



# AUSTRALIAN INDIGENOUS MINISTRIES

Strong Aboriginal Churches



**Henry and Maria Louie from Gilgandra**  
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# Gulargambone

by Yane Damanik

**G**ulargambone is the local Wiradjuri people's word for 'Watering place of many birds' or 'place of galahs'. It is a sleepy little town on the banks of the Castlereagh River, 490km north west of Sydney.



When *Henry, Maria* and *I* arrived from Gilgandra at the Gular town hall the morning of the long weekend last year, the group of young people from One Family Church was already there waiting for us. They had come from Sydney to join Henry and Maria for a community outreach through the Kids Holiday Program.

We began by setting up the hall and waiting for the kids to arrive. Two kids showed up. Led by these kids, the group members went around the community inviting others to join. Soon enough the hall was filled with about twelve children. Some came with their parents. More children came on the second day without needing to be picked up. News about the fun of the first day had travelled fast.

It was a wonderful two days with craft, footy, Bible stories, song and dance, food and games. Some of the parents who came along commented how grateful they are. 'Nothing much happens here for the kids. They have nothing to do especially during holidays. Thanks for making this happen!' It was wonderful to see the parents sitting with their kids and paying attention to the teaching of the Bible stories. There were also opportunities for Henry and Maria to talk and minister to the adults.

We thank the group from One Family Church for their ministry at Gulargambone. It was wonderful to see the joy that they brought to the community. Please keep Henry and Maria in your prayers as they continue to travel distances to reach communities in the northwest of NSW. Travelling to the surrounding areas can be a strain to their health and financial capacity at times, due to running costs of the vehicle.











# Sharing God's Grace

by Joy (Pattemore) Ezzy

October 22, 2022 marked a turning point in our twice-a-month prison visits from the Darwin Community Church. **'Praise the Lord!'** my diary entry for that date reads, **'able to visit prison, first time since June!'**

After the COVID shutdown and only one or two of our rostered visits being allowed due to staff shortages or 'operational difficulties', this felt like a major win. It was a joy to sing and share God's Word again with the female inmates. Other groups had no doubt shared the same frustration of being prepared and ready to go, only to be disappointed on the morning, an hour or so before the due visit.

Since then, by God's grace our visits have been regular. There is always relief still now when the officer in charge says we can come to the women's sector four. Getting back into the men's side has been a little more problematic, but God is faithful.

The chaplains still visited in the times we were unable, and the ladies must have wanted to sing in their cells because all the song books disappeared from the library where we meet (it is a prison after all!). The chaplain is working on replacing them and also getting Challenge (The Good News) paper back in.

The women come from all parts of the Territory, many for a short sentence, a few long term and most for alcohol or drug related offences. Some have come with a background of Bible teaching and a few with very scant knowledge of Scripture. Some have tried to walk the straight path but have fallen prey to the temptations of their life circumstances, family and other relationships or associations which are often accompanied by violence.

The service at the prison may present only as a diversion from the boredom of the day for some, but for others there is the hope of a new beginning.

Last week, as an introduction to a study of Psalm 23, I said, *'Some of you might never in your life have felt loved..., cared for..., protected..., provided for.'* Amid an atmosphere of general assent, one lady nodded sadly and emphatically at every point.

Thank God — He cares! He loves! And He has provided the way of salvation and abundant life!

**If you pray, ask that these prisoners will receive the offered saving grace of our loving God, and that those who minister will be given grace to share the Way with clarity, the Truth with love, and the Life with all the attractiveness of the Lord Jesus Himself. Pray that despair will be turned to hope and distrust to faith, and may Jesus Christ be praised and glorified.**



Vargees, Joy, Wendy, Elsi



# AIM Office Manager

*Mission Co-Ordinator Yane Damanik recently visited AIM Head Office and interviewed the Office Manager Peter Smith which is shared below:*

## **1. Can you give us a snapshot of yourself (what you were doing before taking on this role).**

I had spent twenty years in the Royal Australian Air Force as a pilot and engineer. During that time I met Leanne and we were married in 1989. We had three boys before the Lord called me into the ministry. A fourth boy was born while studying for a Bachelor in Theology at the Presbyterian Theological College in Box Hill, Melbourne. I was called by the NSW Armidale congregation and spent thirteen years ministering there. I knew something about AIM and as a family we went on the first of the AIM Mission Tours. In my last year in Armidale, I started collating the AIM monthly prayer points and got to know a number of people over the phone. It was a wonderful pleasure to catch up with folk each month. In 2013, I was asked by the General Director whether I would consider taking the position of office manager for AIM. Consequently, I attended Armidale TAFE and learnt how to operate MYOB. We moved to the Taree area in January 2014 and Jenny Alley kindly trained me in the specifics of AIM accounting.

## **2. How long have you been doing the AIM office work and why did you take on the role?**

This is my tenth year now in the office. I guess I took up the role because there was a need for it and my dealings with AIM missionaries and personnel as I organised the prayer points had been very satisfying. I had also had a second head tumour in 2012 and really needed a break from full time ministry.

## **3. What does a typical day at the office look like?**

I leave home and go via the PO Box in Taree to collect the mail and then onto the office in Tinonee. The job involves administration and all the accounting. There are day to day bills to pay and various phone calls and emails from rental arrangements, shire councils, managing fuel cards, interacting with people in the field and all sorts of general calls and enquiries. On the accounting

side, we have a data-base which correlates gifts, donations and legacies, amongst other things, into the appropriate places in the AIM accounting system. The quarterly Basic Activity Statements for the ATO and financial reports to the AIM Council treasurer monthly are also involved.

## **4. What do you enjoy most about your work?**

Well, I am quite satisfied when the accounts are audited yearly and found to have no faults. Yet, I find more wonderful encouragement when folk that have been long term supporters ring or email me to thank me for the work I'm doing. I've had the great privilege to meet up with some of these lovely people over a cup of coffee during my time thus far. Equally encouraging, is catching up with people on the field that I've grown to love in the Lord, as I collate the monthly prayer points. I also cannot thank enough, those who generously support me. It is very humbling and precious.

## **5. What have been the challenges in this role?**

Over the years, there have been a few challenges, but overall the pluses far outweigh the minuses! The role really needs first, someone who is gracious and loves the Lord wholeheartedly. Secondly, someone who can empathise with people and pray with them on the phone.

## **6. How do you see this role in the big scheme of the work of AIM?**

The work of AIM is vital as it supports AIM churches and as the missionaries reach out to indigenous people with Jesus' gospel. Accordingly, the office role requires good governance and godly stewardship to aid and support these endeavours.

## **7. What would your advice be to the person who might take on your role in the future?**

It is a very rewarding role as you deal with people, who give generously and pray constantly for indigenous people to be saved and added to God's Kingdom. I have made many friendships in this role. A happy demeanour and a deep love for God go a long way. Being precise in accounting is another must.



# Change of Plans

Christmas saw heavy rains in and around Tennant Creek, resulting in no church meeting and a hastily prepared recording of the Power Point Service that was posted online.

The second consequence was the closing of the Stuart Highway due to flooding about 70 km south of TC. With reports expecting continued heavy rain for several more days, *Peter and Karen Dixon* made the disappointing decision to change their flights until the following week — meaning their time with family and friends down south would be much more limited.

So, a week later than originally planned, the Dixons set off down the Stuart Hwy heading for Alice Springs where they were scheduled to catch a flight

to Sydney. But despite all reports saying the road was passable, the flood waters took something off the bottom of their vehicle. Peter turned around just 50 kms out of TC and the vehicle ended up losing transmission action. Eventually a tow truck arrived and got them and the vehicle back to TC where they left it in the front parking area where they live. They were able to get booked and onboard the Greyhound bus that night, making it to Alice Springs early in the morning. Thankfully they made it to the airport in time to catch the flight to Sydney where they had a very busy but enjoyable time.

During their time away their broken down vehicle had the windscreen smashed. Finally in early February they were able to get it transported to Alice Springs for repairs and are still waiting for this to be completed.

# With the Lord

After years of physical deterioration from Parkinson's, *Valerie Day* went to be with her Lord 16 February. Together with her late husband *Ralph*, she was an associate worker with AIM, ministering in and around the Darwin area during most of their 52 years of marriage. She had grown up in the Retta Dixon Home and had always remained loyal and supportive of the AIM and the missionaries.

Recent years have seen Valerie endure many heartaches — first with the sudden death of her daughter *Brenda* in 2017. She and *Ralph* became the guardians of their then 12 year old granddaughter *Shellbea*. Then in 2020 her beloved *Ralph* passed away. Last June a fall while being helped by her carer saw her suffer a broken upper femur resulting in surgery, then several months in hospital. It was deemed she would be unable to return home and in mid-November she entered an aged care facility. Through it all her faith was strong and she never complained or questioned why.

*Rhonda Coats* has been giving support to the Days since their daughter's death, especially helping with the care of *Shellbea*. When Valerie suffered the broken leg, it was decided *Shellbea* would move in with *Rhonda*, where she remains. Please pray for



*Shellbea* as she adjusts to another major loss in her young life, and as she begins moving forward into her future. Pray she will do so with her eyes fixed on Jesus.

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*Due to the high level of time spent with Valerie especially during her final weeks, and the involvement in arranging and participating in her funeral service, I was unable to work on The Aim magazine. I therefore apologise for the lateness of this issue — editor.*



# Special Award

Lisa Burkenhagen from Palmerston has received the prestigious and well deserved NT Aboriginal Community Police Officer of the Year award. She has been serving on the force for 18 years and is currently a member of the very demanding and overworked Domestic Violence Unit in Darwin.



Reports in the NT show a consistent increase in the number of domestic violence incidents in the past four years. Last year in one Darwin suburb alone, there was a 34% increase in reported DV assaults. Statistics show that at least two thirds of DV assaults are against indigenous women, and many assaults are against victims under the age of 18.

Lisa has shared that her Christian faith is vital as she works in this difficult area of policing, and has a deep appreciation for the Police Chaplain and the care and support received from her. Please pray for Lisa and other Indigenous Christians as they serve in various frontline capacities.

## Graduated

Last November, Ben Davies graduated from the AFP College in Canberra and serves with the Operational Safety Trainers, teaching defensive tactics and firearms. He and the family relocated there from the Northern Territory where he had served in the police force for 14 years, after having served 5 years before that in NSW. His parents, Richard and Sue, are happy to have Ben, Nadia and family just a couple of hours drive away from their home in Cootamundra.



Richard and Sue with Ben, Nadia and family at graduation

**Our God is Able**

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

**In Glory**

Over the past couple of years your prayers have been sought for *Martin Ebel* as he battled a malignant brain tumor. While seeking further treatment in Melbourne in early December, Martin went to be with His Lord.

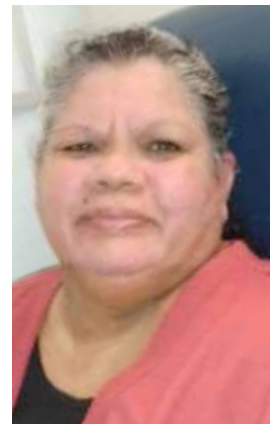


A memorial service was led by *David Chambers* in Woorabinda on 21st January. Martin and Rose, along with their son Ricky went to minister in Woorabinda back in 2002. It was there that both Martin and Rose became Australian Citizens — perhaps the first citizenship ceremony to ever be held in this Aboriginal Community.

Martin remained as pastor of the AIM founded church in Woorabinda until his homecall. He served faithfully over the years, and though numbers may have been few, he enjoyed strong relationships with the believers. Please pray that the church will find their strength and guidance from the Lord as they move forward. The love and sympathy of the AIM family is extended to Rose, Ricky, and Najwa as they adjust to life without Martin.

**Health Update**

*David Chambers* shares: I would like to thank our God who is a healing God. And I would like to thank all who prayed for *Fay*. She spent five weeks in hospital after a blood vessel was found to be leaking fluid to causing pressure on the brain. An infection was discovered after surgery which made her stay a bit longer than expected. Her recovery has been steady, and she has now fully recovered. Fay is now back reciting her favourite verse, John 3:16.



**Prayer Request**

Please join our friends at SIL in prayer. The Plain English Version Mini Bible is being printed in Singapore, then shipped to Sydney, due for arrival 'around' April 17th. Arrangements need to be made to get the Bibles from Sydney to Darwin in time for the Katherine Christian Convention which begins April 29. **PRAY IT WILL ARRIVE IN TIME FOR THE DEDICATION PLANNED DURING KCC.**

Remember *Richard and Sue Davies* who are doing a separate Barkly version of the Plain English Bible. They plan to begin their yearly pilgrimage to the NT in mid-April. They hope to be at KCC before going to Canteen Creek for a few months.