

# IN PARTNERSHIP

August 2019



South Sudan has a long history of conflict: violence between tribes, clans and the long civil war with Sudan. Hostility becomes habit. Then the question becomes how can peace be built along these divides?

There has also been conflict between tribes, clans and sub-clans within South Sudan. There are many causes – competition for natural resources, cattle-raiding and most of all, political influence. However, these conflicts have become exacerbated recently by the supply of arms, and the activity of rebel militia groups.

The conflicts threaten socio-economic development. Above all, there are no major opportunities for people to be informed about or engage in peace building across these divides.

Santino Makol and Peter Gatdet came from different tribes. They trained as ministers together with Paulino Malou. With help, they planted churches in their home areas, and more recently, planted a church together in Juba. A church that crosses tribal boundaries, in the same way that their partnership does.

COCOA staff met with Santino, Peter and the board of their new organisation, LAID Foundation of South Sudan (LAFOSS). Their project ideas showed a great depth to their vision. A fishing project, education programs in Juba, and most critically, a peace-building workshop's initiative. Having broken tribal barriers in their own organisation, they want to encourage the same among others.

LAFOSS is bringing together leaders from churches, schools, and women's organisations, among others. At these workshops they talk about the costs of war and violent conflict. They provide training in how to resolve differences without any violence. Martha, a head girl at her school, said she didn't want to talk about different tribes after attending a workshop.

"No," she said. "Before the war we were in different tribes, but now we are not separated. No one was 'this' tribe or 'that' tribe at the workshop. We are not going to do that anymore."

Peace is the critical issue in South Sudan. With this network of church, community, school and

women's leaders, they plan to hold a symposium. They want to continue the promotion of peace in their communities.

COCOA now works with Christian Mercy International (CMI) in the north, and LAFOSS in the south of the country – across the divides. With the help of supporters like you, people like Santino and Peter can build up a foundation of peace for their home.

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



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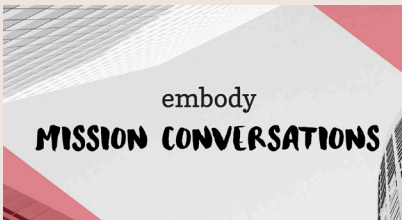
## News & Events



### Safe Water September

Globally, 1 in 9 people still don't have access to safe water close to home. We want to change this, and we challenge you to join us! For the month of September, drink nothing but water and raise funds for safe water projects in Zimbabwe and Vanuatu. You can read about how we've been getting prepared for Safe Water September on the back page of this In Partnership, and sign up today at:

[SafeWaterSeptember.org.au](http://SafeWaterSeptember.org.au)



### embody Mission Conversations

Connect, learn, go deeper. embody Mission Conversations are an opportunity to explore local, national, and global mission topics with friends and people from churches and groups near you. We have three upcoming Mission Conversations in Victoria:

**Thursday August 8 6:30PM,**  
at Wallan Gateway Church

**Monday August 12 6:30PM,**  
at Ringwood Church of Christ

**Saturday August 31 6:30PM,**  
at York St Church of Christ

Find out more at  
[facebook.com/embodyau/events](https://facebook.com/embodyau/events)



## A Sense of Purpose

Having a sense of purpose or a deep motivation for what we do is key to giving us hope as individuals – the same applies for ministries like GMP. There are times for all of us when motivation and a sense of purpose is hard to find and must be reclaimed.

At the moment the GMP Board and staff are exploring what our priorities are as we look to the future. GMP has a strong history. The first initiative in overseas mission was taken in 1891 when Mary Thompson was sent to serve in India. She went “with the idea of giving her life to the work”, and she stayed there for around 34 years. There were times of disappointment and she was frustrated at the lack of interest in ‘Foreign Mission’ back home in Australia.

Mary led the beginning of the engagement of Churches of Christ in overseas mission by leaving, and investing her life in India. The engagement of Australian churches in Aboriginal ministry developed over time. In the 1900s the Brighton Church of Christ (Vic) was pressuring the Victorian Conference Foreign Mission Committee to address the situation of Australia's Aboriginal people. Much later this concern and desire to care took shape in the formation of the Federal Aborigines Mission Board. In the 1970s Churches of Christ Overseas Aid was also formally registered.

This is our heritage that we continue to honour and care for.

Since this inception, there have been rapid shifts in many areas – technology, communication, transport, denominational loyalty and expectations. The strategies of the past are no longer as helpful as they were. Change is needed and cannot be avoided. We must be clear about the difference between strategies, which are changeable, from the deep motivation that underpins them.

We want to reach people and share with them the love of Jesus and invite them to commit to him as Lord and Saviour. We provide support and care to people trapped in poverty or facing disaster and conflict. We see local communities led by people from the same culture and know in our hearts that ‘local people’ do it better than outsiders. Our commitment to mission in the name of Jesus has not changed at all.

Investing in local people has always been at the heart of mission. We are needed – as coaches, mentors and generous supporters. In this season of planning we invite prayer so that we can discern the direction that God has for GMP.

*John Gilmore,*  
Executive Officer



SPOTLIGHT

## Finding Hope and Health Living with HIV

Living a normal and fulfilling life can be difficult for a person living with HIV/AIDS in India – but for those who have the opportunity to join the HIV/AIDS support group at Ashwood Memorial Hospital, a life of dignity, purpose and spiritual hope is a very real possibility.

With over 2.1 million people estimated to be living with HIV, India has the third highest population of people infected by the virus. While discrimination against those with HIV/AIDS is criminalised under the law, the reality is that there is still a strong stigma surrounding the disease, particularly within the healthcare sector. For those living with HIV/AIDS, this has a significant impact on mental health, physical wellbeing and job prospects. While they need help dealing with the physical ramifications of the disease, it is equally important for them to receive social and spiritual support.

Ashwood Memorial Hospital was established by Australian Churches of Christ missionaries in 1927, and offers primary health care initiatives to poor rural communities surrounding Daund, in Maharashtra State. With the generous support of people like you, the hospital is able to offer a HIV support program that not only tests and treats patients for HIV/AIDS, but also supports them with counseling, education and vocational training.

Having run for the past 15 years, the HIV/AIDS ministry of the hospital has helped countless people in their journey to lead

a dignified and purpose-filled life. Over the years that Ashwood Memorial Hospital has offered the support program, many have found hope and healing.

### Simah's Story

Simah has lived with HIV for 20 years, and has experienced heartbreak as a result of the disease. At just 13 years of age, she got married and, two years later, she gave birth to her son. When her son was only nine months old, her husband passed away and she found out that she was HIV positive. Knowing that HIV can be deadly and having been rejected by her family because of it, she grew depressed. It wasn't until she joined the HIV/AIDS support group at Ashwood Memorial Hospital that she started to regain hope and feel loved again. "Slowly, my life was changed because I could come to know the living God here," Simah said. "I realised even though I am sick, there are people loving me! This was inspiring. I started coming regularly for prayer."

While she didn't have a deep relationship with God before joining the support group, Simah grew to know His love for her and, through that, rekindle her hope for the future. "The greatest miracle in my life is that I am alive."

### Ramah's Story

When Ramah was told that he had HIV, he felt helpless. When he came to Ashwood Memorial Hospital and joined the HIV/AIDS Support

Program in 2003, he received counseling alongside his treatment at the hospital. He was given new hope through his time spent at Ashwood.

"I was told to check my wife for HIV status," Ramah explained. "I was praying to the Lord that the test would be negative – and it was!" His wife's negative status was a spiritual turning point for Ramah, and the care of the staff at Ashwood have helped him live with HIV.

"I am not following any other god in this country anymore. I am following Jesus."

While Ramah still lives with HIV, the medicinal and spiritual support he has found has allowed him to live a fulfilling life. His family is happy, with a house and plenty of food. His son and daughter are getting a good education. "I thank the Lord for the blessings in my family," Ramah said.

The generous donations of people like you equip Ashwood Memorial Hospital and the HIV/AIDS Support Program to support those who need it and show the love of God to those who have lost hope. With continued support, Ashwood will be able to continue treating and helping those living with the impact of HIV, giving them hope through the mercy and compassion on display there.



Read the full article online: [gmp.org.au/news/2019-news/](http://gmp.org.au/news/2019-news/)



## Getting Ready for Safe Water September

Preparations for Safe Water September are well underway across Australia! With only one month to go before people of all ages give up all their favourite coffees, teas, milkshakes, and soft drinks to drink only water for one month, we already have 138 individuals and teams signed up!

We are excited that, in 2019, funds raised by Safe Water September challenge takers and donors will go to safe water projects not only in rural Zimbabwe, but also in Vanuatu. With our partners on the ground, funds will go towards digging boreholes in Zimbabwe communities, and giving communities in Vanuatu access to water tanks.

GMP Communications Director, Elise Andrews, went to Vanuatu in July to see firsthand how communities on Ambae are re-establishing themselves on the island after two evacuations over the last two years as Manaro Voui Volcano erupted. The challenges for communities in Vanuatu are fascinating and daunting, but the communities are hopeful that they can learn to adjust and learn how to navigate the changed landscape. We will be sharing their stories throughout the month of September.

Meanwhile, embody NSW Relationships Manager, Jessie Skelly, has recently been to Zimbabwe, along with GMP staff and a Safe Water September volunteer from Bendigo Church of Christ, Zac. Jessie and Zac visited communities that have benefited

from boreholes dug by the Showers of Blessing team, and supported by Safe Water September challenge takers over the past five years. The team has returned home on August 6<sup>th</sup> – we look forward to hearing stories and seeing pictures of the communities in Zimbabwe!

Closer to home, GMP Partnership Coordinators and embody team members are eager to visit churches, youth groups, community groups, and schools to introduce the Safe Water September challenge to your communities. Not only is Safe Water September an effective and life changing fundraiser, it's also an opportunity for people around Australia to learn a bit about life in Zimbabwe and Vanuatu, the impact of safe water globally, our role as global neighbours, and God's heart for justice, health, and flourishing. We have resources, including fact sheets and Bible studies, available for leaders wanting to explore these topics under the Resources tab on the Safe Water September website.

The embody team is gathering a national network of Safe Water September Ambassadors—people who are interested in taking their Safe Water September experience to the next level and lead the change in their local communities. We have Mission Conversations and Ambassador training planned in Victoria in August, so check out the embody Facebook page for details. Ambassadors are also invited to join an ongoing online community to chat with other Ambassadors, connect

with embody and GMP staff, and collaborate on how Safe Water September can have the greatest impact in Australia, in Zimbabwe, and in Vanuatu.

There's lots on, and we would love for you to be praying for our team, volunteers, and challenge takers—wherever they may be!

**If you want to get involved in the challenge, head to [safewaterseptember.org.au](http://safewaterseptember.org.au) to sign up or donate, and follow @embodyau on Facebook and Instagram to keep up with news and resources.**

Because every person deserves safe water.

*Mitchell Salmon,*  
embody Relationships  
Manager VIC

There are lots of great Resources to Download at [safewaterseptember.org.au](http://safewaterseptember.org.au)

