

A Day of Joy, Dedication of the Gumatj New Testament Reprint.

By Rev Tony Goodluck,

Moderator, Northern Synod UCA



This is a story of incredible love, remarkable co-operation and amazing grace.

On Friday 8th April (2022) two boxes of recently printed New Testaments were carried into the Yirrkala church with much ceremony. Dozens of Yolngu men, representing Gupapuyngu, Madarrpa, Mangalili and Gumatj, walked in with the boxes of

bibles and sang with great reverence, as rhythm sticks split the air with their sharp 'crack-crack-crack' defining the rhythm and tempo of local traditional song. We had gathered with hundreds of Yolngu at Yirrkala Church to dedicate the reprint of the Gumatj New Testament.

The church was looking good, decorated with palms, flowers, lace table-cloths and coloured fabric. The people had worked together well in preparing for this long-awaited day. The church was full and overflowing. People also sat on the hillside in the shade looking straight in through the large open widows. Others sat on the grass on the other side and out by the front door. People came from all over; visitors from Yurrwi, Galiwin'ku and Darwin, as well as various homelands and even some people from 'down south'. Many people had been waiting for this day for over ten years. It was finally here.

Pastor Mandaka Marika welcomed us. Yananyumul Munungurr was our MC. She called us to two minutes of silence to remember those who had passed away in the process of bringing this Bible re-print. They were named: Multija Burarrwana, Gulumbu Yunupingu, Djilirma Laklak, Wanybuku Yunupingu, Maypilama, Bananydji, Joe Yunupingu, Dundiwuy Wunungmurra, Djilirma Munungurr, Wuywu Munungurr, Djoki Yunupingu and Rosemary Burrarwana. Beloved people and faithful servants all. Pastor Danatana led us in prayer. I won't try to name everyone and every item that was shared in this joyous time of praise and celebration. I will just say that the next two hours were full of joy and co-operation as people read from Scriptures in various languages, danced, sang and prayed. It was a glorious celebration of community and a celebration for the Word of God in the heart language of the Gumatj people.



**A PROJECT OF THE NORTHERN
REGIONAL COUNCIL OF THE UNITING
ABORIGINAL AND ISLANDER CHRISTIAN
CONGRESS AND THE UNITING CHURCH
IN AUSTRALIA NORTHERN SYNOD**

A Day of Joy for Gumatj Continued.



Gumatj clan leader Dr Galarrwuy Yunupingu AM attended the event, as did local Member for the NT Legislative Assembly, Mark Yinjiya Guyula.

Senior Pastor Marrpalawuy Marika read John 1: 14-19 in Djambarrpuyngu, about Jesus as the true light that enlightens all people coming into the world. There was another item and then the distribution of honorary Bibles. Dhalulu Merrkiyawuy Ganambarr Stubbs handed Bibles to Louise Sherman from the Bible Society who handed them in turn to those who had been called forward, the majority being Gumatj speakers. About twenty people gathered around the table and received their Bibles. Tears flowed down many faces as God's Holy Spirit touched hearts and minds and literally overflowed. What an overwhelming joy to receive Scriptures in one's heart language! I was very privileged to receive a Bible on behalf of the Synod and then to say a few words, offer a prayer and sing a blessing for all the people who had gathered. I sang the old, old blessing that we know from Aaron, the brother of Moses.

The reprinted Gumatj New Testament is a beautiful book to look at and to hold. It is in Gumatj yellow ochre and maroon colours. The New Testament was first translated into Gumatj back in the 1980s and has been out of print for a long, long time. To get this newly printed book, the old one was first scanned page-by-page and digitised (put on a computer). This involved checking every word and every letter to make sure the scanner had read correctly and where it hadn't to make manual corrections. Then there was the inclusion of specific Yolŋu letters, now more widely used in written words than they were 40 years ago; after that some reformatting and making the print bigger and easier to read. This affected where the illustrations went and some of them had to be drawn again. No wonder it took all those years. What an amazing collaboration between Yolŋu translators and proof-readers, as well as Balanda working with the Bible Society, AuSIL, Wycliffe, Pioneer, MAF and Co-ordinate. Such faithful service from such faithful people. All praise to God.

Yolŋu leaders organised and led the event, which was followed by a meal for all and evening fellowship. What a wonderful show of Yolŋu leadership, co-operation and co-ordination.

May God bless the Gumatj people and those around them through the life-giving words of



this beautiful book.
Beautiful words,
wonderful words,
wonderful words of
life.

God is so good!



Dedication in Mayali at Christmas in Jabiru.

By Louise Macdonald



Coordinate #33 April 2022



Christmas in Jabiru has become quite an event with a full Nativity play, carols and a huge feast to celebrate. But 2021 was particularly special.

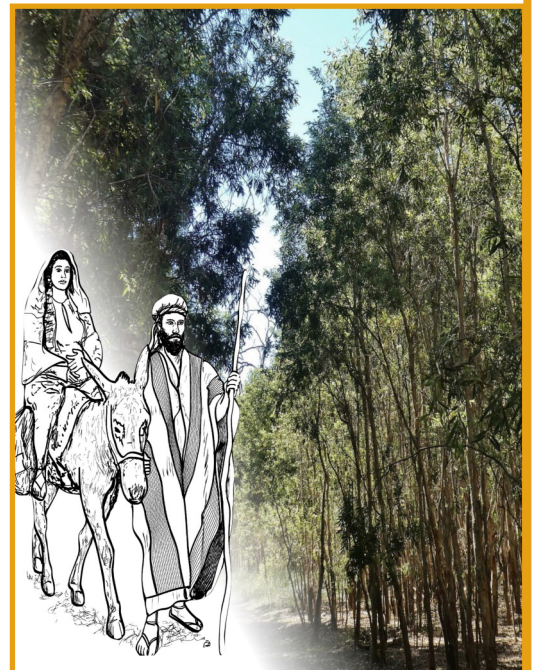
The Christmas story from Luke had been translated into a number of West Arnhem languages including Mayali as spoken at Manabudurma in Jabiru, thanks to our translation teams and support from Rachel Ship and Melody Kube from AuSIL and my old congregation in Melbourne— Sophia's Spring. We were able to present both a lovely illustrated book and an animated video in one of our local languages.

It is difficult recording in the wet season but our reader, youth leader Keena Djandjomerr, her Mum Vienna and myself drove away from town, turned off the car and sweated through three recording attempts on my phone till the heat got too much for us. We sent the file off to Melody at AuSIL and she cleaned it up and edited it into a lovely little animation just in time for

the big night. Each illustration in the book was set against local landscapes that our translators Julie, Joanne, Linda and Marlene all recognised.

The official dedication was conducted by our Moderator Rev Tony Goodluck.

We are now working on Jesus Calming the Storm from Luke and dreaming about Revelations and even the Book of Daniel.



Moving Forward, With a Little Help From 'IT.'

By Margaret Miller

In the last year or so, you may have felt like you are living inside a washing machine - I have! Life has been serving us all sorts of changes and challenges, tossing us from side-to-side. At the same time, the world of Information Technology (IT) has become a very useful skill in making life work, whether we like it or not, ... whether we live in the south or the north, in the city or in some remote community - it is everywhere! QR codes, phone Apps, meetings on Zoom, are all now common words in our world. If you should resist using these IT tools, you are in serious danger of losing connection with your church, community, life and work.

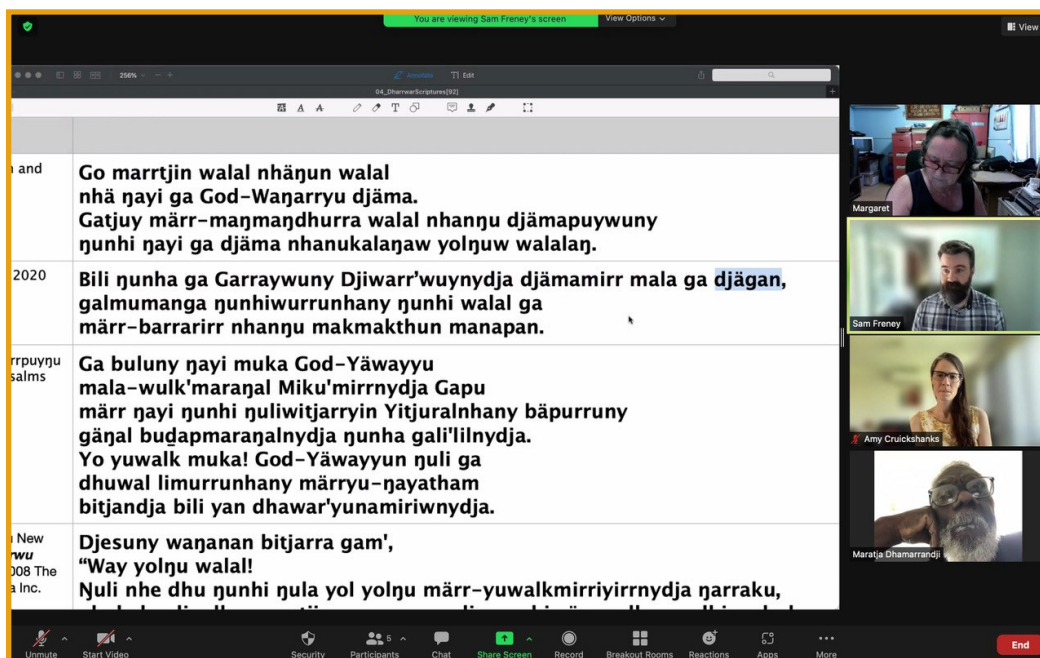
So it should come as no surprise that the IT world is having an impact on those living and working in remote Aboriginal communities. When it comes to connecting with family and friends Facebook is an IT favourite tool on phones in community. But IT is also influencing the way we work. Instead of going on long trips across the Territory to meet with colleagues, for a workshop, a conference or whatever, meeting by Zoom is now a very attractive alternative, especially when you are looking at the budget!

However, introducing Zoom or similar options in the workplace in remote communities is not so simple. In North-East Arnhem Land, Zoom is not an IT tool that is used for personal needs, so it remains a foreign tool for many Yolŋu. It is one of those items that for most Yolŋu, belongs to that Western world of work.

When Bible Society suggested we try and do a Consultant Check on some Djambarrpuyŋu Old Testament verses via Zoom, I knew I needed to be in close contact with my Coordinate colleagues to help facilitate the IT connections. This became one of my priorities when visiting Elcho Island early this year. The Bible Society's consultants live and work in South Australia and New South Wales. With my Yolŋu colleagues close by in Galiwin'ku, we arranged to meet for a workshop at the Translation Centre's computer using Zoom. Three Djambarrpuyŋu people were willing to join me there. But alas, two of them pulled out before we had even started!

But Maratja arrived in the midst of his own set of obstacles, and was even familiar with Zoom! With Carl Gross in SA and his assistants, Amy Cruickshanks and Sam Freney in NSW, our mini workshop went ahead on a consultant check of a selection of Old Testament verses prepared in Djambarrpuyŋu... via Zoom. The checking moved forward, but after two hours of Zooming, our energies were spent. We agreed to re-convene the following week.

Maratja was so deeply encouraged and energised by what had been achieved in the first session, that after a good rest, he was keen and more than ready for the next planned workshop session via Zoom!



Moving Forward, continued

But life throws its curved balls and Maratja was airlifted out of the community to Howards Springs near Darwin in that same week. Oh dear! Would he be well enough to continue? Would he be able to Zoom on his phone? Should we go ahead? 'Yes!' he insisted!

The workshop re-convened, and with the remaining verses checked over, it was fait-accomplis! It worked well! How wonderful! PRAISE the LORD!!!

(see BS photo of second Zoom workshop)

Photo Caption by Sam Freney: At the moment of this screen shot we were looking at the translation of Psalm 34:7 ("The angel of the LORD encamps around those who fear him, and rescues them"). The highlighted word djägan was about God's care for his people, and Maratja thoughtfully added an extra word that was about an active protection, not just a passive covering.

Another task waiting to be attended to whilst I was on Elcho Island, has been the finalising of the recordings that were made last year of Mark's Gospel in Djambarrpuyŋu. These recordings that Yousif (GRN staff) made have now been edited and await a check. Yurranydjil, who was one of the readers, was ready to assist with the checking. So with the sound files downloaded onto the computer, and our Djambarrpuyŋu New Testament in hand, we met together at the Translation Centre and noted any errors to be emailed through to Yousif in Sydney for correction.

At this same time, COVID struck Elcho Island residents. Because so many were diagnosed with COVID, a special team had arrived in the community from Darwin to provide extra assistance to the local health staff. Even so, with the extra help, the health services struggled to manage the load. It was almost inevitable that Yurranydjil got a positive result, and she was confined to her home. The checking of Mark's Gospel in Djambarrpuyŋu could no longer continue together in the way we had been doing so at the Translation Centre.

However, Yurranydjil was so-o encouraged with completing Chapters 1-4, that she was highly motivated to continue. She rang me saying, "We have been working well on those recordings of Mark. We must finish this work even though I am stuck at home. Maybe we could keep doing this by phone?" she suggested.

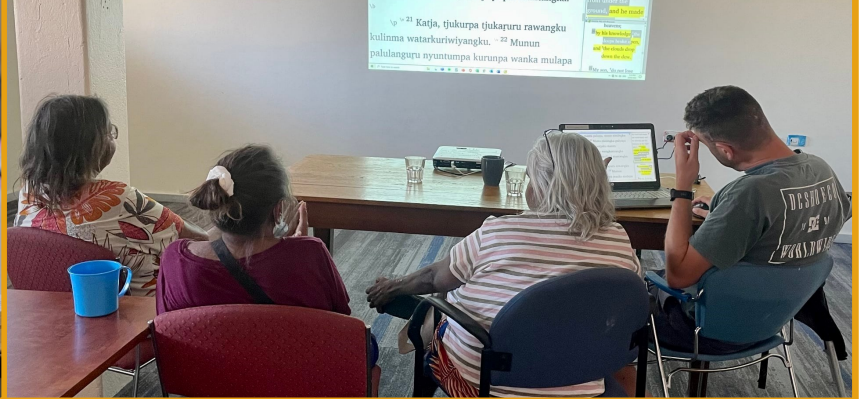
So with her New Testament in one hand, and her phone in the other, I played the recordings over the phone from off the computer. With her good ear and a quick eye, she called out for me to stop the recording, named the error, which I then recorded into an email for Yousif. This was a new way for both of us.. and it worked! We had finished another two chapters when it was time for me to return to Sydney. It was then that we realised that we could continue working with our phones and my computer in Sydney, and her in Galiwin'ku, until the whole of Mark's Gospel is complete!

It is a time of discovering new ways to work and live and to move forward together as the body of Christ in our lives and work. These are certainly challenging times, and Hebrews 10:24-25 is so relevant for us today as it was when it was first written for the Christian Jews in the first century, where it says:

And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.

Pitjantjatjara Old Testament Project Update

By Sam Freney



Hi, I'm Sam Freney and I'm a translation consultant with Bible Society Australia and I work with the Pitjantjatjara Translation Project. A little while ago we were working on the Book of 1 Samuel and one of the Pitjantjatjara translators was reading a passage out to us. This was a woman who had been a Christian longer than I've been alive and she read for the very first time about how the Holy Spirit came onto King David and remained with him all the days of his life. It was the very first time she had read that verse in her language and it was a really wonderful spiritual experience for her. Hearing about the work that God does through the Holy Spirit throughout history and she read it for the very first time in her language. It was really wonderful, an excellent experience to be a part of.

While communities have felt the impact and repercussions of the pandemic hampering connection with remote communities, progress continues on the Translation of the Old Testament into the language of Pitjantjatjara. Pitjantjatjara translators continue to express a desire to see this work continue. They truly are the strength and backbone behind this project.

In early 2022, 98% of the Old Testament has been front translated in preparation for first drafting. A final front translator workshop is scheduled for May with the remaining 2% planned for completion this year. Nearly 80% of the Old Testament has been first drafted into the Pitjantjatjara language and teams of translators continue to faithfully check and edit these drafts through regular workshops.

The Pitjantjatjara translators have also been making good progress on a Pitjantjatjara Daily Prayer Book, with approximately 80% of the readings and prayers being drafted and around 30% of the draft prayers having been checked thoroughly and awaiting final checks.

We thank God for all the work that has been done on the project over the last few years. This work is such a gift from Him, and He has provided everything to enable it to happen – enthusiastic and skilful translators, as well your generous support and faithful prayers, this along with the enduring hope that our 'labour in the Lord is not in vain'. Please pray for the Lord to continue to raise up the next generation of

translators to work on this project and for the Lord's continued mercy and grace to us each day.



Mally's Visit to Galiwin'ku

By Mally McLellan



What a lovely surprise it was when a friend rang me in early December, inviting me to join her for Christmas at Galiwin'ku. She had been asked to house sit the very house where I lived from 2006-07. Within a week it was all planned and a dog sitter in place, and I was there a few days before Christmas!

Meantime, the same friend was able to find Yungirrŋa, and suggest to her that she and I could work together on her Warramiri translation of the Gospel of Mark. In 2019, I began to help Yungirrŋa, and she's had a little help from others in the meantime, but nothing further from me. Yungirrŋa does not have a phone, and so is very difficult to contact without having others do the chasing for you. Thankfully, she indicated she'd be there, and she'd love to spend time on translation.

It was lovely to be out with my adopted family and friends again! Once you're adopted into the Yolŋu system, everyone is family, which makes a return there like a home-coming. Very precious.

For the first two days, the weather was beautiful and the old sea view from "my" place shone. However, on Christmas eve, the rain started, and over the next five days, a low slowly went over us, dropping heaps of rain, and blowing everything to bits! Despite this, Yungirrŋa and I were able to work a couple of hours each morning, thanks again to Kaye Thurlow, who went out in that weather to help pick her up and return her safely home. Over the fortnight, we worked about 15 hours together, checking her early draft of the Gospel of Mark. Sadly, Yungirrŋa's

computer had died, so I then typed up the changed work on my computer. Her new computer is now out on the Island, ready for the next helper.



Visit to Galiwin'ku continued.



There were other exciting things to do as well. After the rains and winds passed, we went up to Dharrwar, a delightful homeland up the Island. The road looked somewhat like a river in some plaes, and there were still some huge trees that we had to get around, or remove – all part of the adventure. But we fished and picnicked – and did more revision on Warramiri Mark.

That was likely to be my last visit for a while, as I am slowly working towards moving “south” later in the year. To me, it was a little gift from the Lord – well, not even that little, really.

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