

Prayer Points

- For us as a family that we won't let ourselves be drained & disheartened by such an intense ministry.
- For wisdom and perseverance as we minister here.
- For Naomi as she prepares to come here.
- For Joshua as he has holidays and then as he starts a new school in late January.
- For the new church toilet block plans as they go through council.
- For enough funds to finish the toilet block and to start saving for a another bus.

Praise Points

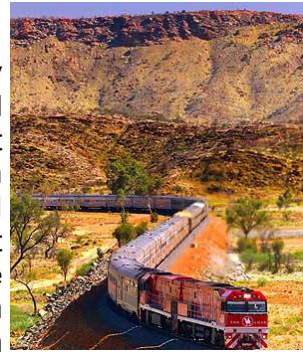
- For the generous gifts given to the new church toilet block project.
- For our 50 new chairs.
- For all our financial supporters who have made it possible for us to be here.
- That Naomi is coming to support us in a practical way.
- That Joshua has so many good friends this Christmas break to spend time with.
- That Joshua had such a safe & wonderful experience in China.
- For the grace and strength to minister here.

Stepping Out With the Stuarts

December Newsletter, 2010

G'day from Alice.

Here we are at the end of another year that has flown by so fast. I was hoping this newsletter would be in the mail weeks ago, but the week I started to write it a derailment south of Alice caused havoc and the southbound Ghan got stuck in Alice. As the boss was away on holidays I Cathy, being the only one available at short notice, spent many extra hours at the train station helping out with the stranded passengers. The Ghan was stuck in Alice from the Thursday to the Monday. Monday saw the boss return and an empty Ghan train head south at Midday. Unfortunately the track repair ran late which made our usual northbound Ghan that stops at Alice 2-6pm very late at 9.15pm & it left at 11.15pm! It was our first train in the dark and a hard way to find out which lights didn't work at the station! The next day was the Alice Springs Train Station Christmas dinner, followed by Joshua's graduation the next night. Along with all this was a particularly tough time at the hospital with so many requests for visits and unfortunately a few have passed away. The family of one lady that passed away requested the funeral here so as this goes to the printer we will be having her funeral here. So all this on top of our normally busy life is why this newsletter is so much later than planned.



MegaVoice - It is used to get the Bible out there to non-literate people - perfect for here! The **Ambassador** (left of picture) is a solar powered pocket size audio device with built in speaker. We have brought another 40 that we personally subsidize and then sell to our mob here for \$25. We have also brought the **Scribe** (right of picture) so we can convert and 'scribe' sermons and language stories, songs and parts of the Bible (where available) onto the Ambassadors. Please pray as we work through the issues to enable us to get God's Story out to non literate people here. If you would like to help this project financially, drop us a line. To know more about MegaVoice visit www.megavoice.com



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If you would like to receive our newsletter via email to reduce costs, please let us know.

If you haven't been on our web lately, check it out. We often update it when a newsletter goes out with new photos etc. We have especially put a section in there on Joshua's China trip!
www.stuarts.id.au

As the last newsletter went out, we were reeling from the sudden death of a beloved church member Noreen. If your newsletter went out in the 2nd day of mailing the September newsletter or you get an email version, you would know that we were sent in a spin over the details of the funeral that they booked here. We needed more chairs and since everything takes two weeks to get here we prayed for a miracle and we got one. They were sent from Sydney on Thursday and they were here first thing Monday morning - Amazing! Phil has written his 'Ministry in the Alice' on the funeral & the events that occurred and why.

This weeks funeral is not a Warlpiri one like Noreen's so we are expecting a somewhat "normal" funeral (for here).

It has been so busy here that I have only recently been able to submit the plans for the new church toilet block. Please pray for a smooth trip through council. We have



been totally blessed by three different gifts of \$10,000 each toward the toilet block project. We believe this will get the church, manse and property up to regulations and the toilet block to lock up stage. Despite the delays in the submission of the plans, we felt much more at peace submitting the plans knowing that we can pay for it!

We have been delighted to have so many friends pass through Alice and say hello. We also had Cathy's parents come for a week, but unfortunately it was the week the Ghan was delayed, so I didn't get to spend as much time with them as I would have liked. We also had friends on the disrupted Ghan, so a small blessing to come out of such havoc was that we got to take them home for a few hours which normally would not be possible.

If you remember in our last newsletter we shared with you about Naomi Findlay who came to help us out for two weeks in July/August. Well Naomi has been seeking some direction for 2011 and after much prayer & consideration is coming to Alice to help us out for about six months from mid January. Naomi is not the first to consider doing a short term stint here and she won't be the last, so we have been thinking about suitable accommodation for such people. We tossed around a few ideas but in the end have turned part of the shed into a room. It is all steel framed, insulated & Gyprocked and we put in a bigger window, a door and a veranda. The shed was leaky so this gave us an opportunity to do some much needed maintenance on the old thing. We already have a spare outdoor toilet & washing machine so she will be able to be as independent or as much a part of a family as she wants.



Our two Amooinguna Aboriginal Community Bible studies have been continuing nicely. However with the summer heat finally arriving we will have to look at moving them to the mornings when it's cooler.

During the last few months our poor church bus has been deteriorating and was in desperate need of some help so we finally gave it up and sent it in for a radiator rebuild among many other things. We knew it would be gone for at least one Sunday so we warned the church that they would have to find their own way here. Knowing full well what a bus dependant church we have here, we wondered if any would bother to make the journey themselves. In reality, we thought we would have the Sunday off, so were thrilled when we got over 20 men, women & children in three cars and quite a few walked. It was an absolute thrill for us to see which of our church mob really wanted to come to church as



From the
Stuart mob
Alice Springs
2010

Phil Read "Ministry in the Alice" before reading this...All done?...Well to top off everything, death is a constant part of ministry here. We are dealing with about 2 - 3 deaths a week. Some are close friends here, others are relations of our church mob, others are those we are visiting in hospital. Death is just a regular part of life here. Fortunately we don't get many of the funerals as they go home to their country to be buried, but it means that our church is quite empty at the moment with most away at multiple funerals.

Another difficult part of ministry here is that people often don't tell you when people have died - *you should just know!* And even at church this week I found out that one of our church mob here died a month ago and we didn't know! *How could you not know?* I hear you ask. People are always going bush all the time, back and forth you often don't know where people are. Also asking questions is rude, talking about the dead is even worse. Often we don't even know when our mob is in hospital until they are out. You are just supposed to know! It is very embarrassing and sickening as well, especially when they have died and you didn't even know they were sick!

Cathy Well how quickly things change here in Alice. Just after our Sept newsletter went out we went into work at the Ghan to find out that the company we work for (that is contracted to service the Ghan) had their contract terminated. This meant that we were losing our casual jobs and we had to reapply for them. We are very excited that GSR (Great Southern Rail) has taken control of the terminal themselves and not re-contracted. Over half of the staff have chosen to make a fresh start elsewhere meaning a reshuffle of the positions available at the terminal. We both successfully reapplied for our jobs and I got a little promotion in the process and therefore a bit more responsibility.



Josh On September 14th I left Alice Springs and flew to Melbourne. The next day I took a 10hr plus flight landing in Shanghai, China. I did not see much of Shanghai because the smog was too great. In Shanghai I did get to see & go almost to the top of the 3rd tallest building in the world (the SWFC) at 492m high. After a trip to Hangzhou for the school cultural exchange, we went to Xian. My highlight was visiting the Terracotta Warriors. I was disappointed a little to see that only a few were completely intact and the rest had some sort of damage. One plus was that all the statues bore real weapons capable of killing people in a battle. The next day we flew to Beijing and from there we visited the Great Wall of China, but to my disappointment I saw no rabbits -lol. Seriously though, the wall had amazing architecture.



While there we also visited the 2008 Olympic stadium. For those who want to know I found no Mario or sonic merchandise. It was bigger than I could ever have imagined. While I was in China I am proud of myself for trying & swallowing a Ducks blood meal (in jelly form). In all I enjoyed China & the experience it gave me & I will continue to learn Mandarin next year. Speaking of next year, I have already graduated from Centralian Middle School & will be in year 10 at the Centralian Senior College.

opposed to just something to do. They have no trouble getting around during the week, but church for many, it is "pick me up or I don't come". It was also heart warming to see what different people came the second week we still had no bus as they had missed going to church the 1st week. We finally got the bus back at 4.30pm on the Friday of the 3rd week.

In Sunday school Cathy has been going through the old testament and when she got to the end of the story of Joseph, she showed the animated film. Well it had been six months since she showed the Veggie Tales Easter DVD, but some things don't change because the children still had the attention span of a gnat (Phil's favourite expression!) It seems colouring in and making things are still the way to go for now, though she did use the laminator once to laminate all Joseph's family after they coloured them in. They found this fascinating & we can't tell you how many interesting little bits of paper got laminated that day!

Well I think that is all for this newsletter. Our future looks 'normal' as we continue on through the end of the year into the next. Nothing stops here for the "holidays" as it is difficult getting it all going again. So the main things we have are church on Sundays, Bible studies Tuesday & Wednesday afternoons, working at the Ghan Monday afternoon & Thurs mornings, hospital visiting Sunday, Wednesday and Friday, finishing Naomi's shed room and finally getting a third start at getting the caravan spruced up for sale. Oh & not leaving out ferrying Joshua to his many social engagements! Yes he finally has a social life - we were a bit worried there for a while.

Oh and for those who like to know about the weather, Alice Springs is changing it's name from the "Red Centre" to the "Green Centre". After last year's rainfall of only 69mm, we have had 926mm (250mm average!). The Todd has flowed more times that it has been dry and the old Aboriginal men are seeing plants that they have not seen here for over 50 years!

So until next time have a safe and happy Christmas. Phil, Cathy + Joshua

If you have been thinking about supporting us, please note our support details.

All of our support is being channeled through the Westminster Presbyterian Church (WPC) so that we can be paid a wage from it. Support that has been sent in our name has been signed over and put into the WPC-Kelmscott-Stuart fund. This bank account is purely for the support of our family.

So if you are considering supporting us, please use these details.

Please write cheque/money orders to:
'WPC Kelmscott Inc—Stuart fund'

For direct Debit:

Bank: Commonwealth Bank
Account Name: WPC Kelmscott Inc—Stuart fund
BSB: 066156
Account No: 10244652
Reference Note/Payee details:
Please use your Surname for ID as all gifts going into this account are received.

Ministry In The Alice

Ngkarte-kenhe areyeke ayeye akwete ilaye. (2 Timothy 4:2a)

If life is like a box of chocolates, then ministry is like a rollercoaster. Up and down and round you go. It very rarely goes straight and flat and when it does, it is for a very short time. But on a rollercoaster you always know what's coming up. When I went to Movie World a number of years ago, I found what I have dubbed the "Ministry Rollercoaster". It is inside and in the dark, so you really don't know what's coming up, but after a while it stops and then you go backwards in the dark for a time and flat chat at that, and then you wonder how do you get off this thing?

Well, we have just finished the backwards part in the dark. It lasted around two months, but now we are going forward again - *Praise God!* If God was not Sovereign, then I know I would have gotten off this ride in October - mind you I probably would have bailed out years ago when I think about it. And what a ride it has been. 16 years in ministry and it finally hit rock bottom - well the lowest I have gotten so far - I know it can get worse, but praise God he only allows things to happen to us that we can handle. And it all started at Noreen's Funeral.

I have done funerals before, Aboriginal and White, but never a Warlpiri funeral. I had been warned of what can happen, but it was not an issue to me - then. Now Noreen was from Yuendumu and if you have been watching the news, you may have heard about the riots in Yuendumu over a murder in Alice. Well the riots were the beginning of payback for the murder, and the police intervened, so payback was never done. But peace was not to be achieved unless payback was done. We expected in excess of 400 people at the funeral, many of whom were coming from Yuendumu, and since payback had not yet been done, we had the police here for the funeral in case things turned bad.

We crammed 200 in the church and had 200 outside. Cath was outside the back of the church in the Sunday school area keeping an eye on proceedings there, Josh was doing the same out with the dogs and our vehicles and police and prison guards were moving about the bulk of the people.

Once the coffin came in, the wailing and screaming started. And wail and scream they did for about half an hour or more until I could be heard above the noise. This was expected, but not to that degree. It is fake wailing to show that you are not to blame. It is a normal part of Aboriginal culture. The more you wail and carry on the less you are to blame, and less likely to get repercussions from the spirit world as well as payback for her death (someone has to be blamed).

What I didn't expect was that nearly everyone at the funeral had to come and lie on the coffin, while the wailing and screaming was happening. I had never seen this before, but as Noreen was a very popular and an important woman, people wanted some of her life spirit, and so they laid on her coffin. She was a Christian woman and would have been disgusted at this.

Now I wasn't happy about this happening as this was a Christian funeral and having this anti-Christian stuff going on was not good, but once started it could not be stopped. But such is life. This wasn't the worst of it. This was just a normal part of ministry here.

Before Noreen died, she said the hardest part of being an Aboriginal Christian was Sorry Business (which all this was a part of), and it was a struggle when it was expected of her to participate. The pressures of the old way are very strong for many who want to break away from them.

As per usual, we had to make sure that we put the vehicles away and anything that could be stolen or broken and put people on guard to stop people jumping fences to get to the rest of the property. So the caravan and the Troopy were put away in the backyard and under Joshua's guard, but we had no room for the Spinifex Truck nor the Camry, although they were tucked away in the corner of the car park. But unfortunately the kids being bored and not having any accountability, they got to our car and the truck and used the roofs as playgrounds and the windscreens as slides. There was probably a few thousand dollars damage done, but the parents weren't going to cough up, so we foot the bill. *(Since that funeral, we now have the Baptist Pastors available to be at our funerals to help keep an eye on everyone and everything).*

After the service Josh told me about the vehicles, and I was not impressed! I went to take the bus to the burial and found - no joke over 40 people in our 20 seater bus. I refused to move unless that halved. Also we had bins everywhere with the hope that they might be used, but of course they weren't. After the funeral, Cathy and Josh couldn't come to the burial as rubbish was strewn across the road and all over the yard and in the church. It took them an hour and a half to clean up and they collected over a wheelie bin full of rubbish. Cath watched white people walk past shaking their heads at the rubbish left behind and you knew what they must have been thinking.

At the burial, after everyone had their go at laying on the coffin again, before I buried Noreen, I gave them a severe growling for the damage done to our vehicles and for the rubbish. Since then we have had to put on a bond to cover any damage done & cleanup required at funerals. Mind you the Baptist church has far more damage done at their Warlpiri funerals and I talked them into putting on a bond too. But after a funeral there last week, their bonds are no longer refundable due to the damage done and poo strewn everywhere. It is a real shame job.

So, this took me on the down hill slide, along with the constant drunken violence and carry on outside our gates nearly every afternoon and night. The shop wall across the road from us all day long being used as a toilet by men and women didn't help and to top it off, for months the drunks used the property next door to drink at, walking back and forth along our front fence to the shops for more grog. It got that bad I had to leave the dogs out of their pens at night to protect the place - much to the delight of grateful neighbours. This was not everything, there is far more, but I don't need to go into more, but I must say Alice is a depraved place and alcohol and sit down money are much to blame.

So it is a very easy slide into the resentment of Aboriginal people here. This is one reason we started Spinifex Ministries, to prevent this and help those in it. It was now something that I had to deal with. I looked at these people with disgust over this behaviour that is "normal" and it made church time a difficult process. But I just had to keep things in perspective. Christian people do far worse to God, yet he still loves us and puts up with us. I just had to keep reminding myself of this.

It is a hard feeling to describe, but when there is no relief from it, everywhere you look it was there, it just drags you down. This is the reason I spend my days off from ministry at the Ghan - to refresh me, so when I drive home and back into ministry, I can keep my perspective.

But praise God, it did not affect my ministry, it was just something I had to work through in my head. It took around two months, but my rollercoaster is going forward again. Please pray for us here, as we minister to a people group we love. Pray also for the Central Desert Aboriginal people especially as there is so much constantly dragging them backwards into depravity.