



# AUSTRALIAN INDIGENOUS MINISTRIES

Strong Aboriginal Churches



**3 Generations from TC @ KCC — Richard Driver with daughter Barbara and her sons Coen and Trevor Wortley.**

# KCC

**J**ono Wright arrived to speak at Katherine Christian Convention from NSW via VIC and promptly came down sick. In these Covid days, he and the KCC Committee agreed that he should go into isolation. He tried to do the right thing by contacting the Covid centre for testing (though there had been no travel through a 'hotspot'). But, it was the start of a long weekend in the NT and he was told the centre was closed until Tuesday morning. Hey, why let a pandemic interfere with a holiday weekend!

Though very disappointed at not being able to be with those he was actually speaking to, Jono left it with Jesus even if He didn't make His purposes known in it all. Fortunately with today's technology Jono was able to speak from his motel room via Zoom which was projected onto a large screen at the showgrounds where hundreds of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people were gathered for the convention.

His topic was 3 Kings: Saul who didn't trust God as he should, David who was clearly not perfect but who did trust God and sought to follow Him faithfully, and Jesus, the King of Kings! There were many good challenges in each message as Jono shared them over the weekend.

This was a new way for KCC, but God used Jono to speak to many hearts through the messages given. The evening sharing times usually consist of individuals or groups singing in their own language. This year, it was interesting to hear a number of them share about how God was talking to them through the messages. There was of course plenty of the singing too, along with a growing number of dance items. One night the spiritual hunger was turning to physical hunger as one lady shared and instead of talking about KCC, she kept saying KFC!

A small group from Epenarra attended the convention for the first time. I (ed.) recalled stories shared by *Elizabeth Ham* from back in the late 1970s. She and the Tennant Creek Christians used to visit Epenarra for meetings. When the local people got up to share they would huddle together and keep their backs to those listening. But here they were a long way from their country, facing the audience of hundreds, and testifying in word and song of

their Lord Jesus. Oh the transforming work of our great God!

Pray that the encouragement, fellowship and challenges received throughout the weekend will continue to help those who attended to keep their eyes on the King of Kings.



**Lisa Mumbin**



**Roslyn and Amy who attend Katherine AIM**



**Penny Kelly, Maureen Wilson, and Lizzie Johnson from Tennant Creek**



**The kids shared what they had been learning through an action song**



**Some of the Katherine AIM Church giving an item**

## Easter Convention

'Christians Cannot go 2 Ways' was the topic for the Lake Nash Easter Convention with Tim Letcher from Epenarra bringing the messages. About 100 people attended the morning sessions. Through the darkness it was estimated there were around 200-300 for the night sessions. Those attending were from Alyawarr speaking communities including Epenarra, Lake Nash, and Amperlatwaty. A couple from Tennant Creek travelled most of the night to attend while a group from Alice Springs hired a bus to be at the convention.



# Weekend In Wagga

All roads led to Wagga NSW for AIM Council members to meet together 16-17 April. Rhonda Coats stayed in Darwin but joined the meetings via ZOOM. It was the first opportunity for most members and the new General Director to meet face to face. The meetings were scheduled to coincide with a commissioning service for *Lloyd (and Clara) Ollerenshaw* into the role of General Director. This was held during the Sunday morning service at Wagga Baptist.

Lloyd spoke from Ephesians 3 for the morning message. He shared the passion and commitment of his heart saying, 'I'm in love with the God who is in love with me, and I will love the people He loves as much as He loves me.'

During the commissioning service a brief glimpse into the long history of Aim was given by *Cliff Letcher*. He shared how at age 15 Retta Dixon was challenged to research the Aboriginal people after being told none were left. This led to her work with a group in La Perouse that ministered along the coast. Retta was concerned for those on the fringes of towns and eventually God directed her and a faithful group of believers to establish the AIM in 1905.

Cliff shared, 'the history of AIM is filled with many good stories — but also a mix of some bad stories in our history — of wrong things being done by some people who claim to be followers of Christ. We are today reaping consequences of that sinful behavior. It has put a lot of stress on AIM. We believe this is part of the reason AIM has been weakened to its current state, but we are now believing that God is moving us forward again. And that is where we believe it is big step forward with Lloyd coming on board.'

Council Chairman *Jono Wright* also took part in the commissioning service and talked briefly of future things. He shared:

'As followers of Jesus we have the most hope of anybody for our own futures and for those around us, and for our nation. Our country has been guilty of severe atrocities towards indigenous people in all different regions and tribal groups, but we look to Jesus to our future – not only to His return, and our resurrection, but to His presence with us through the



**Cliff and Jono**

Holy Spirit and His enabling to work in all people of Australia.

As AIM we have a particular focus of trying to see STRONG ABORIGINAL CHURCHES built around the country wherever. We want to see God's people built into indigenous churches where that's needed and people integrated into other churches where that is needed as well.

AIM has a long history and we believe we have a bright future under God. We look forward to seeing how Lloyd can help the Council move towards better things, good things ahead.

We want to see strong churches. That means strong leaders, strong Christians, people who are fed on the Word of God and nourished by the Holy Spirit. That is what we want to see, and we would appreciate your prayers and support of Lloyd and of us as a mission towards that end. We ask you to pray that the Council will be given wisdom, to pray that the missionaries will be given what is needed, to pray that the indigenous church leaders, the indigenous missionaries around the country will be given what they need to do their work of equipping the church under God.

We all look forward to that great hope of good things to come under God.'

The AIM Council and Wagga Baptist leadership gathered around Lloyd and Clara as Jono asked the following questions on behalf of the Council:

- Do you trust in Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour
- Do you believe the Word of God as we find in the scriptures of Old and New testaments to be the only rule for faith and practice
- Do you accept AIM's doctrinal position as set out in our constitution
- Do you believe God has called you to this position of General Director of AIM
- Is a zeal for God's glory, a love for the Lord Jesus Christ and a desire to serve Him your only motives as far as you know your own heart, and the main motives for undertaking this role
- Do you promise by the strength of the indwelling Holy Spirit, to live a godly life and undertake the work of General Director of AIM

Lloyd enthusiastically answered in the affirmative to all of the above. *David Chambers*, CEO of the Queensland AIM Church Council, then drew the commissioning service to a close with prayer.

Please pray for Lloyd and Clara as they begin a full time role with AIM in mid-June. Pray they will gain a clear picture of the current situation and workings of AIM and enjoy personally getting to know those involved in AIM when they begin visiting the centres in July.



**AIM team at commissioning: Roni Damanik, Bob and Lucy Quinn, Cliff Letcher, Faye and David Chambers, Yane and Edith Damanik, Paul Badman, Lloyd and Clara Ollerenshaw, Richard Davies, Jono Wright, Sue Davies, Henry Louie.**

# Watch This Space

by Bob Quinn (seconded to AIM from Pioneers, and working with AEF Bimbadeen to develop and deliver Biblical training)

Things have gone around full circle at least as far as the residents of the former Cootamundra Girls' Home. What has this got to do with AIM and aboriginal ministry? We have to give some historical perspective on the geographical location that was Bimbadeen.

Readers of this magazine have probably followed the progress of the training of Aboriginal pastors going all the way back to the Singleton Training College under AIM (closed in 1972, followed by Mobile Training ministry). AEF undertook training of Aboriginal pastors at Bimbadeen, Cootamundra from 1979 and AIM then encouraged those in their eastern area centres to go there for ministry training. How did AEF acquire the property at Cootamundra, which became Bimbadeen?

Bimbadeen was on the top of a hill on the north-east corner of Cootamundra with commanding views to the south and west. Bimbadeen as a location was a place of peace that was palpable. I believed that was direct work of the Holy Spirit because the history of the location was not necessarily one of peace. The property started its life in the Nineteenth Century as the hospital for the town of Cootamundra. It did not remain the hospital for long as a new hospital was built lower down in the town. The reason for this relocation is surrounded in mystery and possibly apocryphal stories.

The government was then left with this property. It was then converted into the Cootamundra Home for Aboriginal girls in 1912. Girls who were taken from their families were rehoused and given education and training especially in domestic duties. It was run by the NSW government and the treatment of the girls was not what would be acceptable today, or truth be told for that time as well. It continued to

run as a girls' home until 1972 or 1973, I have seen both dates mentioned,

when it was finally closed.

The government was then again left with this property. As a result of its history with indigenous people the government of the day wanted it to be used by indigenous people. This was where AEF stepped into the ring and said they could use it as a training college for Aboriginal Church workers. Bimbadeen occupied the site on a peppercorn lease for this training.

Fast-forward to today. The residents of the Cootamundra Aboriginal Girls Home have never forgotten their home or their treatment at that place. Girls (now of course adults with their own children and grandchildren) would return to Bimbadeen to remember and grieve. They formed their own organisation simply called Coota Girls and their desire was to have ongoing access to Bimbadeen to record their history, gather for meetings, hold healing services and have smoking ceremonies.

Bimbadeen board decided in 2019 that given the history of the site that they would graciously give over the property to the Coota Girls so they could use it for their activities without either group, Coota Girls or Bimbadeen impinging on the other. This was successfully transferred in 2020. So, while Bimbadeen (the property) is no longer in AEF hands, it is still being used for Aboriginal people. Please pray for the Coota Girls and their families as they seek healing and restoration, they would truly find healing and that peace which comes through Jesus.

This has meant that Bimbadeen Training has had to rethink the way it will go about undertaking training for Indigenous Church workers and where that might be in the future. This is a challenge to make Bimbadeen reassess its function and role and is leading us into ongoing discussion which is still in its infancy but is an exciting opportunity that the Lord has presented to us. So, for the time being Bimbadeen does not have a property to call home, **BUT**, Bimbadeen continues to exist to provide training.

As they say in the classics, watch this space.



# Rivers Convention

They went out to 'Sing the Glad Word that Jesus is Coming' in tiny towns and the biggest regional centre in western NSW from April 2-18th. *Isaac (Ike) and Eileen Gordon* with their team of supporters carried on the Rivers Convention which was started decades before by his late father.

Generations ago, Brewarrina became a gathering place for Aboriginal people from all over. This was brought about through their cleverly designed fish pens in the Barwon-Darling River, which allowed for the trapping of as many fish as the people needed. Over Easter Weekend it became the meeting place for Ike and the team as they kicked off the convention tour here to go 'fishing for people'.

Currently more than half of the 1,143 population of Bre is aboriginal. The meetings were well attended and the team was encouraged as they saw God working in the lives of those who gathered to sing, share and hear God's Word.

Engonia is known for its rich bushranger history. This small place has recently had many deaths among the aboriginal people. One was that of the only known Christian who passed away just before the convention — but how wonderful for them to now be gathering with the saints in heaven.

Near Brewarrina is the small place of Weilmoringle. It has a population of 77 and two of those residents are sisters *Josie and Vera*. These ladies have been faithfully trusting Jesus for over 50 years. What an encouragement for them when the team comes and has a gospel meeting there.

Lying just 20 kilometres from the Queensland border, Goodooga has a population of 247 with about 75% of them being aboriginal. The youth are

bored and need a lot of prayer. Four faithful ladies love the Lord there and were greatly encouraged by the ministry of the team. Please join them in praying for others to follow Jesus in this place.

The team took God's message to Lightning Ridge, known for opal mining. A fellow from the caravan park attended one of the meetings. He told them afterwards it was the first time he had ever been 'to church' and was very interested in what he had heard. Pray there will be ongoing contact with him to further share the message and love of Jesus.

Meetings were also held in Walgett. The fellow across from the church unfortunately had a heart attack and missed out on the meetings. He has since been asking 'when are you coming back'? Pray that his spiritual heart will be awakened to his need of turning to Jesus.

From these small isolated towns it was then on to the 'big smoke' of Dubbo for a weekend of meetings. Aussie evangelist *Bill Newman* joined the team here. Such large crowds gathered that it has been decided a bigger venue will be needed next year! What a thrill to hear that 40 people made commitments to Jesus during the convention. The team leaders passed on the names of the new believers to the relevant churches so that follow-up could begin.

Thank God for the ministry of the Isaacs, and the support from *Paul and Erin Strahan* and family from Moree, *Henry Louie* from Gilgandra, *Harold Dalywaters* from Elliott, *Rob Alley* and the group with him from Across the Divide, and others from the Sydney area who took part in this ministry. Pray that God will continue His work in the hearts of those who heard His Word this year. \*Populations from 2016 census.



## Kids Club

JESUS IS ALIVE was the message taught at the Kids Club held in the small town of Baradine. This was the first year Kids Club was held here and it proved to be a good choice for the School holiday time.

The local Anglican Church made their facilities available for *Henry & Maria Louie* and the team from the Korean Presbyterian Church in Strathfield. A couple of the local ladies helped with morning tea and activities which was really appreciated. The kids ranged in age from kindergarten through to year 9. Teenagers made up half of the attending group which was very encouraging.

Henry and the team held the Sunday service in Pilliga. Thank God for the opportunities to share the message of Jesus in these small outback towns. Please pray that a more permanent witness for Christ can be established in these needy areas.



## Thank You

For many years *Phil and Fiona Spiers* supported a number of AIM workers and churches in Western NSW through preaching, and encouraging which has really been appreciated. They have recently decided to concentrate their efforts on pastoring at the Moree Presbyterian Church and have therefore resigned as TEAM Partners with AIM. We thank them for their valued contribution and pray for God's blessing on their ministry.



## Health

In mid-May *Martin Ebel* began six weeks of chemotherapy following surgery for a brain tumour.

Ask God to strengthen and help *Martin, Rose and Nawja* in this difficult time. Pray that God will meet the needs of the small group of believers in Woorabinda and help them to lean fully on Him during these days of deep concern for their longtime pastor.

Please pray that *Clara Ollerenshaw* will enjoy complete recovery following knee replacement surgery 13th May. Pray that she will cope well with the necessary rehab.

## Borroloola Encouragement

In February the prayer request went out for the dialysis bus and necessary nurses to go to Borroloola so that *Miriam Charlie* could have a few months at home and help in the ministry. She has been told that funding is being allocated for the bus and nurses to go out there -possibly in July. Pray that plans will be finalised soon and that her time back in Borroloola will be an encouragement to the believers, and a challenge to those not following Jesus yet. Thank you for praying!

The believers are very encouraged that the son of their former pastor (the late) *Nero Timothy* has begun following Jesus. Pray that *Vincent Charlie* and the others will help *Ivan* get established in his faith.



## Up North

*Richard and Sue Davies* have again travelled north for the winter months. Their main objective is to do checking of the Barkley edition of the Personal English Translation he has been working on. Accommodation for Canteen Creek was proving a bit tricky but at the time of writing they were hopeful that a borrowed off road camper trailer from Epenarra will prove sufficient for their time in Canteen Creek.



