



## DOUG AND SUE HECKATHORN

*“Tentmaker” ministry among Indigenous residents of Alice Springs*

God used simple but loving and practical people and difficult experiences to draw Sue Heckathorn to himself. From attending Sunday School, Sue grew up assuming that all Christians can be missionaries at home or abroad as they share God's love with others. Sue, who came to faith in Jesus as a teenager, believes that Jesus gives purpose, hope and a reason for living. He sees and values each person as someone worth dying for.

Doug immigrated from the USA when he was ten years old and, as a 17-year-old, decided to follow Jesus. A short-term mission trip to Papua New Guinea in 1980 stirred his interest and a sense of call to cross-cultural ministry. Later mission experiences in Pakistan and China reinforced God's calling. Doug's career in art/craft teaching has primarily focused on people with disabilities and 'fringe people' in communities. Doug and Sue were married in December 1989. They have four children: Josiah (20.11.90), Sam (26.8.92), Sarah (1.2.96) and Jemmah (1.11.98).

### **God has plans for the good of urban Aboriginal people**

Doug and Sue are well aware that there are no easy, quick-fix solutions to the many issues and challenges that affect Aboriginal people in Australia. But they both believe that Jesus can make a difference where nothing and no-one else can.

For I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord. They are for good and not for evil, to give you a hope and a future (Jeremiah 29:11). When they read these words, Doug and Sue know that all peoples are precious to the Lord. They see this being equally applicable to Aboriginal people living in urban situations, many of whom have lost linguistic and cultural links with their heritage, as well as those in town for health and family reasons. Doug and Sue say, "We can have the best intentions and the desire to help others, but unless the Lord builds the house, our labour will be wasted (Psalm 127:1). There have been many terrible experiences that Aboriginal people, as well as others, have suffered in the past. Such experiences influence the present and the future."

### **Professional skills, friendships and God**

Doug's teaching background and Sue's nursing qualifications bring God-given opportunities to make contact with Aboriginal people on a professional basis.

“Our prayer is that the friendships that we make, led by the Holy Spirit, will bring the practical and spiritual message that we all matter to Jesus and that love knows no boundaries. God wants to and can make all people new. We feel challenged by the issues we could face in building this ministry through the use of our professional skills. We and our children need your prayer support in all we do.”

