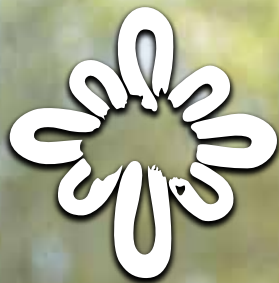


November 2019 – February 2020



# AUSTRALIAN INDIGENOUS MINISTRIES

Planting – Partnering – Participating







# Reflections

by David Cox

In the endless ages of eternity, 18 years doesn't seem long. But that is the milestone Rose and I reached in June — 18 years ministering at Dubbo. What that will mean for eternity we will have to wait and see.

When we arrived in Dubbo, from Woorabinda, we were a small family, having our 6 yr old daughter with us. We are now older, empty nesters and grandparents! Our daughter is now married and has her own 1 yr old.

On the surface it would seem little has changed in the congregation of Dubbo Christian Family Church. Numbers remain at a similar level, perhaps slightly less. Weekly activities have been adjusted over the years as circumstances change, but nothing of significance. We still enjoy the support of our church family who have been very understanding and helpful.

One thing that has changed for the worse is the lack of willing nominees for the positions of elder and deacon. At one point we had three elders, this is now down to one. We also had four deacons, now down to one. This has had a detrimental impact, if not on the congregation, on myself personally. More about this later.

The building has had a few changes made. There is new carpet, sound system, store room, cry room and a conference room. We enjoy very good facilities.

But what is all that when our greatest work is with the eternal souls of men, women and children?



One of the great blessings we have enjoyed is to see many young people spiritually profit from their time in Dubbo. The flip side of this is many have now moved on. However, I am pleased to say that most are continuing to bless local churches in the places they have relocated to.

As mentioned previously, the increased burden of lone leadership has had an impact. It occurred to me late last year I have lost vision and passion for the work — sadly, even some compassion, if I be honest. This led to much soul searching and solution searching. After consultation and discussions with a select group of confidants, I have asked the church for a year of sabbatical in 2020. We plan to spend this time in Sydney studying at Christ College in Burwood.

There are still many preparations to make — accommodation needs to be secured and finances ordered, also preparations to help the church cope in our absence. Do remember Rose and I in your prayers, but mostly the saints in Dubbo. We look forward to seeing God do great things even without us present!





Dear supporters of AIM,

We're living in a world of significant political upheaval. The nightly news highlights places like Hong Kong, Syria, and yes even the USA and UK. Sadly in this fallen world churches and Christian organisations are not immune from times of upheaval. Yet despite all of this we are told that our Lord will build His church and the gates of hell will not prevail over it. Somehow in the mystery of God's providential care over everything He is still working through such times.

Indigenous people are not immune to this world of turmoil. Their history since European settlement has been one of upheaval. Despite all of this, many Aboriginal people have expressed their gratitude for the coming of the Gospel to this land.

AIM has been involved in Indigenous ministry since 1905 and has experienced many changes over the years. In fact as an organisation we need to be constantly assessing how best to be servants of our Lord and Saviour amongst the Indigenous population.

In the past couple of months we have seen the hand of our God giving a new sense of direction. The Lord has stimulated a number of people to express their desire to be involved in the work of AIM and to stand with us in prayer. The AIM Council is in the process of prayerfully looking to see what strategies we need to put in place to ensure that we are assisting the Indigenous church to develop as our Lord desires. We also want to foster the Indigenous church enriching the wider Christian community. They have much to offer.

To this end we are in the process of seeking help and advice from gifted Christian leaders who are skilled in helping organisations restructure for the future. We are also looking to recruit the necessary people to undertake leadership in AIM, to build up the Council, and move the right people into the appropriate ministry areas.

It is with a sense of excitement that we invite you to stand with us in this vital work through prayer. We have faced challenges and opposition from the evil one so please undergird this work of the Gospel with a strong prayer support. Please pray that we will have all the necessary resources to continue on into the future for as long as our God purposes.

You can also be involved by encouraging others in your church to join with us. You may even know of people who have appropriate gifts and skills who could be encouraged to make themselves available to help develop AIM for the future.

For more information please contact our Head Office 02 6553 1572 or email us: [cliff.letcher66@gmail.com](mailto:cliff.letcher66@gmail.com) – [AIM.director@mail.com](mailto:AIM.director@mail.com)

We want to affirm once again that **'Our God is Able'....** to do far more than we ask or think. Eph. 3:20.21.

Yours in His service,  
Cliff Letcher and Yane Damanik  
Co-directors of AIM





Vincent, Amy, Muldoon

## Becoming Aware

Imagine this... you travel thousands of kilometres from NSW to Borroloola, and you meet a local guy named Noel. He tells you about his long stay at the Darwin hospital and how he was so well looked after by a Christian nurse. You pull out your mobile phone and show him a photo of your daughter then you hear Noel exclaim, 'That's her!'

What an absolute thrill it was for Rob Clements to have this actual experience when he visited Borroloola in September. He was part of the Awareness Tour conducted by Across the Divide.

It was a second tour for Amy from Caringbah Baptist Church. As a teacher seeking how God might use her training in the outback, she and the other teachers on the team were able to go into the schools and become aware of how different it can be in these places. One of the principals shared with them at length and didn't sugar coat what it can be like in

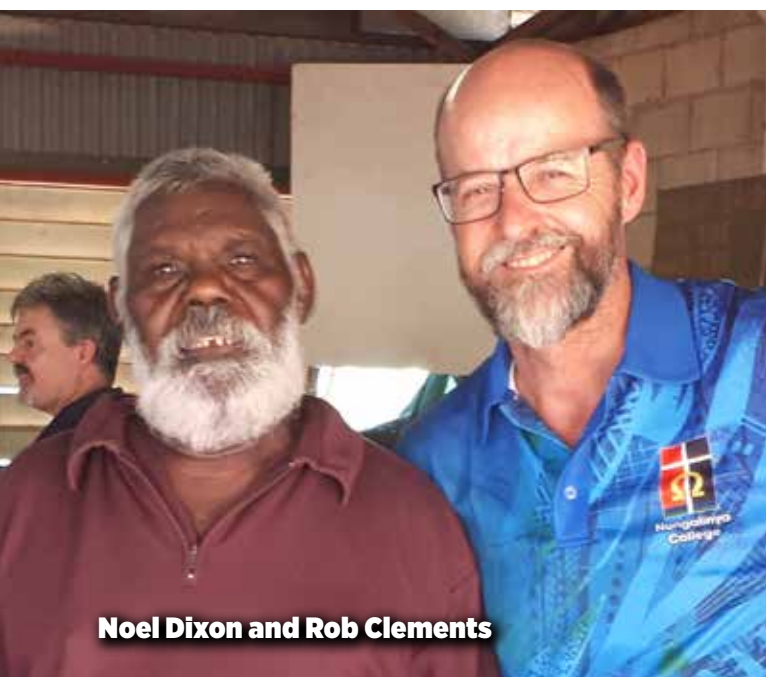
an outback school. Rob Clements was one of the teachers on the trip and shared: *We had a great time as a group of teachers studying teaching on the frontline. We were able to connect directly with the schools, and my prayer is that future CBC teams will be able to work in those environments inside and alongside community.*

Phil and Wendy Johnston were also on the trip and shared the following from their experience:

*What a joy and revelation to slow down and experience the peace of a quiet spirit...church was a time to listen to very personal and vulnerable testimony, as well as periods of stillness to reflect and just 'be' the church together. I know the temptation at home would be to quickly fill the silence. I was challenged not to crowd my everyday at home so there is no quietness before God or true 'oneness' with brothers and sisters in Christ.*

*A special time was had alongside Marjorie. She is physically frail, and it was lovely to hear her testimony of trusting Jesus through her cancer diagnosis.*

*Anna and her partner are determined to move forward from a destructive lifestyle of alcohol and troubles. Thanks God for technology and the ability to download an easily readable Bible version onto her phone! What a privilege to reflect on the story of Moses and how God was able to turn Pharaoh's evil plans so that instead of killing him as a babe, Moses was brought up in Pharaoh's very own household... God can turn our lives around too no matter how bleak the circumstances.*



Noel Dixon and Rob Clements



Thank God for the opportunities and experiences the group had during their time in these communities and for the prayer support it has generated. **Please join them in asking God to continue to care for and build up the Christians, and to strive with others to come into His family and be a part of the local churches.**



**Karlira helping Josie with her 2 ways painting**



**fun at Robinson**



**Sophia, Tirzah, Simon, Abigail**

## **McKees**

Regretfully news was received from *Simon and Tirzah McKee* that they can no longer continue as Team Partners due to ongoing limitations in his health. Their passion to see our Indigenous brothers and sisters encouraged in their faith, and the unsaved reached with the Gospel and changed by the Holy Spirit remains undiminished. However, they are not able to be involved in formal ministry in the foreseeable future. We are thankful for their 7½ years of service with us. **Please pray for Simon and Tirzah as they seek to stand strong in faith and trust God in the limitations they are adjusting to.**



## **Health Update**

Thank you for upholding *John Keane* in prayer. The latest report was that the cancer has not spread and appears to have shrunk a little. He was recently able to preach again as well as enjoy a country music cruise with *Rita* and their daughter *Melinda* and her family. He has begun chemo again which will bring on the side effects of intense fatigue, lack of appetite, lack of taste and weight loss. **Please pray for God's grace and strength for John (and Rita) through this time of treatment, and ask God to use it to its full effect against the cancer.**





# Celebrating 35 Years

by Peter Dixon

There's a stack of photos going back and back in time that are stored in a drawer of a filing cabinet in the Tennant Creek Church. You could say the viewing becomes frenzied when they are brought out onto a table for the church building Birthday Weekend. Memory sparks were igniting everywhere!

Mr Michael Jones particularly wanted to show me a picture of the late Stan Eldridge marking out the boundaries of the block of land before even the erection of the old mission house. And Richard Driver talked quietly about how he was born again responding to the Good News at the opening services of the current building, September 1984.

The ladies did a great job preparing the barbecue and roo tail feast on Saturday afternoon and we all enjoyed great fellowship in the unusually warm weather. The Women's Refuge had donated three 35th Birthday cakes to top it off!



At the heart of the celebration, though, were two meetings for believers, and three outreach meetings in the town camps. On Saturday morning Richard gave a thorough overview of Jesus' calling of his first followers so we could see what Following Jesus is about. On Sunday morning Geoffrey Shannon gave us a passionate challenge to share with everyone the invitation to follow the Master.



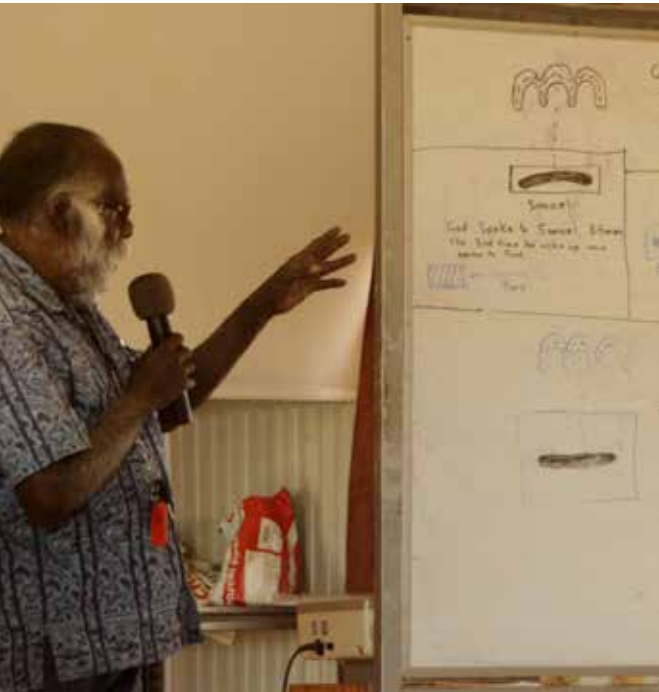
And that's what happened in the evening meetings out in the open — in Mulga, Kargaru and then 'Dump' camp. There were lots of testimonies addressed to families, and at two of the meetings Michael gave a powerful Aboriginal picture of the story of the Loving Father welcoming his wayward son.

On Sunday night a lady with lots of health issues testified how Kampaju (Our Father) had spoken to her in that first evening meeting and how she was determined to stick with Him now. Marie also testified that she was back at church after the Sorry Camp on the death of her husband and also determined to stick with Him as the couple had jointly determined earlier in the year.

It was also a wonderful blessing to have Julie, Kaye and Estelle from Epenarra and Canteen Creek share about that sticking with Him by words, singing and painting. We pray for them in their communities.

We give thanks to God, and thank Him for your prayer support. In the week following the Birthday Weekend there were several more Sorry Camps for those who have died. Let's keep praying as the believers share the only hope with their grieving loved ones.







# A Faithful Life

**D**uring his teen years *Ralph Day* became a Christian. He shared, *'I meant business with becoming a Christian. I wanted to be a true Christian, to belong to the Lord and to serve Him.'* Meaning business, being a true Christian, and serving Christ were clearly reflected in the life of faithfulness *Ralph* lived until his death on 25th August.

The first time he preached was during his 3 years at Singleton Bible Institute. It was at night and the lights suddenly went out which quickly taught him the importance of being well prepared! He shared: *This helped me to hang in during the tough times of study and has kept me learning. I can say this — I love the Lord, I love serving Him, and since becoming a Christian have learned so much.'*

After Singleton he worked as a brickie labourer in Deniliquin. In 1965 he received an invitation from AIM to work alongside *Stan Eldridge* at Darwin Community Church. He had also been invited to minister in Western Australia but felt that it would be better to learn from an experienced man.

When *Ralph* told his boss that he was moving to Darwin he begged him not to go — even offering to buy him a block of land and build a house for him. What a tempting offer to a young Aboriginal man who hadn't even received citizenship yet! Owning a home was virtually unthinkable for him then. But, in his quiet sincere way *Ralph* said, *'Thank you, but no thanks. I have made a commitment to go, and I must keep my word.'*

Right from the start, his time in Darwin was very busy. The Church had a Sunday school of over 250 children with 20 teachers. *Ralph* became a teacher and then superintendent as well as teaching RI classes. He was involved in the regular open air meetings at Bagot and around Darwin, and weekly services at East Arm Leprosarium. The Community Church was being built when he arrived and they were making their own bricks. *Ralph* shared: *'On Monday night we made bricks, Tuesday night was prayer meeting, and Wednesday night we made bricks again — and it seemed every Saturday was a working bee! It was so wonderful that I had that experience as a brickie labourer before I came to Darwin.'*

His Darwin ministry included 50 years of jail visitation, involvement with the Bible Society, Scripture Union, and serving on the Katherine Christian Convention committee for 20 years and being chairman part of that time. When a fulltime pastor came he remained at Community Church as a deacon then an elder. He received other ministry offers over the years with high financial or material gain but he remained faithful to the Darwin work and to the AIM.



Some from AIM NT centres recall enjoying fellowship with *Ralph* when they attended Darwin Bible College, and some remember him teaching them RI at Kormilda boarding school. *Richard Driver* shared how some of the men talked with him until 3am after his messages at their Easter convention.

Despite chronic illness in their own family, he and his wife *Valerie* were always available to help others. Day or night they answered the call to take someone to or visit them in hospital. They supported those who grieved and he conducted countless funerals across the Darwin-Katherine regions.

All aspects of his life were marked by faithfulness to his Lord. He was very involved in footy and a former teammate *Maurie Ryan* shared: *Ralph stood strong in his Christian faith and beliefs. When the NTFL started playing games on Sunday he advised selectors that he could not play as this was a day of worship for him.*

*He was admired as a true gentleman who was loved and who commanded great respect. He helped many people from all walks of life. He had a very gentle easy way about him. Everyone could easily respect him because of his grace and kindness. He was a beautiful soul.*

*Ralph Day* was a beautiful soul indeed whose life was one of faithfulness and service to his Lord. The sympathy of the AIM family is extended to his wife *Valerie*, their sons and families, and granddaughter *Shellbea* (whom they were raising).



