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The Next Step

&

Canberra Aboriginal Church

Canberra Christian Fellowship
(in the Methodist Tradition)



Albert Namatjira, 1902 - 1959

Growing up I had little interest in art or artists, however there was one name I knew - Albert Namatjira.

Elea, as he was first named, became Albert when his parents adopted Christianity and had him baptised. He grew up at the Hermannsburg (Lutheran) Mission. He was a full-blood, Kngwarriya skin, member of the Western Aranda (Arunta / Arrarnta / Arrernte) tribe. (There is a tribal kinship system within the tribal area with eight recognizable groups or skins - the Kngwarriya, Piltharra, Mpitjana, Ngala, Purrula, Panangka, Purianda and Kumarra.)

At age 13, Albert as one of the Aranda people, lived in the bush for six months, was taught traditional laws and customs by tribal elders and underwent initiation.

Over the next 5 years he continued to go on walkabouts. These included visits to Ilkalita. Unfortunately for Albert, she came from a tribal kinship group that under tribal law was forbidden to him and those at the Mission were quick to point out that she was not a baptised Christian. He was discouraged from seeing her.

In 1920 Albert 'to avoid both tribal and Mission strictures, eloped with Ilkalita to neutral country beyond the Aranda and Mission boundaries'. For three years, he found work on nearby cattle stations and by carrying goods to remote stations with Afghan camel strings.

In November 1923, back at the mission, Ilkalita was baptised and given the name Rubina and their marriage was formally blessed.

During the depression years, those living at Hermannsburg were encouraged to produce items for sale to tourists. Albert produced various items including mulga wood plaques on which he began inscribing Biblical texts.

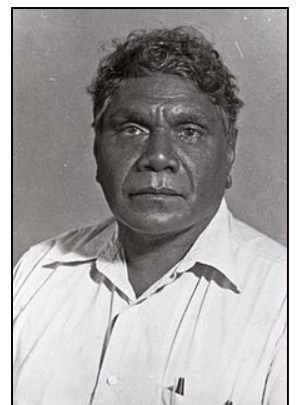
Rex Batterbee, a visiting artist, taught Albert how to paint. Rex thought the fast learner Albert had a natural gift, and he was right. Paintings were included in a number of exhibitions, sold well and he gained national and international fame. Queen Elizabeth 2 became a fan of his work. She had been presented with one of his paintings on her 21st birthday.

In 1944 Albert Namatjira was included in "Who's who in Australia" and 1956 saw him as the subject of the winning Archibald (portraiture) Prize. Wanting to build a house in Alice Springs, he was prevented by the laws of the time, however public outrage induced the government to grant Albert and Rubina full Australian Citizenship in 1957, ten years before other aborigines gained that status.

Albert was moving between two cultures. He was celebrated, successful and receiving good reward for his work but it was always a relief for him to leave the big smoke and return to his desert home, however there tribal culture demanded he share everything between all his fellows. The law permitted him, as a citizen, to purchase and consume alcohol but not to share it. After leaving a bottle of rum on a car seat, he was charged with and convicted of supplying alcohol to another aborigine. He ended up serving two months of 'open' detention. A few months later he died.

Pastor F. W. Albrecht included a section 'The Artist as a Christian' in an 8 page pamphlet he wrote about Albert in

1950. He said *"Albert has a good knowledge of Christian truth from his Bible, and is guided by it. At one time he even offered to go out as evangelist, to live with and teach bush natives, ... He will, what may be called, run wild for a time, but even then he will try to remain within the limits of a decent Christian. ... Some men have tried to upset his Christian way of life, ridicule his prayers at meals, and his attending divine services on Sundays, to which he would reply: "This is the way we have been brought up." ... He knows God answers prayer, and during difficult periods of his life especially he never made a secret of how much he depended on God through prayer. In all such instances Albert has clearly shown that the Christian faith has been the real background of his life and work."*



Albert Namatjira achieved success and fame in a world quite different to that in which he was brought up. The requirements of aboriginal culture and of the European culture and law of white Australia were not always compatible. Confronted by competing demands and frustrated at times by obstacles the law presented, life was for him often challenging. Pastor Albrecht described a man facing up to whatever life threw at him with a simple faith. We would do well to live similarly.

sources

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STINGY OLD LAWYER

A stingy old lawyer who had been diagnosed with a terminal illness was determined to prove wrong the old saying, "You can't take it with you."

After much thought and consideration, the old ambulance chaser finally figured out how to take at least some of his money with him when he died.

He instructed his wife to go to the bank and withdraw enough money to fill two pillowcases. He then directed her to take the bags of money to the attic and leave them directly above his bed.

His plan: When he passed away, he would reach out and grab the bags on his way to heaven.

Several weeks after the funeral, the deceased lawyer's wife, up in the attic cleaning came upon the two forgotten pillow cases stuffed with cash.

"Oh, that old fool," she exclaimed. "I knew he should have had me put the money in the basement."

Parking Spot

A couple of times recently I have been reminded of the tale of a motorist running late for an important meeting. As he approached his destination he was desperate to quickly find a parking space.

"Please God, help me find somewhere to park" he prayed.

A moment later an empty spot appeared very close to his destination.

"Don't worry God, I've found a spot myself." he prayed with relief.

I suspect that all of us at times fail to see God at work round about us.

It is easy to claim that finding that mislaid wallet was simply a result of me finally looking in the right place. The fact that I requested God's help in locating it is coincidence.

I prefer to believe that God listened to me and acted to help me look in the right place.

Did you hear about the dyslexic devil worshipper?

He sold his soul to Santa.

Prayer Points

Please pray

- for Aboriginal communities all over Australia.
- for Aboriginal pastors across the country.
- for Bible translators working to make the Bible available to Aboriginal people in their own language.
- for each other.



and give thanks for the Canberra Aboriginal Church virtual gatherings using ZOOM for around 40 minutes each Sunday from 5pm. - A time of fellowship, worship and delving into God's Word.

The Canberra Aboriginal Church currently intends resuming normal physical gatherings for worship services at Lyons on the 1st Sunday of September.

David & Fiona McDonald

Ruth has received a card from David & Fiona.

It reads in part "... Wondering how your church has coped through all this, how all your people have coped through lockdown. Praying that Ian has been able to help make the technology work so you've been able to meet up some how.

Love & prayers to you & everyone.

Fiona & David

Chaplains

Please pray that as coronavirus restrictions are gradually lifted, the chaplains we particularly support will be able to follow the new paths You have set before them. - Mr. Owen Chadwick - Universities chaplaincy, Rev. Bob Prior - Racecourse chaplaincy, Rev. Paul Tabulutu - N.S.W. / A.C.T. Fijian churches



Devotional material



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Bible Reading



Prayer

Fellowship by Phone

Canberra Christian Fellowship and Canberra Aboriginal Church - Worship Services are currently SUSPENDED.