

IN PARTNERSHIP

JUNE 2018



An All-Encompassing Space for Mission

GMP Board with IMA West

Pentecost caught me by surprise this year! I do not know where my head had been buried! On Pentecost Sunday I found myself in a church where we celebrated the birth of the church with joy and thoughtfulness. I was reading Luke's words in Acts 1:8 – the assurance from Jesus that the Spirit would give the Apostles power for mission – Jerusalem – Judea – Samaria – to the ends of the earth. An all-encompassing space for mission.

One part of my role that I enjoy most is visiting churches in Australia. I enjoy discovering just how much churches are mission focused and mission sensitive. There are wonderful ways that people reach out to communities, friends and neighbours with care and compassion. I hear their stories and am filled with hope – for the world and for the church.

These same churches that care deeply for their local communities, care also for those beyond themselves – Indigenous people and people far away. I hear the stories of past missionaries, see the notice boards, know the level of support

for GMP and enjoy the questions I get asked about our partnerships. What a cause for thanksgiving!

There is no gap between Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and the end of the earth. Yes, there is physical distance between each setting – however, in the economy of God's Kingdom there is no gap.

God calls the whole church to the whole world and using the words of Jesus we pray that his Kingdom might come on Earth as it is in Heaven! It is an all-encompassing task and opportunity. This call is to all – we need each other – within Churches of Christ and beyond Churches of Christ. GMP needs the encouragement, prayers and support from local churches to do our work. We cannot do it on our own.

GMP – just like the local church – serves God's mission, although where we do it is physically distant from the local churches I might visit. GMP is a servant to churches in Australia and internationally in the joy of God's mission. GMP was established in 1891 by people who heard the call of God to reach out

beyond the then colonies of Australia. They did so relying on God's Spirit and on the support of churches in Australia – 127 years later we continue to do the same. Together we seek to build God's Kingdom on Earth, as it is in Heaven.

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

News & Events

NAIDOC WEEK

Because of Her, We Can!

NAIDOC Week (July 8-15) is a time to celebrate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander history, culture and achievements. NAIDOC Week 2018 will celebrate the invaluable contributions that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women have made – and continue to make - to our communities, our families, our rich history and to our nation. Here are some great ideas of how you can prepare for NAIDOC week.

www.naidoc.org.au/celebrating-naidoc-week



Welcome to the Team

GMP welcomes Kanchi Gebrekiros, Assistant Accountant to the finance team in Adelaide. Kanchi is assisting with international payments, payroll and investment portfolio reporting, as well as supporting Colin Scott and Suzanne Hayes with COCOA's DFAT requirements



State Youth Games (SYG) Victoria

One massive weekend of sport, art, music, and community in Warragul, Victoria. June 8-11, 2018. stateyouthgames.com/vic #SYGINSPiRE

embody will be heading to SYG again this year in June! If you're aged 13-30, or know of someone who is and loves sports, art, camping and Jesus – check it out!



Orphanages and Alternative Care

Sippo, Luwani and their brother

When Onotu lost her husband she was in despair about how to care for her children. With no one to earn money for the family she couldn't see how she could keep her children at school. Then she had an idea. Painful as it was, she left them at the police station and snuck away. As she had hoped, a nearby orphanage took them in, giving them food and clothes and making sure that they went to school.

When Luwani's parents died she and her two younger brothers found their way to a local orphanage. They enjoyed their time there immensely. There were lots of friends, enough food and they went to school every day in uniform. As Luwani was finishing high school, the orphanage started a programme to reconnect the children to their families. They found her uncle and he wanted the three siblings to come and live with his family. With some support in the transition, they went to live with their uncle's family. I met Luwani and her brothers just this week. She said, "It's amazing to be part of a family!" Sippo, her youngest brother said, "We are a family!"

We have changed the names, but both of these stories are true; and from Khayelihle Children's Village (KCV) in Zimbabwe. They illustrate two facts about orphanages. Firstly, orphanages can pull families apart unknowingly, and secondly, that even when there is absolutely

wonderful care, there is nothing like being part of a family.

There is a lot of research to back up these two facts and organisations like KCV are moving to a model sometimes called Alternative Care. The goal is no longer to care for children until they are 18, but to find the most family-like situation that is safe and supportive for them. The first priority is restoration to their nuclear family, then reconnection with their extended family, then adoption and fostering and finally residential care organised in family groups.

Over the last four years KCV has reconnected nearly half of the 100 children that it had. The process takes time, and families and the children need support, both practical and emotional, in the transition. Low incomes are a constant, and KCV has responded with a small livelihoods programme to help families earn a bit more money to support their enlarged families. Luwani's family, for example, has started growing a particularly tasty breed of chickens – well worth the \$10 asking price, if you get a chance to try one!

GMP has a fact sheet on alternative care www.gmp.org.au/about-us/news/children-families-and-alternate-care

Colin Scott,
COCO A Director



Left: Time with God before learning languages



SPOTLIGHT

Right: Min Ye and Ma Khin getting married

Mon Ministry in Thailand

My name is Thaug Myint and I would like to share about our new ministry to the Mon migrant workers in Thailand. The Mon are an ethnic group from Myanmar. Since May 2017 I have travelled to many communities where the Mon are working and living. Many Mon work at the fish market from 1am-7am and then continue to work from 8am-5pm in factories or at construction sites. They work non-stop until they get into an accident or become sick, and often their savings are spent on treating their illness or injury.

A Mon migrant worker – Maung – gave his life to Jesus two years ago. My wife, Yu Mar Lar, and I visited Maung’s family regularly and encouraged his wife who was not yet a Christian. We prayed and shared the Bible with them when we visited. Maung testified to us that he was a drunkard, a smoker and living a loose lifestyle, but after he accepted Jesus Christ, God thoroughly changed his life and he became a new person. He is no longer drinking and smoking or

doing any stupid things. Maung’s wife accepted Jesus in October 2017, and her elder sister also committed her life to Jesus in February 2018! We have now shared the gospel with over 200 people in the area.

Yu Mar Lar is very involved with the Mon ministry. She visits 30 Mon migrant workers at a local ice factory, once a month. Yu Mar Lar teaches English, Mon, Burmese and Thai, and runs Bible study and night worship. One of the main struggles for migrant workers at the factory is the spiritual attack on their families. Misunderstandings between young couples lead to breakdowns in their lives. We are praying with them for this issue. Since Yu Mar Lar has been visiting the factory, two women accepted Jesus and were baptised. We shared the gospel at Christmas, and 20 people responded, including Min Ye, a migrant worker who became a Christian after we conducted his wedding ceremony with Ma Khin. Now the couple joins the worship service regularly.

Visiting prisons in Ratchburi and Bangkok gave us the opportunity to fellowship with about 300 prisoners, singing and praising God together with prisoners who are unbelievers. At one prison we had the opportunity to meet about 50 Christian inmates from different countries – most of them from Myanmar, and most of them coming from other religious backgrounds. I shared my testimony, and then opened a chance for them to testify about how the Lord has changed their lives. Two African inmates gave their testimony of how God is with them, and how they have seen the miracle of God through their lives in prison.

Please continue to pray for an effective mission. Please continue praying for those who are in spiritual darkness, especially the inmates and for those who are spiritually hungry.

Prasit Tongtuswattana,
Thailand



Bright Solutions

Fiona has enjoyed many visits to churches and catching up with supporters of Bright Solutions during her recent visit to Australia. Thank you for your warm welcome of her! You can find out more about Bright Solutions’ Vietnam products on their website www.brightsolutionsvietnam.com or on Facebook.

Fiona (left) with a group of women from CrossCulture Church in Victoria at Empower International, St Kilda.



Esline walking to Saralokamru Community, West Ambae

Stories of Courage in Vanuatu

Among the volcanic devastation in Vanuatu there are examples of courage.

Elise (GMP Graphic Design Manager) and Suzanne (COCOA Program Officer) travelled to Ambae, Vanuatu, in April. They visited GMP Partners Esline (Secretary General of the Churches of Christ Conference Vanuatu) and Linda (Community Development Coordinator). Together they visited communities and gathered feedback on the emergency assistance GMP provided after the damage caused by the volcanic activity.

Being a part of the community consultations was amazing—seeing Linda, Esline, and Suzanne work together, listening, advising, and being advised by local communities. What stayed with me most were the stories I heard throughout these consultations and travels.

There is Leah's story, of losing her entire fish breeding program overnight to acid rain—120 fish raised by hand, killed in a single night, and

Leah too scared of the acid to even remove them from the pond. Or a lady from South Ambae, who brought her washing to dry inside because the hot scoria falling from the sky was burning holes in her clean clothes. One community we visited in the south was struggling as their main water source was contaminated with ash. A community in the east was positive and beginning the process of rebuilding, pushing forward with church renovations. One community in the west, right on the edge of the 10 kilometre danger zone, was still feeling the pain of losing all their gardens – their pastor was close to tears as he explained how they were having to rely almost completely on emergency rations.

Among the stories of fear or struggle, there were stories of courage. When we arrived in the community where I met Leah, they had their community hall full of people. They had taken in a community from the south indefinitely, because they had been evacuated from their village. They were in the process of discerning how best to help care for them.

We heard stories of leaders staying until their whole community had safely been evacuated. We saw people who still trusted God, despite all the challenges they were facing.

There's another story I got to be a part of as well: the friendship between the Churches of Christ Conference Vanuatu and GMP. The long-term investment in one another, the willingness to stay in communities together, to listen, to share stories and to eat together—this all reflects relationship. No matter what the volcano does now, that relationship holds. In my time with GMP, I've heard a lot about how authentic relationships are the best base for effective mission. While I believed this, experiencing it was something special.

*Elise Andrews,
VIC*

You can read the full article Courage in Vanuatu in Churches of Christ VIC/TAS's The Edition: Volume 3, Issue 2: Courage. You can read The Edition at www.churchesofchrist.org.au/theedition.

Meet Pastor Watungwa

Pastor Watungwa leads the churches in Zimbabwe's Msipani circuit. During 2017, in addition to his existing pastoral duties, Pastor Matungwa was entrusted with leading the new children's ministry. Two full-time trained male pastors and two female evangelists, who are both trained teachers, now work under Pastor Watungwa's direction. This ministry team meets regularly to find the best ways to train the Sunday School teachers in each church. Last year's highlight was a special weekend of fellowship at Sibozha Church in August. Over 500

children joined in with a variety of activities, from drama to memory verses, music and quizzes, giving the children an amazing experience over the weekend.

Growing up, Scripture was one of the most important subjects we were taught. Many of the church leaders in our country are a product of the mission schools of the past. Today we now have to think progressively for future generations. Children's ministry is not confined to a Sunday lesson but has a variety



of activities, including sports, games and drama activities based on biblical stories. We ask for your prayers as we hope that many more activities like this will occur in the future!

*BJ Mpofu,
Zimbabwe*