



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

WINTER 2019



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God's Christmas Gift FOR TITJIKALA

by Malcolm Willcocks

On 23 December 2018, Janie and Margaret Campbell were installed as church workers by Pastor Phillip Wilyuka and me.

Pastor Phillip has served the Titjikala Lutheran Church since the 1970s and became their pastor in 2008.

A bad hip has been hampering his mobility over the last year and in October he became fully reliant on a wheelchair to get about. This and other health issues restricted his ministry in the community,

so he called on the congregation for some helpers. Janie and Margaret were chosen and they became God's Christmas gift to the people of Titjikala.

Pastor Phillip decided to hold the installation service at the community's recreation complex so that everyone in the community would know what was going on.

The women's installation was very timely as Pastor Phillip only had two months to train them before he had

to move to Alice Springs permanently to receive regular kidney dialysis.

Margaret and Janie have been able to maintain regular Sunday worship and pastoral care in his absence and are a great help to me when I visit Titjikala. They also regularly go out on Country with other women and children to sing hymns and talk about Bible stories. This makes them very happy.

When I first met Janie in October,

Story continues page 2

she told me that not too many years ago she and her husband had been bad alcoholics. After nearly losing her husband to alcohol poisoning, she decided to quit the bottle and return to God and serve the church.

In 2010 Janie graduated from the Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education with a Certificate III in Health Support Services, and since March 2017 she has been Team Leader at the Titjikala Aged and Home Care Services, which provides domestic assistance and personal care, social and recreational

support, and meals to aged and disabled members of her community.

Margaret is Janie's older cousin. She is the traditional owner of the country covered by Maryvale Station. Margaret is the director and secretary of Ritjingka Aboriginal Corporation, which runs a not-for-profit wildlife sanctuary near Titjikala, and she also a director of Waltja Tjutangu Palyapayi (doing good work with families), an NGO providing a wide range of support services across southern Northern Territory communities.

I firmly believe that Margaret and Janie's involvement with the Central Australian Aboriginal Women's Choir and their recent tours has helped develop their confidence and abilities to take on this important leadership role in their community.

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

Cover image: Pastor Phillip Wilyuka with newly installed church workers Janie and Margaret Campbell at Titjikala Lutheran Church.

LEARNING AND CONNECTING *at Living Waters*

Living Waters (Kwatja Etatha) Lutheran School has strong Christian values, supports students to learn, and acknowledges and understands students' connections. The school has a great tradition of supporting not only the Indigenous students but also the Indigenous people who are employed at the school.

Helen Brown, recently appointed Indigenous Liaison Officer, works with Indigenous students and co-plans staff development. She loves helping students who are struggling and she loves seeing the changes in their level of learning.

Gloria Hillman, a classroom teacher, loves teaching five-to-six-year-olds how to read and write and to solve maths problems, and encouraging their inquiries about the environment and Christian studies.

'In my classroom we do daily devotions, worship and follow the school values of service, love, endeavour and courage'. These school values are based on God and his word. [It's wonderful] watching the growth in the children's learning, seeing their faces when they achieve and how proud they are when they open up to you with their questions', says Gloria.

Helen and Gloria agree that knowing each student and developing rapport is one of the joys of working at Living Waters. The school is a safe place with great colleagues who are very professional and helpful.

Both women have connections to the local Lutheran church and the Aboriginal community. Gloria is very proud of her connection to Western Arrarnta communities, and Helen has connections with the people of East and West Kimberly, Walmajarri Desert and Eastern Arrarnta.

Gloria Hillman and Helen Brown are proud to be supporting children and staff at Living Waters Lutheran School.





REMEMBER YOUR LEADERS

PSALM 133 IN AN ABORIGINAL CONTEXT

by Paul Traeger

Psalm 133, which has been translated into Pitjantjatjara, had a big impact on people when it was preached on in 2018. Following H C Leupold's insights, the Pintupi–Luritja listeners were taught that the image of Aaron's long, oily beard showed how God's blessing can flow to a whole community.

As in traditional Aboriginal society, the elders among God's Old Testament people were discouraged from trimming their beards (Lev 19:7). The high priests, descendants of Aaron, were forbidden from cutting their beards under any circumstances (Lev 21:5).

So when the olive oil flowed down from the anointed high priest's long beard, it would touch his clothes. These clothes included the 12 jewels representing God's people. In the Old Testament the hair symbolised life. And the oil indicated God's Holy Spirit.

*This seems to suggest that a parallel blessing is unity, when head and body are of one mind. The blessing of unity seems to drip down from the leading spirits in the nation to the members of less importance in the official and social scale. The blessing drops down on all and infuses itself into them. The Spirit's blessings thrive so much more richly when brotherly unity prevails ...**

At the present time, two Pintupi–Luritja elders are worth mentioning in this regard.

Kumantjayi Anderson was an important Papunya community leader for a long time. He died from cancer in late 2018. His funeral was held in February 2019. Many dignitaries attended. During the last year of his life he expressed a desire to undergo confirmation instruction and to receive the Lord's Supper. The story of his death had a huge impact on the people of Papunya. Several people openly stated that they were awed by the gospel's power.

Nosepeg Tjunkata Tjupurrula was a prominent Pintupi man during Papunya's

and Kintore's early years. He had an especially long beard. He was an interpreter for author Douglas Lockwood, and he appeared in several movies, the last being *Quigley Down Under* in 1990. One of his younger relatives now realises that the best way to help the community and to advance Aboriginal interests is to proclaim the gospel. He sees himself as completing the work of caring for his community that Nosepeg Tjupurrula had begun by learning more of God's word.

Neither Kumantjayi nor Nosepeg was a regular churchgoer for most of his life. But both men's stature in the wider community has nonetheless provided an example for others, drawing them back to God.

So please remember your leaders – in church and community. They are especially important in Australian Aboriginal society. And next time you see the traditional Indigenous man on the Australian two-dollar coin, ponder the meaning of his beard. Then, remembering Psalm 133, pray for the Spirit's blessing to trickle down, via the leaders, onto many Indigenous communities.

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

**See H C Leupold Exposition of the Psalms. Columbus, Ohio: Wartburg Press, 1959.*

Psalm 133

¹How good and pleasant it is when God's people live together in unity!

²It is like precious oil poured on the head, running down on the beard, running down on Aaron's beard, down on the collar of his robe.

³It is as if the dew of Hermon were falling on Mount Zion. For there the LORD bestows his blessing, even life forevermore.

Pepa AT DUSK

by Neville Doecke

Pastor Rodney and I visited for Pepa (devotions) only late yesterday, but the lady asked, 'Can you come again tomorrow afternoon?'

I agreed. (People asking for more of God's word ... that's great!)

Heather and I sat on our stools on the verandah. The daughter wheeled out Grandma to join us, while four younger mums gathered their little ones – like nine little chickens around them on the mattress – none of them yet off to school. A number of them sat up straight with folded hands.

I handed around blue Arrarnta hymnals. After opening in God's holy name, I planned to read Psalm 105:1–5 in English and get someone to read in Arrarnta. A few shy looks showed a lack of confidence in Arrarnta, so I decided on only one verse – I could even try that! *Ingkarta-urna ingkarrirrai, era ekarlta nama, thakerrai ekuralela*



On the journey of life together: Ingkaarta (Pastor) Neville Doecke leads Pepa (devotions) with hearing- and sight-impaired Grandma Ethel and her family and friends

kuterritjika! ('Seek the LORD and the strength he gives. Always seek him.')

But with a big group of little ones, I thought it best to speak very simply to them, telling them that God is someone who really loves them. He is so strong he can even make people – babies, little ones like them!

Then we sang. One of the mums said the children liked singing *Ingkaarta pitjai* ('Kum ba yah'). So we sang all four verses – and then another favourite, *Jesua nuka kangkama* ('Jesus loves me').

I heard singing, from a mobile phone: 'O how I love Jesus'. Praise God! This mum was exposing her little ones to YouTube Christian songs!

Then it was time to ask Grandma Ethel for her favourites. With her hearing and eyesight not so good, but with a wonderful memory for the words, we

sang *Parta thinta ngampintjai* ('Rock of ages'). One of the ladies offered to pray in language, and then I followed, thanking God for family that gathers to hear his word and to praise him, and praying for a safe sleep for all.

Grandma had been on choir tours in earlier years and soon many stories started flowing from her usually quiet character. Then there was lots of chatting with Heather, and as it got dark we left, thanking God for opening our eyes to opportunities like this to encourage families in their journey of life together with God.

On our next visit we'll read from a colourful Bible story book to all those kids!

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



The Mission Block Choir singing for the patients in the Alice Springs renal unit.

MINISTERING IN word and song by Heather Doecke

Every Thursday the Aboriginal ladies from the Alice Springs Lutheran Congregation meet at the church for Bible study and choir practice. They are known as the Mission Block Choir (or Kwatja Etatha).

Their focus and purpose is ministry – by word and song. The ladies are serious about their ministry to the Alice Springs community, the local Alice Springs congregation, Yirara College and outlying

Aboriginal communities. Over the years their ministry has strengthened and grown, and in November and December last year they were particularly busy singing and presenting the Christmas story to church and community groups.

Please pray for the choir ladies as they grow in confidence to share and celebrate God's word through song, and for the women who are becoming strong leaders through regular attendance at the Thursday sessions. Please also pray for us and all the ministry team who support these ladies, especially Suanne Tikoft (Aboriginal Women's Support Worker), Ingkaarta Mark Thiel (pastor of the Alice Springs Lutheran Congregation) and me, Heather Doecke (Conductor of the Mission Block Choir).



TALKING ABOUT FAMILY

THE BUSH COURSE AT AREYONGA

by Paul Traeger

The Finke River Mission (FRM) bush course took place from 14 to 17 April. It was held at Areyonga next to a dry riverbed in an area frequented by horses, donkeys, flies, black cockatoos and the occasional aeroplane (it was close to the local airstrip).

Sixteen people attended, including three women. Dr Andrew Pfeiffer from Australian Lutheran College led the teaching. He spoke on God's gift of families, how they are to function, and how the gospel fits in when they don't function as they should. Dr Pfeiffer is nowadays a bit of a dab hand at dealing with the somewhat unusual FRM course setting, having spoken at these courses several times before.

Every morning one of the support workers gave a devotional talk on parts of John chapters 18 and 19, in

preparation for Good Friday. Michael Jacobsen spoke on Peter's denial of Jesus, Paul Traeger on Jesus before Pilate, and Neville Doecke on Jesus' crucifixion.

Unexpected highlights were a couple of role plays which were both interesting and enjoyable. Listeners appreciated Dr Pfeiffer's willingness to adjust the teaching content in order to better address their concerns. They also appreciated his explanation of God-given duties and his linking of individual and family Bible reading with confession, worship and prayer.

The teaching was ably supported by the catering of 'cookies' Steve Radke (a former support worker), Trevor Braun and newcomer Martin Chapman.

Numbers were down a bit on previous bush courses, as several church leaders felt they needed to be involved in preparations for Good Friday and Easter. The dates for the course had been set many months previously, before it was realised just how big the Easter weekend celebrations



were going to be. In the Pintupi-Luritja Language Area the numbers involved in the worship events from 18 to 22 April were certainly the highest they have been in years. Eight babies were baptised and 27 people were confirmed at Papunya on Easter Sunday, while around a hundred people attended the singalongs at Haasts Bluff for five nights in a row from Maundy Thursday onward. Virtually all the organising of these events was done by the local Aboriginal people themselves.

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



L-R standing, Abraham Poulson (Areyonga), Perry Johnson (Yuelamu), Graham Poulson (Papunya), Rodney Malbunka (Hermannsburg), Lindsay Thomas (Yalata); sitting, Marcus Wheeler (Hermannsburg)



The teaching was ably supported by the catering of 'cookies' Trevor Braun, newcomer Martin Chapman and Steve Radke (a former support worker).

Pantjiti Unkari McKenzie from Docker River has been honoured with the Order of Australia Medal for her services to Indigenous communities in the Northern Territory

Docker River faith leader HONoured WITH OAM

by Malcolm Willcocks

On 5 April, Pantjiti Unkari McKenzie from Docker River was presented with the Order of Australia Medal (OAM) by the Administrator of the Northern Territory, Her Honour the Honourable Vicki O'Halloran AM.

Pantjiti's OAM recognises her achievements to the Indigenous communities of the Northern Territory, and in particular her decades of service on the Ngaanyatjarra Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara Women's Council. Her award also acknowledges her contributions to the arts and media, which include being custodian manager and producer for Ernabella Video and Television, and film and documentary making.

Pantjiti was born at Kultunankunytja, near Blackstone, Western Australia (about 80 kilometres from the South Australian border), around 1942. Both her parents died by the time Pantjiti turned 10. Her aunts took her to Areyonga, where she lived until she went to Ernabella at about the age of 18. She became an active member of the church there and sang in the choir. She travelled all over Australia and to the Solomon Islands with the choir.

She was tribally married to Simon Tjiyangu McKenzie, and they had five children. In 2011, Simon died from renal failure. Soon after, Pantjiti moved to Kaltukatjara (Docker River) and married Pastor Roy Yaltjanki. She has been a great support to Pastor Roy, the congregation and the community.

Pantjiti has passed on her choral skills to the community at Docker River and also through her work with the Central Australian Women's Choir. She toured Germany with the choir in 2015 on the now famous Boomerang Tour, which has been beautifully documented in the movie *The Song Keepers*. Pantjiti plays a significant role in this movie, explaining how she, and many other Western Desert people, balance their Anangu (Western Desert) culture with their Christian faith.

Pantjiti enjoys acting. She has appeared in many films about bush tucker, bush medicine and the traditional story of the Seven Sisters (The Pleiades). She also performed in the stage play *Ngapartji Ngapartji* which explores the Pitjantjatjara concept of exchange and reciprocity. Her work in archiving and sharing knowledge

around cultural heritage is also renowned.

She is skilled artist in paint, batik and weaving tjanpi (grass) baskets and is a teacher of the Pitjantjatjara language. A respected Ngangkari (traditional healer), she combines her firm faith in prayer and God's healing power with her knowledge of traditional bush medicines.

Recently Pantjiti worked on the Smiling Mind Meditation phone app. These meditations have been created and recorded by Pitjantjatjara and Ngaanyatjarra speakers and piloted through schools in the APY Lands. Its aim is to help young people develop healthy relationships with self, friends, family and others.

We thank God for Pantjiti and congratulate her on being awarded the OAM in recognition of her tireless service to Indigenous communities.

Malcolm Willcocks is the Pitjanatjatjara Support Worker in the Western Arramta Language Area.

JOY OVER THE ONE WHO HAD COME

by Michael Jacobsen



'We were together for an hour. I showed him my bush communion vessels and explained when and why I use them.'

Confirmation class at Alcoota. Often I announce it in the church services. The parents, especially the mothers, ask me to write down the names of their daughters and sons to be confirmed this year. The local school has made their library available, so we do not have to hold confirmation class out in the open air with annoying flies and tiring heat.

At the first meeting, not a single person appeared. I was told later that they had forgotten or had to play a football game in the neighbouring community. At the second attempt, again no-one appeared at the appointed starting time.

After waiting for over an hour for the teenagers, I was frustrated and wanted to pack up my teaching material and go. Then a handsome boy appeared. He

had a sports injury on his right ankle. 'My name is James', he said. 'I'm coming to the confirmation class.' I could not believe my ears! Only one had come after all my efforts – but at least one! I almost cried – because of joy over the one who had come.

We were together for an hour. I showed him my bush communion vessels and explained when and why I use them. I told him the story of the prodigal son by means of a drawing. 'I like this picture', he said.

Then we listened to a CD of Christian songwriter Colin Buchanan. The songs 'Jesus loves me' and 'Build your life on the rock' especially touched him. He asked me to give him the CD. At home he has a stereo and wants to listen to the songs again and again. He wants to memorise the songs until our next

meeting in four weeks, when I will visit the community again. He already knows one song from his Granny, whom he often visits with his parents in Alice Springs. There his grandmother takes him to the Lutheran town church for Sunday worship.

After confirmation class, he helped me clean up. We said goodbye. Before he left, I asked him, 'James, you know the others; bring one or the other the next time with you. Then there will be not just the two of us, but three, maybe four or five'. With a smile he waved to me, turned around and left.

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

CONSERVATION TREATMENT FOR

Precinct watercolours

Art conservator Eric Archer is working on a project to unframe, photograph, document and prepare 18 watercolour paintings for new museum-standard mounts and frames.

The paintings, from the Hermannsburg Historic Precinct art collection, were identified as requiring conservation treatment following two assessments of the Precinct's cultural assets undertaken in 2017 and 2018. These projects were funded through three successful grant applications by Finke River Mission to the National Library of Australia's Community Heritage Grants scheme. The 2017 Significance Assessment written by Alison French and Nicholas Hall described the collection as being

of national significance and responsibility, both on its own terms as a collection of artworks of national significance and as part of the cultural heritage components that make up the National Heritage Listed Place.

A temporary conservation studio has been set up at FRM in Alice Springs, where Eric is working on the collection. The process has revealed hidden information about the paintings (such as dates and locations), which is of great interest to curators and art historians, and adds to the significance of the collection. The old framers' labels have also been preserved, as they contain important information relating to the history and provenance of the paintings.

FOR YOUR PRAYERS

TITJIKALA

For Pastor Phillip Wilyuka who has had to move to Alice Springs for renal dialysis and other health issues

For church workers Janie Campbell and Margaret Campbell as they provide pastoral care and lay-reader services

That God will raise up some of the men in the congregation to take up leadership roles

MUTIJULU

Thank God for the long and faithful service of church worker Kunpry Peipei, who, despite age and chronic illness, presses on

Ask God to raise up men and women to help Kunpry and to lead the congregation into the future

Thank God for the wonderful support that Kunpry and the congregation receive from the local aged-care centre

IMANPA

Thank God for bringing a Fijian couple to encourage the Lutheran congregation and support the work of FRM

DOCKER RIVER

For Pastor Roy Yaltjanki who is undergoing extended treatment for cancer in Darwin

Thank God for the faithful service of church worker Marlene Abbott

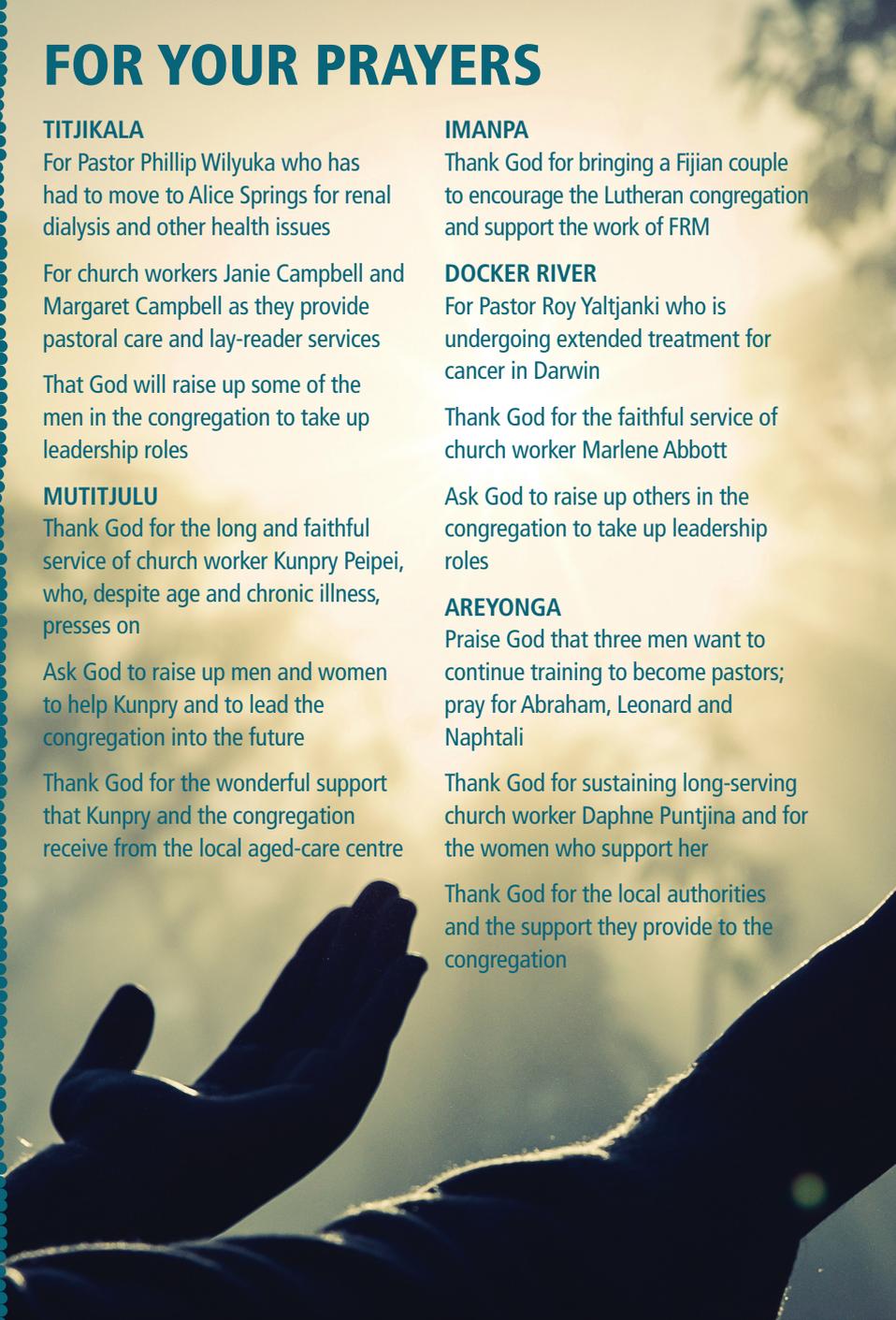
Ask God to raise up others in the congregation to take up leadership roles

AREYONGA

Praise God that three men want to continue training to become pastors; pray for Abraham, Leonard and Naphtali

Thank God for sustaining long-serving church worker Daphne Puntjina and for the women who support her

Thank God for the local authorities and the support they provide to the congregation



WE NEED YOUR HELP

NEWS FROM FINKE RIVER MISSION OF THE LUTHERAN CHURCH OF AUSTRALIA

WINTER 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



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