevance, effectiveness and assess feedback from both sets of participants.*

**Please pray for Bob as he works with others to set up the best times and locations for these pilot programs.**



**Will, Miriam, Lucy, Rob, Lizzie, Bob, Alex**



