

# IN PARTNERSHIP

July 2021



Greg Little at Surrender

## Reconciliation has to be More than Just a Word

Pastor Greg Little is a highly respected Noongar Elder and has faithfully served in Christian leadership for many years, including 13 years as the pastor of Bunbury Aboriginal Christian Fellowship. He joined Bek and Jeziel on Perth's Christian Radio Station – 98five – during National Reconciliation Week, sharing about the importance of reconciliation and what it means to him and what hope he has for his people and for the broader Australian community.

Below is an excerpt of Pastor Greg's reflections:

“Reconciliation is about people coming together to be reconciled with one another. The idea of reconciliation has been around for quite some time and it will continue to be around for quite a while. I've always thought about reconciliation as an individual issue.

If we want to be reconciled, we need to look at ourselves.

“I think over the years we have looked at our leaders to reconcile the country, but it doesn't work that way. We need to come back and put it on a personal plate. Do we want to reconcile; do we want to be reconciled? If we don't want to be reconciled and we expect somebody else to do it for us, well, then it won't work. It begins with us.

“When you look back to the 2008 National Apology that was a great thing for our people, for a Prime Minister to stand up and say sorry on behalf of the previous governments for the hurt and the pain and that suffering that our people went through, and I think we really took hold of that. And then as a country we looked at where we are going to go from here, and we had the discussion

about Constitutional Recognition of Australia's First Peoples but there wasn't broad government support for that. I think that the only way we are going to move forward is through a treaty, but I think that's going to take some time and our people are going to be suffering for a while.

“But when you look around, we have got some good young people coming through. We look at the sporting system, taking a lot of our people in, and in the workforce, where many new doors have been opened. So, there's been progress but, in regards to reconciliation, well I think a lot of people are just saying it's still only a word today.”

If your church would like to book Pastor Greg to come and share at your church service in the coming months, please email Colin Battersby at [colinb@gmp.org.au](mailto:colinb@gmp.org.au) or call on 0404 145 065.

## News & Events



### NAIDOC Week

In this edition of In Partnership we observe NAIDOC Week, highlighting some of our partnerships through Indigenous Ministry Australia (IMA). NAIDOC Week celebrates history, culture and the achievements of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. NAIDOC Week is celebrated by all Australians and is a great opportunity to learn more about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. The National NAIDOC Theme for 2021 is

#### Heal Country!

To find out more visit [www.naidoc.org.au](http://www.naidoc.org.au)



### Safe Water September 2021

Globally, one in 10 people don't have clean water close to home. You can help change this. Switch to just water this September. You can still eat food – just no coffee, tea, soft drink or milkshakes! For every \$25 you raise, one person gains access to safe water. This improves health, hygiene and help to stop the spread of disease. These long-term improvements help reduce child and maternal deaths, help kids to stay in school, and can transform whole communities!

Read more and sign up to take the challenge at [www.safewaterseptember.org.au](http://www.safewaterseptember.org.au)



## Faith Leads to Action

This short sentence could be the catch cry of any history of Christian Mission. Early missionaries worked to develop schools, medical services, leadership training and churches. They advocated for their communities and their human rights. People gained skills, living conditions improved and many discovered the love of God for themselves. We know in hindsight that not all of the action of Christian Mission was helpful. Sometimes cultural values and structures were not appreciated, and western approaches were imposed on others (colonialism).

This month we celebrate faith that leads to action. The beginnings of National Aborigines and Islanders Day Observance Committee (NAIDOC) week can be traced back to the 1930s. More specifically, the 1938 launch of a national Day of Mourning and also to William Cooper (a Yorta Yorta man), who was pastored by Daniel Matthews (a Christian missionary).

After a church service in January 1884, Cooper approached Matthews and said, "I must give my heart to God". This is a beautiful expression of commitment to Christ. In the following years, Cooper influenced many others, one being Pastor Sir Doug Nicholls – also a Yorta Yorta man.

Becoming Christian was foundational for Cooper in the activities he became involved in. These included the establishment of the Australian Aborigines League in 1935. In the same year he led the first Aboriginal deputation to a Commonwealth Government Minister and, in 1938, the first visit to an Australian Prime Minister. William Cooper died in 1941.

William Cooper's faith led to action. Action on behalf of his people and action that could not be diverted by the conservative political environment of the time. He mentored others, and maintained his commitments to his faith and people throughout his life. We remember his sense of hope and expectation as we celebrate NAIDOC week.

James writes: *So faith by itself, if it has no works, is dead* (James 2:17). The verses that follow practically apply this statement. Yes, we are not saved by our own works – however, our faith calls us into action.

Christian Mission is full of stories about people whose faith led them to action. I know not all these stories are good. However, some – like William Cooper – stand as a continuing inspiration to live out the gospel. It also inspires us to act against racism and discrimination on the basis that all of us are God's children and are made in God's image.

*John Gilmore,*  
Executive Officer



Artwork by Jessica Johnson for Nungala Creative [www.nungalacreative.com](http://www.nungalacreative.com)

SPOTLIGHT

## On Kaurna Country Tarndanyangga Kaurna Yerta

*“This is the Red Kangaroo Dreaming place of the Kaurna people. It was an important place for the Kaurna long before the City of Adelaide was established. The Adelaide Park Lands and Squares are part of this place and hold special cultural significance for us – the Kaurna people.”*

Despite the COVID travel restrictions around Australia, IMA was able to run our first ‘pilot’ city tour in Adelaide with the Churches of Christ SA/NT. The tour was led by local traditional owner and elder, Frank Wanganeen. Also helping guide us was Billy Williams, a Gomeroi man and leader with the dhiyaan community in Brisbane.

They shared powerful reflections on all that we saw and heard on our experience in early May. It was a fantastic time that both honoured Uncle Frank, respected local Indigenous history and brought new insights and depth of understanding for those present.

This ‘pilot’ tour took us to significant historical and cultural sites in the heart of Adelaide. From Pinky Flat, Pirltawardli and the sports and arts precinct, to the Aboriginal War memorial and Tarntanyangga (Victoria Square). We also travelled to the moving and reflective Colebrook Reconciliation Park. It is a powerful and poignant place associated with traumas of the past

and the present. The day finished at the Kaurna Cultural Centre, hearing the Tjilbruke Dreaming Story of the coastal country. We also shared our reflections of this poignant day.

Indigenous Ministries Australia (IMA) is looking to work closely with Churches of Christ SA/NT, in particular with Peter Barney (State Minister) to develop these tours.

IMA hopes to offer church groups and others a genuine, honouring and respectful way to listen and learn from our Indigenous brothers and sisters. This will provide opportunities to prayerfully reflect on our shared histories, and to seek healing together through our Creator God who seeks to reconcile us all to one another, the lands on which we live, and to himself.

*Nick Wight,*  
Indigenous Ministries  
Coordinator East



## Pastor Greg Little Speaking Ministry

One way your church can learn more about IMA, Indigenous culture and faith and how to engage further with your local Indigenous community is by inviting Indigenous Pastor, Greg Little, to share at your church.

Pastor Greg Little is a highly respected Noongar Elder and has faithfully served in Christian leadership for many years. Greg has been the pastor of the Bunbury

Aboriginal Christian Fellowship for the last 13 years and is also the Chair of the Indigenous Ministries Australia WA Council. Pastor Greg was the recipient of the 2019 National NAIDOC “Male Elder of the Year” Award and was recently acknowledged for two decades of outstanding service and leadership as a Prison Support Officer at the Bunbury Regional Prison.

Both Pastor Greg and his wife, Margaret, are strongly committed to Indigenous Christian leadership and want their community to flourish. God has laid on Greg’s heart a deep desire to visit and share with WA church congregations about what God is doing in Indigenous communities and to see how churches can walk alongside our Indigenous brothers and sisters in ministry.

If your church in Western Australia would like Pastor Greg to share at your service in the coming months, please email Colin Battersby at [colinb@gmp.org.au](mailto:colinb@gmp.org.au)



Fiona Briers (Photo courtesy of Ngoc Tran/Oi Vietnam)

## Fiona Briers is Back!

Fiona Briers, founder of Bright Solutions Vietnam, is back in Australia...well, after first spending time in a quarantine hotel in Sydney.

Fiona flew back from lockdown in Ho Chi Minh City. Bright Solutions stopped trading in June 2020, but lots of things have happened since then. Fiona had more time for the discipleship work that she has been doing with her church and with other contacts. Some of these contacts have come from people seeing Bright Solutions' values and the way it operated as a business. This attracted them to want to know more.

The work of Bright Solutions continues in another form, too. Since closure there have been two contracts for Bright Solutions handcrafts. Fiona worked with ex-staff to fulfil these. When the third one came up, Fiona put one of the women in charge and she

is organising a group to fill it, and learning about leadership along the way.

Getting back to Australia was not in the traditional returning missionary manner – Fiona flew business class. This was her only option – no other tickets were available. As it was her first ever business class flight, she had to ask the attendant how to move the seat!

Bright Solution's financial and legal affairs are not quite shut down yet, unfortunately. Fiona had to find a new accountant to cover some of the things that the previous accountant didn't attend to. The relevant government department is also overwhelmed; only 8,000 of 20,000 business closures in the queue having been completed.

In quarantine, Fiona saw only one person face to face – the nurse who came to collect swabs for her

COVID test. There are no outings, no keys and lots of Australian food which is a challenge for Fiona's Vietnam-accustomed palate. She is grateful for the chilli sauce that her sister sent her!

Fiona is thankful to God for all His provision. Getting a ticket at the time she wanted was a much-appreciated act of grace.

Post-quarantine plans are still forming for Fiona. Her mother is unwell so she will stay in Sydney with family before catching up with Melbourne friends. Then there might be a time of staying put for a while before she heads off on the next adventure with God.

Fiona will be in Australia for a while and is looking forward to catching up with supporters and friends soon. There will certainly be time to say goodbye to GMP supporters from the last twelve years, so watch for the announcement.



## IMA Resource Kits

IMA has put together some resources for you to use at your church, to help explore Reconciliation and Thanksgiving with regard to Indigenous Australian land, culture and people. Resource Kits available for download at: [www.gmp.org.au/IMAKits](http://www.gmp.org.au/IMAKits)

