

Celebrating 100 years at the heart of remote Australia

“Difficulties of a serious nature will arise in the shoals of every fertile mind. To each one, a reply can only be made in words already made familiar; do not pray for tasks equal to your powers, pray for powers equal to your tasks.”

With these words, Rev John Flynn encouraged the Church to support the work approved by the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church on 26 September 1912 – the Australian Inland Mission.

The Assembly had responded to a report, written by Flynn, detailing his observations of life in the outback. The report included Flynn’s recommendations about the work he believed needed to be undertaken across the continent. The Church responded by establishing the Australian Inland Mission, appointing Flynn as its Superintendent.

Flynn’s dream was to create a "mantle of safety" so people could build sustainable communities despite the challenges of distance and isolation.

The first AIM “patrol padres” went out in 1913 by camel and horse from Pine Creek, Oodnadatta, Broome and Port Hedland to provide pastoral care and counselling services to people on isolated properties, mine sites and road gangs. Nursing posts and hospitals were established in locations across the outback.

As the work of the AIM grew, Flynn envisioned using aircraft to conquer vast distances across the nation and in 1928 he formed the Aerial Medical Service, which later became a separate organisation called the Royal Flying Doctor Service. Flynn saw improved communications as another way to overcome isolation. With Flynn’s encouragement, the pedal wireless was invented by Alf Traeger and by 1937 there were 64 pedal wireless sets in the AIM network of nine hospitals.

Following church union in 1977, the outback work of the AIM, the Methodist Inland Mission and the Congregation Union came together using the name Flynn himself had used – “Frontier Services”.

Frontier Services, an agency of the Assembly, is still serving rural and remote Australia through the provision of ministry and community services, striving to break down the disadvantage created by distance and isolation.

In the Centenary year, we celebrate Flynn’s vision for the people of outback Australia and the remarkable contribution made by so many in remote Australia over the whole century.

It will also be an opportunity to celebrate the incredible hope, spirit and resilience of the people who live in remote Australia, as we look to the future.

Centenary celebrations will take place across Australia and Frontier Services encourages all members of the Uniting Church to take part. More than 2000 people are expected to attend the official Centenary celebration on 26 September 2012 in Melbourne. Held at the Dallas Brooks Centre, it will be a liturgical event with commemorative Centenary songs and worship. All are welcome to attend this special event.

We invite you to join in the celebrations by hosting your own Centenary event. Whether you host a Centenary Great Outback BBQ, a Frontier Services Sunday, an historical display or activity in your

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community - or any other celebration that you can think of – there are endless ways in which you can get involved.

To find out more contact Kate Higginbotham, Centenary Events Coordinator on 02 8270 1361 or email kate.h@frontierservices.org or log on to www.frontierservices.org/centenary.

More than ever, as a nation, a church and a community, we must find the courage and innovation needed to ensure equity extends beyond the urban boundaries to those who live in rural and remote Australia.

As we reflect on Flynn's words a century ago, it is our hope that all across Australia people will honour this amazing story of continued commitment and work together to ensure we can support remote Australia for another 100 years.

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