The Gaius Trust
Newsletter – April 2026

Dear friends,

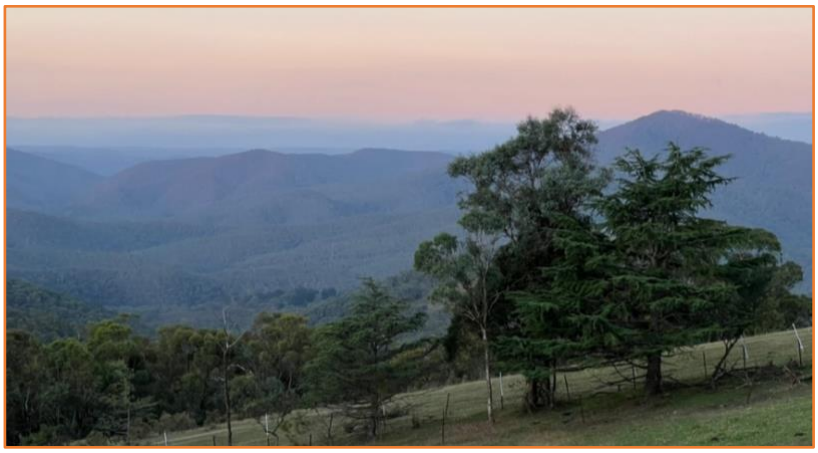
Our first newsletter of the year has news from **David Cox**, including several matters for thanksgiving and prayer. With his retirement from the pastorate in Dubbo Christian Family Church approaching, please join with the church in praying for the Lord to provide them with a new pastor. **Stephen Bignall** updates us on his schools' ministry and has encouraging news about our hopes to work with Aboriginal Evangelical Fellowship to support a man in ministry.

Copies of this and past newsletters are available for download from our website, gaiustrust.org, along with recordings of messages from recent conferences. The WhatsApp group can be joined by opening this link on your mobile phone: Click here to join the WhatsApp group. This is used from time to time to share snippets of news and requests for prayer; it also provides a forum to communicate directly with us and other supporters.

Thank you for your continuing interest and prayerful support.

With Christian greetings,

The Trustees



Rydal, in the Blue Mountains, NSW

From Stephen Bignall

After a very warm and dry summer holidays [often +40C] school resumed in early February in the midst of continuing drought. It was good to catch up with staff and students at both **Gular and Coonamble schools**. Sadly, there was another parental death over the break, the mother of several aboriginal children including a teenage boy at Gular school passed away; first week back, the school staff and students attended her funeral held at our local Presbyterian Church, a gentle Gospel hope laid out before all by a retired elder who was asked to conduct the service. Please pray for the bereaved Ryan family. Grief is a very real trauma for these kids.

Steve has been asked to provide pastoral support to Gular secondary students an extra half day per week this year in the light of several challenges among them. So, it's now 2.5 days in each school. RE has begun for 50 minute each Thursday with teaching on creation, opening the Genesis narrative and the 6 day work of God detailed there, one young lad insisting life evolved over millions of years (there was good positive interaction on this). This past week though we dealt with the crucifixion and resurrection of our Lord, given the season. Stephen sought to provide a contrast to colouring pictures of bunnies, eggs and decorative

preparations for the hat parade, seeking to lodge the thought Jesus really is the reason for this season, long before chocolate.

Last newsletter we mentioned **a new project** the Gaius Trust is supporting along with 2 other evangelical Australian trusts, partnering with AEF [Aboriginal Evangelical Fellowship] to bring sound teaching and training to several small but functioning indigenous churches in the central west of NSW. The first year's funds ($93K AUD) have now been pledged jointly and David Cox invited by the AEF board to fill the role after his retirement from the pastorate, and an appropriate break. David has accepted, bringing good relationships and over 25 years pastoral experience in Aboriginal ministry to this task. Please lift the new initiative before the Lord, as well as David and Rose, and Dubbo Christian Family Church.

Stephen continues to share the **preaching and pastoral care** with a fellow elder, Ian McCutcheon, in the Gular and Gil local congregations, taking a series over January on 1 Cor. 15 - "Death is swallowed up in Victory". We have now resumed our series in Acts, moving through Paul's 3rd missionary journey.

Finally, the Bignalls have had the joy of their daughter's family migrating from the UK to join them in Gulargambone, safely arriving 3 weeks ago despite a troubled world, we can only thank God!

Dear brothers and sisters, we thank God for your continuing prayers and care.

From David Cox

At Dubbo we have seen some people leaving and others joining us. Most who left have done so on good terms. Mark Naden is no longer with us and his ministry amongst us as an Elder is missed. There has been a house church start up in Dubbo, run by an indigenous couple. Some who were attending on and off at our church have shifted across, seeking an "Indigenous" church. I found myself asking, **what is an "Indigenous Church"**? What does it believe? Should a Church be defined by their ethnicity or their doctrinal statement? While this development has been troubling, I am unwilling to soften core beliefs to appear more accommodating. Dubbo Christian Family Church continues with a good proportion of attendees being Indigenous but there has been a noticeable reduction. How will this shape our future? What will new leadership mean for us?

My six weeks of long service leave did indeed prove to be a good test for the members. When I returned, we were able to begin the **discussion regarding my replacement**. Currently there is only one candidate, a young man who has been with us for a couple of years now. He is eminently qualified but has unfortunately shifted in his views on covenant Theology and therefore baptism. Nothing ever seems to be straightforward.

On a brighter note, we witnessed the **baptism** recently of a young member of our congregation, 12 years old. This girl has been attending with her mother, who is a member, since she was four. I have edited her testimony which she read at her baptism as below.

> *I was born and raised without a loving father, but now I realise I have one, and that is God. When I was little and we were going to Church I thought church was boring. I sometimes slept, drew or even slept, just never paying attention. When I was 10 Mum told me about Hell. I was so scared and frightened that I would go to the fiery pits. Mum said I should repent and ask God for forgiveness, so I did. I got a LOT more interested in Church. I would listen and then tell Mum what I had learned. So, I think I got saved at that time. I have tried to be good, but I can't. I realise that only God is good. Now I love God more than ever. I can't wait to be baptised!*

Please pray for this young girl who is on the verge of young womanhood. Pray as she enters what are usually rather turbulent teen years, that God would be her stay and guide. Pray that as a Church we would do all possible to encourage, admonish and generally provide spiritual nourishment.

So, there are **changes afoot** for Dubbo Christian Family Church, as well as for Rose and me personally. I have been offered a role of providing encouragement, teaching and guidance for several smaller congregations around Dubbo. I have accepted and expect to begin early in the second half of the year. Please pray that churches would be willing to have me minister in their midst and that it would see these smaller congregations grow in maturity and numbers. It may mean finding new rental accommodation in a market already hard to break into. Please pray for wisdom for myself and others who will partner with me, possibly. Pray for wisdom for the members of our Church and that we would be able to glorify God in our community and further afield.

Thank you for your interest and prayers.

SDG

David Cox.

Please pray…

- For David and Stephen, their families, and their respective churches and wider ministries.
- For the future leadership of Dubbo Christian Family Church, following Mark Naden's departure to another region for family reasons, and in anticipation of David stepping down as pastor.
- For David as he reflects on the question of what is an "indigenous church", and the implications of recent developments in Dubbo.
- For the young lady recently baptised and her family.
- That God would raise up young men with a desire to minister the Word, and that we will be faithful and effective in training and equipping them; in particular, pray for Tim Bartimote in his theological studies and internship at DCFC.
- For David and Rose at a time of change and for David as he prepares for and then takes on the new role under the auspices of AEF ministering in several aboriginal congregations.
- For the Trustees seeking to progress the ministry of Gaius and especially in connection with the AEF project, which involves a significant financial commitment.
- For the Lord to call Aboriginal men into ministry and mission.
- For Stephen's school chaplaincies and Scripture classes, his conversations and interactions with staff, students and parents/guardians; for the Gospel opportunities that arise and for his ministry to people who are mourning and in distress.