

IN PARTNERSHIP

DECEMBER 2018



Healing and Restoring

There are times when we are faced with a choice that can't and must not be avoided. GMP is in such a situation. To make this important decision we reflected on our values and on how we can rely on the grace and goodness of God, and we decided to focus our attention on others and not on ourselves.

Let me give the background. About five years ago GMP launched Indigenous Ministries Australia (IMA) and we did so based on income from investing the assets of the former Australian Churches of Christ Indigenous Ministries (ACCIM). This new initiative flowed from the closure of ACCIM and the decision by the ACCIM Board to trust GMP with a group of Indigenous leaders to plan a new journey in this important area of ministry. IMA is a gift to GMP and we have learned much from our Indigenous sisters and brothers.

Part of the history of ACCIM included the care of children in residential settings. The Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child

Sexual Abuse has indicated that a small number of these children have described the experience of being abused while in care, and there may be more. One of the recommendations of the report of the Royal Commission is that institutions cooperate with the Government in offering support, counseling, an apology and redress in recognition of the abuse having happened. It is hoped that this process will assist in the process of healing.

GMP was faced with a choice. What should we do? We can attempt to protect the assets we received from ACCIM and not enter into the National Redress Scheme or we can decide to begin the process to opt in.

If we decided not to take part, we would be avoiding responsibility for what happened to some children. Staying out might protect assets. However we would not be part of a healing process.

To enter into the Redress Scheme means financial and organisational

preparation for responding to abuse survivors, and accepting the risk that the claims for redress might have an impact on the assets that make much of the ministry of IMA possible.

Our decision became clear. Our commitment is to build a future on good and strong foundations rather than building it on the pain and suffering of others. We want to be part of a healing and restoring process. So GMP will begin the process to opt in to the National Redress Scheme. We will do so trusting in God's grace and healing for the lives of the hurt and harmed.

Join us in prayer for the healing of hurts, the coming of justice and a future in this important ministry guided by God's goodness and grace.


John Gilmore,
Executive Officer

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For even more of the latest news, check out our website or follow us on facebook.

 www.gmp.org.au

 facebook.com/gmpaustralia



Merry Christmas from GMP

"Let the Heavens Rejoice and the Earth be glad." Psalm 96:11

We at GMP wish you and your loved ones a very joyful and peaceful Christmas season.

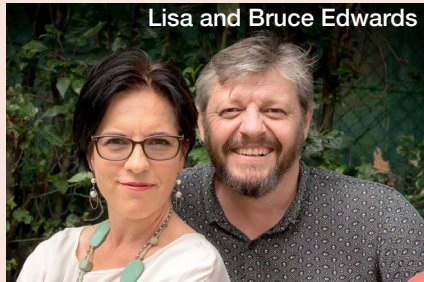
Please note that our office will be closed from 12pm on the 24th of December and will reopen on the 2nd of January 2019.

News & Events

A Time of Transition for Fiji Churches

Bruce Edwards, the Director of Fiji Churches of Christ, leaves Fiji at the end of 2018. GMP thanks Bruce for six years of commitment, leading the ministry in Fiji, and we wish him and his family all the best for the future! Read the full article *A Time of Transition* in the 'News' section of our GMP website.

www.gmp.org.au/about-us/news



Lisa and Bruce Edwards

COCOA Christmas Offering

This December Churches of Christ across Australia will be participating in the COCOA Christmas Offering! Join us this Christmas and help bring hope and real change to people who are in desperate need. Ask your church for an offering envelope during December or contact GMP today to participate in this life-changing offering. **FreeCall 1800 467 222.** Video and Powerpoint resources are available on the GMP website.

Kids and Water Change Lives

This year Hudson (aged 7) and Toby (aged 5) both decided they wanted to be involved in the Safe Water September Challenge with their Nana Anne. It not only showed the boys how easy it was to help others but just how lucky we are to have access to clean water every single day. Read more in the 'News' section of our GMP website.

www.gmp.org.au/about-us/news



Hudson and Toby



Partner Visits Transform Lives

Sharing skills and weaving baskets in Vanuatu

God has done some amazing things this past year. The highlights for me are seeing how partnering with GMP changes people's lives, both from the local church perspective and for our international partners. This year we have seen individuals and churches step out in faith to serve God, whether it be mentoring the church in Fiji, visiting Ambae evacuees to let them know that they are loved and not forgotten, visiting old friends or strengthening God's presence in communities through pastor training in Vanuatu. Whether it is making new friends, as a team experiences a Partner Visit for the first time or engaging young people

for the first time, GMP Partner Visits transform lives. Those that step out in faith are changed forever. Each visit has a unique agenda, and on every trip I am reminded that it is God who puts the agenda together, not us. I have not met one person who has returned from a Partner Visit whose heart is not changed forever. Often people might think, "What can I do? I am not qualified for anything." – but don't worry, God qualifies the called.

Vicki Marney,
QLD Partnership Coordinator

Great Gifts for Christmas

The GMP Great Gifts catalogue is a fantastic way to make a real impact this Christmas. If you would like to place an order to receive printed cards in time for Christmas, make sure you do so before December 10.

You can then print your own cards at home or receive them via email until December 20. Find more information online at www.greatgifts.org.au



\$40

New Tyres

New tyres make a difference to a motorbike evangelist who rides frequently on rough rural dirt roads to share the gospel **IN ZIMBABWE**



\$15

Cooking Classes

Cooking classes will equip Indigenous young people to explore and develop their creativity, self-esteem and life skills **IN NEW SOUTH WALES**



SPOTLIGHT

100 Years in Bangladesh

Vana Bawm (front center)
with members of his community

For Vana Bawm and his community in remote Bangladesh, December 12 is a significant day of remembrance and celebration.

Prior to the year 1918 the Bawm tribe had never heard the gospel. Living in the relatively untouched and remote hills of Bangladesh the community practiced animism, believing that all things were living and spiritual, but not following or worshipping one God.

On December 12 in 1918, the Bawm tribe was visited by a missionary from North East India General Mission named Edwin Rowlands. This Welsh missionary, known for visiting and preaching to remote unreached villages, shared the gospel with the Bawm people for the first time. The gospel was welcomed by the tribe, whose descendants still trust and follow God to this day.

Now, 100 years later, the Bawm people are celebrating a century of knowing God.

In January, the Bawm community will gather together, with other guests, in the small town of Ruma not only to commemorate the exciting occasion, but also to reunite with members of the Bawm community from around the world, and share the love of Christ with neighbouring communities in Bangladesh.

The celebrations will involve cultural shows, traditional dancing and group singing, as well as the commemoration of several important historical events, including a dramatic retelling of how the Bawm people received the gospel.

Vana Bawm, founder and General Secretary of the Bandarban Hill Churches of Christ, said that the celebrations are an important time for the Bawm people to reflect and rejoice. As a visionary leader with a heart for outreach, Vana hopes that the joyful celebrations will have a profound impact on neighbouring people groups.

Vana has been ministering to local churches since 2007 and works in outreach ministry amongst the Mru people, many of whom still hold animist beliefs. Following in the footsteps of his evangelist father, and in partnership with Global Mission Partners since 2012, he has worked to plant 16 churches, totaling 700 members.

While the gospel has reached a significant number of people in Bangladesh, Christianity is still a minority religion. Please pray for Vana's ministry to the Mru people and other neighbouring people groups, and join the Bawm people in rejoicing in 100 years of gospel ministry in Bangladesh.

To support the Bangladesh church partnership through GMP, visit:

www.gmp.org.au/what-we-do/projects/bangladesh/bangladesh-church-partnership

Ikuningen Church Gets More than a Roof

A team of 11 volunteers from South Australia travelled to Tanna, Vanuatu, in September. A highlight for the team was to assist Ikuningen Church to finish the last of the blockwork, and construct the roof for their new chapel – the building that had been destroyed by Cyclone Pam. Read more online in the GMP 'News' section on our website.

www.gmp.org.au/about-us/news
(Right) The Ikuningen Church building is complete!





Jenny from Nowra Church of Christ, shares icecream with Pastor Raj and Nirmala in Fiji.

Visiting Friends and Doing Mission at the Same Time



Sometimes mission starts with a bucket of cash or resources to be sent to those in need.



Sometimes we set off with an empty bucket, to bring back new experiences.



Why not turn the bucket upside down, place it in the dust and sit beside your neighbour?

Giving away resources? Collecting experiences? Sitting in the dust? What is mission about? Particularly short trips from Australia?

A short while ago we had a long discussion at GMP about ‘Short Term Mission Trips’, as they were called. Some of us were uneasy about the name because it could suggest that:

1. Mission is a short-term endeavor.
2. That the Australians on the trip would do the mission to those they met.

With our emphasis at GMP on partnership, the suggestion of an uneven relationship just didn't fit. Eventually we came up with ‘Partner Visits’. The emphasis here was that the team going was visiting a church or project where there were people who had equal standing with the team. Indeed, they were a group that the visitors were already in partnership with across the sea, even before the visit began, because they had been already talking and praying together. They were visiting people who they were in partnership with on God's mission, the long-term project of reconciling all things to God in Jesus.

Maybe we were over sensitive about semantics – but better sensitive than sloppy.

As I travel to visit our partners I often see the impact of the way communities have been treated badly by visitors in the past. Visitors who did not see them as equals, visitors who took their land or other

resources, drew country borders across their tribal boundaries and insisted that their way of doing things was superior. Sometimes the work of development is undoing the impact of these visits (many of which were not short term!). As we have said often in these articles, our helping must always begin, and major on, a relationship of respect – where we may come to help and contribute, but also expect to learn and gain in the process, trusting that our partner will do the same. That is a partnership.

If we go on a Partnership Visit we go expecting to deepen the relationship that we have in the gospel. We go expecting to meet someone who is seeking to follow Jesus just like we are, and who we can encourage and be encouraged by. We go to share the resources that God has given us and to learn new things. We go to help out with whatever part of God's mission our friends are involved in at the moment. This is not a ‘short-term’ mission. God has been working on it since creation! Our role is not so much doing the mission, as joining our partners and God in God's mission.

As Australians we have a bucket-load of cash and resources that we should be sharing with those in need and there are many new experiences amongst our partners that we can be enriched by, but these things need to stem from a posture of partnership, where we sit beside our neighbours in the dust together.

Colin Scott,
COCOA Director