



# CHRIST IN THE CENTRE



## What's Inside?

### PAGE 2:

- Drive-by worship in Alice
- Yirara ahead of the curve

### PAGE 3:

- For just such a time as this

### PAGE 4:

- The legacy of 'Brother' Boko

### PAGE 5:

- German guest experiences ministry in the outback

### PAGE 6:

- Parents bring new joy & hope

### PAGE 7:

- In memoriam Philip Wilyuka
- Coronavirus can't stop the singing

### PAGE 8:

- Sacrament windows add beauty & light at Engawala

## The best things never change

by Barbara Cybulka

**Term 2 at Living Waters Lutheran School in Alice Springs has been quite different. Students and staff returning to school have had to adapt to social distancing.**

'We can't drink from the bubblers; we fill our water bottles from the tap in the classroom, and we are washing our hands a lot', one student says. 'We still play games, but we've changed them so that we don't do any physical touching. Before, we used to play handball, and now we play a chasey game we made up

where we don't tag each other.'

For the first week, we moved the desks apart. We spent some time in the hall, and then some time in the classroom. In the first two weeks of term, all of the learning was online using an app called Seesaw. We had to do online learning so that students could stay home if they wanted to.

Students have missed being able to go to whole-of-school assemblies on Wednesday and worship on Friday, but devotions and Christian Studies are continuing in the classrooms.

We still believe in Jesus. We do devotions, and every day we get together to worship in class groups.

Coronavirus hasn't changed us as people. We are still the same, but the virus has changed what we can do. It's a bit sad that we can't visit the families we want to see, and this year we will not have a big NAIDOC week or family birthday parties. We miss being able to go to places!

*Barbara Cybulka is the Coordinator for Curriculum, Teaching and Learning at Living Waters Lutheran School.*

# Drive-by worship in Alice

by Suanne Tikoft

'No gathering for Easter worship'.  
Is that a disaster?

Not when we work together to  
find creative solutions.

Even though we couldn't physically gather for Easter worship, the leadership team at Alice Springs Lutheran Church was determined to share the good news of Jesus' death and resurrection with as many people as possible. The long church fence was the perfect billboard.

Yirara College had some Easter posters in Arrarnta, carefully saved from vernacular literacy classes in past years. Principal Chris England was only too happy to give us access. Elizabeth, the librarian, stayed back at school to scan the posters for the church. They were magnified, printed, laminated, assembled and cable-tied to the fence.

And so the Alice Springs Lutheran Church drive-by Easter storyboard was there for all to see.

How many people were touched by it?  
We have no idea. But if even one person was helped to focus on our Saviour, it was worth the effort. Thanks, everyone!

*Picture captions (translated from Arrarnta):*

1. Jesus ate the Passover with his disciples. He instituted the Lord's Supper.
2. Jesus prayed to his Father in Gethsemane.
3. His enemies arrested Jesus.
4. They accused Jesus in front of the Sanhedrin.
5. They accused Jesus in front of Pilate.
6. The soldiers nailed Jesus to a cross.
7. Jesus died.



## Yirara ahead of the curve

by Tim Stollznow and Yirara staff

**Yirara College in Alice Springs is ahead of the curve in ensuring education is delivered to its students who can't attend school due to COVID-19 restrictions.**

Yirara is a boarding school for remote area indigenous students. When faced with the dilemma of how to deliver remote learning, staff knew that not all students have access to reliable internet or suitable devices. They had to consider alternatives. Yirara's plan in the last weeks of Term 1 was to produce a daily television show that would be aired on ICTV (Indigenous Community Television) as well as via YouTube and Facebook.

Yirara2u was created.

Yirara2u incorporates a workbook and the daily episode aired on ICTV for students to follow along and complete their school work remotely.

By the end of Term 1, staff had created and compiled 10 weeks of workbooks and had planned all of the episodes for the Term 2. Packs of workbooks were mailed to students during the term break so they had them ready for the start of Term 2.

Episodes cover more than just numeracy and literacy. Yirara Pathways is producing videos about VET courses and work options. Boarding staff are continuing with life skills lessons. Student support is focusing on health and wellbeing; and the Girls Academy and Clontarf Foundation are focusing on sport and general wellbeing.

The first daily episode went to air on 22 April on ICTV.

Yirara College is grateful for the support given to its students from community schools and the Clontarf Foundation. The college has the opportunity to reciprocate by offering students who would normally attend boarding school interstate the use of classrooms and ICT facilities and teacher support.

*For more about Yirara2u, see: Yirara College's YouTube channel and ABC Radio's video story (type into your search engine, ABC Radio Yirara).*





*Left: After a four-year break, Rita Okai is back supporting ministry at Mutitjulu.*

*Above: Rita is hopeful that one or more of these men will become leaders in the congregation and maybe seek to become pastors.*

# For just such a time as this

by Malcolm Willcocks

**God's gracious Christmas gift to Mutitjulu — Jesus Christ to be sure! But Christmas 2019 saw the Spirit of Christ stir the heart of Rita Okai to request to be reinstated as a church worker.**

Long-term FRM supporters may remember Rita was installed as a church worker back in 2011 after many years of active service in the Mutitjulu congregation, leading singing, Sunday school, teaching confirmation and baptism classes, and helping the pastors lead worship.

In 2016 Rita decided to take a break from church leadership to study Christian Ministry and Theology at Nungalinga College in Darwin and to raise her baby daughter.

In 2018 Pastor Hezekiel Tjingooona died, leaving Church Worker Kunpry Pei Pei to continue to support the congregation. However, during 2019, age and infirmity began to increasingly hamper Kunpry's ability to provide regular pastoral care and Sunday services.

Kunpry was desperately worried for the future of the congregation and had asked me to visit Rita the next time I came to Mutitjulu, to talk with her about resuming church worker duties. A week later I was on my way. About 40 kilometres away from the community I received a phone call from none other than Rita. She asked me, 'Would it be okay for me to be a church worker again?'

Although her formal (re)installation as a church worker has been delayed due to COVID-19, Rita has been very busy since February caring for and encouraging her people. She even brought her sister to Alice Springs for the rite of private confession — a 900-kilometre round trip!

COVID-19 restrictions have meant FRM pastoral support workers have been barred from visiting their communities, and so normal Sunday services and the gathering of large groups are temporarily suspended. This has not fazed Rita. Each week day she meets with different small groups (within the Northern Territory Government

guidelines), teaching them to read Pitjantjatjara from the hymnbook and Bible. In the process she has been teaching the Bible stories and how to sing the hymns. These groups have been developing into informal confirmation classes. One such group consists of five young men who have not usually attended worship services in the past. Rita is hopeful that one or more of these men will become leaders in the congregation and maybe seek to become pastors.

Five months ago the future of the Lutheran congregation in Mutitjulu appeared to be terminal, with ageing members, diminishing attendance and struggling leadership. Now, despite the troubles of COVID-19, Jesus is faithfully building his church. Perhaps, like Queen Esther, Rita was raised up 'for just such a time as this'.

Praise be to God our Father, and keep praying for our brothers and sisters in Mutitjulu.

*Malcolm Willcocks is the Pitjantjatjara Support Worker in the Western Arrarnta Language Area.*



# The legacy of ‘Brother’ Boko

by Malcolm Willcocks

**It began at about 8.00am on a Sunday – a phone call from the church worker at Titjikala (Maryvale) asking if I would come so the people could have holy communion. After driving the 90-minute trip, I was most surprised to discover a whole tribe of white fellas waiting at the church.**

Nine siblings of the Smart family had travelled to Titjikala from all over Australia to be with their extended Aboriginal family, including Lorna Wilson, Patricia Boko, Margaret Campbell and Janie Wells, to lay a memorial stone on the grave of their foster brother, Lincoln ‘Brother’ Boko.

Jenny Smart, the eldest daughter says, ‘Brother was about eight years old when he came to live with us. He did not know exactly when he was born, but he knew he was born behind a sandhill. It was mind-boggling for us. He was shy at first, but then so much fun and so cheeky once he felt part of our family’.

A school teacher at Titjikala in the 1960s had noted how bright young Brother was and wanted to provide him with the best educational opportunities. So, he contacted his friends, the Smart family in Adelaide, to arrange with them to take Brother in and support his schooling. They did this wholeheartedly. Younger sister Jacinta recalls what an amazing inspiration Brother was for all of the family.

After completing his education, Brother moved back to the Northern Territory, where he worked as an assistant teacher at Titjikala for many years. Later he moved to Alice Springs, where he worked at Yirara College as a boarding houseparent. He also worked with St Phillips College. He had IT skills and taught the Pitjantjatjara language. During this time he actively engaged in the ministry of Alice Springs Lutheran Church.

He was a respected elder in his community and in Alice Springs. He was always looking out for his people and wanting them to thrive. One

example of this was his leadership in partnering with the Desert Knowledge Cooperative Research Centre to create new research training, employment and enterprise opportunities for the Titjikala community.

Sadly, Brother passed away in October 2014, but the Smart family’s strong connection with the Boko clan and Titjikala community lives on. In partnership with Titjikala, renowned musician Gabriella Smart has been providing regular music training over a number of years. She has also helped to establish the Titjikala Project, which aims to develop a sustainable and long-term culture of empowerment and dignity through arts for health.

Jacinta Smart, Arts Learning Area Leader and Aboriginal Focus Person at Cornerstone College (Mt Barker SA), has coordinated many service trips to the Finke River Mission area and has been exploring the feasibility of a partnership with Titjikala.

Ever since Brother’s death, the

Far left: Lincoln ('Brother') Boko's extended family at his grave

Left: Young 'Brother' with the Smart family

Right: Normally shy northeast Aboriginal people were keen to meet German mission secretary Rev Arnim Doerfer

Bottom: FRM Support Worker Michael Jacobsen (left) with Pastor Doerfer



# German guest experiences ministry in the outback

by Michael Jacobsen

Smart family had been planning to provide an appropriate headstone to mark his grave.

Jacinta says, 'Brother was an important part of our lives, and this memorial stone is a recognition of and testament to the impact he had on our lives. He was loved and brought joy to our lives. He opened our minds to Aboriginal culture in a way that not many people get the privilege of experiencing. His legacy to us is his extended family opening their arms to us and teaching us. I wish he had lived to see the strong bonds between his family and ours. But it feels now that the circle is complete.'

As his sister, Lorna Wilson noted, 'He brought us all together'.

Let us remember with thanks God's gift to us through Brother's life. May we also walk together in joy, love and unity – one family under Father God.

*Malcolm Willcocks is the Pitjantjatjara Support Worker in the Western Arrarnta Language Area.*

**Early this year my wife Hanne and I were delighted to host a guest from Germany for two weeks.**

Rev Arnim Doerfer is the new regional secretary for Papua New Guinea and Pacific in Mission EineWelt, the Centre for Partnership, Development and Mission of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Bavaria.

During his stay we were able to give Pastor Arnim a detailed insight into the varied work and eventful history of Finkel River Mission. We visited churches in the outback and celebrated services. Church leaders and Aboriginal families, who are usually very hesitant towards foreigners, were very interested

in our guest from Germany and were not afraid to meet him.

A day trip took us to Hermannsburg, where Lutheran missionary and educational work among Aboriginal people in Central Australia began in 1877. A meeting with Principal Chris England of Yirara College was stimulating and informative, and the possible continuation of the volunteer program was also discussed.

Unfortunately, we had to cancel a two-day trip to Ampilatwatja and its surrounding homelands due to heavy rain in the northeast and resulting road closures. So, there was no meeting with Aboriginal pastor Frank Turner, who is currently the only pastor in the area. But that might happen when Pastor Arnim comes back next year.

*Michael Jacobsen is the FRM support pastor for the Alyawarr Language Area.*





# Paraments bring new joy & hope

by Malcolm Willcocks

Last year the 'Hearts and Hands' Women's Fellowship of St Paul Lutheran Church, Blair Athol (SA) kindly donated a set of paraments to Titjikala Lutheran Church. Although originally made for the opening of the St Paul church in 1967, the paraments were still in good condition.

However, the St Paul altar is significantly longer than the altar at Titjikala. What to do? We decided to turn the paraments into banners. A hanging rail was installed on the wall behind the altar, just in time for Advent. The Titjikala congregation

were really happy to have a special 'new' banner to help to make their church building look extra festive. But more than this, they were proud to be connected with the life and story of St Paul Lutheran Church, Blair Athol.

During the service we also celebrated the baptism of four young ones and communed 81 parishioners. That Sunday was the last time Pastor Philip Wilyuka led worship at Titjikala. Our Father welcomed him home on 22 January this year.

His funeral was held on 20 February 2020, with well over 400 people

attending. Due to the large numbers, the funeral service was held at the basketball court. One of the locals had decided to bring the 'parament' banner from the church and hang it at the front of the court. So there, suspended above Pastor Wilyuka's coffin, were the words 'Hope in the Lord' for all to see.

Titjikala is 119 kilometres south of Alice Springs, with a population of around 270. Please remember the Titjikala 'mob' in your prayers.

*Malcolm Willcocks is the Pitjantjatjara Support Worker in the Western Arrarnta Language Area.*

# Coronavirus can't stop the singing

Submitted by Paul Traeger, with content from Larry Kenny and Martin Bennett

**Singalongs at the remote Amunturrngu community and neighbouring outstations have become cultural celebrations again. The nightly events at Mt Liebig are being enriched by senior students at the local Watiyawanu school, who are supplying music and Pintupi/Luritja lyrics for the festivities.**

'The borders imposed by the coronavirus have deflected young men and women into activities that are self-enhancing and socially inspirational', Principal Larry Kenny said. People were observing the social distancing guidelines and amalgamating them

into normal cultural meeting practices. Singers and musicians stay about two metres apart, microphones are cleaned between performances, and two-and-a-half metres separate family camps of just five to eight people.

Dyson Wheeler, 17, said: 'I've come back to the college because of the singalongs. At the college I can get help using computers and printing lyrics. I like to write my own songs in English, and also in Luritja.'

Rosemary Daniels, 12, said: 'Because of the coronavirus sickness, we come together and sing and pray for people. Singing makes people happy, and we love it.'



The singalongs are organised by the Finke River Mission and community pastor Roderick Kantamara. 'Family groups sit apart because we follow the government's rules about social distancing', he said. 'All the Amunturrngu people come to our singalongs at the outstations to sing, pray for the world, and listen to stories from the Bible.'

*Paul Traeger is the FRM support worker for the Pintupi/Luritja Language Area. Larry Kenny is the principal of Mount Liebig School. Martin Bennett works for the media section of the Education Department of the Northern Territory.*



*Below: Pastor Philip was ordained by LCA President Mike Semmler on 15 September 2008.*

*Bottom: Pastor Philip was reliant on a wheelchair and had to travel to Alice Springs (238km round trip) to have renal dialysis three times a week. However, he cheerfully provided ongoing pastoral care and spiritual leadership for his community. This photo was taken during his last sermon during Advent last year.*



# In memoriam Philip Wilyuka

by Rob Borgas

**Pastor Philip Wilyuka was born on 29 March 1957 at Maryvale Station NT to Paulus Wilyuka and Aldis Wari. After his mother died in 1964, he was cared for by his mother's sisters Mavis and Dora.**

Because of his father's influence as an evangelist and ordained pastor, Philip also became interested in church work from a young age. He assisted his father in translating the first Pitjantjatjara version of Luther's Small Catechism (printed in 1982) and also the Pitjantjatjara hymnbook (Nyiri Inmatjara), first printed in 1995.

Philip was a master communicator, fluent in at least five languages, including Yankunytjatjara, Pitjantjatjara, Eastern and Western Arrernte and English.

His natural ability with language and his strong involvement in traditional cultural activities meant that he was often the obvious person chosen to organise and manage major activities in his community and beyond, including involvement with a football team, gospel singalongs, and the Titjikala town council.

The year 2007 was a time of massive change in Central Australia because of the replacement of local government community councils with the current much larger and more centralised regional shires. Because of these political changes and also the death of the resident evangelist at Titjikala at the time (Johnny Briscoe), Philip felt called by God, his family, and his church to take on more responsibility in his local church.

After completing the requirements for ordination, Phillip was examined by Dr Peter Lockwood of Australian Lutheran College (ALC) at the Hart's Range FRM Bush Course in May 2008. He was ordained on 15 September 2008 at Titjikala by the president of the LCA, Pastor Mike Semmler. Philip served his local church and assisted in many other congregations in Central Australia for the next 11 years until his death in 2020.

Philip always said that the most challenging thing about being a pastor and a community leader was the immense pressure that is placed on people in these important roles. It's no wonder then that his favourite

Bible verse was Matthew 11:28, 'Come unto me, all you that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest'.

Philip is predeceased by his wife Marcia Alice and his brother Haines. He will be lovingly remembered by his sons Darren and Roger, and his sisters Joan, Annette, and Lisa, and his brother Andrew.

*Pastor Rob Borgas is a former FRM Support Worker, now serving the Angaston Parish in South Australia.*



# FOR YOUR PRAYERS

Gracious and loving God,

Give wisdom and strength to all those in our communities and around the world, who are responding to the coronavirus: health professionals, government officials, aged-care providers and school leaders.

May those who mourn the loss of loved ones to the virus be comforted.

May those in our communities who are feeling anxious find peace and reassurance.

May our congregations be places of compassion, attentive to those who are impacted by the virus.

May we be communities of empathy, love and care, in all we face.

Through Christ, our Lord. Amen.

## Sacrament windows add beauty & light at Engawala

by Michael Jacobsen

Stained-glass windows can be found in many places around the world, often in medieval churches.

The purpose of the coloured windows is not to allow people to see outside but to beautify buildings, control light, and oftentimes to tell a story through narrative or symbolism.

In June 2019, the new Aboriginal Lutheran church at Engawala, 250 kilometres east of Alice Springs, was opened. But it is not yet finished. The congregation wanted to make visible what is important to them in worship. They asked a small group of artistically talented community workers, led by development worker Jeff Iversen, to design two colourful windows for their church. They were to represent the

two sacraments of Lutheran faith: baptism and the Lord's supper. Finally, after months of painstaking work, two stained-glass windows were placed in the wall above the altar and between the artistic cross of joy.

It is something special when the congregation is gathered for worship and the sun is shining from the east and its rays illuminate the two sacramental windows. These windows become even more effective when both sacraments are actually celebrated in the service. Even someone who cannot read and write understands what is shown in the windows: holy baptism and the sacrament of the altar.

*Michael Jacobsen is the FRM support pastor for the Alyawarr Language Area.*

**WE NEED YOUR HELP**

NEWS FROM FINKE RIVER MISSION OF THE LUTHERAN CHURCH OF AUSTRALIA

WINTER 2020

### Our Indigenous leaders in Central Australia desire the skills, resources, support and opportunities to serve their growing congregations.

They are asking for more Christian teaching and training, resources in their own language, equipment to run singalongs, and personal support than we have the capacity to give. We need your help!

**Tax-deductible donations of \$2 or above can be made as follows:**

Online: [finkerivermission.lca.org.au](http://finkerivermission.lca.org.au)

Mail Cheque    Credit Card details:     Visa     Mastercard

Card number \_\_\_\_\_ Expiry \_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_ CCV \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Name on card \_\_\_\_\_

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Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Mobile \_\_\_\_\_

Signed \_\_\_\_\_ Amount \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Send your donations to: FRM, PO Box 2129 Alice Springs NT 0871. For regular donations please phone FRM on 08 8952 4666 (Alice Springs) or send an email to [frmoffice@bigpond.com](mailto:frmoffice@bigpond.com)

All information is kept strictly confidential in accordance with the LCA Privacy Policy and is used only to inform you of the work of Finke River Mission.

**PLEASE NOTE:**  
Your donation cannot be processed without these numbers



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