

I thank my God every time I remember you. In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now. Philippians 1:3-5



# Gäwa news

Edition Three 2015

## The year in review...

2015 has been an extraordinary year of joys and challenges for us here in Gäwa.

Although we have struggled to communicate with you as regularly as we would have liked, we would like to share with you some glimpses of our journey this year.

With Tropical Cyclones Lam and Nathan occurring early in the year, our time in Term 1 was significantly disrupted. We evacuated Gäwa in preparation for TC Lam, a category 4 cyclone which ravaged Elcho Island from top to bottom. Approaching from the north and tracking down the western side of Elcho Island, the homes of many of our families in Galiwin'ku were also severely impacted. Thankfully and miraculously, most of our infrastructure in Gäwa was spared although our Wind Turbine was raised to the ground demonstrating the extraordinary ferocity of the winds. With a little work, the Gäwa airstrip was re-opened enabling a prompt return of staff and food supplies. TC Nathan followed just one month later and was predicted at category 2. This time, staff and community families prepared to stay in Gäwa. Nathan crossed the coast just south of Gäwa homeland and continued on its westerly track across the Arafura Sea before turning and crossing the coast closer to Darwin. After a long night, we emerged thankful for robust housing and facilities which had protected us from the astonishing forces we experienced.

Term 2 saw a welcome return to the rhythm of school life as services in our community were restored to operational. Houses were again full of families and trees were being renewed with new foliage. Our school programs were back in full swing and gorgeous smiles on the faces of gorgeous children brought joy and delight to all.

Please continue to hold us in prayer as we recover from a very difficult time in Term 3. We embarked on a new journey together of grief, trust, love and support. It was not until Term 4 that our journey brought us to a place where we began returning to a new rhythm of school life. Due to cultural sensitivities, we began holding school in an old school house located in a neighbouring homeland community. It is our hope to return to school back in Gäwa during 2016.

Through all the trials and challenges of 2015, our Lord has been faithful. We have been supported and sustained through the loving support of many people far and wide. Our 'Yolju and Balanda' partnership model of working together has been a vital force in the life of our school and community. It has underpinned our capacity to move forward in uncertain and challenging times.

We look with great hope to 2016. There are exciting plans afoot for a barge landing to be built in the Gäwa community. With most goods requiring barging from the mainland, this facility will negate the need for 120km of travel on the rough dirt road to and from Galiwin'ku. The future potential of this service has our community very excited! We are also thankful for the provision of new remote staff housing in 2016 with the building of a new house and visitor facility due to commence early in the new year. The roof space will house a new solar installation providing sustainable power to the school well into the future. These projects will offer employment and training opportunities greatly blessing past students and community members.

Please pray for rest and renewal for our committed staff during the upcoming Christmas break, and for a vision encompassing great hope as we head into the new year. We are thankful for your support and partnership in the gospel across many miles, but all for the one Kingdom and Lord.

On behalf of our Gäwa family, many blessings to you and yours.  
Karen Fletcher, Principal





# Thanksgiving Evening

A lovely cool breeze was blowing as the sun set and our small communities of Gäwa, Ban'thula and Gan'purra gathered together to celebrate God's faithfulness and blessing. We shared in a peaceful night of carol singing, dancing, prayers of thankfulness and the much anticipated gift giving!

Surrounded by their families, the children sat expectantly to receive their precious Christmas gifts. We shared the story of how the gifts had come from our friends far away at Mt Evelyn Christian School. Nine large boxes had travelled along distant roads and rail-lines, even on a train which derailed at one point, eventually reaching Darwin. They were loaded onto a barge to head across the Arafura Sea to Elcho Island, and transferred into a troopy to travel up a very rough and dusty road finally arriving safely in Gäwa . The love, hope and joy that was packed into each gift was then opened and shared among the children and families of our school community.

These parcels are highly treasured, cuddled and cherished articles! As well as wonderful toys and books, they also included beautiful drawings, notes and handmade gifts reminding our children that others just like them had put love, time and thoughtfulness into their gifts.

During the evening, we thanked our staff for their dedication and faithful service during 2015. We also farewelled Sue, Geoff and Tom David after two years of service in Gäwa. They were presented with a beautiful painting created by school students and their Art teacher, Salome. We hope it fondly reminds them of their time and adventures in Gäwa, and of our faithful God who has walked alongside them during their time here.

We closed the evening with one of our community Elders giving thanks for the blessings and protection of our Lord this year, and for the great hope we have in the coming of Jesus our Saviour, the true Light of the World.

