

May the God who gives hope fill you with great joy. May you have perfect peace as you trust in him. May the power of the Holy Spirit fill you with hope.

Romans 15:13



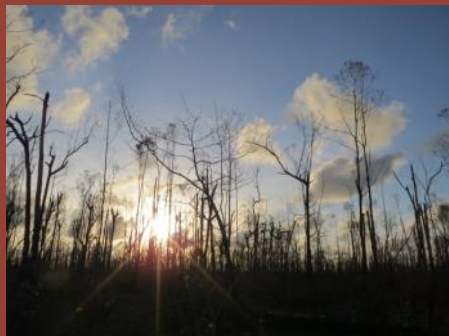
Gäwa news

March 2015

Welcome to our first newsletter for 2015. It is a little later than usual as this term didn't go according to our plans. This edition will take you on a journey through our term as we navigated our way through not one, but two cyclones. Yet, despite the turmoil, we have experienced God's hand clearly at work here in our school and community as we trusted and waited upon Him.

Isaiah 55:8 speaks of God's thoughts and plans. His thoughts are not our thoughts, and His plans are not our plans. The promises of verse 13 give us great hope that the unforeseen events of our lives are for the Lord's renown. Our goal is to seek to serve Him with great joy as we find ourselves in these unexpected times.

Karen Fletcher
Principal



2015 got off to an exciting start with an encouraging number of students and staff returning from Galiwin'ku. There was a strong sense of unity as we worked together.

Our term was expectedly interrupted with the approach of Tropical Cyclone Lam. One minute our school was operating and within two hours we were

evacuating. Some staff headed to Darwin while others returned to their families to Galiwin'ku. It was an anxious time as we waited and watched the path of TC Lam tracking along Elcho Island. While communications remained intact we continued to talk from Darwin with our friends and family who were sitting out the storm in Galiwin'ku. It was a long night of waiting. TC Lam passed Elcho Island as a category 4 cyclone.

We were relieved and excited when we received news the next morning that everyone was safe and well. We were shocked to see the first photos of the devastation to Galiwin'ku caused by the cyclone. We awaited news of how Gäwa had fared.

There was an immense sense of thankfulness as we received our first aerial shots of Gäwa from our local MAF pilots. Our homes and school facilities remained intact although our wind turbine suffered significant damage.

God's hand of protection was clearly evident on Gäwa and its people.





School kitchen and outbuildings



School kitchen and outdoor seating



Classrooms and school housing



Our playground was stripped bare of vegetation



Motor and blades of our wind turbine



Community housing



The force of the wind blasted our houses with sand and salt water that forced its way inside



Many large trees were uprooted

Busy Waiting

An Assessment Team was sent ahead to determine the extent of the damage and prepare the site for people to return. The cyclone brought down many trees all over the island and so the main road up the island to Gäwa was blocked. It would be many weeks before the road could be cleared enabling access by road from Galiwinku to Gäwa. This would have big implications for the restoration of Gäwa. Rangers came by boat from Gove to begin the clearing of fallen trees. Electricians came by plane to ensure the site was safe. Emergency response teams came by helicopter to assess damage and determine best ways to support community.

Staff were able to return from Darwin after two weeks of waiting. We began cleaning the sand out of our homes and classrooms. We had permission to send a convoy of vehicles to Galiwin'ku for supplies as the road was officially closed. Having access to town meant that we were able to collect mattresses and essential items for our community. Other donations of clothing and Manchester arrived by plane. It would be one more week of waiting before our community could return from Galiwin'ku to their homes in Gäwa. How wonderful it was to be reunited as we worked together to continue the process of restoring Gäwa.



*Commit your way to the Lord
Be still before the Lord
and wait patiently for him.
Psalm 37: 57*





So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live your lives in him, rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness.
Colossians 2: 6-7

As we surveyed the devastation of TC Lam it was difficult to see beyond the apparent lack of life around us. Within weeks, small shoots of green growth began to emerge. Our spirits began to lift as we realised that there were so many little joys and opportunities for growth— we just had to look a little closer!

School Resumes...

With kids back onsite we were excited to get back into school. It was wonderful to be together again and share our personal experiences of the cyclone. These were captured in written recounts and illustrations. Our friend, Ian Morris, again visited Gäwa and explored the effects of the cyclone on our Gäwa environment. It was interesting to compare photos pre and post cyclone.



“Many hands make light work”

Many tradesman have visited Gäwa in the past month, assisting with the many jobs around the site. One of our past students is now studying at the Trade Training Centre at NT Christian College in Darwin. We were excited to have him back onsite to assist in the restoration process.



Gäwa Appeal

As a school and community we have been overwhelmed by the kindness and generosity of so many of our friends all over Australia. We are in awe over God’s protection and provision and the many ways we have seen His fingerprint in the events of this past month.

There is still much to do and many costs incurred so far. Here are our details if you are able to assist with the cost of recovery:

Gawa Christian School
BSB 035 306
ACC 225 878

Thank you for your support.
We look to the future with great hope!

But wait, there’s more..

It was beyond our wildest imaginings to think that a second cyclone could come our way. However, Tropical Cyclone Nathan seemed intent on visiting Gäwa. We again prepared our site for destructive winds. Based on the category 2 prediction, we decided this time to stay onsite. Each family group bunkered down in their home to sit out the storm.



Emerging the next morning we were relieved to see there was minimal damage to Gäwa.



“For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways,” declares the Lord.
Isaiah 55: 8

