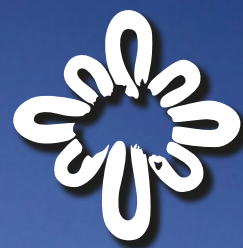


September - November 2025

# Australian Indigenous Ministries

**Strong Aboriginal Churches**



**Council member Roni Parlindungan with Henry Louie  
in Gilgandra (See Page 6)**

# 120 years of the AIM



**P**receded by months of prayer, it was from humble but faithful beginnings that AIM was formed 120 years ago on August 5, 1905.

It has been a history of growth and decline and regrowth, triumph and tragedy, testing and trials, blessing and seeming drought, challenges and victory. And through it all, it has repeatedly been proven that indeed 'OUR GOD IS ABLE'. Workers walked, bicycled, used horse-drawn carriages, buses and trains, and rowed across rivers and harbours to take the Good News of Jesus to the Aboriginal people.

Each step of the way our Lord has been faithful. He has provided faithful prayer partners, personnel, finances, properties and breakthroughs in red tape when humanly it seemed impossible. God has continued to build His church among the Aboriginal people by drawing individuals to Jesus and knitting them together as His people to stand strong and bring honour to Himself where they are, despite our weaknesses and shortcomings.

We have seen Aboriginal Christians standing strong and faithful over many decades, during hardships, difficulties, and lack of fellowship and encouragement. For example, over many years one



**NSW Convention early 1930s**

lady stood alone for Christ with no missionary and no fellow believers. She could not read but she loved Jesus and went to the church building every Sunday. She talked to her Saviour, put her gift in the offering basket, prayed for others, then walked down the dirt track back to her home. Now she walks the streets of gold and worships her Saviour in heaven with the myriads of saints from every tribe and nation.

Spiritual churches and fellowships have been established with attendance and leadership ebbing and flowing over the years in each place. Some have been thriving groups while others just a tiny light in their community. There was a time when maps of NSW, QLD and the NT were littered with dots representing churches and places of outreach by AIM and local church members. That number has declined as some churches closed or other denominations have taken over, and outreach in many areas has ceased. Yet, one can only wonder at how many Aboriginal people have heard the Gospel and had opportunities of Christian leadership through the ministry of AIM over the past 12 decades.

Over the years Cherbourg was known for the many Christian leaders having their beginnings there. The Gilgandra area has a rich heritage of Christian workers from the Naden and Towney families now with some





### Outreach by the people

from the fourth generation in service for Jesus.

Countless church buildings were erected over the years with God miraculously providing the finances and workers to make each one possible.

A variety of training programs have been exercised - from being on campus to mobile Bible schools in local churches, from being well attended to eventually dwindling, all were seeking to strengthen individuals and churches, and through these ministries much was achieved.

Countless conventions were started by AIM and then by local churches which have helped strengthen believers and the bonds of fellowship among them. Katherine Christian Convention is one of note begun by AIM, which then established its own committee of leadership many years ago.

A thriving literature ministry (Mission Publications of Australia) functioned for decades providing sound, useful Sunday School lessons and other literature and resources to Aboriginal Christians and churches as well as to numerous countries of the world. Many MPA materials are still available today via the AIM Office.

Over the decades various forms of Church Councils have been formed with the most effective and long-lasting being the Queensland Church Council - now known as the Queensland Aboriginal Ministries Church Council. But it too has faced struggles in recent years with decreasing membership and is now trying to rebuild.

A few decades ago, Tennant Creek had only a few believers and looked to Borroloola as an example of a group of leaders working together in a strong church.



### Singleton Bible College staff and students 1955



### Bible School at Canteen Creek 1991

Then, the Lord worked in the area and strong leaders were raised up. But age has been taking its toll there as well as in most AIM areas.

The cry across the field continues to be *'where are the younger ones to be trained up to be the next generation of Aboriginal Christian leaders?'*

- Ask God to bring new believers to Himself who can be developed into the next generation of faithful Aboriginal leaders.
- Ask Him to bring the right workers into AIM who can help in developing strong Aboriginal churches.
- Thank God for all those Aboriginal Christians who today remain faithful to Him and His ways regardless of testing, trials, temptations, and hard times.
- Join us in giving thanks to our Lord for His faithfulness, provision, and goodness over the past 120 years.
- Pray for us as we look to Him to reveal His plans and purposes into the future.

# A Time to Rest, Reflect and Rejoice

by Andrew Billing and Roni Parlindungan

**I**n the midst of the challenges and joys of Gospel ministry, God gives us moments of grace to pause and be refreshed. In June several members of the AIM Council along with our admin manager Anne Darragh, gathered for a three-day retreat at Wyee on the NSW Central Coast. It was a time to step away from the hustle and bustle of life and ministry to seek the Lord together – through prayer, deep teaching, and heartfelt fellowship. What unfolded was a beautiful Spirit-filled time of encouragement, reflection, and renewed purpose.



Anne Darragh, Don Hayward, Peter Dixon, Andrew Billing, Roni Parlindungan

## Gathering together

The group came together from across this great nation, some travelling long distances, for three days and two nights in the peaceful surrounds of Wyee at the Bethshan Camp and Conference Centre. We give thanks to Bethshan for their wonderful hospitality over the weekend. The retreat provided space to slow down, share stories, and encourage one another in the Lord. We were blessed by Anne's presence, whose behind-the-scenes work keeps much of AIM's day-to-day tasks running smoothly.

## Biblical encouragement from Habakkuk

Our guest speaker was Pastor Don Hayward from the Aboriginal Berean Community Church in Adelaide. Don led us through a series of messages from the book of Habakkuk – a portion of Scripture that gives voice to the burdens we often carry in ministry and life. His teaching reminded us that God welcomes our honest prayers and laments and calls us to keep trusting Him even when we don't see the whole picture. He encouraged us to persevere in faith over the long haul, to find lasting joy in God rather than in circumstances, and to embrace leadership

that flows not from power, but from prayer and dependence of God. While circumstances in this life may be confronting, when we turn to the God of love we can find rest, knowing He has carried us through to salvation and a lasting peace. These messages touched our hearts and helped us reflect more deeply on how God is at work in our lives and in the communities we serve.

We thank God for the gifts He has given Don in teaching and the blessing it was to sit under God's Word with him.

## Prayer and fellowship

Having reflected from Habakkuk, we spent time in prayer, song and sharing. We prayed for one another, our families, churches, and all who are serving in the name of Christ through AIM. There was a genuine sense of unity and warmth as we listened, encouraged one another, and lifted our burdens and hopes before the Lord. These moments were just as powerful as the teaching, creating space for God to speak and strengthen us through one another. Having prayed, we listen for God's response and cannot wait to see Him work through those He has called.

## AGM and wider fellowship

On Saturday afternoon we were joined by other AIM leaders, workers, and friends from video link for the Annual General Meeting. It was encouraging to revisit the broader work of AIM continuing with faithfulness and vision during the year. On reflection of the previous year, it was easy to see that God is mighty, able, and continues to work generously providing all needs, blessings and strength when it is needed. We concluded with a time of prayer, giving thanks for all that God has done and entrusting the year ahead to His leading.

## Looking ahead with hope

The time at Wyee reminded us that God is near – especially when we take time to stop and listen. As we continue in the work God has given each of us, we do so refreshed in spirit, encouraged by His Word, and grateful for the unshakable bond and strength of fellowship we share in Christ. Please continue to pray for AIM's churches, leaders, workers, and communities as we seek to follow Jesus together.

# MARK COMPLETED

It was smiles all around in early July when the Gospel of Mark Barkly Version arrived in Canteen Creek. *Richard and Sue Davies* were thankful that it came during their annual time in the community this year.

Richard and Sue travelled from Canteen Creek to Darwin in late July. Though it was only for a brief time, they were thrilled to have all their boys together as they gathered for the wedding of their second son Joshua and Leslie.

Two translation consultants made the trip back to Canteen Creek with them for a week of working together.

Richard and Sue left on 18 August having found the community in really good shape this year, with seven or eight new houses, and more people working than seen in previous years. They also shared *'The family feuding has settled down without too much violence. It is so sad to see what alcohol does to people. It is still a grog-free community, but sometimes people*



**Janet, Brenda, and Marlene**

*either come back drunk, or bring alcohol in. And that seems to give them the courage to say and do things that they wouldn't when sober - things that are mostly not true, and which should just be dealt with quietly and carefully.'*

Once back in Cootamundra, they will be able to continue working with *Brenda Thompson* (centre of photo) via the phone while she uses her laptop with all the translation work downloaded onto it. As Richard said, *'It's not the easiest way, but it works. Please pray for more trained consultants! And local people who are keen to see the Bible in a form they can understand'*.

## LOOKING FOR A HOME

Recently the newly formed Aboriginal fellowship in Brisbane had to vacate the building they had been meeting in so are now a homeless church meeting in a park! Under the leadership of David (*and Fay*) Chambers and his brothers-in-law *Max (and Tracey)* and *Goma (and Denise) Conlon* they are enjoying meeting outdoors and sharing a sausage sizzle with anyone who joins them. The service is relaxed with the usual singing, praying and sharing from God's Word. So far, the weather has been kind, but summer is on its way...

For some time, they have been searching for a suitable location. There is one of interest, but it needs renovation. They are working with the group who own it in hopes of the repairs getting done soon. They would value prayer that things will continue to move ahead in their favour and soon they will have a suitable building in which to meet regularly.

Please continue to pray for David as he oversees the work of the Queensland Aboriginal Ministries Church Council. He recently visited *Bill Power* who led the Council so well over many years. He reminded David to *'go and strengthen the brethren'*.

Please pray for David and Fay as they continue to wait for contact from the specialist regarding the best way ahead medically for Fay. She did not have the anticipated surgery as she was deemed too great a risk. Please pray for God's peace as they wait, and for God's intervention to see that Fay is quickly looked after by the medical professionals.

Please pray too for *Bill and Lesley Power* in Rockhampton. Both were hospitalised in July due to a virus and pneumonia. After a couple of weeks at home, Bill returned to hospital and was still there at the time of writing.

Painting by Goma for the Brisbane fellowship (copyright)

# A Journey Of Fellowship And Faith

by Roni Parlindungan

**I**n July this year, a small team from Camberwell Methodist Church set out on a short-term mission trip to Gilgandra, NSW to visit the AIM Church and AIM Council member Henry Louie. What unfolded was more than a visit – it was a sacred exchange of fellowship, worship, and shared stories of faith. United by the Gospel, the team encountered a vibrant faith community that, despite limited resources and real challenges, radiated joy, hospitality, and steadfast hope in Christ. It was not a trip of grand gestures but of quiet faithfulness, mutual encouragement, and deep spiritual connection in the body of Christ.

## Building connections with AIM

The relationship between Camberwell Methodist Church (CMC) and the AIM began in early 2024, when initial contact was made. Former AIM Mission Coordinator Yane Damanik then visited CMC in August. This visit stirred a desire to deepen fellowship with our Indigenous brothers and sisters. By early 2025, a team from CMC had committed to visit AIM's ministry in Gilgandra to listen, learn, and share life together.

## Preparing our hearts

In June the team came together for a training session led by Jenni Alley, which focused on developing a Biblical vision for mission, cultural awareness, and child safety. More than a logistical briefing, the session offered space to pray, reflect, and align expectations. It helped form a strong foundation of unity and humility – shaping not just our plans, but our hearts for the journey ahead.



## Arriving in Gilgandra

The team departed Melbourne on Friday 11 July, stopping overnight in Wagga Wagga before arriving in Gilgandra the following day. That evening, the team shared a meal with pastor Henry and Maria Louie and heard stories of Henry's faithful itinerant ministry across regional towns like Gulargambone, Pilliga, and Baradine. His testimony – marked by endurance, cultural complexity, and grace in the face of hardship – left a deep impression. Henry's Chinese ancestry, rooted in migration during the gold rush era, added another layer to the beautiful diversity of God's people.

## Worship and Fellowship

On Sunday the team joined the AIM congregation for morning worship. Kathy Bird and the other faithful women of the church offered generous hospitality, welcoming the group with open hearts. The worship was simple but profound – full of joy, sincerity, and the quiet power of enduring faith. The CMC team was invited to share music during the service, and songs became a meaningful bridge of encouragement and unity.

Later that day, the team gathered at the home of Henry and Maria's daughter Kylie, for an informal time of worship and fellowship. Despite feeling unwell, Kylie prepared a meal and opened her home with warmth and grace. The gathering was filled with testimonies singing, prayer, and a palpable sense



CMC Team with Henry and Maria

Training session with Roni (front left) and Jenni Alley (middle)

of God's Spirit drawing hearts together across cultures and generations.

## A trip of encouragement and insight

The team returned to Melbourne deeply thankful for the safety, unity, and spiritual richness of the trip. Many reflected on the profound faith and resilience of the AIM church community, and the depth of relationship formed in just a couple of days. The visible absence of younger generations in the church also raised important questions: How can we support Indigenous-led churches as they disciple and raise up leaders? What does long-term, respectful partnership look like?

## Looking forward

This trip has left the team with renewed purpose and ideas for future ministry: the possibility of returning to run guitar or basketball camps, supporting music training remotely, and encouraging Christian schools to engage in cross-cultural mission. Above all, it reminded us that true mission is not about bringing answers, but about walking alongside – sharing life, listening well, and letting the gospel shape our steps.

We give thanks to God for His faithfulness, and to Henry, Maria, Kathy, and the AIM Church in Gilgandra for their grace-filled hospitality. May this relationship continue to grow in love, humility, and mutual encouragement, as we remain open to wherever the Spirit leads next.



## Enjoying fellowship with Gil AIM ladies



### Meeting at Kylie's place

## Our God is Able



**Partnership  
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*Australian Indigenous Ministries*  
Strong Aboriginal Churches

Name: .....

Address:.....

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**I would like to join in partnership with AIM through:**

- ☐ Prayer support by getting monthly topics.
- ☐ By Email at:.....

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- ☐ Making a one-off gift for AIM ministry.

- ☐ Giving regular financial support to AIM for provision of Gospel ministry to Indigenous Australians.

- ☐ I would like to arrange for direct deposit of my support. Please contact me with details.

- ☐ Giving regular financial support to a missionary by joining their support team

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- ☐ Monthly  
☐ Quarterly  
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Amount: \$.....

- ☐ Setting aside part of my estate as a legacy for the ministry of AIM. Please contact me.

- ☐ Please find my cheque or money order.

OR

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Card Number:

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Apple	10
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Orange	12
Grape	5
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Strong Aboriginal Churches

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The requested amount of \$20 per year helps fund the printing and posting of this quarterly magazine.

# Sudden Retirement

It was with deep regret that the AIM Council accepted the sudden notice of retirement from Chairman Peter Dixon due to health issues. He shared the following:

*At the beginning of July, I came down with a strange virus that started with neck and shoulder aches and pains then nose and throat but also a complete loss of appetite. Then the pain in my leg became overwhelming so I went to the hospital for medication.*

*The condition sustained in 2013 is referred to as a spinal neuropathy which shut down the nerves in my left leg. In 2015 the neurologist said the nerves were starting to heal, but that healing would take at least ten years. The healing process has become engulfing and the RSV hangs on. So, I came to the conclusion that I could not continue as Chairman of the A.I.M. Council and must retire for health reasons.*

Peter came onto the Council in September 2021 and provided exceptional leadership as Chairman following his years of experience serving as such with European Christian Mission. His background in law has also served us well as AIM has had to navigate the paperwork and requirements of the National Redress Scheme.

We give great thanks to God for the measureless contribution Peter has made to the Council, and we wholeheartedly join him in seeking your prayers for good medical advice, for God's healing, and God's help and guidance for the Council.

Please pray for Karen as she now carries an extra load due to Peter's health issues. She is thankful to our Lord that there is finally a full complement of staff at the Primary School including three Asst. Principals.

Karen continues to facilitate the Indigenous Language and Culture program and is very sorry for the recent resignation of a Language Assistant, Gina. She is thankful for the useful resources being produced by the Papalu Apparr Kari Language Centre.

