

IN PARTNERSHIP

December 2023



A Gift with Purpose: Campfire Gathering

Uncle Frank's storytelling captivated Anthony. As he listened, his eyes and heart were opening. He had never heard these Aboriginal stories before. "I found myself compelled to listen; to quieten my own responses and let their story breathe in the air between us," he shared.

Anthony is the Minister of Aldgate Church of Christ, South Australia. He participated in the Kurna Yarta tour with Uncle Frank Wanganeen and Brooke Prentis. His expectations were open to what it might be like. Having limited exposure to Indigenous cultures, Anthony realised during the tour that he wanted to "lessen the distance" and learn more.

Indigenous Ministries Australia (IMA) facilitates cultural learning tours, gatherings, and retreats. Providing opportunities for small groups to learn about Indigenous perspectives and culture in their local area. Participants can visit sites that are important to First Nations people. As well as understand the five key aspects of Aboriginal culture – the land, family, law, language and ceremony.

Tours help promote a deeper connection to the Indigenous community. "Participating in the tour

was a unique experience to develop an awareness and appreciation for Indigenous people and their stories," Anthony shared. "We are front and centre of our story... What we have missed is that others are front and centre of their story too."

Tours are also running in Melbourne, Victoria. One participant in the Songlines tour said she experienced stronger compassion to love her neighbour. Phillipa said, "I found the balance of information and contemplation good." Carly told us, "I really enjoyed learning more about all of the forces affecting Indigenous Australians."

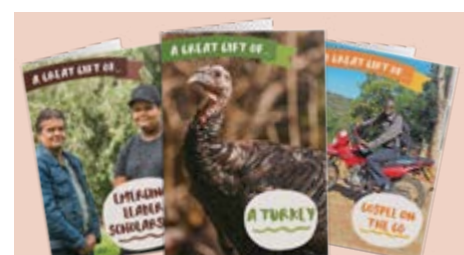
IMA provides other learning experiences, like the Dhiyaan On-Country Retreat. Groups can immerse themselves for three days in the stories and activities within an Indigenous community. Take part in Welcome to Country ceremonies and cultural awareness teaching sessions. Individuals can also contribute to animal and plant care at the property.

Reconciliation in Australia requires coming together 'around the fire'. Experiences like the Kurna Yarta tour, Songlines tour and the Dhiyaan On-Country Retreat encourage this.

Listening and learning between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians builds unity.

Anthony is now seeking what authentic steps he can take next. "We can walk these lands together, humbly, respectfully, lightly, with justice and grace," he said.

When you buy the Great Gift of a Campfire Gathering, you will give a gift with purpose. Providing opportunities for our Indigenous partners to share their culture with non-Indigenous Australians. To facilitate a space for everyone to stop and listen, to learn and connect.



**Get your Great Gift cards
in time for Christmas**

Order by Friday, December 8 to ensure you receive your Great Gift cards by post before Christmas. Or have a print-your-own gift card emailed to you.

Australian Churches of Christ Global Mission Partners Ltd.
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News & Events

COCOA Christmas Offering

Your church can take up an offering during December to support Churches of Christ Overseas Aid (COCOA). You will give hope to many of our partners around the world who live in the hardest places. Please FreeCall 1800 467 222 to request green giving envelopes for your church or you can give online at www.gmp.org.au/hope

You can also share the COCOA Christmas Offering video in your church service. Download the video using the QR code.



New Board Chair

At our AGM in October, Barrie Yesberg resigned as Board Chair. We are thankful for his seven years of service. He chaired the Board through many significant changes.

Gordon Buxton was nominated and elected as the new Board Chair. He has had much experience on the Board as the Company Secretary, a member of the COCOA Reference Group, and a member of the Finance Risk and Audit Committee.

Middle East Crisis Appeal

Global Mission Partners has launched the Middle East Crisis Appeal to help provide critically needed humanitarian support to people affected by the conflict. Donations received for the appeal will be directed through Anglican Overseas Aid, a Church Agencies Network Disaster Organisation (CANDO) member. Your gift will help provide urgently needed aid so Christian care can continue. Please give online at www.gmp.org.au/middleeastcrisisappeal

For more news and updates, follow us on Facebook or Instagram @gmpaustralia

The Resilient Journey of Pastor Sunny in Fiji

Pastor Sunny has faced several setbacks in his life. The closure of his church in Nadi and losing his home in a fire. Despite these challenges, Sunny and his family continued to trust God.

Sunny became a baker to support his wife and their three children. They also began to look for a new church to attend. They met Global Missions Partner Muneshwar at the Lomowai Church.

The church was a 30-minute drive from their house, but this wasn't a deterrent. Sunny and his family committed to attending the services weekly.

Muneshwar resigned as pastor of Lomowai Church in early 2023. Sunny was approached to preach at their Sunday services. He did this so well, that a potentially traumatic period for the church became a smooth transition, and he was elected with 100 percent of the vote for a new pastor.

Sunny and his family now live closer to the church. "Through my



experience, a pastor and the church are more blessed if he lives near the church," says Sunny.

Sunny's devotion to the gospel and compassion for the congregation won the church's heart during a challenging time.

You can read more impactful stories like this one in the new Global Mission Partners' Annual Report.

You can download the 2022/2023 Annual Report at www.gmp.org.au/annualreports. You can also request a hard copy. Please FreeCall 1800 467 222.

Thanks for Completing our Survey!

Thank you to everyone who completed the recent Global Mission Partners online supporter and church survey. We loved hearing from you about improving our work partnering across nations. Everyone who completed the survey entered the draw to win a gift pack of Christian books.

Ten individuals received a gift pack, including, Barry Gear, Judith Flett, Len Frankham, Lindley Thompson, Mary Ambrose, Tery, Avon and Deslee, Nora Syiemlieh and Paul Andrews.

The following churches received a gift pack: Kersbrook Church of Christ, Dandenong Church



Gabriel Hingley, Dandenong Church of Christ, and Kersbrook Church of Christ with their gift packs

of Christ, Brooklyn Park Church of Christ, Chinchilla Church of Christ, and the Church of Christ Hurstville.

Thank you to everyone who participated in the survey. We look forward to hearing from more of you when we do another survey in the future!

SPOTLIGHT

Joy for All People

Dear Friends,

As we prepare to celebrate Christmas, I reflect on the events surrounding Jesus' birth. The story somehow reminds me of what we have experienced throughout the past year.

Luke records that Joseph and Mary travelled to Bethlehem to complete a census of the entire Roman world. The census served as a headcount of the population at the time. There was no real-world change that came from that event. Yet Luke gives us this fact to mark time for the most significant moment in history. Jesus' birth.

This year, we were asked to take part in a Referendum. To vote and let the Australian government know our support or lack of support for an Indigenous Voice to Parliament. We know the outcome was 60% against and 40% in support. Regardless of our individual positions, it would be a mistake to think that this political activity, like the census from Luke's account, had little implications.

In speaking with our Indigenous Ministry Australia (IMA) partners, many have felt hurt, unheard and rejected. Considering any progress we'd made up until this point around reconciliation, I can't help but believe it has stalled, possibly regressed, our Indigenous to non-Indigenous relations nationally.

What might God be saying to us in this moment?

The words of the Angel to the shepherds offer me some comfort.

"Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people." (Luke 2:10)

Regardless of our views on the Referendum, God is greater than politics.

In times of shock and despair, God offers comfort from fear and invites us all to look at the "good news" with a promise that it will be a source of "great joy for all people." All people are offered this joy-bringing good news. Indigenous and non-Indigenous alike. I pray the good news of Jesus, who reconciles us with God and one another, might inspire our future reconciliation efforts with First Nation Australians.

Another parallel I see in the Christmas story and our current times is the dire situation faced by those living through the current conflict in Israel and Palestine.

In Matthew's account, another Angel appears, warning Joseph of impending violence and an escape plan. The Angel said, "Get up, take the child and his mother and escape to Egypt. Stay there until I tell you, for Herod is going to search for the child to kill him."

Many of the two million residents of Gaza, half of whom are under the age of 18, have spent recent weeks also fleeing south toward Egypt. The Rafah Border Crossing between Gaza and Egypt is currently the only way out (for those who can) and the only way in for the critically urgent aid supplies. We continue to pray for peace, an end to all the violence and a safe return of all the hostages.

As a newborn child, Jesus escaped violence with his parents across this same small piece of land. This crossing is a place of both despair and hope.

What might God be saying to us in this moment?

"Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people." (Luke 2:10)

The Angel's message was addressed to scared, fearful onlookers and is also for all of us today.

May we not be afraid. But with courage this Christmas, let's remind ourselves of this wonderful good news of Jesus - the joy for all people - in Australia and to the ends of the earth.

Together, let's bring hope to the hard places.

In Faith,

John Lamerton,
Chief Executive Officer

Give Hope this Christmas

In this season of giving, you can support our partners who work in the hardest places. As we also navigate challenging times, your compassion can bring hope. You can give today and help ease suffering. Bring hope to those facing crises worldwide. Give to the COCOA Christmas Offering in December and provide immediate relief that extends to creating sustainable change within vulnerable communities.

Give now at
www.gmp.org.au/hope



Matt and Lucy Destry visiting the Emmanuel Education Centre with Hosanna Ministries.

A Lot of Life Happening within a “Tin Shed”

When Pastor Matt Destry planned a visit to Mumbai, India, he organised a visit to Hosanna Ministries. He travelled with his daughter, Lucy. They wanted to go and see the work happening in the Prakash Tekadi Slum and return home with new inspiration for the church’s mission projects.

Discovery Church supported the Prakash Tekadi Community Building project earlier this year through their Vision Offering. Their partnership helped support the 180 families living in extreme poverty near the Ambernath rubbish tip.

Matt and Lucy met our Relief and Development partner, Danny Gaikwad. The Hosanna project coordinators and teachers showed them around the Emmanuel Children’s Centre. Matt described it as “a basic tin shed in the middle of the slum – but a lot of life is happening there!”

Lucy, a high school student, enjoyed the tour. “The Christian education system that they have implemented in the slum community was really impactful to see, and I’m sure I will never forget it,” she said.

“We were not there to do anything,” Matt said, “but to rather observe the work being done.”

The kindness, trust and dedication of the teachers impressed Matt. Amid “people doing it tough,” there is a team that “wholeheartedly encourage, support, educate and train others,” he said.

“Projects like the day-care, computer lab and sewing classes are all doing amazing work in and around the community, and to see all of it was a real privilege,” shared Lucy.

The visit deepened Matt and Lucy’s understanding of the complex issues of poverty. They listened to stories of transformation. Learning from Hosanna Ministries was “both a blessing and a privilege,” Matt said.

“It seems like a beautiful and gentle approach to mission,” he reflected.

Matt and Lucy carried this experience home to Discovery Church, where they are implementing support and community-building programs through Discovery Community Care.

Global Mission Partners connects local churches in missional partnerships, both internationally and here in Australia, through Indigenous Ministries Australia partners. If you would like to visit one of our partners in 2024 or establish a Church-to-Church partnership, please contact us!

IMA Church Resource Kit for January 26

This January 26, we want to invite all followers of Christ to open their hearts to a greater understanding, a deeper compassion, and an acknowledgment of what this day represents for Indigenous Australians. This Church Resource Kit has been developed for Churches of Christ congregations to use during a service on or near January 26th.

You can download the kit from www.gmp.org.au/IMAKits or scan the QR code.

