



Dear Friends,

It has been a year since our last newsletter, and we apologise for this extended gap in bringing you news from Arnhem Land. So much has happened, and as we reflect back on this difficult year, we can see clearly that **God has been with us** through the events. He truly is faithful to his promise to never leave us. Not only has God been faithful through the past year but also you, our partners around the world, have been incredibly faithful to us, so **thank you for your loyal support and encouragement** through a very difficult time for all the family.



We have just passed the third anniversary of arriving in Arnhem Land. We can now celebrate how much **God has brought about change and renewal** both in this community and in our own lives as well. In this newsletter we want to start with our praise points which cover both this last year and also issues we have raised from the earlier years:

- ❖ Our respective **'adoptions'** within the local family structures have been protective and encouraging links into the community. We are both adopted into strong Christian families.
- ❖ The **Djambarrpuyngu New Testament was dedicated in June 2008** after 32 years of translation work. Hundreds of people attended a rich cultural celebration over a whole weekend.
- ❖ We returned from leave to find that the **council and school management had changed**. This has removed a great deal of frustration and has led to many subsequent positive changes in the community services and beyond.
- ❖ **Galiwin'ku church leadership** has become more visible and effective. Services take place most weeks and groups continue to meet informally. Relationships within the church across clans appear to be stronger and there is a warmth towards all members of the congregation.
- ❖ **Our partner churches** were able to encourage and support us during our leave last year. When we returned to Arnhem Land we knew that we had the understanding and care of those back home. We are excited to see an increase in the number of churches partnering with us. Thank you so much for your generosity in supporting us and this work.



But those who hope in the LORD will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint. Isaiah 40:31

- ❖ Our third year on Elcho has brought even closer friendships with the Yolngu, especially for Jen and the boys as they have sought to provide **Christian resources, Bibles, DVDs** and reading glasses to the community through the **Friday market**, callers at home and a weekly **ladies' Bible study**.



- ❖ Graham, Jonathan and Jen are continuing to make good progress with **home-schooling**. We are so grateful to MAF for providing Lisa, the home-school support teacher, who has visited us regularly for the last year. She is such a great encouragement to all the families she visits.

- ❖ Our current staff team is great and working well. In addition to the Vogel family and ourselves, **the Fiorito family** and **Matthew Alcorn** have joined the Elcho team in the last few months. **David** has returned to flying full-time and now works directly for MAF after a year of mainly office-based duties while seconded by MAF to Marthakal Yolngu Airline.

2008 was a year of continual change and seemingly impossible difficulties, juggling the conflicting demands of MAF charter operations with the day-to-day management of Marthakal Yolngu Airline. With unexpected staff problems to deal with as well, we felt overwhelmed and were relieved to leave for furlough, feeling totally exhausted. We hoped for an improvement in our absence.

However we had only been back in Arnhem Land a month after our leave in the UK when a **recurring ear infection perforated one of David's eardrums**. With no doctor on Elcho Island he eventually had to travel to Cairns to visit a specialist who was able to completely remove the fungal infection and promote the healing of the eardrum. Thankfully, there has been no recurrence.



On the day David returned to Elcho we received the news that **Hadleigh Smith**, one of our pilots, **had not returned** from a routine freight flight. The ensuing search found some aircraft parts and cargo in Buckingham Bay, but no sign of Hadleigh or the plane. Several subsequent aerial and underwater searches have followed and a final sonar search has just been completed. There were intensive internal and external investigations which so far have not reached any firm conclusions as to the cause of the accident. We remembered Hadleigh with his family, the Arnhem Land MAF team and the local community in November during a very moving Thanksgiving Service at Galiwin'ku church, on Elcho. The grief of this loss brought us closer to the local community, who came to comfort us, and it was a significant point when we became dependent on them.

The end of the year finally brought a restructuring of the Elcho operation so that the **MAF** charter flying could be **managed separately** from the ground activities. This has ultimately enabled David to return to full-time flying duties and for Marthakal Yolngu Airline (MYA) to manage the other activities with its own new management team.

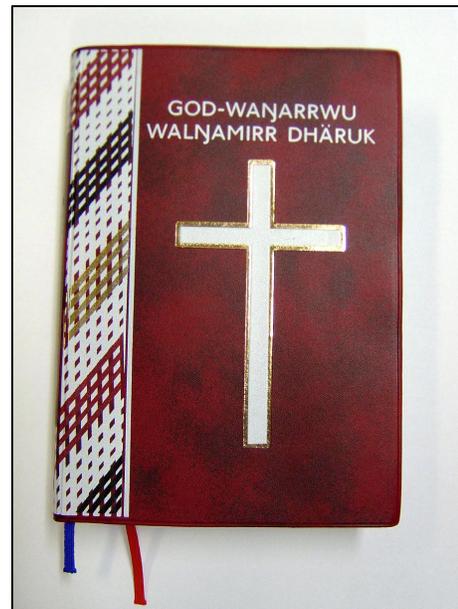


The events of the last year have taken their toll on the family with both **David and Graham becoming ill with stress-related conditions.** David was given a month off work in March before his re-induction to flying duties, and Graham is making a steady recovery as we seek to establish more appropriate boundaries in all areas of our life. Jen and Jonathan have been an amazing support through this time and deserved the holiday we took in Cairns in May. We now have the capacity to move beyond 'survival mode' and rediscover the joys and opportunities that God has placed here for us.

The effects of the **Government's intervention programme** in the Aboriginal communities has raised the demand for flights but any actual benefits to Galiwin'ku and the surrounding area are yet to become obvious. To the Yolngu, access to welfare payments has become more complicated and their main concern of severe overcrowding in houses has not yet been addressed.

Around Arnhem Land there has been a **widespread turning to faith in Jesus** with MAF staff closely involved in supporting the emerging fellowship groups where there is no established church. Power is closely linked to the traditional belief system, therefore a move of God directly challenges traditional leadership, which in turn has attempted to discredit and confuse the Gospel along with an increase in secret ceremonies and superstitions. **Jesus Christ brings freedom and joy in direct confrontation with the fear and bondage of traditional spirit worship.**

We are excited to have seen a **YWAM / Wycliffe** team here at this important time **providing basic biblical teaching** to the local church members using the newly dedicated Djambarrpuynngu New Testament. They are being equipped to recognise and stand against the distortion of Biblical truth which has been infiltrating the community. By hearing the truth they are also better able to discern the difference between cultural behaviour and traditional belief - an essential distinction - if they are to successfully secure their identity as Yolngu whilst breaking free from their oppressive belief system. The best news is that believers are realising that they have a choice.



Prayer Points

- Please pray that many will choose the freedom that Christ died to offer us all, and that the traditional fear-based power system will be replaced.
- Please pray that the Christian DVDs, CDs and Bibles supplied each week at Friday markets will continue to make a positive impact on the community.
- For increasing boldness to use the opportunities to encourage faith and understanding that arise during the day.
- For Homeschool for Graham and Jonathan and for wisdom about their future education needs.
- For the MAF community in Gove with the huge task of finishing the MAF hangar with a steady stream of volunteer builders to accommodate and feed.
- For a continuing strong partnership between the Elcho MAF operation and MYA staff.

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