



CHRIST IN THE CENTRE

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

NEWS FROM FINKE RIVER MISSION OF THE LUTHERAN CHURCH OF AUSTRALIA

SUMMER 2019



Tears of joy at ordination

by Paul Traeger

On Sunday 13 October, nearly 200 people attended the ordination service for Jeffrey Wheeler at Mount Liebig. People came from several communities, including Hermannsburg. Among them was Pastor Marcus Wheeler, Jeffrey's uncle.

Pastor Graham Poulson formally presented Jeffrey for ordination. Bishop John Henderson led the ordination rite.

Pastor Jeffrey is one of the younger generation of Pintupi–Luritja pastors. Like Pastor John West, he is not yet 40 years of age. He was confirmed at Yirara College in the 1990s, and married Veronica Peterson a few years later. They have four children.

Having worked for the Mt Liebig/ Amunturrngu Council for many years, he trained for the ministry according to the FRM curriculum and attended teaching courses for about the last six years.

After the service there was a great outpouring of emotion. Some people spoke, with tears of joy and relief, of how they had been waiting for this day for a long time.

Paul Traeger is the Ministry Support Worker for the Pintupi–Luritja Language Area.

What's Inside?

PAGE 2: • Old reasons to celebrate at Haasts Bluff

PAGE 3: • United as one

PAGE 4: • Yirara College honoured with royal visit

PAGE 5: • What I liked about NAIDOC week!

PAGE 6: • Areyonga students graduate at Unity College

• Learning Alyawarr – just give it a go!

PAGE 7: • Is this your new watering hole?

PAGE 8: • New church dedicated at Engawala

• For your prayers • Donations



Old reasons to celebrate at Haasts Bluff

by Elise Mattiske-Rogers

September 2019 marked the 70th anniversary of the dedication of the church building at Haasts Bluff, 220 kilometres west of Alice Springs.

Around 75 locals and visitors attended the anniversary celebrations, which included an evening singalong on 21 September and a service of thanksgiving on 22 September.

Pastor Simon Dixon led the service in the Pintupi–Luritja language, assisted by Pastor Paul Traeger from Papunya. A children’s choir from the Haasts Bluff school sang during the service, accompanied by Pastor Simon on guitar.

Olga Radke, the unofficial keeper of Central Australia Lutheran records, and Ann Scherer, an Alice Springs historian, organised a sign for the church that was unveiled at the service. They also created four posters about the history of the building, which were displayed during the celebrations.

Olga said, ‘It was a glorious day. In contrast to the visitors who attended the dedication 70 years ago on the

back of trucks from Hermannsburg, jolting over winding outback tracks, our journey from Alice Springs in air-conditioned vehicles was a breeze!’

The church building was formally dedicated on 25 September 1949.

It was the first church built in the Pintupi–Luritja language area when it was constructed predominantly by the work of Aboriginal people in 1946. Money was raised for the construction by showing films of Central Australia made by Lou Borgelt to Lutheran congregations in South Australia and Victoria.

The church’s bell, which is still in use, was donated in 1947 by the Lobethal Lutheran congregation in the Adelaide Hills who had used it for 80 years.

Many of the other church furnishings were donated by church members in South Australia.

Pastor Hermann Pech and his wife Elizabeth (who passed away only this year) arrived one year after the church

was built and were the first full-time missionaries at Haasts Bluff. They established a vegetable garden, which provided food for the whole settlement, and kept a herd of goats.

The church was also occasionally used as a hospital, particularly during a measles epidemic in 1948.

In 1930, before there was a church building or resident missionaries, Aboriginal evangelists from Hermannsburg (Ntaria) made a camp in the Haasts Bluff area. Meetings took place wherever people gathered, and they came together just by talking with each other.

Elise Mattiske-Rogers is an editorial assistant with LCA Communications.





United as one

by Michael Bradshaw

Each year, 24 Year 11 students and 6 staff members from Luther College in Melbourne travel to Alice Springs to engage with the student community at Yirara College.

Though it is a school trip, the word 'trip' doesn't properly reflect what it is. A 'trip' can too easily reflect that it is simply a one-off event or a tick-the-box experience for the individual. Rather, the time our students spend at Yirara is a journey – to learn and grow through the many conversations and experiences they have.

Students from two different backgrounds and experiences come together for a couple of days and have the chance to listen, talk and participate in activities.

One activity is working with some of the Yirara students and artist Ruth

Cook, a former student of Yirara. It is a chance for our students to work with a gifted artist and to learn about the rich history of the Indigenous culture through art. Students usually create their own story through their painting, but this time they used Indigenous symbols to communicate what the artwork is saying.

They learn the importance of community from the Indigenous perspective and learn that, though our life experiences can be different, the similarities in what both communities need and want far outweigh the differences.

Throughout Scripture we read of the power of community. Today, communities are just as important and a vital aspect of any demographic. But it is very easy within our everyday lives to connect only with those from within our community

or with those immediately around us. This means that we can miss out on valuable connections with others, which ultimately results in losing opportunities for our lives to be enriched by being challenged, encouraged and taught about other worldviews.

Joining with the Yirara community is invaluable for our students, and it is our hope and prayer that it is the same for Yirara. The opportunity for two communities of students to relate, with a common purpose to grow together, is one that should never be taken for granted. It helps us all to better see and, more importantly, live out the challenge that Jesus gave us all – to be united as one, just as he and the Father are.

Michael Bradshaw is a teacher at Luther College, Croydon, Victoria.



Yirara College honoured with royal visit

by Yirara College staff

Yirara College was honoured to be chosen to host His Royal Highness, Prince Edward, Earl of Wessex KG GCMG, Chairman of the Board of Trustees for The Duke of Edinburgh's International Award, acknowledging the 60th anniversary of the award in Australia.

They were proud to share the special event with fellow schools delivering The Duke of Edinburgh's International Award: Acacia Hill, Centralian Senior School, Our Lady of the Sacred Heart and St Phillips.

Students at Yirara College have been participating in The Duke of Edinburgh's Award program since 2014. Yirara students log hours in activities they are already participating in, giving them additional opportunities to earn credit points towards their NTCET with successful completions

of bronze and silver awards, and in 2019, Yirara has two students working towards their gold award.

The award consists of four development areas – physical recreation, skills, voluntary service and an adventurous journey – which challenge students to develop their character.

Some of the activities that students have participated in include:

- Physical recreation: basketball, AFL, weights training, soccer, softball, swimming, bike riding, table tennis and volleyball
- Skills: driving lessons, first aid training, VET training and hairdressing
- Voluntary service: picking up rubbish, spending time at Old Timers, chapel band, Riding for the Disabled, Hetti Perkins aged care, and assisting with community events and soup kitchen

The Duke of Edinburgh's International Award program supports students in achieving goals and acknowledges their participation and successes. Some of the 'soft skills' such as confidence, leadership, resilience and initiative are developed in this program, encouraging students to become valuable community members.





FRM Board chair Tim Stollznow (right) introduces His Royal Highness Prince Edward to Yirara students



What I liked about NAIDOC week!

by Barbara Cybulka

Yirara students are from remote communities, and some of the activities that take them out into the wider community, such as assisting with the preparation for the Finke Desert Race and Clean Up Australia Day, expand their worldview and gives the outside community a positive view of our young people.



Living Waters Lutheran School students celebrated NAIDOC with a variety of activities including dance, song and art.

Students and staff agreed that NAIDOC is a very important school event – a time to celebrate and learn about Australian Indigenous culture and languages.

‘It goes deep into our country ... there are a lot of Indigenous languages that we don’t know about’, said one teacher. Others said: ‘We are largely an immigrant country and it’s important that all our students know that’ and ‘We know that some of our history is not always pretty!’

During the week, students heard from Indigenous people. Students and staff commented, ‘I liked the way we had Indigenous people speaking at assembly and in our classrooms’ and ‘It made us realise that Indigenous cultures and the land need to be respected’.

Indigenous students also had opportunity to speak and participate. At the opening NAIDOC

assembly, students danced and played music, including the didgeridoo. ‘My Uncle taught me to play and it didn’t take me long to pick it up’, one student said.

Under the guidance of Helen Brown, Living Waters Lutheran School’s Indigenous Liaison Officer, students learnt and performed a cleansing dance. ‘We learnt the dance in three days, and the braids we wore were made by students during our lunch hour’, said a student. Others said: ‘We were painted in ceremonial colours’, ‘Performing in front of the whole school was the best’ and ‘My parents came and it was really nice for them to see me doing things from my culture and speaking up the front’.

It was another very successful NAIDOC Week for Living Waters Lutheran School, celebrating Aboriginal peoples’ contributions and acknowledging that they have been here a long time before everyone else.

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



Areyonga students graduate at Unity College

by Unity College staff

Among Unity College's (Murray Bridge, SA) graduating Year 12 class of 2019 were four students from Areyonga (Utju), who had successfully completed their Year 12 studies. Congratulations to Christopher Doolan, Jimmy (Mick) Doolan, Claudia Coulthard and Selinda Hopkins on their excellent achievement!

The students were supported at the graduation event by several family

members and other special guests who travelled from the Northern Territory to attend. Special guests included Principal Jonty Fernando and long-serving teacher Tarna Andrews from Areyonga School, where the students had received their primary education.

A choir of six Areyonga women attending the service performed a Lutheran hymn in the Pitjantjatjara language as a blessing to all the graduating students.

In the last two years, six students from Areyonga have successfully completed Year 12 through Unity College. Much of this success is due to the strong partnership and links between the Areyonga community and Unity College. In her address to the school community, Principal Kaye Mathwin-Cox said, 'We thank God for all of our students and the rich tapestry they create at Unity College'.

Learning Alyawarr – just give it a go!

by Michael Jacobsen

For me, it is very important to communicate directly with the Aboriginal people. This is not possible without language. Meeting the desert-dwellers regularly, I have become fully aware of how essential and fundamental it is for their coexistence and survival to be in relationship and to remain in relationship through language.

Talking with each other enables us to share and participate in each other's lives and beliefs. So, from the start, learning the Alyawarr language was a high priority for me and is an integral part of my ministry. Even though I am not the youngest anymore, learning the language sustains me.

The Alyawarr language is spoken in Central Australia daily by 1500 people. Most speakers live north-east of Alice Springs and are spread across the Queensland border.

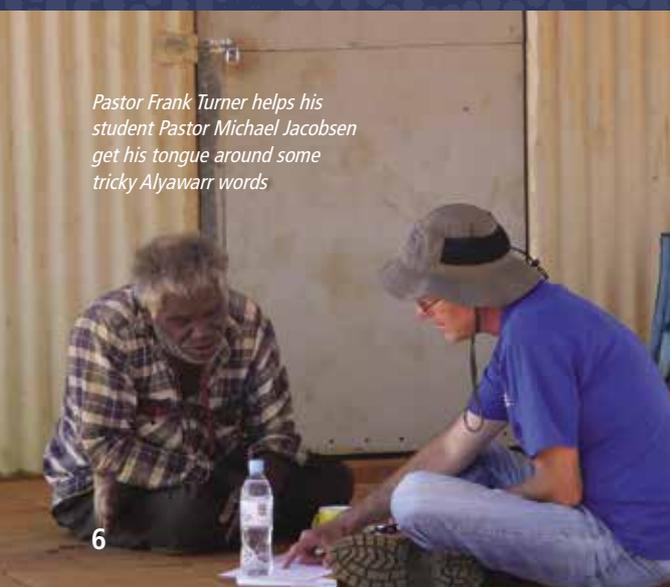
I realised very soon that Alyawarr and other Aboriginal languages are so different compared with the Indo-European, Afro-Asian or Melanesian languages. My European tongue is

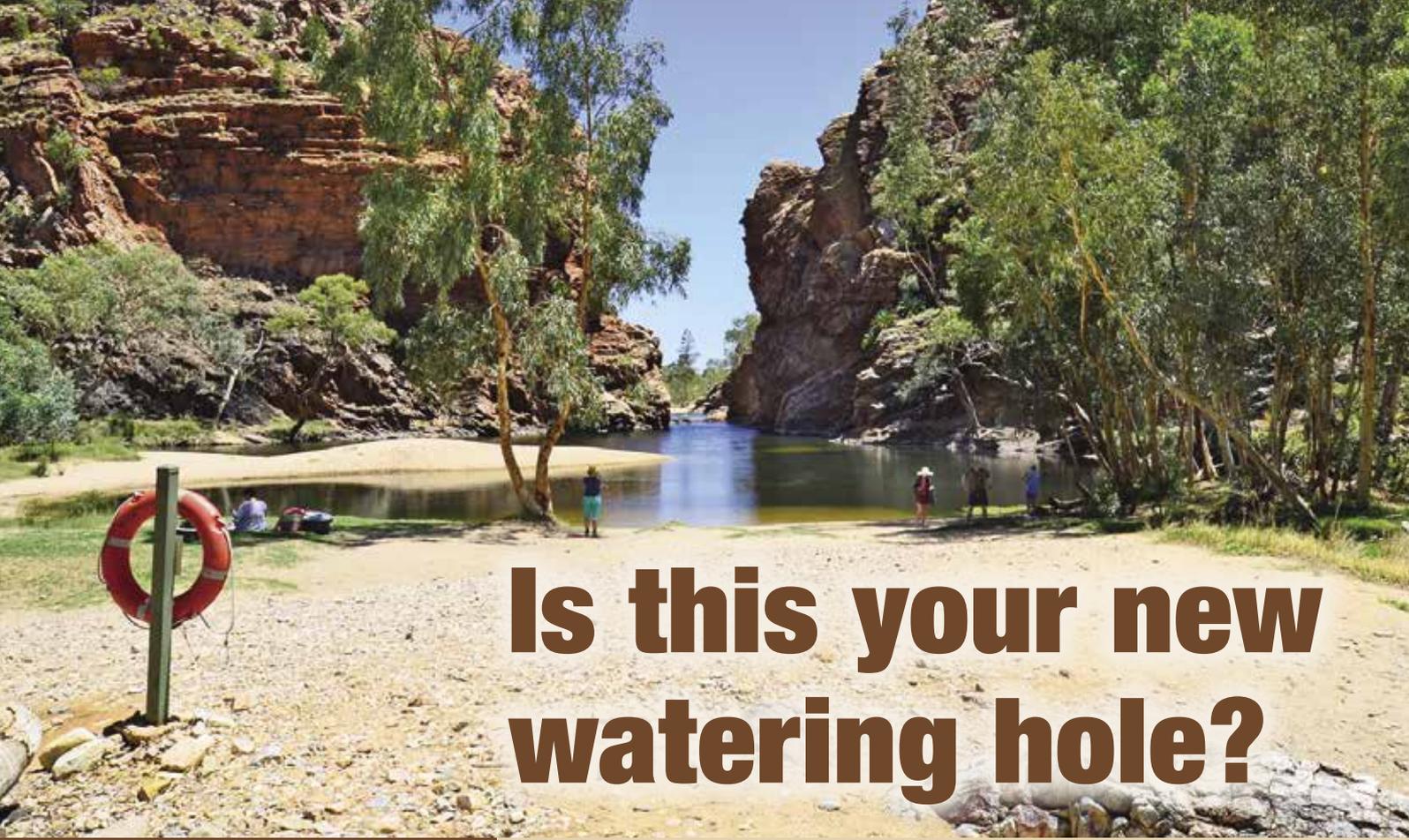
having a hard time pronouncing many of the Alyawarr syllables and letters, as they are completely unfamiliar to me. But the effort is worthwhile when I see Aboriginal children make big eyes at me when I say something to them in their language. They also laugh heartily when I say a word that sounds weird to their ears.

Currently, I'm going through the Alyawarr Picture Dictionary repeatedly. I also meet regularly with local pastor Frank Turner and a linguist from the Australian Society of Indigenous Languages to practise reading in Alyawarr. Most of the time we read and translate a text from the Bible. Recently, for the first time, I presented a short Bible text in the service. When I told my language teacher about it, he said, 'Just give it a go!'

Michael Jacobsen is the Ministry Support Worker for the Alyawarr Language Area.

Pastor Frank Turner helps his student Pastor Michael Jacobsen get his tongue around some tricky Alyawarr words





Is this your new watering hole?

YOUR NEW LIFE

- ✓ Goodbye bleak rainy winters. Hello sunshine! Low humidity, great for health
- ✓ Long-established (140 years) and respected Lutheran heritage
- ✓ Schools, childcare, medical clinics and hospital, supermarkets, restaurants
- ✓ Daily flights to most capital cities
- ✓ Endless outdoor activities ... golf, hiking, 4WDing, camping



Sea changes are over-rated. Try a Red Centre change instead.

We're inviting Lutherans of all ages and life experiences to come to Central Australia to grow our community. Bring yourself, bring your family, bring your faith, bring your gifts, skills and talents - and we're sure you'll discover a God-designed place just for you.

Come for 6 months, 12 months, or stay for a lifetime.

We need pastors, teachers, nurses, social workers, trainers, trades and maintenance people. There are loads of employment opportunities in the Centre, so your partner will find a job too. Plus, there are endless ways you can volunteer!

The Lutheran Church in Central Australia employs more than 200 people, across the Alice Springs Lutheran Church, Finke River Mission (including the Historical Precinct and Hermannsburg Store), Lutheran Community Care, Yirara College and Living Waters Lutheran School. Together we are already a vibrant Lutheran community enjoying Christian service, fellowship and growth. All we need to complete us is you.

Interested? Contact Tim Stollznaw (chair of the Finke River Mission Board) for more information about opportunities and lifestyle for Lutherans in the Centre. Email lcica@lca.org.au

LUTHERAN CHURCH IN CENTRAL AUSTRALIA



New church dedicated at Engawala

A new bush church was dedicated in June at the small community of Engawala in the Northern Territory, 150 kilometres north-east of Alice Springs. Until recently the congregation had gathered for monthly worship on a basketball court.

Several years ago, the locals decided that they wanted their own church building. Assisted by community development workers, they have been converting an old house into a small church.

Northern Territory MP Chansey Paech spoke at the opening. Pastors Marcus Wheeler,

Michael Jacobsen, Rodney Malbunka, Michael Tjapiard, Christopher Tjanima, Malcolm Willcocks, Philip Wilyuka and Neville Doecke attended, along with Jeff Iversen from community development program contractor My Pathway. FRM support workers officiated. Aboriginal pastors and linguists, together with the Central Australian Aboriginal Women's Choir, participated in the service.

Church vessels were donated by St Paul Lutheran Church Morawa in Western Australia.



FOR YOUR PRAYERS

Thank God for the children in the different language regions and ask him to bless, protect and guide them

Ask God to give joy to the congregations as they care for and restore their broken bush churches

Thank God for the faithful women in small communities who call families to worship and keep community life alive

Ask God for wisdom and sensitivity, as FRM staff and Indigenous pastors work together with mutual respect and support

WE NEED YOUR HELP

NEWS FROM FINKE RIVER MISSION OF THE LUTHERAN CHURCH OF AUSTRALIA

SUMMER 2019

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 _____

Email Address _____

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

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



Christ in the Centre team

Wayne Beven

Story collation

wayne.b@finkerivermission.org.au

Linda Macqueen

Writing and editing

linda.macqueen@lca.org.au

Casey Heinzel

Design

casey.heinzel@gmail.com