



# CHRIST IN THE CENTRE



NEWS FROM FINKE RIVER MISSION OF THE LUTHERAN CHURCH OF AUSTRALIA

SUMMER 2014

## Areyonga Pulpit Exchange

*Because worshipping numbers are growing, the people of Areyonga community have decided to donate more than \$100 000 towards the renovation and extension of their church, which was originally built in the 1940s.*

Meanwhile, the Bethel congregation (near Kapunda, SA) no longer use their pulpit (built in 1940), so they contacted the FRM. When the need for a new baptism font at Areyonga was also mentioned, Pastor Les Pfeiffer offered to make one. A special bowl and water jug were also donated by Ron and Margaret and Gary and Natalie Schmidt. Neil and Roxanne Weichert provided the transport of these sacred items from the Bethel congregation to Areyonga, a massive 20 hour, 1700km journey, starting noon on Monday.

Tuesday pm, Pastor Les and Neil arrived at Areyonga and met local parish worker, Daphne Puntjina, who was very happy to receive the pulpit and personalized baptism font; but the pulpit was far too high.

So they discarded some steps, reduced the pedestal height and made it secure. By 6 pm that day the alterations were complete. They then took the old Areyonga pulpit with them to the

church at Lilla (which has no pulpit), about 200kms away, on a rough dirt track, and swagged the night at King's Canyon Resort.

Both Neil and Pastor Les reported positively to the Bethel congregation about their experience, and the honour of meeting Daphne. They had travelled more than 3500 km in 3½ days to make the 'pulpit exchange' at Areyonga a reality. They arrived back at their homes early Thursday morning, just in time to start work!

FRM congregations often require sacred furniture. In 2015, a new church will be built by the Australian Army at Titjikala community, 120km south of Alice Springs. They will require a new altar, pulpit, baptism font, and other accessories such as number boards. If you can help FRM in any way to support the Titjikala congregation access such items, then please contact Pastor Rob Borgas at the FRM.

Pictured top: the beautiful new baptism font made by Pastor Les.

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Bethel Congregation and their pulpit and font.



Neil Weichert and Daphne Puntjina in the Areyonga church.



# Meet Pastor Jim Brown



Pastor Jim Brown at a training course at Haast's Bluff

**Where were you born?** Winparrku (Mt Webb), on the northeast edge of the Gibson Desert, in 1949.

**What was it like when you were young?** I remember living with my family wandering around the desert until we moved to Haast's Bluff in the 1950s. We also lived at Areyonga and finally Papunya. At these places I met Pastor Petering and learnt more about the gospel, and also the whitefella world - when I was young I used to eat sugar with my hands!

**How did you become a pastor?** In the mid 1970s I started singing gospel music, happily travelling from place to place. I spent a lot of time in the southern Kimberley and the eastern Pilbara. I really enjoyed working among the Walmatjarri people around Fitzroy Crossing and Hall's Creek. Back then many people said: "Hey, you should be a pastor!" But it was not until 1998 that I was finally ordained.

**What other things have you done to help your community?** In 1985 I moved to the brand new community of Kiwirrkura to help the nine people who had walked in from the desert the previous year. They had never seen a whitefella before! In 2003 I went to South Africa. God's Spirit told me to go to Robbin Island near Cape Town to see where Nelson Mandela had been in jail for many years. Mandela was a good man because he forgave his enemies.

**What are the most important things a pastor should do?** He should live among his people, and not be distracted from his work by other commitments. A pastor needs to trust that God will look after him. He should be 'like a young man all the time' (always enthusiastic and alert for opportunities to serve God and others).

While Pastor Paul Traeger was interviewing Pastor Jim in his own language, he spontaneously broke out into song a couple of times. One of his favourite songs was written by another Pintupi-Luritja pastor about the earliest missionaries to the Pintupi people. The song mentions Pastor F.W. Albrecht and Kamutu, a famous Indigenous evangelist, who brought the gospel to Pastor Jim's area in the 1930s. He greatly values their selfless work all those years ago.



The Miegels and Hartmanns with Hermannsburg staff.

## Desert

On going property maintenance is constantly required at the Mission Block in Alice Springs, church and store at Hermannsburg, and also at 20 churches and other buildings scattered throughout central Australia. This is a huge task that FRM shares with the local congregations, communities and traditional owners, who actually own most of the land and property.

FRM volunteers assist these local congregations to maintain the structures they feel they need to help proclaim the gospel in their local area and beyond. Each year, dozens of people from various congregations all over Australia, give their time, money and labour to help maintain these physical structures. Although the conditions in which they work are often challenging and extreme, the relationships they build with the local

## Yirara College

Confirmation weekend is an important weekend in the life of Yirara College. On 2 November, 2014 10 young people were confirmed. Derek Summerfield and Randall Norris (Titjikala), Dion Pareroultja, Jennicka Inkamala and Shaujan Stuart (Hermannsburg), Emmanuel Whiskey (Haasts Bluff), Glen Woods (Areyonga), Jack Packer (College Staff Family), Presley Daniels (Mt Liebig) & Vanessa Price (Tara) confessed their faith in a loving God and joined in the sacrament of Holy Communion for the first time.

Pastor Simon Dixon and Neville Doecke led the procession and were supported by the presence of Pastor Phillip Wilyuka from Titjikala, Pastor David Paech from Adelaide and Pastor Darryl Mattner from Finke River Mission. Mission Block and Hermannsburg combined choirs led the congregation of some 250 people in song.

Confirmees were presented with a bible and certificate and Pastor Simon asked all in attendance to remember all confirmees in their prayers, encourage them to serve our Lord and to set a good example for them so that they may live as God's people and finally reach their heavenly home.



Areyonga volunteers dismantling the shade structure.



The Portland crew on their way to Docker River.

# Rules Renno!

congregations, and the unique country they get to see, often far outweigh the difficulties they endure.

After volunteering with the FRM for seven weeks in 2013, Nannette and Trevor Hartmann from Immanuel, Novar Gardens, decided to recruit addition helpers for 2014. Consequently John & Mal Moran from Victor Harbour and Helen & Daryl Miegel from Novar Gardens answered the call, undertaking a huge range of tasks.

“You name it, we did it!” said Trevor, “From driving the truck into Alice for supplies, to erecting fittings, fixing pipes and even a washing machine. Nannette is currently making new altar cloths and vestments for the old Hermansburg church.”

Phil Ruge, Brendan Roll, Ross Roll and Martin Mibus (from Portland) achieved a significant bush engineering achievement, dismantling a large, heavy shade structure at Areyonga, with the help of a few young and strong local

volunteers. They then ‘monster’ moved the structure in a tandem trailer almost 1000km to its new home outside the Docker River church. But, according to Phil, “We are still keen to do it all again - Martin and Ross would have turned around the next day and gone back!”

And then there were the Hahndorf volunteers, led by Andrew Hein, who spent a number of days laying large areas of cement at the Hermansburg manse, adjoining car shed, and the pathway to the church. They also worked on the plumbing at the historic precinct, where they serviced the air-conditioners, and performed countless other repairs and maintenance. FRM is truly thankful for all these volunteers!

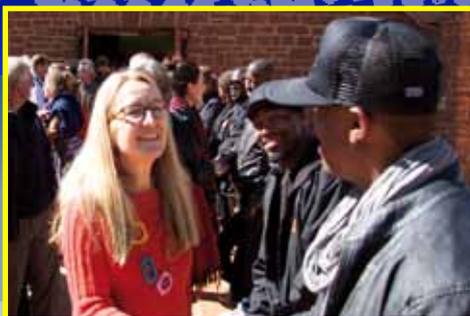
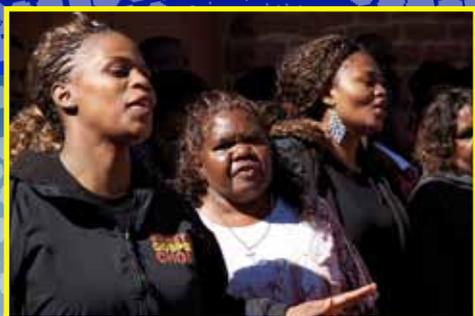
*If the above stories have stimulated your interest, then please contact Wayne Beven through the FRM office in Alice Springs, or at [wayne.b@finkerivermission.org.au](mailto:wayne.b@finkerivermission.org.au) - There is still much more to do!*

# Confirmation 2014

Ingkaarta Simon Dixon and Neville Doecke serve communion to the new confirmees.



# A HARMONY OF



At Hermannsburg on Sunday July 20th the traditional song 'Kumbayah' was sung in fifteen different languages at the same time. Eleven of those languages came from the hearts of the multi Grammy award winning Soweto Gospel Choir, who took time out of their busy Australian tour to worship with Indigenous choirs from Alice Springs, Titjikala, Docker River, Mutitjulu, Areyonga and Hermannsburg, all harmonised together in a service of praise.

Pastor David Kuss began the service with a question: "What is the most used book among Central Australian Indigenous Lutherans?" Clearly, the answer was the hymn book. Readers may be disappointed that the answer was not the bible. But, we must understand that Indigenous people have a strong oral tradition that has mainly been chanted or sung. So, when the first missionaries came to Hermannsburg, God's word was received as song far more naturally than being read in the pages of a bible. The Soweto people also have a great singing tradition, and there

was an obvious overwhelming spiritual bond as the choirs came together.

Later in the day, the Soweto Choir was invited to sing in the "old church" in the Hermannsburg Historical Precinct. The old church walls were once again blessed with harmonies of praise. After delicious soup and apple strudel, the whole contingent, including a very sensitive entourage of media people,



# CULTURES



were taken to some special sites along the Finke River including 'Jesus' Footprint' formed in the bedrock.

The day ended with hugs and the bestowing of skin names. These things normally would happen after many years of trust and friendship. It seemed the common history of hardship, story, and song created a deep kindred spirit. It was a day of blessing for the Indigenous Lutherans and especially for our choirs who are in many ways the backbone of Lutheran spirituality in Central Australia. We are very thankful to the Soweto Gospel Choir for blessing our people with their presence.

In Alice Springs on July 19, the Combined Central Australian Indigenous Choir performed as a support act to the Soweto Gospel Choir at the Araluen Arts Centre to 2 packed audiences. On August 24, they did it all again at the Darwin Amphitheatre for the closing of

the Darwin Festival before a crowd of 5000 people. A retiring offering for the Choir's trip to Germany in 2015 raised almost \$7000. If you would like to support the Choir so they can perform at the 2015 Kirchentag in Germany please see p8 for more details about how you can help.

Pastors Robert Borgas and David Kuss (ex FRM support worker, now pastor at Birdwood)

For more reports and photos see: ABC's veteran religious commentator John Cleary was at Hermannsburg: <http://mpegmedia.abc.net.au/news/audio/am/201407/20140721-am-fullprogram.mp3>

See the Soweto Gospel Choir Face Book Page for excellent photos of the day: <https://www.facebook.com/pages/Asante-Sana-Choir/206866396020070>

The following is a link to a short film of the choir singing at the Araluen Centre in Alice Springs. <https://vimeo.com/109431867>



The Combined Central Australian Indigenous Choir sings at the Amphitheatre, Darwin. Photo: ©Paz Tassone

# New kids on 'the Block' Celebrate 5 years



Miranda Cirocco

Communications Officer, Lutheran Community Care

In 2009 LCC was invited to work with Finke River Mission to respond to the needs of the local community. Building on 40 years of community service experience in South Australia, LCC set up on 'the Block' in Alice Springs and formed a partnership with Finke River Mission and the local Alice Springs congregation.

'When I visited in those first months we had just started our support program, helping people with managing money. There were three staff in the office. It was a quiet place and we didn't know quite how things would go,' LCC Director Helen Lockwood says. 'Now when I visit there are over 20 staff enthusiastically providing support in financial literacy and running the playgroups. It's a dynamic workplace with staff contributing ideas, planning and increasing their skills. We now work with nearly 2,000 people a year.'

The original financial literacy program that targeted Town Camps and 10 remote communities with two money workers has expanded to reach 13 remote communities serviced by 10

Pictured: Damien Marlowe, Lachlan Thompson, Lisa Lewis, Maggie Gleeson, Jenny Black and Wendy-lea Lechleitner

Money Workers. LCC also has two qualified Financial Counsellors on site, including the first Aboriginal Financial Counsellor in Alice Springs. Staff have a personal knowledge of what Indigenous Australians face and have assisted them to avoid borrowing 'traps' and large bank fees.

In addition to the financial literacy programs, LCC has worked closely with the church to develop the Kwatja Etatha playgroup which reaches out to over 200 parents and children each year. In 2013 staff were excited to start a mobile playgroup which drives fun activities and morning tea directly to families in four Town Camps each week.

LCC recently opened a road front Op Shop on Gap Road which offers quality used clothing at an affordable price. It has been hugely popular with the community and is open Thursday and Friday. Further responding to community needs, LCC offers emergency assistance in the form of food or blankets and just last year staff were able to give 55 Christmas Hampers for struggling families to celebrate the holidays.

The true success of LCC is the passion brought from staff who work together to provide support that has been needed for many years. When asked what they enjoy most about working at LCC, one staff member said they like the positive atmosphere and feeling of belonging that the playgroup creates.

'That's why families come, it's a comfortable, healing place. People come directly to us at LCC because it's a calming place and they feel they belong. There's serenity, they are comfortable, and they are accepted as a group.'

## FRM and Mission Block Reunion

Written by Joan Grosse, who taught at Hermannsburg 1973-1976 and Living Waters, Alice Springs 1987-2006.



Over forty interstate visitors with connections to Finke River Mission (FRM) joined locals on the June 14-16 weekend to celebrate over 75 years of God's work on the Alice Springs Mission Block and 50 years since the opening of the Children's Cottages.

The Mission Block was originally purchased by Missionary FW Albrecht in 1938. Since then, the Mission Block provided a place to stay, a place to train and teach others, a place to distribute food and clothing, a place to meet

and a place of worship – all of this work still continues today. The Old Church is now a valued meeting room and museum/archive.

The Mission Block reunion program was drawn up by the 'Old Church History Team' of Olga Radke, Tony Collins and Christine & Karl Benz. The official welcome on Saturday afternoon gave current FRM Board chairman, Tim Stollznow the opportunity to thank all past and present FRM staff and supporters for their work. He reminded the gathering that

"Those Mission seeds planted long ago and nurtured throughout the years, now include 30 pastors covering 40 communities and 6000 Aboriginal people who identify as Lutheran in Central Australia. With God's grace the Mission Block will continue to serve as an important base for our church in the centre for many years to come." The work and presence of both past FRM Board Chairman Mostyn Keller & Superintendent Garry Stoll, who both served FRM for over 40 years was acknowledged.

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# Volunteers

## Andre and Eloise Thompson



Photo: Andre and Eloise and their children, Cloie, Tamlyn, Monica, and Dylan

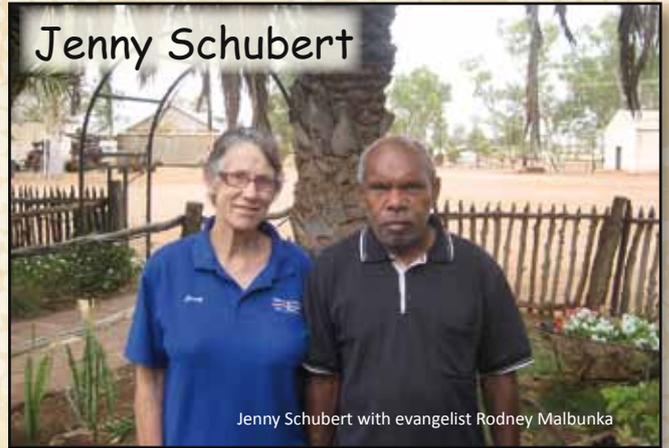
Andre and Eloise have been working at the Hermannsburg Historical Precinct for the past month helping run the tea rooms and doing general maintenance. One of their four children, Cloie, also worked at the reception desk near the entrance. They originally came to Hermannsburg as tourists, spending the last half of this year travelling Australia. When they read something about an historic mission they decided to stop for lunch and check it out.

Noticing the 'request for volunteers' sign at the tea rooms in exchange for free camping they decided to give it a try for one week. They ended up staying for 4, doing paid work for the last three.

"What really impressed us was the community spirit of the FRM staff and the whole town. We would have loved to stay longer and get to know the people and their culture, but we had to finish our trip around Australia. We would certainly do it all again one day for the people there and for God."

Andre and Eloise are not Lutherans; both were brought up as Baptists. But the most important history lesson they learnt was how the early FRM missionaries tried to learn the local culture and language so they could share the gospel without expecting the Arrarnta people to become westernized Christians.

## Jenny Schubert



Jenny Schubert with evangelist Rodney Malbunka

I first became a volunteer at Hermannsburg in 2013, not long after I became a widow. My husband's parting advice was the catalyst that brought me here: "Follow Jesus, put your hand in His and He will show you what to do."

When I first arrived I worked in the kitchen at the store, producing takeaway meals and sandwiches. Sometimes I stacked and cleaned shelves, and always I experienced the most amazing acceptance, love and appreciation from everyone involved with F.R.M. In just a month I knew that this was truly where I should be.

After a quick trip back to the Barossa Valley I became totally miserable and knew that I needed to go back and help at Hermannsburg. In April this year I left my home and my life in Tanunda to voluntarily serve the FRM for as long as I am able.

It has been my great privilege getting to know the children and adults in the local congregation by helping with Sunday School. Since our pastor, David Kuss has left us for his new parish, I have helped Evangelist Rodney Malbunka with some of his numeracy and literacy studies from Nungalinga College in Darwin. Hopefully, he will soon be ordained. It is an unbelievable privilege to be meeting together with Rodney for mutual prayer and support.

Otherwise, my days are spent at the store kitchen, baking scones and making sandwiches each morning, then for the rest of the day I work at the Historical Precinct where I serve lunches and snacks to the tourists and often have opportunities to talk to them about the work and history of FRM.

Those employed by FRM at Hermannsburg include local Indigenous people, students, and even volunteers from overseas. The long-term presence of our wonderful managers, Selwyn (his wife Ruth) and Rod, are a major reason for the beautiful spirit of friendship and acceptance here at Hermannsburg.



Merryl Spears and Heather Heinzl

John Strehlow, Rhonda Inkamala and Olga Radke

Mona Cramer and Garry Stoll

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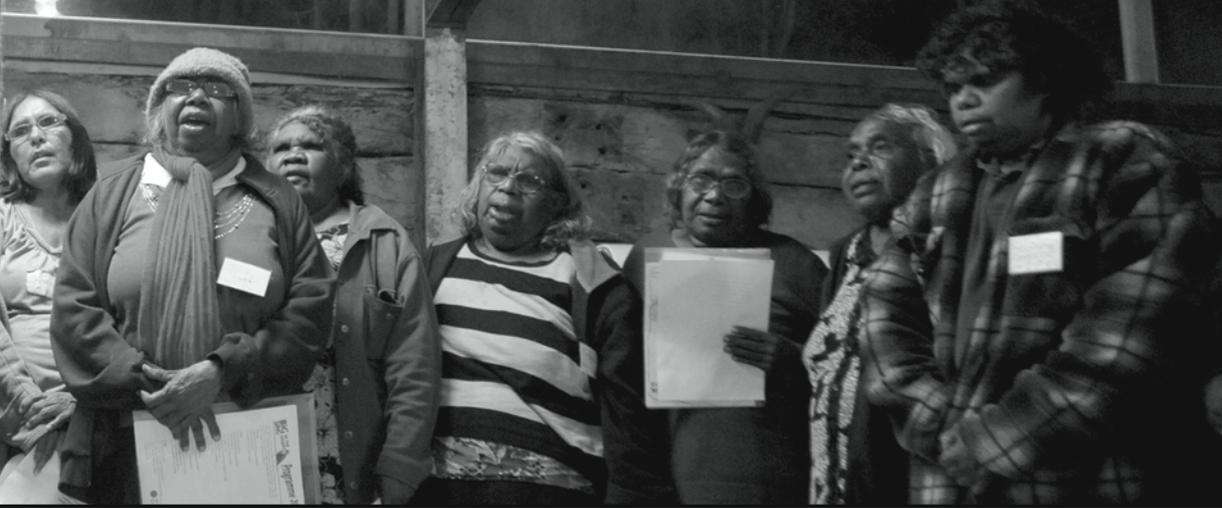
A thanksgiving service was held on Sunday morning. During this service in the 'new' church, a video message (in both English and Aranda) from Pastor Paul Albrecht (former FRM field superintendent) was screened. Pastor Max Stollznow who had previously worked in Alice Springs and at Papunya also spoke. Prior

to the benediction, the officiating pastors led the congregation out to the old gum tree, the site of the first worship services in Alice Springs, where the Aboriginal choir sang and Pastor Simon Dixon spoke and prayed.

Sunday afternoon included a tour of Yirara College, a stop at the old Alice Springs cemetery where

identities such as evangelist Martin and artist Albert Namatjira are buried, and a visit to Living Waters Lutheran School. Monday was spent at Hermannsburg attending the local school's closing service in the church, listening to the children sing outside, reminiscing and walking around the historical precinct, and meeting up with local people—a very special time.





Pictured from left: Theresa Nipper, Judy Trigger, Sandra Windy, Manatji Brumby, Pantjiti McKenzie, Rosslyn Yibbardi, Marlene Connelly.

Singing has always been important to the Indigenous people of central Australia. Much of their traditional religion (or 'Dreaming') has been communicated through the chanting of songs. When the first German missionaries noticed this, they also taught the gospel to these people through Christian hymns. Central to the missionary endeavour was the establishment of choirs led by various people over the past 100 years. These choirs helped people learn the Western hymns that had been translated by the missionaries, encouraged others to write Christian hymns in their own language, and also supported the life and worship of the congregation. Today, these choirs have survived a period of demise since their zenith in the late 1960s, and now, with the support of the FRM, they have once again taken their rightful place as central to the mission of many FRM congregations. They also play a vital role promoting the work of FRM and showcasing the modern cultural heritage of central Australia to the general public.

In 2015, the Combined Central Australian Indigenous Choir, like a boomerang, want to bring something back to the churches and people of Germany who sent out their loved ones so long ago to such a foreign place. They want to bring back the gospel through their singing, dancing and painting to share it with the Christians and other people of Germany. The way they share the gospel through song, dance and painting is unique and powerful to the post modern young people of today who are seeking something different than modern churches can usually offer.

The Finke River Mission is working hard to send the CCAI Choir to the 2015 Kirchentag in Stuttgart (see [www.kirchentag.org.uk](http://www.kirchentag.org.uk) for more information). In Neuendettelsau, Germany, the Mission EineWelt, Centre for Partnership, Development and Mission of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Bavaria will be their official sponsor, providing much needed accommodation, meals and other support. However, this "Boomerang Tour" will also need financial help with travel. This will be a significant event for the choirs, for the Finke River Mission, and for the LCA. If you would like to help sponsor this once in a lifetime opportunity for our FRM choirs, then please give to the work of the FRM.



## 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:**

*You really can make a difference*

Online: [www.lca.org.au/finke-river-mission](http://www.lca.org.au/finke-river-mission)

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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 e-mail to [frmoffice@bigpond.com](mailto:frmoffice@bigpond.com)

# For your prayers:

## The family of the late Pastor M Roberts

who was buried at Haasts Bluff on November 7. He has faithfully served as a pastor and evangelist for many years.

## People to encourage

and mentor the next generation of pastors, evangelists, choir singers and other church leaders.

Our newest support worker, **Pastor Darryl Mattner**. He will be installed in January when his family arrives in Alice Springs.

The new manager of the Hermansburg Historic Precinct, **Roger Jenke** and his wife Irene

**Mark Thiel** and his family as they prepare to come to Alice Springs. Mark will be installed as the new Indigenous ministry support person in January.

The **FRM choir** as they prepare for their 'Boomerang' Tour of Germany.



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