

December 2025 - February 2026

Australian Indigenous Ministries

Strong Aboriginal Churches



The Murgon Baptist team at Woorabinda

A Good or God Idea?

‘We need a fence! Can you come up again and help us?’ was the call Chris Downes at Murgon Baptist received from Lenore Blair in Woorabinda. The local Council had told her it would cost thousands to put a fence around the church building, and it wasn’t a job they could get to anytime soon. They did have some materials they would make available if Lenore could get the group to come put it up for them.

So, Chris put the request and challenge before the church. Did they think it was a good idea to go help? More importantly, did they think it was a God idea? If it was a God idea, Chris knew it would work. Then of course, he hit them with some scripture to ponder, like....

Galatians 6:9-10 And let us not grow weary of doing good for in due season we will reap if we do not give up. So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone, and especially to those who are of the household of faith.

Then God started to show them that He was in it – like when a man at the church said, *‘My boss wants me to get rid of some fencing materials’!*

A small but enthusiastic group travelled the nearly 500 kms to Woorabinda, but not without some excitement. A flat tyre that was noticed a bit too late suffered damage to the rim. What did they need to replace it? 1944 rims...yes, 1944 rims – apparently the same as the old Landcruiser’s. Chris called a friend in Rockhampton – the nearest sizable place that might have what they needed. And of course - God had what they needed and blessed them with new tyres as well!

Now, about that fence...After good bridges were built with the Woori Council during their previous working visit, the works yard was left open so the Murgon team could get whatever they needed. Then the Council workers came (at no charge!) with a bobcat and dug all the fencepost holes for the team. How good was that!

There had been an old gate back at the Murgon Men’s Shed that they fixed up and gave to the team along with a couple of flag poles to use. The picture shows



Some Woori Christians and the Murgon Work Team

how God brought these gifts and talents together to be a great entrance to the church – and it certainly has been getting plenty of attention from all who pass by.

Then there was a gate down the back in the Council yard...just what they needed to open the way for vehicles to get into the church yard...like the hearse for funerals. One worker said that someone had put that aside to use himself, but that someone was then told by a fellow worker, *‘You’re a welder. You can build your own gate. Give this one to the church.’* So, the church got the gate!

While time ran out before the job was finished, they are looking to get another group like YWAM involved next year. They would love to have them run a Youth program as well as set an example of serving by helping to finish off the fence. Chris had



Lenore Blair

taken the time each night to give a teaching series with the small group of local believers, and they were certainly encouraged through that. How much could a week of youth outreach impact lives and the community....?

Why has Chris felt so connected to the Woori Church? His parents, *Barry and Lois Downes* had their first AIM mission posting to Woorabinda. They became the parents of Chris while there and dedicated him to our Lord in that church. Then after finishing his teaching degree, Chris taught for a time in Woori.

Sometime later after some deep testings in his life, Chris was pastoring at the relatively nearby mining town of Blackwater...and a teacher from Woorabinda named Bron went there for some Christian fellowship. And yes - It was a God idea!

Chris and Bron have now been married for 22 years! So yes, Woori holds some very special links to the heart of Chris, but he has always waited on the Lord to show him and the Murgon folk when the opportunity is a God idea, not just a good idea!

New Council Member

It is a real pleasure to announce the addition of *Dr Jude Long* as a member of the AIM Council. She and husband Allan currently live in Melbourne.

Jude became a Christian at age 19 after moving from Brisbane to St Kilda, where friendship with neighbouring Christians led to hearing the Gospel and deciding to follow Jesus. Early on she became involved in youth work which led to her attending theological college to be grounded in her own faith and communicate it well.



She served at the Anglican General Synod, then spent nine years as Dean of Students at Bible College of Victoria prior to serving as principal at Nungalinga College for Aboriginal Christians in Darwin for eight years. While there, she led a re-centering of the college on the gospel and on Jesus and revising the vision to restore clarity and mission focus. Jude emphasised 'walking alongside' and empowering Aboriginal leaders through education as a key leadership posture.

She and Allan returned to Melbourne seven years ago to be closer to their daughters and grandchildren. During this time, she served at Melbourne School of Theology as vice principal/academic dean

and continues to teach Australian Church History with an emphasis on Indigenous history.

Jude will bring a wealth of experience and wisdom to the Council, and more importantly as the Council sensed during interviews, it all comes seasoned well with humility and grace. Despite her training and experience, Jude does not come with ready-made answers and solutions, but rather as one who sees she needs to learn more about AIM.

Her years at Nungalinga taught her many valuable lessons as she worked closely with students and the board there. She worked hard to make sure the Aboriginal board representatives were not left behind in discussions regarding all things including financial matters. She shared that some of the key lessons she has learned are patience and listening.

We believe Jude's background and heart to serve Jesus among the Indigenous people will make her a valuable, and valued member of Council as we seek to fulfill our Vision and Mission statements of building Strong Aboriginal Churches through aiming to biblically disciple aboriginal believers and develop their leadership for gospel ministry. Welcome to AIM Jude!

AROUND THE FIELD

Borrooloola

Vincent Charlie had a week in Darwin for medical attention in October. He enjoyed fellowship with some of the Borrooloola Christian family living there for dialysis. He keeps on faithfully, but with little encouragement back home. A couple of other men come along most of the time, but one has an unbelieving wife which makes it difficult for him. Vincent has led God's work in the AIM Church here for over two decades. There is a need for more people to come to Christ, help with the ministry load, and be developed into leadership here. Please pray that God will work out His purposes and provide for the needs in this place.

Work has begun on a renal unit for the town. A number of Borrooloola people who must live in either Katherine or Darwin for dialysis but would love to be home and have their treatments there. And how good would it be for the church if the Christians were able to return home, rejoin the fellowship and encourage the small group of believers. Some living in Darwin want to go back and run Sunday School there again.

There will be the need for nurses willing to go and work in this isolated town, with limited facilities (they do have a small coffee shop and swimming pool!) – but what an amazing opportunity for Christians! Please pray that evangelical Christian nurses will seek God about taking up these jobs so they can be godly witnesses and encouragement to the believers.

Barunga

It was such a high when *Anita Painter's* sister turned to Christ while in Darwin hospital. Her newfound faith saw her filled with enthusiasm to get well, return home and be involved in the life of the church...but she never made it home. Several weeks after the long and complex surgery, her body still succumbed to cancer. But she slipped away from here and into God's strong and loving arms with peace knowing she was His child through faith in Jesus.

Jocelyn McCartney has mobility problems but often with help, gets to church with the small group of believers. Other groups have been trying to get in and use the church building, but even some of the non-believers have been speaking out and telling them NO. They are showing their support and respect for Jocelyn and others whose faith and testimony has stood strong in the community over the years, and whose loyalty has remained firm with AIM and its' teaching.

Please pray that God will keep them strong and wise to see through groups that would seek to bring other teachings in. Pray that God might provide faithful believers who are aligned with AIM doctrine and practices, who can stand alongside them, encourage them, and help them to continuing growing in the grace and knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Katherine

After rejoicing last year when the repairs to the front of the church were completed, the mission house has now been declared unusable due to white ant damage. Pray that the believers and AIM Council will communicate and work together well in finding God's way forward. The problem is increased due to the house having a large amount of asbestos, making removal extremely costly.

Pray that the lives of the believers will be a good reflection of Jesus as they remain faithful in reaching out to this needy community with His love and message. Ask God to strengthen the long serving leaders – *Lisa Mumbin, Noel McDonald, and David Hughes*.

Alice Springs

The crime and violence in this outback town has sadly made national news more than once. Unfortunately, the AIM property has not escaped the trouble. Numerous times the building has been broken into which has been a growing

concern for those occupying the accommodation on the property. The costs of installing adequate security measures here is exorbitant. Also, we don't have any suitable workers to serve the Lord in building a strong Aboriginal Church here through biblically discipling aboriginal believers and developing their leadership for gospel ministry.

Please pray the AIM Council will know God's wisdom and direction in being good stewards regarding this facility and future ministry.

Canteen Creek

The small but faithful group of believers continue to meet regularly to share in worship and to encourage one another. A secondary teacher has come to the community which has allowed the older students to stay home to finish school. Thank God for the local Christians who have seen this as an opportunity and are now running activities for them in the church. Pray that these young people will turn in faith to Jesus and be willing to follow Him, even when the way is difficult. Pray that the believers will stand strong, look to Jesus, and know His help and peace especially when troubles come.

Dubbo

David Cox is planning to step back from his role as pastor in May 2026. Pray that he and Rose will know God's peace as they wait and trust Him to unfold His plans for them, and to provide for the ongoing needs of the church. Pray that the members will keep their eyes on Jesus as they go through a time of change after the long and faithful ministry of David and Rose. Pray for a peaceful and harmonious transition to the new leadership God provides. Continue to pray for the spiritual needs of the hundreds of Aboriginal people living in this inland city.

Gilgandra

Three deaths of family members in early November brought a thick cloud of grief to this small, close-knit, family-related fellowship. Please ask God to give comfort, strength and peace to each one. Pray that their faith in Jesus

will sustain them through their grief in such a way that others in the town will be challenged about their need of having Christ as the anchor of their lives.

The sympathy of the AIM family is especially extended to former AIM worker *Phyllis (Naden) Morgan* who lost her only son Heath in early November. Pray for God's grace to sustain her as she adjusts to this loss in her life. Pray too that God will strengthen and uphold her sister *Kathy Bird* as she supports Phyllis and the other relations in this season of grief within the family.

Sympathy

The sympathy of the AIM family is extended to *Karen (and Peter) Dixon* since receiving the news of her mother's home call in mid-November. We pray that our Lord will be her strength at this time.

Davies

After sharing an enjoyable visit to Canteen Creek mid-year, *Richard and Sue Davies* were disappointed to find that their translation consultants are no longer available to help with their project. The senior consultant now has other responsibilities, and the other fellow will not be fully qualified until sometime next year. Pray for the Davies as they wait for God to provide this need. They are thankful plans are moving ahead to print a booklet containing Ruth and Esther. Thank God for the translation work they have continued via the phone and computer with *Brenda Thompson* in Canteen Creek.

Health

After a very extended period in hospital, *Bill Power* has now moved to residential care in he and *Lesley's* hometown of Emu Park. He continues to have rehab to hopefully regain more mobility. Pray that Bill will make the most of every opportunity to serve His Lord in this new mission field. Continue to ask God to call out more Indigenous people to Himself in the Rockhampton area and become His faithful witnesses and servants in the AIM Church there.

Was it worth it? by Cliff Letcher

I commenced writing this article while having a break from our long trip home to the Blue Mountains. As I get older the long days of driving seem to get more tiring. Was it really worth the effort to go to Elliott for a couple of months? Thousands of kilometres not to mention cost of fuel? Was it worth it? Then there were many days when nothing seemed to happen. Was it worth it? We spent most of our time with just one couple. Was it worth it?

Let's look at our time there from a different perspective - of small groups of believers in isolated communities. People who have very little opportunity for Christian fellowship let alone good Bible teaching in a language they really understand. Australia is a vast land where most people live in a small area of the continent close to the sea. But when you travel through what we call our Australian Outback you will find there are many small communities but with a lot of distance separating them.

Over the years I have had several conversations with people from various denominations responsible for the oversight of ministry in these remote areas. They have bemoaned the fact that it is hard to recruit people to minister in these places. (I even heard someone say it was hard to get ministers to go west of Parramatta). So let me ask you, *'Is our Lord not concerned about the people in those places?'* Is it only where the large numbers are that really matter? After all we have limited personnel available. Isn't it better to concentrate on the larger population areas so there is potentially a greater harvest?

Because AIM's ministry is scattered over a large area of our country it is involved with many of these remote communities. We also have great difficulty in recruiting people who are willing to be involved in what has often been described as one of the hardest mission works in the world. It's hard for all sorts of reasons. It's hard because of remoteness. It's hard because of cultural and language issues. It's hard because of political issues. It's hard because of history and it's hard because of community attitudes. The list could go on. But what did the Lord of the harvest say to us? *'Go into all the world....'* - not just where there are lots of people. He also said, *'Pray that the Lord of the harvest will send out workers because the labourers are few, but the harvest is plentiful'*. We can't all go and we aren't all suitable for the work of AIM, but we can all pray that the Lord will send out the right and gifted workers to His harvest field - yes even in the remote and sparsely populated areas.

I've become a little sidetracked from where I began - 'was it worth it?' I mean was it worth it for us personally? I could say that yes it was worth it because I love to travel over this vast country of ours. I never get bored with the ever-changing scenery (not even when driving through the Hay plains). But that's not where the true value of the trip was for us. It was the people we spent time with that made the trip of immense value to us. Our time in Elliott was valuable as it reminded the community that AIM values the people there.

Most of all it was worth it for the time we spent with *Raymond and Thelma Dixon* from the Marlinja community, some twenty kilometres north of Elliott. They face many challenges as leaders in their small community, as well as personal grief from recent family bereavements. They even had more



Richard and Sue Davies visiting Cliff and Carolyn

That's what we did. We had rich fellowship over cups of tea and times delving into God's word and praying together. It was a very special time as we found the Bible so relevant to our daily circumstances. We are now planning to try to keep up regularly with the Dixons using Zoom video links so we can continue building on what we have begun.

Another valuable aspect to our time in Elliott was it enabled me to further develop the adaptation of the Langham Preaching Workshop material for the Aboriginal scene. I've been working on this with Aboriginal couple *Rick and Kayleen Manton* in Sydney and my focus on this material while in Elliott will I hope, further this development.

Would we do this trip again? It would certainly be worthwhile, but we will need to see how our Lord directs our steps. He certainly prompted the venture this year.



Thelma and Raymond at the study time



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Birthday Weekend

by Peter Dixon

As the usual time for making plans for the 41st Tennant Creek Church (building) Birthday Weekend comes around, viruses seem to attack all and sundry. This year us older people found it very hard to shake off their effects, so the planning meetings kept getting put off. And, the church leaders who are also pillars in the community were involved in many meetings, some away from home. As I struggled with a respiratory virus and was spending a lot of time lying down with prayer and meditation, I kept thinking about the apostle Peter's picture of God's spiritual house built with living stones.

So, when *Mr Michael Jones* asked me about speaking at a cut-down weekend I felt that God had been getting me ready. I was resuming some tasks and trusted that He would restore my voice in time. We had a planning meeting and agreed to that program (no Friday night meeting) with the theme 'Come to Him'. Then when plans were made the Jones family suddenly learned of a funeral on the birthday Saturday they were obliged to be part of. So, the date was changed to the last weekend in September which also avoided the Barkly AFL Grand Finals.

The invitations to outlying communities had not been sent, but the church was very full for the morning meetings. There were people still in town from the football including some from Ali Curung. There was also a group from a Korean Presbyterian Church in Melbourne who were here to support *Hang Mo Yang* the boarding supervisor at the Aboriginal Hostel. They also brought some of the hostel students to the meetings.

After the Saturday morning meeting we enjoyed a barbecue and the birthday cake. Saturday evening was at Mulga Camp and church members powerfully shared testimonies. Sunday afternoon storms began to threaten so the sharing was transferred to the churchyard where equipment could be quickly brought under cover. Thankfully that need did not arise and a good mob gathered at the church. Local members along with the Korean brothers shared at the meeting.



I was encouraged in the weeks following to hear the older leaders continuing the theme with cultural applications. We keep giving thanks for the building and praying for a mighty spiritual building here and across the nations.

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