

# IN PARTNERSHIP

May 2020



## How Hand Washing Helps Kids in Vanuatu

Children in Nasawa, Vanuatu

The importance of washing our hands has been emphasised to us a lot lately. I'm sure you have seen posters or videos showing how to make sure our hands get thoroughly cleaned. It's easy to see things like this and wonder, "Surely everyone knows this already?"

In many parts of the world, there is a lack of education around proper hygiene. People aren't taught how germs spread, or how to properly wash their hands. They may not even have clean water to use! And some of the most affected by this are children.

Poor hygiene is a major cause of illness in children, resulting in an estimated 1.9 billion days of school missed per year. Kids spend long hours close together in classrooms, which makes it easy to spread communicable sickness like diarrhoea. Schools can too easily become a place where children will be at risk.

This is why hygiene training, soap, and handwashing stations are so important.

Baravet is a small village on the coast of Pentecost Island. Like many small communities in Vanuatu, the people living there had no reliable access to safe water until recently. Matan is a teacher there, and she used to have to walk all the way to the next village to gather water for the school. With so little water, they had to choose if they wanted to use it for drinking or washing.

"Now the pre-school has a standpipe, we have clean water and do not need to walk long distances," Matan says. "The children can clean their hands after the toilet and not worry about using up the water."

Frequent handwashing helps to keep these kids healthy. It can reduce the spread of sicknesses like diarrhoea.

Another village on Maewo Island, called Nasawa, also built handwashing stations as part of their new kindergarten. Children can now wash their hands before they eat, and after using the toilet!

Good sanitation is spreading — but there are still many places in Vanuatu, and other countries, where they don't have this awareness.

You can help make a difference to people living in places like Baravet! It costs \$300 to educate a group of people about proper hygiene and sanitation practices.

Your gift, no matter how much, helps bring this critical training to more people, and stops the spread of preventable disease.

Donate today at [www.gmp.org.au/change](http://www.gmp.org.au/change)

### Also in the Issue

News and Events .....	2
The Great Lockdown.....	2
Hope in the Pandemic .....	3
Closing Down Opens Up New Opportunities.....	4
IMA Essentials Pack.....	4
GMP Tribute.....	4

## News & Events

### Cyclone Harold Vanuatu Emergency Appeal

Churches of Christ Overseas Aid (COCOA) has launched an emergency appeal for Vanuatu. Funds raised for the appeal will be used to support the recovery of our partner communities and programs. You can give online at [www.gmp.org.au](http://www.gmp.org.au)



### Over \$20,000 Raised for Walk for Hope!

A big 'Thank You' to those who participated in Walk for Hope this Easter. The money you donated will help plant new churches, train pastors, and send evangelists to share Jesus' message of hope to people around the world.

### Farewell Natalie Oakes

We want to acknowledge Natalie Oakes, who concluded her role as GMP embody National Coordinator on April 8. Nat has been a part of the embody network for more than five years, both as a volunteer and staff. She has continuously developed our small team into a strong support network for projects like Safe Water September. Mitch Salmon is now the embody National Coordinator.

### SWS 2020

Safe Water September (SWS) will be launching for 2020 very soon! [www.safewaterseptember.org.au](http://www.safewaterseptember.org.au)



## The Great Lockdown

The Great Lockdown provides opportunities. Many of us are doing tasks at home we have not got around to for some time – we have had some big cupboard cleanouts and unpacked boxes from five years ago!

We are also learning new skills. Worship, family catchups and many meetings via the ubiquitous Zoom. We are gaining many new skills as well as facing many challenges. A gift in this time is the chance to discover a new pace of life and maybe to find more time to reflect.

I have found myself drawn back to one of the contrasting illustrations Jesus uses with his followers. He talks about the options for building a house – on sand or on rock. Sand is easy to work with – it can be made smooth and can even seem strong. House building on sand is fast and can seem impressive.

House building on rock takes time. Either the rock needs to be shaped to be a foundation or the foundation is shaped around the rock. This takes time and in the early stages does not seem impressive. However, rock is a foundation that can withstand the elements much better than sand.

The strong winds of the current situation are being experienced in many ways – and it has given us a unity with our partners – all of us are in it together, although with very different capacities and resources available to us. We share the same pandemic.

Our rock gives us hope and provides meaning for us. It helps us to trust God, maintain confidence in his love, be present in prayer, focus our lives on his call to follow, and to create reliable foundations. Our external realities do change. Our security is in the rock of God's eternal goodness and love - which does not change.

What does this look like for GMP right now? We are not giving up and are not discouraged. Yes, income has fallen and, yes, we have advised our partners of our challenges. We have asked for their support – we are not giving up. We are with you, our Australian partners – and are confident in our foundation and the providence and grace of God that flows. We have a strong future, and deeply trust God in this.

*John Gilmore,*  
Executive Officer



SPOTLIGHT

Left: Hosanna Ministries India providing food packets during COVID-19

Right (from top left) GMP Partners: Hery Susanto, Philemon Pawar, Yabru Jerry, BJ Mpfu, Fiona Briers and James Aru.

## Hope in the Pandemic

**Right now, the world is facing an unprecedented struggle. One thing that is bringing hope is that we are facing this struggle together. We want to share with you some positive responses from our international and Australian partners:**

In South Sudan, the children at Emmanuel School have been diligent in washing their hands. Paulino Malou Bol said, “They first learnt this skill at school by washing their hands before lunch time as instructed. Now, they are teaching their families to do the same and help keep them safe from the virus.”

Discipleship continues even in isolation. The students at the Christian Church Theological School of Indonesia (CCTSI) participate in Google classroom, upload their singing to YouTube and share encouraging Bible verses via WhatsApp and social media.

In Zimbabwe, pastors record their Sunday messages on their phones and send them to their congregations, while those who don’t have access to this technology spend their time praying.

In Vietnam, people have more time to reflect and pray, sharing their faith journey through Viber.

Families in Fiji are experiencing new connections to each other and God at home. Pastor Raj exclaims, “Like they have never done before.”

James Aru said, “The churches in Vanuatu are mobilising their prayer network for the whole nation. We commit to praying for one another.”

Here in Australia, we are seeing Indigenous Ministries Australia (IMA) church communities meeting online for the first time using platforms like Zoom or Facebook. Also, embody youth continue building their community online. Mitch Salmon told us, “We’ve been blessed to host online prayer gatherings, casual Zoom meet ups and mission discussions.”

Even in the face of this pandemic, we are seeing the common thread of love and care. For instance, theology and ministry students in Indonesia responded to this crisis by volunteering in the neighbourhood and spraying disinfectant. CCTSI Academic Dean, Hery Susanto, said “We also want to be a blessing for others.”

Daniel Trihandarkha, from Indonesia, has seen God’s goodness in fresh ways, “I saw a little hawk enjoying its meal. Such a view is rare

nowadays, with so much poaching and deforestation, it just reminded me of how marvellous God’s providence is.”

In Thailand, Rev. Sayam Muangsak has been demonstrating God’s goodness, providing rice and food for people in his local community who are unemployed, “We are concerned and care about human beings, who God created with dignity and value.”

Daniel Gaikwad reports “We made 50 food packets which included rice, dhal and salt. One food pack would help one family for a week. We plan to increase the food packets to 100.” Philemon Pawar, also of India, responded to the GMP Board’s letter: “Beautiful words of encouragement and assurance of prayers.”

BJ Mpfu of Zimbabwe insightfully wrote, “This virus has brought to our world a reminder that we need each other.”

We will continue to keep you updated on news from our partners, as the COVID-19 situation keeps changing. You can read more news updates on the GMP website [www.gmp.org.au](http://www.gmp.org.au) and Facebook page.

# Closing Down Opens Up New Opportunities

Dareton is a town used to doing it tough, but the necessity of closing the Dareton Youth and Community Centre has placed an extra burden on many of the local Indigenous families in the Sunraysia District. Combined with school closures, the shutting of the centre has made it particularly tough for many of the youth who access the centre regularly and participate in the cooking and art classes – not to mention the positive socialising and connections they’re missing. However, the local IMA partners, Ilker Deli and Brendon Garlett, supported by Andrew Tonkin from the Mildura Church of Christ, are coming up with a creative and

safe way to keep connecting with and supporting the locals through ‘Essentials Packs’. The Essentials Packs will be distributed safely from the Youth and Community Centre and because of the genuine relationships and connections already established over the last three years of the centre’s operations, the Dareton team are able to ensure the packs get to those most in need. Most Indigenous communities are already at high risk and the additional financial hardships that many are now facing, due to changes in their work, can make it harder to access some of the day-to-day shopping essentials.



This is where the Essentials Packs can make a difference. Our partners in WA, SA and VIC are getting on board with this program and we’d love your support, too.

*Nick Wight,*  
IMA East



**\$50**

## IMA Essentials Pack

Indigenous Australian families and individuals are experiencing hardship during COVID-19. With your support, IMA will safely deliver essential items like groceries, sanitisers, gloves and face masks to those at high risk of virus exposure, with compromised health or experiencing financial hardship.

*\$50 will help to provide an essential supplies pack to vulnerable Indigenous Australian families and individuals experiencing hardship during COVID-19. This donation is tax deductible.*

To give an essentials pack visit: [Extend.org.au/EssentialsPack](https://Extend.org.au/EssentialsPack)

## GMP Tribute

**The GMP Board and staff give thanks to God for the ministry and service of four former missionaries who died in the past few weeks.**

**Don Stephens (WA)**, who with his wife Claire, served with the Australian Churches of Christ Indigenous Ministry (ACCIM) in various locations from 1973-2012.

**Betty Sewell (WA)** was a pioneer ACCIM missionary at Ingada Carnarvon during 1946-48, and wrote the history of the Ingada mission.

**Alex McKay (WA)** served with the Overseas Mission Board (OMB) in Vanuatu through 1969-1972 and also with ACCIM in Carnarvon from 1980-83. Alex followed this with further service at Roelands from 1983 onwards.

**Shirley Ludgater (VIC)** served in Londua, Vanuatu, with OMB (and her husband, Keith) through 1961-1977. It was at Londua where she wrote the school song – which is still in use.

We also give thanks to God for the life of long-term member and Treasurer of the Victorian OMB Committee - **Val Wilson**.

**Our future is built on the faithfulness of so many people.**

