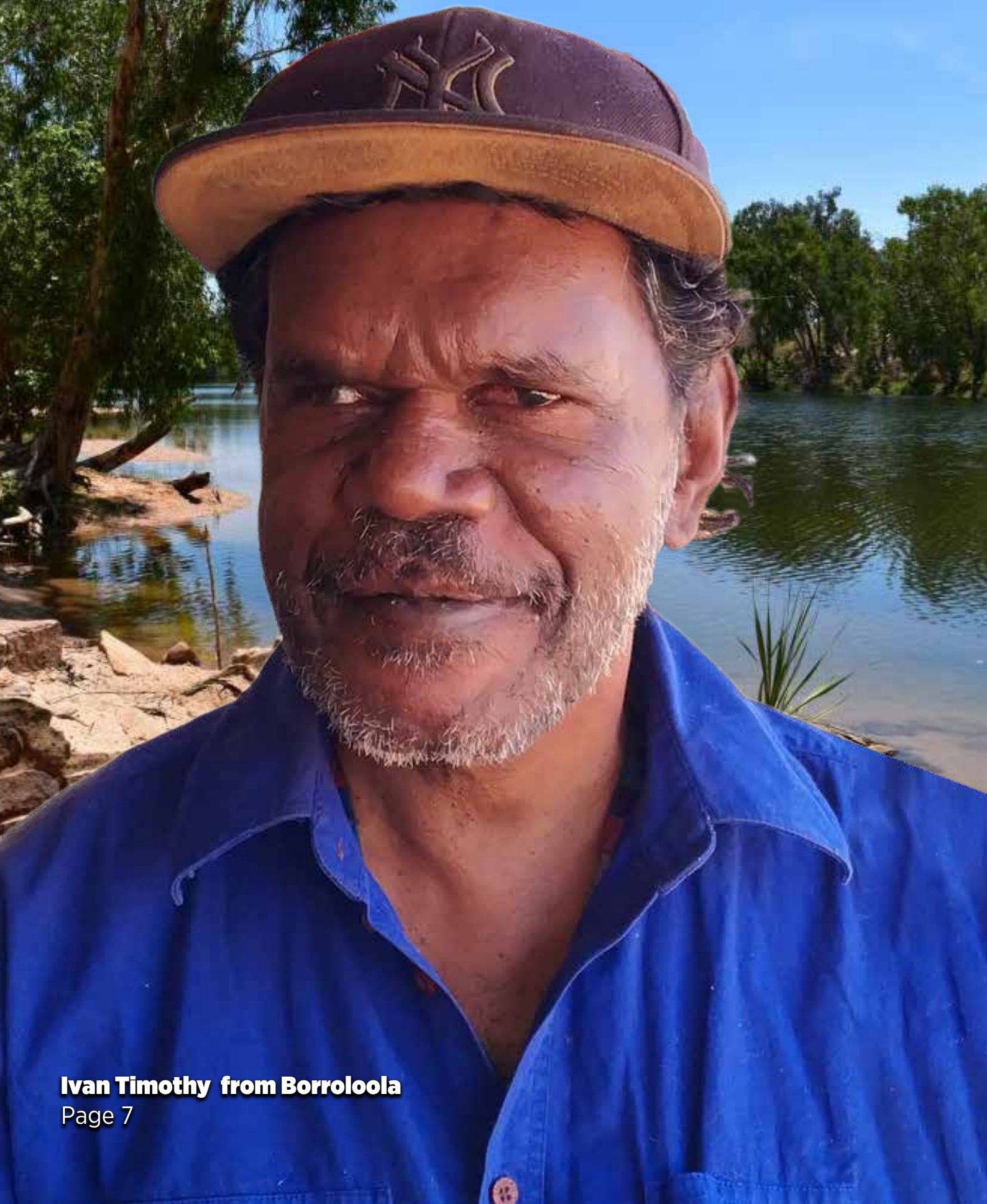


September – November 2023



AUSTRALIAN INDIGENOUS MINISTRIES

Strong Aboriginal Churches



Ivan Timothy from Borroloola

Page 7

After the Flood

Last issue we shared about the flood that damaged Camooweal Church and office. The assistance from some of the Mt Isa Baptist men was a tremendous help, but there were still some things needing attention.

They were praying for help to get the damaged church floorboards replaced, the ongoing problem with the toilets and shower fixed, and a few other things Hazel Lauridsen had on her list. Meanwhile, Steve and Sharon Munro were travelling around in Western Australia seeking to be helpful during their long service time. The name Hazel kept coming up so they thought the Lord must be in this. They left WA and headed across to Camooweal.

'Do you need a hand with anything here?' was a question they might have come to regret! *'Too right we do mate'* was the reply. Out came the to-do list with the floorboards and toilets being at the top.

A trip to Mt Isa lumber yards saw them coming up empty for new floorboards. The Church is so old that floorboards of that width are no longer made. So, as you do in the bush, he went scavenging! Some were amazingly found at the local dump and then he got some from the pub (no details were sought of how he managed that...). With a bit of work and ingenuity, the floor was completed and the church again able to be used for meetings.

Then there was the toilet and shower issue. The main problem was tackled by clearing out piles and piles of tree roots and replacing the pipes. Finally with that under control, new cisterns were installed along with disability rails. Now for the first time in a long time, there are two working toilets for the church. And then...

On a clear and sunny day, water was suddenly appearing in the back yard. And it kept rising and spreading. Unfortunately it was coming up through the septic system. And of course — it was a weekend! A large Mt Isa Council truck was sent to pump out the septic tanks on the property.

The big question was — what would they be charged for this? The four hour round trip travel costs plus the time getting the job done would create a huge bill. BUT it was discovered that a Council worker had not shut a flap on the town sewerage system, and



this is what was coming into the yard. It was quite a mess of course, but it did mean that their septic system was thoroughly pumped out AND it seems there will be no cost to them since a Council mistake had caused the problem. Please pray that will be so.

Several repairs were done to the mission house and marked off Hazel's list.

Though the split system was not yet replaced, things were working out for an electrician to come out free of charge to quote on replacing it.

These physical matters have been very encouraging and seen as gifts from God. A greater encouragement was that a group of men from Lake Nash/Camooweal went on outreach to a non-Christian area and \$400 worth of Christian literature was sold. The people are wanting more bibles, which Hazel has already sourced for their return trip in October. Please pray that the opportunity will remain open and that the power of the Gospel might flood the hearts of those who hear and receive God's Word.



New Place — New Face

Some years ago, the AIM Office was moved from the Blue Mts to Taree to be convenient for those involved at that time. But with the retirement of *Peter Smith* at the end of July (page 6), it was neither needful nor convenient for the office to be located there.

Ample space at the Bethshan facility in Wyee was kindly offered for an AIM Office. We are very grateful to *Roni Damanik* who painted and did other minor repairs and upgrades to have the room ready, along with the anonymous donation of new carpet which was also a real blessing. Thankfully it was all ready by the time *Cliff Letcher* and *Paul Badman* transported the furniture and equipment from Taree at the end of July when Peter Smith retired.

AND God gave us a wonderful answer to prayer to fill the new space with a new face!

At the July 11 Council meeting it was decided to prepare a letter of advertisement for the AIM Office Manager role and circulate it particularly in the Wyee area.

Before this could be written — in fact, the very next day after the meeting — Yane engaged in conversation with local resident *Anne Darragh*. Yane didn't know much about her other than she attends Bethshan Bible Church and was baptised 2 years ago. She also knew Anne was computer savvy as she teaches the other residents at Bethshan how to use them or upgrade their skills.

Before Yane mentioned our need, Anne shared that she has substantial accounting experience and is currently looking for part time work — which is just what we were looking for! After further discussion and obtaining more details, Yane encouraged her to send through her resume.

The process went quickly, but followed all the usual protocols of application, checking with referees, interview with the Council (via TEAMS on the computer these days), police checks, etc.

The Council could see God's hand in it all. The process was completed and with a unanimous decision, they moved to offer the role of Office Manager to Anne who happens to live just metres from the new office location. We are very pleased to



Welcome to the team Anne



Roni at work

welcome her onto the team, and already appreciate her contributions in keeping the wheels at the hub in motion.

Anne was able to travel with Yane to Taree and spend time with Peter on his last day in the office. This enabled her to learn the specifics of the AIM admin and accounting tasks. Thankfully she is knowledgeable in both MYOB and XERO computer accounting programs. This has been vital as she has also spent time with *Rod Bishop* (European Christian Mission) who has been guiding the transfer of AIM financials from MYOB onto XERO.

Please join us in thanking God for providing such a skilled worker to step into the role of Office Manager. Please pray for Anne as she becomes familiar with names and places, and as she continues to work her way through to understanding the various tasks and responsibilities in the Office of AIM.

Sowing the Seeds via SRE

by Young Lee

For 30 years I was a Korean church minister. In 2014 my wife *Eunice* and I moved from Sydney to Taree where *Pamela Leggott* was one who taught me English. For the first two and a half years I preached the gospel to Indigenous children and provided free meals in bushland. After that, God led me to become a Scripture teacher so that I could share God's Word with children in Primary schools. So, I have been training since late 2016 and have been Scripture teaching since 2017.

The Australian government began teaching the Bible in public schools around 1820 with the help of the Church of England. In 1990 the NSW government dualized the GRE (General Religious Education) and SRE in public schools. GRE was included in the general education curriculum so that teachers could teach the contents about religion and SRE (Special Religious Education) is separate for several religions and requires trained outside instructors to teach in the schools.

I am now Scripture teaching at three primary schools in Taree. About 40% of the children attending these three schools are Indigenous with one school being 61.7% Indigenous. This makes me happy because I am very interested in Indigenous people.

Back in the days when I was doing the free meals it was very painful for me because the children were only interested in food and did not listen to the gospel. But now those Indigenous children have gone through all the Scripture classes in one of the schools. The children who were babies at that time have grown up and are now learning the gospel from me. My regrets of not being able to teach God's Word enough in the past were resolved through the



Scripture classes. God led me as a Scripture teacher so that I could effectively sow the seeds of the gospel.

While I have been a church minister for a long time, this is my first-time teaching children in the English language. This has made it feel like I was teaching for the very first time again. It really isn't easy, so I pray and prepare more and more.

I make teaching notes by writing down everything I want to say, without missing even one word. I read it over and over again until I get used to it. And to keep the children focused, I make about a 50 slide PowerPoint with subtitles for each lesson and prepare a short video. Each classroom has a large smart board. Other Scripture teachers don't use it well, but I make the most of it! What a good device it is for me!

I also practice singing lots of times to sing with the children. It usually takes about 3 days to prepare a lesson. Then my eyes are gloomy, and my body is tired, but my heart is very happy.

Teaching the Scripture to children is something I like doing very much even though it takes very much work. When I go to the supermarket with my wife, sometimes children recognise me and call me 'Mr. Lee'. When that happens, I feel very grateful. It shows me that the children like me and respect the Scripture class.

Let me tell you a story. One day, a church pastor visited the Sunday school. The pastor asked a boy passing by. 'Son, do you know who destroyed Jericho?' Then the boy looked at the pastor and said, 'I didn't!' I think this is a made up story, but it not only makes us smile, but also think a lot.

Due to the development of the internet and the popularisation of smartphones, people's interest is gradually moving away from the Scriptures and so have no knowledge of what God has done and has said. The time has come to enjoy swimming in the seas of the internet in search of something pleasing to the eyes and ears. When I talk about Bible stories children often ask me if it actually happened. They don't know who God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit are. As time goes by, I am realising how important it is to teach the gospel to children. If we do not teach them, this funny story about who destroyed Jericho may sadly become a reality.

When I go into the classroom there is a great mix of ethnic children and the class teacher is also there, so what a great opportunity to share God's Word. Teaching the Bible to children is like a farmer sowing seeds. Looking forward to the future, with the heart

of a farmer who hopes to bear much fruit, I am sowing the seeds of the gospel. I believe that as the Apostle Paul said in 1 Corinthians 3, we are just sowing the seeds and watering, and it is God who makes it grow.

When I was in primary school American missionaries came to our village, pitched a tent, and preached in poor Korean, 'Believe in Jesus'. I remember laughing with my friends because of their funny Korean pronunciation. Now, 55 years later, I am sharing 'believe in Jesus' in a funny English pronunciation in front of Australian children! Then I saw one great hope there. That even if they laugh because of my pronunciation, in the not-too-distant future, at least one of these children will become a missionary or pastor who preaches the gospel. I still go to school with this heart-filled hope.

Please join in my prayer that the seeds of the gospel of the kingdom of God that are sown to the next generation through the SRE classes will fall on good soil and bear fruit 30, 60, and 100 times.



Newspots

Thank You Peter

After nearly ten years of service with AIM, *Peter Smith* retired from his role as Office Manager as of the end of July. He faithfully served 'at the hub' carrying out the administration needs including the accounting which is a vital role in aiding and supporting the endeavours of AIM in establishing strong Aboriginal churches through biblically discipling Aboriginal believers and developing their leadership for gospel ministry.

While he always found it satisfying to see the accounts found faultless at each yearly audit, it was the contact with those on the field and preparing points of prayer for the work and workers that he enjoyed the most.

We are grateful for the contributions he made to the ministry of AIM and ask you to join us in praying for God's blessing upon him and his wife *Leanne* in their retirement years.



Resignation

AIM Council received the unexpected resignation of Treasurer *Paul Badman* on 29 July. The Council expresses their thanks for his contribution.

Birthday Celebration

He has battled with some health issues in recent years, but in late June *Bill Power* celebrated his 90th birthday. Congratulations to our brother on reaching this milestone.

His family were busy planning a gathering to celebrate his birthday which happened to fall on a Sunday. Bill stepped in and said with authority, 'I just want a church service. And if anyone is not at church, then don't bother being at the gathering afterwards!'

And they obeyed! The service and party were held at the local Emu Park Hall, and many friends and family



gathered in honour and celebration of Bill and his birthday.

We are so grateful for the ministry and leadership Bill shared through pastoring the Rocky church and as leader of the Queensland Church Council. May God bless you brother and continue to use your wisdom and witness to His glory.

Sympathy

The AIM family extends sympathy to the family of the late *Ruth Naden* who went to be with her Lord in July. For many years she has been part of the fellowship at the Dubbo Christian Family Church where her son-in-law *David Cox* (husband of *Rose*) is the pastor. She was always a faithful and supportive attendee at ladies' meetings.

She has had the joy of seeing most of her children following and even serving the Lord, and more recently has been blessed to see grandchildren doing the same. The sympathy of the AIM family is extended to all the members of Ruth's family.

News was also received of the death of *Karen Dixon's* father on 16 August. The sympathy and prayers of the AIM family are extended to Karen and *Peter*.

Visiting The Mob

The Katherine Christians were thrilled to have a brief visit from their former missionary *Greg Piper* in early August. He had been invited back to take the funeral of the daughter and niece of prominent church members. She was also of important standing among the local Jawoyn people whose large presence provided a good opportunity to share God's Word.

His long weekend visit was filled with going over plans for the farewell service with the family, being guest of honour at a surprise dinner put on by some locals as well as speaking at a gathering of the Ministers Fraternal which he had strongly supported during his time in Katherine.

The highlight for him and the locals was to share together again in worshipping the Lord Sunday morning with the church filled to overflowing.

Please pray for strength and endurance for the Katherine leaders who have kept going since Greg and Debbie left this ministry in 2016. Thank God for



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Strong Aboriginal Churches

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people, no light show, no polished worship band and or leader, no four-point sermon with applications, just a gathering of people in a tin shed with a concrete floor and an Indigenous man talking about Jesus. It is one of the most inspiring and refreshing experiences I have had in a very long time.' Pray that locals will attend and be inspired, challenged and refreshed through hearing God's Word.



Borroloola Church

The new location of the AIM Office means the following changes.

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