



# COVENANTER'S NEWSLETTER

An Occasional Newsletter for Covenanters

April 2009

No. 21

## Pastor Denise Champion



Denise Champion, a member of the Congress and an Adnyamathanha (Flinders Ranges) woman, is providing part time supply to two mainstream Uniting Church Congregations at Port Augusta (Chapel Street) and Quorn. This is the first time that an Aboriginal woman has ministered to a mainstream congregation in South Australia. Her ministry will extend to the end of the year. Pastor Denise has commenced studying for the ministry and has completed her period of discernment with the Congress Regional Council selection panel recommending that her name go forward to be recognized as a candidate for the "Ministry of Deacon". So Denise is likely to become the first ordained Aboriginal woman in South Australia. Denise's story appears in the latest "New Times".

### Reconciliation Sunday 31 May 2009

Reconciliation Sunday will be recognized in the Uniting Church this year on May 31, Pentecost Sunday. Worship resources will be available later in April to supplement those already on the website from past years. **Consider asking your worship leaders what might happen in your Congregation this year to acknowledge this special day?**

### The Anangu Lands Paper Tracker e-newsletter

The April of edition is now available and includes the latest information government initiatives and promises for the APY Lands. Of particular interest is the report of Sue Park and Jonathan Nicholls visiting communities in the eastern-

half of the APY Lands and Umoona community in Coober Pedy. Get the latest news on the Ernabella Church refurbishment and more . . . go to:

[http://www.papertracker.com.au/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=193&Itemid=40](http://www.papertracker.com.au/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=193&Itemid=40)

### Fifty years of working alongside indigenous people

Great news! The inaugural meeting of the South Australian Mission Studies Network (a state chapter of AAMS) will be held from **12.30 to 2 pm on Wednesday, 15 April at Tabor** Adelaide, 181 Goodwood Rd, Millswood. **Bring your own lunch and hear Rev Dr Bill Edwards**, Adjunct Senior Lecturer in the David Unaipon College of Indigenous Education and Research at the University of South Australia reflect on fifty years of working alongside indigenous people.

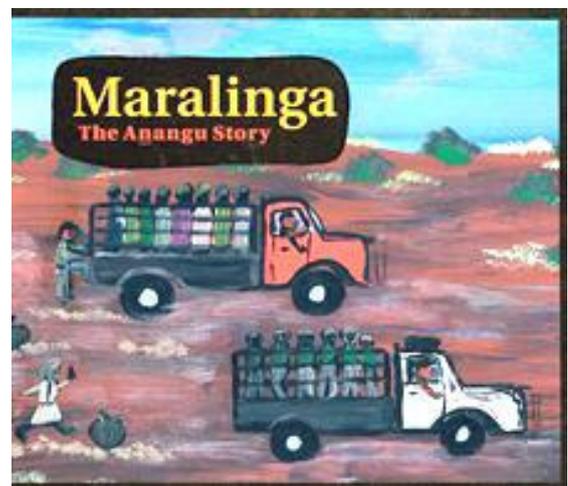
For a flier contact David Turnbull:

[dturnbull@adelaide.tabor.edu.au](mailto:dturnbull@adelaide.tabor.edu.au) or **8373 8777**.

### Maralinga: The Anangu Story

This not to be missed colourful publication written and illustrated by the Yalata and Oak Valley Communities with Christobel Mattingley will be launched by Yami Lester, a survivor of the Maralinga atomic testing at 6pm on Thursday 16<sup>th</sup> April 2009 at Tandanya's Kurna Gallery, 253 Grenfell St, Adelaide.

Please RSVP by 3 April to [publicity@allenandunwin.com](mailto:publicity@allenandunwin.com) or 02 8425 0100



Address all correspondence to the Covenanting Coordinator, Uniting Church in Australia, Presbytery and Synod of South Australia, 212 Pirie Street, GPO Box 2145, Adelaide SA 5001. E: [prussell@sa.uca.org.au](mailto:prussell@sa.uca.org.au) M: 0427 667 607  
The views expressed in this newsletter may not necessarily reflect the policy of the Uniting Church.

## Editorial

Dear Covenanters,

This year has already proved to be an exciting one for all those concerned for progress in 'closing the gap' and advancing Aboriginal communities. Three events of note occurred only recently that may not have received a lot of attention in the news.

Firstly, the Adnyamathanha people have succeeded in achieving Native Title over the Flinders Ranges, their traditional lands, and I quote the news release from Vince Coulthard Chairperson Adnyamathanha Traditional Land Association in this newsletter. Secondly a report of an address by the Chief Justice of the High Court, Robert French, where he dismissed the legal arguments used by previous governments to resist a treaty with Aboriginal people, has gained some national publicity.

In each of these cases it is interesting to note that scare tactics were used to suggest to the general population that the advancement of either "native title" or a "treaty" would deprive non-Aboriginal people of their rights in some way. With regard to Native Title the Adnyamathanha example is a case in point: no current landholder loses any land (which could not happen anyway), local Aboriginal people gain access to sacred places and the landowners and Aboriginal people agree to ways in which both access and care of these sites can happen. As for a treaty, in the words of Robert French:

*"Such an agreement could recognise and acknowledge traditional law and custom of indigenous communities across Australia, their historical relationship with their country, their prior occupancy of the continent and that there are those who have maintained and asserted their traditional rights to the present time."*

This speech was seen as an important step forward in the continuing debate about a treaty. (see the whole text at: <http://www.smh.com.au/national/chief-justice-backs-aboriginal-treaty-20090327-9e79.html>)

Finally a statement by our own state Governor has encouraged local Aboriginal people. His Excellency Rear Admiral Kevin Scarce AC CSC RANR, hosted a commemorative event celebrating the anniversary of the 1836 Letters Patent and the recognition of the Stolen Generations on Kurna land at Government House, Adelaide on February 19th, 2009. He said in reference to the failure to carry out the intentions clearly stated in the Letters Patent,

*"There can be no doubt that the Indigenous people of this state have suffered from that failure. I think it necessary for us all now to renew the spirit of those good intentions."*

The full text of the Governor's speech is worth reading and can be found at:

<http://www.governor.sa.gov.au/index.php?m=selected-speeches&itemID=769>

As the Uniting Church has indicated a willingness to work with the Congress in the call for a Treaty we also need to progress these matters.

## A Message from Elcho Island

### A MESSAGE FROM A TRADITIONAL OWNER OF ELCHO ISLAND, NORTH EAST ARNHEM LAND

Dr. Djiniyini Gondarra OAM Sunday 8th March, 2008

Aboriginal leaders need to have a mind of their own which is grounded in the empowerment of their own people, and who are able to fight the system they are victims of.

We need to learn from the past leaders who have gone before us, like Mabo, who's struggle was not just for his own people, the Islanders, but all Indigenous in Australia.

All Aboriginal leaders must come together and set the same agenda, one that is of their own. And the Government of Australia must follow our agenda, as we are always forced to follow theirs.



Ghandi's method was powerful.

We Indigenous Australians also have to be able to say 'no' when we think things are not right. And to find the courage and confidence to stand up for what we think is right.

We have not been able to say 'no' we won't wear your clothes, or eat your food or participate in your legal system, because we are scared and we are not empowered.

So in the meantime, we remain slaves.

There are 2 kinds of slaves

1.. The slave who works, sweats and tries to do something, he/she is whipped, tortured, rejected and / or locked up.

2.. Mastered Slaves, who's hearts have been brainwashed by the master. They do what the master says, and is always thinking, 'What is there for me?' They get the handouts, the pensions, or the big pay cheques from Governments because they do not have the guts to say what they truly feel. Their spirit is poisoned.

Our people have been crippled, we are less and less likely to get our own natural foods, speak in our own tongues and participate in our own cultural practises. We are forced to live by the balanda (white) way, without the choice to decide what is best for us.

I am frustrated, sick and worried for the leaders, for the people, and for the young children.

I wonder, what is the empowering weapon for the people now?

The government is always listening to only 2 or 3 Aboriginal people like Marcia Langton, Warren Mundine and Noel Pearson, who do not and can not represent the rest of us.

These Aboriginal people have been brainwashed with the white way of thinking. They cannot speak on behalf of me, or the people.

I am saying to these people, stop being the bait.

As long as we Indigenous are divided and fighting amongst ourselves, we will never be achieve what we want for ourselves.

If we are divided, we are conquered.

Reconciliation cannot happen if we are still being hurt by government policies like the NT Intervention and being forced to sign 40-year leases on our lands in return for basic citizenship rights.

The healing will not happen if you are still torturing us, taking our land and killing our culture.

Dr. Djiniyini Gondarra, OAM  
Galiwinku, Elcho Island.

**Rev. Dr. Djiniyini Gondarra, is a past Moderator of the Northern Synod of the Uniting Church and a minister to his people on Elcho Island as well as a traditional owner.**

## Native Title Settled over the Flinders Ranges

**Press release: Friday, 24 March 2009**

The Adnyamathanha people will have a Federal Court hearing on Monday that will give a consent determination in relation to their Native Title Rights over their traditional lands.

Chairperson of the Adnyamathanha Traditional Land Association, Vince Coulthard said today "this is the best thing that has happened for my people in the last 200 years."

"The Adnyamathanha people have been working towards this day for more than 15 years and all of our hard work has now come to fruition." Mr Coulthard said

"My people have always known that this land always was and always will be Adnyamathanha land, but to have this recognised by all of the other stakeholders is a huge achievement. This means that not only our rights are recognised but also the responsibilities of other land users will now be clear."

"This empowers my people to have more control over what happens on our land and to ensure our sites and important places are respected and protected."

"This is the largest Native Title Claim to be determined in South Australia and to have achieved that without litigation is a real positive for us all" Mr Coulthard said.

"I believe my people will be very proud on Monday to finally have this recognition, this is a huge event for us and one we plan to celebrate."

"So I am expecting all Adnyamathanha people to come and share in this historic event and to be proud of our achievements."

*Permission is given for this press release to be used in its entirety only. For more details or interviews please ring Vince Coulthard Chairperson Adnyamathanha Traditional Land Association on 0429900222*

## Safe Tracks

Often times people visiting Adelaide from remote communities either sleep rough in parklands or stay with relatives in what are already overcrowded houses. This is not only a difficulty in Adelaide but also in major country centres.

In 2003 and 2005, the State Government established transitional accommodation centres for homeless and transient Aboriginal people in Port Augusta and Ceduna. Both of these centres provide Aboriginal people - predominantly from the APY Lands - with a safe place to sleep, two meals a day, access to showers and laundry facilities and linkages to other support services. People staying at these centres contribute to the cost of their accommodation and services.

In recent months, the Moderator, along with other Uniting Church leaders and agencies, has urged the State and Federal Governments to press on with this important work as part of what the South Australian Government has dubbed its "Safe Tracks" program.

While both levels of government recognise the need to improve housing and accommodation options for Aboriginal people in and from remote communities, sufficient funding for the proposed centres in Adelaide and Coober Pedy has still not been allocated.

The Uniting Church plans to continue its advocacy on behalf of people from remote Aboriginal communities. For more information on this work or to express your support or desire to be involved, contact Rev Don Catford: phone 8236 4253 Read the full story in New Times or:

<http://sa.uca.org.au/news/72-uniting-church-sa/1358-safetracks-for-aborigines.html>

## Keeping in touch

There are three community organisations that provide a source of current information on Aboriginal issues and reconciliation. For Covenanters that wish to avail themselves of a greater breadth of information than is provided in these occasional newsletters you may consider the following.....

**ANTaR** is Australians for Native Title and Reconciliation. They sponsor community reconciliation events and have a website and regular local news. They also partner with Oxfam in the **Close the Gap** campaign which this Synod supports. Goto [www.antar.org.au](http://www.antar.org.au) for the national website. Connect from there to the South Australian site which has news bulletins.

JOURNEY OF HEALING ASSOCIATION [SA] INC



TAMPILLAMPILLA "RECOGNITION" of the STOLEN GENERATIONS WODLIANNI  COMING HOME JOURNEY OF HEALING

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|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Kurna Tampillampilla Welcome</li> <li>■ Learn about Stolen Generations</li> <li>■ Wodlianni - Coming Home Stories</li> <li>■ Guest speakers &amp; music entertainment</li> <li>■ Share a free BBQ, salad and drinks</li> <li>■ SA Linkup will be providing assistance &amp; support on the day</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Come to Join in Kurna Tampillampilla: Recognition of the Stolen Generations</li> <li>■ Support Seven "Rs" for Reconciliation</li> <li>■ Aboriginal Heritage and Culture</li> <li>■ Continue weaving across the nations</li> <li>■ Community Displays &amp; Information, including an ANTaR SA &amp; other stalls</li> </ul> |
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FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: JOHN BROWNE 0431 234 561

**TUESDAY 26 MAY 2009**  
**TARNDANYANGGA [VICTORIA SQUARE]**



*We acknowledge the Kurna People as the Traditional Owners of this Land*

Covenanters may also like to join the monthly **Justice and Peace Candlelight Walk** on the first Friday of each month around Government House. Gather outside the front at dusk.

**Journey of Healing SA** is based at the David Unaipon Centre, University of South Australia. They are encouraging folk to join in celebrating **Sorry Day**, this year on **Tuesday, May 26**, meeting at Tarndanyangga (Victoria Square) from 10.30am – 2.30am.

- Learn about SA Stolen Generations Histories
- Kurna Welcome
- Hear guest speakers & music entertainment
- Share a free BBQ and drinks
- Enjoy weaving across the nations
- Community Stalls, Displays and information
- Aboriginal Heritage & Culture
- Seven "Rs" for Reconciliation

- SA Linkup will be providing assistance and support on the day
- Stolen Generations Remembrance

Further information contact is John Brown, M: 0431 234 561  
Download a poster from <http://sajoh.auspics.org.au/sorryday/>

**Reconciliation SA** is based at the David Unaipon Centre, University of South Australia. Reconciliation SA believes that reconciliation is a people's movement. Extensive information is available on their website. <http://www.reconciliationsa.org.au/>

### Prayer Points

- Give thanks for the work of reconciliation that has brought the Adnyamathanha people and local landholders in the Flinders Ranges together to achieve a landmark agreement on Native Title without litigation.
- Pray for Auntie Denise Champion as she studies for the ministry and ministers to the congregations at Chapel Street in Port Augusta and also Quorn.
- Pray for the NT communities facing the negative impacts of the intervention. Give thanks for the positive aspects but pray for those involved on both sides that real communication might occur and changes happen that will benefit communities and respect the dignity of local people.

Palya, Go with God,

*Peter*

2 April 2009

'Til we meet again,  
Hold the warmth of the camp fire in your heart  
And may the Creator Spirit, the God of peace,  
Always walk with you.

Note: The Covenanting Coordinator position is only half time. Office hours are usually in the first half of the week, Monday to Wednesday when not out and about. The Covenanting Coordinator is able to preach at Services, and talk to Church Councils, Bible Study and Fellowship Groups. For further details contact the Covenanting Coordinator. Past copies of this newsletter may be downloaded from the website:

*Apologies if there are problems with the new site. They will be rectified as soon as possible.*

<http://mrn.sa.uca.org.au/covenanting/covenanting/covenanting-whats-new.html>

The resources, events and conferences listed in this newsletter are not necessarily officially supported by the Uniting Church. Information is provided as presented by the relevant organisations. The views expressed in this newsletter may not necessarily reflect the policy of the Uniting Church.

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