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THE AUSTRALIAN CHRISTIAN

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THE AUSTRALIAN CHRISTIAN

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News

Carlingford Graduation

Beginnings and endings

An excited crowd gathered at the Wesley Auditorium on 26 November for the Graduation Service of the Churches of Christ in New South Wales Theological College.

The service began with prayer led by Richard Howarth and a time of praise led by two of the graduating students, Joanne Dew and John Lee, both from Western Australia. Another two of the graduands, Adrian Jackson and Andrew Ranucci, thanked those who had contributed to their theological education and training for ministry.

Appreciation was expressed to Peter Dixon who has left the faculty to take up a cross-cultural ministry at Marrickville, Sydney. He has been a very able and popular lecturer. We also said farewell to Gordon Branch after 13 years as groundsman and Antony Cook after a year as Field Supervision Coordinator, a task he has carried out with flair and perception.

The address by Ron Hewitt challenged the students to realise that they served a God who did not fail, so they could be confident in him. After Ron's sickness, it was a privilege to hear him testify to the greatness of God and what it means to serve him.

The Diploma of Ministry was awarded to Marjan Beer (currently at Richmond, Vic), Stephen Cathcart (Towradgi Congregational, NSW), Joanne Dew (Quakers Hill, NSW), Lisa Gaddes (York Street, Ballarat, Vic), Richard Howarth (Bexley North, NSW), Adrian Jackson (Quakers Hill, NSW), John Lee (Rockingham, WA), Alan Pelling (Merrylands, NSW), Andrew Ranucci (Hardys Bay, NSW) and Joel Ratcliffe (Towradgi Congregational, NSW).

The Christian Service Certificate was awarded to Peter Enseleit who will continue to prepare for missionary service to Muslims.

It was also announced that Peter Enseleit,

Carlingford Modules

New course and course changes

There have been some changes to the courses being offered through the Churches of Christ in New South Wales Theological College. Many of our readers received copies of the Carlingford College module handbook as in insert earlier this year.

The new module being offered is DF304 Religious Alternatives in Today's World. It is being offered 20-23 September 1994 at Carlingford with Adrian van Leen leading the module.

Changes of dates are now advised of DP109 Pastoral Leadership and Administration offered by John Bond and Keith Farmer at Wollongong which is now being presented 19-22 April and BS103 The Acts of the Apostles by Tim Harris at Wollongong on 12-15 April.

There is a new lecturer for two courses being offered through the Wollongong Ministry centre. DF202 Church Growth Perspectives (15-18 February) and DF204 Advanced Church Growth (4-7 October) are both being taught by Colin Noyes, Executive Pastor, Gateway Baptist Church, Brisbane.

Adrian Jackson, Alan Pelling, Andrew Ranucci, Alan Gordon, John Rees and Neil Watt had all completed the requirements for the award of the Bachelor of Theology degree within the Sydney College of Divinity. Alan Gordon, John Rees and Neil Watt have completed the Bachelor of Theology Conversion Course which enabled them to upgrade their Diploma of Ministry to a degree with one year's extra work.



• 1993 Carlingford Graduands

Kidsmin Celebrations

Influencing children's lives

Kidsmin (Vic-Tas) held a dinner at the Nunawading church for children's leaders. Tom Slater, State Director of Scripture Union, spoke about the positive influence that leaders have in the lives of children. Entertainment was provided by storyteller Cathie Bradley and singer Tim Steen. The evening was chaired by Andrea Salmon.

Children's groups gathered at Williamstown for an event to end the year. They enjoyed games along The Strand and afternoon tea at the renovated Williamstown church. Kidsmin Chairman, James Pearce, led the thanksgiving program and Lyndsay Smith, former Explorer Chief, presented awards

to groups. Box Hill Kanga Kids club won the "Group of the Year" award, and Croydon Explorers club received the Championship Cup. Children had worked through the year to raise money for the 1993 Service Project, which was given to the Aborigines Mission Department to purchase an overhead projector and video machine for children's and youth work at Albury and Mooroopna. A large collection of gifts for children in hospital was displayed.

A varied program for 1994 has been planned to enable children to participate in combined events, and to provide training and encouragement for leaders.

—Lynette Leach



• Tom Slater, third from right, State Director of Scripture Union, at the Kidsmin Dinner

Launceston Camp

Developing relationships

On the November long weekend over 100 (from babes in arms through to grandparents and great aunts) gathered at Camp Clayton near Ulverstone for the Launceston, Tas, church camp. Studies and discussions on relationships were lead by Pat Grieg from Ringwood, Vic. We covered relationships in our families and relationships within the church. These times were intertwined with team-building exercises, children's programs and purely social times. A highlight was the trip to the beach at Devonport on the Don River Steam Train. The

fellowship, exercise and worship were all great, and these were topped off by the provision of excellent food.

A worship highlight was the music provided by a team of over a dozen musicians, singers and our resident soundman. The worship times came to a focus in the Sunday night communion service where we had a deep look at our relationship with Jesus. The service was followed by a spontaneous time of "making a joyful noise unto the Lord" as musicians, singers and others joined in celebration.

Noisy but Exciting

Boomerang Kids Club



• Heads down, sticky fingers

On 5 November, the Boomerang Kids Club at the Preston, Vic, church held its first family night and barbecue. 115 attended, ranging from babies through to grandparents, with everyone enjoying the time spent together in a relaxed atmosphere. Parents joined in the games with the children—poison ball was definitely a favourite for the youngsters as the ball was aimed hard and straight at parents—but everyone had fun! This was followed by a half-hour animated video

and a quiz time, finishing with some of their favourite choruses. By this time everyone had worked up an appetite and welcomed the sausages, bread and butter, raisin bread, yogurt and variety of cakes, tea/coffee and cordial. It was great to see parents and children (heads down, sticky fingers) all intent on making their own waste paper bins together.

It was a noisy but exciting night providing an excellent opportunity to get to know parents better.

Eyre Peninsula Camp

Women's conference camp at Redcliff

On the first weekend in November, ladies came from Whyalla, Port Lincoln, Ungarra, Tumby Bay and Wudinna for the annual camp. The study leader was Merle Hill, from Elizabeth. Her studies centred around the book of Nehemiah, drawing lessons from it which apply to our Christian lives today.

The camp began with tea on Friday, followed by an introductory session. Twelve ladies slept at the camp while others travelled down for the sessions,

bringing the total to 25 on the Saturday.

On Sunday morning the ladies adjourned to Tumby Bay for the church service and joined in a share lunch. Merle gave her final study during the service.

During the camp, offerings were taken for our Keep a Missionary project and for Ruth Perkins in Niger, \$82.20 and \$104.70 respectively.

This year we were really given a treat at meal times—although most of the food was prepared beforehand—two of the men from Ungarra (with help from their children) took charge in the kitchen and did an excellent job.

We expected to leave camp feeling tired, and we did almost without exception; but looking forward to developing further skills and relationships and our responses to the challenges that God puts to us.

—Janet Kerison

The studies and singing, the fellowship, beautiful campsite, meals and Bev's bedtime stories all combined to make the camp a highlight for the year.

First Missionary Convention

Beyond expectations

Some 12 months ago the Bendigo, Vic, church decided that it would hold a special Missionary Focus weekend, to learn first hand about the work of the missionary families which the church supported.

A task force was appointed to set out a program. The board was enthusiastic about this first-time effort, and set a target of \$2000 in offerings.

Murray Selwood was appointed the correspondent to write to each family that we support and much information was received. Information posters were made up from this and displayed in the church for all to read.

A poster advertising the weekend was designed by Mrs Rennice Graham. This was used as a colouring competi-

tion, and distributed to all churches in the Central and Northern District Conference as well as most local churches in Bendigo.

The Missionary Convention weekend was launched on 3 October with Jack Edwards as speaker. A challenge was issued to the congregation seeking their support as mission offering bags were distributed to all families.

The weekend program commenced on 15 October with Julie Trinnick holding a special program with the Gold Miners Gang and also the youth group. Saturday afternoon we conducted mission workshop, when representatives from Wycliffe Bible Translators, TEAR Australia, SIM, and a video was shown

Call to get Involved

Aboriginal reconciliation

The Chairperson for the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation, Patrick Dodson, called on all Australians to become involved in the reconciliation process by taking practical and concrete steps to improve community relations. He was launching the national Working Together campaign.

The campaign is based on a resource kit which contains practical examples of where people have got together to build bridges of understanding and address local problems.

"The case studies demonstrate that it is not too hard to get involved and do something that will make a difference," Mr Dodson said.

"In Sydney, for example, South Sydney City Council is actively supporting the Redfern Aboriginal Corporation in its efforts to improve living conditions and employment opportunities.

At Albury-Wodonga, more than 40 local companies and agencies as well as the Melbourne-based Stegley Foundation have pitched in to help the

Aboriginal community make a video to help young people find jobs.

The campaign comes at a crucial time in Australia's history. In this International Year of the World's Indigenous People, when governments are responding to the issues raised by the High Court's decision on Native Title, the country is facing the challenge of how to improve the relationship between the nation's indigenous peoples and the wider community.

We need to show that we are capable of resolving the causes of disharmony and injustice that has so often marked this relationship, and to work towards a future based on justice and equity.

This campaign is about helping people take this first step.

And it is about mobilising that enormous amount of goodwill out there in the community. It is a response to the people who ask, "What can we do to help?"

Reconciliation will not take place without support and action from the broad Australian community. It is imperative that we all look for innovative ways of making the contact and working together on common purposes," Mr Dodson said.

For further information about the campaign, call toll free on 008 807 071.

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Bethesda Hospital is celebrating 50 years of Caring in the Community with two special events

Dinner Dance

At Royal Freshwater Bay Yacht Club Ballroom
Friday, 21 January, 1994
Elegant dinner • Music by Stringy Bach
Guest Speaker, Harold McComb
and

Thanksgiving Church Service

at Christ Church Grammar School Chapel
Sunday, 23 January, 1994
at 9.30 am followed by morning tea and
open house at the hospital

Dinner Dance Tickets \$50 per head (tables of 8)
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Church Service—Jenni Ashton (09) 384 6311

depicting the work of New Tribes Mission. An international dinner followed the workshop on Saturday evening where guests arriving were entertained by the Eaglehawk Brass Band as they played various hymns. Many members came dressed in costumes representing various countries. The menu was a variety of food dishes from other countries. Julie addressed those present with an appropriate topic on "Food". The winners of the poster competition were announced.

Sunday saw the culmination of the weekends activities with Julie speaking at all three services. The amount received through the mission bags exceeded \$3200. This amount will enable us to increase our support to our missionary families by 25%.

—A. Graham

Queensland Aboriginal and Islander Christian Fellowship

We have (or will have in the near future) permanent full-time ministers serving at three out of the five fields in Queensland. Logan City (Lindsay and Nola Grant), Eidsvold (Charles and Dianne Simpson) and Mareeba (Murray and Narelle Thomson). In the Torres Strait Islands we have Stan Pedler with full-time secular employment able to make contact with and distribute material to all he meets on his rounds. In Normanton Lyle Morris is "filling the gap" while we wait on God's person/couple.

There is good news for the children at each of the centres. Each of them will find out exactly what it is when they unwrap it at their Christmas break-up.

Many churches, fellowships, women's groups and individuals held a Christmas-In-July program and sent toys and gifts. They included Dalby, Harlaxton, Redcliffe, Centenary CWF, Burleigh Heads CWF, Golden Age Retirement Village Fellowship and others. East Ipswich CWM sent a Christmas hamper up to Len

Black while he was still in Normanton and it was much appreciated.

Local Centres

The faithful few continue steadfast at Mareeba. Sunday School is in operation as are Sunday services. Vincent and Tom are managing to get around and visit the people. They are so looking forward to the arrival of the Thomsons in March.

The news from Logan City is that there are too many children who want to come to youth group and Sunday School. It takes Terry about one and a half hours to pick up all the people. The next big event will be the carols service on 11 December. A number of churches (Aboriginal and otherwise) are getting together to praise God in one voice.

Charles and Dianne Simpson have opened up the Eidsvold centre and people are glad to have their church back in operation. Hervey Bay and Bribie Island churches visited in early November for a special weekend of ministry and about



• Stan Pedler on his yacht, Torres Straits

50 attended the Saturday night program.

Recent Normanton ladies' meetings have been well attended with 20-30 coming along. A funeral was held for

Margery Nimble; her daughter, Joyce, had been coming to church for some weeks, and on the first Sunday in November she rededicated her life.

—Ken Tedford

Church Newcomers

Dispelling the myths

Protestant denominations are attracting young adults and people from lower socioeconomic backgrounds, dispelling the myth that modern churches are failing to draw newcomers from across the social spectrum.

People under 40 years account for most of the 8% growth in Protestant church numbers during the past five years.

That's the upshot of the latest results of the National Church Life Survey which questioned more than 300,000 Protestant churchgoers across Australia.

The survey found that 13% of attenders at the Assemblies of God were newcomers. 9% of all Anglican Church respondents were also new churchgoers. Newcomers include people who are fresh to church life and those who have returned after an absence of many years.

The largest number of first-time attenders came from the 20-29 year-old age group.

Many newcomers had lower educational levels and lower status occupations.

People returning to church after an absence of years were

most likely to be aged 30-39. "One theory is that young adults return to church when they have children in order to expose them to church values and standards," research team member, John Bellamy, said.

"The data supports this. Attenders who had returned to church after an absence of years were twice as likely to have pre-school or primary school children than attenders generally."

The majority of newcomers highly valued the social relationships and care they received from the church community. They also valued the spiritual dimension with 45% claiming they were growing much in their understanding of the faith.

Some 81% of church visitors thought churches were friendly to newcomers, the remainder were mostly undecided.

Other highlights included: 49% of newcomers joined because of a personal invitation of a friend or family member; 18% of newcomers joined because of contact with the clergy or church activities.

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Equipped for the Future

York St centenary

Former members and friends travelled from interstate and many parts of Victoria to join in the centenary celebrations of the York St, Ballarat, Vic, church on 13-14 November.

A large display of memorabilia and photographs brought back happy memories for the many who attended the "open house" on the Saturday afternoon as well as all day Sunday.

A centenary dinner was held on the Saturday evening at the Hollioake Park Tennis Centre, with 180 attending. The church ladies catered for the Sunday luncheon attended by over 400.

Larry Galbraith, present minister, preached at both services, with former members taking part with music provided by the church choir and band under Frank Clark's direction.

Building alterations were completed prior to the centenary and the church is now better equipped to cater for the growing membership and expanded work well into the future.

Guests for the worship service were the Mayor of the City of Ballarat, representatives from DMED and sister Ballarat churches. —Graeme Hewitt

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Tour organiser David Boyd has had several years experience in the coach and touring industry, successfully organising and carrying out similar tours in conjunction with Club Solo, a non-denominational

group for Christian singles. David is a member of Mt Evelyn Christian Fellowship, Vic, (a Church of Christ) he is committed to providing tours giving a balance of fun and adventure along with fellowship and ministry.

Tours for 1994 include 2-16 April to Central Australia for \$795; 13-26 August to NT/Kakadu for \$1395 (includes return air fare to Alice Springs) and 8-15 October to the Blue Mountains for \$665.

For further details see brochure inserted in this issue or contact David Boyd, Christian Fellowship Tours on (03) 728 5286.

New Diplomas

Perth Bible College graduation

Four Diplomas in Christian Ministry were presented at the 65th Perth Bible College graduation service, held at the Scarborough Church of Christ on 27 November. These new Diplomas are accredited by the State Employment and Skills Development Authority in WA.

After a time of praise and worship led by graduating student Bevan Griggs (Bassendean), the College choir under

the leadership of David Cohen (Cottesloe) sang. David Michie (Whitfords), the Director of the Centre for Biblical Counselling, led in prayer and first year student David Hill (Whitfords) gave the Bible reading.

Two new audio-visuals, one "The Parable of the Plants" created by Vice-Principal Dennis Watkins, were shown.

The four graduating students (including Bevan Griggs (Bassendean) and Sheryl Keyte (Nollamara)) shared their experiences.

Bevan Griggs, David Hill and Sheryl Keyte were among the 10 who were awarded an A.Th. Jo-Anne Griggs (Bassendean) received a PBC Certificate.

College Principal, Dr Alan Meers, gave the final challenge to the graduating students and used the illustration of the four tempters from T.S. Elliott's dramatic poem *Murder in the Cathedral*.

In a report on the college year, it was noted that 120 had attended lectures at the college weekly and a number of others had studied by correspondence. Already 10 applicants have been accepted for 1994.



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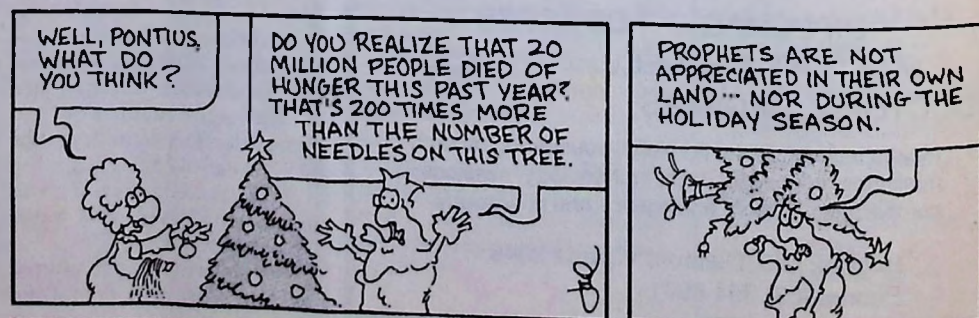
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Pontius' Puddle



Kids Ahoy!

Boating at Greensborough



• SS Disciple, berthed at Greensborough

It was a case of "ship to shore" in the Greensborough, Vic, church as the children of the Sunday School unveiled the boat they had made in their classes.

With its two sails, the *SS Disciple* was certainly impressive, measuring about four metres, by one metre, by two and a half. The project took about four weeks while the children were learning about the Bible stories

of Jesus calling his disciples.

Cardboard "disciples" were also part of the project, and the punk hairdo and interesting clothes the children made certainly showed that, even in Biblical times, it took all kinds...

The *SS Disciple* was the centrepiece of a series of mimes performed by the children in the morning service, which showed Jesus sharing times with his disciples fishing on

Celebrating 50 Years

Bethesda Hospital anniversary

Bethesda Hospital, owned by Churches of Christ in WA, was founded by Matron Beryl Hill, and was officially incorporated on 23 January 1944.

With a donation of 5s she commenced the hospital fund, which was later used to purchase St Andrews, Subiaco, WA. After much prayer and consolidation of support the property was purchased in December, almost a year after Beryl first conceived the idea. The 14 bed hospital was dedicated to the Lord and the ministry of healing on 13 February 1943, with the precise challenge that, "It is a hospital conducted on definitely Christian lines. It is the determined purpose of the Matron and the whole staff to associate with their general duties the privilege of witnessing to the power and love of the living God and to make known the gift of eternal life through His Son Jesus Christ." Not long after, St Andrews was renamed Bethesda, to mean a "House of Mercy".

23 January 1944, saw the establishment of a Board of Management complete and Incorporation become effective.

Not long after, Beryl Hill felt the need to expand the facilities and ministry provided by Bethesda.

When Lucknow Hospital, in Queenslea Drive on the Swan River, went on the market, Miss Hill and the Board grasped the opportunity and sought to purchase the land.

On 2 July 1945 Bethesda Hospital, Claremont, was officially opened and again dedicated to God.

Whilst Bethesda has seen many changes, in their building structure and provision of medical facilities and staffing,

the Sea of Galilee and mending their nets.

Much to the disappointment of all, however, this particular boat's cardboard construction restricted sailing activities to the church buildings!

the vision of Beryl Hill continues to live on in the ministry of the hospital today. It is still our priority to establish an environment of peace and dignity where the love of God is evidenced in the care given to all people.

The appointment of a full-time Chaplain and an inviting chapel all combine to reinforce the connection between spiritual and physical healing. The decor of the hospital and setting of the Swan River provide a serenity that encourages people to consider our creator in a way that is unobtrusive, but nevertheless obvious.

People often comment that there is something very special about Bethesda. We believe it is the Spirit of God working in our midst, guiding and leading, caring and supporting, and challenging us to live out the vision that began so many years ago. Let us echo the prayer expressed in the Annual Report of 1950, and claim it anew:

"We thank our heavenly Father most sincerely and humbly for all His provision for our needs at Bethesda, and His guiding presence in all our plans, and we pray that as we face the times ahead we shall be able by his grace and love, and to His glory, maintain the effectiveness of the hospital and its witnesses"

—Jenni Ashton
(Chaplain)



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Gerald Rose L.Th., M.A.(Q), B.Th
Southern Community Church of Christ
4 Chesterville rd, Cheltenham

Letters to the Editor

Letters are limited to 200 words

Decisions by the Elderly

To the Editor,

I was interested to read Peter Bradley's article regarding the time for the elderly to go into care ("AC" 20 November).

Unless he is writing of private institutions, whose prices are only for the very wealthy, the decision is no longer ours. As an 80 year-old with no family, living alone and suffering with heart and rheumatic problems, I enrolled a few years ago with our excellent local hostel, to be admitted when my doctor thought necessary. Now I find the government has decreed that we cannot choose where and when we go to spend our last few years. Our own doctor has no say; an assessment team of three are sent from the Castlemaine Hospital to interview us (a doctor, a welfare officer and a physiotherapist all unknown to us). You are then told when and where to go, quite possibly to another country town miles from your friends.

I believe this decree was brought in very quietly, so I wonder how many part and full pensioners know of the position. Maybe it only applies in the country, as country people seem to be ignored as much as possible. —Helen Harber (Kyneton, Vic)

Apostolic Authority

To the Editor

I cannot accept most of Bruce Armstrong's claims in his article Leadership and the Roles People Play ("AC" 4 December), because they are wrong in fact. For instance, the whole community chose the first deacons "from among themselves", the twelve apostles set them apart (Acts 6:1-6). The apostles and elders issued the decree to the Gentile converts from the council in Jerusalem only after the consent of the whole church (Acts 15).

Who in Churches of Christ is going to claim to have the authority to appoint leaders, except the whole membership?

I understand the frustration of ministers dealing with authoritarian church boards, but the answer is not to replace them with authoritarian ministers, but to be rid of authoritarianism in any form.

In the "AC" (2 November 1991), I wrote an article on Collective Leadership which outlined the participative and consensus decision making processes expressed in both the Old and New Testament. Time and again, I have invited those who are introducing autocratic forms of leadership into Churches of Christ to debate the issue of leadership roles. No one has taken up the invitation. I again invite them to do so. The congregations can then make up their own minds on what leadership model(s) they wish to have.

—Bruce McIntosh (Upper Yarra, Vic)

Economy vs Moral Standards

To the Editor,

Is the economy as important as our politicians and the media experts keep telling us?

The people who know most about economics have their doubts.

Nobel Prize winner for Economics, Milton Friedman, said recently, "Our problems today aren't economic. Our real problems are social-deteriorating education, lawlessness, homelessness, the collapse of families, teenage pregnancies ..."

Ex-presidential adviser Zbigniew Brzezinski says American society's troubles are "derived more from cultural than from economic causes ... the role of religion in defining moral standards has declined, while the ethos of consumerism masquerades as a substitute for ethical standards".

If you notice a politician talking a lot about money matters, but backing away from moral/spiritual issues, vote for somebody else.

—Arnold Jago (Mildura, Vic)

Broaden Contributions

To the Editor,

I have a somewhat oversimplified working definition of a

"fundamentalist" and it is this: "Someone who believes that I should believe what they believe". It is a useful tool, because it crosses all the usual boundaries of "caro, fundy, liberal" and all those other undefinable terms.

Sometimes, I get fed up with reading the same old "gang of three or four" who not only have the privilege of writing most of the articles in *The Australian Christian*, but then hog the letters as well, setting others "straight" as if they had some special mortgage on the truth.

Two of the historical tenets of Churches of Christ are "No Creed but Christ" and "Unity in Diversity". Clearly the Christ that I know and love is experiential—my experience is different from yours and everyone else's. Some of the things I believe you do not—and vice versa. Thank God, otherwise

we would have him pushed into a box, so we are diverse, yet we are unified and again thank God!

I, for one, would appreciate you attempting to broaden your base of contributors, and thereby diluting the current (perceived) impression that a few people are the "holders of all knowledge and wisdom".

—Jim Longbottom (Box Hill, Vic)

[We are constantly attempting to get new people to write articles, letters for us. I agree at times it does appear that only a few write. We are very willing to consider material from any of our readers -Ed]

Thank You

To the Editor,

I write to thank all those who do the hospital visitation from our churches and others. Many have done this job for many years with little recognition.

Letters to a Travelling Companion

Trivia

Dear Daniel,

It was good to hear from you again! Congratulations on winning first prize in your church's "Bible Trivia" quiz. Actually, without wishing to brag, I am a bit of a trivia enthusiast myself. I love to read through books and magazines pursuing knowledge, most of which is totally irrelevant to my needs. This relentless pursuit of trivia has led my wife to call me a "repository of useless information".

I must confess, however, that during a recent argument with a fellow purveyor of biblical trivia regarding the colour of the horses that pulled the fourth chariot in the eighth vision of Zechariah I was overcome by a sense of the absolute futility of such debates. It is all very well to have an extensive knowledge of the intricate details of the Bible, but where does that help us in the realities of life?

You and I, Daniel, need to be on our guard that we don't confuse biblical knowledge with faith. Sure, it is important that we study Scripture carefully and seek to expand our knowledge of its message. If, however, we do this merely to pack our heads with information so that we can win "Bible Trivia" nights or strike down our opposition in arguments, then I would suggest that we have lost the plot entirely.

Scripture is not an encyclopaedia of intriguing facts. It is a message from God, for people about life. It is this message, not trivial facts, that we must seek to understand as we read our Bibles.

Kindest regards,
Pastor Salt

Letters

In the Repatriation Hospital recently, three ladies in Salvation Army uniform visited me and they were followed by a man representing the Ministers' Fraternal. I was very glad to meet him, particularly when I found out that he was a student from our College.

Many thanks to all these folk.

—C.J. (Jim) Pope
(North Balwyn, Vic)

Baptisms

To the Editor,

Malcolm Gray's statements that baptisms are an indicator of Biblical result ("AC" 4 December) and that tent maker ministries are for incompetent ministers do not stand the test of experience.

There was a tent maker ministry which was conducted in a present day church where baptisms were almost "the order of the day" for about two years, then the entrepreneurs received unwelcome criticisms and quit, taking with them all who had been baptised during their regime. Their followers went back into their own old lives, and those continuing in the church were told, "You need not think that you will get (so and so) back, they belong to us."

The order of the "Great Commission" is (1) Go preach the gospel, (2) make disciples (followers of Jesus), (3) baptise, (4) teach. A changed life and commitment to Jesus as Lord and Christ are the grounds of baptism not "coming to church".

In Revelation Jesus never mentioned baptism or church numbers in his review of the seven churches, but rather their devotion to himself and their purity of living and teaching, and their ability to endure and overcome as they waited for his return.

Although Paul evidently encouraged baptism he did not make it a criterion for the success of his ministry. Tent maker ministries are usually conducted by people like Paul and those in "fully funded" ministries need to consider whether or not "they have received their reward".

—E.A. Barton
(Port Lincoln, SA)

News

Westside

An exciting new beginning

The congregations of Centenary and Kenmore, Qld, have amalgamated to form Westside Church of Christ. After several months of prayerful discussions and negotiations, a new beginning was made when the Westside church held its first service on 12 September at the Centenary chapel.

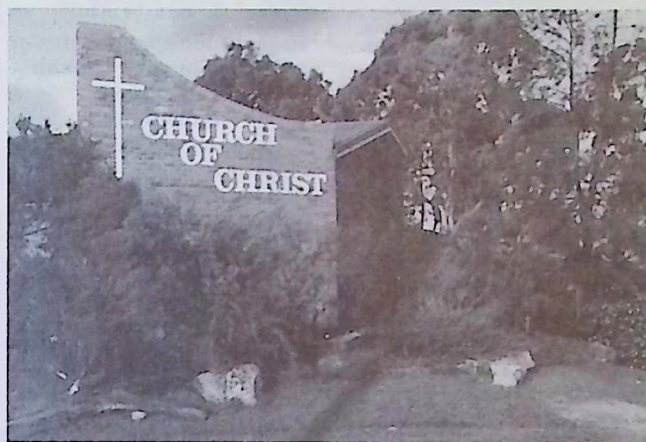
The pastors of both former congregations, Reg Charles (Centenary) and Grant Spangenberg (Kenmore) are working in a team ministry to realise the vision of a wider and more effective ministry to the western suburbs of Brisbane.

The amalgamation has brought together not only the physical resources but, more importantly, human resources which have all the potential to enable Westside to make a considerable contribution to the spiritual health and varied needs of the targeted areas.

The birth of Westside is regarded by the great majority as a new and exciting visionary venture.

Westside now has an active membership of about 120, plus many other attenders and contacts making a congregation of up to 170, which adds a varied richness to the congregational life.

Plans and visions for future outreach, to a significantly expanded area of operations, are being developed. Short and long term goals are proceeding. The elders meet regularly at 6.30 am for prayer each Thursday. Team groups are forming.



Some expansion of facilities in the near future is under consideration and a very positive spirit is evident as people begin to commit themselves to some fairly demanding roles.

Over the last five years, several members have had a fairly significant input into Kiah, ("beautiful place") the occasional child care centre sponsored by Queensland Churches of Christ Social Services Department built adjacent to the church block. Children are cared for from six weeks to five years of age.

At the other end of the scale is the long established seniors group, regularly catering for about 35 elderly persons in variety of activities.

Between the extreme age ranges lie the activities of Kangaroo Kids (preschool play groups—a very successful bridge which builds relationships with new families), Explorers (Sunday School) clubs

(junior, senior and young adult), Young at Heart, and Young Marrieds, to name a few.

As part of future planning, 22 leaders spent some time at Mount Tamborine retreat considering future directions and goals, with Bill Thornburn (Southport church) leading the discussions. This mountain top experience has begun to clarify our long-term and shorter-term goals and drawn us closer together.

Westside leaders are acutely aware that very important decisions must be made regarding the perceived mission of the church in a rapidly changing world. That strategies to cope with a growing congregation must be developed; clear and firm decisions regarding the place needed to house a large church congregation are necessary; and above all a deepening of the spiritual life of the church. —Charles Kimber

Pontius' Puddle



Media Review

Books



Before the Leaves Wither

by Elizabeth von Levin (Lutheran Publishing House) \$14.95.

I found this novel to be a good story that attracted one's whole attention, easy light reading. Once I started reading the book, I found it difficult to put down. The author comes through as being one of a sensitive nature, with a knowledge of human relationships.

The story concerns a woman who is asked to go back to her early childhood village after an absence of 30 years. It is her brother with whom she has never got

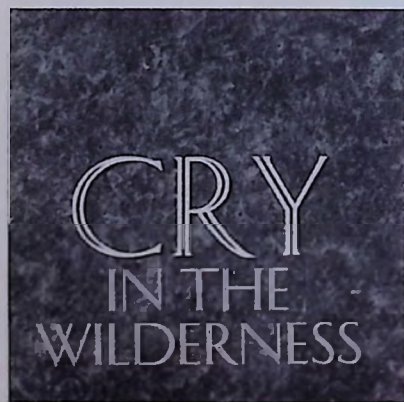
on very well, who asks her back.

The story is told by means of flashbacks to her early childhood after an incident in the present. The family had a number of problems and certainly had difficult relationships with one another. The author looks at this from the viewpoint of the woman and her insights from later in life.

I enjoyed reading this book which I believe would be suited for adults.

—Freda Fraser

Music



Cry in the Wilderness

by Anastasia (Larrikan Entertainment AVD1192)

Cry in the Wilderness has been released through Larrikan Entertainment, Australia's largest independent record label. The press release that came with the CD describes it as "a haunting and ethereal interpretation of traditional religious songs

that Anastasia very was inspired to record following a spiritual visit to Medjugorje, a place of worship in the former Yugoslavia". Anastasia, who describes herself as mildly religious, found the impact of the visit a major turning point in her life. She left there with an overwhelming desire to create an album of music that would communicate spiritual love.

This CD is interesting in that it has been released by a secular company into the secular market with an artist who has not previously been recorded. The range of the material covered is also interesting from "standards" such as "Abide With Me",

"How Great Thou Art" and "Amazing Grace" to liturgical songs ("Kyrie/Gloria", "Our Father") and carols ("Silent Night" and "O Come All Ye Faithful"). The selection whilst having many that would be expected, is a little unusual.

The singing style of Anastasia is a little unusual (perhaps a little like Kate Bush) and not to everyone's liking. It would pay those interested in purchasing a copy to listen at a local record store beforehand to see if they like the style.

—CRA

Television

"Christmas Star"

SBS Television 19 December, 8.30 pm (8 pm Adelaide)

The star of Bethlehem has been a source of wonder for centuries. What guided the wise men from the East, the Magi, to the birthplace of Christ? Was it a comet, a supernova, or a fireball that fell to earth? Or was it a conjunction of the planets?

"Christmas Star" is a fascinating scientific and historical detective story, a quest for knowledge and understanding through the ancient skies.

Shot on location in Judea in September this year, "Christmas Star" presents the very latest research and theories of several leading astronomers—Dr David Hughes of Sheffield University, England (author of *The Star Of Bethlehem Mystery*), Dr Don Yeomans of NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory, astro-photographer David Malin of the Anglo-Australian Observatory (who imaged a supernova in 1987 "a perfect Star of Bethlehem") and John Moseley of the Griffith Observatory, California. All are working to unravel the enigma of the star.

And some surprising conclusions are drawn which separate fact from fantasy. Christ, it seems, was probably born in 7 BC on the evening of 15 September. The wise men, the Magi, were not kings on camels but rather astrologers travelling on horseback—Zoroastrian priests following a celestial sign. And yet, David Hughes, the scientist with the most convincing explanation of the Christmas star, a triple tryst of Saturn and Jupiter, finds no conflict with his strong Christian faith.

"Christmas Star" is a compelling exposition. It investigates the phenomena of fireballs and exploding stars, the cult of astrology, and the significant observations of ancient astronomers in China and Babylon. Together with clues from the Gospel of Matthew, science provides a surprising answer.



"I hate to break up the set, but one has to go."

Changes at Wollongong

Ministry movements



• Barry McMurtrie

Ted Keating has been appointed the senior minister of the Wollongong, NSW, church and will commence ministry there from July 1994. Ted will conclude 20 years of outstanding ministry at Nunawading, Vic, church in May. He has played a major role in the local community and in the ministry of Conference, both State and National. The church at Wollongong is excited about the future. The church meets in a \$3 million complex and has 800-900 in worship on Sun-



• Ted Keating

days. Ted's experience in developing through-the-week programs that reach the community will lead to significant growth. Barry McMurtrie concludes a 14-year ministry at Wollongong at Christmas. The church has grown from 100 to over 800 in that time. He has been appointed as senior minister of the church in Corona, California. Corona is a church with 1700 members and is near Los Angeles. The church owns 38 acres and Barry's call is to lead them into relocation.

"It's Cool in the Furnace"

Musical with a clear message

The Sunday School from Eastern Hills, WA, church recently completed a series of performances of the musical/drama "It's Cool in the Furnace". Planned by the coordinator Robyn Lawrence, the first performance was at the Sunday School anniversary on 21 November. The following Saturday night, a church full of family and friends heard the musical story of Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego. The following Saturday night saw the musical performed at the Yallambee Frail Aged Hostel in Mun-daring and was well received by the residents. The play tells of the Jewish exile to Babylon under King Nebu-

chadnezzar, the king's dream of a huge statue which is destroyed, and the sentencing of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego to the fiery furnace (from which they emerge unscathed). The message that we have a faithful God and that we must be faithful to him was clearly portrayed.

There were six months of planning, preparation and rehearsals for the all age Sunday School group prior to the first performance. The 30 participants ranged in age from seven to "over 55". The Lawrence and Lithgow families provided the musical direction and organised most of the props and stage scenery. Joy Teale made a full

Spotlight on Tamworth Aboriginal Fellowship

Tamworth, NSW, is a beautiful rural centre, home of clear skies and the music festival. It is also a centre around which more than 4000 Aborigines live.

The 1979 the Federal Aborigines Board asked Garth and Yvonne Sawley to commence a church especially for Aborigines in Tamworth. They were succeeded by Peter and Vina Jamieson and later Frank and Rose Johnson who spent 10 years there.

John and Ruth Saulo are currently in ministry with the church (whose name change to the Aboriginal and Community Christian Church was designed to reflect its outreach not only to Aborigines but to the wider community). John is a New Guinean and Ruth hails from Bordertown, SA, and they have three children—John, Dinah and Benson.

On a good weekend more than 30 meet for morning worship and a Bible study in the place of the evening service.

The Saulos enjoy wide acceptance. John is a valuable resource to the Department of Corrections, a couple of local

doctors, the Alcohol and Drug Authority and in the counselling services he provides. Ruth assists in the local primary school with children with learning difficulties and behaviour problems.

Grace Munro, a member of the church Council, takes art classes for the Aborigines in the local prison. She and John are respected for the part they play in rehabilitation programs.

The church operates a second-hand clothing store as part of its outreach and to raise funds. Members meet in a small, neat chapel in Lydia Street and they hope to embark on a renovation program next year. The church Council consists of seven—John, four Aboriginal and two non-Aboriginal members. The new secretary is Trina Bennett.

The Saulos have just been asked to stay another five years. They are enthusiastic and believe the programs of community outreach they have begun, and planned, will have the impact that will raise their profile in and around Tamworth.

—AWM



• John and Ruth Saulo

set of costumes for the choir and main characters.

Was it worthwhile? The following statements from the cast show that it was.

"It was exciting to see an idea grow into action, scenery, costumes, songs and finally into a

musical that brought so much enjoyment to others"

"What affected me most was the church reaching out to the public"

"Working together on the musical brought us closer as a group." —Murray Dolling

Happenings

Sri Lankans are turning to Christ in unprecedented numbers. Many new churches have been planted in Buddhist villages. Tamil Hindu tea plantation workers in the highlands are also accepting Christ. Buddhist clergy are reported to be urging the government to bring down legislation to forbid conversion. In July at Ratugala, Christian workers were assaulted by Buddhist monks. In July at Mawanella, Christians returning from worship were taken to the Buddhist temple and assaulted. In August at Mahagama, a mob of 40 attacked and damaged the equipment of a team showing the *Jesus* film.

John Tingle, 2CH broadcaster and commentator, launched Jay Back's latest book *Make Your Day* on 17 November. Jay is the senior minister of the Northside Community Church in Sydney and is also the open line presenter on 2CH. His motivational spots are also heard twice a day on 2CH. Copies of the book which is of daily devotional thoughts can be obtained from the Northside Community Church during business hours on (02) 439 7822.

Systematic destruction by thieves and vandals over the last 3 years has caused a Baptist church in Newport, Britain, to close down. Members said they would "rather go into exile than face another break-in by burglars intent on stripping the building of its contents." In 1990 there were more than 20 burglaries, and it has continued since, stripping the church of its communion table, antique vestry chairs, communion plates and goblets, brass door knobs, iron railings, piano stools, organ pipes, lecterns, the kitchen table and a clock. The members have joined with a nearby Baptist church.

A study by Professor Ann Harding of Canberra University, indicates that a quarter of the bottom 10% of Australian income earners were one-income couples

with children. The next largest group were sole parents who made up 22% of the lowest 10%.

A survey by the Australian Bureau of Statistics, released on 23 November, found that more than half of those marrying in 1992 had lived together before marriage, compared to 15% in 1975. Of the 4 million couples in Australia, 8.4% were unmarried. Victoria has the lowest proportion of *de facto* couples, 7%.

Two brochures dealing with the impact of domestic arguments on children from the Mission of St James and St John (an Anglican welfare group based in Melbourne) took out the national 1993 Reader Friendly Communication Awards. Judges said the brochures were "clear, simple and practical", and dealt with a "delicate social issue in a balanced way".

Municipal leaders in the highland communities of Mexico's southern Chiapas State are taking advantage of indifferent state and federal authorities to carry out what is becoming one of the most violent and massive forced expulsions of Protestants and Catholics in recent memory. Since June, 454 people from some 20 communities in the municipality of San Juan Chamulas have been violently evicted from their homes, reportedly for converting to religions other than the traditional Chamula religion—most are Protestants, but about 30% are Catholics.

The Holy Synod of the Russian Orthodox Church has defrocked Father Gleb Yakunin, the member of the former Russian Parliament who led the July and August fight against proposed new restrictions on minority churches and foreign missionaries. Synod divested Yakunin of his priestly rank on 2 November, citing his refusal to remove his name from a list of candidates running for Parliament in the 12 December elections.

Sudanese security forces are holding a predominantly Christian village near the Nuba Mountains under siege in an effort to force the villagers to convert to Islam. The siege began in August. The village of Nafia has 1200 inhabitants who are members of the Hawaraby tribe, considered ethnic Arab Muslims by the Sudanese government.

The government-sanctioned Evangelical Church of Vietnam (ECVN) in Danang, central Vietnam, received official approval to import 5000 Bibles for use among ECVN congregations. In many congregations less than 25% of church members own their own Bible. In tribal areas of the Vietnamese southern and central highlands, only an estimated 10% of Christians own a Bible.

The Leprosy Mission has appointed Stuart Brown to the role of National Director for Australia to commence in January 1994. Stuart and Norma come from the Blackburn North Baptist Church. Stuart brings to The Leprosy Mission extensive experience in management, marketing, administration, community service and Christian mission activity, including a high level involvement with Youth For Christ.

Amongst the spiritists, tarot card readers, astrologers, astral travellers and alternative life-style stalls at the recent Mind-Body-Spirit New Age Festival held at Sydney's Darling Harbour, were two Christian stalls. One, called Community of Hope, involved a number of denominations and offered free samples of Margaret River, WA, water whilst telling about Jesus, the real water of life. The other stall, called Christ Consciousness, was run by Hills Christian Life Centre. It featured free massage, prayer for healing and health products.

Dr Gordon Moyes successfully underwent heart bypass

surgery on 1 December at the Sydney Adventist Hospital. His condition was described by the hospital as satisfactory and Gordon is expected to return to his pastoral and community work with Wesley Central Mission, Sydney, following a short period of convalescence.

Southern Cross Ministries is an interdenominational organisation that is committed to working with and assisting the church and its leaders to reach Australia for Jesus. Graham Sercombe, Director of Evangelism with Southern Cross Ministries, and team is available to assist churches with a proven strategy called "Bridges to Life" which is a four phase strategy that aims to mobilise the church to continuous evangelistic action. Details can be obtained from Shirley Moore, Southern Cross Ministries, PO Box 437, Cannon Hill 4170. Phone/fax (07) 390 6063 or (07) 398 8940 (after hours).

The Pro-life Majority Coalition recently bid \$US550,000 to purchase the only abortion clinic in Chattanooga, USA. The anti-abortion group took possession of the clinic and closed it down.

During February 1994 the Victorian Council of Christian Education will be sponsoring a series of practical and inspirational workshops for people in the church working with children. The training and development sessions will be conducted in 4 different locations over 3 weeks. The first sessions deals with pastoral care for children, the second will explore ways of using drama, music and puppets and the third will encourage participants to enliven their curriculum. Workshops will be held in Kilsyth, Cheltenham, Rosanna and Moonee Ponds/Essendon. Cost of all 3 sessions is \$20. Details from Gail Wager at the VCCE on (03) 529 4377.

On 7 December Pro-Fam Australia formally commenced its new ministry as Focus on the Family Australia. In its short history, Pro-Fam's ministry has been strengthened by a growing network of Christian counsellors, psychologists, educators and ministers who share their common goal—to strengthen the families of Australia. Over the past six months they have conducted 20 workshops in churches and seen almost 650 attend. Listeners to Focus on the Family radio broadcasts being aired on various stations around Australia are now also able to ring direct for counselling, resources and support. Information and material is available by contacting Glenn Williams, Executive Director, Focus on the Family Australia, PO Box 6104, Melbourne 3004.

The Mongolian Parliament has adopted new legislation that limits all Christian activities to the confines of church buildings and forces churches to register. Under the new regulations, the government is given control over the location of churches and the number of church workers in each congregation. In addition, religious activities are prohibited from being held in state-owned halls and school buildings. The new law gives special recognition to Buddhism. There are an estimated 2000 Christians across Mongolia, with the majority located in the cities of Ulan Bator and Darchan. Most have been converted to Christianity since 1991.

An international fact-finding delegation, led by Christian Solidarity International, has concluded that the French Government acted correctly in removing 7 children from their parents, who were members of a Citadelle Bible Church in Paris, on 10 February. The parents were charged with child abuse and the international team found that it was "not a case of religious persecution". One of the team members told News Network International that they couldn't find a single family intact in the entire Citadelle Bible Church.

A Useful Pianist

60 Years at the Piano

When Albert Morffew took his young daughter Elva to have piano lessons, he was asked as to what standard he would like her to achieve. He replied that he would like Elva to become a useful pianist, which is what Elva became as she used her talent in the church and community. First playing for the Junior CE Society at Preston, Vic, and then in the Bible School and for RE at Preston Girl's School. Moving to Hartwell, Elva played in the Bible School and church as well as being pianist for the Eastern Suburban Fellowship.

After her marriage Elva moved to Launceston, Tas, and assisted at Sandhill on the piano and organ, and also at times at Invermay including playing for the Hinrichsen Mission.

When the Women's Evening Fellowship was formed for the three Launceston churches, Elva was elected pianist, a position held for the 40 years it existed.

Elva was also pianist for many of the Women's State Camps and other activities in the church and community.

With the introduction of the piano into the 9.15 am and



• Elva Orr at the piano

evening services at the Launceston church,

Elva became a member of the music team regularly play-

ing at the Launceston church services, but is looking to partial retirement at the end of this year.

Nursing on the Run

Ruth Perkins dedicated for Mission Service

The Kadina, SA, church has the privilege of assisting Ruth Perkins in her missionary activities in Africa. Ruth is the daughter of retired minister Cliff and Mary Perkins and all are members of the Kadina church. Ruth is a qualified midwifery nursing sister who ministers at the Galmi Hospital in Niger, Africa.

Galmi Hospital is an 85 bed hospital founded and run by SIM International. A recent

report from SIM said: "The nurses who work here simply run. More than 60% of the patients are surgical, both elective and emergency. Only the most acute patients are admitted to the hospital. The rest, when possible, are treated on an outpatients basis. The Outpatients Department and Under 5s Department presently average an attendance of 250-300 per day. 30 of the beds are occupied by maternity patients.



• Ruth Perkins being dedicated to her missionary task by the laying on of hands by the elders at Kadina together with an SIM representative (l to r) Brian Roberts, Ron Churchett (SIM), Neville Bradley (minister), Mary and Cliff Perkins, Alf Russack and Ross Britton (SIM)

The midwives have no trouble keeping busy. Last year they attended to 1949 mums."

Ruth works in the Medical/

Surgical Department of the hospital. Her address is Ruth Perkins, SIM, Galmi via BP 44, Madaoua, Niger Republic.

You are invited to attend the Churches of Christ Theological College COMMENCEMENT SERVICE

and INDUCTION

of Stephen Curkpatrick

(Lecturer in Theology and New Testament)

and

Merryl Blair

(Lecturer in Old Testament Studies)

at 3.00 pm

on

Sunday 6 February, 1994

at the

GLEN WAVERLEY CHURCH OF CHRIST

46 Montclair Avenue 3150

(Melways Map 71, C2)

Speaker: Mr Ron Elbourne

Come and enjoy the inspiration and fellowship of this special occasion.

Gladys Butler

A remarkable woman—an interesting book.



• Gladys and Percy Butler with their six grandchildren

Gladys Butler is quite a remarkable woman and at 80 she has just written a substantial book, *Christian Women and Men*.

The Australian Christian readers will have met her in the "Letters to the Editor", where she has written strongly and intelligently on a number of subjects close to her heart, but mainly on the place of women in the church. Gladys is no "wet behind the ears", fanatical "women's lib" feminist, but has well reasoned biblical and theological convictions in her struggle to see women in the church liberated from the traditional prejudice that has prescribed certain areas where they may

serve and there only, and to see them alongside men, able to use their God-given gifts fully.

Gladys Butler is a farmer's wife and a member of the Bruce Rock, WA, church. She is intelligent, widely read, well travelled and loves her Lord and his church. She has been a leader in Christian education and women's work in her church. She has worked with distinction in the community as a Girl Guide leader and as President of the CWA, as well as wider CWA activities. But it was not until this capable woman had turned 80 that she was permitted to preside at the Lord's Table in her own church.

Her convictions made it inevitable that such a capable woman should write a book, well researched over many years, and now available as a 250 page, clearly printed, well illustrated, eminently readable hard-cover volume.

She sees that the church that she loves concedes that women, equally with men, are able to enjoy redemption in Christ, but that the next step is for the church to reinstate women to the place intended for them by God who made them in his image. (Genesis 1:27).

Her thorough knowledge of the Scriptures, wide travels in Israel and extensive reading have made her very familiar with the culture of the world of the first century church, especially Jewish culture. She sees restrictive attitudes toward women that sometimes characterised that church as being Paul's attempt to prevent the church from creating offence to the Jewish communities in which it often lived. She contrasts this with Jesus' attitude to women and other oppressed people. She points up Paul's problem of seeming to be laying down binding laws on women when he was the apostle of grace.

The book is largely autobiographical which adds to its readability and reveals a woman with an active questioning mind. Some of the issues raised in the book are law and grace, Christology, the atonement, the Trinity, eschatology (last things), the ordinances, the church, denominationalism, divorce, politics, secularism and "New Age" thinking, all against the backdrop of her main theme; freedom for women to be able to use their God given gifts in all of the ministries of the church.

The final chapters of the book are devoted to Gladys' convictions about the place of Jews in God's scheme of things. Her interpretation of some of the Old Testament prophets, her visits to the Holy Land, her contacts with Jewish Evangelical Witness (JEW) and her association with the International Christian Embassy in Jerusalem have all reinforced her premillennial understanding of the Second Coming of Christ, together with some speculative theories such as that of "the Second Eve". Many readers who share her convictions on these matters will not necessarily go along with her convictions about the role of women and men in the church ... yet!

Christian Women and Men may not "convert" many who are rigid about their attitude to women in the church, but at least they should read to see what one intelligent, committed, Bible-loving Christian woman is thinking. The book will be welcomed by those desiring to "reinstate" women. It will probably be most useful for the mass of people who are uncertain, desiring justice for women, but having a feeling that somehow the Bible is against it.

Christian Women and Men is published by Access Press. It sells for \$30 and is available from the publishers at 35 Stuart St (PO Box 132), Northbridge 6000, or from Gladys Butler, 42 Butcher St, Bruce Rock 6418.

—Gordon Stirling

The New Year

New beginnings
present:
A fresh page;
Story, yet untold;
Power to determine,
Our future.

—Garry Harris

Les Lawlor says...

Lawlors the White Ant People are experts in the treatment of all kinds of pests—and have been serving South Australia for over 50 years—If you are troubled by pests, call Lawlors.

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Where is God When we Hurt?

Asking honest questions?

For those in the Bible, where was God when they hurt?

For me, where is God when I am hurting?

Ten years ago, I had a little girl named, Carla, who was subsequently diagnosed as having Williams Syndrome, which among other things, means she is mentally handicapped. At that time, receiving this news had all the impact of a wrecking ball smashing against the side of a building. I felt as if someone had simultaneously shattered my carefully

constructed picture of motherhood, family life, and my dreams for the future, while at the same time, breaking my heart into little pieces. What I hadn't counted on, was this initial pain being experienced daily for many long months to follow.

No doubt we've all had times when we've experienced intense hurt in our lives, and I'm sure many of you know being in pain can become a full-time job! It has this way of taking over and pushing everything

else into the background, blotting out all but the awareness of itself.

So where is God when our pain throbs like a racing toothache and all we care about is finding a dentist to make it stop?

And what do we do with God as we try to make sense of our circumstances? As we try to face the "why's", and the "why me's", and struggle with feelings of being abandoned by God, even wondering at times if maybe he's punishing us?

For me, that was a time when my belief in God was severely tested. My childhood faith in a loving Heavenly Father worked fine in the showroom. It even handled the quiet back roads reasonably well, but could it endure the rugged mountainous terrain over which I was then travelling?

The same week I gave birth to Carla, a friend of mine had a little boy who was born deaf and with multiple brain and physiological disorders. Throughout the first year of our children's lives I watched her reactions in a similar situation. Increasingly my friend began to grow bitter at the direction her life had taken, angrily blaming God and eventually giving up her faith. She began to drown in self-pity, alienating her friends with her bleak and despairing view of her child and her future.

Unbeknown to her, in this, she gave me a gift. She made me aware that I, in fact, faced a choice. I also could readily sink into that black hole and give up my hope, my hope that somehow God was hanging in there with me. It would have been easy to imagine he didn't exist, or didn't care, because in that place, any sense of his presence had been blotted out along with everything else, everything except the feelings of loneliness, confusion and grief. Or, I could continue to believe in God, and his Word, continue to have faith in his sovereignty and in his love for me, despite the circum-



• Joanne and Carla Werry

stances and in the midst of my pain.

Here I echo the words of poet Robert Frost:

"Two roads diverged in a wood,
and I—
I took the one less travelled
by ...

And that has made all the difference!"

Well, I did, and it has! I have learned over these last 10 years the truth in God's promise that "Those whose hope is in the Lord are never disappointed!".

In the Bible, David the shepherd, and later the King of Israel, was also faced with this choice as he struggled to handle his pain. We read of his experience in Psalm 42.

And so, for you, where is God when you hurt?

—Joanne Werry
Joanne Werry made this presentation at a recent morning service at the Engadine, NSW, church. Joanne accepted Christ as saviour at age eight and her faith deepened through her teenage years. Joanne and Bruce have been married for 16 years and have recently been welcomed into the Engadine fellowship. They have two sons Ben (14) and Brent (12) along with their daughter Carla (10). Joanne has a degree in Psychology and works as a group leader with Family Life, giving adult training in communication and relationships.

Miller to Succeed Schaller

New Yokefellow Institute Parish Consultant

A "Retirement Celebration" was held for Lyle E. Schaller on 28 July at the Yokefellow Institute in Richmond, Indiana, USA. Lyle Schaller has been the Parish Consultant for the Institute for 22 years. The author of 40 books on church growth and renewal, Schaller's retirement from Yokefellow takes effect December 31.

Herb Miller, Field Services Consultant for the Net Results Resource Center and Executive Director of the National Evangelistic Association (Disciples of Christ) in Lubbock,

Texas, was named the new Parish Consultant of Yokefellow Institute. He will begin his duties on 1 January, 1994, while continuing his work with *Net Results* and the NEA. Miller is an internationally recognised author and consultant in the field of congregational effectiveness. He is the editor of *Net Results*, a monthly journal of new ideas in church vitality and leadership. *Net Results* is available from the Australian Board of Church Development and Education, 77 Capel St, West Melbourne 3003.



• Lyle E. Schaller and Herb Miller

**DIAL FOR
NEW HOPE
(03) 11610**

People

Aborigines Board Changes

New FAB chairman

At its first meeting since National Conference, the Federal Aborigines Board elected Max Wright, pastor of the People's Church in Port Lincoln, SA, as its chairman. He succeeds Eric (Ric) Maxwell who served as chairman for 17 of the 20 years he has been a Board member. Ric will continue as vice-chairman.

Max's appointment is significant. He is the first Aborigine to hold that position in the Board's 51 year history. He is the first full-time missionary to fill the role and it is the first time that the chairman is not a

resident of Western Australia.

Max has chaired the Board's last two annual meetings and comes with a background as President of the Eyre Peninsula Conference. Max grew up on Mt Margaret Mission, WA, and is a graduate of Singleton Bible College. He has been a member of the FAB since 1989 when a major restructure of the Board was implemented. Max and Naomi have served with the FAB since 1979 and have had ministries at Mooroopna, Vic, and Port Lincoln, SA, as well as two years on secondment as dean of Bimbadeen



• Max and Naomi Wright

Bible College at Cootamundra, NSW.

Ric Maxwell, a school principal in WA, came onto the Board in 1974.

In 1976 he replaced the late Dr Geoff Hall as chairman.

During his 1986 WA presidential year Trevor Booth held the position of chairman. Ric has always given decisive leadership and is a keen deputationist on the Board's behalf.

—AWM

Paper Money

Essentially practical people

Jack and Fluff Matthews from the Maylands, SA, church first came to WA and the Aborigines Mission at Norseman in 1959. Since then they have made at least 10 trips west to assist at various centres for varying lengths of time.

Essentially practical people, Jack and Fluff looked for ways they could personally assist the work of FAB either on the field

or at home. So they began collecting newspapers for recycling. Initially, the proceeds were to purchase small presents for staff, then essential items such as linen, electrical goods, food processors, etc. In recent years, their money has purchased commercial gas stoves, paint, curtain materials and many other costly, but essential, requirements.

When he handed over a cheque for \$400 recently, Jack commented that they had raised \$12,700 over the years.

Sadly, the recycling of newspapers isn't possible in their area from the end of the year, so that avenue of practical fund

raising has come to an end.

The FAB records its gratitude to this dedicated couple. No doubt they'll be casting around for another way of supporting the work to which they've given so many years.

—AWM

Chinese Bibles

Reaching Those in Need

By now the 6 millionth Bible has been produced by the Amity Press of Nanjing, China, and all have been distributed through 20 church distribution points to those they were intended to reach, Mrs Violet Wong, General Secretary of The Bible Society in Hong Kong, said in Melbourne during a visit. Production of another 1.6 million Bibles was in hand, she said.

Mrs Wong spoke at four Chinese community churches in Melbourne, during which she assured the congregations that the Bibles in Chinese were being distributed carefully and effectively. Rumours being spread that this was not being done were false, and deliberately misleading.

There remains a tremendous need for Bibles in China. Those already produced by Amity, of

which many had been the result of support from Australia, were "a mere drop in the ocean", but they represented, in a sense, a tremendously positive challenge.

The Chinese Government continued to set quotas for the production of Bibles by Amity. Chinese Christians needed our prayers and sustenance to have the quotas raised, Mrs Wong said.

She was also guest speaker at The Bible Society in Victoria's annual meeting. During that meeting Lieut-Col Doug Davis of the Salvation Army was elected Victorian President. Syd Jackson (Christian Brethren) was appointed chairman of the Management Committee and Milton Oliver (Sunbury Community Church (Church of Christ)) vice-president.

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Thankyou for the Gifts

Assisting Sri Lankan refugees

Churches of Christ in Australia assist with the work among Sri Lankan refugees in India through the Churches of Christ Overseas Aid (COCOA) fund (see advert page 31).

The following is from a letter received at the Overseas Mission Board regarding the work that COCOA is funding.

Beloved friends in Christ,
Shortly, we will be entering the Christmas season. God gave his Son as a gift to the people of this earth. Because of that, we enjoy our material blessings as well.

We are grateful for your contribution towards our ministry among children in Kotagiri.

The name of the place where we run a Day Care Centre for children is Thavittumedu. This is a colony where many Sri Lankan repatriates live. There are about 1000 families in this colony. All the residents earn their living by working as daily

paid labourers. Most of these people do not have a proper house, water supply or toilet facilities. Some of them rear pigs, which are a source of many diseases and resultant problems.

With the funds we receive we are able to look after 25 children. We provide breakfast, lunch and afternoon tea. Government nurses visit once a week and carry out a medical check-up on them.

One child who attends our Centre is Devaraj, three years old. He has lost his mother and the father has married again. Devaraj is in the custody of his grandmother and aunt.

There are so many widows and women deserted by their husbands, women who cannot go to work because there is no one to look after their children. Utter poverty. Older children unable to go to school, as they have to look after their younger



• Pappathy, Ambika and the children

brothers or sisters. You can imagine the many benefits derived by our running a Day Care Centre.

Two ladies are employed in the Centre. One is Pappathy, a widow, 60 years old, having some knowledge of health care work and medicine. The other is Ambika, 22 years, whose father died. She is persecuted at home as she accepted Jesus as her Lord and Saviour six years ago. She is now living sepa-

rately in a small house with the salary we pay her.

The Day Care Centre is run in a rented house. Some 70 children have sought admission but we have taken only 25 due to the limited financial resources. In the whole of Kotagiri, there are some 60 such colonies. Our desire is to establish at least a few more Centres.

—Pastor M.J. David
(Smyrna Fellowship Trust, India)

The Middle East

Signs of hope for peace

News reports from this area usually focus on the points of tension—street fighting between Palestinians and the Israeli military, violence occasioned by the expropriation of Arab villages, Jewish settlers responding with violence to attacks.

In the midst of this violence, the Middle East Council of Churches (MECC), along with other organisations, is working to erect "signs of hope" amongst the people affected by discrimination, unemployment, hardship and violence. They are the first to acknowledge that the goodwill of Governments and organisations will not be sufficient to achieve peace in the area—discussions, openness and concessions by ordinary people in all sectors are necessary just to begin the actual process for lasting peace.

In the meantime, MECC seeks to find ways to be more

effective in their work with those who suffer hardship and injustice. One avenue is the Department of Service to Palestinian Refugees (DSPR), staffed mainly by Palestinians and operative in West Bank, Gaza Strip, Israel, Jordan and Lebanon.

The five area committees are responsible for programs which have the following priorities: improved health; education and employment opportunities; community and village development; and assistance for individuals.

The work in Gaza is focused mainly on education and community health, while the West Bank priority is community development (land reclamation, housing, local employment). DSPR in Israel and East Jordan also emphasises community development, while education is the main focus for DSPR in Lebanon. There has

also been a need for the adult literacy and skills-training classes to be continued and expanded.

One factor that has affected all work with Palestinian refugees has been the Gulf War. Each area notes the impact of an increased number of refugees. There has also been increased family impoverishment, since loss of employment in the Gulf States has meant a loss of remittances to Palestinian families. With the influx of more refugees and the cessation of remittances from abroad, people have been concerned to develop employment opportunities—not an easy task when curfews are implemented. Training in nursing and home economics is therefore important, as has been the provision of loans for income-generating activities.

Wherever possible, support is being given to assist the Palestinians to strengthen their links with their land and their homes. Reclamation and improvement of agricultural land

is important for improved agricultural production. Loans are also being provided to enable Palestinians to improve their homes.

As peace initiatives are signed between governments and representatives of the Palestinian people, and international talks for peace continue, the MECC and the Palestinian refugees continue to work to build "on the ground" signs of hope. The newly planted olive and small stone fruit trees growing in the increased areas of reclaimed and improved farm land are tangible signs of the hopes for a better tomorrow.

—Force Ten

ON YOUR OWN, YOU'RE NOT ALONE

Christian Singles Fellowship offers friendship through correspondence with other born-again Christian singles and single-again people.

Write enclosing a stamped, self-addressed envelope to:

CSF, PO Box 17,
Anna Bay 2301

Korean Newsletter

Geon Christian Children's Home

[For many years Australian churches and members have been supporting Yoon Kwon Chae and the Geon Christian Children's Home in Korea through the Overseas Mission Board. A reader recently wrote to us asking about any recent news and the OMB have supplied us several of his latest newsletters, this a summary from the July letter —Editor]

To me, the biggest difference between the adults and the children is neither the size nor years of experience, it's how much they enjoy what they are doing. Adults have long forgotten the joy of work (and life), being more concerned with when it ends, whilst children enjoy the process more than the end. Everything is joy for them. The other day, one child was two hours late coming home from school. He found a caterpillar by the roadside and followed it to where it was going for one and an half hours.

We were planning for the summer camp trip. We had been considering several west coast beaches. I was more concerned with how soon we can get there and how we can come back without being stampeded by the crowd (and without losing more than one child). I was surprised to find that our children were more concerned how long they can ride the buses even if some of our children get carsick. I guess they enjoy the process more than the end.

Anyway, we decided on Tean beach this year, in the first week of August. Actually in that same week, I have to speak at a Christian convention and hold a seminar for youth ministers, and I don't know how I can jam all those appointments in one week. But one thing I am going to do—I am going to take two full days just talking with my children. The other day, one boy sneaked up behind and hung over my shoulder. He wouldn't let me go ... he must be really hungry for conversation.

Eversince we built and modernised our second story of

Geon Home, we keep finding areas that need to be renovated to keep up with the new building. This time, it is our kitchen. We have been using coal briquettes for fuel, but now we are trying to change it to the gas burners and modernise the sinks, serving table, wall, etc. Believe me, it's not a small job as it's a kitchen for 100 people. One thing our children will miss, they told me, is burnt rice cakes and burnt rice tea. Gas burners will cook the rice perfectly and will not leave any burnt rice like the old coal burners did.

The summer is at its peak in Korea. And we are fighting a losing battle against mosquitoes. We use mosquito nets, sprays, wrist-bands, noise makers, and lots of incenses, and we smell like cigar-smokers. Nobody can say that he or she loves a child until he or she spends a night trying to protect a child from mosquito attacks. Sometimes we keep awake all night to protect the sleeping faces of the children, still, in the morning, we find the bullet marks on some of the unimaginable parts of our children's bodies, and we are desperate. Thanks to God that summer is not forever and our God is!

—Yoon Kwon Chae

PS. I hope to visit Australian churches next summer (July–August 1994). If you want me to visit your church, please let me know (the address is Geon Christian Children's Home, Central PO Box 1728, Seoul, Korea).

November Solution



BIRTHS

ANDREWS (HARTLEY) Carol and John thank God for the safe arrival of Benjamin Joseph on 25 November. Brother for Catherine and Emily. Grandson for Barbara and Howard, Margaret and John.

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AMBROSE/PEGAM Chris and

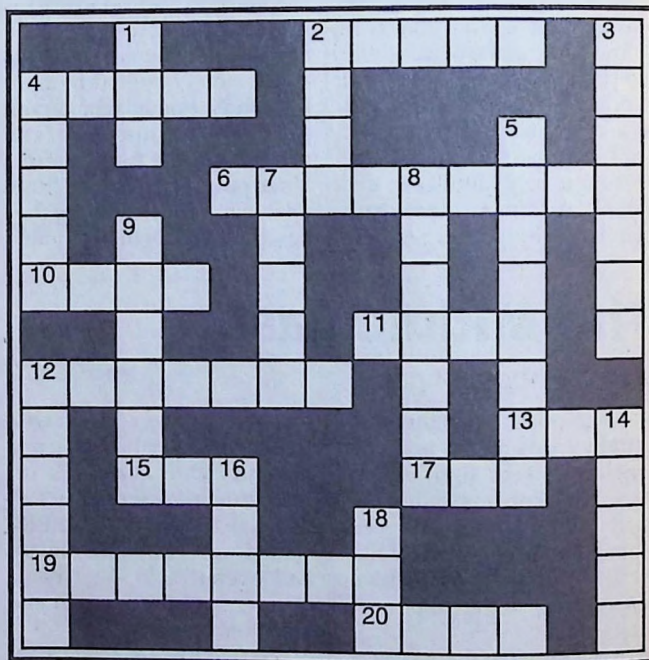
Mary and Nigel and Julie wish all their friends a joyous Christmas. We thank all *The Australian Christian* subscribers (and readers) for their loyalty, support, encouragement and prayers during this past year.

HOLIDAYS

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Crossword



All clues taken from the Matthew and Luke accounts of Jesus' birth.

ACROSS

- 2 Position of the Magi
- 4 "Saviour"
- 6 Forms the beginning of Matthew's gospel
- 10 Descendant of David
- 11 Location star was seen
- 12 Mary was _____ to be married
- 13 Account was handed down by these witnesses
- 15 Pronoun
- 17 "Peace to _____"
- 19 "God is with us"
- 20 Mary was his servant

DOWN

- 1 Father of Jehoshaphat
- 2 "_____ King of the Jews"
- 3 Place mentioned in genealogy
- 4 Bethlehem is there
- 5 Significant number in genealogy
- 7 Reason for significance of Babylon
- 8 Father of many
- 9 Son of Jacob
- 12 Disgrace Mary exposed to
- 14 Where son called from
- 16 "_____ rejoice because of his birth"
- 18 Number of boys ordered to be killed

The Vincent Van Gogh Show

Viney Longthorp

The exhibition of paintings by Vincent Van Gogh, now assembled in Australia, is one of the best presentations of pictorial art we have seen for a long time. The title says it all: **Van Gogh-His Sources, Genius and Influence.** Here are 61 carefully selected works from collections from all parts of the world, meant to deepen appreciation of one of the world's best-loved, but possibly most misunderstood, artists.

Of these works, 25 are by Van Gogh himself; the others are works by artists from whom he drew both his inspiration and technical knowledge. Others, again, are by those artists who were influenced by him.

Van Gogh was no mere inspired dauber who painted by unthinking instinct. He studied in depth the works of Jean-Francois Millet (whom he lovingly called "Father") from whom he learnt the importance of line and composition. Also, his debt to the French Impressionist school is obvious in his use of bright colours. He was also keenly aware of the experiments of the group of Pointillist artists, such as Signac and Pissarro.

It is often said that genius in any given artistic genre is the ability to sum up and synthesise the work of previous artists. In this respect Van Gogh

must be regarded as being eminent in his field.

That he led a tempestuous life is undeniable—but it was more an inward dissatisfaction and yearning, which is part of the creative process, than anything else. It is in this sense that Irving Stone's biographical novel, *Lust for Life* must be understood. Vincent was severally, a failed lay-preacher, a book seller, an art dealer, and a school master before becoming an artist at the age of 27.

It was in the last 10 years of his life that he produced those marvellous works; the growth of artistic development in these years was nothing short of miraculous. These years of frenetic activity can only be compared with the last 10 years work of that other transcendent genius, Franz Schubert.

He died by his own hand on 29 July, 1890, aged 37. He was not mad, as popular stereotype has it, but he did live under constant stress and in near poverty. That he survived at all was due to the generous help of his brother Theo, who was a moderately successful art dealer.

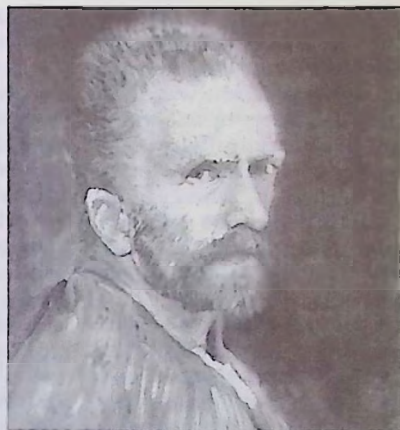
In those 10 years his style and content were constantly developing. "The Potato Eaters", an early work, depicting workers in the stygian-like conditions of the Borinage district, is sheer humanity (this work is

not shown in this exhibition); Van Gogh's immense empathy with his fellow men in their suffering is apparent. This painting shows, as no bureaucratic report could, that ethos of materialism, cynicism, and lack of faith in which so many industrial workers were condemned to live. Like other artists and writers of the time, such as Proust and Bergson, he attempted to free man's spirit from the thrall of late 19th century determinism.

When he moved to the south of France in search of brighter light he produced those works by which he is better known. Also his interpretation of life seems to mellow somewhat. In "First Steps", he depicts the delight of a young couple assisting their infant to walk; the tones of his palette reflect a gentle mood. Two paintings from his last year, "The Chair and Pipe" and "Portrait of the Postman Joseph Roulin" are both examples of his genius, whereby the three constituent elements of painting—realism, plastic form and expression are all held together, merged into a meaningful whole.

In the 1980s, as we know, one of our big business moguls bought a Van Gogh painting for \$46 million. What would Vincent have thought? Envy? Despair? Not a bit of it. He who sold but one painting in his lifetime for the price of a tube of paint, would have regarded the purchase as grotesque and obscene, a symbol of that social malaise which he opposed and exposed—that social climate which confuses price with value.

Art, including Van Gogh's, mediates spiritual values. Matthew Fox affirms that "Art is for man what in God is the power to create." For more than a thousand years the church at



once used art and has been the chief inspiration of artistic endeavours. The historian Herbert Butterfield reminds us that in England alone, parish churches offered great music, the best architecture, the noblest images and literature, to form the consciousness of an entire people. Public taste, shared morality, and the meanings of life which these things engender can only decline when this symbiotic relationship is broken.

The Van Gogh exhibition is a living reminder of the holiness of beauty, much less of "The Beauty of Holiness". For when God created light he made the artist a necessity—those who respond to God's light, creating form and order out of the visible world both for our delight and for ways of seeing which require the exercise and practice of faith.

**Van Gogh
his sources,
genius and
influence.**

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Law Abiding Christians

Gordon Stirling

The Old Testament is about the Jewish Law and what the Jews did about it, mainly the way they kept on disobeying it and incurring the wrath of the prophets. Only Jeremiah looked forward to a time when people would no longer be under an external law, but rather the law of the spirit of God within. (Jer. 31:31-33).

The Jews had their scribes who were the official interpreters of the law, who added masses of other rules and regulations to those already in the Pentateuch. Hence, the simple Sabbath law had the sort of accretions that forbade the plucking of ears of corn on the Sabbath because that was reaping and therefore working. (Matt. 12:1-8). Jesus' impatience with such legalism had him exclaiming, "The Sabbath was made for man and not man for the Sabbath."

And there were the Pharisees, exceptionally well meaning people, who gave their lives to keeping the rules and regulations of the law. They were very well behaved, but not really alive with abundant life. They were dead in their exclusiveness, their self righteousness and their judgementalism. They "tithed mint and anise and cumin" and failed in the more important matters of jus-

tice and compassion and understanding. (Matt. 23:23).

Ever since the New Testament writers put pen to parchment, there have been Christians who have wanted to make these writings into laws and rules and regulations. For them the New Testament is a sort of updated Old Testament rule book. Even in Churches of Christ, we have said that, "The New Testament is our only rule of faith and practice"; when it would have been more true to the New Testament to say that it is, "Our only guide to faith and practice". The New Testament writers did not think of themselves as writing a book of rules for Christians, but if the New Testament is not a revised law for Christians, what is it?

It is three things

1. It is the record of Jesus revealing in his life, death and resurrection, the nature and mind and will and purpose of God. God is like Jesus. (Col. 1:15, 19).
2. It is the record of how people who open their lives to the living Christ, enable the spirit of God to create in them the will and desire to follow the lifestyle revealed by Jesus, and the ability to live it. (2 Cor. 5:17). This is what "being saved" is about.
3. It is the record of how the first century church applied

what God had revealed in Jesus in the Jewish, Roman and Greek cultures of that day.

For instance, the young church needed some structures and followed the Jewish synagogue pattern. The young churches had to be guided in matters of their members' shopping, because most meat in Greek markets had been "offered to idols". We find Paul tempering the riotous worship of the Corinth church with cautions "to do all things decently and in order". The Greek culture of the day was expressed in the words of Demosthenes, "We keep the *heterae* (escorts) for the sake of pleasure, concubines for daily requirements of the body, and wives to bear our legitimate children and to be faithful guardians of our households." Public women in Greek cities were not representative of the Christian ideal of womanhood, so it was expedient for women in the Greek churches not to be seen in too prominent a role, but rather "to be silent in the church" lest there be misunderstanding in the world. The young Christians set an example of kindness to their slaves in the Roman society where only a quarter of the population were free men, but they did not attempt to free their slaves as later Christians did.

The writers of the New Testament did not think of themselves as writing a Bible or setting down a permanent constitution for the church or making a list of permanent rules and regulations for Christians for all time. They thought of themselves as applying principles revealed by Jesus Christ, to their contemporary situations.

This is obviously how we are to use the New Testament today. Not to follow rules and regulations for the expediences of the first century church, but rather to take the principles

for faith and life that God revealed in Jesus and to apply them to our culture and situation.

So how do we use the New Testament today?

1. We use the New Testament to discover the mind, will and purpose of God, expressed in principles (general guides), and apply them to our culture and situations. To use it as a book of rules puts us back under the law when we are under grace. In any case, we cannot keep rules and regulations. Only God can make us from within into Christlike beings.
2. We use the New Testament to encourage people to open their lives to the living Christ so that God can mould them into people who are willing and able to live by Christian principles.
3. We use the New Testament to study the way in which the first church applied God's revelation of himself in Jesus in first century culture, so that we can get guidance in applying that revelation in our culture. This does not mean that the outcomes of applying the principles of Christ to our culture will be the same as the outcomes of the first century Christians.

So for twentieth century Christians, the New Testament is not a handbook of rules and regulations.

Rather, it sets out the basic principles of life as God intended it to be lived. And it tells of a God who graciously works within us to grow us into people for whom the Christlike life becomes the natural way of living.

Christians are not meant to be law abiding. "The letter kills and the Spirit gives life." We are meant to be people who abide in Christ and in whom Christ abides, so that the fruitful life comes naturally. (John 15:4-5; Gal. 5:22-23).

—Gordon Stirling

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Growing Spiritually

Never Too Old

L.W. Marshman

Just after Christmas last year, my wife was hospitalised with a severe case of vertigo which proved to be an anxious time.

As time went on she became extremely depressed through not making any progress despite treatment. Unable to walk, she was almost completely confined to bed.

There was of necessity, our normal procedure of relying on faith and prayer that the Lord would handle the situation, but we knew there were things we had to do ourselves. To say we never had doubting moments would be a wrong, but times of assurance gave much impetus to our expectations.

In the course of time, our prayers and the prayers of Christian friends and neighbours were answered to the extent that a specialist discovered my wife's basic problem. She was transferred to Nursing Home care. From that point on she began to make progress.

Her own faith and determination, together with medical assistance, enabled her to walk a few steps on her own.

We would like to have been assured that our prayers were gradually and convincingly being answered. It gave us continual faith and hope. My wife's doctor, a Christian, displayed tremendous interest and concern. I never asked if he ever

prayed for us, but I feel convinced he did. There were times when we were ready to doubt if my wife would ever walk again on her own, but we could not doubt the Lord's ability to restore her to some kind of normal life.

In the middle of July, my wife's progress was so remarkable that I made the decision to have her home. It was a joy for her again to taste the pleasures of home life.

It has been wonderful for us to be able to share experiences and talk about the way the Lord has been with us all along the journey. I guess there were times, when assessing our situation, we may have allowed

ourselves doubts concerning our future, yet behind it all faith grew as we assured ourselves that the Lord knows best.

After having been home for four months now, under my care, my wife has gained a new perspective on her restricted life. She now moves about slowly and finds joy in small household tasks. Since being home she has celebrated her 91st birthday. Our hopes having been fulfilled to this extent—we are more confident in our spiritual life and faith as we look upon our experience as a confirmation of our faith in God and in the assurance that even in declining years God's people can grow spiritually.

Our Fellowship is with God

Susan Knox

Matt. 14:23 "And when he had sent the multitudes away he went up into a high mountain apart to pray; and when the evening was come he was there alone."

Many times throughout the Gospels we read of Jesus leaving the crowds and seeking time alone with his Father in prayer. Today in this ever changing society where the pressures of everyday living are high, it is important that we too withdraw ourselves to a quiet place and seek time alone with God.

For it is the quality time that we spend in prayer that gives us our strength and helps us to develop a loving fellowship with the Lord Jesus and the Father God. A fellowship where we discover that God and his son Jesus are not just spiritual persons that dwell in heaven but are our friends when we need friendship, our strength when we are weak, our fortress when we face our enemies, and our light in a

world that can seem so dark at times.

Being only a young girl in the faith, at first I tended to overlook the fact that only through prayer with God could I receive his instruction for my life and be strengthened by his love and mercy when I felt overcome or worried by circumstances beyond my control. I found that when the things I prayed for didn't come to pass, I would be disappointed, asking God where I went wrong. In time, however (with the help of the Holy Spirit), I began to understand prayer as being more than just me doing the talking then walking away and trying to have faith in the Scripture Matt. 7:7 "Ask and you shall receive". It had finally occurred to me that I had been speaking in a monologue. A one way speech.

In John 16:13 Jesus explains to his disciples that when he goes back to his Father he will send the comforter, who will guide us into all truth, and who

shall not speak of himself but whatsoever he shall hear, shall he speak.

We have these words to help us realise that God has a perfect plan for each of us, but we must seek his will in our lives and not try to harness his power into doing our will. We accomplish this through being silent after prayer and listening to the Holy Spirit. When we do this, prayer takes on a whole new meaning and the results are evidence for us to see that God always has our best in mind.

Slowly but surely I began to practise the art of praying in dialogue, a conversation between two people. I found that as I began to truly listen to the Holy Spirit's direction, I developed the skill of applying the knowledge and wisdom God supplied me in my everyday life.

This fellowship began to draw me closer to God's character and soon the meaning of Father became real. I truly had

a Heavenly Father that not only listened, but who also answered.

I now know that as a mother, a Christian and a woman, my fellowship with God plays an integral part in my life.

Times still get tough and I still get anxious, but when this happens I always remember the Scripture in Phil. 4:6-7 "Be anxious for nothing but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be known unto God. And the peace of God which passeth all understanding shall keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus."

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New Age or Old?

Dr Neville Aubrey

Our present society is characterised by a decrease in institutional Christianity and a growth in what is generally called "spirituality". That people are turning from church culture to modern alternatives is evidenced in statistics and the advent of various sects. A visit to any bookshop will reveal a section devoted to New Age material, a growth industry that shows people have tired of traditional faiths.

But it must be asked, How new is New Age teaching? Is it really new, or an updated version of older philosophies and religions? Even a brief examination of the material by a student of religion shows that New Age teaching is far from new. Much of it consists of Eastern mysticism with its dual emphasis upon reincarnation and the search for nirvana. Much else is taken up with astrology, the ancient belief that the stars can affect human existence. There are also divinatory practices

such as Tarot cards and Rune stones which are centuries old, together with claims of psychic healing, which again can be traced to antiquity.

There is the further claim of new awareness on two major issues. First, there is an attempt at religious syncretism on the basis that all religions are equal, and that the religion of tomorrow will be a blend of what is deemed worthwhile from the religions of the past. Here again, this is not new. Some eastern religions have been all-embracing in their theology, and in the last century, Bahaism originated as a movement to unite all religious traditions. Needless to say, it has become "another religion" in itself! Second, adherents to New Age teaching have claimed a new environmental consciousness, not surprising since many of the convictions can be traced to ancient fertility cults with the concept of "mother" earth. But yet again, we must ask, "Is this new?" The Israelites of old

knew that "The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof," and that humanity had been appointed as steward of creation (Psa. 8). All in all, it seems that our New Age friends offer nothing new! How then can we account for its popularity?

The simple fact is that people seek religious alternatives because they are not satisfied with what they've got, and in many cases they cannot be blamed. For instead of being presented with the teaching of Jesus, his message gets crowded out by church culture and institutionalism. Now the church has always been culturally conditioned even in its early evolution, through hellenisation and urbanisation, and we need only think of the diversity of the church throughout the world today to prove the point. Consider for example the difference in worship between a Russian Orthodox church and an American Pentecostal fellowship. But my

point is that so often church life gets cluttered up with things that really take the place of Christianity, such things as politics, preferences and personalities. Indeed, no-one can be blamed for wondering at times if the church has much to do with the religion of Jesus. But my belief is that if people were exposed to the things that Jesus said, to his pure teaching, then most would look no further in their search for spiritual fulfilment.

In reality, the New Age movement offers nothing new. Its teaching comes down to ancient beliefs that have been revived, ancient practices that people tired of long ago, and will tire of again. In contrast, we have the treasury of words of one who claimed to be the "Light of the world," whose truth is ever new. If people seek alternatives, it is because they have not given the spirituality of Jesus a chance, and perhaps the church has been the major stumbling block.

Marsden

Friendship

Neil Marsden

Jesus didn't come to Earth as an almighty conqueror or as an angry, unmerciful God. He came as a man, to save us all.

As a man, Jesus became a friend to all in need—when they accepted him and had faith in him.

Friendship is always a two-way street. Around him he brought together 12 men who would be his closest confidants. For about three years, he lived almost constantly with these men. Jesus knew the importance of friendship, devotion and love for both himself and those around him.

Friendship is love, and love should be what friends do. There's no place for uncontrollable anger, hatred, selfishness and ungratefulness in a deep and fulfilling friendship. Neither is there room for laziness, slackness and procrastination. When it comes to friendship, what must be done must be done, and it must be done with love. Hard work brings satisfaction and discipline—everybody knows that. If there is no love, no commitment, there lies a chain around the neck of a possible traitor.

In this topsy-turvy world it is accepted that war brings peace and love can bring hatred and anger, even though such things are opposite to its nature. That's why we must never rest, put our guard down, or just "go with the flow", when it comes to the love and friendships we want to last forever.

There is more to love than romance, and more to friendship than "hello". Misunderstandings can ruin an understanding, but we have to keep trying, because when it comes down to it, friends and God are

all we have—and we were specially created for both.

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Comment

The Great South Land of Which Spirit?

Nigel Mann

Call it bush, outback, red centre or never-never, Australians always have had a special relationship with the land.

The land, complete with natural features, unique life, and wild weather, has always been a dominant national symbol—if not always a favourable one.

European settlers learnt the hard way about the threats this strange land poses, and only recently has the wisdom of Aboriginal Australians, who have lived with the land for millennia, been more widely accepted.

Even before invasion, Europeans identified this land's special mystique. The spirit and mystery of this land was implied by the very name "Australia". Literally meaning "southland", the name Australia was coined from two earlier emotive phrases, *terra australis incognita* (unknown southern land) and *Australia del Espiritu Santo* (Southland of the Holy Spirit).

Unfortunately for the early European settlers, this land refused to be tamed like the "old world" England or the "new world" America. It was a land that could sustain good crops and herds for several years only to destroy everything in plagues of drought, fire and flood.

The hostility of the land led some Australians to call it God-less. But even though modern Australia is highly urbanised, the mystery and spirit of the bush continues to capture the imagination of the masses living in the suburbs that cling to the coast.

The Australian Aborigines who had lived here much longer also knew the creative and life-sustaining spirit of the land. For many Aborigines, the land could be read as an endur-

ing physical testimony to the fact that the earth produced and sustained life. These messages called dreaming trails, formed the basis of cultural, economic and spiritual life.

So in both modern and ancient traditions the land of Australia has been seen as revealing a sense of mystery and spirit. But does God fit in here? Sometimes we talk about Australia as though God did not discover it until the Europeans did. Sometimes we act as though every good thing about Aboriginal culture should be belittled because we doubt God could use Aborigines to teach us more than we can teach them.

But God was in Australia before Aborigines, let alone European immigrants. God has always been the God of all the world, including this land. God's creative Spirit has always been at work in the lives of Australian people.

Before Bible-carrying Europeans arrived, the Spirit of Love was developing in Australia a wisdom, a sense of the spiritual value of the land and a culture that can express the gospel as legitimately as any other.

Bush poet Henry Lawson called Australia "the worst,

dried up, God-forsaken country I was ever in". He could not have been further from the truth. God has never abandoned this land and God certainly did not arrive for the first time on the First Fleet. God does not need opportunist Europeans sailing around the world saying "we claim this land for God and King". The earth and all that is in it already belongs to the Lord.

Understanding this frees us to accept new ways of relating to God and proclaiming the gospel in Australia.

First, God's grace can be seen to be at work in our land, animals and plants. No longer do Christians need to rely on Holy Land tours to visit the sacred sites mentioned in Jewish Scriptures. With the uniquely Australian understanding of the connection between the land the Spirit, we can see God has not abandoned us in a hostile land. Every time we ponder the significance of the land we are on the verge of meeting its creator.

Second, we have a responsibility to respect the rights and culture of the Aborigines who have a legitimate claim to this land. We can stop treating Aborigines and Islanders as nobodies, as occurred under the lie of

Terra Nullius. This generation can take responsibility for abolishing the double standard that recognised the land rights of people with titles issued since European invasion, but not those that existed generations earlier.

Third, if God's grace is recognised in the land, the land should be maintained and protected, not constrained and changed to fit foreign mind sets. God invites us to appreciate Australia as a unique gift and take responsibility for liberating the land. We can learn from the traditional Aboriginal care for the land and the Aboriginal respect for all that is given in creation.

A faithful reflection on our heritage shows that Australia truly is the great south land of the Holy Spirit. God is revealed in this land.

The church can be a cultural ghetto threatened by the cultures of the Aboriginal nations and later immigrants, or start embracing all that is good in Australia. If this land never suits us we will never suit this land. Not until the church comes to terms with this land and its people will it be able to present the good news of Jesus Christ in a way that is relevant to Australians.

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Pastoral Preaching, Pastoral Care

Garry Harris

Preaching is the pastor's most visible ministry. Pastoral preaching may be the most influential. Countless thousands of sermons are preached each Sunday. How significant is their pastoral impact?

The pastoral needs of a congregation are numerous. Illness, bereavement, and relationship difficulties are commonplace crises.

Many parishioners attend church needing to hear a healing word.

The astute minister will readily recognise that pastoral care can become a ministry style rather than an isolated function. This style can embrace the pulpit with as much validity as the counselling room.

Edgar N. Jackson attests, "Preaching can also be a pastoral function. The pastor who lives close to his people...is not separated from his people

when he enters the pulpit on a Sunday morning."¹

Obviously we are not promoting the pastoral sermon as a means of treating psychiatric illness. It emphatically is not. It is, however, a means of helping people grapple with the normal problems of living.

What then, is pastoral preaching? Charles F. Kemp suggests, "It is an attempt to take the needs of the people in one hand and the truth of the Christian gospel in the other and bring the two together by means of the spoken word."²

Kemp's definition is important because it keeps sight of the fact that authentic preaching is firmly grounded in Gospel. A pastoral sermon is not pop psychology punctuated with proof texts. It is the application of the Christian gospel to the problems of life, with a sensitivity to the psychological implications. Without this, the

proclamation will have lost its Christian distinctiveness and degenerated into a good "talk" about pastoral psychology.

There are two divergent philosophies of pastoral preaching. Each has very different objectives and expectations. The British preacher, Leslie J. Tizard, advocates what I call "passive pastoral preaching". He suggests that the pastoral sermon primarily signals to the congregation that the preacher is competent, human, and approachable.³

Howard J. Clinebell assigns greater significance to the sermon when he states, "Like group counselling, preaching offers an efficient means of helping a number of individuals simultaneously."⁴ I would contend that the pastoral sermon should be regarded as a therapeutic event in itself, not merely a precursor to personal counselling.

Harry Emerson Fosdick epitomises the style of proclamation I term "active pastoral preaching". Fosdick's classic description of the craft states, "Every sermon should have for its main business the head-on constructive meeting of some problem which is puzzling minds, burdening consciences, distracting lives."⁵ Clearly, preaching is seen here as more than a verbal enticer to the counselling room.

Fosdick, Clinebell et al are

not suggesting that the counselling sermon and the counselling session are mutually exclusive. They are, however, attributing credibility to the pulpit as a legitimate member of the therapeutic team.

The pastoral sermon is a potent partner in the healing ministry of the church. It can enrich and extend pastoral caring because it has the capacity to communicate "the inner meaning of the Gospel to persons at their point of need."⁶

Pastoral preaching may be understood as that experience where a specific problem is addressed, and solutions are sought in light of the Gospel. It is designed to ensure that sound psychological dynamics are operative, and is typified by therapeutic activity. The outcome of this exercise is personal and spiritual growth, and the provision of assistance to those struggling with life's perplexing problems.

1. Edgar N. Jackson, *The Pastor and His People*, p. 195-196
2. Charles F. Kemp, *Pastoral Preaching*, p. 12
3. Leslie J. Tizard, *Preaching*, p. 96-99
4. Howard J. Clinebell, *The Mental Health Ministry of the Local Church*, p. 77
5. Harry Emerson Fosdick, *The Living of These Days*, p. 94
6. Carroll Wise, *The Meaning of Pastoral Care*, p. 8

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Ultimate Healing

Judy Flood

Someone recently said to me, "It's awful you know. Everyone I talk to seems to know someone who has cancer or they have it themselves." Another friend spoke of how worried she was about the future, especially for her children. She was concerned about the apparent injustice in the world. Other friends have commented on how they would love to be back in the "Good old days".

It is true that as we look around us, read the newspa-

pers, watch the news, that there is much sadness and tension in the world for both the Christian and non-Christian. Where the world and the Kingdom of God exist side-by-side this will always be the way until the Lord returns.

We cry out for healing. Healing for our bodies, healing for the future, healing for the world. At Calvary Jesus performed the greatest and final act of healing. This act was for all the world.

Mark 10:32 gives us an amazing picture of Jesus going to Jerusalem "ahead" or "in front of" the others.

He knew what lay before him. There would be pain, loneliness, humiliation, the cross and even death itself. This was not a good picture of healing, restoration or life.

Or was it?

Jesus was heading to Jerusalem to perform the ultimate act of healing over the ultimate sickness—death. Through his

resurrection we have that sure hope that death has lost its power and fear. Jesus gave to his followers then, and to us today, a tremendous hope. Only in Jesus do we have completeness, wholeness and restoration.

No matter what we go through in this life, all is not lost if we are in Christ. We have that sure hope of knowing that one day there will be no more sadness or tears or fear—only a glorious future.

Why do they Crowd to the Back?

Jack Ludbrook

In the Last Word column of *The Australian Christian* (2 October) one of the jokes related that in a church where everybody sat towards the rear a stranger walked in and took a front seat. After the service the minister asked him why he sat up front. "I'm a bus driver," was the reply, "and I came to learn how you succeed in getting people to move to the back."

I have often wondered why many worthy folk in the churches seem to consider it their duty to sit as near as they can to the rear of the chapel, if not occupying the back seat itself. In churches where attendances are sparse, it is disconcerting for worship leaders and preachers to have to talk over a chasm of emptiness to people forming a huddled rear guard.

It reminds me of one of the famous spoonerisms of the late noted English preacher Dr Spooner (the word was coined because of his habit of accidentally transposing two words from their intended places in his sentence construction). On a well remembered occasion he bewailed the long rows of beery wenches it had been his misfortune to talk above.

One can understand there may be circumstances requiring certain persons to sit along the back wall. Late comers may not wish to parade up the aisles. Young mothers may want a quick exit if babies are too vocal, though I've been in churches where infants are happily "dotted" around the congregation with parents and siblings.

Perhaps some people feel they will be considered to be seeking notice or prominence if they take forward positions (Jesus spoke of those wanting to occupy the best seats in the synagogue). But such thoughts

surely don't apply in this discussion.

The cling-to-the-back-seat phenomenon is less noticeable in those auditoriums of modern church architecture (multi-aisles) where seating is spread out widely. In these instances, the principal denizens of the extreme rear may be teenage couples who like to do some hand-holding. It would be a pity to discourage them by denying them this concession.

Churches which regularly have sizeable attendances don't suffer from having a few back-seat lurkers. It is those with dwindling audiences in con-

ventional old style two-aisle design which suffer worst from unused front seating. I've seen cases where not a soul was to be seen in the front five rows, the full width of the church.

Appeals to the regulars to sit nearer the front usually fall on deaf ears, even when those seats—in the case of pews—are made more comfortable with cushions.

Someone has suggested roping off some seats, as at weddings. But surely this is impracticable and is a policy of despair.

Jack Ludbrook is from one of our SA churches.

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Shine, Jesus, Shine!

Helen Oatley

It was a Sunday night at camp. We had sung some great songs like "Loved With Everlasting Love" and "We're Gathered Here Because We All Love Jesus". We had thundered out "It Is Well With My Soul" and finally, "Shine, Jesus, Shine".

Now it was suppertime, and the food was spread out attractively on two long, low tables. The lights shone directly on these tables and the people grouped about, while the rest of the hall lay in shadow. For some reason, I sat back in the shadow, thinking, as all study leaders tend to do, about the studies and the people doing them, and as I looked on, I pondered.

It was rather like looking at a play. To one side of the hall, slightly "off-stage", sat a woman in a wheelchair, her husband, hands in pockets, standing contentedly beside her. There was a cheerful murmur of conversation over the tea-cups around them, a pleasant aura over all, men and women, mostly older, talking together. Was it the songs we had sung, I mused, or the conviviality kindred minds find in coming together? How else to account for the light that lit every face with peace and harmony? Outside, the wind

howled and rain came in spasmodic bursts, but within that small bare hall in the back of beyond was comfort and refreshment.

My eyes found Bess, a bright brave little figure in party pink, her earrings and necklet sparkling, she was laughing as she described the enormous number of pasties she now makes for the rest home where she lives. Over 80 years old, her eyes and speech are full of vitality and fun. From her, I move to George. He is seated, and looks weary but cheerful. He has not long returned from driving 200 km to visit his hospitalised wife. He knows many such journeys, yet he is stronger, not weaker, for them. The dark-eyed lady is Elena. Some of those unusual cookies on the table are her own special Greek recipe. She likes to share them, as she will share her shy but thoughtful insights into life.

I am still thinking about Elena, and wondering how she manages to fit so well into this group of "foreigners" when a gust of wind shakes the door open, and two figures slip quietly inside, unnoticed by the others. I greet Phillip Adams, the celebrated atheist, and Paul Keating, our Prime Minister. They sit by me, and study the group before them.

"Thank you for coming, gentlemen", I murmur. "As you see, the play has begun. Your task is to name it for me, if you can". Both are already studying the small group before them and I see in their knitted brows and set lips the workings of powerful intellect. I wait.

"They are a contented group", Adams muses, after some time.

"Happy, too", says our sombre leader, a little later.

"Perhaps it is their splendid surroundings", I suggest dryly. Both men shoot me a scornful glance.

"Well", I continue ingenuously. "I believe some people insist on having the very best around them to make them content. Do they not?" There is no reply. I hand each man a list of the characters before them and a description of their situation in life. Thus, Bess, 80 plus, feeds those in rest home unable to feed themselves. Joan, confined to wheelchair for 20 years, no hope of cure. "That is her husband beside her", I murmur.

"I know that!", Adams snaps irritably. "I've got eyes". (Indeed he has. Keen, merciless eyes that miss no detail in the area of human weakness and frailty. Perhaps because he knows the condition so well. Yet those eyes have been known to recognise instantly some unusually sweet and wholesome incidents in life.)

There had been a long silence. "Well", I ask bluntly, "are they simply a group of ignorant fools? Is that all they are?"

"No", growls Adams. "Shut-up". He straightens out the page I have given him and continues reading. "Jane", he reads, "35 years old and almost completely deaf. Has several children and can no longer hear them speak, let alone sing." "That is Jane". I point to her bright face, animated in conversation. "She lip-reads a lot. She helps lead a youth club" I add inconsequentially. Neither man comments.

Paul K. looks up. "Which one is Sarah?", he asks. I know what he is reading. "Sarah deserted by husband; has reared three children alone; isolated from English family and friends; a stranger in a strange land"

"There she is." I point proudly. Sarah is deep in conversation with an older person. Her face is alive with interest, and bright with friendship and confidence.

Time passes and the husband of the wheelchair lady looks at his watch. "Well I don't know what you are planning," he says cheerfully, "but I think I'll go home". She laughs. It's an old joke, apparently, and they soon move off together. Paul gives a grunt. The group is breaking up, moving off, calling out goodbyes, shaking hands, hugging. Soon we three are alone. The hall is silent, bare and ugly. "The play?", I ask softly. Paul Keating is standing, ready to go, pulling his coat collar higher around his chin.

"Easy!" He is already moving away.

"Name it!" I am insistent.

He turns at the door to speak, but a gust of wind carries the words away and the door slams behind him. I turn, exasperated, but Adams is laughing. Laughing at my exasperated face. He too is ready to go. He puts a friendly arm around me. "We both guessed it straight away," he says. "Paul doesn't like it because he can't understand it."

"And you?" I dare to ask.

"I have a different problem", he confesses. "I like it, but I don't understand why I like it. It would be easier if I could slam the door on it, like Paul. I wish I could!"

"The name of the play?" I remind him gently.

"It is called, 'The Christian Life'". His voice is reluctant. "The acting was fine, really fine, and the characters, their stories, all good. And the lighting. Now that was superb! How did you light up their faces like that? Who did it?" He is impressed.

"A Friend," I reply. "Someone we all know. He is good at lighting faces." Adams is moving away. I hear the door close. Left to myself I begin to sing "Shine Jesus Shine, fill this world with the Father's glory. Shine Jesus Shine."

The hall is very bright and I feel my face glowing. *Helen comes from Milang, SA.*

Introspection

Spread holy paste
Upon our insight,
That we might see.
Let the healing virtue of spittle and clay
Remedy our bent for half-intentions
and,
and half-commitment.
Chasten us with that self-reproaching
vision
Of our limited availability,
Till the meaning of our lives becomes
apparent
In your holy inward glance.
—Garry Harris

A Church ABC

Depending on your perspective, Kaniva is either the last town you pass through on your way from Victoria to South Australia, or the first town on the Victorian side of the border. Located on the Western Highway, some 410 km west of Melbourne, Kaniva is situated in a fertile belt about 60 km wide between the Big and Little Deserts in the Wimmera area. As might be expected, the major industry in the area is farming, both crops and sheep.

The town itself has a population of about 900, with a shire population of about 1600. Due to changes in the economic situation and farming practices the population is declining in numbers and increasing in age. The trend is toward larger farms, so when a family sells up, rather than a new family buying and moving in, the property is bought by an existing property owner who has to work larger plots of land to make the purchase of expensive modern equipment viable.

Unemployment in Kaniva is close to zero, mainly because

the unemployed do not stay, moving elsewhere in search of work, aggravating the population decline. As such, a significant proportion of the town's population are retired (often ex-farmers), therefore, the lo-

ness when the primary and high schools have enrolments numbering over 300 between them.

Kaniva is one of our older churches, being established in 1889, and has figured fairly

for the church, in spite of the generally gloomy outlook. His vision is, with the right kind of outreach, the younger couples and families could be befriended and brought into the church. If this was coupled with outreach to the local youth, Kaniva would indeed have a bright future.

Setting long-term goals is difficult because the future for the community itself is uncertain and, in many respects, looks quite bleak. Nevertheless, the church is seeking to develop a mission statement so that they have a guide concerning where their efforts and future goals should be focussed. This will mean that rather than simply concentrating on survival, the church's outlook will become goal and mission oriented.

This fits in well with the church's history, where it is known in Victoria for its support of conference, mission and ministry. One of the most well-known conference figures to come from Kaniva has been E.L. Williams (Principal Emeritus of the College of the Bible—now CCTC).



Focus on Kaniva

cal economy is geared toward that age group.

The church is also composed largely of retired folk (particularly farmers) with some being active farmers or others. With a membership of 56, the church is managing to support a full-time ministry (currently by Martin Goldup). A problem the church faces is the lack of people in the young adult age group, as most of the teenagers leave to pursue employment or further education elsewhere. This makes it very difficult to build a youth work, a real sad-

largely in its community and has been one of our stronger country Victorian churches. As in many of our churches, currently the church is struggling with the issues of keeping the valuable traditions of the past whilst seeking to present the faith in a way that is meaningful and meets the needs of contemporary folk, particularly people on the fringe. A strength the church has is the number of people with musical talents, a strength they seek to build on.

Martin, a self-confessed optimist, sees potential for growth

Gospel = Growth = Change

Allan Blyth

Dare I conclude from this equation: No Change = No Growth? No Growth = No Gospel?

Yes, I think I can!

Not that I find this a very comfortable conclusion, being a person who enjoys tradition. (I don't even want to change our flag!)

During the eye-opening experience of *Leadership 2000* (thanks to the sponsorship of *Christian Projects*) in California in June and July, one of the conclusions I reached is that the name of the Gospel game is change.

The Good News (of Jesus Christ) continually demands a response—

- from folks outside the Kingdom who hear it for a first time

- from folks inside the Kingdom being joined by new disciples of Jesus

- from folks inside the Kingdom re-hearing the Good News

- from church leaders inspired to proclaim the Good News in new social, cultural, economic and ethnic contexts

- from all who would continue to learn as disciples of Jesus (Matt. 11:29) and progressively discover the abundant life (John 10:10).

As we, with the whole creation, groan as in the pains of childbirth waiting eagerly for our adoption as children. (Rom. 8:22–23)

Whether the change/growth/gospel is expressed as:

- a new ministry to the Hispanic people at the Crystal Cathedral, or

- a new youth ministry training program, or

- provision for visitor parking in the car park, or

- the empty chair filled in a small group, or

- the televising of Chuck Swindoll's address to an overflow crowd, or

- powerful southern jazz piano during "the prayers" (as in a downtown black church I visited in Nashville), or

- someone in your congregation expressing the maternal as well as the paternal nature of God in prayer, or

- the occasional omission of traditional "Churches of Christ communion" in order to create a service more relevant to "lookers-on", or

- whatever; this change/growth/gospel

demands each of us to be prepared to accommodate change.

Let's be careful we don't become so wary of the different, that we, like the God-fearing folks in Jesus' day, end up condemning to death changes, growth, the gospel, as they did Jesus!

Maybe my equation can't be reversed (eg change for the sake of change will not produce growth).

But one thing I'm more sure of than ever since my *Leadership 2000* experience is this:

- Where there isn't much change there isn't much growth.

- Where there isn't much growth there isn't much gospel.

Allan is minister at Howrah, Tas.

Flexibility

John Sweetman

Finding a frame of reference in another country isn't easy. For me, as a participant in the Leadership 2000 study tour, it was provided by the gum trees. We saw thousands in our time in California. While in Australia they have become a visual cliché, in California I saw them in a new way. Anaheim, California, provided the opportunity for me to see ministry in Australia from a new perspective. There was the visual stimulus of megalithic church buildings but what is a building without people? And it was at that point that the picture snapped into focus.

The throbbing heart of any church must be the people. People capably serving God. The Christian church recognised from the start the need to set aside people for specific tasks.

As a church develops so must the structure. Each of the churches visited in California sought to encourage people in unleashing their talents for God, and to release them for outreach. All this reflects the truth as stated by Dr Leroy Lawson of Pacific Christian College that the church is the only organisation designed for the people not in it. This requires, among other things, staffing ahead of growth. The specialised staff of churches such as the Crystal Cathedral, Saddleback and the Vineyard demonstrate that as congregations are equipped the church can be restored to fulfilling its mission.

This input came at the right time. For a number of months prior to going to California the Bendigo church had been challenged about the need for spe-

cialised youth ministry. The tour provided both confirmation and additional skills to help develop this possibility. While this will stretch the church financially, there is a commitment to sharing with the young people of the city and suburbs of Bendigo. In December, there will be a new staff member added to the existing team at Bendigo—a part-time youth director. This will complement the current line-up of John Sweetman (senior minister), Sue Pollock (administrative assistant) and John Wilkinson (honorary music director).

Appropriately for a church birthed in a Temperance Hall, Bendigo, like the Rechabites of ancient days (Jer. 35), is trying to be flexible enough to be faithful to the God who continually seeks obedience in new situations.

Obituaries

Obituaries are limited to 100 words

Bartlett, Gladys Ada (27.10.93) Gladys Bartlett (nee Cutts) was born at Hyde Park, SA, on 14 September 1899. Educated at Nailsforth and Goodwood primary schools, and Unley High, she made her decision for Christ in 1912. The church at Park Street Unley was well served by Gladys prior to her marriage to Walter in 1931. Leita and Jim were born during Walter's first ministry at Berri and Marlene was born at Balaklava during the second ministry. Wally acknowledges Glad's outstanding support during several ministries spanning 45 years. Parkrose Village CWF rewarded Gladys with life membership for eight years' service as President.

—Cliff Spencer

Gruar, Allan Lawrence (22.11.93) Allan was born 28 June 1918, served his country in Papua New Guinea and Borneo in World War II, and is survived by Nancy, children Barrie, Lorraine Hughes, Jill Gaffney and Anthony, and grandchildren Amanda, Travis, Melinda and Megan. Allan was baptised in the Box Hill, Vic, church on 28 November 1982. He loved his church family and was greatly loved as a gentle man and a man of patience and humour.

—Jim Longbottom

"Real" Leadership

Bill Addison

On returning from the Leadership 2000 program, a friend asked, "What one thing stands out to you from your time in America?"

After visiting some of the largest churches in Los Angeles and talking with some of the more well-known ministers, so much had been seen, heard and discussed. One thing did come to mind. It was a statement made by Dr Bruce Larson, co-pastor of the Crystal Cathedral in Garden Grove. Simply put, he declared that the good news of Christianity is that we are all bad, yet nevertheless God loves us.

Referring to 2 Cor. 4:7 and the concept that to be a Christian is to be a cracked pot indwelt by the glory of God, Larson proceeded to exhort us all to grow in embracing hon-

est-to-goodness real leadership.

What is "real" leadership? It certainly involves being prepared to "die first", to "shed first blood", but it also involves being prepared to acknowledge that we haven't got it all sorted out, that we are still cracked pots and will remain so until God completes his work of grace in us.

Real leadership I believe, can only be provided by people who, with God's wisdom, are prepared to let others know where they are still struggling and hurting. To choose to do otherwise is to betray, to contribute to the guilt feelings of others and in fact to mislead.

After returning I read a book that Larson wrote many years ago, *Living on the Growing Edge*. In it he made the following statement that continues to

challenge me: "Let us hope that the generation we are attempt-

ing to lead will find in us disarming honesty rather than presumption or hypocrisy". *Bill is the minister of the Mandurah, WA, church.*

Part-time Youth Minister

Burleigh Heads Church of Christ
(20 hours per week. Start February 1994)

Burleigh Heads is located right in the middle of the fabulous Gold Coast in Queensland.

The church is seeking and praying for God's person to enable it to reach out to young people and young marrieds on the Gold Coast. The successful applicant will be part of a team led by Noel Newton. The position will be extended to a full-time ministry as soon as funds are available. Other part-time work is feasible.

Persons applying need to have a heart for evangelism with young people and young families and commitment to a growing church.

Please write stating your relevant skills, qualifications and references to:

Pastor Noel Newton, 23 Harran Street, Bellevue Park 4215.
Phone (075) 31 4353. Applications close 31.12.93.

Baptisms

•Julianne Sleeth, **Murray Bridge, SA** •Matthew Kenzie, Richard Ayton, **Devonport, Tas** •Brod Crook, David McKenna, **Maylands, WA** •Andrew Watson, **Boronla, Vic** •Michelle Coates, Frank Hynes, Bradley Irvin, Luke Tonkin, David Smart, Joanne Lilley, Peter & Annette Fossey, Ben Morrison, Trevor & Kay Wilson, Danny Thompson, Kris Williams, Angela Cochrane, Darren Midgley, Ben Reeve, Matthew Oates, Natalie Taylor, Robert Muir, Heather Collins, Peter Brugman, Suzanne Hucker, Howard Williams, **York St, Ballarat, Vic** •Jane Burkett, Wendy Gadsden, **Swan Hill, Vic** •Lina Hindes, Darren Hose, **Glen Waverley, Vic** •Robert Kingston, Peter Solloway, **Pine Rivers, Qld** •Margaret Bloom, Alyssa Kershaw, Andrea Waterhouse, Richard Wolkow, Irene Wolkow, **Berwick, Vic** •Elissa Dean, Simon Jones, Fiona Lynch, **The Patch, Vic** •Darren Morris, Carmel Christou, Andrew Lui, Donna Purchase, **Dianella, WA** •Sue Schmidt, **Brooklyn Park, SA** •Emily Walshe, Lyons, **ACT**

Marriages

•Karl Knowles and Justin Bellchambers, **Devonport, Tas** •Heather Goodridge and Mark Finger, **Berwick, Vic** •Joyce Froud and Stan Allison, **Tootgarook, Vic** •Kathryn Mollgaard and Jason Sundblom, **Kyneton, Vic** •Gwen Tupper and John West, **Thornleigh, NSW**

Deaths

•Mrs Violet Kennedy, **Surrey Hills, Vic** •Gladys Ada Bartlett, **Croydon, SA** •Mrs Clarice Sullivan, Stef Mitaxa, **York St, Ballarat, Vic** •Hec Sheeran, **Berwick, Vic**

Changes

SUNSHINE: Secretary—Miss Susan Horwood, 22 Cornwall Rd, Sunshine, Vic 3020. Phone (03) 311 1557 (All correspondence should be addressed to PO Box 144, Sunshine, Vic 3020). **Church office**—Phone (03) 364 8116.

GARDINER: Secretary—c/o Secretary, Cnr Malvern Rd and Scott Gve, Glen Iris, Vic 3146.

TOOTGAROOK: Secretary—Stan Allison, 155 Rosebud Pde, Rosebud, Vic 3939. Phone (059) 86 4057.

Valvid

Video Projector Hire
NTSC→PAL transfer
Edifing Suite, etc
Phone (03) 457 2394, Fax (03) 459 2833

WA

MAYLANDS (Robert Drown) Well attended Convention weekend 27–28 November included AGM & 89th anniversary celebrations, speaker Roger Ryall, Conference President ... Sunday luncheon held at home of Robert & Beryl Drown ... Assisting minister 1994 re-elected elders, Ron Jones, Trevor Streton, Ivan Whitworth with Hart Smetherham & George Eaves (elders emeriti) ... Christian women's ministries reappointed Connie Eaves (pres), Audrey Jones (vice-pres), Wilma Humphrys (sec), Betty O'Meara (treas) & Vi Smetherham (asstreas). **DIANELLA (Tony Armstrong)** Church dinner with Covenant Players 20 November. Message in drama brought during & following meal ... First day of Advent celebrated by Sunday School with banner parade. This special children's service attended by puppet theatre group who presented Christmas story differently. Church full of children & "big kids" ... Youth breathe sigh of relief as TEE & other exams draw to close ... Two baptisms & baby dedication planned for 5 December ... Planning day held 27 November.

DIANELLA (Tony Armstrong) Advent very special time in church's life ... Celebrated with four baptisms, baby dedication & four transfers including Keith Roberts ... Banners presented depicting Advent by Sunday School, youth, women & men's groups ... Church planning day held ... Street stall/car wash raised over \$500 ... CWF officer bearers Lynette Armstrong (president), Val Manson (secretary) ... Teaching program for next three years in place.

EASTERN HILLS (Maurie Ashworth) Guest speaker Roger Ryall (Conf Pres) ... "It's Cool in the Furnace" presented threetimes ... Ernie Tong returned from England but now in poor health ... Thanksgiving service & special offering, speaker Charles Lithgow (elder). Maurie Ashworth returned to pulpit for evening thanksgiving service ... Girls' Brigade final church parade & award presentation ... Christmas dinner held 11 December ... Ladies fellowship meal held 15 December.

Vic

KANIVA (M. Goldup) Committee chairman, Les Wheaton, gave thoughtful address on commitment as lead-up to stewardship campaign with Ian Cartmel guest speaker at am service & luncheon ... Sympathy to Paul & Jenny West on death of Paul's father ... Prayers for sev-

eral members in indifferent health, particularly Doug Thomas in Ballarat & Dorothy Wallis following surgery in Horsham.

SURREY HILLS (David Brooker, Julie Adam) David released to take up appointment in Adelaide. Julie's term & part-time hours extended. David, Heather & family will be much missed ... Gwen May elected elder, David Goodwin deacon ... Project appeal, including fair, raised over \$3000 ... Memorable series of addresses on Romans ... Following many deaths in congregation, Advent series begins with "Hope" ... 1994 theme "Step into Joy", conviction of God's presence always.

FOOTSCRAY (Geoff Casey) Church congratulates minister on completion of Bachelor of Theology studies ... Visiting speakers included Arch Stevenson (singer), Rebecca Weirenga (Mercy Ships), Daniel Batt (*On Being*), Peter Rullman (Operation Mobilisation), representative Leprosy Mission ... Creating Disciples of Christ Conference & several prayer breakfasts held ... Prayer chain established ... Significant donation to TEAR Fund ... Result of drama, sausage sizzle & stall Kidsmin raised \$95 for Aboriginal Mission.

BENDIGO (John Sweetman) Successful Missionary Convention held with Julie Trinnick 15–17 October. Over \$3200 given to missions through mission bags ... Attendance still good at both morning services & evening ... Local author interviewed at evening service ... Sympathy to Reg & Clove Broad on loss of daughter Cheryl ... Trash-n-Treasure & mini fair raised \$815 towards building debt ... Appointment of youth director after much prayer. Andrew Grant commences 14 December.

YARRAWONGA (W. Keddle) Keddies conclude their ministry end December ... Dorothy Geyer guest speaker to about 60 women at CWF Thanksgiving Day. Thank offering \$400 & trading table \$300 ... Garage sale towards support for Forbes in PNG realised \$850 ... Greensborough C of C choir gave delightful weekend of music, message & fellowship. Concert raised \$340 for Bible Society ... "The Life of Christ" theme for combined tea & service.

BORONIA (Keith Milne, Andrew Henley) Annual meeting 24 November. John Masterton elected elder & June Whitney & Adrian Wilson deacons. Lively discussion on the place of older people in pm service, advisability of "year off" for elders required by constitution after serving two terms, assistance for participants in expensive study. Both ministers spoke positively about activi-

ties of past year & their expectations for 1994. Keith Milne completed session with presentation on how family today differs from the past. **SWAN HILL (Lindsay Mayes, Tim Green, Graeme Sonsle)** David Ratten (Mildura) speaker at October guest service ... Two young women baptised ... Sunday School children presented special Christmas musical "Life of Jesus" at morning service on 12 December. Church lunch followed in Riverside Park ... "Creation" bus visited 4 & 5 December ... Tim Green will conclude associate ministry at end of year.

GLEN WAVERLEY (Ron Elbourne, Martin Gillespie, Howard Sanders) Retired men maintain property ... Visiting speakers Greg Elsdon, Ian Allsop, Alan Baker, Jeff May ... New Living Links—Forbes family, Craig Francis ... Young people introduced to worship leading ... Amanda Crabb to study at Wollongong campus 1994 ... Nancye Cottee recognised for 24 years continuous leadership of women's group ... November attendances highest on record.

BERWICK (Tim Hanna, Andrew Ball) Dr Keith Farmer guest speaker ... Students' Winter Gig ... Commitment Sunday for practical & financial assistance to church ... Kids Big Band play each week for Sunday School ... Sunday Students re-enact Moses & Israelites walk in the wilderness ... Successful Country Fair ... Nine lessons & carols to be presented 19 December & Carols by Twilight, Christmas Eve at Civic Centre.

TOOTGAROOK (M. Giezendanner) Officers appointed for 1994 ... Appreciation to Yvonne Marks for seven years' work as church secretary. New secretary Stan Allison ... 103 enjoyed Christmas dinner at "Open Door" with entertainment by Pauline Watt, Bob Baker with Madge Leigh pianist. Appreciation to Lal Earl & team with flowers ... Church packed for wedding of Stan Allison to Joyce Froud ... 17 attended Advent service by Inter-Church Council.

THE PATCH (Mike Folland) Congratulations to Elissa Dean, Simon Jones & Fiona Lynch on their baptisms & welcome into membership on 28 November ... Ladies & mixed netball teams made the finals once again ... High Riders youth group celebrated their end of year break up with a games night at Kilsyth Pool.

LATROBE TERR, GEELONG (Glen Wegner) David McGregor participated in bush walking leadership course in Grampians ... Paul Bauer received Diploma of Ministry, CCTC graduation ... CWF entertained residents Grace McKeller, held craft afternoon & contributed groceries to "Concern"

Church News

... Geelong Churches of Christ held carol service Grace McKellar ... Church excited about full-time ministry of David & Ruth Jones, commencing February ... Varied functions organised by auxiliaries to mark end of year.

BOXHILL (Jim Longbottom, Moffat Zimba) Christmas celebrations well underway with the celebration of Advent, focussed on "Seeing in new ways" & "Giving ourselves as gift to God" ... Kanga Kids still thriving, congratulations on winning Kidsmin "Group of the Year" award.

Old

PINE RIVERS (Neale Proellocks, Ian Todd) Over 220 shared combined Sunday School/Playtime/Cradle Roll break-up 5 December ... 12 December, commissioning service for Bill & Lorna Moore & boys in preparation for their ministry at Lowood ... Farewell lunch on 19 December for Ian & Di Todd & boys who will be ministering next year with the Caboolture church.

SA

MURRAY BRIDGE (Morrie Munyard) Church anniversary service 17 October followed by family luncheon. Guest speaker Ross Pelling ... Baptism of Julieanne Sleeth at morning service 7 November ... Prayer & planning in progress for "Church in the Park" each Sunday evening service through January & February ... Family picnic at Rockleigh Downs ... "We Care" phone in, is proving very worthwhile ... Plan for church growth presented to members by Graham Jones, Bellevue Heights Baptist.

DULWICH/ROSE PARK UNITED (Roger Brown, Rob Williams) Brian Phelps received Mission Fund cheque from Lindsay Bowes & addressed church ... Other recent visiting speakers were SA Conference President elect Keith Ridge and UCA State Moderator Dr Dean Brookes (Tusmore). The latter's visit was on occasion of 22nd anniversary of united parish ... Crazy whist evening at Roger & Judy Brown's home raised \$200 toward interstate ministerial removal expense.

CROYDON Appeal by Community Care Centre to assist the needy at Christmas receives a boost thanks to a generous donation of handmade toys & gifts by the craft group, a church outreach project. Wide range of packaged food suitable for Christmas menus contributed by church members over six weeks ... Russell Mountford to commence half-time ministry February 1994.

BROOKLYN PARK (P. Webber) Cooperation continues with Henley & Flinders Park two am services com-

bined, all pm services, picnics, prayer group, new Reactor youth group ... New Evangelist group ... Basketball premiership, club sportsmanship award ... Four tennis teams ... New format am services ... Financial support high school chaplain ... Elders elected M. Cambareri, G. Smith, E. Webb.

Tas

DEVONPORT (R. Chapman) Visiting guest speakers Steve Spelman (Feed the Hungry), Gary Billing (Baptist), Gary Tobler, Covenant Players, God's Squad ... GB 30th anniversary

church parade ... Task forces set up to look at church constitution & discipleship ... Anonymous gifts of computer system, video recorder, video projector ... Manse to be used as church office, study & counselling rooms when Chapmans move to own home ... Matthew Kenzie & Richard Ayton welcomed into membership.

HUONVILLE (Kathy Rochester) Farewell service for Peter & Marj Collins. Peter retired after serving for 35 years as church secretary ... Congregation looking at restructuring in 1994 ... Continuing commitment to support two part-time youth workers (shared with other Huon churches)

Ani Wierenga & Natalie Dixon ... Kathy Rochester studying at Regent College, Vancouver in 1994 ... Ray Meredith (Baptist Church) appointed as interim minister.

LAUNCESTON (C. Spaulding, D. Tobler) Congratulations to Louise Geiger & Maree Salmon who were presented with their Girls' Brigade Queen's Award on 21 November ... GB presentation night on 1 December ... Pryor family entertained CWF at their break-up on 24 November ... Other groups holding break-ups this week ... Kylie Birtwistle speaker at 7 pm youth service on 5 December ... D. Tobler on holidays.

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Kensington Changes

Kensington Christian Network closes

Following significant changes in the life of the Kensington Christian Network and its surrounding community, the group recently decided to discontinue meeting as a congregation. Factors influencing the decision include major population changes in the area, cessation in Ministry of Housing development and the continuing upgrading of the area with private accommodation. The leadership believe that the pattern and ministry style of the Network would not be appropriate for the future.

Ministry of Housing accommodation has been largely taken over for Indo-Chinese and Spanish people.

Along with these changes there have been continuing movements of leaders away from the area and changing personal circumstances.

The leaders acknowledge with thanks the outstanding help from supporters by way of letters, prayers, donations, personal assistance, Christian resources, food, furniture and so much else.

The ministry through the years since 1982 has been of outstanding significance to the people who were helped. A number found a faith through the Network's ministry and many have been encouraged in their personal journey.

Mike Esbensen, the minister at Kensington, has now moved to a ministry at North Essendon.

At the final service, a group of people gave thanks to God for the achievements

and the influence of the Network in the lives of so many people who have now moved on.

In 1994, the Victorian Department of Mission, Education and Development will consider whether there is a place for any new ministry in the area.

The Department invites friends and donors to consider support for the Urban Neighbourhoods of Hope project at Springvale under the leadership of Ashley Barker.

This church planting project has commenced through youth meetings and contact with the family groupings of numerous refugees and new immigrants, among some 300 people.

Many of these people are living in most difficult circumstances and are in danger of being part of a permanent ethnic underclass.

Ashley and Anji Barker and their volunteer team are deeply committed to evangelisation the building of a church to reach this sub-culture.

In 1994 it is proposed to develop work at Frankston in The Pines area where there is a similar group of 70-80 young people plus their wider family network. This group is currently in Ministry of Housing accommodation.

Enquiries to Don Smith, phone (03) 326 8900, or Ashley Barker (03) 547 1129, will be welcome.

[See also, Pamphlet Club in this issue.

—Ed]

The Last Word

Gossip is a low form of the communion of saints.

—Author unknown

"I crossed a hyena with a parrot."

"Why?"

"So I could ask what it was laughing about."

Sunday School teacher, "Do you remember your memory verse?"

Student, "I even remember the postcode—John 3:16."

After attending a prayer meeting where everyone prayed loudly, a young child remarked, "If they lived nearer to God they wouldn't have to pray so loud."

New employee to boss, "Well, if I can't have a raise, how about the same pay more often?"

It is better to give than to lend, and it costs about the same.

A ship collided with a fishing boat in heavy fog. No real damage was done, but as the offending ship tried to back off, it banged into the boat again. The captain, afraid some damage might have been done with the second blow, shouted through a megaphone to the floundering victim, "Can you stay afloat?"

"I guess so," called back the skipper of the boat. "Do you want to try again?"

How can you start a self-service dairy? Cross a cow with an octopus.



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"That will be eight cents more—while you were telling me how outrageous prices are, eggs went up."