

You may be wondering how Stephen and Henry and their families have been faring during the recent weeks of bush fires in New South Wales. I am pleased to report that they have been preserved from the blazes, though a number of adjacent regions were devastated. They are very thankful indeed for recent sustained rains – which may well be drought-breaking after almost three years of aridity. In fact the rains have extinguished all the fires in New South Wales over the past two weeks and many rivers and creeks are now in flood and pastures are greening up; real reason to praise the God of heaven!

Henry undertook Jessica Bignall's baptism and preached from James 3 in mid-December - a joyful outdoor occasion with just over thirty in attendance; but a few weeks later in early January the Louies had a family tragedy – their young adult nephew with his parents was subject to dangerous fires at Bateman's Bay for several days; surviving this trauma the young man took his own life by hanging a few days later; they have been in grief these past weeks. Please pray for them.

Henry conducted a wedding recently in the village of Pilliga, the couple wanting to honour God by marrying rather than simply living together. Stephen also conducted a cross-cultural marriage in Wee Waa. Henry and Stephen with a small team have decided to co-operate in the Sunday meeting at Pilliga, to ensure the regularity of the service even if Henry must be somewhere else – this means a time shift to 3pm so that the Bignalls can get there after morning services in Wee Waa - another matter for prayer.

David and Rose Cox (mentioned in our previous prayer letter) have now moved for the remainder of the year to Sydney for David's studies at Christ College; the Gaius Trust will be contributing to their weekly living needs. David is now in his third week of lectures and settling into a rhythm - it being a long time since he was in the classroom. Stephen and Fiona visited their church, the Dubbo Christian Family, last Sunday, Stephen preaching to the mainly indigenous congregation of thirty-five or so; they were well received and the church was very hospitable, laying on lunch for all attending. Stephen and others will assist with pulpit supply in the coming year.

While there, Stephen and Fiona chatted with a young indigenous couple Jeraki and Sally Goolagong, with their delightful toddlers, over lunch. David has been mentoring Jeraki for some time and is regularly in touch. The young man has good gifts and both he and Sally were converted to Christ three or four years ago; they have now married and have become consistent church members. Pray for their growth and preservation and the future possibility of study and service; they are both reading good books alongside Scripture presently.

Thank you for your continued prayerful support. May the Lord bless you and the work in which we are partnered.

On behalf of the Gaius Trust
Robert Strivens

Please continue in prayer for these men and their wives, families and possibilities. The Gaius Trust continues to support Henry financially on a monthly basis and to make grants towards the high fuel costs which aboriginal pastors incur due to the long distances that they need to travel. If you would like to contribute to any of these needs, you can do so through **give.net** via our website (gaiustrust.org), or by **cheque** to Gaius Trust, sent to 15 St Margaret's Street, Bradford on Avon, BA15 1DA.