



WARNING: This publication may contain photographs of Indigenous people who are deceased.

# CHRIST IN THE CENTRE



**Congratulations!**  
Yirara College  
and Living Waters  
Lutheran School –  
National  
Winners

NEWS FROM **FINKE RIVER MISSION** OF THE LUTHERAN CHURCH OF AUSTRALIA

**SUMMER 2011/12**

## Hands across Australia

Yirara College and Living Waters Lutheran School, both based in Alice Springs, were recently announced as the winners of the GenerationOne Hands Across Australia song competition.

around Australia in July to celebrate the history, culture and achievements of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people).

The filming, playing, climbing, jumping and eating together at Simpson's Gap that they called 'Closing the Gap at the Gap' was one of the many highlights.

Imagine the excitement for the college when they gathered together watching the live broadcast from Sydney to hear that out of over 130 entries from all around Australia they were awarded first place in the Outstanding Performance category with a prize of \$15,000.

Congratulations to the rappers, choir members and marimba players, along with staff members Mrs Jenny Chapman, Mr Paul Imms, Ms Jodi Farrell and Mrs Nicole Dohler.

### What did you enjoy about making the video?

**Stafford Swan:**  
Just enjoyed singing the song and doing the actions and the rap. I liked doing it with the Living Waters' students – having fun.

**Melissa Andrews:** It was good, especially going to Simpson's Gap. We climbed all over the rocks and took photos.

**Preston Harrison:** It made me feel proud, being ambassadors for Yirara College.

Note: GenerationOne is a not-for-profit organisation that works to show the importance of education, training, mentoring and employment as the best means for ending the disparity between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians.

The joint entry which was put together by staff and students was extremely professional and very inspirational. It was recorded as part of NAIDOC week celebrations with the final scene filmed at the closing worship service with the Alice Springs Lutheran Church (note: NAIDOC celebrations occur annually

**Shania Raymond:**  
Great inside.

**Melissa Andrews:** Happy and excited because we did special things in choir at Yirara.

### How did you feel when the announcement was made?

**Stafford Swan:** Proud and happy. Proud of Living Waters' students helping us.

**Preston Harrison:** Proud and excited, especially when I collected the prize money for Yirara College.

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Check out their winning entry on **YouTube** by searching for **Yirara College**.

# Red Centre

Irwin Traeger



## church brought back

In the heart of Australia's 'Red Centre', an abandoned and run-down church has been restored by the local Lutheran Aboriginal community, with the assistance of Finke River Mission (FRM) and some enthusiastic Sydney school students.

On Saturday 30 July, FRM pastor, Rob Borgas, led a rite of consecration of the restored church at Lilla outstation (Reedy Creek, which the outstation was called when it was part of the Tempe Downs cattle run), ten kilometres south of spectacular tourist attraction of Kings Canyon.

On the Kings Canyon homelands – which includes Ulpanyali, Lilla, Wanmara and Ukaka – FRM Pitjantjatjara-speaking pastors have been leading occasional worship services for the mainly Luritja-speaking people in the area, often under the shade of a tree or the verandah of a house.

Recent renewed interest by the people of Lilla in redeveloping their outstation led to a number of projects being undertaken in partnership with Reg Ramsden of

Remote Tours. After they successfully reopened their primary school on 27 January, the people of Lilla set about restoring their old church. This time they were assisted by FRM, which supplied some sacred furniture and hymnals for the new church. St John's Lutheran Church, Dernancourt, donated the pews, and St Paul's Lutheran Church, Sydney, donated the baptismal font.

Muscle and elbow grease was supplied by a group of Year 10 students from St Andrew's Cathedral School, Sydney. Used to studying in multi-storey buildings in the heart of Sydney, the students were given the rare opportunity to camp on a homeland and learn about traditional culture from the local people, in exchange for helping to paint and renovate the church.

Originally the church had been built by the founders of the Lilla outstation, including the late Pastor Peter Bullah, in the late 1970s or early 1980s. Over the years it had fallen into disuse and disrepair, like so many other outstation

churches have done after such hopeful beginnings 30 to 40 years ago.

In the 1970s changes to FRM policy about how Indigenous culture and Christianity could coexist, plus the federal government's granting of land rights, gave Indigenous people the freedom to move from the more populated communities, such as Hermannsburg, Papunya and Areyonga, back to their traditional homelands. Over the next 10 to 20 years many so-called 'outstations' were developed in Central Australia, including in the Kings Canyon area.

'Traditional Indigenous culture and identity is fundamentally linked to the land', explains Pastor Rob. 'This is perhaps why family relationships and responsibilities seem to be more functional on outstations. Removed from inter-family fighting, people talk of the peace and quiet they enjoy on the outstation. The outstations, far from the dangers of alcohol, drugs and gambling found in the major centres, are safe and healthy places for people and their families. They are places for them to be who they really are.'





to life



A great product of the increased freedom and sense of identity people experience on their homeland is the desire to renew the Christian faith and traditions introduced by the missionaries and evangelists and practised by their parents and grandparents.

'This is why so many people ask for church services and devotions to be held on their homelands', Pastor Rob said.

*'Traditional Indigenous culture and identity is fundamentally linked to the land'*



The people of Lilla are very proud of what they have achieved. According to Vera Williams, 'In the past people were missing out on church and there was no place to have Sunday school for the kids. Having a special place dedicated to worshipping God and teaching our children is very important for us at Lilla.'



The spectacular Mt Liebig, 300kms west of Alice Springs, was a very suitable backdrop for the recent well-attended mini-course on Leviticus in the western desert area of the Centre. The course was part of a series of studies on the whole Bible from Genesis to Revelation prepared and led by FRM support worker Paul Traeger.

“For each section we studied what God wants us to do, how He wants us to worship and, most importantly, what this teaches us about

Christ’s work for us”, explained Paul, “It was pointed out that the Israelites had been wandering around the bush for years and needed to be taught how to live in settled communities. There were murmurs of assent when the people recognized that their parents had been in exactly the same situation”.

Parts of Leviticus are found in the Pintupi-Luritja Bible but none of it has yet been published in any other Central Australian language. So for some sections, people were hearing and studying parts of the Bible that were completely new to them.

Much of Leviticus is particularly relevant to traditional Aboriginal society. For example, chapters 13 and 14 were applied to scabies, boils and other common skin complaints. At chapter 17 verses 13 & 14 there was an animated discussion about hunting practices. And in chapter 18 the people learnt that the relationship categories mentioned are similar to Aboriginal kinship terms.

The study of chapter 19 was particularly memorable. The people looked at how the phrase, “Be holy, because I, the Lord your God, am holy” parallels the phrase, “Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful” (Luke 6:36). In other words, God’s holiness is usually expressed in compassion. This whole chapter seemed to have a big impact upon those listening.

On reflection Paul commented, “It was very moving to see how they sometimes struggled and then smiled or nodded as the meaning became clear”.

At the end of the day Pastor Simon Dixon described the teaching as “palyalingku” (excellent) and Irene Nangala, a lady who is involved in community politics, described God’s Word as “ngalypa-ngalypa wiya”, meaning that there is no fiction or spin in it.

Please pray that the people will understand Leviticus in the light of the Gospel. So, for example, the prohibition of self-harm during “sorry-business” (21:5) must point to the New Testament command not “to grieve as others do who have no hope” (1 Thess. 4:13).

And pray that, as the Aboriginal people work through these issues together, they would do so as a free priesthood, under Christ, their perfect High Priest, who is concerned about every aspect of their lives.

# Mini Course



# Message of grace



## FRM Vision Statement

***"Vibrant indigenous worshipping communities of the Lutheran Church in Central Australia"***

THE STIRLING (WILORA) COMMUNITY, 280KMS NORTH OF ALICE SPRINGS IN ANMATJERE LAND IS A GROWING TESTAMENT TO THE FRM VISION STATEMENT.

Lutheran Aboriginal Pastors, Michael Tjapiard and Christopher Tjanima, share the message of God's saving grace through the death and resurrection of Jesus in a variety of ways:

- Regular worship services at Stirling and nearby outstations
- Weekly community 'sing-alongs'
- Sunday School
- Recently introduced Cuppa after service
- Sharing clothing donated by Lutheran Community Care.

The congregation are very thankful for recent renovations to the worship area, funded by a government grant:

- Worship centre has been lined and insulated
- New shade structures over worship area and stage spaces
- Power and water now connected
- Permanent screen for 'movie nights'
- Toilets and air conditioning to be completed soon.

All this is being achieved in spite of the hardship and life challenges Indigenous communities face.

Pastors Michael and Christopher together with the Wilora people give thanks to God for the facilities that are now a centre point of the community's life. Next on their list is a data projector and a new bell, so if there's any offers out there please contact the FRM office or Pastor Ray Morris who supports this area.

***Please continue to pray for this community and its leaders.***



# Mutitjulu woman installed as layworker

Recently, in the shadow of Uluru, Lutherans from the Mutitjulu community gathered in the Good Shepherd church for the installation of Rita Okai as a lay worker.



Rita with friends (left to right): Millie Oakai (Rita's grandmother), Veronica Long and YUPIYA Long. Photo: Helen Schulz

'To be chosen as a layworker requires a person to have demonstrated exemplary behaviour in the eyes of fellow Christians at Mutitjulu', said Finke River Mission (FRM) pastor, Rob Borgas.

Rita, 29, was installed by Docker River pastor Howard Smith and the service was led by Mutitjulu pastor Hezekiel Tjingoon.

Like many in her community, she has had to deal with numerous challenges in her life. After her father died, her mother, who was a heavy drinker, left the family in Rita's care. Since then Rita has been responsible for the welfare of her three younger siblings, as well as her own son.

Rita had started thinking about God's plan for her life when she was a student at

Yirara College, where she was confirmed in 1993. Later, when she was 19, she asked her pastor at Mutitjulu, Hezekiel Tjingoon, if she could help him lead worship and teach the children at Sunday school. He agreed, and proceeded to teach her about the liturgy and the Bible.

In 2008 Pastor Rob started giving her formal training through a series of mini courses, and in 2009 she went to Titjikala for her first FRM course for pastors and evangelists. She was the only woman there (along with her grandmother whom she brought along for 'company').

Rita then started instructing a confirmation class at Mutitjulu, the first for many years. At the same time she started coordinating choir practice for the Mutitjulu ladies choir,

helping ladies to learn the songs and tunes, as well as recording their singing. She still found time to lead Sunday school and help Pastor Hezekiel with Sunday worship. In April 2010 eight young adults, whom Rita helped to teach, were confirmed.

Rita works full-time as an employment consultant for a local employment agency called Anangu Jobs. All of the work she does for her church at Mutitjulu is voluntary.

'I really like working for the church and teaching people about God's great love for everyone', she said. 'I try to help young people discover for themselves that God has a special plan for their lives, too.'

**Please remember Rita and the people of Mutitjulu in your prayers.**

## Old Timers' Retirement Village

# GRANDMA'S WITNESS



"I drove the Troopie around to the dormitory to collect the three girls who had asked about visiting an elderly relative in the Old Timers' Retirement Village. It's only a 3 minute trip so soon we are walking into the open space dining area. The girls quickly locate Iris. She is in her wheel chair fast asleep and parked up against the table waiting for dinner.

The girls talk loudly in Pitjantjatjara, as Iris is quite deaf, and soon Iris wakes and starts chatting to them. I immediately see the sunshine in her face, a treasured moment in the daily routine of life in a retirement home.

Soon the dinner tray arrives. One of the girls helps mash up some of the food. Iris asks for some toast; a kind-hearted nurse thought she said 'salt'! The toast eventually arrives and Iris folds her wrinkled, feeble hands and bows her head. Immediately the three girls do the same and together, speaking in their heart-language of Pitjantjatjara, they ask God to bless the food.

*What a perfect witness by this sick and ailing Grandma!  
What a moment of learning for these young teenage girls.*

*Heavenly Father, bless each of these your treasured children. Amen."*

**Neville Doecke, Yirara Chaplain**



# Sharing The Gospel

## Napperby Church Art

Pastor Ronnie McNamara and Community Development supervisor, Kath, are excited about the beautiful artwork that has been created by Napperby community residents for the recently renovated Church building. Each piece of work has a 'heart and soul story' that goes with it. They were created with much love and thought to communicate the gospel message of God's love.

## BAPTISM BEARS

A candle is often presented to families at a baptism to help the family remember the great day of God's grace.

*"You are the light of the world; let your light so shine to the glory of God the Father."*

In the heat of Central Australia, a candle is not always a practical gift for such an occasion. After several baptisms and more being planned in the Anmatjere and Alyawarra areas north-east of Alice Springs, a young mum, Tanya Barber, has started knitting "Baptism Bears" as an alternative to the candles. These bears will be presented as a baptismal gift. Maybe with the encouragement to *"Bear one another's burdens, and in this way fulfil the Law of Christ."*

If you would like help to knit and 'bear' some of the work for mission, please contact Tanya or the pattern on email: [morris-tl@hotmail.com](mailto:morris-tl@hotmail.com).



## BB's for Mission

Completed bears can be sent to Tanya's dad who is a Support Worker with Finke River Mission.

**Pastor Ray Morris**  
**P.O. Box 2129**  
**Alice Springs, NT 0870.**

# Yirara Calendars



## A group of Yirara year 9/10 students recently developed a small business as part of their study.

Using a grant from the Department of Education, the students were able to produce and sell calendars and greeting cards that showcased student artwork. "We have been learning about being good ambassadors, this project gave us the opportunity to be ambassadors for our school and our communities" said Levina Grant (year 10). The concept behind the grant is to allow the students to better understand what makes a small business sustainable.

The students were divided into teams that included artists, sales, production & packaging and administration. Through mentors the teams controlled all aspects of the business process including planning together with research, costing and pricing followed by producing, selecting and printing the artwork, finally selling and accounting for the product.

Art by student Teagan Malthouse was selected for the month of March, she said "I was so happy and proud. I told my family, they were also proud! I showed my mum the calendar and she said it was great seeing my painting on the calendar."



Levina Grant, who worked on the stall at the Alice Springs markets wrote afterwards "It was scary at first, but as the night went on, I got used to it. I think it was a good experience for me because my confidence increased. Some of the customers asked us questions about the artwork. They liked it. They were happy with the price."

When Yirara student and member of the sales team, Phyllis Bara, saw the final product she said "When I see Yirara students' work, it inspires me with my own art. I feel really proud for my friends that did the art."

At the end of the program, project manager and mentor, Anita Synnott reflected "The skills sets that the students have learned are easily transferred to other areas of their life. The students have shared that their confidence has increased and they are more comfortable interacting with the general public. It has been a delight to see how much pride they have in their work."

The sales continue at the Alice Springs markets, and at Yirara reception and conferences at Yirara.

**2012 Calendars are available for \$15. Please email sales@yirara.nt.edu.au**

## get involved!

**Please don't forget our 135th Anniversary.** If you, your Church or your School are interested in ways to commemorate 135 years since Lutheran missionaries arrived in central Australia please contact Irwin Traeger for information and activity ideas.

Irwin Traeger  
irwintraeger@hotmail.com  
or phone 08 8336 1141

## thank you

**To those of you who have shown an interest in the work of FRM we are very grateful.**

Many of you tell us of your continuing commitment to pray. You have also sent us regular monthly donations and letters of encouragement.

You are partners with us as we go about our work in the remote outback in support of Aboriginal ministry.

NEWS FROM **FINKE RIVER MISSION** OF THE LUTHERAN CHURCH OF AUSTRALIA



**SUMMER 2011/12**

## You really can make a difference

- I will pray for FRM staff and Aboriginal church leaders.
- I enclose a special tax deductible gift of \$ \_\_\_\_\_
- Please send me \_\_\_\_\_ copies of Ruth Cook's painting of "The Last Supper" @ \$65 incl GST

- I enclose a cheque for total of \$ \_\_\_\_\_
- Please charge my credit card \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Visa  Mastercard

Credit card No \_\_\_\_\_

Expiry date \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Signed \_\_\_\_\_

### Every donation of \$2.00 or above is tax deductible.

- FRM's on-going work
- Please send me some free prayer cards
- I would like details of giving my LLL interest to FRM
- Please send information about including FRM in my Will
- I have included FRM in my Will. Please list me as a 'Heritage Friend'
- FRM will be grateful for gifts to help fund this newsletter

*NOTE: If your preferred project is fully funded when your gift arrives, we will allocate your gift to other needs.*

### Online donations: can be made at [www.lca.org.au](http://www.lca.org.au)

- Select → 'LCA Online Donations'
- 'Missions'
- 'Finke River Mission'

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