

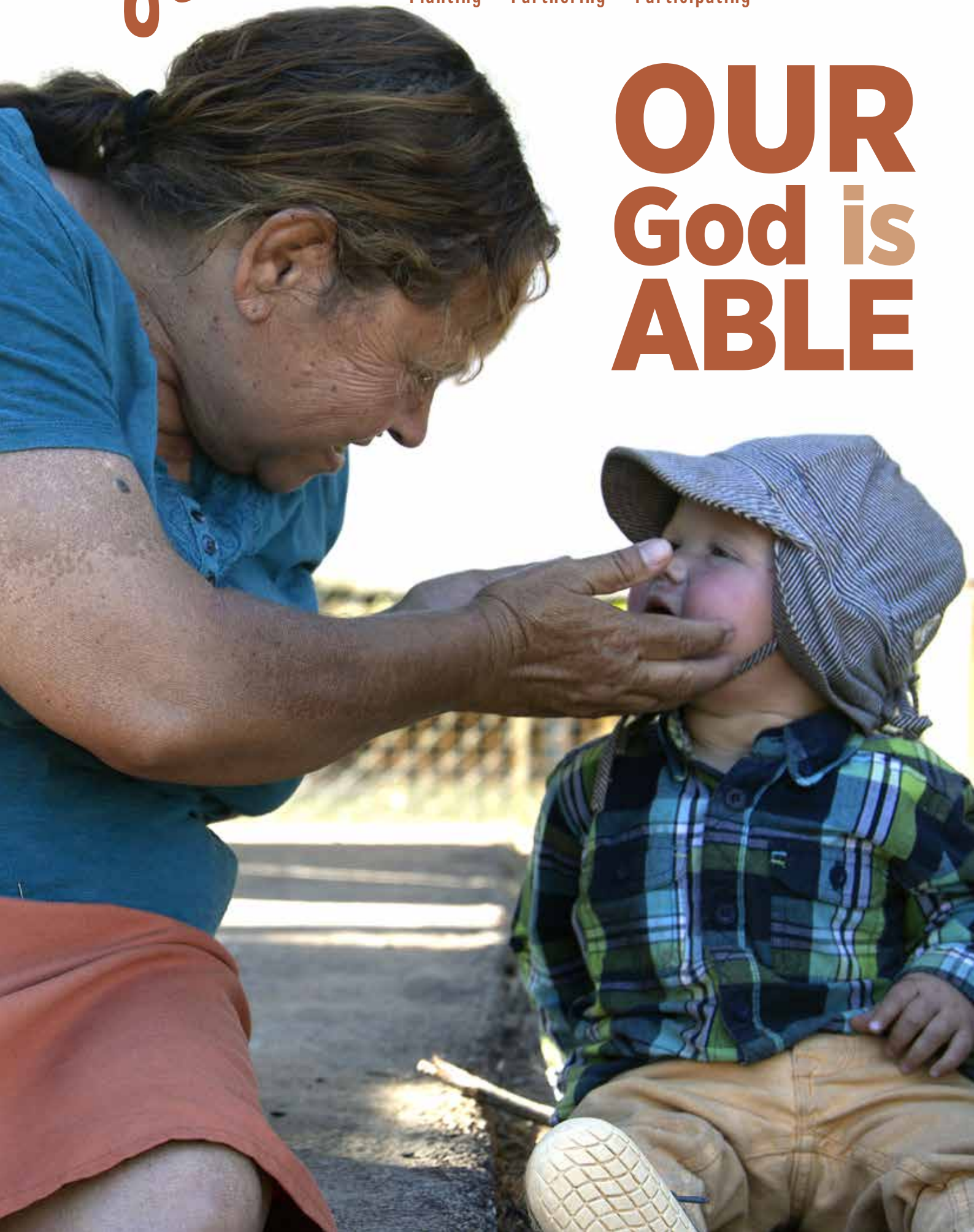


September – November 2019

AUSTRALIAN INDIGENOUS MINISTRIES

Planting – Partnering – Participating

OUR God is ABLE



Thank You John

It was with shock and sadness the AIM family received the news in late July that *John Keane* had to immediately resign from all positions in AIM due to ill health. He has been serving as Council Chairman, NSW Representative, and interim Field Director.

John has been a part of the AIM family since joining the Council in 1993. Prior to this he had served on the MPA Council and as chairman for several years but his concern and connections went back even further.

Shortly after becoming a Christian he was exposed to a wide range of missionary influences which fuelled his interest in missions. John became the missionary convener of the Christian Endeavour group he was in and made regular contact with mission organisations. There was a special attraction to work among Aboriginal people so he read all he could find, listened with great interest to missionary speakers, began visiting the AIM office to obtain information and prayer points, and waited eagerly for the AIM Annual Meeting which used to be held in Sydney.

He had served on the board of another Aboriginal mission for 18 years prior to coming to AIM. He had long had a burden and desire to be actively involved in mission work among the Aboriginal people. And involved he has been!

Whenever possible John has visited centres and churches – especially in Western NSW. While still working as a manager in the secular world, he often took holiday time so as to attend conferences. No matter how far away they were, he liked to drive so that he could visit as many AIM centres, workers, and churches as possible along the way.

In his 'retirement years', as if pastoring a small church and being Chairman of the AIM Council wasn't enough he took on the role of NSW Representative

in October 2015. Besides deputation meetings, another opportunity opened up for him. On most Tuesdays while classes are on, SMBC holds two 'Missionary Matters' sessions when various mission representatives speak. John began attending regularly with his usual enthusiasm. He made himself known and available to talk of work amongst Aboriginal people with the students and was a great supporter of any AIM workers who had the opportunity to speak there.

We are so thankful for all the years of service John has given to the Lord in AIM through administration, prayer, encouragement, friendship and pastoral care. He has been much appreciated and will be greatly missed. Thank you John!

Regarding his health, John shared the following:

The day I went into hospital for extensive tests to find out what was wrong with me, our reading was from Exodus 33:14 'My Presence will go with you and I will give you rest (inner peace).' I continued to remind myself of this promise as I lay on the bed waiting to be taken into theatre for the tests. This wonderful promise has been the experience of Rita and I over these past days – the Lord's Presence and His inner peace have just been so real to us.

John has begun an intensive regime of chemotherapy. **Please pray that he will have strength through this process, and that it will have its full effect on the cancer. Please pray too for his wife Rita through this time.**



John's resignation leaves a huge void in AIM.

PLEASE ask God to supply the right personnel for the Leadership, Council, and Field, along with the finance needed that we may continue in ministry amongst the Aboriginal people.

OUR GOD IS ABLE



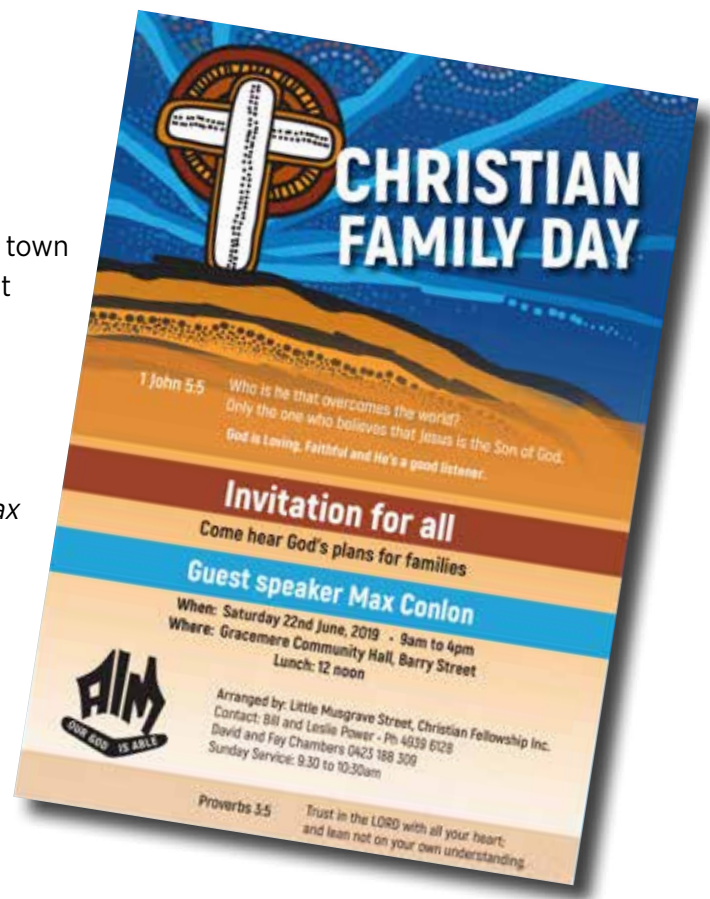
Rocky Outreach

by David Chambers

I'd like to inform you of the recent outreach event at the town of Gracemere in central Queensland. It is located a short drive west of Rockhampton on the Capricorn Highway. There are many Indigenous families now living there.

On the 22nd of June the Rockhampton AIM Church held meetings at the Gracemere Town Hall. The theme was **'Families and God's Plan for Them'**. The speakers were *Max Conlon* from AIM Cherbourg and *Lindsay Kristoffel* from Murgon Baptist Church. The music was supplied by *Hedley Fisher* from Cherbourg AIM Church.

Although there were fewer than expected in attendance, a great time of fellowship was had by all. New friendships were established and there were inquiries made about holding cottage meetings out that way. The Rocky Church is working out plans for these.



Please pray for the families at Gracemere and the ongoing involvement of AIM there.



Lindsay and Lyn Kristofel



Hedley Fisher

Resignation

In early July the AIM Council regretfully accepted the resignation of *Roy Hatfield* as General Director. He and wife *Roslyn* came to this decision after many weeks of prayer and consideration. We thank them for their ministry with us and pray as they seek how to best serve our Lord in the future.

We implore you to PLEASE PRAY that the Lord will make His way clear to the AIM Council regarding the future.

PLEASE ASK God to provide us with the person who has the gifts and skills to fill this vital leadership role. AIM is a faith mission, so they will need to have their own financial resources.

OUR GOD IS ABLE





Observing and Learning

by Ellyn and the Awareness Team

On the 17th July a team of eight adults and one excited little toddler flew from the NSW Central Coast to Darwin to jump on Rob Alley's big red bus. We were excited at the opportunity to see how God is working around our country but mostly had no idea what to expect!

We were greatly blessed as we had the opportunity to visit many communities including Katherine, Tennant Creek, Canteen Creek, Epenarra and Camooweal. It's hard to put into a few paragraphs all that we have seen and learnt over the two weeks but here is a little glimpse into how God has been at work in our lives...

Roger: I've witnessed firsthand the whole of life commitment made by missionaries who go and live in the communities. I have a greater appreciation of the complexities involved in reaching across cultural groups, and a greater appreciation of the devotion and commitment of churchgoers in small isolated congregations. I'm captured by God's plan to make His name known amongst all nations.

Kirsten: Why did I go on this trip? There is a song that I heard playing on the radio one day that penetrated deep into my thoughts. The lyrics were 'I can only imagine what it will be like, when I walk by your side, I can only imagine what my eyes will see, when your face is before me, surrounded by your glory, what will my heart feel...'. When I stand before Jesus and see the scars in his flesh, I want him to look at me and see mirrored in my flesh the same scars because it was crucified for Him. I realised that I want Him to know that I ran the race and fought the good fight as hard as I could because I wanted to be with Him forever as much as he wanted to be with me for eternity.

Jo: I have learned that becoming a Christian and devoting your life to God as an Aboriginal can be an extremely difficult thing to do. They are turning away from the spiritual system they are born into and had instilled in them since birth. They are turning away from the ceremonies and many of their cultural traditions. Their community and family may turn away from them.

I truly admire the Aboriginal people that have chosen to become Christians and strive to honour and glorify God by staying on the narrow path. They acknowledge that there are times like all of us that they fall off that path, but, through prayers and their love for God they get back on that straight path. So much love and respect for these beautiful people!

Mick: One thing I've learnt from this trip is that we need to support the wonderful work the missionaries are doing in such a hard and harsh environment, which is all for God's glory. I enjoyed the simplistic approach to God's Word through their drawings and also their sharing times. And I reckon God's message to us through this trip is quite simple — life is better when we're one mob in God.

Ellyn: I have learnt so much from this trip but one thing that really stood out to me and I loved seeing is how the Gospel unites people from every tribe, nation and culture! We had the great blessing of visiting a number of different communities and each one is so different with its own complexities but there is one thing that is the same for every place we went and that is people's need for a Saviour.

I loved the urgency of the message preached in Tennant Creek. *Michael Jones* called us all to 'be ready'. I get so easily distracted by things in this life but I've once again been reminded of my need to be 'on mission' to my friends, family, neighbours... I want everyone I know to 'be ready' to meet Jesus!



Life in Canteen Creek

by Richard and Sue Davies

Our time in Canteen Creek is nearly over for this year, and people often ask us what it is like to live out here. Well, the community is about 3½ hours from Tennant Creek, on a good day. If it has rained, the river crossings are treacherous, parts of the road are washed away, and others are so soft, your vehicle sinks into the mud. It can take hours to get out. Or even when the road is dry, many have rolled their vehicles....loose gravel, corrugations, tyre blow-outs, blind corners, kangaroos, speed, tiredness, sun in your eyes, all make it quite a challenging journey.

The community houses around 250 people, although that is fluid. Events such as Shows, rodeos, funerals, football, court, shopping, ceremony, training, and hospital visits take people away, and with a lack of roadworthy cars, some find it difficult to get back.

This community is well served by an amazing new clinic, the flying doctor service, a new store, a well-equipped school, a power house and a good water supply. A CEO is employed by the community to run its affairs, and depending on the person, this works well or not. At present we have a very dedicated man trying to unravel past neglect and a lack of necessary funding to employ people and maintain the community. People can work at the school, clinic, store, powerhouse, mechanic's workshop, office, art centre, after school activities, road repairs, or be employed part time around the community.

Right from the very beginning, the community chose to be 'dry' (alcohol free), to work, and to have a church. Mostly this has worked, the place is still officially dry, although people sometimes come back from town under the influence and disrupt everyone. There have been some pretty ugly scenes at times.

The church is still in the centre of things. We don't have a workable building, so we meet around a fire, or under a shelter. We have a transportable container for storage.

Recently there was a funeral and in the weeks leading up to it, the church yard was raked clean most days, the men sat together in the evenings playing gospel music and people joined them to sing. People came from all over the Territory to be

with family and attend the funeral. The coffin was brought from town in the clinic Toyota from another community. It was quite a special and solemn arrival, with the flags of the lady's favourite football teams flying either side of the bull bar. *Leslie Peterson* from Lake Nash gave a very good message and the family provided a barbeque for everyone that night.

In our time here this year we have been able to finish the first draft of chapters 12-50 of Genesis into easy English — the first part of Genesis was completed some years ago. A lot of people do not understand and speak complex English, and so the need was recognised many years ago for a Plain English Translation of the Bible. We have been able to read and check it with people here in the community. A small team of translators is working on this project, and to supplement available drawings, our son *Paul* is being contracted to do specific illustrations for the planned mini Bible.

We hope our time has been an encouragement to the community. We've been able to help with some repairs around the place, as well as set up the sewing room again. One lady found and finished a skirt she started 4 years ago! Over the years we have been compiling family trees for various people, and would love to be able to work out the best way to display them. Most families are very complex!

In the 35 years we have worked in this area, we have seen a lot of change, a lot of government policies come and go, a lot of money spent (often unwisely), and a lot of our dear friends pass away. It would be difficult to say that things have improved in general. In fact, we would say that the needs are greater now than ever before, and the work is probably more difficult than it was when we started.

We leave here late August to spend a week or so in Alice with our family, then to drive home to Cootamundra by 8th September. We would appreciate your prayers, for safety in travelling, but also the week following our return, we will be resident missionaries at SMBC. Richard will be presenting a talk on Tuesday 17th September.



Football Team



Sue and Ursula



Contrasts and Needs

by Cliff Letcher — Member Care

Australia is an amazing land of contrasts. Carolyn and I have recently returned from our annual trip to the Northern Territory with the hope that we were able to provide a measure of support and encouragement to those in AIM centres.

Driving up through Queensland we saw evidence of the large amount of water that flowed through the Channel Country on its way to Lake Eyre earlier this year. Even the Georgina River still had good clean water in the large water holes along its course near Camooweal. However about 400kms away the Roadhouse had not had any rain for over two years so were carting water from nearby Tennant Creek. Large tracts of land in New South Wales showed either a slight green tinge or totally brown and bare countryside at a time when one would expect to see lush green conditions with healthy crops.

That contrast in many ways is mirrored in the life of the church. In some places it seems to be vibrant and alive while in other places it struggles to be any expression of the Kingdom of God or there seems to be no evident church at all. The Indigenous Church in the NT is a reflection of these contrasts.

Having come from a farming background and experiencing both droughts and lush conditions, I could not help but spend time talking to our Lord about the need for good soaking rain — not just for the farmers but also the wild animals in desperate need. Now having spent many years pastoring churches and working with the Indigenous church through AIM, I was impelled to talk to our Lord about the needs I can see around our country:

- the large numbers of communities without a viable witness of the Gospel
- the need for the Lord of the harvest to send out workers to the harvest fields
- the need for an increasing inter-dependence of churches to learn from each other, serve each other and build each other up



The trip for me provided both encouragement and disappointment. It is always encouraging to spend time on the ground in the NT and see the reality of God at work. Sometimes it is only apparent in small ways and at other times there are more signs of God's work. People are being transformed by the Word of God. People are standing firm as God's people despite the incredible pressure to walk away from God and follow the way of the 'ruler of this world'. Discouragement also came in not being able to connect with some I have known for many years, or seeing people drifting away from the things of God.

A big source of discouragement that came as we travelled this year was the news of the resignation of the new General Director, followed soon after by the resignation of the long serving Chairman of the AIM Council (due to serious ill health). We are already struggling to work out the way forward so how do we now deal with these major blows? Add to that, the challenge of declining financial support and the lack of new workers.

As a Mission we need to remember our motto, **'Our God is Able'**. While we remain uncertain what God wants to do in regard to AIM we must never lose our certainty that Our God is able to do far more abundantly than we ask or think. We may not understand why He leads us through difficult times. We may not know how He wants to build His Church among Indigenous Australians but we need to hold fast to Him as the One who has the ability to lead us through these difficult days.

Please continue to pray for the AIM workers, Church leaders and Council, that we will remain confident that God will work out His purposes and that all involved will have wisdom to know how to continue to serve Him in the days ahead. Please pray that God will supply what is needed in terms of people and finances so that He will be glorified among Indigenous Australians.

