

NATSIEC PRAYER DIARY 2006
FEBRUARY 2006



Wednesday 1 February

Readings: 2 Sam 24.2 (3-8) 9-17, Mark 6.1-6

Pray for: Wali Fejo, Liesl Holmes and the work of the UAICC in New South Wales

Reflection: *'My nickname, one of many, that my parents gave to me was 'firebug'. Of course, already you know what it's all about. I just loved playing with matches until I burnt the mosquito net and that stopped it. For us as Larakia people, and I think it is true of other Aboriginal people, the fire has great meaning. For us here it meant when we needed to call our people for various ceremonies we'd light a big fire. Today, you pick up a telephone. And telephone cost money. But we were able to just collect wood and make a fire and everybody knew that there was a calling for a special time. And that related to others to get the message across to be able to come and have the ceremony and meetings. With a special place! And it was a controlled place where the fire did not get out of control.* (Rev. Wali Fejo, Welcome Address to 'Country in Flames' conference 1994)

Thursday 2 February Presentation of Christ in the Temple

Readings: Mal 3.1-4, Heb 2.14-18, Lk 2.22-40

Pray for: Elsie Heiss, Sue Gibson & the Aboriginal Catholic Ministry at La Perouse

Reflection: *'You are people first. Always remember that. We don't say to people here "are you Catholic: or not? Are you Aboriginal or not?" We welcome everyone whoever they are and wherever they come from.'* (Elsie Heiss, to the young Christians, Muslims and Jews on the 'Journey of Promise' experience 2004)

Friday 3 February 1st Anglican Service at Sydney Cove

Readings: Sir 47.2-11, Mark 6.14-29

Pray for: Eora Country, its people and needs: and especially the ACM City Office

Reflection: *'We ask the church to understand that there have been two sides to our missionary history. On the one hand we give thanks to God and to our missionaries because they brought us the good news. We were able to meet Jesus Christ to know him as saviour and to live in God's love. We will always be indebted to the whole church for the Gospel. On the other hand, the theology of missionaries, clothed in their own cultural forms and their social and political interests has imprisoned us in a narrow spiritual perspective hostile to both the spiritual and social needs of our Aboriginal people.'* (Charles Harris 'Manifesto')

Saturday 4 February

Readings: 1 Kings 3.4-13, Mark 6.30-34

Pray for: Indigenous ministries in Redfern: ACM Alexandria, Crossroads Aboriginal Ministries, Koori Lighthouse Ministries, Colin Davis' Street Ministry, Generation Next; and for fruitful development of the recommendations of the recent NSW Ecumenical Council report on addressing the challenges of Redfern and inner urban Aboriginal living

Reflection: *'Redfern and the Block in particular, is a place of political, spiritual and cultural significance for Aboriginal people in Sydney and Aboriginal people throughout NSW and Australia. Indeed, the Block has been described as the "Black heart" of Australia.'* (Upper House Inquiry Interim Report, 2004 p.34) *The title of the report, "I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly", is the second half of John 10:10. The full verse reads, "the thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly." "The first part of the verse is where Aboriginal people live. They haven't seen much of part two."* (Pastor Ray Minniecon, Crossroads Aboriginal Ministries, in an interview, Sept 2004) (NSW Ecumenical Council Redfern Research Project Nov 2004)

Sunday 5 February 5th Sunday after Pentecost

Readings: Isa 40.21-31, 1 Cor 9.16-23, Mark 1.29-39

Pray for: Kuring-gai Country, its people and needs

Reflection: *The sadness of this place is evident in the limbs and boughs of the ancient figs that no longer grow so tenaciously. The sand contains the bones of the fallen, slaughtered by the smallpox. Our freshwater swamp and the extensive midden are have been destroyed. More car parks, more people, more desecration. Yet there are now signs warning you not to swim there, in what was once a paradise. The British military made it a cemetery, and then progress built on our bones. Now the product of this folly is pollution.* (Denis Foley on Balmoral Beach in 'Repossession of Our Spirits' p.99)

Monday 6 February Waitangi Day (Aotearoa New Zealand)

In 1840 the Treaty of Waitangi was concluded with the British crown and Maori Chiefs.

Readings: 1 Kings 8.1-13, Mark 6.53-56

Pray for: Maori needs, communities and organisations; recognition of Maori rights and spirituality

Reflection: *"[I]t cannot be too solemnly asserted that [Native title] is entitled to be respected, that it cannot be extinguished (at least in times of peace) otherwise than by the free consent of the Native occupiers.... It follows from what has been said that in solemnly guaranteeing the Native title ... the Treaty of Waitangi, confirmed by the Charter of the Colony, does not assert either in doctrine or in practice any thing new or unsettled."* (Justice Chapman, Supreme Court judgment in *The Queen v Symonds*, 1847)
"What do Native men want of a Governor? We are not whites, nor foreigners.... [W]e are the Governor – we, the chiefs of this our fathers' land. I will not say 'Yes' to the Governor's remaining. No, no, no; return." (Rewa, Ngai Tawake, Ngā Puhī, To Lieutenant-Governor Hobson, at Waitangi, 5 February 1840 - quoted in William Colenso, *The Authentic and Genuine History of the Signing of the Treaty of Waitangi*, New Zealand, Wellington, 1890, p. 19)

Tuesday 7 February

Readings: 1 Kings 8.22-23 (24-26) 27-30

Pray for: Darkinjung Country, its people and needs – and especially for Phil Bligh and the Earth Light project at Gosford Anglican Church.

Reflection: *'We all come from different tribes...(yet) it all amounts up to the same thing. We're black and we've been in the Dreamtime'.* (Central Coast Aboriginal Health Action Group)

Wednesday 8 February

Readings: 1 Kings 10.1-10; Mark 6.53-56

Pray for: Dharug Country, its people and needs: and especially the Aboriginal Catholic Ministry at Penrith

Reflection: *'We as one thank you God for this day. May we give thanks for being able to see and to hear this morning. May we be blessed because you are a forgiving God and an understanding God. You Lord have done so much for us, and you keep on blessing us each and every moment of the day. Forgive us this day for everything we have done, said or thought that was not pleasing to you, we ask now for your forgiveness.*

Please keep us safe from all danger and harm, help us all to start this day and every other day with a new attitude and plenty of gratitude. Let us make the best of each and every day to clear our minds, so that we can hear from You.

Please broaden our minds so that we can accept all things. Let us not whine and whimper over things we have no control over. Let us continue to see sin through God's eyes and acknowledge it as evil. And when we sin, let us repent, and confess with our mouths our wrongdoings. And receive the forgiveness of God. And when the world seems like its closing in on us all remember Jesus' example: 'slip away and find a quiet place to pray'. It is the response when we are pushed beyond our limits; we know then that when we can't pray, you Lord listen to our hearts.

Continue to use us to do Your will. Continue to bless us that we may be a blessing to others. Keep us strong that we may help the weak. Keep each and every one of us here today uplifted so that we will have words of encouragement for others. May we all pray for those that are lost and can't find their way. Let us pray for those who don't know you intimately, and let us pray for those that don't believe. We believe that God changes people and God changes all things seen and unseen. Let us therefore pray for our sisters and brothers and for each and every family member in their households. Let them have peace, joy and understanding in their homes and their needs met in one form or another.

Let every ear that hears this know that there is no problem, circumstance, or situation greater than God. Every battle Lord is in your hands for you to fight. We pray that these words be received into the hearts of everyone that hears them and every mouth that confesses them willingly.

THE TIME FOR REBIRTH IS NOW. THIS IS OUR PRAYER. AMEN.

(Clarke Freeman, for the NATSICC Assembly 'The Time For Rebirth is Now')

Thursday 9 February

Readings: 1 Kings 11.4-13; Mark 7.31-37

Pray for: the Revd. Di Langham, Chaplain at Cessnock Correctional Centre

Reflection: *'My favourite workshop was "Dream On!" which was presented by Di Langham. It showed the way in which she as an Aboriginal Anglican Priest connects the Aboriginal Spirituality to Christianity so as to maintain a large portion of Aboriginal Culture. The "Dreaming" was explained as being man's connection between him on earth and the Greater Spirit - in this case God. We were asked to paint and draw our own dreaming and the results were amazing and somewhat varied.'* (participant, National Anglican Youth gathering 2003)

Friday 10 February

Readings: 1 Kings 11.29-12.9; Mark 7.31-37

Pray for: Awabakal and Worimi Countries, their people and needs: and especially Louise Campbell and the work of Aboriginal Education in the Newcastle area

Reflection: Newcastle City Council first signed a Statement of Commitment in 1993, which recognised prior Aboriginal occupancy of this land. The document was updated and enhanced in its practical orientation during Newcastle's Bicentennial year in 1997. The Commitment which was signed on the 14th April 1998, includes the following:

The Council of the City of Newcastle acknowledges that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, in this council area the Awabakal and Worimi, were the first peoples of this land, and are the proud survivors of more than two hundred years of continuing dispossession. As a vital step towards building a just, common future, Newcastle Council recognises the loss and the grief felt by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples for the alienation from their traditional land, the loss of their freedom, their lives and the forced removal of their children. Newcastle Council supports the right of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to live according to their own values and cultures...(and) in consultation with local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples is committed to:

- *Respecting and conserving their cultural practices, traditional sites and significant places,*
- *Promoting activities which increase cultural sensitivity and awareness of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples*
- *Developing an agreement between local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and other community members of the care of the local environment*
- *Working towards the recovery of their languages, health, cultural practices and lost kinship.*

Newcastle City Council will look towards Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures for practical knowledge which could help to secure a sustainable future for our community... in negotiation with local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, will further reconcile between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and other community members by working together for a treaty and/or other agreements of reconciliation, ...(and), in negotiation with local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples will develop an action plan to redress disadvantages and attain justice for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples of this community. (Agreements, Treaties and negotiated Settlements Database website)

Saturday February 11 World Day of the Sick

Readings: 1 Kings 12.26-13.34; Mark 8.1-10

Pray for: All those who are sick, for their families and friends, and the work of Aboriginal Health services

Reflection: *This celebration takes place on the feast of Our Lady of Lourdes. The Church is reminding us to face the mystery of pain and suffering, recognising in them an opportunity for developing and promoting the culture of life within ourselves and our society.*

Sunday 12 February 6th Sunday after Epiphany

Readings: 2 Kings 5.1-14; 1 Cor 9.24-27; Mark 1.40-45

Pray for: Biripi Country, its people and needs

Reflection: To mark the end of reconciliation week 2004 at the Biripi Aboriginal Medical Centre the day's proceedings were opened with a spiritual blessing. The Aboriginal flag, the Torres Strait Islands flag and the Australian flags were raised, and three rose bushes were planted, one black, one red and one yellow. All this happened despite the fact that, to the disappointment of local community members, the Greater Taree Council had refused to fly Indigenous flags. As the result of people power however, the decision has now been reversed.

Monday 13 February

Readings: James 1.1-11; Mark 8.11-13

Pray for: Wonnarua and Geawegal Countries, their people and needs

Reflection: In the NSW Legislative Assembly in November 1999, Kerry Hickey said:
'The Wonnarua nation takes up the majority of the Lower and Upper Hunter areas. This land has been impacted upon in many ways since white settlement, through agriculture and more destructively through mining. The large-scale, open-cut mining processes currently used on Wonnarua land has irreparably changed and destroyed significant tracts of land with which the Wonnarua people share cultural affiliations...The coalmines are spending up to \$300,000 per development on Aboriginal heritage. The traditional owners argue that this money is being spent during the development process on archaeologists employed by consultancy firms. I argue strongly that very little of this money reaches

the local Aboriginal people. It is an appalling state of affairs when, through the environmental impact statement process, we demand archaeological inspections of sites for mining and development because of the highlighted need to preserve Aboriginal culture, but we do not involve the local traditional owners in the identification of sacred sites and artefacts.’ How much better are we doing across the country now?

Tuesday 14 February **Valentine’s Day**

Readings: James 1.12-18; Mark 8:14-21

Pray for: Dungutti and Nganyaywana Countries, their people and needs

Reflection: *Valentine’s Day can be an opportunity for finding or renewing love and affection, and has also been a day on which love for country has been expressed. Sandon Point for example is located between Thirroul and Bulli on the east coast of NSW and is one of the last green spaces in the Illawarra that joins the escarpment to the coast. It is an area of immense indigenous cultural value and ecological importance. The campaign to protect Sandon Point has a long history, stretching back for almost 20 years. The Sandon Point Aboriginal Tent Embassy (SPATE) was set up at McCauley’s Beach in December 2000, and is staffed 24 hours a day, whilst the local community have also made a stand - a community picket and information centre was established in March 2001. Notably, a community blockade on Valentines Day 2002 attempting to stop destruction equipment being moved onto site was met by approximately 60 police, armed security guards and dogs. This resolve of the 300+ community members present increased significantly as a result. (see Sandon Point community website for updates)*

Wednesday 15 February

Readings: James 1.19-27; Mark 8.22-26

Pray for: Gumbainggar and Ngarabal Countries, their people and needs

Reflection: *‘the history of human suffering of the Indigenous people of this country cannot be assuaged by legal decisions or the opening of a purse. It can be assuaged only by the opening of hearts’ (Michael Dodson: ‘Land Rights: A question of Social Justice’ in Martung Upah)*

Thursday 16 February

Readings: James 2.1-9; Mark 8.27-33

Pray for: Yaegl Country, its people and needs: and especially the work of the Combined Churches Magpie Group working for Reconciliation

Reflection: *‘During the early 1990s, during the “International Year for Indigenous peoples’ a group of Christians met in Northern NSW. Pastor Della Walker from Yamba Aboriginal Community suggested that such a group of “Black and Whites” meeting together could borrow the name from the black and white bird, the Magpie. Now, several years later, the Magpie Group is stronger and more active than ever, with members from Wauchope to Tweed Heads, NSW, and many other States of Australia. We are Christians from different Denominations, who meet and work together, so that bridges can be built between Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal Christian Communities and between Churches.’ (Magpie Group web information)*

Friday 17 February

Readings: James 2.14-24, 26; Mark 8.34-9.1

Pray for: Bundjalung Country, its people and needs: and especially Casino Public School and its Indigenous and Reconciliation education work

Reflection: *Wollumbin, the mountain today known as Mt Warning, towers 1100 metres above the sea. Captain James Cook named it in 1770, as a warning to other seafarers, of the numerous treacherous reefs along this coast. He failed to learn that the Bundjalung people for many miles around called the mountain Wollumbin, and that it was an important sacred site. They learned from their fathers over the centuries that the land was created through the movement and creation of spiritual beings and the creatures of nature. There is a dreamtime story of Wollumbin, said to be Warrior Chief of the mountain. The spirits of the mountains were warriors. The wounds they received in battles can be seen as scars on the side of the mountain and the thunder and lightning are the effects of their battles. When you look toward Wollumbin from the north, you can see the face of the Warrior Chief in the mountain’s outline.*

Saturday 18 February

Readings: James 3.1-10; Mark 9.2-13

Pray for: Gamilaroi Country, its people and needs: and especially for Envoy Denise Webb, NATSIEC Commissioner, and the Salvation Army in Narrabri; and for the Myall Creek Memorial Committee

Reflection: *And one of the things that I'm excited about is that we now have an Aboriginal women's healing house. It has been for me a dream, a dream of healing....And it is absolutely wonderful....What we're aiming to achieve for Koori women is very unique. It has not been addressed by other healing places. Our gathering allows the everyday person to speak out and be heard. We do things like massaging, story-telling, yarnning, addressing stress and how stress affects our body.*
(Barbra Asplet, a Gamilaroi woman from Burra Bee Dee Mission Coonabarabran, who runs the Aboriginal Healing House at Picton, NSW)

Sunday 19 February 7th Sunday after Epiphany

Readings: Isa 43.18-25; 2 Cor 1.16-22; Mark 2.1-12

Pray for: Wailwan Country, its people and needs

Reflection: *'It is argued that our rights do not amount to full beneficial ownership because 'Indigenous peoples belong to the land' rather than 'the land belonging to Indigenous peoples'...I draw an analogy with the Christian notion that human beings belong to God, not God to human beings. If I were to put it to you that this meant that God was less valuable, less important or less central to your lives, you would surely feel that I had failed in the most profound way to understand the nature of the connection, particularly if your legal rights were circumscribed by the nature of your relationship to God.'* (Mick Dodson in Martung Upah)

Monday 20 February

Readings: James 3.13-18; Mark 9.14-29

Pray for: Wongaibon Country, its people and needs

Reflection: *"Sustaining the self has been the key to sustaining the oldest living culture on the planet " and "Daring to be different can make all the difference" (Jack Beetsen, Wongaibon-Ngemba educationalist and activist)*

Tuesday 21 February

Readings: James 4.1-10; Mark 9.30-37

Pray for: Wiradjuri Country, its people and needs: and especially for the development of Aboriginal Catholic Ministry in Dubbo

Reflection: *'The pursuit of our own Aboriginal cultural adaptations in the Church is our way of contributing to the life of the Catholic Church in Australia. His Holiness the Pope in his visit to Australia spoke to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, at Alice Springs, of the fact that we should be "allowed the happiness of being with God and each other in Aboriginal fashion"'* (Woman and Man: One in Christ Jesus p.237)

Wednesday 22 February

Readings: James 4.13-17; Mark 9.38-40

Pray for: Tharawal and Gundungarra Countries, their people and needs

Reflection: *"it is the spirituality that comes from a real place, a real spot on the ground, from a real tribe, that gives life to a movement"* (Mac Charles Jones, Black American WCC representative at the Martung Upah gathering)

Thurs 23 February

Readings: James 5.1-6; Mark 9.41-50

Pray for: Yuin and Ngarigo Countries, their people and needs

Reflection: *'When your voice is raised with power, and you are clear about who you are, and you are grounded in the pain of your own People, that voice has unbelievable power.'* (Mac Charles Jones)

Friday 24 February Matthias, Apostle and Martyr

Readings: Acts 1.14-17, 20-26; Phil 3.13-21; John 15.9-17

Pray for: Ngannuwal Country, its people and needs

Reflection: *'The journey of healing is not smooth. We all knew there would be rocks and false paths along the way. But the direction is clear and there is determination to stay on the track, together.'* (a reflection from *Sustaining Ngannuwal Culture: report of the second cultural camp for Elders July 2003*)

Saturday 25 February

Readings: James 5.19-20; Mark 10.1-12

Pray for: Wiljali and Wandjiwalgu Countries, their people and needs

Reflection: *"Ralph Ellison, an African-American writer, when asked, 'what was the most painful thing about being an African-American? Was it being called nigger?', replied, 'No, we can handle that'. 'Was it the discrimination in employment and housing?' 'No, no, we can handle that.' 'Was it the*

jobs or the hundreds of years of working as slaves for no pay?' 'No, we dealt with that. The problem we have in America is that we are invisible!'... 'The problem we have is that folks make decisions about my destiny as if I'm not even there.' (Mac Charles Jones, Martung Upah)

Sunday 26 February

8th Sunday after Epiphany

Readings: Hosea 2.14-20; 2 Cor 2.14-3.6; Mark 2.13-22

Pray for: Barkindji and Danggali Countries, their people and needs

Reflection: *'The Barkindji people of the Willandra Lakes World Heritage Region and surrounding areas have always felt that the Willandra Lakes are a keyhole into the past of our indigenous ancestors. Since the discovery of Mungo Lady in 1968 by Dr Jim Bowler, a geomorphologist, Australia has been educated in our way of life and our environment. The region has significance on the same scale as Lake Victoria, Ayres Rock and Kakadu in terms of spiritual belief and the sense of belonging to an area of great antiquity and prominence... It was the scene for a great many stories, initiations, dreamings and day-to-day activities. One of the Barkindji spiritual links to the Willandra Lakes is Bookamurra, the giant kangaroo. Barkindji warriors tracked Bookamurra for days and finally caught and killed the giant kangaroo at the southern end of the lakes. The lake system and surrounding area is the actual remains of Bookamurra. This is one of many traditional links that bond Barkindji people to this very special and spiritual place. The Barkindji people now feel that they have a great chance to show the European descendants some of their land-management skills. It is a good place to educate students from schools and universities as well as the general public, and shows that we are a thriving and ongoing culture. Barkindji people are eagerly looking forward to a long and fruitful management process with the Mutthi Mutthi and Nyiampaa, landholders and the Government department associated with the Willandra.'* (Extract from the message of the Barkindji Elders as documented in the World Heritage Property Willandra Lakes Plan of Management, 1995.)

Monday 27 February

Readings: 1 Peter 1.3-9; Mark 10.17-27

Pray for: Barindji, Gurendji and Yitha Yitha Countries, their people and needs

Reflection: *'When truth is distorted, its first victim is justice, because people's perceptions and prejudices are based upon a lie....Assisting in the conversion of community attitudes and actions is a dynamic role the Church can play. Its importance can \not be overestimated.'*

(Graham Paulson, 'Just and Proper settlement', in Martung Upah)

Tuesday 28 February

Readings: 1 Peter 1.10-16; Mark 10.28-31

Pray for: Muthi Muthi, Nari Nari and Yorta Yorta Countries, their people and needs

Reflection: In 2004, the Government of Victoria agreed to enter into a historic co-operative management agreement with the Yorta Yorta people covering public land, rivers and lakes in north-central Victoria. The partnership gives the up to 6000-strong Yorta Yorta people a say in the running of their traditional country, which covers land including the Barmah State Park, Barmah State Forest, Kow Swamp and parcels of public land along the Murray and Goulburn rivers. Attorney-General Rob Hulls claimed the deal was a significant advance for reconciliation that had been achieved outside the native title process and one that provided a basis for future agreements: "It is an Australian first and I think it can absolutely be described as historic. This is a precedent that can be followed right around Australia," he said. Yorta Yorta elders council spokesman Henry Atkinson said that "at long last" his people had been recognised by government as traditional owners of their country.: "It is going to give Yorta Yorta the chance to preserve what is traditionally ours and it is going to make sure that Yorta Yorta will be in existence for a long, long time to come." (from The Age, 1 May 2004)