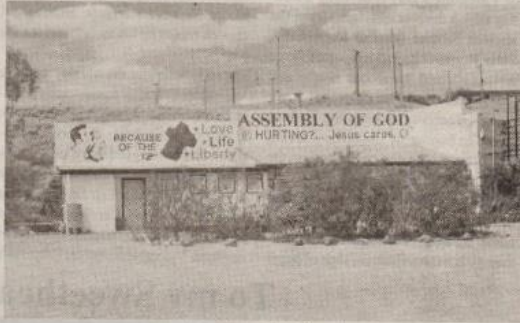


FAITH IN THE DESERT

Coober Pedy has an amazing number of different cultures living here, from French to Italian; there are all sorts. This fact really makes the town unique, like no other in the world, but what is also extremely interesting are the different religions and churches here. So each fortnight I am going to meet and interview the priests and congregations of the different churches in Coober Pedy, in order to educate and maybe answer a few questions the general public has. This is the third issue running the "Faith in the Desert" story and this issue I have interviewed Pastor Tim and his wife Robyn from the Assembly of God Faith.

The Assembly of God Church follows the Christian Faith; they are different to traditional Christian Churches, but follow the same principals, which is to follow the Bible. They have no other rules or structure to their churches, and work towards meeting individuals and community needs within the church. For example the Coober Pedy AOG celebrate with music and have a



Assembly of God Church

church band.

The AOG Church is plain in appearance but Pastor Tim told me, "We put the emphasis on people rather than on buildings, because the bible says that God doesn't dwell in temples made of stone, he dwells in the hearts and lives of people. That dug-

out over there is empty when no one's in it and the very first person that walks in there on a Sunday morning that's when God arrives."

The AOG is a Pentecostal Church. Pentecostal churches are normally musical and

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they also speak in tongues. Pentecostal means they experience miracles, speaking in other languages than their own. They do this without ever having any training in that language. They believe it is God speaking through them. Not just people from this church experience this, it can happen to any Christian. They try to get their message across in a way that the people need and understand and when it comes to music they are constantly moving and changing with the times.

There are actually two AOG churches here in Coober Pedy; the other one is aimed at reaching out to the local Aboriginal people. About 12 years ago the two churches were one fellowship, Pastor George McCormick felt that the Aboriginal people weren't fitting in as well as they should so he set up what is known as the Kupa Piti Church located at Crowders Gully.

AOG don't have any government as such they look after themselves. All of their belongings are owned by the local church and they make all of their own decisions concerning the progress. Because of this reason the AOG's churches are very diverse. Expression in the church can be different and individual, but the core is always the same.

The AOG have the highest rate of successful rehabilitation with youth related issues, 70% of all people that go through the system get through successfully. Their success rate is due largely to the method of helping they use and that is to work from the heart not just the outside physical problems.

They are at the moment reaching over 200,000 teenagers in Australia, and they hold Youth Alive concerts in all the major cities.

The AOG share a simple communion every Sunday, this is something all AOG churches share. As Robyn said "We are simplicity with a faith that affects every area of our life."

The AOG are made-up of 9% credential ministers being women, they have moved with the times and if a woman is available for the job then she does it.

There are many churches here in Australia and the world, it is the fastest growing church yet, and they have had a 20%

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