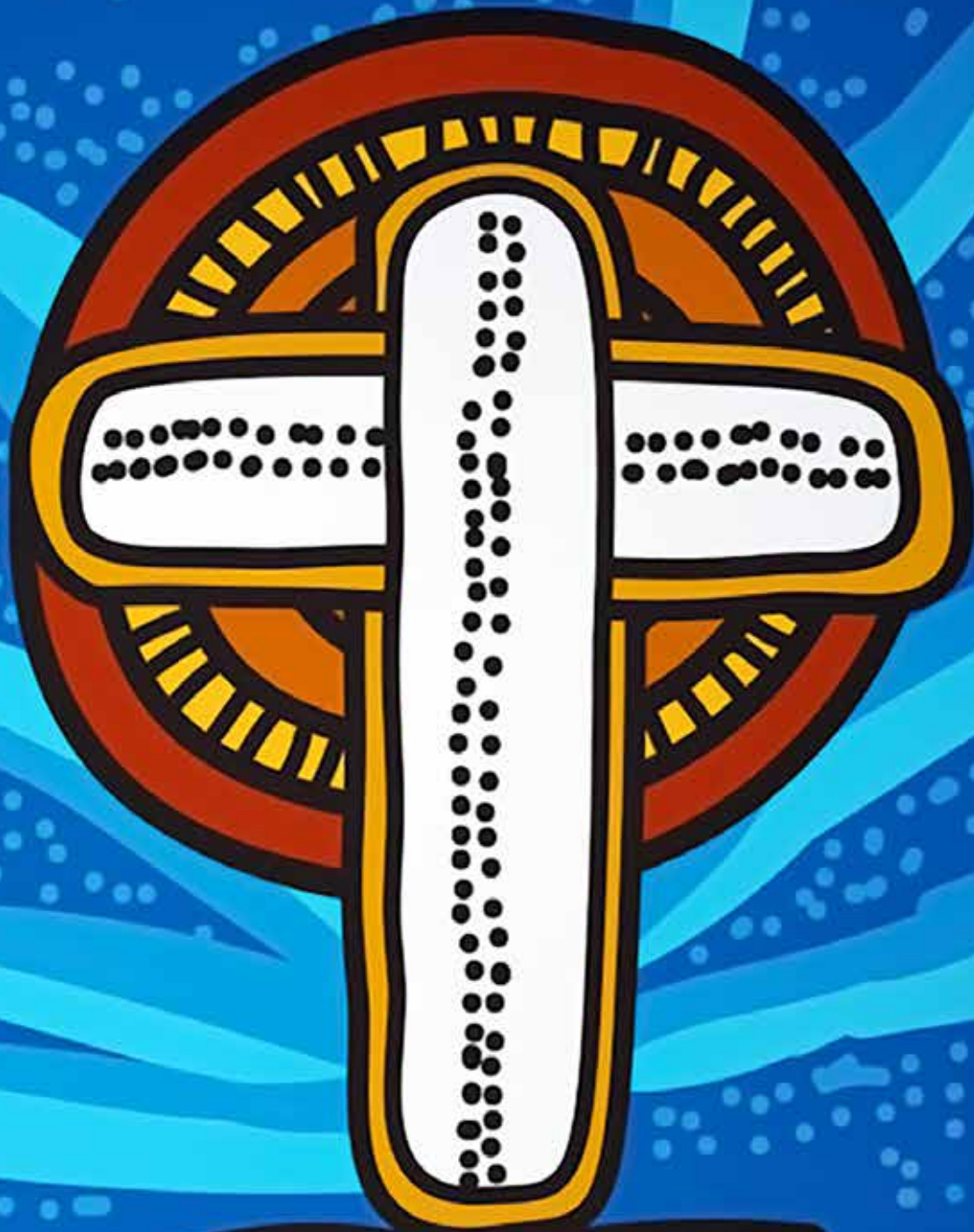


March – May 2024



# AUSTRALIAN INDIGENOUS MINISTRIES

Strong Aboriginal Churches



# The Challenge of Changing Leadership

*This devotion based on 2 Timothy 4:1-8, 16-18 was shared by Cliff Letcher at his final AIM Council meeting last year. Over his years in AIM he had at various times served as General Director, Field Director, Member Care and Council member.*

The early church was about to experience a dramatic change in leadership. Paul has been a key leader in the expansion of the church. His missionary work is well recorded for us in the book of Acts. His letters have provided us with essential knowledge about the implications of the life, death, and resurrection of our Lord. These are very helpful patterns of sound teaching, correction of false teaching, and discipline for the church.

As much as many of us may like to have had Paul still with us today to keep us on the right track, life never works that way. People come and go. Circumstances change. Sometimes the church handles it well, sometimes it fails miserably, yet in all of this we need to stop and recognise it is our Lord's work not ours. We have a role to play but it is the Lord's work and He never fails.

Paul and Timothy have been a team working together in the Gospel for a long time. Sometimes they have worked together in the same place but often they have been separated by considerable distance — yet they are still a team.

As Paul writes this letter, he is expecting his life to end very soon. He is expecting condemnation and execution (v.6). He is expecting to reap the reward for his years of faithful service (v. 7,8). But he is also concerned for the ongoing work of the Gospel.

As he writes to Timothy he warns him of the challenging times ahead. He actually describes them as 'terrible times' (3:1). He encourages Timothy to follow his example (3:10) and charges him with continuing the ministry of preaching and making disciples (4:1,2). Throughout his ministry Paul has been a man of integrity despite what seems like an ever-increasing ungodly world. His challenge to Timothy, the one who will be continuing on in

ministry after Paul, is, **keep going in a way consistent with the Scriptures and the example he himself has set.**



We see Paul's expectation of challenging times of increasing evil as well as people who will deliberately distort the truth to lead people away from the truth. Despite that, he challenges Timothy to continue as a faithful servant who carries on the work Paul himself has been doing, and he expects Timothy will be able to continue in faithful service. Why is Paul confident? Because of whom he has been serving. Paul has experienced the very presence of our Lord as he faced these difficult time (4:16,17).

Paul's confidence in our Lord went far beyond dealing with the difficult and evil times he lived through. He looked in confidence to ultimate deliverance into the safety of the heavenly kingdom (4:18). Paul could look back and see how many times he had been delivered from so many different and dangerous situations. He believed that the Lord would always rescue him, though ultimately that rescue would be through death itself bringing him into the glorious kingdom that is still to be revealed.

**Transitioning time can be difficult but has to be faced. We need to continue faithfully in the ministry our Lord calls us to be involved in, but we must always recognise that it is the Lord's work and He is the One building it. Paul reminds us that we should rejoice because we belong to the Lord, not over what we have done. It is God's work, and even in transition times, God is going to work His purposes out.**

# Special Religious Education SRE

by Gail Naden in Gilgandra

Special Religious Education is an integral part of sharing God's Word and biblical principles to both primary and secondary students in NSW public schools. It is essentially an opportunity of learning from and being able to facilitate biblical based lessons as a volunteer teacher.

It is to the students at Gilgandra Public and Eumungerie State schools that I present lessons using curriculum which provides basic biblical knowledge showing the keys to God's teaching throughout scripture.

Volunteering in the program is a rewarding and blessed experience for me each week as I meet with students and teachers. I share short videos, songs, craft and Bible stories and verses related to the lesson. God's Word, His love for humans and the saving grace of the Saviour Jesus Christ makes life productive, abundant, and available to all who seek the goodness of God.

**'I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly'.** John 10:10b

Engaging in Children's Ministries early in life provided me opportunities to expand my skills base. It has also helped me build rapport with students and also the teachers and community members who reach into the students' lives. Working with dynamic children provides many opportunities to develop the characteristics of God and His compassionate love for all.

GodSpace is a great tool published by Burst Christian Resources. It has sourced Aboriginal artworks from *Kristy Naden* alongside other talented artists and contributors in the current term manual. It explores questions about God and people found in the Bible. It explores stories of Jesus, showing His power over nature, sickness and death, and His power to change people's lives.

This curriculum is currently used to present God's plan for salvation — the gospel of Jesus Christ



to our multinational and multi-faith students. It also addresses how people in the Bible respond to positive choices in relationship to Jesus Christ, themselves, and others. Because Jesus experienced life as a human, students are given tools to understand that Jesus is God and can help people with lifelong challenges.

Students can learn how to become peacemakers for life. The curriculum explores biblical characters who remain faithful in a multicultural and multi-faith society. It teaches how to follow God and His plan respectfully and faithfully with their lives during difficult times by communicating with God through prayer.

For so many students who face times of feeling alone or troubled, there are lessons about prayer which teaches them they can pray anywhere, anytime and about anything. The lessons show the differences Jesus Christ makes by coming into the world and bringing peace and joy through the account of His earthly birth.

These are just some examples of the lessons SRE presents. It is exemplary in bringing glory to God for everything He does for us. Scripture teaching in NSW schools has opened many doors in the lives of students, their teachers and parents.

*Does God want you to be involved in this type of ministry? Please pray that people will be faithful in taking up the opportunities to share God's Word and love in the schools and pray for spiritual fruit among students and staff alike.*

# Remembering Elizabeth

**O**n 14th January *Elizabeth Ham* went to be with her Lord. In reflecting on the 37 years she worked in AIM, the words FRIENDSHIP and FAITH come to mind.

She joined AIM in 1971 and her first appointment was to Mareeba followed by some time on Palm Island. It was in May 1976 that she moved to Tennant Creek with *Merna Carlo*. She later shared the ministry with other workers such as *Lesley Jones (Power)*, *Elsie Lemon* and *Jenny Benson*.

The friendship and respect that Elizabeth extended to the local people resulted in strong relationships and countless opportunities to share Jesus and to help them see the need of coming into relationship with Him. It also opened the door for many others to form close bonds with the Christians there as well. All aspects of the ministry were shared with the Aboriginal people as they came to faith in Christ which saw the church grow and strengthen.

Her prayer life played a huge role in her ministry. At night when fights would break out or drunks were screaming, Elizabeth would kneel beside her bed and earnestly ask God to reach them with His love and forgiveness. There is still much fruit from her prayers, friendship evangelism and teaching ministry and she is remembered by so many with deep affection and gratitude for the kindness and care she always showed them.

She joined the staff at Darwin Bible College in 1985

where her gift of teaching was put to good use. Then in 1988 she became involved in urban ministry in and around Darwin. Here again, friendship was an integral part of her ministry as she met and sought to 'be available' for the Lord's sake in this diverse place and ministry. She had said, *'With God, even our frustrating experiences can be turned into special opportunities. It*

*doesn't always happen, but often enough to let us know that He directs our paths!'* Hospital and home visiting, the Ladies Fellowship, and teaching RI were a large part of her Darwin work and where she so often saw the Lord directing her path to an opportunity.

Elizabeth easily formed friendships and had ministry among a variety of people from different ethnic backgrounds in multi-cultural Darwin. She saw each person through God's eyes — as one precious in His sight and needing to know Jesus.

She was always encouraging, dedicated to her task and to communicating with her Lord in prayer. She was generous in every way, kind, caring, and always appreciative. She loved her Lord and found such delight in all His creation and creatures great and small! What a privilege to have known her — what a challenge her faith and faithfulness will continue to be — and what a reverberating WELL DONE, GOOD AND FAITHFUL SERVANT would have sounded through Heaven when she met her Lord face to face.

**Thank you friend, for all you have done, and will continue to mean to the AIM family.**



# Pebbles, Sickness, Fear & Hope

The Tennant Creek Church has grown in numbers, faith, and faithfulness over many decades. They have faced challenges regarding their culture and traditions and have made some decisions that have cut across both. The following was shared by Elizabeth Ham years ago and gives a glimpse into her kindly ways as a friend and the firmness of her faith, and of the ingrained beliefs of the Aboriginal people — until they are set free by Jesus.

by E Ham

If you have visited Central Australia, you may have seen the Devils Marbles — and closer to Tennant Creek — The Devils Pebbles. They are remarkable sights. Back in the 1970's the Tennant Creek Town Council decided to move one of the pebbles to a town park as a feature of the area, complete with an appropriate plaque.

**But — the Aboriginal people said, 'People will die if that is not taken back!' One of the tribal custodians who was also a church member was their spokesman. Sadly, that man *did* die soon after saying this. FEAR spread like a bushfire!**

One day someone walked past me on the street and without stopping said, 'That old lady sick.' Wow! That old lady was also a custodian and a professing Christian. I went straight to her house, praying for the Lord's guidance! Her daughter was a very active and dedicated Christian, Sunday school teacher and Church member.

When I arrived, the old lady was lying in the centre of the living room floor, and the whole room was



packed with people. No one spoke. The fear was palpable. They were waiting...waiting for what they feared was the inevitable...

I crouched beside the old lady and spoke quietly to her. I stayed with the group for a while. Some wailing started...the sound heralding death in the key of hopelessness. Just imagine being the sick one lying on the floor!

I took two of her daughters aside and asked if I could talk to them. 'I would like to take your Mum to the hospital and ask the doctors to see her. What do you reckon?' They instantly agreed and their mother gladly agreed to go too. The FEAR was suddenly replaced with HOPE!

I sat praying in the hospital waiting room. Soon the doctor appeared with a big smile! 'She has pneumonia. We've started her on medication, and she will need to stay in hospital for awhile, but she should be fine. Would you like to see her?' In that very short time she was like a new woman! She was sitting up smiling and waving excitedly. She not only recovered but went on to live for many years after that.

Later the Tennant Creek Council did return the pebble to the area from which it had been taken. In time the Christians dropped Devil's from the names of the Marbles and Pebbles areas. They said, 'They are God's creation, and good for everyone to look at!'

Our world view shapes our beliefs and behaviour. Thank God, He has given us all His Word — 'a lamp to our feet and a light for our path' Psalm 119:105 and He is able to cast out all fear.

# Work In Western NSW

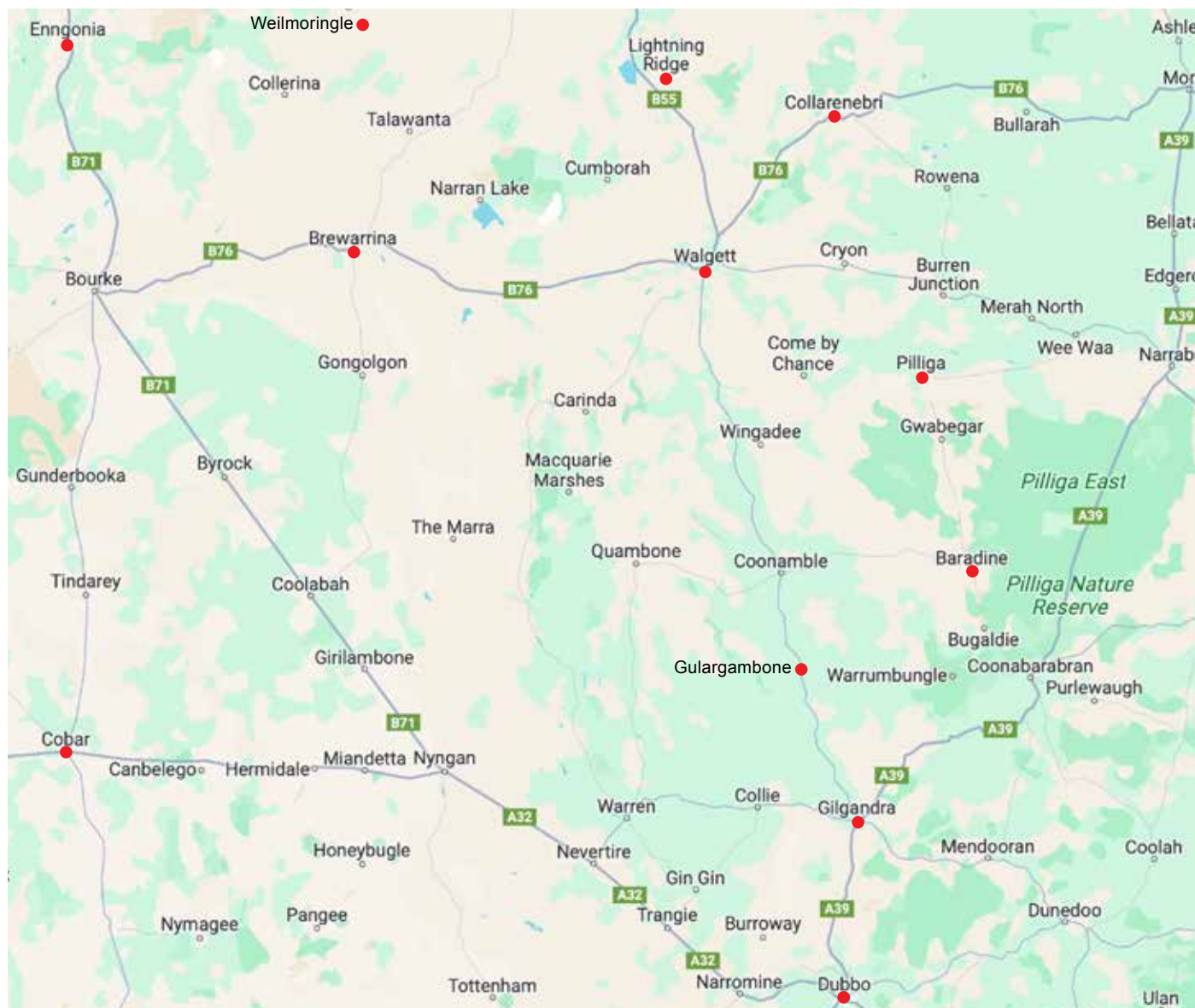
It was just before Christmas when *Henry Louie* made the 600 km round trip from **Gilgandra** to **Cobar** to conduct a funeral. Unfortunately, while there he contracted covid which laid him low for a month which meant his planned Christmas ministry couldn't happen.

As soon as he regained his strength, he and *Maria* were back to their weekly visits to **Pilliga** and **Gulgargambone**. In mid-February he began bible studies on Sunday afternoons in Gular following the morning church service up in **Pilliga**. We rejoice and give thanks that there is a group of people in Gular who are eager to learn more from God's Word. This encouragement comes after a number of years of outreach by Henry and Maria. He says, *'I just followed the Lord — it's all in His time.'*

Henry has been doing studies with a group of

other pastors and leaders in the Sydney area. They meet once a month under the direction of Daniel Zsz as they work their way through studies on *'Empowering to Influence: A 7 paradigm Shift to Impact as Salt and Light'*. Henry is finding this very challenging, encouraging, and helpful in his own Christian walk and ministry as well.

A group from Sydney is planning to come out and assist he and Maria in conducting a Kid's Club in **Baradine** during the April school holidays. Many in



## Partnership

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# AUSTRALIAN INDIGENOUS MINISTRIES

the group are University students and have been going out to conduct the Kid's Club for a number of years. They have built good relationships with the young people and adults in this small outback town. Please pray for good planning and spiritual fruit as God's Word is taught and His love shared with the young people there. Pray for Henry and Maria as they teach and encourage the people in **Pilliga, Gulargambone, and Baradine.**

*Isaac Gordon* continues to head up ministry in **Brewarrina** and the surrounding area. The Church and town in Bree have had a great boost since Green Point Christian School established a school 50 kms south of **Brewarrina** township. There had been a self-contained school already on the large property before Green Point began the Christian school in 2023. The school caters for kindergarten to year 9 with an enrolment last year of 18 students. They are thrilled that numbers have increased to 32 students this year.



The school is bringing students together from stations and town, and is a mix of Aboriginal and white students. It has given the town and local church a great injection and no doubt will be the means of being a godly example of true reconciliation among the local people.

A number of planned gatherings will be keeping Ike and others busy in the west. A coming together for prayer and encouragement for men is planned for 23-24 March in **Dubbo**. This will be followed by an Easter Convention in Bree over Easter weekend (29 March – 1st April).

The Rivers Convention takes place each year to *'Encourage and build up believers, challenge non-Christians of their need to turn to Jesus'*. This will get underway 12 April to coincide with NSW School holidays. The circuit this year will be: **Brewarrina, Enngonia, Weilmorigle, Goodooga, Lightning Ridge, Walgett,** and finishing this year in **Collarenebri**. They hope to have a separate outreach to **Dubbo** later in the year.

Ike is rejoicing at God's provision of a new truck which can carry all the sound and band equipment. This will allow them to set up in football ovals and parks rather than always needing buildings. They are thrilled that the **Goodooga** church building has been refurbished and is ready for use again.

**Please ask God to bless these ministries and bring much spiritual fruit as His Word is shared. 'To God be the glory'.**

**Our God is Able**

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# AUSTRALIAN INDIGENOUS MINISTRIES

Strong Aboriginal Churches

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

## Another One Home

Former AIM worker *Audrey Kleinschmidt* went home to Jesus in late November. She was 95 and had for many years been in the Carinity Care facility in Brookfield Qld.

Audrey had entered AIM work in 1951 as a single lady (nee Harvey) and first served at Tingha. The next year she married Harry and they began serving together at Woorabinda with their accommodation being at Perch Creek. From there they spent a number of years at Moree, then Townsville and finally in Inala where they established a new AIM work. They had three children that kept Audrey busy on the home front, but she supported Harry in the ministry when and wherever possible.

After retiring from AIM in 1979, they continued living in Inala and were keen supporters and helpers in the church and ministry there. Both were tremendous prayer warriors for all the work of AIM.

“Mr and Mrs K’ as they were affectionately known, were still in the Inala Church when Mrs Nellie O’Chin led the work there. In recent years Nellie too has been in Carinity Care. She visited Mrs K every day for a time of prayer and encouragement.

We thank God for the service of Audrey and the prayer support she offered on behalf of AIM over many years. Out sympathy is extended to her family.

## Convention

Each year a convention welcoming everyone is held over the Easter weekend somewhere in Alywarr country. This year it will be at Lake Nash with Ben van Gelderen as the speaker. He is the principal of Nungalinga College in Darwin where several students from Lake Nash were attending the first course of the year.

## Travels

Council member *David Chambers* is also CEO of the AIM Queensland Church Council. Over recent months he has made visits to Woorabinda as well as to Palm Island. Please pray for him as he seeks to work with the Christians and the local Councils of these Aboriginal communities to sort out expired land leases.

David is often called upon to travel back up north to Woori and Rockhampton to conduct funerals too. He and his wife *Faye* enjoy catching up with those from their home church in Rocky at such times. David especially enjoys being able to sit with former QCC chairman Bill Power for advice and mutual encouragement.

