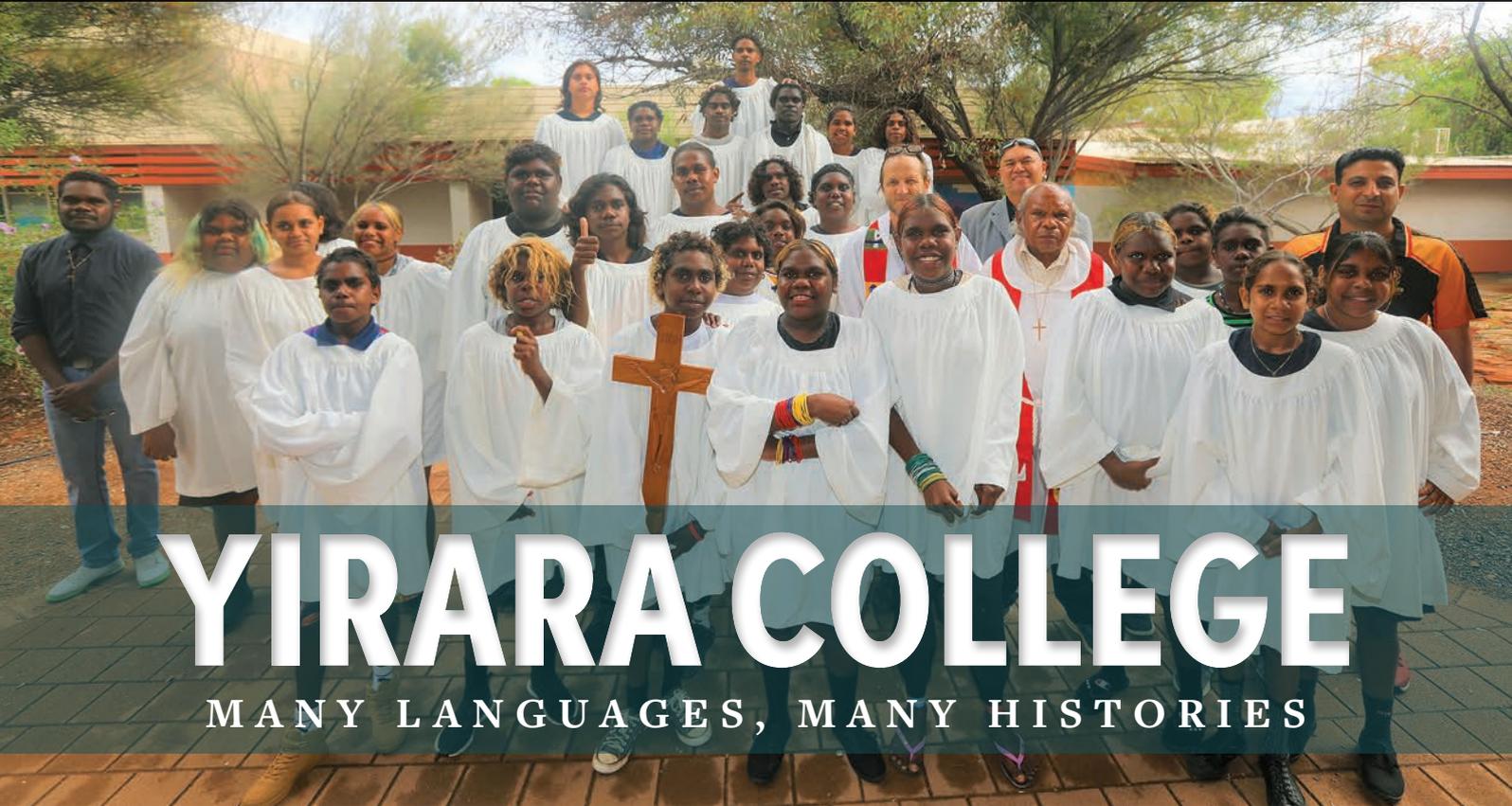




CHRIST IN THE CENTRE



YIRARA COLLEGE MANY LANGUAGES, MANY HISTORIES

by Pastor Basil Schild

Many of the students of Yirara College come from communities served by Finke River Mission (predominantly Central Desert). But most students come from remote communities beyond Central Australia that are not connected with the Lutheran Church. This includes communities around Tenant Creek, Katherine, all over the Top End, Gulf Country, the Kimberleys and APY Lands, as well as some around Alice Springs.

The Christian message arrived at these remote communities with missionaries from the Anglican, Baptist, Uniting, Catholic, as well as Lutheran churches, along with the Aboriginal Inland Mission and,

recently, the Seventh Day Adventists. Some of the communities have a Christian history dating back over 140 years, much like our own Lutheran history at Hermannsburg.

This makes Yirara College a truly multi-denominational space and an ecumenical worshipping community. The majority of Yirara students identify a connection to the faith communities of their families and have an interest in Christian spirituality. As such, the Yirara College community of teenagers is somewhat unique in the national Australian religious context, as most students in colleges located across our capital cities would not acknowledge such a connection.

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The faith communities to which Yirara students' families are connected are respected and acknowledged by Yirara College. As Yirara chaplain, I have travelled across the Northern Territory to meet Indigenous pastors and other church

leaders from Anglican, AIM and Lutheran community congregations. I have also met with non-Indigenous leaders from the Baptist, Uniting, Catholic, Pentecostal and Lutheran churches, who give pastoral support to many remote Indigenous families.

I am pleased to say that generally they are all very supportive of what we do here at Yirara College.

When we worship together at Yirara, we look for our common ground – the mercy and love of Jesus that unites us, and draws us together.

YIRARA COLLEGE BAPTISM AND COMMUNION DAY

Yirara College Baptism and Communion Day (cover photo) was celebrated this year on Sunday 7 November.

Many families and students had waited a long time for this day, and families of the students had travelled a long way to be there.

Students celebrating their baptism and communion day came from many different communities, some from the desert, some from the top end, from Imanpa, Elliot, Papunya,

Indulkana, Dhalinbuy, Robinson River, Tenant Creek, Borroloola, Doomadgee, Mungkarta, Titjikala, Binjari, Katherine, Yuelamau, Minyerri, Ntaria, Rainbow Valley, Areyonga and Alice Springs.

The Yirara staff band played beautifully, with many students joining the band on tambourine. Some of the songs were sung in Luritja and Aranda. Howei Gurruwiwi from Dhalinbuy in Arnhem Land played the didgeridoo with me (Inggkarta Basil) playing guitar.

Tobias Hume from Katherine read the readings for the day. Steve Silver from Ngukurr community presented the baptism candles, and Lizzie Jako from Alice Springs and Miss Chris helped with communion.

After the celebrations in the chapel, the families of students joined with them for a BBQ dinner in the dining room and outside on the lawns.

Pastor Basil Schild is Chaplain at Yirara College.

THANK GOD FOR FREDDY

by Michael Jacobsen

Indigenous pastor Frank Turner, ordained in 2000, from Ampilatwatja is currently the only person pastorally serving in the Alyawarr Language Area, about 3-4 hours drive from Alice Springs.

His three former colleagues have passed away. Since no young successors from the community can be found, the focus is now on training committed lay people.

One such candidate is Freddy Dixon from Artekerr (Three Bore), half an hour drive from the main community Arlparra. Freddy is already an Inggkarta, a spiritual leader, in his small community in the middle of Tomahawk Swamp. He is a quiet and inconspicuous person, highly respected by everyone. He has restored the almost ruined bush church. Regularly he organises singalongs for the residents and the neighbouring communities. Together with Pastor Frank Turner, he organised an Easter convention this year, which was attended by

over 100 people from this area and some from further away. Because of his reputation and reliability, he was also appointed to the local council.

Freddy comes to the training sessions Pastor Frank and I offer him. When teaching, we adhere to the curriculum for teaching Aboriginal pastors and evangelists published by FRM. Since Freddy is not fluent in English and I am still learning Alyawarr, Pastor Frank assists as interpreter and helps with the explanations. We are currently teaching Freddy Old Testament Bible Knowledge.

Most of the time we meet at the bush church of Ampilatwatja. We have already covered the stories of creation and the flood, as well as the stories of the patriarchs Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Now we are going to read the stories of Moses.

Pastor Frank and I want to encourage Freddy to do Bible reading by himself and we try to teach him to



Photo: FRM Support Worker Michael Jacobsen (left) and Pastor Frank Turner (right) are teaching layperson Freddy Dixon to be a pastoral leader in his community.

read the Alyawarr Bible. It is a long process, but we have made a start.

I am grateful that we have identified someone also in Engawala, at Plenty Highway, who is eager to learn more about the Bible. Please pray with us that Lindsay Jambulga will stay tuned.

Pastor Michael Jacobsen is the FRM Support Worker for the Alyawarr Language Area.

AREYONGA

ONE OF THE MOST VACCINATED COMMUNITIES

by Steven Schubert

The low rate of COVID-19 vaccinations in Indigenous Australians continues to cause concern for politicians desperate to reopen borders, but one community near Alice Springs has turned that on its head with 94 per cent of the eligible population having received at least one dose.

About 200 people live in Areyonga, also known as Utju, a small Indigenous community nestled in a sandstone valley in the MacDonnell Ranges, 170 kilometres west of Alice Springs.

While only 36 per cent of Indigenous people in the Northern Territory outside Darwin have been double vaccinated, and 47 per cent of First Nations people have been double vaccinated nationally, Utju is well on its way to full coverage.

One major reason for the community's success was the push by Good Shepherd Lutheran Church member Sarah Gallagher, a long-term health worker in the community, who has almost single-handedly persuaded residents to get the jab.

'We've seen it everywhere. Our community heard about it, seen the news, it's everywhere', she said.

'Our community people have been saying, "we've got to think about ourselves here. This is a good community, we need to go

to the clinic and get vaccinated".'

Residents in the remote community of Utju said they were proud of their community's vaccination efforts.

Health workers who service the community have also credited strong male leadership in the community in the uptake success. Jonathan Doolan, who has lived in Utju for 20 years, said the community had felt fear and uncertainty about COVID.

The combined efforts of Ms Gallagher's commitment to her community and Mr Doolan's leadership, has led to success, but the formula has proven difficult to replicate in other communities struggling to promote vaccination.

'People trust me. I live here in my community and people trust me', Ms Gallagher said.

While Utju has exceeded the national vaccination rate for the general population, many other Indigenous communities are lagging well behind. Now the leaders of Utju are working to encourage their friends and families living in other communities to get vaccinated.

'Some are listening to us. Some don't know what to do but they'll listen to us that this is safe for us and our community.'

Steven Schubert is a journalist with ABC Alice Springs, who kindly gave Finke River Mission permission to republish this story.

Below: Sarah Gallagher and Jonathan Dooley have been crucial in encouraging residents of Areyonga to get vaccinated. (Photo courtesy ABC Alice Springs)



THE BUSH COURSE WE THOUGHT WOULD NEVER HAPPEN

by Malcolm Willcocks

Way back in 2019 the Aboriginal pastors agreed to hold the 2020 winter Bush Course at Tara, which marks the northernmost edge of the FRM service area. The teaching topic was to be 'Prophecy in the Old Testament, New Testament and the church today'. Now we know that many prophecies in the Bible took a long time to be fulfilled, and this proved true for the Tara Bush Course.

The global pandemic obliterated any chance of gathering together last year. However, this year, with the Northern Territory being free of COVID-19 in the community for over 12 months, we felt quite safe in planning to come together at Tara this winter. But a devilishly timed hotspot causing a short lockdown in Alice Springs put pay to 'Tara Take 2'.

With the Convention of General Synod meeting in October this year, we resigned ourselves that the Tara Bush Course would have to wait until winter 2022. However, with

the Convention going online, we were able, at short notice, to quickly regroup and reorganise to make the Tara Bush Course a reality.

Tara is a small community surrounded by the Neutral Junction cattle station, which occupies Kaytetye Country. It sits almost at the halfway point of the Stuart Highway's trek between Alice Springs and Tennant Creek. The versatile church building at Tara, erected in 2015, was paid for by the community from their lease (royalty) money.

Rev Dr Adam Hensley from Australian Lutheran College (ALC) led the teaching, which was enthusiastically received by the participants. The longstanding partnership between the ALC and Finke River Mission should not be taken for granted. We honour the partnership and the intrepid lecturers who brave the privations of rough bush camping and yet bring such riches to share with us.

Two things are essential for a bush course: (1) an ALC lecturer willing

to come, and (2) two or three hardworking 'cookies'. We were able to draw upon the talents of experienced cookie Lyndon Hampel, who was ably assisted by Alex Voigt.

Sadly, due to the timing and short notice of the Tara Bush Course, no representatives from the Pitjantjatjara Language Area were able to attend. However, Dr Hensley produced excellent teaching resources, and this material has been presented at a number of communities, where it has been a great blessing and excitedly embraced.

Malcolm Willcocks is the Pitjantjatjara Support Worker.





WHERE I GREW UP

by Rodney Malbunka

In September we had a bush course where I was born, at Tara, near Neutral Junction cattle station, 300 kilometres north of Alice Springs. I was born there in 1965.

One afternoon before dinner, Ingkaarta Neville drove me, Malcolm Willcocks and Adam Hensley to the cattle station, about two kilometres from the Aboriginal community. As we drove into the station, I said, 'That's my school'. We stopped in front of the Neutral Junction school. We talked to the lady principal. She was excited to meet someone who had been to the school a long time ago. They want to bulldoze the school down over the Christmas holidays and put up a new one. So we took photos of everyone in front of the old school.

I felt sad because it would be gone.

I remember walking from our home over to the school each morning. We walked home for lunch and came straight back to school. I enjoyed maths and reading, and I tried to talk good English.

I remember my dad teaching Bible stories in the school to give the

teacher a break from teaching. He also preached in Arrarnta every Sunday, inside the galvanized shed if it was hot and outside if it was cold.

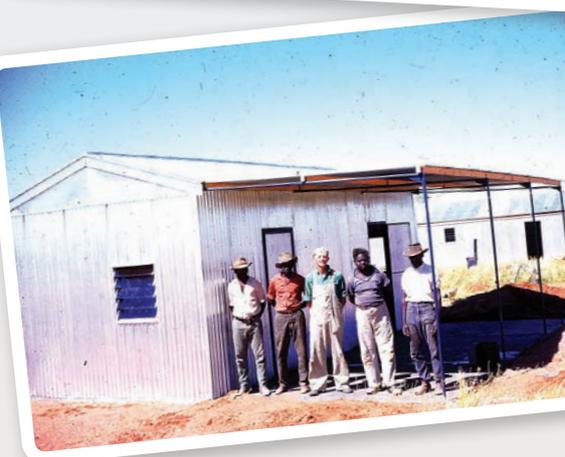
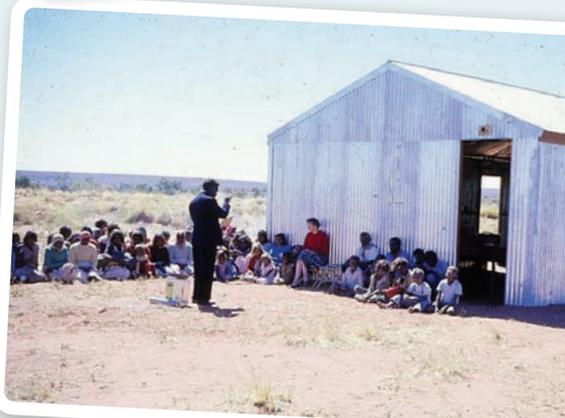
As young fellas we went swimming in the nearby waterholes. We roamed all over the country hunting for kangaroo. On weekends the families went camping. A bean tree is still standing just west of where our house used to be.

Pastor F W Albrecht had sent my dad up there from Hermannsburg. He was the evangelist bringing the gospel to the Kaytetye-speaking (Kay-ditch) people. They worked as stockmen. I grew up learning Kaytetye from the kids I played with. I only learnt Arrarnta when we returned to Hermannsburg.

In 1962 Ingkaarta Neville's father, Bruno Doecke, came up and built a house for my family.

It was good to show people where I grew up and went to school.

Rodney Malbunka is a pastor at Bethlehem Lutheran Church, Hermannsburg.





HUGE LEARNING EXPERIENCE ON THE HUGH

by Sally Staggs

In March this year I joined the Lutheran Mission Development (LMD) Board.

This board was established to support and promote the aims, beliefs and articles of faith of the Lutheran Church of Australia, to provide funds for carrying out the mission program and to organise, supervise and extend the work of preaching the gospel of Christ to the Aboriginal people of Australia and to promote their general welfare.

In late May I travelled with fellow board members for a meeting held at a campsite at Hugh River in the Northern Territory. Staff and board members of Finke River Mission and Yirara College were also part of this meeting. It was the most

beautiful backdrop for our meeting.

For me, as a new board member, this weekend was an amazing opportunity on so many levels. It reinforced the importance and value of our work and provided time to get to know members of LMD and meet members of Finke River Mission and Yirara boards. During the weekend there were opportunities to spend time with the dedicated staff of Finke River Mission, visit the office in Alice Springs, Yirara College, Hermannsburg and the newly restored Historical Precinct, and the Northern Territory outback.

I witnessed firsthand the passion and work performed by the Lutheran pastors and other support

workers in these communities. They were able to share experiences, joys, successes and challenges as they work alongside and support the Indigenous communities in the Northern Territory.

There were many highlights including: lunch with all board members and staff at Hermannsburg; camping at the scenic Hugh River and exploring outback areas; spending time with members of Hermannsburg community and Historical Precinct; and attending a church service held in language in Hermannsburg, with hymns sung by members of the Indigenous choir.

The three days were invaluable, providing a reality and insight into the daily life of these communities and the valuable work of the Lutheran Church and dedicated staff in the Northern Territory. It highlighted the many achievements and the need for ongoing support.

Sally Staggs (pictured above: front row, centre) is a member of the Lutheran Mission Development Board.



Photo: David Strickland and Ronnie McNamara (pastor at Laramba) with the new Anmatyerr Mini-Bible.



FRM WELCOMES NEW SUPPORT WORKER

by Malcolm Willcocks

It is with great joy that we welcome longtime SIL linguist David Strickland, who has joined the Finke River Mission team as a support worker in the Anmatyerr Language Area. This position has been vacant for three years and in that time two Anmatyerr pastors have been called home and a third has retired.

David is no stranger to FRM or the Anmatyerr people. In fact, together with his wife Ming Fang, he has been working closely with the people for 18 years, learning the language and translating parts of the New Testament into Anmatyerr. In the 2021 winter edition of *Christ in the Centre*, we celebrated the publication of the Anmatyerr Mini-Bible, which included two Gospels, the letters of Peter and James, and Paul's pastoral letters.

This work began as a shared partnership between FRM and SIL / Wycliffe. FRM purchased a house in Ti Tree (in the heart of the Anmatyerr area), where the Stricklands lived for many years. During this time David's language skills have been an invaluable resource in FRM's regular bush courses.

David and Ming Fang continue to work as SIL and Wycliffe Bible translators but have agreed to work part-time (0.3 FTE) for Finke River Mission in encouraging and teaching the Anmatyerr Lutherans, especially trainee pastors and community leaders. Now that they finally have a Bible in their language, the people are excited and keen to learn how to read and understand it. As the Ethiopian believer confessed, 'How can I [understand] unless someone explains it to me?' (Acts 8:31). As we know, 'faith comes by hearing and what

is heard comes from the word of Christ' (Romans 10:17). Thanks be to God that, through the gifts he has given to and through David and Ming Fang, Christ's words will be heard and understood in the heart language of the Anmatyerr people.

However, 0.3 FTE only equates to about 12 hours per week. David has been God's answer to us for the short term, but the need for a full-time pastoral support worker is still with us. With the resource of David's experience, knowledge and language skills, there would be no better time to start work in this area than in the next year or so.

Is God calling you, or someone you know, to serve in this area?

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

GREAT-GREAT-GRANDMA COMES TO CONFIRMATION

by Neville Doecke

Four young ladies confirmed their baptismal promises and confessed their faith in the Triune God at a confirmation celebration at Bethlehem Lutheran Church in Hermannsburg on 8 August 2021.

Confirmations are an annual event here, but this one was special and very important for three of the young ladies. Great-Great Grandma was there!

Connie Impu was born in 1923 and is a bit frail, so she doesn't come to church services anymore. The pastors have devotions with her, and she celebrates holy communion with her family at home.

But this Sunday was different. And so Connie made the effort

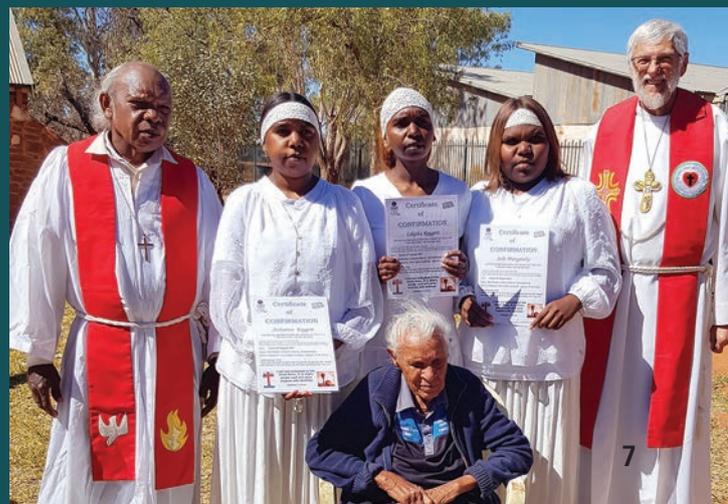
to come to the church for the confirmation of three of her great-great-granddaughters, Likisha, Jade and Arsharnie.

And what a joy it was to see how this was appreciated by Great-Great-Grandma, the young ladies and all in the gathered congregation. Lots of photos were taken outside, too – until Connie boldly exclaimed, 'That's enough. I'm going now!'

We give thanks and praise to our loving God for special family times like these.

Neville Doecke is the Ministry Support Worker for the Western Arrarnta Language Area.

Photo: Connie (seated) with (left to right) Pastor Rodney Malbunka, Arsharnie, Likisha, Jade and Pastor Neville Doecke





FRM DELEGATES PARTICIPATE IN GENERAL SYNOD

In a first for FRM communities, representatives from the new Language Area Agreement (LAA) groups participated in a Convention of General Synod as delegates.

Pictured at Yirara College, Alice Springs, participating in the online sessions of the 20th Convention of General Synod, held 1-2 October, are Pastor Stanley Roberts and Punata Stockman (Pintupi-Luritja LAA). Helping them to navigate the Synod processes and procedures was FRM support worker Pastor Paul Traeger. Afterwards Pastor Stanley said it is 'important to be involved in Synod' and Punata described the experience and 'enjoyable' and 'lovely'.

FOR YOUR PRAYERS

Thank God for:

- Karina Penhall, pastoral assistant at Alice Springs Lutheran Church, who has graduated with a Cert IV in Christian Ministry and Theology
- the appointment of new principal Lisa Goldsworthy at Living Waters Lutheran School
- David Strickland, who has accepted the part-time

- support worker role in the Anmatyerr Language Area
- the six men training in the hope to become pastors in their communities
- the FRM Board – current, past and newly elected – for their service, support and management of the mission.

Ask God that:

- our people not to be led into confusion or despair by false and misleading information about COVID-19 and vaccinations
- our leaders in the Northern Territory Government will be fair and equitable, and that they will not unreasonably burden or prevent Christian pastors and leaders of goodwill from ministering with Indigenous people
- he will raise up workers to fill vacancies in FRM, Alice Springs Lutheran Church, Yirara College and Living Waters Lutheran School
- he will lead FRM pastors and support workers in truth and to proclaim it clearly; that he gives them grace to gently care for straggling lambs and to kindly contend with strong-headed sheep

- all Indigenous people will be strengthened to be salt and light in their communities
- the people of the Alyawarr Language Area, where Pastor Frank Turner currently serves alone, will be sustained in their faith and that leaders of the communities will make the mission of the local church their business
- Indigenous businesses would flourish so that wealth can be created to pass on to the next generation, to help them gain dignity and self-worth
- for those who suffer shame, that God will cover them with his glory and they will realise how much God loves and treasures them.

WE NEED YOUR HELP

NEWS FROM FINKE RIVER MISSION OF THE LUTHERAN CHURCH OF AUSTRALIA

SUMMER 2021

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

Mail Cheque Credit Card details: Visa Mastercard

Card number _____ Expiry ____ / ____ CCV _____

Name _____ Name on card _____

Address _____

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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 admin@finkerivermission.org.au

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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