



June – August 2020

AUSTRALIAN INDIGENOUS MINISTRIES

Planting — Partnering — Participating



'Mustering for Jesus'

see page 6

Faith vs Fear

by Yane Damanik — Acting Field Director

The storm hit them without warning. Huge fierce waves lashed into the boat rocking it relentlessly from end to end. The angry wind had torn the sail away and was now threatening to drag them into the furious sea. In the face of such chaos, their skills and experiences as seasoned fishermen were proving useless. The situation was beyond their control. They were going under for sure. Exhausted and frightened, they called out to the Master.

But then came the strangest question in reply:

'Why are you so afraid?'

I picture myself in that boat with the disciples. I know without doubt that in that predicament, I have every reason to be afraid. And yet Jesus' question seems to suggest otherwise. But why shouldn't they be afraid? What reason is there to not be fearful in such a terrifying situation? I can only think of one possible answer:

Jesus was in the boat with them.

The one who controls the universe is with them. When you view the situation from this end, you realise that Jesus' question makes every sense in the world.

As long as we live in this world we will go through storms of life. They are not physical storms, but they all have the potential to 'drown' us. Life's storms are varied and may include illness, loss of a loved one, disappointments, setbacks, relationship challenges, financial difficulties, racism, unemployment, persecutions, and the list goes on. How are we to

respond? There are only two options: with fear or with faith. The human way is to respond with fear. With the current coronavirus pandemic outbreak, we see empty shelves in the shops, physical fights over toilet paper, angry words, denial, finger pointing, hopelessness and stress. These

reactions I believe are manifestations of fear. The covid 19 pandemic has forced people to accept the truth that they are not in control of their lives. Just like the disciples, this realisation causes them to fear.

Jesus, however, calls us to respond differently. His question reminds us that in crisis,

God wants us to respond with faith. Faith is the opposite of fear.

To have faith is to have peace and to be delivered from fear. Faith is acknowledging God for who He is. Fear is forgetting that God is the Almighty and Master of the universe. Faith is believing that God is with us always. Fear is thinking that you are left alone on your own to make it in this world. Faith is surrendering to the truth that God is always in control. Fear is refusing to let go of your need to be in control and to know all the answers.

As I reflect on the story of Jesus' calming the storm (Mathew 7:25-27) and particularly on his pointed question,

'Why are you so afraid?'

I am reminded of the fact that Jesus' name is Immanuel which means God with us. I am reminded of His promise to be with us always to the end of the age (Matthew 28:20). In these different and difficult days of the pandemic, and in whatever circumstances you are currently facing, may this truth encourage you, as it did me.



AIM Council @ Work

Every second Monday of the month (and sometimes in between) the AIM Council meets online. Dealing with some unattended matters of the past has been a significant load for acting General and Field Directors *Cliff Letcher and Yane Damanik*. There are some important issues currently facing AIM and your prayers for God's help are most appreciated — as are your prayers for a new General Director.

New Council member *Paul Badman* has recently accepted the vital role of Treasurer. His thoroughness and input in this position is already greatly appreciated.

In February members met in Canberra with *Lynette Glendinning* who is founding Director of Tempo Strategies, a national consultancy in organisational and executive development. Minds were certainly stretched (and at times boggled!) during the workshop sessions. Her challenges continue to help in moving forward as a Council and Mission, and we are most grateful for her time and input.



It was at these meetings that *Richard Davies* resigned from the Council after serving several decades as a field representative. He has shared the following thoughts and reflections:

Since 1986 I have had the privilege to be one of the field representatives on the AIM Council. When I joined, it was really the Administrative Council with missionary representatives that gave a 'field' perspective to the discussions regarding strategies

and problems. While the Admin Council, made up of members from the Sydney Basin met monthly, we field reps only attended twice a year in Sydney.

There have been significant changes in the last 34 years. The Councils have been streamlined from three to one and more recently we have met by computer link ups.

With the changing times, AIM has had its share of problems to overcome. The Retta Dixon Royal Commission, the dwindling number of workers resulting in mission centre vacancies, and of late the possible threat of the demise of the Mission itself and the merging with another Mission.

AIM's reason for existence is the building up of the Indigenous Church in Australia. The Council has a vital role in helping those churches and fellowships to get firmly established. At the training session in Canberra, it became clear that the Council should source people from the Christian public with appropriate skills to join and lead AIM into the future. After much prayer and heart searching I decided to retire from the Council to make way for such people.

There is much to be done. Can I urge everyone to pray for AIM that the Lord will raise up a new General Director and other members of the Christian public that have a heart for our First Nation people to bring their skills to the Council.



Henry Louie explains story woven into Aboriginal basket gifted to Lynette

Subscriptions

A current review of our magazine shows a substantial rise in production and postage costs. This has prompted us to increase our yearly request for each copy in subscription to \$15. Please send your donation to **AIM Head Office PO Box 126, Taree NSW 2430.**

If we do not hear from you, we will assume you no longer wish to receive the magazine and we will respectfully remove you from the mailing list. Thank you for your prompt attention to this.



Covid19 = Changes

The bushfires across eastern Australia had hardly been extinguished when suddenly everything began changing, including our vocabulary. Words like corona, Covid19, pandemic, lockdown and social distancing became a part of our conversations. Going to a shopping centre, cafe, beach or park became off-limits. Then came the closure of schools and churches.

So how has this affected the AIM centres? Here are some glimpses of life during lockdown from around the field:

Gilgandra

Lots of phone calls and text messages for encouragement were shared among believers here. Some members were not keen to have meetings via the computer, so *Henry Louie and Bernie Woodrow* (who has been helping out at the church) would write out messages and deliver a copy to the house of each member. Henry has kept in touch with the folk in *Pilliga and Baradine* by giving messages through the computer via ZOOM.

Rockhampton

With *Bill and Lesley Power* living 50 kms away in Emu Park connecting via the phone has always been important for the Rocky believers. Lesley has also always kept in touch and had prayer times with people in the Queensland AIM churches. During these very different and difficult days, this phone ministry has been even more important for fellowship and encouragement.



David at his Covid19 Pulpit

David Chambers has been delivering messages via ZOOM. One of the other leaders, *Jandalyn Mitchell*, has been taking her iPad over to Bill (her father) and Lesley's place so they too can join in this new form of church service. This technology has been a great help in filling the huge void left of not being able to meet together. David's messages have recently been on revival. Pray that true and lasting revival will begin and spread throughout this town and beyond.

Cherbourg

Max Conlon and Harold Chapman have been able to take church to the airwaves. Max put out a notice via text and facebook that 'church' would be held on the local community radio. People were able to then text him a scripture verse to be shared during the service. Live video streaming of messages and music via computer has also been taking place.

Open air meetings have been a part of Cherbourg life and ministry for as long as anyone can remember. What now with lockdown? You innovate by putting the speakers out in the church carpark, turn up the volume, while the legal number of people inside the church share the gospel through music and messages. That's Open Air in lockdown, Cherbourg style!



Up North

While gatherings were not permitted, community isolation became more the focus in the Northern Territory rather than individual isolation. This allowed for more movement among the people, though they could not go outside their own community. Some leaders shared the message to any within hearing distance using mics and speakers. Some

carted the sound equipment and had meetings in different sections of the community to give more the opportunity to hear the good news. And some...just kept meeting together — though outside. After all, some of the 'churches' are rather 'outdoor' kind of setups anyway!

As restrictions began to ease, the CEO of an Aboriginal Corp. in BORROLOOLA provided a bus for the church so they could go to a camp across the river. A great night of sharing and singing was held which brought much encouragement and fellowship to the believers and challenge to the non-believers. Everyone was happy with the meeting taking place and even the non-believers are looking forward to more being held.

In the early days of lockdown, some of the believers in BARUNGA had a family service on their verandahs. Neighbours were able to listen to the songs of worship and stories from God's Word. When there were deaths in the community, the leaders still visited the grieving family members and shared support and comfort through songs, bible readings, and prayers — usually with microphones, speakers, and keyboards being used.

KATHERINE and TENNANT CREEK churches were more restricted because they are in towns. *Peter Dixon* worked with church leaders to record messages that he then put on YouTube. Most



Outdoor meeting in Tennant Creek

members were able to watch via their phones or computers. Outdoor meetings became possible but the cool windy days always prove a challenge.

It was good to have news from *Tim Letcher* in Epenarra (working with Wycliffe and SU). Not only did the Canteen Creek Church mob visit for a Sunday night service, but one local lady paid for a whole lot of kangaroo tails to feed them. Also there are some older Christian ladies who are really trying to disciple a new believer in Epenarra. God is at work!

Thank God that His Word has kept going out during these challenging times. As church doors reopen, please pray that people will be faithful to meet together and be committed to taking part in the life and ministry of their local fellowships.

Heading West

Just like God sent Abraham from his country and relations, Larrakia man *Alfie May* has recently been sent out from Darwin. He has been involved in jail ministry there for many years and is grateful for the mentoring of the late *Ralph Day* in this role. Alfie is also thankful for the discipling from *Pastor Peter Ezzy* at the (AIM) Community Church where he has served as a deacon and brought memorable messages each time he preached.

Alfie and his wife Kirsty are headed to Western Australia where they hope to be spiritually helpful to their (step) daughter and family, and he hopes to have ministry with Aboriginal men. Thankfully they plan to be boomerangs and keep returning to



Alfie, Kirsty and daughter Tabitha (staying in Darwin) and Peter Ezzy

Darwin — especially during goose shooting season! Pray for God's guiding and help in making new contacts and finding ways to be effective servants in the West.

Mustering for Jesus

Camooweal is a very small town on the Georgina River about 190 kms west of Mt Isa near the NT border. During winter hundreds of tourists pass through this otherwise quiet place (but not during Covid19 of course). Many stay and enjoy the outback hospitality at the Drovers Festival. Church member *Cyril Anderson* was on the festival committee last year, and also led the way in organising the church float which was a witness to all.

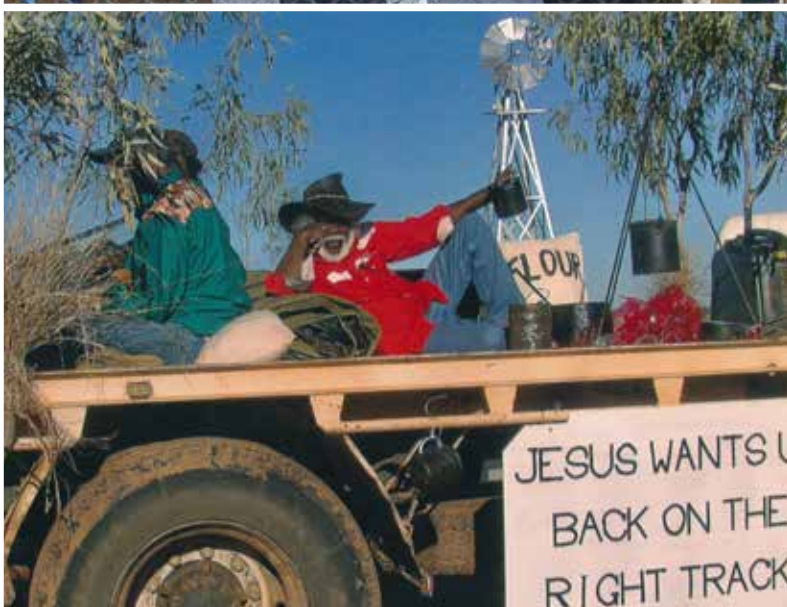
The Gospel Band (pictured on front page) is made up of Alyawarr men, mainly from Epenarra. They played at the church service and did sessions throughout the Festival weekend. Please pray that these men will always be strong for Jesus and faithful in the life of their local churches.

In the hard places like their communities and in the small outback town of Camooweal, pray that each believer will keep driving with Jesus and seeking to muster new believers into God's family.



Cyril and Thelma Anderson





Transformation

The Gilgandra AIM property has had some upgrades this year. The church hall was transformed with a new coat of paint, and the whole property now has an attractive, child-proof fence right around. New turf was laid between the buildings and around the gazebo to help complete the transformation. Some time back a visiting group from Shell Harbour rebuilt the gazebo standing between the church and hall. This had been brought over from the Towney Hostel several years ago.

This recent transformation was made possible through a grant offered by Joblink Plus in connection with Centrelink. It was a two way street of opportunity. For the church it offered the chance to get some major work done which was beyond the small older group to achieve. For those on Centrelink payments, it offered the opportunity to gain new skills under a capable supervisor which would help enhance their future job opportunities. It was this two-fold opportunity which encouraged the church to apply for the grant. It was an innovative way to reach out to the community, try and build relationships with the workers and be a witness to them.

Now that there has been this physical transformation of the church property, please pray that there will be a mighty spiritual transformation of people in this town turning to Jesus and becoming active in the life of the AIM Church.



Church member Michael Kane supervised and did a lot of the transforming work



Health

John Keane had a draining regime of 30 radiation treatments before being given a treatment free month. His attitude is remarkable — and challenging. In a written sermon sent via the computer he recently shared the following: *'This week I have had five radiology sessions (the last three weeks it has been only four) so it has been a tough week — but still a good week! The side effects of the treatment have been intense — so it has been a tough week — but still a good week!'* Please pray that God will cause the treatments to have their full effective against the

cancer, and ask Him to restore and renew John's strength and sustain Rita as she supports him.

Harold Dalywaters was flown to Adelaide in May with gall bladder problems. Though flown down in a medical plane and returned by the same means, two weeks in lockdown was still required before returning to Elliott. The hospital chaplain helped him to get daily bible readings and studies on his phone which he and wife Kaye enjoyed doing together though separated. Please pray as follow-up operations are planned for mid-June.

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