



Finke River Mission
Est 1877



CHRIST IN THE CENTRE

NEWS FROM FINKE RIVER MISSION OF THE LUTHERAN CHURCH OF AUSTRALIA

WINTER 2023



Above: Linguist David Moore speaks during the launch of the new Alyawarr hymnal at Alice Springs Lutheran Church.

Synod offering supports hymnbooks

by Rob Borgas

The offering from this year's LCA NZ Convention of General Synod in-person meetings is contributing more than \$30,000 towards an FRM project producing, revising or reprinting Lutheran song and hymnbooks in Central Australian Aboriginal languages.

And on Sunday 14 May, the fruit of these gifts was celebrated when the new Alyawarr hymnal was dedicated at Alice Springs Lutheran Church by Pastor Frank Turner and Alyawarr linguist David Moore.

About 200 people attended the service which also included the installation of Pastor Ben Pfeiffer to the congregation and the farewell of Pastor Michael and Hanne Jacobsen. The Jacobsens are returning to the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Bavaria (ELCB) after serving FRM for the past six years. We thank Michael and Hanne for their service, and Mission One World of the ELCB for

supporting them financially. Michael worked as a pastoral assistant with Alyawarr-speaking Lutherans and Hanne worked at Yirara College while they lived in Central Australia.

Volunteers and FRM staff have been working on reprints of worship songbooks in the Pitjantjatjara and Western Arrarnta languages, while the Alyawarr-language hymnal is a new resource. In addition, a revision of the Pintubi-Luritja language worship resource is also underway.

Most of the hymnals feature liturgy, prayers and catechism resources, as well as hymns and songs. The preface to the Pitjantjatjara Lutheran Hymnal's previous 2010 update highlighted the history of similar worship resources, explaining that the first Arrarnta hymnal produced in 1891 contained Bible stories, prayers, psalms and 53 hymns.

As well as offerings collected at the Melbourne Convention in February, LCA NZ congregations

donated to the Synod offering via the LLL. A total of \$34,098.66 was raised for the hymnbook project.

Pastor Rob Borgas is an FRM board member and former FRM Support Worker who has been working on the hymnbook project.

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*Left: Retiring Yirara College Principal
Chris England with Yirara students.*

Thank you for blessing us, Mr Chris

by Basil Schild

This term the Yirara College community has farewelled our principal of the past four years, Mr Chris England.

As we reflected in chapel on the story of Miriam who keeps watch over her baby brother Moses in the river, we recognised how Chris kept careful watch over our college through the COVID-19 crisis. Chris looked out for us, with careful thinking, and by organising support and safety for us all.

His calm leadership and wisdom enabled the college to

stay open and keep our staff employed, the relationships with remote communities strong and our students healthy. In a time of challenge, we were blessed by Mr Chris.

Big sister Miriam was known for her tambourine playing. One day Chris suggested that instead of just one person playing the tambourine with the college chapel band, we organise an entire collection of tambourines to be available for any students who would like to play along. The shimmer

of tambourines and shakers throughout morning chapel is now a wonderful reminder of Chris England's journey with us at Yirara and a symbol of his care and concern for our students.

We hope and pray that he and Deborah have a wonderful retirement.

Pastor Basil Schild is Yirara College Chaplain.

Chance to preserve historic land titles

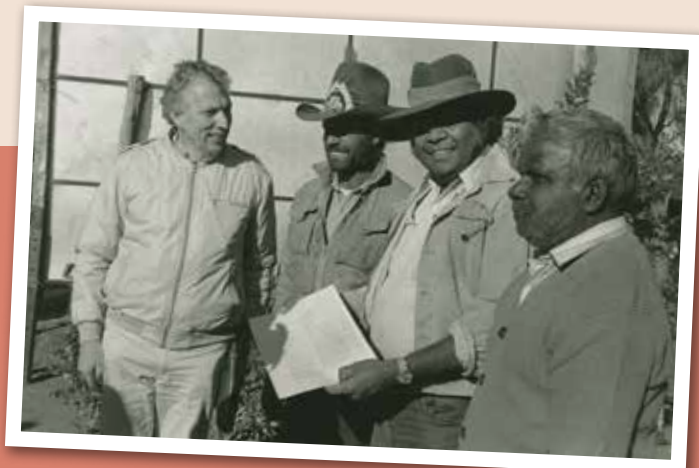
by Angela Schilling

In 1976 the Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act was tabled in Federal Parliament, with the intent to grant the Hermannsburg land (Ntaria) as a single title to be held by a single Aboriginal Land Trust.

FRM personnel sought responses from people living in and around the Hermannsburg lease, which resulted in 18 submissions to Parliament. FRM personnel and representatives of land areas within the lease mapped the cultural, social and geographical stories within the area. The Hermannsburg Mapping Program included extensive aerial photography and audio recordings.

On 2 June 1982, five titles of land at Hermannsburg were granted to five separate Aboriginal Land Trusts. The photographs, submissions, aerial photographs, documents and audio recordings are now held at Lutheran Archives in Adelaide. Lutheran Archives and FRM are partnering to digitise audio recordings made on-site so that they can be preserved. The records are extremely culturally significant, containing secret and sacred stories and songs. Access is restricted – yet the recordings must be digitised before the content is lost.

Angela Schilling is Lutheran Archives Collections Archivist.



Above: Mr Ian Wilson, the then Federal Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, with members of the Urana Trust who had received their title deed at Hermannsburg (Ntaria) in 1982.

You can donate to this project through Lutheran Archives online at <https://donation.lca.org.au/project?id=P21021> or to FRM (via the form on page 8 or online at <https://donation.lca.org.au/project?id=P21061>), noting that your donation supports the Hermannsburg Land Right digitisation project. Both options are tax-deductible. Alternatively, you can donate to Lutheran Archives via online banking to BSB 704 942 Account 100846262. Contact us via phone (08 8340 4009) or email (lutheran.archives@lca.org.au) so that we can issue you a tax receipt.



An Epiphany story

by Malcolm Willcocks

Let me tell you a story. It's a wonderful story, a true Epiphany story.

Bernard Bell is a traditional owner of the country around Docker River (Kaltukatjara) Northern Territory and is training to become a pastor of the local Lutheran church. He is also a senior ranger with the Kaltukatjara Rangers. Whitefellas are employed to provide support and management for this program. One of these – I'll call him 'Peter' – was keen to learn Pitjantjatjara and so Bernard gave him a copy of Tjukurpa Palya (Pitjantjatjara Bible) to practise pronouncing the words.

Peter just wanted to learn the language; he wasn't interested in learning the Bible. But something strange began to happen in his soul. Somehow, he was absorbing the word of God. Peter became eager to know what was in the Bible that was affecting him so deeply.

He left Docker River for employment but wanted to learn more about Christianity. He knew Bernard was

Lutheran, so he tracked down a Lutheran church podcast from St Pauls Sydney. He started listening to Pastor Richard Schwedes' sermons and found them very helpful.

Later, Peter took up a job in a remote community in Western Australia. During Christmas break in 2022, Peter returned to Docker River to stay with Bernard for a few days and I met him briefly.

Due to floods in WA, Peter was stranded in Alice Springs for several weeks and attended the Lutheran church. On the third Sunday of Epiphany, he returned, and I was leading the service. Afterwards, he said to me, 'I think I need to be baptised'.

During our discussion about baptism, I heard his incredible story the wondrous workings of God, the Holy Spirit drawing him in and granting him faith, even through a language he did not understand.

On 26 January 2023, Peter was baptised at Alice Springs Lutheran Church. He really wanted Bernard to be there, but that wasn't possible, so we videoed the baptism so that Bernard can share in it. Peter was determined to have some of the baptism liturgy read in Pitjantjatjara – the language God chose to start talking to him, so Karina Penhall, one of the church's Aboriginal pastoral assistants, assisted.

Special thanks to Pastor Richard and St Pauls congregation Sydney for their part in this wonderful story.

Malcolm Willcocks is the Pitjantjatjara Support Worker in the Western Arrarnta language area.

Above: Bernard Bell, a Kaltukatjara Ranger who is training to become a pastor of the local Lutheran church at Docker River, shared a copy of Tjukurpa Palya (Pitjantjatjara Bible) with a ranger program colleague who wanted to learn some local language. It changed the man's life.



Cyclone changes course

by Neville Doecke and Paul Traeger

In mid-April, Cyclone Ilsa whipped up record-breaking winds off the Western Australian coast. Heavy rain fell over WA in a line straight towards a little Lutheran community in the Gibson Desert called Kiwirrkurra.

At the same time, more than 600 kilometres to the south-east in Hermannsburg (Ntaria), last-minute plans were being made for a Bush Bible Course to be held at Wallace Rockhole. The site is 35 kilometres from Ntaria towards Alice Springs on bitumen, then 20 kilometres on recently graded dirt roads. Aboriginal pastors were heading to the bush course Sunday afternoon. It was predicted that Cyclone Ilsa would dump heavy rain on Saturday afternoon. And it did!

With no Plan B, organisers had to think and act quickly. Wallace was out of the question due to the road being ripped up. So, it was off to Ntaria, where the gospel was first brought to Central Australia

in 1877. Cyclone Ilsa had certainly changed the bush course!

Dr Graham Harms travelled north from South Australia's Barossa Valley to lead eight sessions studying the first 11 chapters of Genesis. Bathed in warm sunshine, the lawns of Bethlehem Lutheran Church made a pleasant classroom after the Saturday rain. The 26 pastors and four lay people present soaked up many amazing revelations unearthed by Dr Harms over the three days.

We sincerely thank Dr Harms for his preparation and the clear and informative way he presented the material. Linguists David Strickland and Paul Traeger translated the information into Luritja and Alyarrwa for the 14 Aboriginal pastors and one woman from Ti Tree who attended, along with 12 non-Aboriginal pastors and three 'cookies' who fed everyone.

The course concluded with a holy communion service led by the

Hermannsburg pastors, with Dr Harms preaching. We praised God not only for the rain but also for the blessing of clear blue skies and warm sunshine for the three days of intensive learning at the course.

Because of Cyclone Ilsa, Wallace Rockhole is now being planned as a future course venue. The course relocation was actually good news for one group of long-distance travellers. Those attending from the west-northwest – in particular Kiwirrkurra – had less distance to travel and less distance on dirt roads to navigate. After checking weather conditions, Pastor John West and a couple of others bravely and patiently drove from Kiwirrkurra to Ntaria. This included 520 kilometres of dirt road, much of which was muddy or waterlogged. Having spent Saturday night in Kintore, they arrived at the course campsite in a mud-spattered car on Sunday evening.

Just after Cyclone Ilsa became a tropical low, it joined up with



Facing page: Pastor Neville Doecke puts out the sign for the Bush Bible Course that was moved to Hermannsburg (Ntaria) from Wallace Rockhole due to the rough weather and heavy rain caused by Cyclone Ilsa. Above: The course was attended by 26 pastors and four lay people. Below: Attendees listen intently to the presentations during the Bible course.

a cold front heading east across the Nullarbor Plain and Great Victoria Desert. A lot of the ex-tropical cyclone's heavy rain then affected locations such as Yalata and Ceduna on South Australia's West Coast. Local pastors Lindsay Thomas and Andrew Vanderwal had been preparing to come to the bush course along the dirt road via the Gawler Ranges and Kingoonya to reach the Stuart Highway leading

to Central Australia. But the rain necessitated a 400-kilometre detour via Port Augusta.

It is not often we face post-cyclonic rain just before a bush teaching course. And even less often does such weather track so closely to FRM communities. So, it is even more remarkable that these two travelling parties drove so far – one no less than 2000

kilometres. There may have been others living closer to Ntaria who did not risk attending because of the rain, but those who did were immensely blessed by the teaching.

Pastors Neville Doecke and Paul Traeger are the FRM Support Workers for the Western Arrarnta and Pintupi-Luritja language areas respectively.





Left: Abraham Poulson, who is training to be a pastor at Areyonga, was among Yunkun's descendants who attended the reinterment ceremony, and represented his family and community with 'dignity and integrity'.

Forgiveness and love mark sad 'homecoming'

by Malcolm Willcocks

The families of Yukun, an Aboriginal man shot and killed by police at Uluru almost 90 years ago, have finally been able to lay his remains to rest at the base of the Rock.

In a deeply emotional ceremony late last year, representatives of Adelaide University and the South Australian Museum where Yukun's remains had been stored, travelled to Uluru to present them to his family members for the reinterment. Sadly for Yukun's family, a forensic search was only able to positively identify his skull, and this was laid to rest in a deep narrow grave, close to the site where he died in 1934.

In August 1934, Mounted Constable Bill McKinnon was sent to investigate the killing of an Aboriginal man near Mount Conner, approximately 150 kilometres east of Uluru. A few weeks into the search, McKinnon and his Aboriginal trackers found Yukun sheltering in a cave near Mutitjulu waterhole

at the base of Uluru. McKinnon shot Yukun from a distance and brought him from the cave. Yukun died from his wounds several hours later and they buried him there.

In 1935 a board of inquiry investigated the incident and ultimately exonerated McKinnon. As part of the inquiry, Yukun's remains were exhumed and taken to Adelaide.

Some of Yukun's closest surviving family members are leaders of Areyonga Lutheran Church – Margaret and Abraham Poulson and Joy Kunia, and Joy expressed the family's feelings about Yunkun's death. 'We are really, really sad and upset. That part of history is really cruel and sad for us', she said.

Abraham Poulson is training to be the pastor at Areyonga. Despite a media contingent and a multitude of Yunkun's descendants attending the reinterment ceremony, Abraham displayed quiet and calm dignity and represented his family and

community with integrity. Even though he and his relatives were distressed and angry that only Yukun's skull was returned, Abraham gave the SA Museum representative a hug of thanks.

Furthermore, he expressed his sympathy to Bill McKinnon's descendants who had travelled from Queensland for the ceremony and also thanked them for their presence.

Many handshakes and hugs were shared between the Yukun and McKinnon families after the ceremony. The love and forgiveness demonstrated so warmly by our Lutheran brothers and sisters from Areyonga was something to behold.

Malcolm Willcocks is the Pitjantjatjara Support Worker in the Western Arrarnta language area and led the reinterment ceremony for Yukun.

Ted Strehlow finally laid to rest

by Neville Doecke



Almost 45 years after his death in Adelaide on 3 October 1978, TGH 'Ted' Strehlow has at last been laid to rest, along with his second wife Kathleen, near Hermannsburg (Ntaria).

Linguist and anthropologist Ted Strehlow was the son of missionary Carl Strehlow and his wife Frieda. Ted died on the same day the Strehlow Research Foundation was launched by the Honourable Justice Michael Kirby at a public gathering at Adelaide's State Library of South Australia.

After his funeral, Ted was cremated, and Kathleen kept half of his ashes in an urn – the other half was taken to Ntaria and buried under a desert oak tree several kilometres west of the community. Kathleen survived her husband for 41 more years and died in March 2019.

After multiple discussions with family members, a small ceremony took place under the same desert oak west of Hermannsburg on Tuesday 28 February this year. It was a significant date, as it was the 50th birthday of their son, Carl.

The service was led by pastors Rodney Malbunka and Neville Doecke and a small gathering of people assisted in burying the remaining half of TGH's ashes and those of Kathleen. It was a quiet and sombre ceremony during which we gave thanks to God for the lives and service of these people.

Ted is especially remembered for his contributions to the recording and preservation of the language, culture and customs of the Western Arrarnta Aboriginal people. He is also remembered for his linguistic skills in translating

Scripture and Lutheran hymns that are still in use today.

After last year's 100th anniversary commemoration of his father Carl's death and burial at Horseshoe Bend on the Finke River in 1922, when Ted was 14 years old, it was fitting for both Ted and Kathleen to finally be laid to rest in this quiet spot near Hermannsburg.

Pastor Neville Doecke is the FRM Support Worker for the Western Arrarnta language area.

Above: Rosemary sprigs mark the gravesite with a cross and the first initials of Ted and Kathleen Strehlow. Below from left: Pastors Rodney Malbunka, right, and Neville Doecke, left, lead the ceremony west of Hermannsburg (Ntaria) to bury the ashes of Ted Strehlow and his wife Kathleen; Pastor Rodney spreads Ted Strehlow's ashes; Glen Auricht spreads Kathleen Strehlow's ashes; the gravesite by the desert oak.



For your prayers

Pray for

- capable young men and women to become strong, responsible and trained Christian leaders
- Pastor Ben Pfeiffer, his wife Meghan and their family, as they adapt to life in Central Australia. Give thanks for Pastor Ben's installation at Alice Springs Lutheran Church, which was without a lead pastor for six years.
- and praise God for the humble service that Pastor Michael and Hanne Jacobsen have given the FRM over the past six years
- Abraham Poulson, as he prepares for a colloquy on his journey towards ordination
- Daphne Puntjina, who has faithfully led worship at Areyonga since the 1980s and has been hospitalised multiple times in the past year due to ill health. Thank God that new leaders like Abraham Poulson have been encouraged to follow in her footsteps (Hebrews 13:7,8)
- All Indigenous Australians and our entire country, as we prepare to vote on proposed changes to our constitution this year
- Workers to come to Central Australia to continue the work with Aboriginal Lutheran leaders in the Alyawarra area.

We need your input

Christ in the Centre is looking to change – and we need your help.

Keeping the wider Lutheran community informed about the work of Lutherans in Central Australia is important and *Christ in the Centre* plays a significant part in that.

As we look to the future, we're seeking your input. The cost of printing, packing and postage for the magazine continues to rise and we would like to know whether you would still prefer to receive a printed copy or if you would be happy to receive a link to an electronic copy to download and print or read online, such as: https://issuu.com/thelutheran/docs/christ_in_the_centre_summer_2022-23?fr=sNDgzYjM4NzMoNTY

We know that one option won't suit everyone, so please let us know so we can continue to keep you informed in the best possible way, by emailing frm@lca.org.au

Get your donations in now!

The end of the financial year is not far away, so now is the best time to donate in support of the work of Finke River Mission in Central Australia – and receive a tax benefit for your gift. All of your financial gifts are gratefully received and greatly appreciated – and continue to change lives. Through them, along with your prayers, you are helping people to come to know Jesus and to grow in their faith and life with him.

See the form below to make your donation today.

Following a detailed review of Finke River Mission operations compared with the relevant taxation criteria, FRM will not be issuing taxation receipts after 30 June 2023. However, FRM is exploring alternative pathways for those wishing to provide support that is tax-deductible. The Yirara College of the Finke River Mission is an indigenous boarding school that continues to be able to issue taxation receipts for support for their work.

WE NEED YOUR HELP

NEWS FROM FINKE RIVER MISSION OF THE LUTHERAN CHURCH OF AUSTRALIA

WINTER 2023

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 _____

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Email address _____

Phone _____ Mobile _____

Signed _____ Amount \$ _____

PLEASE NOTE:
Your donation
cannot be
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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.



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