

December 2020 – February 2021

# AUSTRALIAN INDIGENOUS MINISTRIES

Planting — Partnering — Participating



**Jocelyn McCartney (Barunga Church leader) is one of many 'living with death'**  
See article page 6



# With the Lord

A cloud of sadness passed over AIM as news was received that John Keane had passed away. He went to be with the Lord 9th November.

From his early years as a Christian he had a burden and desire for mission work among Aboriginal people. He had served on the MPA Council for several years, and on the board of another Aboriginal mission for 18 years prior to joining the AIM family as a Council member in 1993.

Former AIM worker and Council member *Esther Mackintosh* reflects: *I've been thinking about John's involvement in so much of our Aboriginal work. I think Ecclesiastes 9:10 sums him up: 'Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might'.*

*John did a lot of visits to northern NSW to encourage local people and help with various projects. Then he was on the MPA Council in order to help the literature ministry advance through Sunday school lessons, Bible study helps and various other kinds of literature going out to strengthen the Aboriginal Church.*

*In later years he was instrumental in helping MPA obtain the truck which was so useful in transporting tons of paper to the printshop, then the boxes of finished materials to be sent out to the centres across Australia as well as overseas to South Africa, Taiwan and elsewhere.*

*He was a highly valued member of the AIM Council. He considered matters carefully, remained calm and kind in all situations and above all else was very prayerful. It was always great to have him at AIM conferences. He liked to drive to them so that he could visit as many AIM centres as possible. He loved hearing, collecting and telling stories and he did a lot of that along the way.*

*He was always ready and willing to grab his guitar and with his infectious joy in the Lord would lift the conference singing to another level. No doubt there were times the family may have wished he would stay home but only God knows how many people were helped and are thankful for his ministry.*



While Chairman of the AIM Council he took on the role of NSW Representative with his usual wholehearted commitment. On most Tuesdays when classes were on, he enthusiastically attended the 'Missionary Matters' sessions at SMBC. He made himself known and available to talk of Aboriginal ministry with students and was a great supporter of AIM workers who spoke there.

John had a tremendous pastoral heart and always showed great concern, interest, fairness and equality to all. As one former worker said, 'He was a great bloke to have as a friend.'

*We are so thankful for John's wholehearted ministry for the Lord in AIM through administration, prayer, pastoral care, encouragement, and friendship and for the godly example he was amongst us.*

Our dear brother in Christ has fought the good fight, has finished his race and kept the faith, and is now with His Lord and Saviour whom he loved and served. The sympathy and prayerful support of the AIM family is extended to Rita and family as they grieve and adjust to life without John.



# Making a Statement

It is important for an organisation to be clear on who they are, why they exist, and what they are to be doing. With the changes in AIM administration over recent years and a number of challenges we have been facing, AIM has spent valuable time in re-evaluating itself, and working through our VISION and MISSION statements.

'A vision statement is a document that states the current and future objectives of an organisation. It is intended as a guide to help us make decisions that align with our philosophy and declared set of goals. It can be thought of as a roadmap to where we as a mission want to be within a certain timeframe.'  
([www.projectmanager.com/blog/guide-writing-perfect-vision-statement-examples](http://www.projectmanager.com/blog/guide-writing-perfect-vision-statement-examples))

With this definition as our guide, and after much prayer and discussion among members of the field and Council, the following has been adopted as the Vision Statement for AIM:

## **STRONG ABORIGINAL CHURCHES**

Our particular ministry goal is to see STRONG ABORIGINAL CHURCHES established and functioning right across our field. As a Council and as field workers, we will be (continue to be) working toward this through our decisions, guidance, and ministry on the field.

Council and field members also worked through a Mission Statement of why we as an organisation exists. It succinctly explains what we do and what might set us apart from others. It is used to provide focus, direction, and inspiration to members while it tells others what to expect from our organisation.

The following Mission Statement has been adopted for AIM:

## **WE AIM TO BIBLICALLY DISCIPLE ABORIGINAL BELIEVERS AND DEVELOP THEIR LEADERSHIP FOR GOSPEL MINISTRY.**

In addition we are working on a plan of action to achieve our vision. To do this we aim to use the following strategies:

- Partnering with churches/fellowships and like-minded organisations to facilitate Aboriginal leadership.
- Supporting the ministry team to achieve our mission.
- Promoting mutual relationships between the Aboriginal Church and the wider Churches

We value your prayers for AIM as we seek to minister towards the fulfilling of these statements and strategies. Please pray we will have God's guidance, strength and provision to do so. Please continue to pray that our Lord will provide the personnel we need and that He will continue to work in the lives of Aboriginal people and bring many into His Kingdom and the life and ministry of the local church.







**Keighly Mitchell and Anthony (Boy) Turnbull**

## New Sign – New Interest

**Jandalyn Mitchell, a Church leader in Rockhampton recently shared the following:**

**A** new church sign has been decades in the making. Every time we would line someone up something would happen and it wouldn't get done. But thanks to COVID 19 we had Anthony (Boy) Turnbull from Him-Fulla Aboriginal Art Studio offer to do a new church sign for us. We gave him the information we wanted on it and he did the rest.

The new colourful sign has caught the attention of many in the area, and has become a real talking point. Thankfully, some are showing a new interest in attending the church.

One day Lesley Power received a call from a lady enquiring about attending. When Lesley asked if she

knew how to get to the church the lady replied with 'Oh yes. I'm standing at the lovely church sign now!' They were encouraged by her attendance and have seen others drawn into services after seeing the sign.

The church was able to have a witness to the artist through the personally written thank you card and gift. They shared the book 'Our Mob, God's Story' with him. His reaction showed he was deeply touched by them both.

**Pray that God will continue to use this bright new sign to get people's attention and draw them in to hear His Word. Pray for strength and wisdom among the leadership team, and ask God to bring many others into His family and the church family here.**



# Communication

**T**he imparting or exchanging of information by speaking, writing, or using some other medium is the definition given to 'communication' in the Oxford dictionary.

Communicating in a clear and effect way is essential in ministry.

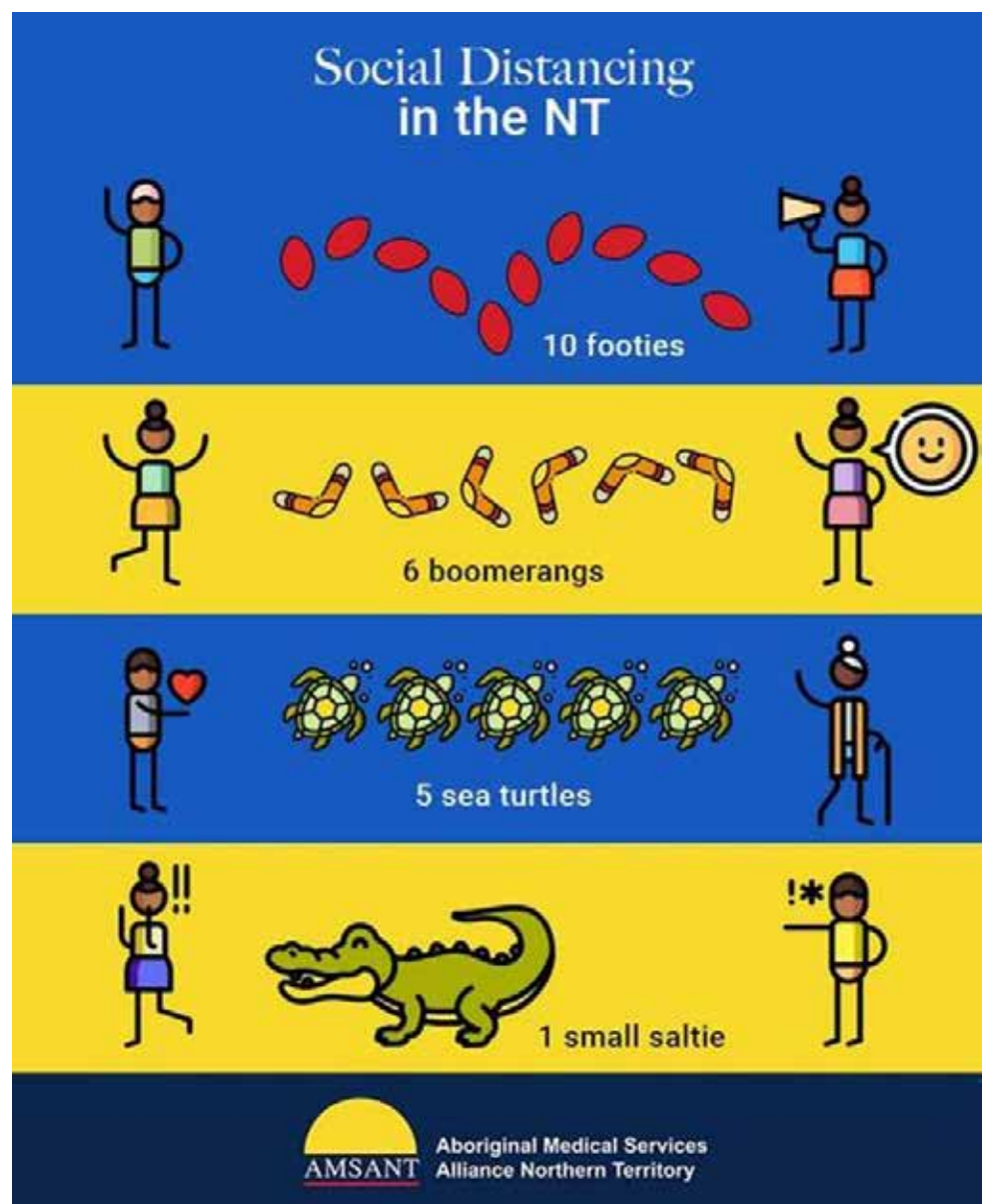
Many find using 'other medium' such as drawings a very effective tool in teaching God's truth particularly to those of another culture and language. Pictures or illustrations have been an important part of sharing God's message with many around the world including here among Aboriginal people.

We need to insure the visuals are as clear and effective as possible and not a cause of confusion or misinformation. For example, many people refer to the fruit eaten by Adam and Eve as an apple because that is what has been seen in pictures. While that doesn't really create doctrinal problems, it does show how pictures can cement an idea into peoples thinking which are not actually found in scripture.

Visual aids need to be clear, understandable, and culturally appropriate. There are not only many different languages used by Aboriginal people there are also a variety of art styles used by them, depending on their location. For instance, Arnhem Land uses art that is vastly different to that used in some desert areas, and the eastern and western groups also have their unique styles. Just as it would not communicate well to use a language from one area in another, using art styles in different areas doesn't necessarily make for clear communication. It is important to find out from locals what will not only be understandable but what is acceptable in their area.

There has been a concern about Aboriginal people understanding Covid and what to do to prevent it. This poster (used by permission) is a very Top End visual to help people understand about social distancing. For the desert and inland areas where kangaroos are large, a drawing of an adult size roo between 2 people was used to teach social distancing. Both are good examples and reminders of using the familiar and understandable to communicate new things in a particular area.

***'Pray for us that God will give us an opportunity to tell people His message. Pray that we can preach the secret that God has made known about Christ. Pray that I can speak in a way that will make it clear, as I should.'* Colossians 4:3-4**



# Living with Death

**M**any Aboriginal people are in an ongoing state of grief, virtually living with death as a regular visitor in their circle of life.

One death affects so many with its stinging tentacles stretching out from one community to many others where there are family connections. A young life cut short through accident, sickness or even suicide brings an extra darkness to the cloud of grief. This is of course increased if the deceased was not a follower of Jesus.

What a burden to see the crowd of spiritually dark faces — the 'living dead' — who gather at funerals. It can be very draining at an already emotionally vulnerable time. Ministry is relational so missionaries are not immune to this burden of grief which is compounded when the deceased is spoken of as being a believer even when there has been no evidence of this in their life.

The Territory AIM centres have recently had a wave of grief sweeping through. In Darwin the Retta Dixon family has lost 3 members along with the daughter of one killed in a car accident. *Harold Dalywaters* from Elliott lost his adult daughter. *David Hughes* from Katherine went to support them at the funeral while his own daughter was in intensive care. Sadly, she too passed away. The brother of *Raymond Dixon* from Marlinja recently died and *Michael Jones* family in Tennant lost an uncle and also a newborn in their family circle. *Lisa Mumbin* in Katherine has had the sudden loss of her sister, while the Borroloola Church lost a faithful member. This was all in addition to numerous other deaths within their circle of connections.

- Pray for Church leaders who face grief and often have to take part in the funerals. Ask God to comfort and strengthen them.
- Pray that other local believers will step up their involvement in the ministry of the church and help share the workload and joy of serving.
- Pray that local Christians will find appropriate and effective ways of sharing God's love and message with those who grieve.



Daily life for everyone can get disrupted by a death. In some places the local Council office and school closes when news of a death is received and again during the funeral. Too often one death follows another which keeps them in an ongoing cycle of grief and disruption.

There is still strong pressure and expectation for people to attend funerals regardless of their health, time off required from work, or how far they must travel to get there. Often people travel hundreds of kilometres for a funeral and within weeks or even days are expected to attend another one as far away in another direction.

It is especially difficult for dialysis patients facing this pressure. They live away from community for treatments and are at high risk of complications if they miss them. But some go back for funerals



because of the pressure and to see family. Often they have to be airlifted out to hospital or once they do return to the town for treatments they are admitted into hospital with deteriorated health.

- Pray that Christians will be wise about their own health and wellbeing and care for their bodies as the place where the Holy Spirit lives. Pray they will be good examples of living a healthy lifestyle and looking after themselves and their families.

A community may be overrun by visitors who come for cultural business and the funeral. Then afterwards some stay on and wait for money so they can return home. This makes for overcrowded homes for the local families and their resources get over-stretched as they try to provide for the visitors.

Grieving in culturally appropriate ways vary from place to place, and it is something Christians have to keep working through to decide what is acceptable to God. Some areas are dangerously trying to take on practices from the past or from areas outside their own without understanding the spiritual implications and connections of them.

- Pray that Christians will not blindly get involved in such practices to try and be cultural or acceptable. Pray they will seek to honour the Lord even through their grieving and funerals and pray God will grant them wisdom and faithfulness to do so.

**Please pray that as the message of Jesus is shared, hearts will be open to receive the eternal life He freely offers. Then those left behind can grieve, but not as those who have no hope.**

## Out West

In late September the Gilgandra AIM Church inducted *Bernie Woodrow* into the role of pastor. He and his wife *Joanne* have been giving support to the church in Gilgandra over the past several years. Please pray God will bless their ministry and that it will bear much fruit to the glory of God.

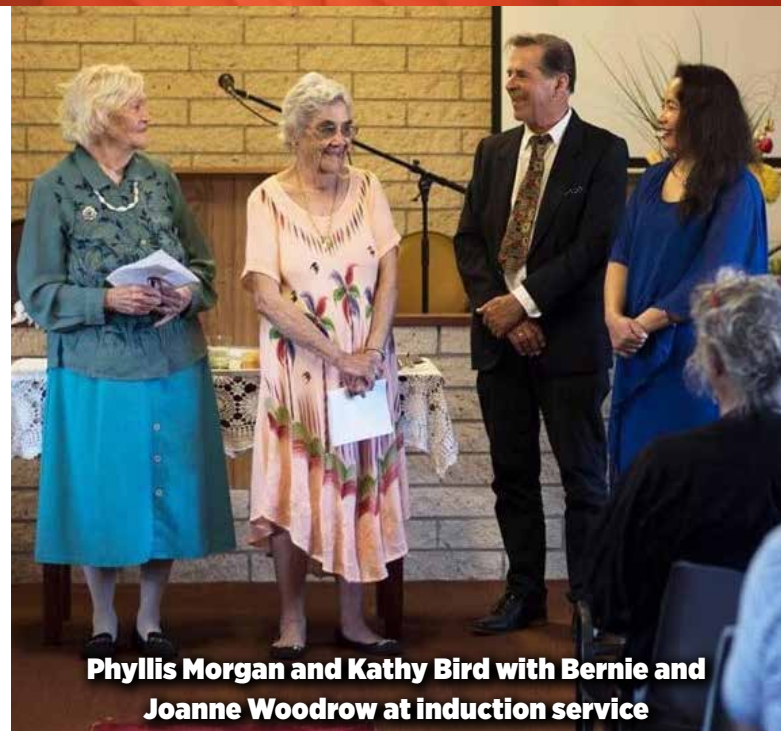
We thank God for the many years *Henry Louie* has served the Lord in the church here — often through very difficult times. His trust in the Lord and desire to see peace in God's family kept him faithful to the task. He was overjoyed when reconciliation became a reality with those who had been separated from the fellowship.

Please pray for Henry and his wife *Maria* as they wait upon the Lord for His provision of housing in Pilliga where they have been ministering via outreach.

**Pray that the church in Gilgandra and the new fellowship of believers forming in Pilliga will share mutual encouragement and support for one another.**



Henry



Phyllis Morgan and Kathy Bird with Bernie and Joanne Woodrow at induction service



locals and visitors on induction day

# Answered Prayers

**M**y name is Miriam Charlie and I am a dialysis patient. After my treatment one Tuesday I woke up about 4am with my upper body covered in blood. It was such a shock! Being on dialysis I knew I had to get to hospital straight away.

I rang the ambulance and when I got to hospital the doctors and nurses couldn't stop the bleeding. They kept putting more and more gauze and pressure on it but it just kept bleeding. It was coming from the fistula site in my arm. My blood pressure was sky high and I was getting a very bad headache from the shock of seeing my own body bleed like this. I was praying and praying.

This continued on until about 7am. While I was lying there praying, I remembered that story in the Bible about the woman who had bleeding for many many years. When she touched the edge of Jesus' coat she was healed. (Luke 8:43-48) I prayed to my Lord then and asked Him to do the same for me and stop my bleeding. When I finished praying and opened my eyes the bleeding had stopped. Not one more drop of blood came out again.

The nurses were shocked and said, *'Hey, what happened here?'* Well, I told them that I had prayed and Jesus had made the bleeding stop. They were shocked and just looked at each other. They didn't know what to say. Me, I said, **'Thank you Lord!'**

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Some of my family and I went hunting out bush one day and my vehicle ran out of fuel. So I hand signaled to my niece who was a little bit long ways



away from us to go get fuel and bring to me.

When she got to us she started pouring in the fuel. Suddenly I noticed the colour of it was wrong...it was diesel not petrol! 'STOP' I screamed but it was too late. It was already in the tank.

I didn't know what to do, but I told them not to start the car. As I was thinking of what we should do, the Bible story about Jesus turning water into wine came into my mind. I went away from everyone to sit quietly and pray to the Lord. I told Him I remembered that He had turned water into wine over 2000 years ago. I asked Him to do the same thing for us now — to turn that diesel into petrol.

Someone went into town and got my son who was training as a mechanic. He topped the tank right up with petrol and said it would take care of the diesel — it would kind of eat it up and change it. So, he started the car and drove it around in the bush for awhile and everything was all good! There was no damage to the engine — nothing. I really thanked my Lord for that. He had answered my prayer and turned that diesel into petrol.

## To Our Supporters

**THANK YOU for your faithful prayer and financial support throughout 2020. You are a very important part of the AIM ministry and all that you do is greatly appreciated.**

**In spite of the many challenges and changes there have been this year, may you find peace in knowing *Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever*. May you be richly blessed this Christmas and into the New Year as you remember God's great gift of love in sending His Son to bring us life forever with Him.**



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