CHRIST IN THE CENTRE

NEWS FROM **FINKE RIVER MISSION** OF THE LUTHERAN CHURCH OF AUSTRALIA

WINTER 2011

Members of the Soweto choir, Titjikala and Areyonga choirs, and the Asante Sana choir at the sell out performance, Alice Springs.

a long way from home

In May, the world famous Soweto Gospel Choir's Australian tour began in Central Australia with a visit to the predominantly Lutheran Areyonga community 200 kilometres west of Alice Springs.

Soweto choir perform at 'the Cave' at Areyonga.

The multiple Grammy award winners shared their South African song and dance with the local Pitjantjatjara people, who in turn, gave them a taste of the local indigenous traditions.

Local choir members participated in a joint workshop with the Soweto choir at the Good Shepherd Lutheran Church in Areyonga.

"We ended up nearly jumping around also like them!" said Titjikala Choir's Lena Campbell, "We got a bit excited and wanted to dance but we were all in a big group and we were jammed in the corner."

The workshop was followed by a spectacular performance by the Soweto Choir in Areyonga's stunning natural amphitheatre known as 'kulpitjara' or 'the cave'.

The choirs travelled to Alice Springs where they practiced some more, and presented their songs at two 'sell-out' performances at the Araluen Arts Centre.

As a double bonus, both the Areyonga and Soweto choirs gave daytime performances to students and staff at Yirara College.

The Soweto Gospel Choir visit not only entertained the local people of Areyonga and Alice Springs, but also gave the members of the Areyonga, Titjikala and Asante Sana choirs a rare opportunity to practice and perform with a world-class gospel choir.

"It was heartening to see how proud and empowered the choir members became through their involvement with this famous Christian choir", said FRM's Pastor Rob Borgas at the end of the visit.

Check out:
http://www.sowetogospelchoir.com/
for the current tour dates of the Soweto Gospel Choir.

You won't be disappointed!"

RIGHT FROM TOP: Sharing each other's culture at Areyonga school

Yirara College Chapel

Choir workshop at the Good Shepherd Lutheran Church, Areyonga

Soweto choir members with residents of Abbotts Camp.

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

WHAT'S INSIDE:

2 THE **SOWETO CHOIR** SINGS IN THE CENTRE

4 **ALTUS** VISIT

6 RAY'S TRAVEL DIARY

WOMEN'S COURSE

BUSH COURSE

8 **YIRARA** ACHIEVERS

SA/NT President visit & the Bush Course

Central Australia

Hermannsburg Congregation

Christ in the Centre spoke with **Pastor David Altus** following his recent visit to central Australia…

Did you enjoy attending the In-Service Bush Course?

Attending the Bush Course was something I had wanted to experience - sitting with our Aboriginal pastors and leaders was special.

The attention they gave to the word of God and those speaking it to them indicated to me the importance they placed on this time. To spend a week together in Bible study, prayer and song, and to do that camping out in the cold under the stars at night goes beyond what most of us in the ministry do for our in-service training!

To spend a week together in Bible study, prayer and song, and to do that camping out in the cold under the stars at night goes beyond what most of us in the ministry do for our in-service training!

I felt honoured and privileged to sit with them. I was also full of admiration for our support pastors and particularly admired the linguistic skills of Paul Traeger who communicated with ease in language.

Yirara College is an important part of Finke River Mission's service in the centre. Did you get a chance to visit?

I was escorted on a tour of Yirara by two very polite, quietly spoken students who were obviously very proud of their school and of the leadership roles they had been given in it.

The facilities are obviously impressive, but equally inspiring (and obvious) is the love of the principal Andrew Mirtschin and the staff for the total well-being of the students in their care.

Their desire to share and live our Christian faith in that community in practical ways comes through. Dignity and respect, compassion and love for all because of Christ.

You led Bethlehem Lutheran Church in a pre-call meeting, how did that work out?

When I asked the Hermannsburg congregation what was important to them about their next pastor, after Pastor Peter Pfitzner leaves for Robertstown later in the year, I was greeted by silence - for a while. Then, one by one people spoke, sometimes themselves, sometimes through others, sharing what was important to them about ministry in the place where God had put them to serve him.

A **Haast's Bluff** Story

Around 170 people live in and around the settlement called Haast's Bluff (aboriginal name Ikuntji), 227 km west of Alice Springs. The community lies on a rough dirt road leading to nowhere in particular.

The local church is a corrugated iron building built in the 1940s. The pastor's name is Trevor Raggett. He was ordained at the end of 2004 and is the son of Pastor Obed Raggett.

Inside this church something good seems to be happening. I'm not sure why – though I have my theories.

Three or four years ago Sunday morning attendance figures were not particularly high, averaging about 25. Virtually all were older folk. Nowadays the average is almost double, and there are many more young people coming along and evening gospel singing is now a regular occurrence. Within the community the church is respected and the pastor is loved - by both aboriginals and whitefellas.

Why is this happening?

Haast's Bluff has always been a reasonably pleasant place. Its small size helps; perhaps also its out-of- the-way location. More important is the legacy of pioneer missionaries, both indigenous and whitefella. For instance, Trevor's father Obed, was widely-known as an example of gospel service. He was especially good at providing a pastoral bridge between the indigenous and non-indigenous worlds.

But what is the difference between now and three or four years ago? One can only guess. Perhaps it was the FRM Pastors' course at Haast's Bluff in early 2007. Perhaps it was Simon Dixon's ordination in 2007 – Simon, who calls Haast's Bluff home, often helps and encourages Trevor. Perhaps the changes are associated with the annual Easter singfest at the nearby missionary memorial. These have been big occasions over the last few years.

Maybe it is also partly to do with government administrative changes – in late 2007 Haast's Bluff gained a permanent police presence, and the following year some dedicated people took charge in the council office.

Teacher: Susy Chapman. Students (L-R):Steffan Farrell, Ashley Albert (House Captain Albrecht), Chevez Kirkman, Lance Ashley (House Captain Albrecht), Leonardo Cavanagh.

Their concern for people around them, in their own and neighbouring communities, meeting people where they are, as well as for the young people came through. Please pray for a pastor to join them in the unique place, challenge and opportunity for ministry in the Hermannsburg area.

Following your time in the centre, do you have any other thoughts you'd like to share?

I was encouraged by the various Church groups' desire to develop their relationships with each other so that God's work there is coordinated and supported across the region. This is vital as they face the many opportunities and unique challenges in the centre, but especially as we work towards our 2012 District synod in Alice Springs.

Much of it must be due to the attitude and work of Trevor himself. He continues to mature as a pastor, growing ever more confident in that role. He enjoys relating to people, is competent as a liturgist and works hard on his sermons.

No doubt another contributor is that people have been praying for this community.

Whatever the reason, it is wonderful to see God's hand of quiet blessing upon this place. Please continue to pray and give thanks for God's people in Haast's Bluff.

Paul Traeger
FRM Support Worker
Western Desert

CRYING IN THE DESERT

A NEW GENERATION IN DANGER

After morning worship in Alice Springs the churchyard often sees over 100 Indigenous worshippers joining with non-aboriginal members in vibrant fellowship and happy conversation. Children bustle around, there is laughter, tea and coffee, fruit, bread, and worshippers wander in and out of the Living History Space recently established in the Old Church building accessing old photographs of family and mission history.

This healthy reality stands is stark contrast to the challenges faced by many during the rest of the week.

So many Aboriginal central Australians including many Lutherans struggle with the challenge of alcohol addiction. The life-destroying effect of alcohol in central Australia has been well documented recently. In the small township there are over 90 Liquor licenses. Bars open at 10 am and are full by midday. Many Lutheran aboriginal children are attending 10 funerals a year of loved ones who have died as a direct result of the impact of alcohol – either through catastrophic health collapse, accident, murder or violence – it is difficult to imagine the trauma of grief such children are carrying.

Current strategies while well intentioned have not resulted in significant decreases in alcohol consumption. In order to help save the lives of so many, members of the congregation and Lutherans from the remote communities

proposed strategies

1. End the all day trade in alcohol in Alice Springs
2. Reform welfare to prevent payments being able to be spent on alcohol
3. Close down problem liquor outlets
4. One day per week where no take away alcohol is available

are calling on the government to make the following changes

You may like to assist us by writing to the Federal Minister for Indigenous Affairs Jenny Macklin to voice your concerns about the death and destruction due to alcohol abuse in central Australia. You can email the Minister at the following address: JMacklin.MP@aph.gov.au; the postal address is The Honourable Jenny Macklin, P.O Box 6022, House of Representatives, Parliament House, Canberra ACT 2600.

As a Church we are called to lift our voice on behalf of those who are suffering and whose life is in danger. So many families, across so many Lutheran congregations of the desert, are finding their lives destroyed. Pray for a government with the courage to tackle the alcohol industry and to bring all necessary reform in health, in education, and in employment.

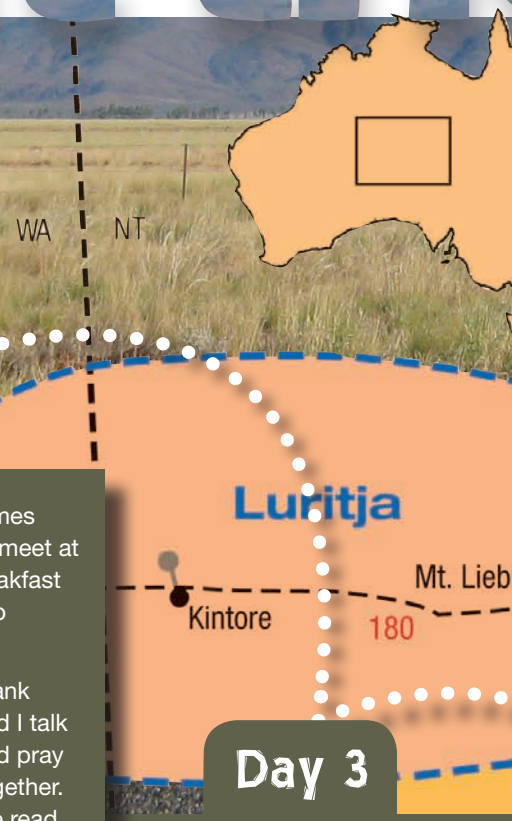
Pastor Basil Schild
Town Camp Chaplain
Alice Springs

Thank you Irwin

Irwin Traeger has been Editor and chief story writer for "Christ in the Centre" since its inception 15 years ago. *While Irwin will still be involved in Finke River Mission promotional work from time to time, he is packing up his editing keyboard. We thank God for Irwin's service to the Church in this important way and wish him every blessing as he reads future editions with a new perspective.*

a day at the

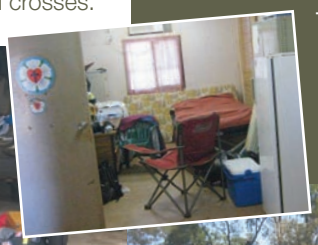
PASTOR RAY MORRIS, FIELD WORKER FOR THE ANMATJERR AND ALYAWARR PEOPLE, GIVES US A TASTE OF HIS **"DAY AT THE OFFICE"** AS HE TRAVELS OVER 5 DAYS TO COMMUNITIES TO SUPPORT THE MINISTRY OF WORD AND SACRAMENT.



Heading out

"I plan to visit Pastor Frank Turner at Amperlatwaty on the Sandover Highway 350km north east of Alice Springs. I haven't seen Frank for a while because rain has made the roads impassable. There is now a break in the weather and reports indicate vehicles are getting through.

Before heading out I need to ensure I am well prepared – diesel, water, food (canned and frozen), safety equipment, swag, cooking gear, language bibles, hymn books, service orders, communion supplies, second hand clothes, cassettes and gold crosses.



Day 1

I head out about 7am unsure of road conditions and likely travel time. My sat-phone and emergency locator could be very important.

Normally the road is dusty and corrugated but this time there is lots of water, mostly with side tracks but in many cases I have to go through. A large truck just made it, so here goes. Steady, don't rush it. The trip takes about 5hrs.

First I double check on accommodation. Despite forward planning, I'm never sure what will be available. This time I stay in the old "donga" (container).

I had left a message for Frank about my visit (he has no phone), however he has gone hunting and won't be back till late! So I visit some of the "white fella" shire managers and clinical staff. Lots of positives about the Lutheran church being a part of the community.

Frank isn't back by dark so I head to my camp and prepare dinner - canned stew on my portable cooker. There is no tv – read and then reflect on what I need to follow up with shire leaders.

Day 2

Next morning, Frank comes visiting and we agree to meet at the church grounds. Breakfast is Salada and coffee. No shower option this visit.

Frank and I talk and pray together. We read through the next few weeks' bible readings – in English and language, we discuss the story of the text. Frank talks about what he thinks God is saying and the message for the congregation. He leads and finishes with prayer. I pronounce a blessing.

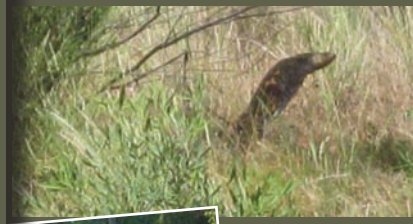
A regional manager meets us to discuss maintenance of the community church area.

I share a cuppa with Frank. His vehicle is "off the road" so I offer to take him to Irrwelty (160km return trip) to collect his communion materials. Thankfully, Frank is aware of the side tracks. We arrive back after dark. Dinner is steak and salad. Climb into swag and fall asleep listening to local donkeys roaming the streets.

Day 3

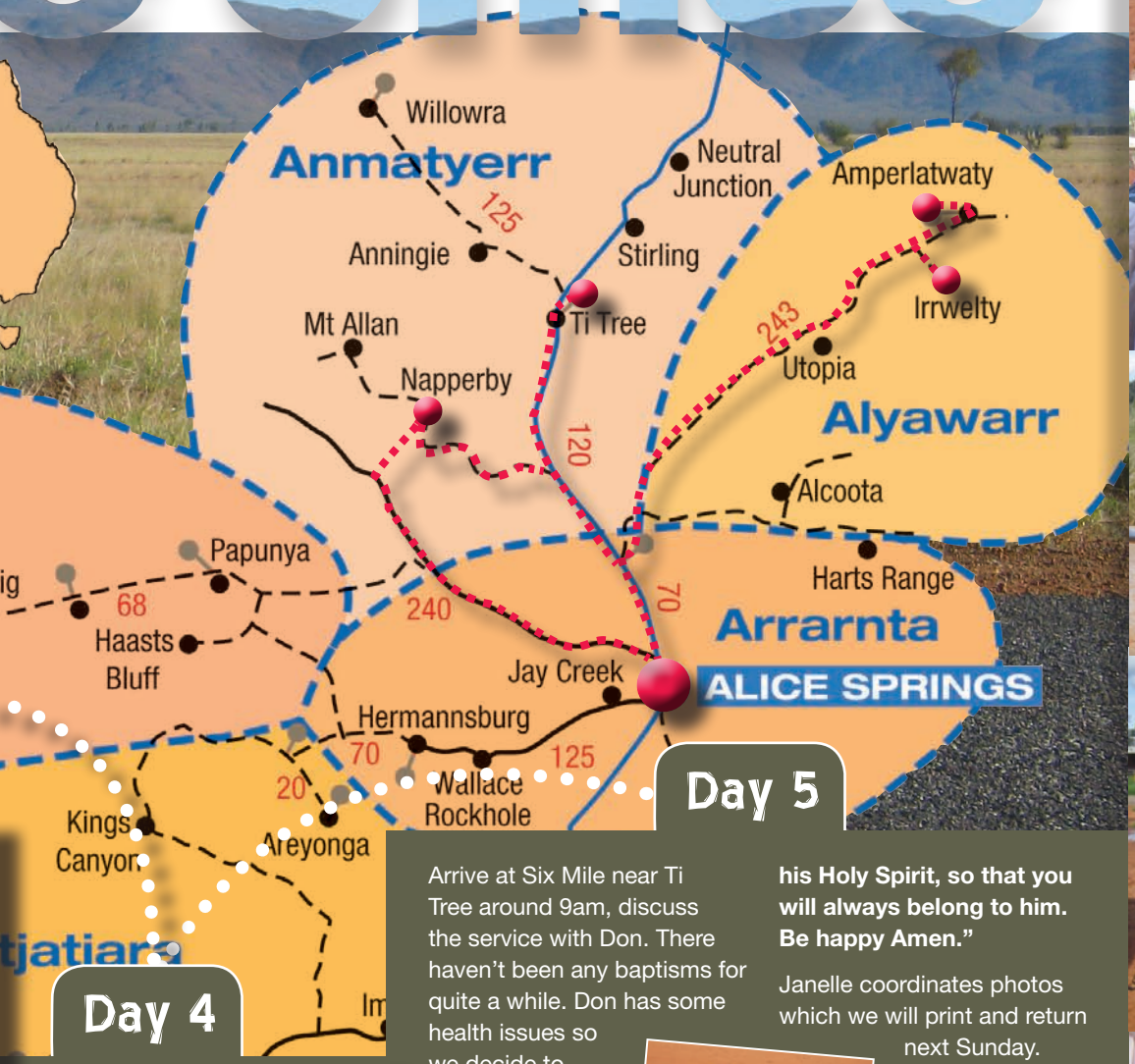
I help Frank conduct a communion service at the church grounds. Dirt, dust and dogs are normal visitors for such occasions. The loose roof sheeting rattles in the wind. After I distribute much requested cassettes, crosses and 2nd hand clothes from Lutheran Community Care. Frank and I discuss possible baptisms, future leaders, engaging people more in the liturgy and my next visit.

It's about 2pm before I head off for Alice Springs. The trip home is slow and slippery.



Have an interesting guest for afternoon tea. Yes, a goanna! After dark I'm very cautious about kangaroos and livestock. Arrive home late, the car needs a wash!

e office



Day 4

Prepare and repack the car for tomorrow's visit to communities about 200km north of Alice.

I have planned some baptisms with Pastor Don Presley. My wife, Janelle is coming on this trip to take photos and help record family details.

Day 5

Arrive at Six Mile near Ti Tree around 9am, discuss the service with Don. There haven't been any baptisms for quite a while. Don has some health issues so we decide to share the service.

The local dingoes come out to greet us! A stark contrast to pipe organs and heated pews in previous parishes!

The families are happy to worship and excited about today's baptisms. My camp table comes in handy – no altar cloth and a practical container for the baptism water.

Don baptises 13 children into God's family. Despite the time since the last baptism, everyone knows the responses. It's a great celebration.

I help with blessing the children and use the English translation of the Arranda - **"When you were baptised God forgave your sins, made you alive, made you new. God make you strong with his Holy Spirit, so that you will always belong to him. Be happy Amen."**

Janelle coordinates photos which we will print and return next Sunday. Don's wife Bettsy distributes the children's clothing from LCC.

We leave for Napperby about noon to visit Pastor Ronnie McNamara, about 1.5hr west on dirt road.

The church building had been in disrepair for nearly two years following a storm. Most repairs are now complete and Ronnie is conducting worship services again. He and I plan a big celebration mid-year and we discuss the 'Bush Course' at Yirara in Alice. There is prayer and a blessing. I leave clothes and communion supplies with Ronnie.

After heading south via a property private road we hit the sealed Tanami Rd and head for home another 2.5hrs away.

Heading home

These 5 days involved around 1400 km driving, at average 60—80km/h predominantly on dirt road.

We give thanks to God for the faith and commitment of the Aboriginal Pastors and leaders. Please pray that resources and support continue to be provided for this important ministry of the Lutheran Church through Finke River Mission.

The first Bush Course for 2011 was held at Yirara College from May 8-13. Over 40 people attended, including 10 women, which is the most yet. People came from as far away as Yalata in South Australia.

Bush Course

Pastor Paul Albrecht made a welcome return visit to central Australia to jointly lead the course with local Pastor Davey Inkamala on the book of Amos. Pastor Albrecht has just completed a translation of this Old Testament book into the Arrarnta language. Theresa Wilson, who attended from Areyonga, was impressed by his command of the Arrarnta language: "I have never heard a white person speak Arrarnta so well. It's like the old days." Pastor Albrecht spoke in Arrarnta and English, and Paul Traeger translated his words into Pintupi-Luritja, while Pastors Philip Wilyuka and Howard Smith translated for the 19 Pitjantjatjara speakers present at the course.

Daily bible studies were led on the lectionary readings for the Sundays that fell after the course.

A number of guests also presented including: District President Pastor David Altus who offered prayers and encouragement as well as an update on the 2012 Synod for the centre; local Lutheran Dr Yip from NT Health Department (infectious diseases section) offered ways of preventing the spread of common infectious diseases; Lutheran Community Care spoke about the financial management courses they offer; Pastor Basil Schild spoke about alcohol issues, and we looked at ways of reducing alcohol consumption in Alice Springs; Dr Mirtschin addressed the leaders about Yirara College, and also to get vital feedback from them about Yirara.

On Friday we finished the course with a service with Holy Communion at the Yirara chapel. Special thanks to Yirara College for allowing us to use their wonderful campsite and chapel facility. It was a great opportunity for regional church leaders to see the college (we also attended a chapel service during the week), and for students to see what the Bush Course is all about.

Betty Wheeler, Lorraine Ngalaia & Lily Roennfeldt

Central Australian Women's Christian Leadership course

Twenty women from Aileron, Alice Springs, Docker River, Ilamarta, Imanpa, Mutitjulu, Ntaria (Hermannsburg) and Utju (Areyonga) attended the second FRM course at Ampiyata Outstation, north-west of Yulara on the weekend of 15-17 April. Last year the women had decided to hold camps at different communities hoping this would encourage more local women to attend. As that wasn't our experience this year we've decided to meet closer to Alice Springs in 2012, hopefully at Simpson's Gap.

As the small group who started the course last year – Lily Roennfeldt, Marion Swift, Renita Kantawara and Deborah Myers – had intentionally limited the presence of non-Aboriginal women, so that the women themselves would take responsibility for facilitating the course, we've been thrilled that Susan Abbott, who works as the cook at Ilamarta – a rehabilitation centre for young male substance abusers – has been our cook for the past two camps. Small groups assist her with preparation and we all wash our own dishes. Leaders from the different language groups – Anmatjara, Western Arrarnta, and Pitjantjatjarra – work together to co-facilitate the camp and also to lead morning and evening devotions or 'eating house'.

Having discussed Leadership and Mentoring in 2010, our teaching sessions this year dealt with Conflict (Pastor Peter Pfitzner) and Reconciliation (Pastor Rob Borgas). Deborah outlined **The Faith 5** – faith acts in the home – from Faith Inkubators. Marion and Rita Okai (pictured left from Mutitjulu) facilitated large group discussions and translated as necessary.

Singing was a highlight as different groups would quietly start to sing together and others would then join in. Sunday most of the group worshipped at Mutitjulu in an effort to encourage the people there before we lunched at the oval and headed home.

The women have already made suggestions about the next course that:

- Simpson's Gap be the venue
- the theme of Prayer be explored
- two courses be planned for 2012

Will you join with us in praying for the women's course next April?

Deborah Myers and Marion Swift
Facilitators

Yirara success

Alex Swan

has gained employment at Birrendudu Station (near WA border) through NT Cattleman's Association.

Alex has been working at the Cattle Yards in Alice Springs for the past 2 years while boarding at Yirara, and has taken on a traineeship through NT Cattleman's Association.

Alex has completed Horsemanship and other relevant training while at Yirara.

He is originally from Mt Isa and has always wanted to work on a Cattle Station.

Ideally Alex would like to work at Lake Nash and hopes to when he is finished his training.

Alex has been working very hard toward this for the past 2 years.

Josiah Jackson

completed Year 12 in 2010 while boarding at Yirara College.

He has received numerous leadership awards throughout his schooling including NTCET Achievement Award, Caltex Best AllRounder Award, and Boarding House Award in 2010 and Australian Defence Force Long Tan and Leadership Award in 2009.

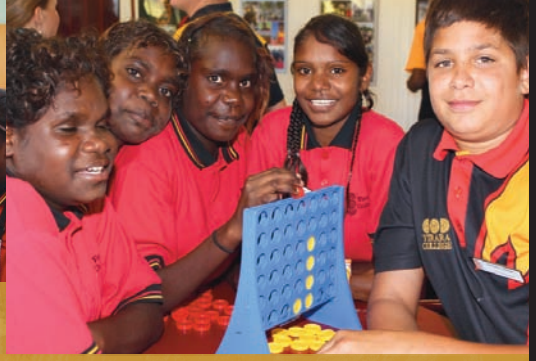
Josiah is highly regarding with both students and staff of Yirara as a leader and mentor to other students.

Josiah has volunteered his time to help out in with homework program, coaching sports and in dorms whilst completing his schooling.

He is currently employed at Yirara working in classrooms mentoring and tutoring and in the dorms.

Josiah is hoping to study Certificate 3 in Education Support.

The Honourable Mr Tom Pauling and his wife Mrs Tessa Pauling with Phillipa Simon, Trilby Godfrey, Monica Armstrong & Nova Noble



Chialer Hodgson, Soraya Brown, Shania Raymond, Levina Grant & Liam Kirkman

Yirara recent visitors…

The Chief Administrator for the Northern Territory, The Honourable Mr Tom Pauling and his wife Mrs Tessa Pauling toured Yirara College during a recent visit to open the parliamentary sitting in Alice Springs.

Student leaders outlined programmes during a tour of classrooms, the new library and male boarding houses. Student representatives from each class joined the group for a sumptuous afternoon tea in the Clontarf Club where Mr Pauling, our Principal Dr Andrew Mirtschin and Head of Yirara Clontarf, Mr Michael James addressed the gathering.

Youth Ambassador

International Year of Youth Ambassador for the United Nations and movie celebrity, Ms Monique Coleman gave a short presentation to Yirara College students during her recent national tour. A number of senior students enjoyed the opportunity to engage with her. Several Yirara ladies joined with other schools to participate in a special workshop hosted by Ms Coleman later in the day.

Photo: Scotty Collins, Dallas Lemon, Mitchell Weekend; Front row Yellow Tyrell Swan and Veronica Grant

Youth Artworks

Two Yirara students were commissioned to paint for local territory member Ms Robyn Lambley MLA. Teagan Malthouse and Stephanie Rabuntja presented their finished paintings to her in a special ceremony in the Yirara College Chapel. The artworks will be displayed permanently in Ms Lambley's Alice Springs Electoral Office.

THANK YOU, FRIENDS!

TRULY we have so much to thank you for. Recently you have shown an increasing interest in the work of Finke River Mission, and we are grateful. Promised prayers and gifts received are all greatly appreciated.

Many of you tell us of your continuing commitment to pray. You have also sent us regular monthly donations, letters of encouragement.

So it goes on. You are partners with us as we go about our work in the remote outback in support of Aboriginal ministry.

Thanks!

NEWS FROM **FINKE RIVER MISSION** OF THE LUTHERAN CHURCH OF AUSTRALIA

WINTER 2011

You really can **make a difference**

- ☐ I will pray for FRM staff and Aboriginal church leaders.
- ☐ I enclose a special tax deductible gift of $_____
- ☐ Please send me _____ Packs of 10 Christmas cards @ $15.00 each pack, incl envelope
- ☐ Please send me _____ copies of Ruth Cook's painting of 'The Last Supper' @ the Anniversary price of $50 incl GST
- ☐ I enclose a cheque for total of $_____
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If you do not state a preference, FRM will apply your gift where most needed. **Every donation of $2.00 or above is tax deductible.**

- ☐ FRM's on-going work
- ☐ The new revised Pitjantjatjara Hymnbook
- ☐ Church workers' in-service study courses ($3,300 each)
- ☐ Anmatyerr/Alyawarr Support Person, Pastor Ray Morris
- ☐ Please send information on 'Sponsor a Missionary' (SAM)
- ☐ Please send further 135th Anniversary information
- ☐ Please send me some free prayer cards
- ☐ I would like details of giving my LLL interest to FRM
- ☐ Please send information about including FRM in my Will
- ☐ I have included FRM in my Will. Please list me as a 'Heritage Friend'
- ☐ FRM will be grateful for gifts to help fund this newsletter

NOTE: If your preferred project is fully funded when your gift arrives, we will allocate your gift to other needs.

Post to FRM,
197 Archer Street, North Adelaide SA 5006

For phone gifts & requests call FRM at 08 8267 7300

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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