

AUSTRALIAN INDIGENOUS MINISTRIES

Strong Aboriginal Churches



Seasons
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Gone Fishing

'Pretty ordinary' was the reply from Henry Louie when asked how the fishing had been. He had taken six teenage boys from Gilgandra to Nyngan, about 165 kms away. They camped and fished at the Bogan River which flows through (and often floods) the town. They caught a few small fish that they threw back during the several days they spent there. But as Henry shared, 'fishing wasn't the main point of our time over there. It was really about getting some of the young boys out of town for a few days and sharing a bit of God's Word with them'. In other words...the fishing was just a bit of bait as he sought to be a 'fisher of young men.'

Every morning they would sit together and Henry would share something from God's Word. Again in the evening he would read and share some more as they sat around a campfire and sang some Christian songs. They were good listeners out there away from home and peers who try to lure them away, and away from the 'boredom' in town that can easily lead them astray.

Plans are now underway for Kids Club to be held during the school holidays which begin April 11. They will be having meetings

in Baradine again this year, as well as in Pilliga. The team from the Korean Presbyterian Church in Strathfield will be supporting Henry and Maria in this outreach endeavour.

Pilliga will also be the site of the 'Convention Extension' as Isaac Gordon calls it. The weekend of 2-3rd April will see Ike and some of the convention team kicking things off with meetings in Pilliga with Henry and Maria the week before the main Rivers Convention gets underway. The dates of the NW NSW Rivers Convention are listed below. PLEASE PRAY and ask God to work in lives as His Word is shared through the Kids' Club and Convention meetings.



NW NSW Rivers Convention

8-24 April 2022

- 8-10 Goodooga • 11-12 Weilmoringle
- 13-14 Enngonia • 15-17 Brewarrina
- 18-19 Lightning Ridge • 20-21 Walgett
- 22-24 Dubbo

For more Convention information: www.facebook.com/nwnswriverconvention or
Contact: Isaac Gordon 0458 814 705 or Paul Strahan: 0438 758 629



'Sharing the Gospel of Jesus Christ,
Encouraging Believers, Enjoying Fellowship -
Until He returns'

Obstacles Removed

It is good bitumen road over the 200 kms between Tennant Creek and Elliott, so travel to and fro should be smooth. But...*Michael Jones* found several obstacles blocking his travels and halting his visits throughout much of last year.

First there was the Elliott mission house where he stays when there for ministry. Heavy rains had created the need for verandah and roof repairs. It was good to get *Malcolm Wall* on the job with his workers from the Yapa-Kurlangu Ngurrara Aboriginal Corporation out of Yuendumu. (Malcolm is the son of retired workers *Norm and Lola Wall*.) When he got to Elliott he found the problems were much greater than first thought. Between asbestos and white ants it became quite a sizeable job.

Once the repairs were done and a few plumbing issues fixed, it meant the way was clear for Michael to travel up and get back into the ministry. But then...after keeping the Territory clear for so long, suddenly Covid was here and began to spread. And with it came lockdowns...

Car problems have at times also been an issue for Michael. Sharing remains a strong part of the culture among most aboriginal people, and vehicles are popular items that get shared around. So, having a vehicle available and running well for his trips has at times been an issue.

Finally in early February he went to the local AIM worker *Peter Dixon* with the good news 'I'm going up to Elliott this weekend'. The mission house repairs were done, there were no more lockdowns (though there was a last minute scare when a bio-security zone was set up to try and slow Covid. Fortunately it was only for Aboriginal Communities, not towns in the NT.) and, he had a roadworthy car. So at last, the major obstacles were down and Michael was able to visit Elliott.

He enjoyed having a camp meeting while there. And he was very happy that *Raymond and Thelma Dixon* travelled into town from Marlinja for fellowship with him and *Harold and*

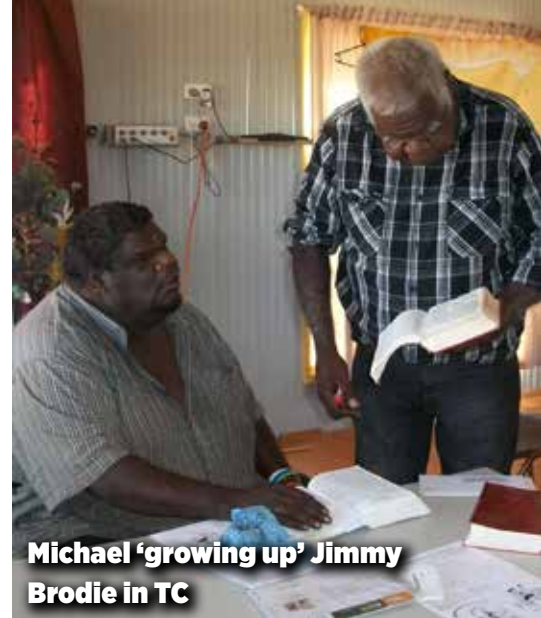
Kaye Dalywaters. There are a couple of other men there who are showing an interest too.

Weekend trips will be all he can do at present but hopes to be able to go for a week or two at a time soon. He wants to continue sitting down to help 'grow up' (disciple) Harold and now also Raymond, as well as have camp meetings in both the North and South Camp at Elliott and then travel to Marlinja for one on Wednesday nights.

Michael asks, 'Pray for Lord to call out some young helpers for them here. You know, so they can start growing them up like I've been helping them to grow up.' Please join Michael in praying for the truth of 2 Timothy 2:2 to become a reality in Elliott and Marlinja.

'Take the teachings that you heard me proclaim in the presence of many witnesses, and entrust them to reliable people, who will be able to teach others also.' (GNB)

Please pray for strength and wisdom for Michael as he carries out this ministry, and is still involved in the work at Tennant as well.



Michael 'growing up' Jimmy Brodie in TC



New Council Member

AIM is very happy to announce that *Roni Parlindungan* joined the council in February. Zoom meetings make it possible to have members from across Australia and Roni joins us from Victoria. He gives us the following word picture of himself:

I was born in Indonesia, grew up in Singapore, and moved to Melbourne 16 years ago. I love food, coffee, and watching sports. I live with my wife Eriana, and son Thomas in Kilsyth, Victoria and serve with Croydon Presbyterian Church as an Elder.

I studied Engineering and Law in university, and now work as a researcher with the Victorian State Government. But I am also studying part-time with the Reformed Theological College in Melbourne CBD.

I was born into a Christian family, but it wasn't until the age of 16 that I realised that following Jesus changes everything. Since that day He continues to change me through His Word and His love every day, reminding me that He is my reward, my joy, and my everything.

It is such a blessing and privilege to work together with brothers and sisters who have so much more wisdom and experience in ministry through the AIM Council. I come up with a lot of ideas, but at the same time have very little knowledge of the context and history of our ministry work on the ground.

The Council gives thanks to our Lord for bringing Roni onto the team. His humble, gracious and valuable input has already been much appreciated.



Our God is Able *‘to do exceedingly abundantly above all we ask or think...’* (Ephesians 3:20)

PRAY that God will open the understanding of more Aboriginal people *‘so that they may turn away from the power of Satan and turn to God, so their sins will be forgiven and they will receive God’s blessing with all those who have been made holy by believing in Christ.’* Acts 26:18

THANK GOD for those who have become followers of Jesus. **PRAY** that each one will know His ‘grace is sufficient’ for them and their needs. 1 Cor. 12:9. **Pray** they will know *‘Jesus is faithful’ and will trust Him ‘to keep them strong until the end.’* 1 Corinthians 1:8 -9

PRAY that those who have received Christ Jesus as Lord will *‘continue to live in Him. Keep your roots deep in him and have your lives built on Him. Be strong in the faith and always be thankful.’* Col 2:6, 7

ASK God to call out servant-hearted people who can help AIM biblically disciple aboriginal believers and develop their leadership for gospel ministry. *‘There*

are many people ready to harvest but only a few workers to help harvest them. Pray to the Lord, who owns the harvest, that He will send more workers to gather his harvest.’ Matt. 9:37-38.

PRAY that all involved with AIM will *‘know God’s will, and have great wisdom and understanding of spiritual things so that we live a life which honours and pleases the Lord in every way.’* Colossians 1:9-10

PRAY that all in AIM will remain strong and faithful. *‘Do not let anything move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your work in the Lord is never wasted.’* 1 Corinthians 15:58

THANK GOD that He has promised *‘I will build My Church and the gates of hell will not prevail against it.’* (Matthew 16:18) **PRAY** that we will keep looking to Jesus and trusting Him to continue building HIS Church among the Aboriginal people.

From The Damaniks

‘How long has it been since your family moved down here from Humpty Doo?’ a friend recently asked us. The answer was a simple ‘Four years ago.’ But that answer went further because it got us thinking about the journey we’ve travelled as a family within those four years.

2018. It was a wet day when we left. All our belongings that we accumulated over the past seven years were packed away in a small trailer latched to our 2007 Prado which carried the four of us plus Chilli our dog, and tons of memories of our life and friends in the Top End.

2022. Four years later. We still have our dog Chilli, who never seemed to mind moving across the continent as long as she knows she is still ours. Our son *Ryan* completed high school last year and is now studying at Newcastle Uni to become a secondary teacher in drama and Indigenous studies. Our daughter Edith is in year 11 and loving school.

Roni: The past four years have had many highlights. The most recent was being able to make a trip to my home village in Indonesia and visit my aging mother. These trips reconnect my ties to my families, land, and culture and are always invigorating for me. Another highlight was the opportunity to lead one person to Christ during hotel quarantine in Jakarta in my recent trip home. It was a joy to help download the gospel of John to this new believer’s phone and later finding him reading it. Also, the saying ‘*sharing the fun of fishing turns strangers into friends in a few hours*’, is actually a living reality for me. People know I am a bit of a crazy fisherman and living near the coast has made it near impossible to keep this hobby in check. But really I strive to be, and there are ample of opportunities for me, to be a fisher of man whilst being a fisherman.

Yane: It has been a busy four years. I am

glad to say that I will be completing my studies this semester. Working as a member of the AIM Council and the acting Field Director has been a joy but also challenging. As a mission organisation with limited resources, we have been stretched in every direction. But even so, this experience has actually produced growth, stronger commitment to our vision and unity among our council members. Through it all, God has proven Himself to be faithful. He repeatedly provides us with the people and the resources that we need for our work, though sometimes not within our time frame or in ways that we envisage. I am also grateful to have the opportunity to teach as a guest lecturer at SMBC this semester. It’s a weekly two-hour trip to campus on the train, but I don’t mind it at all as I love being involved in teaching/training ministry. It is also a good opportunity to represent AIM there among students and staff. I look forward to the year ahead as I know God was, is, and always will be faithful.

Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful. (Hebrew 10: 23)



What a catch!



Yane, Roni, Edith, Ryan

Seasons

by Rhonda Coats

Oh look! That stingray will be fat now.' Since we were driving down a city street her statement was rather confusing. My puzzled whitefella look brought the usual laughter from my Aboriginal friend as she pointed out the 'yellow flowers' (wattle) in bloom. They were telling her that the season of fattened stingrays had arrived. She then directed me to the beach and sure enough, several people were in the shallows hunting stingray.

To the non-Aboriginal people the Top End weather is typically known by two main seasons – 'the wet' (November-April) and 'the dry' (May-October). September through October is locally referred to as 'the buildup' – when the humidity and temperatures are agonisingly high but little to no rain falls. Mangoes ripen at this time and the heat and humidity bring on what some refer to as 'mango madness' – where tempers are frayed to breaking point and nerves are ready to snap – and sometimes do. The story is told of a businessman who one day during a very long and trying 'build up' slammed shut the cash register and declared he had finally had enough. He walked out, put the business up for sale, and left Darwin!

Finally the rains begin with many locals of all ages bursting outdoors to celebrate the first shower! Eventually the showers and storms increase to monsoons with an occasional cyclone or two somewhere across the top of Australia.

To the Aboriginal people in the Top End, they recognise five and in some areas six seasons throughout the year. Each season is known for its particular weather typically experienced at that time. More importantly, it marks when certain animals are ready to be hunted and when particular fruits are on the trees and bushes – their seasons of harvest.

The history and lore/law of the creation of the land (referred to as 'country' by Aboriginal people), animals, vegetation and its seasons, along with the laws that govern it and the people living there is complex. Different areas have varying stories of beings, spirits, and animals which are said to have created and sustain their country. With the passing of the seasons and the ecosystems of an area, their stories, law and ceremonies link that country with all that live there.

Throughout the many seasons of the ministry of AIM there have been numerous Aboriginal people who have come to know the God of the Bible as the creator and sustainer of this world – and as Lord and Saviour of their lives. When one lady from the desert was taught the Bible story of creation she declared, 'I bin wanting to know the true story – who made everything. Now I know.' She had

been questioning the truth of what she had been taught from childhood. Her response of joy was testimony that she had indeed come to know the truth and was set free by it.

During this season of Easter, please pray that many Aboriginal people will enter into the season of New Life through faith in the Son of God – by whose power all things were made (Col. 1:16). Pray that Christians will find effective ways to share the Good News that the One who made this world and all people, is the One who 'loved the world so much, that He gave His one and only Son so that everyone who believes in Him may not be lost, but have eternal life.' John 3:16 NCV

The Larrakia calendar shows how life and seasons around the coast are linked.

Wintarra – Rainy season (November-December)
The first rains come with *Djarrarra* (electrical storms). Favourite shellfish are collected from *Pilakidara* (mangrove forest) including *Ferrissirras* and *Dala* (Mangrove Worm), *Djarrarra* (Mud Mussels) and *Djarrarra* (Long Bums) are collected on mussels.

Djarrarra – Buildup (October)
Cocky Apple flowers have taken on the ground signal the buildup has begun. Box Jellyfish are seen, and thunder and lightning may be heard in the distance. Red-flowered Kurajong signal that *Mulayaywa* (sharks) are fat.

Djarrarra – Big wind time (August – September)
Wattle flowers signal stingrays are fat and ready to hunt and, along with Turkey Bush flowers, indicate it's time to collect cockles.

Djarrarra – Heavy dew time (July)
This is the time to burn grass to encourage regrowth for *Mulayaywa* (mussels), *Woolybutt* and *Stingray* trees collected from tree hollows. Dugong is hunted.

Djarrarra – Monsoon season (January-February)
New plants are sprouting. It is *Mulayaywa*, cyclone season. *Mulayaywa* (big red apple) and *Mulayaywa* (wild pink apple) are bulging.

Mulayaywa – Speargrass, goose egg and knock 'em down season (March-April)
Knock 'em downs - windy storms flattening the speargrass - mark the end of the wet season. *Berriyirra* (Flatback Turtles) are laying eggs. Many saltwater fish have roe and *Red Clay Yabobes* are plentiful.

Djarrarra – Barramundi and bush fruit time (May-June)
The skies are clearing. *Djarrarra* (Bush Pearls) seeds are eaten and *Djarrarra* (Bilbygoat Plum) are bulging.



AUSTRALIAN INDIGENOUS MINISTRIES
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Acting Field Director

Yane Damanik
Email: aim.director@mail.com

Office Manager

Peter Smith
Email: aim@aimpa.com

AIM Office

PO Box 126 Taree NSW 2430
Phone: 02 4754 3833
australianindigenousministries.org.au

The Aim Editor

Rhonda Coats
PO Box 40555 Casuarina NT 0811

Assistant Editor

Grace Wright

New Series Volume 58 No. 1

Graphic Design & Printing

Springwood Printing Company
Phone: 02 4751 6119
spc@springwoodprinting.com.au
www.springwoodprinting.com.au

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The requested amount of \$15 per year helps fund the printing and posting of this quarterly magazine.

Locked Out

The current pandemic has brought so many changes. From being locked in through the lengthy lockdowns some states endured and others had a taste of, to the lockouts some states have introduced, life has often been turned upside down — and with it many ministries.

One that has suffered a lot is that of taking God’s Word to those who are locked up! And unfortunately it is not a ministry that can be done via Zoom!!

Sharing God’s Word in prison has been a major ministry undertaken by various members of the Darwin Community Church for many decades. It has been difficult — almost impossible — to go and minister to those in prison for quite some time.

At times the reason has been because of staff shortages. There are not enough workers to be able to supervise anything extra like those interested in attending a meeting within the prison. Then there have been the lockdowns due to Covid. The Community Church visitors have not been able to get in and share God’s Word since early October last year — and there had been many cancellations prior to that as well. They remain willing and eager to go and share God’s message of hope and freedom in Christ with those in prison. Please pray God will soon unlock the way for the ministry to get underway again, and pray He will continue to work in the hearts of those who have heard His truth in the past. ‘You shall know the truth, and the truth will set you free.’

Churches & Covid-19

With the highly contagious strain of Covid now in Australia, most of our churches are being affected. Attendance is well down in many churches. Several have had to cancel services due to the high number of people in isolation or being diagnosed with the virus — many of them being the leaders. Pray that doors will be able to open again soon.

Please pray for a quick and full recovery of those who have come down with the virus and for protection of those who are most vulnerable through age and compromised health.

Pray that the believers will stay in touch with one another via the phone or social media in order to encourage one another, pray together, and share in Christian fellowship as best they can. Ask God to give them discernment when on social media seeking teaching and messages.