

Obituary Ian E Kleinig November 2023

Ian, the sixth of the eleven children of Gustav Adolph Kleinig and his wife Maria Rose (nee Pietsch) was born in Eudunda, South Australia on February 24, 1925. He was received by baptism into God's family on March 15, 1925, in St Paul's Lutheran Church, St Kitts.

Until the age of eleven, Ian lived on a share farm in St Kitts with his family. He attended the local public school until grade six. After a brief stay in Willaston his parents then moved to Angaston, where the family ran the dairy and milk run. He completed his primary education at the Angaston Public School in 1938. He was also confirmed that year at St Pauls Lutheran church.

During his school days at St Kitts. Ian went with his parents to the Dutton Church where several missionaries on furlough from New Guinea gave a lantern lecture for church people. He was deeply moved by the pictures and addresses of the missionaries. His mother and father took note of this *and as he said* "God led them to make arrangements for him to attend Concordia College" in Adelaide with the goal of becoming a pastor in the Lutheran Church. He started at Concordia College in 1939. He completed the Leaving Certificate in 1942, and then two more years of study before the final three years of seminary studies. His ordination to the Lutheran ministry took place in St Pauls, Tanunda on February 15, 1948.

Ian was a competent scholar, however he excelled in languages: Greek, Latin, German, and English. He was a natural sportsman, represented Concordia teams in tennis and athletics, setting a state student shotput record that remained for more than 40 years. He played SANFL at league level for Sturt with fellow seminarians Ev Leske, Clem Koch, Keith Nagel. His sporting love was cricket; he played college and district cricket and was in the state training squad with his heroes Gil Langley and Donald Bradman. His love of cricket and association with these gentlemen opened many doors for him in India.

After a brief period at St John's Melbourne, Ian accepted a call to missionary service with the ELCA in Papua New Guinea. The commissioning for this work took place in May 1948 at St Paul's Tanunda.

On May 15, 1948, he married Enid Lois Wearne, then teaching at Birdwood High School, at Flinders Street Bethlehem Lutheran Church. Their missionary service began soon after with the Australian Lutheran Mission on Siassi Island, PNG.

In 1949 their first child, Katherine, was born in Finchafen. That year they accepted a call from The Lutheran Church Missouri Synod to join its mission among the Enga people in the Western Highlands of PNG. They, with baby Katherine joined the newly arrived Burce and Heintze families from America and Lou and Lorna Heppner from Australia

From 1949 – 1965, they lived and worked among the Enga people, living initially in a bush house at Yaibos, situated in the Lai River valley. They opened mission stations at Yaibos and Amapyaka and Ian explored the outposts of the Pogera, Kandep and Kopiago areas. He was

the resident missionary at Yaibos until 1963, then as teacher at the Timothy Lutheran School for church workers for the next two years.

In February 1966, with Enid and five children, Ian took up missionary service in India, having accepted the call from the Missouri Board of Foreign Missions and the Indian Evangelical Lutheran Church to service as missionary among the tribal people, originally the first people in India, in the Koraput Dist in southern Odisha state. The call to Ian came from the Lutheran mission and their supporters as he held an Australian Passport as India still allowed those from the Commonwealth to enter and work in India. Their attitude was *'If not us, then who?'* They arrived in Chennai (then Madras) on February 16th, 1966. (For Ian, this was to be one of 25 entries into India for his career in Odisha) After orientation they arrived on the mission field on Ian's 41st birthday. What a life was ahead of them all.

Using the mission bungalow in the town of Jeypore as a supply base, Ian and Enid soon moved to set up a site in the Kond hills, near a few villages. This place had the name 'Saptamaha' which became a centre for their work among the indigenous Kuvi-speaking tribal people. This involved studying the Kuvi language, reducing it to a written form while engaging in evangelistic and translation work together with local Indian Christians. Saptamaha continues to be a centre for education, training, and translation in the Kond hills.

In 1974 Ian and Enid returned to Australia to pastoral ministry in the Coonalpyn parish. Until his retirement to the Pasadena Lutheran Aged Care centre in 1990, Ian was the resident pastor for the Cairns parish from 1980, serving congregations in Cairns, Atheron and Innisfail. During his ministry in Australia, he also served on the Board for Overseas Mission, and for SA District Missions and Lutheran Bible Translators.

Having left India in 1974, Ian and Enid made 14 six-week long visits to Odisha to continue and complete the translation of the New Testament into the Kuvi tribal language. Following Enid's death in February 1999, Ian made three more visits to assist the tribal Church in its evangelistic and education tasks, along with further translation and resource development. In 2002 he also went to PNG to teach for one semester at the Birip Timothy Luther Seminary in Enga Province.

Ian moved into a serviced unit in 2011 alongside two of his siblings. He actively participated in congregational life and assisted in ministry. Until his voice failed, he cherished his singing, with various choirs and meeting people this way. He'd also get up early in the morning and distribute the morning paper to the village, especially to the 'old' people, and always got in his cross word or quiz. He was a regular at water exercises for many years, and until he could no longer stride, he would walk a lot, to clear the mind, and to enjoy his surroundings. Ian had regular trips to Cairns to visit children, grandchildren, and past friends. He relished the opportunity for family gatherings and times with visitors and relatives. He maintained his contact with the Sturt Football Club priding himself to be one of the oldest living players. Until the recent season he would often be seen in stands barracking on the Double Blues, and

often (to the chagrin of those he was with) be heard encouraging the players in no uncertain terms; likewise his comments on the vision of the umpires.

As Ian's health deteriorated and care became increasingly problematic, he moved to the VITA respite facility at Daw Park. Having made peace with his family and his God, he died peacefully into the arms of the Lord in the early hours in the morning of Tuesday, 21st of November.

Vale – Ian Elmo Kleinig