

May 2020 (4)  
Issue 120

# The Next Step



## Canberra Aboriginal Church

Canberra Christian Fellowship  
(in the Methodist Tradition)



Canberra Christian Fellowship (in the Methodist Tradition) and Canberra Aboriginal Church  
Worship Services SUSPENDED due to COVID-19 coronavirus threat

### Retta Dixon



Margaret Jane Dixon, born in Ultimo, Sydney of Irish born Baptist parents in 1878, was probably better known by the name Retta Dixon or her married name Mrs. Long.

She joined the Christian Endeavour Union and began evangelising at La Perouse Aborigines' Reserve and at age 19 became the first resident missionary there.

Retta contacted and visited Aboriginal communities on the south coast, the Hawkesbury and the Macleay with help from La Perouse aborigines, always believing in the power of the Gospel to transform the lives of 'sinners'. She found the Aborigines were in no way 'inferior to the white race' and came to admire their spirituality, generosity and endurance.

In 1905 Retta left the New South Wales Aborigines' Mission, moved to Singleton and formed the **Aborigines Inland Mission** of Australia. With her husband Leonard William Long, a Wesleyan and fellow Christian Endeavour member, whom she married in early 1906, she was co-director of A.I.M.. Retta's outstanding gift was her 'ability to write helpful encouraging letters' however she was also very active in attending services and addressing

meetings, visiting A.I.M. stations and editing and writing for the A.I.M. publication "Our Aim".

Headquartered back in Sydney, A.I.M. became quite successful with a considerable number of missionaries living and serving in aboriginal communities. A 'Native Ministry' was also emerging.

"Mrs Long was emphatic that the mission's sole concern was salvation. It taught from the Bible and had helped those 'eager to read God's word' to learn to read. But it was not a mission which sought to 'civilize the native'. ... A.I.M. was in general less intrusive on Aboriginal culture than other missions, and it avoided involvement in institutions that took children from their parents."

Retta was less active from 1935 in part due to her health but remained a director of A.I.M. until 1953 and passed from this life in 1956.

A.I.M. opened a Native Training College in Port Stephens, N.S.W. which later moved to Singleton, and after World War 2 the Retta Dixon Home for aboriginal children in Darwin. Unfortunately a number of the wrong people obtained positions at the home and abused residents. The home was destroyed by Cyclone Tracy and is now closed.

A.I.M. is still active although renamed Australian Indigenous Ministries in 1998.

see <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/long-margaret-jane-retta-10857> , <https://australianindigenousministries.org.au/about-us-read-more/> & <https://aiatsis.gov.au/exhibitions/remembering-mission-days>  
Thanks to Barry for suggesting this topic.



### A Birthday Celebration

It wasn't so long ago Alec had a special day that he reports was most enjoyable and resulted in over a hundred cards and messages from the Prime Minister, the Governor General and the Queen.

Birthdays haven't stopped for the rest of us either. I'm sure each one is celebrated in some form as was Marie's a few weeks ago.

She tells me that Kelly, Ruth and another of their friends turned up on her doorstep, sang Happy Birthday to her (maintaining the appropriate distancing) and left a cake for her to enjoy.

As we adapt to changed conditions, it is good to see and hear that as we modify the way we interact, thoughtfulness, caring and the personal touch are still much in evidence.

## Chaplains

Please pray that the chaplains we particularly support can adapt their ministries to the conditions we all currently face. - Mr. Owen Chadwick - Universities chaplaincy, Rev. Bob Prior - Racecourse chaplaincy, Rev. Paul Tabulutu - N.S.W. / A.C.T. Fijian churches



Please remember those who are unwell or are receiving ongoing treatment. Dawn, Ruth and Ian H. have all had recent spells in hospital. Ashley, Daniel, Eden and Jay are now settled together in Sydney however Ashley has been suffering from shingles from just before the move, but it is getting better.

### Devotional material



Prayer



### Contacts

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### Bible Reading



Fellowship by Phone

## A PRAYER: [written as I walked on the beach with Tammy the dog]

Gracious and eternal God, we come to you because You are the One who has the words of eternal life....  
...we come to You, because we have nowhere else to go.

We find ourselves in the middle of the wilderness, bewildered and uncertain

...we find ourselves in the muteness of isolation from friends and family, colleagues and workplaces; worship services and times of fellowship.

In the brokenness of this separation, we seek the embrace of your Spirit whispering to us that You are present with us and within us  
...whispering to us that You will never ever leave us  
...but will ever journey with us.

Gracious God:

when all we have ever known as community is at risk of disintegration, we seek Your still small voice of reassurance....

...when we are anxious, we ask that You cover us with your enveloping love

...when we weep, continue to gather our tears so precious to you

...when we are feeling helpless, take us gently into your hands where our names remain embedded

...when our worries seek to overwhelm us and our anxiety levels choke our living

...we pray that You will hold us close to your heart in order that we can hear the beating of your heart for all of your broken world.

We thank you that your creation speaks of a future

...the ocean waves crashing continually onto the beach

...the sun enveloping us in warmth

...the sky speaking into eternity

...rosebushes bravely showing their colours

...climbers ever reaching out and claiming their space

...pansies and poppies and geraniums spilling their colourful presence

...cows birthing their babies and sheep and horses grazing contentedly in pasture

...tree and vine, shedding their autumnal leaves, readying to join us in hibernation

...ALL these things proclaim your goodness and ever giving promise of new life into our futures.

Help us Lord, to continue to be flexible in our living

...compassionate in our dealings with others

...loving in our ongoing relationships

...and faithful in our prayers.

Enable us to know deeply in the very depths of our hearts that You are present with us, bearing us and carrying each one of us to life again.

God of hope, fill us with your hope...

...fill us with the power of Your Spirit to enable us to trust You in the living of these times that we all may yet rise again....

We pray these prayers and the deep agonising prayers of our heart in the Name of Jesus....

by Carol Chambers (a friend of Annette Purdey) written at the height of the COVID-19 restrictions

## Prayer Points

Please pray

- for Aboriginal communities all over Australia, that they will stay safe and coronavirus free
- for Aboriginal pastors across the nation as they minister in these changed conditions
- for Bible translators working to make the Bible available to Aboriginal people in their own language
- for each other
- that God will use these changed circumstances to speak to people's hearts, minds and souls and draw them to Himself

and give thanks for the Canberra Aboriginal Church Sunday virtual gatherings. They have met remotely using ZOOM for around 40 minutes each Sunday for worship, prayer and fellowship.

Chris believes it unlikely they will meet together physically until the COVID-19 danger is well past and winter over as most of their people are older and in the 'more vulnerable' category.

