

IN PARTNERSHIP

February 2022



HOPE FOR THE FUTURE



Technology has changed the way we navigate. No more maps or wondering where we are. It is a screen, a voice, a little pointer and we can be sure where we are at any given moment. The only risk is that we trust it too much! An unimaginable change just a few years ago.

Looking ahead and wondering what this year will mean for GMP is harder than following Google Maps! The variables are infinite and outside of our control. Hebrews 12: 1-4 has helped as I look ahead. The writer sees us as runners in a race set before us. The stands are full (so great a cloud of witnesses) and we race without distraction, looking to the one who is before us – Jesus (the pioneer and perfecter of our faith). Jesus is our example. His race was to the cross, he experienced hostility and did not lose heart and is now seated with God. These are rich images to reflect on, a key one being to keep our attention on Jesus.

So, as I anticipate the future for GMP there are three distinct themes.

The first is uncertainty. Every time we begin to feel confident and anticipate a return to 'normal', COVID-19 makes its presence felt. Whether we are talking about our partners, their ministries and programs or considering our own church communities, uncertainty is a reality. How we respond is critical. During uncertainty, we need to be clear about what is core to our work. For GMP this is 'Partnering Across Nations' in mission. GMP's core focus is found in our partnering, and in seasons of uncertainty this reliable and consistent partnering is all the more critical. In 2022 GMP will continue to be in partnership.

A second theme is transition. In the course of 2022, GMP will face a series of transitions and some will fundamentally change GMP's work. With the National Redress Scheme's impact (linked to the past operation of Aboriginal missions with children) GMP will not have the reserves we have relied on to sustain Indigenous Ministries Australia. The impact of this is hard to contemplate. Another

transition is the way that GMP engages with Australian churches. With rising costs, GMP will ensure that our partners remain the focus of our work. In a few weeks, we will outline a new way of engaging with Australian churches.

Finally, a third theme is opportunity. There are extremely positive new opportunities for Churches of Christ Overseas Aid and these will be announced in the coming months. We have opportunities to develop GMP's mission partnerships in what looks like being a third year with little, if any, travel. Creativity in communication and relationship development is continuing. New opportunities is a core theme in GMP's new Strategic Map (out soon!)

What gives us hope? Looking to Jesus, 130 years of witnesses around us, and running with determination the race that lies before us!

John Gilmore,
Executive Officer

News & Events

Tonga Emergency Appeal

The volcanic eruption and Tsunami in Tonga on 15 January had a shocking impact. The eruption was one of the biggest to hit Tonga in the last 30 years. GMP has launched the Tonga Emergency Appeal to help affected people. Funds raised through the Tonga Emergency Appeal will be directed to Act for Peace who have an established partnership with the Tonga National Council of Churches (TNCC). For a prayer for the people of Tonga or to provide assistance go to www.gmp.org.au/tongaemergencyappeal

Position Available – COCOA Program Officer

GMP's Relief and Development program, Churches of Christ Overseas Aid (COCOA) is seeking a competent development professional to manage a portion of COCOA and DFAT-funded projects and our emergency program. The position would operate from the successful applicant's premises in the Sydney region so that they can readily attend team and other face-to-face meetings. For further details see gmp.org.au/employment. Applications close Friday 11 February 2022.

COCOA Christmas Offering

Thank you for your generous support for the COCOA Christmas Offering. To date we have raised \$50,470. Your support of long-term development projects in education, health, water and sanitation, livelihoods and emergency relief helps to build resilience, bring hope and positive change for communities around the world.

Walk for Hope 2022

Walk for Hope is the opportunity at Easter to support evangelism, church planting and ministry training across the nations. A series of resources will be available for churches and individuals in March. More information will be available in the March edition of In Partnership.



Gandep Bible College graduates 2021

Preparing for Ministry in Papua New Guinea

The journey of preparing people for Churches of Christ ministry in Papua New Guinea (PNG) is a challenging one. With limited resources, churches scattered in one of the more isolated regions and low levels of literacy, the process of education is challenging. Ministry preparation often starts with a focus on further developing basic literacy.

This past year has been complex due to COVID-19. In PNG, the vaccination rate is extraordinarily low and the rumours about the 'dangers' posed by vaccines are hard to challenge. This results in confusion and creates a greater risk of the potential impact of the pandemic in village communities.

The focus of ministry preparation in the Melanesian Evangelical Churches of Christ (MECOC) is the Gandep Training College. Courses taught at Gandep are often based on curriculum from the Christian Leaders Training College (CLTC) located near Mt Hagen. The sharing of courses reflects the strong partnership between CLTC and Gandep.

Each year Gandep has a Commissioning Service for the graduating students. This happened on November 28 and the faculty washed the feet of the graduands and prayed with them. Students are released to preach and teach the gospel. The following day featured a reconciliation program. Teachers and

students were reconciled with each other. Failures were acknowledged and disappointments forgiven. A college meal, where everyone was invited, featured a pig purchased from a neighbouring village.

The 2021 Graduation happened on December 8. For the first time in Gandep's history the Conference Chairman, Vice Chairman and Community Development Director were present. The guest speaker was Vice Chairman Ps Edward Samol, speaking on the theme of "Guard the Truth" (1 Timothy 6:20).

About 400-500 people witnessed the graduation, and were challenged and blessed with the official speeches from the MECOC leaders. It greatly benefited the teachers to hear from the MECOC leaders that the Bible College is important for the future.

During the ceremony, the outgoing Principal Steven Yamok was thanked for his service and the incoming Principal Caleb Dankro was inducted into his new role.

There are challenges ahead for Gandep. Several teachers at Gandep are at the same time leaders in one of the District Conferences.

It is also an encouragement to see what has come from humble and basic beginnings and to know that the churches are being well led.



SPOTLIGHT

A Perth church group, camping within the Peak Charles National Park 507 kilometres east of Perth, with IMA in 2021

Indigenous Ministries Australia Pathways Program

Last year, Indigenous Ministries Australia (IMA) had the privilege of taking a church group from Perth on a discovery road-trip to Norseman and the surrounding Great Western Woodlands in Western Australia's Goldfields region. This trip required much planning, including a consideration of weather and road conditions for the trip and the type of resources necessary to ensure a safe and enjoyable time while we were on country.

Preparing for future ministry and leadership is no different. We need to consider the path before us, travel with others, and acquire the necessary knowledge, skills and experiences to effectively navigate through the bumps and detours that lie ahead.

The IMA Pathways Program seeks to provide emerging Indigenous

Christian leaders with a safe pathway to grow in their Christian discipleship and to prepare them for future ministry. It has been designed to develop their leadership through culturally appropriate ministry training and mentoring opportunities. Each student will work with the program facilitators and Indigenous mentors to ensure they have access to the most appropriate programs and learning experiences, tailored to their unique ministry context and interests and developed in consultation with their local church or ministry accountability partner.

According to Brendon Garlett, a Noongar man and Indigenous Pastoral Outreach Worker, "The IMA Pathways Program is a good set-up for me and our mob as it's designed to give support for us to access the right kind of training. I've got a big family, lots of community

expectation and commitments as well as the reality of issues that our mob face daily. Any help and support for me to do more training is needed and that's what the Pathways Program wants to do."

To find out how you can support this program or be a future participant of the training go to GMP's website www.gmp.org.au/pathwaysprogram

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Give Great Gifts all year round!

Thank you for giving Great Gifts for Christmas! Did you know that Great Gifts are available throughout the year?

Each gift fights poverty, builds up local Christian communities or stands with Australia's First Peoples.

You can even give gifts that will help the pathways program provide discipleship opportunities to emerging Indigenous leaders.

Order your Great Gifts online during 2022 for family and friends at www.greatgifts.org.au





Introducing the 'Return the Rains' Project

For many years now, you have been journeying with our partners from South Sudan. Your support has helped the programs of our international development partners; partners like Christian Mercy International (CMI). Your partnership has enabled lives to be changed through their work. We are excited to introduce and invite you to partner in a new program created by CMI - Return the Rains.

Communities in South Sudan have experienced the negative impacts of a changing climate since 2015. These effects include warmer and drier weather conditions which have led to droughts. The changed rainfall has also increased the frequency and severity of floods, causing farmers to lose their harvests. This has caused South Sudan's agricultural productivity to deteriorate, affecting food security and the livelihoods of its rural population.¹

With a vision to address this issue, Paulino Malou, Director of CMI, became the driving force of the new 'Return the Rains' Project. "We used to have rain on time and we could have two harvest periods each year. Farming production was of plenty and singing of hunger was not known, unlike it is today where climate change has affected farming in South Sudan and Aweil in particular. Today we only have rain once a year, and it comes in June or July rather than April or May," he said.

CMI initiated consultation with the government, NGOs and the UN Food and Agriculture Organisation to ensure the project was well planned. This project builds on research which shows that increasing the number of trees in an area can improve local rainfall. Evidence shows that on average, 40% or more of the precipitation and heavy dew in the atmosphere of major rainforests originates from evaporation and transpiration of water from plants.²

With this in mind, the project aims to plant trees in the grounds of community organisations, with the long-term goal of more consistent rainfall for subsistence farmers. This in turn will improve food security, soil fertility, yields and the living environment.

When considering the reasons behind the climate change, Paulino says, "The problem is human activity such as ... cleared forests for settlement, human life activities for employment such as making charcoal, tree cutting and timber work which have all resulted in deforestation of the country."

So far, nearly 5,000 trees have been planted across four payams (counties), in 72 schools, 80 churches, 15 health centres and 1,200 marketplaces. Local people are planting the trees, with training from CMI. So far, the survival rate for trees after three months is a

whopping 99.5 percent! People can obviously see the value of the project and CMI's training has prepared them well for their part in it. As Paulino says, "The development we need is the development we do ourselves".

"This project is very acceptable to the community due to its positive impact on the social institution we focus on - schools, health care centres, churches, markets and local government headquarters. They receive the advantage of trees which bring shade and also fruit to eat. This is our best option to take so that we have rain twice a year, fight hunger and improve the climate as well."

Long-term, the trees will grow and impact rainfall around Aweil. Any shift in rainfall patterns or agricultural productivity will not be noticeable for at least ten years, but the investment now will help secure a better future. Your continuing partnership, through GMP and COCOA, can help plant more trees that will improve the living environment, and help increase farming production for subsistence farmers.

You can find out more about
Return the Rains at
www.gmp.org.au/returntherains

¹ <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/southsudan/overview#1>

² <https://www.learningfromnature.com.au/drought-proof-increasing-rainfall/>