



EDUCATION FOR WHAT?

At the Synod Standing Committee face to face meeting at Nungalinga College on 19 May 2007 members discussed the issue of education in Aboriginal communities.

The NRCC members of the Standing Committee met the day before Standing Committee and spent the day discussing what has happened in Aboriginal communities with respect to education. Concern in the past has been expressed that the church seems to have deserted Aboriginal communities with respect to schooling education.

The Standing Committee agreed that this is an important matter that needs to be discussed at length. The Standing Committee looked at a number of issues, and in particular, focused on the question of 'What is wrong with the present

system of education in Aboriginal communities?' A number of concerns were raised.

From these concerns the Standing Committee focused on two major problem areas. One of those areas was the perceived powerlessness of Aboriginal communities to be able to have major input into the development of their school, especially with the appointment of the Principal. As a result of this, the Standing Committee decided to write to the Minister for Education, suggesting that Indigenous Regional Committees be set up, similar to what exists in South Australia.

The second major area focused upon is the problem of 'Education for What?' It is all very well to have schools in Aboriginal communities, but the major question is 'what are those

schools attempting to do?' What are the expected outcomes for Aboriginal children attending school?

There is no simple solution to this question. Standing Committee decided that it would take this topic and use it for a forum at the coming Synod meeting. The forum will be asked to discuss the topic 'Education for What?'

This forum will be the Synod's Expo Day for the general public to participate in the debate.

Kevin Davis AM

The Synod Standing Committee also discussed issues relating to Nungalinga College and the proposed Centre for Indigenous Scriptures.

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Stories from the Centre

This issue of Northern Synod News features stories from the centre - or more correctly, the southern areas of our Synod.

The new chapel at St. Philip's College realizes a long held dream for

the school and there is the story of the refurbished worship space for the Anangu congregation in Alice Springs.

Readers are asked to consider what 'being church differently' might mean for congregations

and there is exciting news from the newly formed West Arnhem Area Ministry Council.

The Editorial Team hopes that you enjoy this edition of NS News.

From the Moderator



Turning 30 is regarded in the human life span as entering middle age. On the Friday 22nd June, the Uniting Church in Australia turns 30. Have we lost the vitality and vision of our youth as a church?

Sometime it feels like it to me.

But then I talk to someone who has the vision of an inclusive and open Christian Community that takes seriously those words in the Basis of Union “to go forward together in sole loyalty to Christ the living Head of the Church.”

I am encouraged.

We in the Northern Synod have pioneered the vision of Uniting. We were a United Church in North Australia long before 1977. As Christ continues to call us from the future towards himself, we need to continue to hear and follow his call.

One aspect of Christ’s call is for his people to be reconciled. With all our diversity, we are working as a Synod to be a reconciled people, growing our partnerships and learning from one another. In this I believe we are again pioneering the future for the Church in Australia.

May God keep the vision strong and our determination sure for the sake of Christ and the communities in which we live, work and witness.

Steve Orme

From the Synod Standing Committee

Nungalinya College

The Standing Committee was updated on developments at Nungalinya College. The committee learned that Nungalinya College Constitution is being revisited and will be updated.

A review of their current structure has also been carried out by Mr John Ingram and the College has agreed to review its Strategic Directions. In that regard the three churches in partnership with the College have been asked to indicate what they expect of Nungalinya College in the future. Standing Committee considered this question and responded as follows:

In order to promote training for both lay leadership and ordination
a) *The Standing Committee reaffirmed the decision made at the last Synod in wanting to re-engage with Nungalinya College.*

We want a developing partnership with Yalga-binbi Institute for Community Development,

b) *We want a developing partnership and a complimentary relationship developed with Yalga-binbi Institute for Community Development, both in theological community development and family and community services.*

Centre for Indigenous Scriptures

A progress report was received by the Synod Standing Committee from Howard Amery and Kevin Davis after they had a meeting with Maratja Dhamarrandji and Margaret Miller from Djambarrpuyngu Bible Translation Project at Galiwin’ku.

It is now becoming clear that what is being proposed is the creation of a centre that will provide support services to groups or individuals who want to translate the scriptures into local languages within the Northern Synod. The second major function of the centre would be to establish links and networks of organiza-

tions involved in the translation of scriptures.

The drafting group looked at what type of services could or should be provided in the various locations and the following was identified:

1. Facilitating translation assistance (linking skilled translators)
2. Assistance with bible knowledge by using bible consultants
3. Providing resources. e.g.
 - ✦ Computers
 - ✦ Software
 - ✦ Assistance with Information Technology
 - ✦ Printing services
 - ✦ Money (conduct fundraiser campaigns)
 - ✦ Identifying staff, particularly volunteers
4. Pastoral support through links to specialists

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Being Church Differently

At the 11th Assembly a report was presented by the Assembly Agency Theology and Discipleship called “Being Church Differently”. The report considered how the Uniting Church might be involved in the development of new congregations and faith communities.

In the past the church was often at the hub of a community and people’s commitment to the traditions of the church, such as Sunday morning worship, were more solid. Though the Uniting Church has a long standing involvement in providing community services and education as an expression of the gospel of Christ, the professionalism of schools and the many community services available means that there is now a considerable distance between these services and the life of the congregations that gave rise to them. “Being Church Differently” invites presbyteries, congregations, schools, and community service agencies to explore innovative ways of creating an opportunity for worship in these contexts.

The National Assembly’s Consultant for Theology and Discipleship, Rev Dr Rob Bos, said faith formation is not possible in isolation

and that a Christian community is essential. “Just as it takes a village to raise a child, it takes a Christian community to evangelise and nurture a new Christian.

“If we do not provide opportunities for faith development outside of the inherited ‘normal’ structures, people will go elsewhere, or miss the opportunity to come to faith.”

In his sermon at the opening service of the 11th Assembly, Rev Gregor Henderson called for the church to accept the challenge of new ways of being: “In the Uniting Church we have far too many congregations where the joy and excitement of the faith and the confidence that God is leading us into his future, do not shine through. We have to face squarely the reality that we are, overall, an ageing church. In John’s prologue we are told the Word came to bring life and light - we need to rediscover and re-emphasise that life and light in many parts of our church,” he said.

While the “Being Church Differently”

discussion paper encourages people particularly to look at congregations in schools and community services agencies there are many examples around the country of congregations making creative and exciting connections with community in modern day explorations of what it means to be church.

Tracy Spencer, a Deacon at John Flynn Memorial Uniting Church, was looking at the church site with a filmmaker friend in Todd Mall in the heart of Alice Springs one day when her friend looked up at a blank wall and suggested it would make a perfect screen. And so the idea for “Storywall” was born. Tracy decided to host the evenings of digital storytelling to give the community an outlet for expressing and defining itself. Clips and films that are locally produced, of local content, or of interest to locals are shown, many by Indigenous filmmakers and community

There are many examples of congregations making creative and exciting connections with community.....

members. Tracy describes “Storywall” as “a gathering that happens to celebrate who we are and to come to understand each other better so that our lives in Alice Springs can

be enhanced and we can minimise the sort of tension and racism that can exist in the community. The Uniting Church auspices it because it believes it’s one way of bringing life in its fullness to Alice Springs.”

Tracy sees “Storywall” as promoting reconciliation and as an outcome in Christian living whether or not people identify as Christian. “I don’t think Jesus was worried about people branding themselves as Christian. Where “Storywall” becomes a witness for the institutional church is that people know the church is involved in it, they know we sponsor it; the church



Films projected on StoryWall are locally produced, many by Indigenous filmmakers

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storyWall

celebrating who we are , what we think and feel.

(Continued from page 3)

logo is up there. So if people ask, ‘Why is the Uniting Church as an institution interested in this kind of thing?’ I think that speaks volumes about our mission statement as a church in the midst of our community.”

“Being Church Differently” is an important and timely agent of change urging members to explore its implications and the development of communities outside the structures of “normal” congregations.

Gregor Henderson, Uniting Church President, sees enormous potential for the future of the church. “When we focus on being a church at worship and at mis-

sion, a church that knows God’s Word is alive and with us, then we can and will connect with some of those 80% of Australians who have no regular contact with any church, despite the fact that most of them claim some sort of Christian affiliation.”

Thanks to Meera Atkinson, Assembly Communications Unit for this article.



StoryWall utilizes the blank wall of the building neighbouring Adelaide House in Todd Mall, Alice Springs

To download a copy of “Being the Church Differently” visit the Theology and Discipleship website, <http://nat.uca.org.au/TD/resources.htm>

Tennant Creek Congregation focus on the future

Rev Elizabeth Warschauer shares some the story from Tennant Creek Uniting Church...

The Congregation in Tennant Creek has been travelling in a Year of Transition. This is a ‘Transitional Ministry (aka Intentional Interim) program where a congregation that has lived significant challenges journeys to find their way again as a Congregation in Christ.



Members of Tennant Creek congregation working towards the future

with it and to discover richness and meaning about who we may be into the future as God’s people.

This year we have been focusing on discovering our vision as a congregation and setting some goals that will enable us to be who God is calling us to be. This is still in progress.

Celebrating our 70th Anniversary last year was lots of fun and in-

spiring. It also helped us learn about our history, come to terms

We’ll let you know about our vision and goals soon.

Adelaide House....a ministry of healing and wholeness

Adelaide House has opened its front doors and returned to its original role of providing health and hospitality to all comers! Fresh locally roasted coffee served with love, warm damper and golden syrup, and the services of a naturopath and traditional healer have joined the welcome that Museum volunteers give to tourists and locals alike. While this new combination of businesses and volunteers is in its early stages of settling in with each other, the impact on the local community has been immediate. With chairs and tables set out on the verandah, Adelaide House has become a central social meeting place again, a place to rest, a place to watch the town go by. And behind the scenes we have been applying for grants to upgrade the

museum displays inside the building as well, and have high hopes that we will be able to

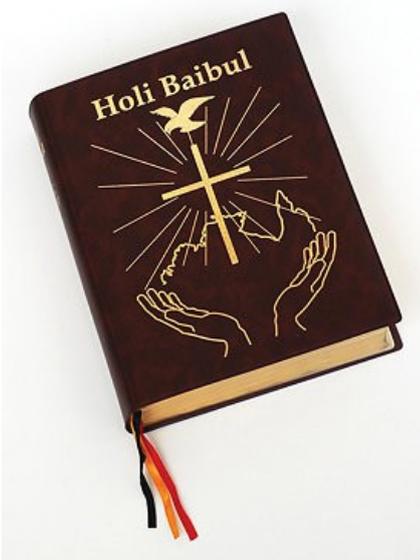


restore the original cooling system, be able to present an Indigenous view of Flynn's work in Alice Springs, and introduce new film and digital displays on the early nurses and John Flynn himself, as well as installing a

replica pedal radio and a community stories archive where stories of life in Alice can be collected and made available to the public. But all of that is in the future. For now we are delighted to have the opportunity to share our message of love and reconciliation with all who come by...whether it be for the best coffee in town served with a smile by Isabel, for healing with Carpillar consultancies, for the inspiration that a glimpse of John Flynn's life and vision can give, for a drink of water or use of the amenities, or simply for the ambience of the most gracious old building in town. Every encounter is ministry, because we strive to see Christ in every friend and stranger.

*Rev Tracy Spencer (Deacon)
Alice Springs Uniting Church*

Kriol Bible completed



The Kriol Bible launched at Katherine Christian Convention - May 2007

Kriol, an Australian Creole language developed out of contact between European settlers and the indigenous people in the northern regions of Australia is presently spoken by 30,000 people across the Top End.

The Bible translation from Genesis through to Revelation was undertaken by a group of Aboriginal Christians and missionaries in the Northern Territory with support from organisations such as The Bible Society, Lutheran Bible Translators, The Church Missionary Society of Australia, The Anglican Church Diocese of NT, Australian Society

for Indigenous Languages and Wycliffe Bible Translators and was launched at the Katherine Christian Convention on 5th May 2007.



Joy Sandefur, Phillip Freier (now Anglican Archbishop of Melbourne) and Margaret Mickan with the first Kriol Bible

Pentecost at Amata

On May 26 and 27 this year a few hundred people from communities across the Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara Lands gathered at Amata to celebrate Pentecost and to participate in Bible studies exploring the outpouring of God's Spirit on the Day of Pentecost and the ways in which the early Church continued to live out its life after Pentecost. The celebrations were organised and run by the Ananguku Area Ministry Council and were resourced by Rev Jovilisi Ragata from Nungalinga College.

The weekend was a time of significant spiritual renewal and a time of healing of some of the conflicts that have emerged within the life of the church in recent times. Jovilisi spoke about the meaning and "fruits" of lives controlled by the Spirit of God.



Worship time during Pentecost celebrations at Amata

Lands at the time was that Nungalinga College courses might be delivered "on the ground" in the APY Lands. So, prior to the Pentecost weekend, Jovilisi spent three days at Pukatja (Ernabella) teaching and preaching about the role of elders, community ministers and congregations in the life of Congress and the Uniting Church.

win to attend courses at Nungalinga College. Over 150 people participated in the various teaching sessions that Jovilisi ran during his time at Pukatja and Amata.

Rev Murray Muirhead

*Resource Worker with NRCC
Ananguku Area Ministry Council*

*Thanks to Murray for this story
and photographs.*



Kinyin McKenzie and Graham Kulyuru, Community Ministers at Pukatja

The singing at inma (worship time) each evening was truly uplifting as people expressed their deep love of God and their renewed hope for their communities.

At the N.R.C.C. and Northern Synod meetings held in Alice Springs in 2006 there was extensive discussion about the Uniting Church re-engaging with Nungalinga College. One of the hopes expressed by people from the APY

This was the first of what we hope will be many visits by the Nungalinga Theology Teacher to the APY lands. The visit has also sparked renewed interest in Anangu travelling to Dar-



Old Timers Village

Frontier Services opened a new wing of its Old Timers Village aged care service at Alice Springs on May 14, completing a \$3.5m extension and improvement program at the nursing home.

Mrs Jan Trengrove, the Chairperson of Frontier Services Board, officially opened the new Nancy Lamb wing. Deputy NT Administrator Pat Miller AO also spoke at the opening which was attended by more than 100 residents and guests.

The new wing, named after a long-time Old Timers resident and tireless supporter, provides single and double-room accommodation for an additional 20 people and includes special facilities for residents with dementia.

The existing Marion McGeough wing was also extensively upgraded as part of



Jan Trengrove, Chairperson of Frontier Services with Nancy Lamb at the opening of the Nancy Lamb wing at Old Timers Village, Alice Springs

the building program.

The Rev Terence Corkin, General Secretary of the Uniting Church Assembly, and also a Frontier Services Board member, blessed the new facility.

The new wing was added to

meet increasing demand for nursing home places and the first residents are expected to move in during June. Frontier Services will recruit additional nurses and carers to staff the new wing.

The building improvement program was funded by the Australian Government.

Old Timers Village now offers

- ◆ a 68-bed nursing home
- ◆ Flynn Lodge, a hostel for residents requiring low-level care
- ◆ 43 independent-living cottages
- ◆ the Fred McKay Day Therapy Centre

The Old Timers site was first in use in 1949 and was part of the wide-ranging vision of the Rev John Flynn.

Frontier Services National Office



Jan Trengrove, Nancy Lamb together with Sharon Davis and Terence Corkin. The plaque features a photograph of Rev John Flynn and the words ‘..to continue serving the people of the outback’

St. Philip's College

The Swag Chapel, which gets its name from the two roll up canvas sides, has become an integral part of the fabric of the College...Chris Tudor and Sarah Pollitt tell the story behind its construction....

Ecclesiastes notes that there is a time for everything and the Swag Chapel at St Philip's College is no exception. For 18 years the notion of the Chapel has been discussed – dreams created, sites researched and discarded, ideas developed. A cardboard model design lay in my office for years and I cannot count the many country churches I looked longingly at as I traveled across Australia. Maybe one would be for sale.... and then one Sunday morning I sat puzzling the problem under the shade shelter at the entrance to the Peace Garden – “yes, this is the spot”. It was abundantly clear; this was the site of the chapel. The 80 meter rotunda had to be turned into God's House.

There have been times at St Philip's when a solution has emerged from the puzzle. Such times are indeed an “I've seen the light” moment and I find my aging



The Swag Chapel combines elements of traditional church structure with the openness of the bush shelter creating a sacred space for students, staff and visitors to the College.

frame filled with energy, enthusiasm and something beyond this certainty. Within the hour I had sought the Chaplain's feelings on this and within one and a half hours the Swag Chapel was born.

When one is inspired the road to achieving the dream becomes clear. I was driving a few days later out in the bush behind the hills when I received a phone call from a College friend and benefactor, John Blaiklock. I put my idea to John, who loved to sit, when in Alice, in the Peace Garden under the old iron wood tree beside his old mate Fred. Conscious of the beauty but also the lack of privacy of the Garden, the Chapel would stand sentinel, guarding this sacred area

of the College. John was rapt “I'll help you!” he said and we parted on my words of thanks. Within minutes, my ugly mobile phone

The Chapel - our place of reflection to teach and glorify God....

again broke the stillness of the bush. John: “Do you want to know what I'm going to give you.” “Please!” – “would \$50,000 be OK?”

What a wonderful man, what a giant of an Australian and what humility always flowed from his generosity.

We were now off and running – the Chapel, our place of reflection to teach and glorify God would now be a reality. And the hard work had to begin. Anne Marshall, our retired Art Teacher, captured my vision on paper in carefully constructed formality. Duncan Cook, the building inspector and a parent spent hours re-interpreting the plans so that they met building code and could be built by students and staff. His help was invaluable and when we began to feel uncomfortable, he was so encouraging.....

Chris Tudor, Headmaster



Chris Tudor in the Peace Garden at St. Philip's College

The Swag Chapel



The excavations began at 6am one chilly April morning during the Australasian Round Square Conference in 2006 when 120 students and staff met at the site of the Swag Chapel to be. We began to build “the temple” at St Philip’s.

Chris Tudor, Headmaster and Master Designer had The

Vision while students, past and present, staff and parents have been the labour force for the chapel which has come to fruition after 20 odd years.

It nestles in the crook of the valley guarding the Peace Garden where lie the ashes of Fred and Meg McKay. The little cross hanging high among the gum leaves gently shouts a testimony to God’s creative power in this place.

The Swag Chapel, built largely of wood, octagonal in shape, supporting beautifully shaped windows strategically placed to include the surrounding majesty, has two canvas walls to keep out the weather like a swag under the stars.

From the international flavour of the foundations to the homegrown painting and sawing of Years 7 – 10, to the pyramid-like movement of the stone by 120 students heaving a rope in unison, God’s temple has taken shape under the direction and inspiration of Chris Tudor.

The Chapel is our sacred space, a place of refreshment and renewal for all who visit from all over the world. Built with such love and care, it has in its very “bones” the heart of God and stands as a living witness to the example of practical Christianity, the hallmark of St Philip’s College, Alice Springs.

Sarah Pollitt, Chaplain



Headmaster Chris Tudor (centre) and Chaplain Sarah Pollitt (far right) with group of Year 7 students collecting rocks on the tractor in front of the chapel



Heaving in unison - St Philip’s students help with construction of the Swag Chapel

A transformed space

As the colder mornings of winter began to creep into Alice Springs I was reminded by a member of the Anangu Congregation of the days when they used to meet for worship on the grass at the back of Adelaide House and in other spots around the Uniting Church site here in Alice Springs. Many of the same people who faithfully met week-by-week in the heat and cold continue to meet for worship and fellowship.

Only now they have a space to call their own in Mission House. As well as gathering for Sunday worship under the leadership of Rev Raymond Bandicha, and with assistance from Margaret Bain and Rev Murray Muirhead, the group meets for occasional Bible Studies and singing using the Pitjantjatjara Bible and Hymn Book.

When the Alice Springs Church Council first agreed to the Anangu Congregation using a space in Mission House it was conscious that the rooms were in a fairly shabby state after the removal of

bookcases and other fittings previously used by the Christian Bookshop. So the Church Council and the Anangu Congregation jointly applied to Pilgrim Presbytery for a Special Project Grant to “.... enable the members of the developing Anangu worship community to create a culturally appropriate worship and teaching space in Mission House”.

The grant was approved and the money has recently been used to buy paint for the walls and ceiling of the ‘Anangu space’ and to purchase a CD player that has enabled the use of Pitjantjatjara Worship CD’s, a small number of Pitjantjatjara Bibles (‘Tjukurpa Palya’), some Pitjantjatjara hymnbooks and songbooks, a whiteboard for teaching purposes, and an urn for the crucial cuppa tea!

So after many months the rooms have been transformed with the

assistance of Leonie and Bob Read and others who helped with the preparation and painting of the



Rev Raymond Bandicha

rooms, replacement of doors and locks, etc. The transformation is remarkable! With freshly painted walls and the removal of the boards that previously covered the windows the Anangu congregation now have a light and airy space to meet for worship and fellowship.

Two members of the congregation, Nuykana Baker and Margaret Hefernan, are now busily creating large paintings with distinctive Anangu designs to hang in the worship space. A large banner depicting the U.A.I.C.C. and Uniting Church Symbols alongside a cross will also be hung.

Along with the small core group of regular worshippers who attend week-by-week, many different people from communities in the Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara Lands drop in for worship and fellowship when they are visiting Alice Springs. So we never know if we will have five or twenty five

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Mission House in Todd Mall - the Anangu Congregation utilizes what was the Christian Bookstore

Anangu worship and meeting place



The transformed space - banners and paintings are being prepared to hang in the worship space

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people on a Sunday morning. Many of those associated with the Anangu congregation have been forced to leave their home communities and move into, or visit, Alice Springs for health reasons with a number of them requiring regular dialysis treatment.

In the past year the Ananguku Area Ministry Council (part of NRCC) which has responsibility for ministry in the APY Lands has recognized the importance of the Alice Springs Anangu Congregation for people who need to live in Alice Springs and has provided assistance to the congregation to purchase a guitar and keyboard. It

has also provided a small amount of financial support for Raymond's ministry.

Whilst the Anangu congregation remains fragile, due in large part to health related issues, the informal partnership that has developed between the John Flynn Congregation, Pilgrim Presbytery, NRCC and the Anangu congregation will ensure that Anangu in Alice Springs continue to be nurtured in the love of Christ.

Readers of the Northern Synod News are asked to remember the Anangu congregation and its leaders in your prayers and join us when you are able. The congregation gathers "around" 9.00am and finishes "around" 11.30am on a Sunday morning.

Rev Murray Muirhead

Editor's Note:

The refurbishment of the Mission House space was funded through the Northern Synod's New Initiatives Fund.

Moving beyond traditional areas



Aboriginal Resource and Development Services Inc. (ARDS) has been involved at the coal-

face of community education with the Yolngu people of north-east Arnhem Land over the past 30 years. In this time ARDS educators have developed a unique and highly effective educational methodology that enables the transfer of knowledge covering a comprehensive range of often complex subject areas. The key components that

have lead to the success of this education are:

- ✦ that all educational sessions are conducted in the language of the people
- ✦ the education incorporates the people's own experiences, knowledge and worldview.

ARDS now has an exciting opportunity to utilize this proven methodology in different language and culture groups. Trainee educators, under the mentorship of ARDS senior staff, are learning this methodology in the communities of Wadeye and Lajamanu.

The training program takes place over a period of 18 months and is supported by funding from the Commonwealth Government through the Department of Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs.

The education methodology is aimed at empowering indigenous people to function successfully within the economic, health, legal and social environment of western culture.

For further information on the work of ARDS see their website:
<http://www.ards.com.au>

Frontier Services patrolling the Barkly

The Tennant Barkly Patrol covers approximately 200,000 square kilometres. This is the area east of the Stuart Highway to the Queensland border and north from about Barrow Creek to the Carpentaria Highway, so it takes some time for us to move around. This is our second year in the Patrol, but the challenge of meeting new people is still apparent as staff on stations can often change.

Although it was always in the back of our minds to visit Indigenous Communities as well as pastoral stations in the patrol area this has only come about this year. With the blessing of the Education Department and the cooperation of the teachers in the schools we have begun to share Bible stories and activities in the schools as we visit. This has also been a significant time of making contact with the adult Aboriginal people working in the schools.

Recently at two of the Schools that we visited, there were Aboriginal Teaching Assistants who remembered us from our time at Ali



Rev John Flaherty at Rockhampton Downs

Curung School in 1978-79. One was a student in the school then and another was undertaking training in the school at that time. This was a wonderful gracious moment where people have not moved on, but have stayed and still remembered us over a period of 25 years.

This year we have been sending out birthday cards to the children

on the stations. These have proved to be a highlight, as the children receive a letter addressed personally to them. We have also been distributing 'sample bags' to the children.

A jillaroo from one of the stations spent a couple of nights with us as she was receiving treatment at the Tennant Creek Hospital. It was a blessing to us that we could offer this hospitality to a young woman who was in a town that was one and a half hours from the station on which she works and whose family were interstate. We became Mum and Dad to her for a time.

We have found this ministry to be life-giving for ourselves as well as those we meet on our journeys. We go to be Christ, but also to meet Christ in those we share with.

*Rev John Flaherty
Tennant Barkly Patrol;*

*Rev Elizabeth Warschauer
Tennant Creek Uniting Church*



Rev Elizabeth Warschauer shares a story with children at Neutral Junction

West Arnhem Region Northern Regional Council of UAICC

Howard Amery, Resource Worker with Northern Regional Council of Uniting Aboriginal and Island Christian Congress (NRCC), shares some of the exciting developments in the West Arnhem Region.

In April, Maningrida congregation played host to the first full meeting of the recently-created West Arnhem Area Ministry Council which is now comprised of 4 congregations: Maningrida, Waruwi, Minjilang and Jabiru.

Rita Djitmu from Maningrida has been elected as the first convenor of the West Arnhem Area Council. Rita was commissioned by outgoing Arnhem region convenor Rev Bilanya Garawirrtja during a service of worship at the conclusion of the meeting.

Jabiru congregation is currently undergoing significant change as NRCC, Frontier Services and PPNA engage in on-going discussions about ministry needs in the local Jabiru area as well as in the wider West Arnhem region of NRCC. Discussions to date have focused on better ways to engage members of the local Bininy congregation at Jabiru. Now that Jabiru is part of NRCC, future discussions will also focus on the need to resource other NRCC congregations in the West Arnhem region.

In May Maningrida celebrated 50 years since its establishment as a community. It was also the 50th Anniversary of Maningrida church and many past missionaries and staff, including Rev Gowan Armstrong and Bob and Heather Cross made the Pilgrimage to assist with the celebrations. They were pleased to discover that the Maningrida church building had survived the fury of Cyclone Monica's onslaught in 2006.



Maningrida congregation played host to West Arnhem Ministry Council in April 2007

In June, Waruwi congregation will host the next meeting of the West Arnhem Area Council. Two Bininy members from Jabiru congregation will attend this meeting for the first time.

Immediately following the Area Council meeting, Jabiru congregation will host a combined ministers' retreat for NRCC ministers from the West Arnhem region and ministers from the PPNA congregations of Nightcliff, Indonesian Missionary,



Jabiru Congregation celebrated Pentecost at Mudginberri

Palmerston, Living Water (Humpty Doo), and Katherine Patrol.



Rev Gowan Armstrong with Synod General Secretary Kevin Davis

In September the Minjilang congregation and community plan to celebrate the 40th Anniversary of the ordination of the Rev Lazarus Lamilami. Lazarus was the first Aboriginal minister to be ordained in Arnhem Land and special guests from other ministry regions within NRCC, as well as from Pilgrim Presbytery and the Northern Synod will be invited to come and join in the celebrations.

Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress National Elders Meeting

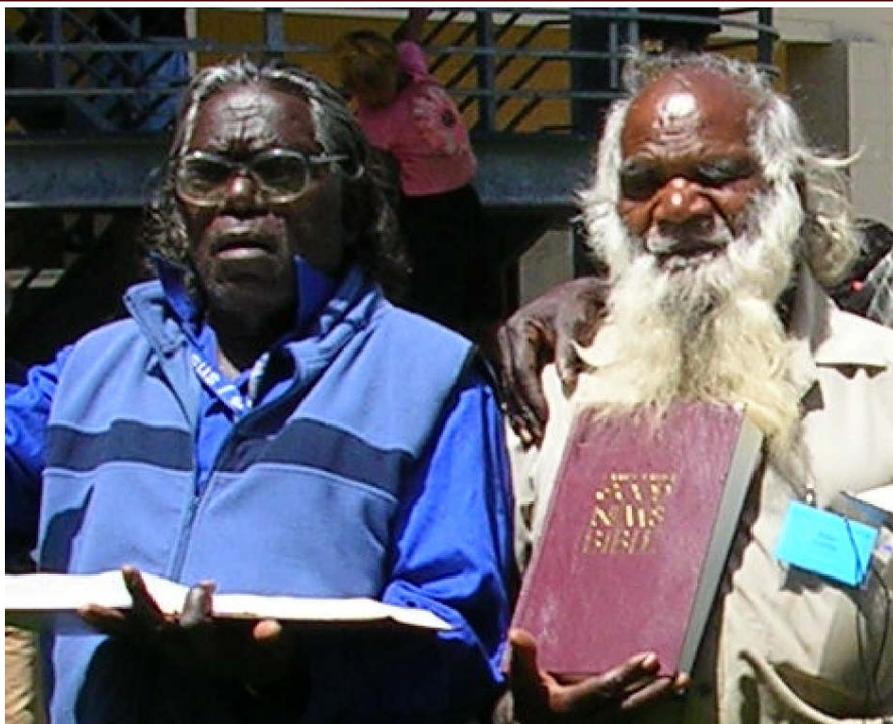


Rev Peter Nyangu and Rev Walirr Garrawurra recently attended a gathering of UAICC National Elders at Shalom College in Townsville. They were accompanied by Rev Dr Murray Muirhead (Deacon) and Rev Rronang Garrawurra.

Peter and Walirr are recognised by N.R.C.C. as U.A.I.C.C. National Elders. The National Council of Elders includes indigenous elders from each Congress region throughout Australia.

At their last meeting the Elders discussed a number of issues including:

- ✦ What sort of qualities people must have to be recognised as National Elders?
- ✦ The role and ministry of the National Elders as set out in the U.A.I.C.C. Constitution.
- ✦ The importance of indigenous languages being used in the life of Congress.
- ✦ How the U.A.I.C.C. might respond to the many changes that the Federal Government is making to Aboriginal communities?
- ✦ How can the National Elders



Rev Walirr Garrawurra and Rev Peter Nyangu pictured together at Synod 2006 in Alice Springs

can help to encourage healthy lifestyles in their communities?

- ✦ How can the Congress Regions might support the ministry of the National Elders.
- ✦ How God is working in communities in other countries which face the same sort of challenges as Aboriginal communities in Australia.
- ✦ The importance of prayer and fasting in the Christian life and the life of Congress.

Following the meeting the National Elders Council wrote to NRCC and other Congress Regional Councils to ask them to increase their support for work of the National Elders. NRCC Executive has subsequently agreed to provide support for Peter and Walirr to carry out their responsibilities as National Elders within their Area Council ministry regions.

As well as participating in the life of the National Elders Council Peter and Walirr will spend time visiting congregations and communities in their regions so that stories and concerns from the regions inform the decisions of the National Elders.

The National Elders Council provides advice and guidance to the National Executive of the U.A.I.C.C. on many issues in the life of Congress.

Thanks to Rev Murray Muirhead for this article.

For more information on the work of UAICC, National Elders and the NRCC, see these websites:

<http://nat.uca.org.au/uaicc/>

<http://ns.uca.org.au/>
- then follow the link to 'Presbyteries'

Synod Standing Committee....continued

5. Organizing seminars and conferences on bible translation

All members of the church are urged to pray that the Centre for Indigenous Scriptures may be supported and developed.

The Standing Committee dealt with a number of routine matters. In all, it was decided that it was a very useful and worthwhile meeting.

Kevin Davis AM

Members of Standing Committee elected at Synod 2006 are :

- ✦ Rev Steve Orme
- ✦ Rev Wendell Flentje
- ✦ Mr Kevin Davis AM
- ✦ Rev Mawunydjil Garawirtja
- ✦ Rev Felicity Amery
- ✦ Mr John McLaren
- ✦ Rev Kate Fraser
- ✦ Mr Stuart McMillan

- ✦ Mr Eric Neil
- ✦ Mrs Barbara Grylls
- ✦ Rev Bilanya Garawirtja
- ✦ Mr Graham Kulyuru
- ✦ Mrs Matjarra Garrawurra
- ✦ Mr William Noinba
- ✦ Mr Howard Amery
- ✦ Ms Joy Morlumbun
- ✦ Mrs Manyiritjanu Lennon

Comings and goings.....



Rev Tony Davies at Pilgrim Presbytery in March 2007

Rev Tony Davies moves from Centralian Patrol to the Riverina Presbytery to take up a placement as Presbytery Ministries Development Officer.

Rev John Boundy, currently serving in the Murchison Patrol based in Meekatharra WA, will replace Tony. John will relocate, with his aircraft, to Alice Springs in August.

Rev Andrew Watts will be taking long service leave from July to October 2007. Andrew, Jodi and family will relocate to NSW while **Wally and Margaret Johnson** take care of the West Kimberley Ministry based in Derby.

Rev Tom Verrier is once again providing supply ministry in the Northern Synod. Tom and Dawn will be working in Broome from June for 3 to 4 months.



Rev Tom Verrier

National Church Life Survey

Congregations that participated in the National Church Life Survey in 2006 will have received their Church Life Profile and be working on ways to consolidate their strengths and engaging with areas which are not so strong or have declined.

The Northern Synod has received a regional profile from NCLS based on 332 responses from 9 churches. These responses all came from congregations of the Pilgrim Presbytery.

A few responses are included here:

- ✦ 87% attend church services weekly or more often
- ✦ 62% indicate that leaders at local church inspire people to action
- ✦ 28% have switched from local churches of other denominations or transferred from UCA congregations in the last five years.
- ✦ 76% prefer contemporary music styles
- ✦ 71% indicate that their leaders encourage innovation
- ✦ 62% of attenders are female
- ✦ 66% travel between one and ten minutes to church
- ✦ 57% of respondents are involved in leadership, ministry and administration roles
- ✦ 82% of all attenders agree they have found it easy to make friends in the congregation
- ✦ 62% said God is the most important reality in their lives



**UNITING CHURCH IN
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The Northern Synod News is published by the
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All enquiries should be directed to the Editorial
Committee at the address above.

*The next edition will feature stories from the
Kimberley region*

Deadline for articles 1 August 2007

Articles and photographs for this edition
of were provided by Murray Muirhead,
Tracy Spencer, Kevin Davis, Frontier
Services National Office, John Flaherty,
Elizabeth Warschauer, Howard Amery,
Chris Tudor, Sarah Pollitt, Bible Soci-
ety, NCLS Research, Assembly Commu-
nications Unit.

The Editorial Committee appreciates the
support of all contributors.

Diary Dates

2 July - 20 July 2007

*About F.A.C.E. (Faith and Culture Exchange)
Participants travel to Darwin and to indigenous
communities to experience life in a different culture*

13 August - 16 August 2007

*East Arnhem Region Ministers and Church Leaders
Retreat at Ramingining*

11 & 12 September 2007

*ARDS Training Seminar - Capacity Building in
Indigenous Communities*

24 September - 28 September

*Northern Regional Council of UAICC
Meeting in Darwin*

28 & 29 September 2007

*Pilgrim Presbytery of Northern Australia
Meeting in Darwin*

30 September to 3 October 2007

31st Annual Meeting of Northern Synod in Darwin

15 October to 18 October 2007

*Ananguku Region Ministers and Church Leaders
Retreat at Ngarutjara*

7 & 8 November 2007

*ARDS Training Seminar - Capacity Building in
Indigenous Communities*

One Great Sunday of Sharing

The Uniting Church National Assembly agency Multicultural and Cross-cultural Ministry encourages congregations to celebrate One Great Sunday of Sharing. This event provides congregations with an opportunity to cross over between cultures, to grow in what it means to live as people from different cultures in worship, witness and service.

It is also an occasion in which we can celebrate the richness of our diversity as God's people, sharing faith and fellowship with language, image, songs, dance and artifacts that speak across cultures. The theme for 2007 is *'The outpouring love and Spirit of God moves hearts'*.

One Great Sunday of Sharing is customarily celebrated on the third

Sunday in July. However, if Sunday July 15 2007 is not suitable, congregations can choose another day on which to celebrate.

It is not about a program! One Great Sunday of Sharing is about making room for the grace of God to work freely among us; it is about making space where the gifts of grace already poured out on God's people are given room to work, space in which to be honoured, a place to bloom and to grow.

The Multicultural and Cross-cultural Ministry Annual Appeal for 2007 will be directed towards youth programs building cross-cultural relationships with Indigenous communities and activities. Congregations are encouraged to contribute to this appeal.

A range of resources for worship, sermon notes and stories around the theme is available on the agency website.

One Great Sunday of Sharing is a time for the Uniting Church to recommit to the vision of actually being a multicultural church; a time to give expression to our unity in Christ; a time to embrace the diversity of cultures, languages and gifts through which that one Spirit of Christ works for all peoples.

*Rev Dr Tony Floyd
National Director
Multicultural and Cross-cultural
Ministry*

*For resources and information:
<http://nat.uca.org.au/multi/>*