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THE AUSTRALIAN CHRISTIAN

PREACHER IN A BLOODBATH

MASSACRE IN RWANDA



"The Preacher" by George Gittoes, winner of the Blake Prize for religious art.



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In Australia



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Editorial

Confronting Evil

Don Smith

Ron Taylor, the headmaster of Dunblane Primary School, described the tragedy in the school's gymnasium as "Evil visited us". "We don't know why; we don't understand it, and I guess we never will". This terrible event and the loss of sixteen young children and their teacher shocked the world.

The spectre of evil continues to revisit us. It has visited every generation in every century of human history.

It was there in the bloodbath in Rwanda. From our private residence, it is almost impossible to imagine the Rwandan scene captured by George Gittos. What of the mood of those about to massacre men, women and children? What could the preacher say? What is there to be said in such a fearful moment?

These are hard themes to write about. Far easier to turn on some relaxing music and put away such thoughts.

What has our faith or religious philosophy to say to such terrible events? Yet we have just come through Easter week with its message of alienation, torture, crucifixion and death.

Jesus came to bridge the chasm of human alienation and selfishness.

Evil in all its shapes and furies had created a barrier between humanity and God. It was not meant to be like that! The response to God was rejection and manifest evil in the hearts of men and women, who in some other circumstances may have been quite nice.

The story of the crucifixion is at the centre of the Christian understanding of human existence. It is understanding how to tell this message to our contemporaries that is the great challenge to our evangelists. This is a fundamental task ahead of us.

Dorothy Sayers the English detective story writer and playwright wrote a play-cycle on the life of Jesus. It was first performed on BBC radio between December 1941 and October 1942.

In the closing moments of *The Man Born to be King*, in a post resurrection scene, Jesus is with the disciples.

Jesus invites Thomas to touch his hands and side. Peter, witness to this moment



becomes aware of the implications.

"Master when I disowned you, when we failed, doubted and deserted you, is that what we do to God?" "Yes Peter." Then James speaks. He reflects on the mocking and the insults, the flogging, the nailing and the suffering. "Is that what we do to God?" "Yes James." And then John speaks, "Beloved, when you suffered and went down to death with all our sins heaped

upon you, is that what God does for us?" Jesus replies, "You are free to be false or faithful, free to reject or confess, to crucify or be crucified, to share the shame, the bitter cross and the glory. They that die with me, rise with me and are one with me."

This is the message which confronts evil wherever it visits us. The message springs directly from the crucifixion. It is a great "mystery" to be received by faith.

Ernest Gordon in his book *The Miracle on the River Kwai* describes a prison camp on the Burma Railway during World War 2. The morale of the Allied prisoners was low. Gordon describes how men forgot common decencies and sometimes descended to base levels to survive. It was every man for himself.

One day, as was customary, a count was taken of the tools after the day's work. There was one short. The men were lined up, questioned and abused. The man who had taken the shovel must step forward. Nobody moved. The officer raved with fury. The prisoners would all be shot if the guilty party did not own up. Then suddenly one man stepped forward. He was clubbed to death with rifle butts by the guards.

The prisoners were marched back to camp and the tools recounted. There had been a mistake at the first count. The tools were all there!

Ernest Gordon said the incident had a profound impact on the camp. It revolutionised morale. Here was an innocent man who died a voluntary death to save his doomed comrades.

How powerfully the story comments on the confrontation of good with evil at the Cross. The message sorts and sifts and separates us all. ♦

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Letters to the Editor



The Australian Christian welcomes letters from its readers. Short letters up to 175 words stand the best chance of publication. All letters may be edited. We reserve the right to omit letters altogether.

Ministry Seeks Help

To the Editor,

Almost twelve months ago, I was encouraged to form the Christian Singles Pen Friend Club. I was astounded to find the great need for some type of support group that would reach out and assist single Christians. Being a widower living on a single parents' benefit, I have found this to be a drain on my limited resources. However, I am determined to struggle on. The need is great.

I have been lead through prayer and devotion to attempt to do something to bring about a change in the current situation. This letter is part of that attempt. Our club needs members, financial and prayer supporters.

I am asking for prayer support and donations to help get our newsletter out each month and to assist to cover the cost of telephone counselling. This helps to get many isolated single people to at least communicate with each other.

Contact Christian Support Pen Friend Club, PO Box 507, Stawell Vic 3380. Phone (053) 58 4152. —Bryan P. Hedges (Stawell, Vic)

Encounter with Mother Teresa

To the Editor,

ABC Religious Broadcasts seeks the help of your readers for our weekly series on Radio National called *Encounter*. We plan to make a program entitled "Encounter with Mother Teresa".

It would seem that somebody has written a book suggesting that Mother Teresa has been wasting her time dealing with the poorest of the poor because she has not managed to reform the governments of the country in which she has spent most

of her life. I would like to hear from any of your readers who have worked with Mother Theresa at some time, helped her in some way, or even just visited her. A reply by the end of April is necessary. Please telephone the ABC on (03) 9626 1638. Readers outside Victoria can ring via their local ABC office. —Kay McLennan

(ABC Religious Broadcasts, Melbourne)

Making Hard Decisions

To the Editor,

I wholeheartedly agree that it is difficult to appreciate the anguish of Jack and Sybil Christie and the other members of the Cottesloe church ("AC" 2 March) and that Tony Sands and myself are well outside this situation.

In this connection, I do not wish this letter to be any criticism of the Cottesloe Church. However bearing in mind the poor location and the current small active membership of 25, shouldn't the painful decision be taken now rather than later so that the broader church can benefit now? There are so many growing areas in metropolitan Perth, eg the northern and southern coastal corridors which are crying out for funds to be spent on them to plant new churches. I wish that our "policy" of planting new churches and closing very small ones was similar to some other denominations where a broader consensus is sought to free up funds for where the need is greatest. —F. Hewitt (Wembley Downs, WA)

Women's Roles

We who have sat and listened for so many years should be sure that our role is for good, not for the outdated traditions that hinder the professed ideals of unity and reconciliation in the Body of Christ.

Marj Dredge has stated that the aim of the September Gathering at Belair, SA, was to encourage young women into leadership roles. This goes against traditional teaching in some of our churches. However, let us examine this old teaching in the light of the cross

Letters to the Editor

Hartwell Church of Christ 75th Anniversary

21st April, 1996.

10.00 am Worship: Speaker: Peter Bradley
12.00 noon Lunch, followed by a P.S.A.

All Welcome

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of Christ. Didn't he pay the full redemption price for all sections of humanity? Or was it a partial payment for women? Paul and Peter taught both. Redemption for all, then, that women must stay under the Judaic law? Thus we have had confusion since Pentecost. Pentecost spelled out the victory

over the curse, but tradition has left women only partially free. God cannot honour us in our goal of unity in the Body of Christ while we still tolerate the tradition that puts the female half of the church in subjection to male domination.

—Gladys Butler
(Bruce Rock, WA)

Update

Dear Readers,

This issue brings us some further new features. I'm sure you will enjoy the interview with John Grisham, the popular American novelist. We are indebted to *Wineskins*, a contemporary magazine from Churches of Christ in America, for permission to use this material. It is our hope to use material from the three churches within our tradition if it is helpful. You may like to hire *The Firm*, which is based on one of Grisham's novels, from your local video store. It is a great film to start with.

In this issue we also bring you a report on the outcome of the Federal Elections for the candidates we featured in the "AC".

In our planning for 1996 we have a special theme for each issue. This will run in parallel with our existing news items and regular features. Each of the themes will be supported by specialist articles and comments. Readers may like to

suggest themes which could be considered for future issues.

We value your comments on content or any other matters you would like to raise.

Thankyou for the continuing expressions of appreciation we are receiving about recent issues. A major challenge we face is to increase the number of new readers. If your church would like additional copies of recent issues these are available for promotion. You may also like to pass your own copy to a potential new reader and draw attention to the discount as set out in the application form on page three. Our chairman, Keith Aird, has suggested that current subscribers could make a gift subscription to family members or friends. What a good idea!

Sam Smith

Pontius' Puddle

I KNOW I SAID THAT IN TIME OF TROUBLE
ONE SHOULD CALL ON THE LORD TO HELP,
BUT BELIEVE ME, A SIMPLE PRAYER
WOULD SUFFICE.



Stirling Effort

Celebrating 60 years in ministry

A special celebratory service was held 4 February at Boronia, Vic, church, when Gordon Stirling celebrated 60 years of ministry, having been inducted at Lower Hutt, NZ.

Gordon chose to use the same text that he used at his induction, taken from 1 Cor 2:2. His relevant, down-to-earth, challenging sermon was hailed as "one of his best". Following the service, a luncheon was held in his honour and during proceedings a cake made and decorated by church secretary Bev

Jeffrey was cut. Keith Milne, past Vic-Tas Conference President and minister of Boronia church for 11 years, paid tribute to Gordon's long and effective ministry and presented him with a video of Gordon and Lesley's "This is your life" recognition evening held at Boronia some two years ago. The Boronia church is privileged to have Gordon and Lesley in membership and has appreciated the outstanding contribution they have made for many years.



• Gordon Stirling (above) and the cake with the symbolic horn of plenty



Can you Help?

Refugees to arrive in Adelaide

Starting in April, it is expected that 50 refugee families will arrive in Adelaide from Bosnia Herzegovina, six couples from Ethiopia and four single men from Eritrea.

The South Australian Council of Churches (SACC) is looking for fellowship groups, families or even individuals to befriend and assist these new arrivals with settlement. In the first three weeks of arriving,

the helpers will need to spend two days each week taking the new arrivals to government and medical appointments, enrolling children in schools, showing them how to use bus tickets and so on. Weekly visits will follow. The SACC will provide helpers with advice, support and information on settling refugees.

You don't need to speak their language, give them any money

or put them up in your house. You just need to have free time or a group of friends who have enough time between you and enjoy learning about other cultures. Following their arrival, we will be looking for a lot of prams, kitchen tables and chairs, lounge suites, beds, dressers, street directories, children's toys, clothes maidens,

etc. Perhaps you are about to replace something that is too good to throw away. If you are, you could donate the unwanted, but still in a reasonable and clean condition, goods to a new family.

Contact me on Tuesdays or Thursday mornings on (08) 232 0070 to discuss how you can help. —Christine Loveday

Horsham's First Female Pastor

Julie Trinnick inducted in to ministry at Horsham, Vic

Julie Trinnick will join Steve Blacket as the first woman to serve the church as a minister. She was inducted on 17 March. Julie's duties will include a full range of ministry tasks, including preaching, pastoral work and administration. She will oversee the church's team of voluntary office workers.

She brings a wide range of experience to the ministry, with service to the Overseas Mission Board as assistant director, teaching in Vanuatu and service with *The Australian Christian*. Julie has also taught extensively in Secondary Education in Victorian schools. She holds degrees in Arts, Theology, a Diploma of Education and a Graduate Diploma in teaching English to speakers of other languages. Julie has a



• Steve Blacket (left) with Julie Trinnick and former voluntary administrator Peter Finlayson

strong interest in mission work arising from her years of service in this area.

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Step of Faith

Young church makes bold move of faith in purchasing property

Last December the International Christian Community, under the leadership of Chek K. Chia, took a bold step of faith and signed to purchase the St Paul's Anglican Church, Glen Waverley. Situated 15 minutes walk from the station, fronting Waverley Road, the nearly ½ hectare property was purchased for \$900,000. The deposit was paid at the signing, with the final settlement in December 1997. The property has four buildings on it with

ample parking.

There was much excitement and rejoicing in the church over the purchase, because ICC was only about two years old at the time. The congregation could see that the Lord was moving miraculously to even raise the deposit within one day. Truly, the whole congregation saw it as the Lord's provision and totally rely on him to raise the balance of the funds needed in the coming year.

As the church has been exer-



cising much faith, unity, courage and prayer, for a few months, Chek and another member signed for the property after being informed by the church treasurer that there was only \$8,000 currently available in church funds. The Lord provided the rest of the deposit by moving a few hearts that

night after the usual prayer meeting, without Chek having to ask some members in the church to give.

The church has been praising the Lord for his miraculous provisions, which came in so short a time, and is praying continually for the balance of the funds. Pray with ICC.

Federal Election Outcomes

Election results for politicians featured in "AC"

Both Churches of Christ members who stood for election in the 2 March election were returned with substantially increased majorities.

John Forrest, the member for Mallee, Vic now holds one of the safest seats in Australia. He was elected with a majority of over 70%. John is a member of the Swan Hill church and a National Party representative in the House of Representatives.

John Bradford was also re-elected to the seat of McPherson, Qld as a Liberal member. On the basis of the election results, McPherson has also become a safe Liberal seat. John Bradford is a member of the Southport church. John is the secretary of the Parliamentary Christian Fellowship and John

Forrest serves as the treasurer.

Both men are enthusiastic about the prospect of a number of new members coming into the Fellowship. They also spoke very positively about their expectations of good standards prevailing in conduct of business and debate in both chambers and warmly welcomed the appointment of Kim Beazley as the new Leader of the Opposition.

Mr Jim Snow the previous Labor member for the seat of Eden-Monaro in NSW was defeated as was Senator Christabel Chamarette in WA.

Mr Neil Andrew the Liberal member for Wakefield, SA was

returned as was Senator John Woodley, Democrat, Qld. Each of these candidates were featured in our election issue of 17 February.

John Bradford is a member of the Lyons Forum which is a pro-family group within the Liberal Party and was responsible for influencing development of Liberal Party family policy.



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



• John Bradford



• John Forrest

Women's Day Celebration 110th Annual Conference

Monash City Church of Christ, 46 Montclair Avenue, Glen Waverley

Thursday 2 May 1996

CWF President, Lola Adam invites you to attend this great day of Praise, Worship, Enrichment and Celebration.

Theme: "Born Free—to love, give, hope, go, do and be"

Morning 10.20 am	Praise & Worship, Reports, Business, Offering, Interview, Soloist—Sandra Gibson
Basket Lunch or BYO	\$4.00 pre-order RSVP 25.4.96 to Lorraine Hughes, phone (03) 9802 8950.
Afternoon 1.20 pm	Speaker—Maren Chandler, 1995 Victorian of the Year, many years of voluntary work with young people. Georgie Cutler—Soloist. Induction of Shirley Wallis as President.
Coffee & Dessert Evening 7.00 pm	Theme: "Born Free-to be me" Panel of Speakers—Anji, Trudy and Ruth Cost: \$5.00 RSVP 26.4.96 to Elaine Elsdon (03) 9701 1101 or Liz Tilson—(03) 9326 8900.

Basketball Tour of Philippines

Taking opportunities to share about Jesus



• Andrew Harrison taking the opportunity to speak with school students

On 3 February 1996, I, along with nine others from Launceston, Tasmania and one each from Melbourne and Perth, left Australia on a twenty-day basketball tour of the Philippines. The twelve of us had been training physically and spiritually for over six months for whatever God had before us. We left not knowing what would happen, but knowing that God had brought us all together for the work he had for us to do. Three of the team had been before and so they tried to prepare us for what we could expect. However, you don't fully appreciate it until you see it for yourself. We stayed in Manila for two nights to enable us to train and prepare for the actual trip into the provincial areas of the Philippines. The morning we left for the airport to fly to where we would be playing for the next 2 weeks we got up at 5.00 am for a 9:30 flight. Manila, being the world's largest parking lot, had "better" traffic flow at this time, so it would take us 1½ hours instead of the 3-4 hours if we had left later.

We flew to the northern part of the Philippines and were based in a hired house in a town called Gattaran. We used our house as a base and travelled out from it each day for the two weeks we were in Gattaran. We had all the luxuries, concrete floors as beds, a bucket of water and a cup for a shower, the world's lowest toilet, a well

with water you couldn't drink unless it was filtered. We also had two Christian Filipinos who were our cooks for the two weeks, and they looked after us well.

Most days we were in the provinces we had two games a day. Some days we had three games and on Sundays only one. In all we played 27 games in the two weeks and won all 27 of them. We did lose a game of softball at a school against their girls' softball team. They were very good though, or we were pathetic! In all we played in front of over 25 000 people. This was both exciting and humbling. The teams we played in front of were either high and college school teams or local all-star teams. Some of these games were in so-called "stadiums", while others were played out in the hot sun. Our last game was in the Manila City Jail. This was for me my toughest game, because of the environment and the fact that it was our last game. Most of us were getting tired and looking forward to rest and coming home.

The thing that kept each of us going was the thought that the basketball was secondary. It was taking the opportunity to share about Jesus that was our reason for being in the Philippines. You see basketball is the Philippines' national sport. Therefore, World Harvest Ministries uses basketball as a means of getting people to-



• Travelling in style throughout the Philippines

gether so that at half time and after the game the players can share about the love of Jesus. The Philippines is a Catholic country and very spiritually aware, so most people are very open to hearing about Jesus and the assurance of salvation that only he can offer. During our

tour we had 8248 people sign up for a five-part Bible study course. This was certainly a blessing to us and also to the pastors of the local churches we found and the Christian teachers in schools who were excited to follow these people up.
—A. Harrison

No Bunyips but Still Fun

Kidsmin Adventure Camp

The recent Victorian Labour Day weekend saw 130 people brave bunyip-infested bush to post a record number of attenders at the annual Kidsmin Adventure Camp. Despite being in the Bunyip State Park and despite intensive searching, no bunyips were actually spotted. Nevertheless the weekend was a huge success, with the campers being kept busy with abseiling, archery, caving, canoeing, horse riding, overnight hiking, wide games, initiative games and an ongoing story about a search for a bunyip that brought with it a message about trusting God in all circumstances. There were campers from thirteen of our churches present, Ascot Vale, Ballarat—York St, Ballarat Family Church (Dawson St), Doncaster, Essendon North, Frankston, Gisborne, Maidstone, Maryborough, Ocean Grove, Ormond, Strathmore and Werribee and all reported having an excellent time. Why

not set aside next year's Labour Day weekend for your young people to come along and experience the adventure of a lifetime.



• Talitha Pearce emerging from the caves at Labertouche, part of the activities for the 1996 Kidsmin Adventure Camp

8 Years' Hard Labour

Hobart's history completed

Sunday 11 February 1996 saw the culmination of around eight years' hard work by Cec Neville.

The History of the Church of Christ Collins St, Hobart, 1872 - 1991 has been researched, collated and printed into a fantastic book spanning some 119 years.

The beautifully presented book has around 150 photos, original hand-written minutes from 8 February 1872 and many notes covering the many years of faithful service.

It contains more recent happenings and a list of the many ministers who have faithfully led this church.

In 1872 the church began with the formation of a group known as "Christians". They later be-

came "Disciples of Christ" and still later "Churches of Christ". There is even a photo of the first person baptised, Stephen Piper.

The West Hobart Church, which commenced in 1920 in Hill Street, rates a mention as an important part of the witness in Hobart. It closed and the members joined with Collins Street in about 1960, with the buildings coming under the care of Collins Street. Those buildings were later sold, but still stand.

Due to the collapse of the Tasman Bridge in 1975, the work at Howrah commenced. A good portion is given to explaining the early days of this work. This report covers the period through to the opening



• At the book launch for Hobart church's history

of their building in Rokeby Road on 9 December 1979.

Many hours of interesting reading are here. The book finishes with the church moving from Collins Street to 4-8 Goulburn Street.

Copies are available through the church office at 203 Liverpool Street, Hobart 7000. Phone (002) 34 3919 or fax (002) 31 3174. The cost is \$25.00 + \$5.00 postage.

—Clinton Wardle

European Evangelistic Society

Supporting our witness in academia in Europe

For the last 50 years Churches of Christ round the world have shared in the support of a witness to our plea for New Testament Christianity in the heart of academic Europe at Tübingen (Germany).

At the centre of this witness is the local Church of Christ which is known as *Christliche Gemeinde*.

The organisation sponsoring and financing this work (mainly in the USA) is the European Evangelistic Society.

The Society is celebrating its

first 50 years during the World Convention of Churches of Christ at Calgary (July 30 - August 4) at a Breakfast on the Friday morning in the historic "Stampede Park".

At the breakfast there will be an appreciation of the 22 years of service of the President, Dr Robert Shaw, who succeeded Dean Walker, the first President who served for 28 years.

The new President will be Dr Bruce Shields, formerly the pastor of the *Christliche Gemeinde* (1970-1975). Pres-

ently he is Professor of Preaching and Biblical Hermeneutics at the Emmanuel School of Religion.

At the Breakfast Dr Shaw will deliver the Dean Walker Con-

vention Lecture on "The Stone-Campbell Movement: A Strategy for World Wide Evangelism".

Delegates to the World Convention interested in the breakfast can write to Dr Robert Shaw, 3111 Anderson Road, Coral Gables, Florida 33134 USA.

Opening and Closing

Churches merge to form new congregation

After 143 years of service the Prahran Church of Christ, Vic, has amalgamated with the South Yarra Church of Christ, Vic. The Prahran chapel will close its doors for the last time on 12 May 1996 and reopen as the Stonnington Church of Christ at 61-71 McIlwrick St, Windsor on 19 May 1996.

If you want to say a last good-

bye to Prahran Church of Christ then come along to a Farewell to Prahran to be held at the chapel, 220 High Street Prahran, at 11.00 am on Sunday 28 April 1996. This will be followed by a light lunch and a tour of our new home.

RSVP 14 April 1996, Denise Lynas (03) 9510 5412, Graham Webb (03) 9510 4332.

MINISTRY OPPORTUNITY

Are you interested in a ministry that offers a faith-stretching challenge?

The Overseas Mission Board is seeking a minister who is looking for such an experience. The successful applicant will join Barry and Sue Ward in Suva, Fiji, working with the new and exciting church at Nakasi.

The person we seek will need to have:

- ☆ A willingness to cope with living and working in a cross-cultural environment.
- ☆ A preparedness to work in a team ministry.
- ☆ A strong commitment to Pastoral Care.
- ☆ A strong desire to serve Jesus Christ, to be innovative in approach to ministry, desiring to see the Church grow.

IS THIS YOU?

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If so, contact Jeff Weston for more information and an application form.

OMB 180a Gray St, Adelaide SA 5000

Phone (08) 212 4446

Fax (08) 212 6388

Here and There

Leslie Lyall Dies

Leslie Lyall who died in England in February, aged 90, was for many the voice of the Chinese Church through years of silence under Communism. While at Cambridge, where he led the Christian Union with J.B. Phillips, he played a key role in founding the Inter-Varsity Fellowship. In the 1940s the China Fellowship was the largest movement of its kind in the world. Westerners left in haste as the Communists took over provincial towns and hordes of students descended on Peking. Kathy Lyall ran a soup kitchen for the displaced students and Lyall preached to them. The family knew much suffering and were expelled from China in 1952. Leslie Lyall travelled through Asia, Africa and Europe telling the story of the church in China.

Fred Nile Sues ABC

The Rev Fred Nile, MLC has instructed his solicitors to launch one million dollar criminal defamation legal proceedings against the Australian Broadcasting Corporation for televising an obscene live representation of Fred Nile during the Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras Parade in Sydney on 2 March. The legal proceedings have also joined the producer and participants in the Wollongong University students' representation in the action. The action has the support of the NSW Council of Churches.

Confronting Euthanasia

A seminar on euthanasia will be held at the Uniting Church Centre for Ministry, 16 Masons Dve, North Parramatta on 30 April under the auspices of Heads of Churches, Sydney's West. The seminar commences at 9.00 am with medical, political science and theology specialists contributing to the discussion. Phone (02) 638 1458 for details. Graham Long is the Churches of Christ representative on the committee.

Tony and Elaine Butters

Commissioning service for Director of Finance, Administration and Community Development in PNG



On Sunday 18 February at Monash City Church Of Christ Tony and Elaine Butters were set apart for missionary work in Papua New Guinea. The service was conducted on behalf of the Overseas Mission Board and was attended by a good representation from Victorian churches. A special greeting was received from the Executive Director of OMB, Jeff Weston. Readers are encouraged to become actively involved in the work by supporting missionaries through The Living Links Programme. Details are obtainable from the Board's office 180a Gray St, Adelaide SA 5000, or through state representatives.

Building on the Foundation

Aldinga ministry news

Aldinga Regional Church of Christ, SA, celebrated the induction of Peter Clegg into ministry on Sunday 18 February.

A sense of great expectation has followed Peter and Vivienne Clegg's placement at Aldinga. The four-year ministry of David and Lyz Reynolds has created a base for further expansion.

The Cleggs' most recent appointment was with the Overseas Mission Board in establishing a vital church in Fiji. Their experience, energy, deep Christian commitment and

ability to "build church" across cultures will provide a wonderful opportunity at Aldinga.

The Croydon, SA, church has entered into Partnership in Mission with Aldinga by providing funds for one day each week during 1996 for the Clegg's ministry. Along with subsidy from Churches of Christ in SA and ongoing support of the Hindmarsh Trust, the local congregation has been able to establish a four-day funding base each week.

Keep a prayerful watch on what God is doing at Aldinga.



• Peter Clegg

Cheshunt Campsite

Decades of contribution to our youth

Fifty years ago the Churches of Christ North Eastern Victoria & Riverina Districts Conference decided to hold Young Peoples' Camps at Cheshunt, from Boxing Day to New Year's Day. Camps commenced on Boxing Day 1947, on a property owned by the Izzard family on the King River at Cheshunt. This year the 50th consecutive Christmas Youth Camp will be held at the same site.

Since the commencement of the first Camp in 1947, our camps on this site have resulted

in great blessing and challenge. At least one camper at the first camp made his commitment to Christ at the watch night service and is today Treasurer of the Wodonga church. Another made her commitment a week later, due to the camp, and is now Secretary of the Bright church.

Details of our camps or of hiring the camp and cottage can be obtained from the Churches of Christ camping department or from the camp caretakers (Les and Judy Smith

phone/fax (057) 29 8258). There is still much work to be done to complete some of the buildings; materials are on site. If any retired handymen or tradesmen would like a working holiday with free accommodation, contact Les Smith. We would also be overjoyed to hear from anyone with a spare tractor or ride-on mower to donate.

Next year we will hold a 50-year celebration.

If anyone would like to put their reminiscences on paper, or have photos from past camps, please send them to David Oldfield, PO Box 99, Wodonga Vic 3689. Phone (060) 24 2460. —David Oldfield

Books

Disappointment With God: Three Questions No One Asks Aloud

By Philip Yancey (Harper) \$5.95.

Is God unfair? Is God silent? Is God hidden? We ask these questions when life goes wrong and we feel that God has let us down. *Disappointment with God* asks these and other related questions. Yancey's concern is not with the cause of evil, but with how humans and God respond to it. Using everyday language and a Genesis-to-Revelation overview of the Bible, he explores both human expectations of God and God's response to human sinfulness and rebellion. Into this he weaves the experiences of Christians who have been affected by personal tragedy or bereavement. Some kept their faith, others did not.

Yancey finds it hard to give definitive answers, but he explores the limitations of human perception of the supernatural nature of God and the realm in which he works. Each person is left with a choice after a time of disappointment. We can reject God entirely, or we can believe in a God who does love us and cares for us, but who is often hidden and appears distant because of our limited human perception. Yancey does not hide his own struggles and doubts in this regard, sharing with us his own times of rebellion and disbelief, while encouraging us with his journey back to faith.

The book's short chapters encourage reflection and application. This book has helped me begin to come to terms with some of the disappointments in my own life and encourages me to positively reassess what I expect of God and how I view life in total.

—Andrew George

Evil and the Cross

by Henri Blocher (Apollon) \$19.95.

This is not a book to read for light entertainment, but if you are interested in a theological discussion concerning the problem of evil as it concerns Christians, then this is a good resource.

I have to admit that the analysis of solutions provided to the problem of evil that forms the first three chapters of the book presents rather heavy going and that some background reading in ethics and possibly even philosophy are definitely recommended. Nevertheless, the final chapters, where Blocher presents his position are much more accessible. Here he presents his approach, which has Scripture as its starting point.

I like this approach and found that I was given a lot to think about by the time I had reached his conclusion. I even thought that the hard work of the initial chapters was worthwhile as I found obscure references and difficult concepts finally beginning to gel.

Not a book for the faint-hearted, but one I would consider worthwhile reading.

—NDP



and the
CROSS

Preacher Takes the Prize

A positive image from the bloodbath in Rwanda



• 'The Preacher' by George Gittoes, winner of the Blake Prize for religious art

When artist George Gittoes was in Rwanda he saw a preacher preparing his people for the bloodbath. He didn't wind up the crowd with shouts of rage and revenge. Instead, his face full of pain, he comforted his people with words of hope.

The gentle, courageous man became the subject of 'The Preacher—Kibeho Massacre Series, Rwanda', the painting which won the prestigious Blake Prize for religious art in December.

Of his winning entry George Gittoes said: "I will never forget the image of the preacher in Kibeho Camp giving courage and hope to those about to be killed. This is a picture I had to paint, but feared I could never express the depth of my feeling for this man as he faced death with the dignity of one who shares his faith."

Mr Gittoes travelled to Rwanda with the Australian Defence Force as the official artist and 'The Preacher' was the first painting he attempted upon his return.

"When I returned home I was carrying this terrible imagery in my head," he said. "I have a wife and two children. I didn't want to go straight into the studio and start painting dead children. And the one powerful positive image I had was the preacher. I could see him in his yellow coat and I could feel his courage."

"He represented what I think religion should do: raise people up, make people feel human and spiritually alive and give them courage and faith." (Southern Cross. Used with permission.)

A Comment

I first heard about the picture 'The Preacher' by George Gittoes, shown on the cover of this issue, on a local radio station. Something intrigued me about the intense feeling expressed by the artist being interviewed. He powerfully conveyed the passion that he felt in witnessing the horrific deeds perpetrated in Rwanda. It seemed to me that his feverish speed in completing the picture immediately upon returning to Australia was like an exorcism of the terrors and brutality seen there that preyed upon his consciousness.

Continued on page 11

Reflections Following Neurosurgery and Recovery

Dean R. Phelan

The neurologist phoned on a Friday evening last mid-December. The call followed an MRI scan conducted several weeks before "to be sure that a numbness I had on the side of the face was nothing to worry about". He told me matter-of-factly that I had a brain tumour and said he thought I might need the week-end to process the information. It was a calm conversation. I asked relevant questions and thanked him for the call. Then I quickly unravelled.

To be told "out of the blue" that you have a brain tumour and will be dead within two years unless you have surgery, is a focussing experience to say the least. The ABC broadcaster Andrew Ollie died at around the same time, which added to our deliberations. I am initially

told all sorts of possible scenarios—you will lose your hearing and balance on the right side, possibly have a paralysed face or body on one side, sight is mentioned and, yes, you could die, as the operation will take a full day with two surgeons and an assistant.

I get my affairs in order, tell all the important people and try to keep a balanced positiveness about the most likely outcomes. I worry about work and the

load that will fall on others. I worry about Janette and the children. The medical system sweeps you up quickly with various tests, scans and appointments prior to hospital admission. It seems unfair, but there is nothing more that can be done at this point.

The admission to Royal Melbourne Hospital is going into the tunnel. The Neurosurgical Ward about the size of a war zone, with bandaged and wounded peo-

I asked relevant questions and thanked him for the call. Then I quickly unravelled



ple everywhere and enough patients seemingly away with the fairies to make you wonder. I am in a four-bed ward and behind a curtain screen another inmate is told he is terminal—also not good for my deliberations.

Continued from page 10

Strangely though, it was not the images of death and degradation that he felt compelled to portray. It was the portrait of a Christian preacher standing alone, rallying and comforting those who faced imminent destruction.

The artist spoke of the preacher appearing calm, displaying quiet courage amidst the oncoming carnage. When I look at the portrait it is not difficult to draw the analogy of this stricken figure with the image of Christ crucified.

In one sense the figure is like a martyr who accepts his fate as the price of his conviction. The tragedy in this case is that hundreds of thousands of people died for no more reason than their tribal and racial origin.

Such an expressive picture as this belongs to a long tradition of western art both religious and secular. The tortured

and accusing look of the preacher harks directly back to images of Christ's suffering on the cross by Matthias Grunewald from the Northern Renaissance of the early 1500s. This painter worked out of a sense of deep piety in order to communicate sacred teachings. His interest was not in the search for beauty, but in visual and spiritual truth. Just as George Gittoes has done, Grunewald sacrificed realism for a vivid portrayal of pain and tribulation in order to achieve an emotionally charged response.

A picture of equal power in expressing suffering and cruelty belongs to the early nineteenth century work by Francisco Goya (1746–1828). The 'Third of May 1808' is a portrayal of the execution of Spanish prisoners by soldiers of Napoleon's invading army in Spain. The central figure in this painting raises his arms in a desperate plea for reprieve in

front of the remorseless firing squad. While the painting techniques employed by the master Goya belong to a different time, the gripping emotional cues of the subject matter relate directly to Gittoes' work.

From the more modern era there are similarities in 'The Preacher' with the work of Oskar Kokoschka (1886–1980). This Viennese expressionist painter used jagged, thick brush strokes of dark, moody colour to achieve intensely troubled psychological interpretations of the human condition. Kokoschka's paintings did not portray a sense of protest like Gittoes' subject, but they express strong emotions using similar techniques.

The Norwegian Edward Munch (1863–1944) produced images of great emotional and psychological power. 'The Scream' resonates with disturbing neurotic energy. It protests anxiety of the spirit in much the same way that 'The

Preacher' cries out as a voice, surrounded by insanity and inhumanity.

Picasso's 'Guernica' is one of the seminal pictures in world art in the graphic expression of oppression and terror. Inspired by an atrocity committed by Franco's Fascists in the Spanish Civil War of 1938, 'Guernica' vividly conjures up images of death and destruction amongst the civilian population of a Spanish town. While this picture is rendered in a semi-abstract Cubist style, it conveys the same sense of moral outrage present in 'The Preacher'.

Man's inhumanity to man will always be a subject for artists to express in new ways.

Art is still quite powerful in its ability to stimulate the imagination and emotions. Like his predecessors, George Gittoes achieved a remarkable potency of feeling in representing another cry of the human spirit amidst the trials of the world.

—Keith Smith

Being wheeled down to theatre is the moment of truth. I am woken at 6.00 am, washed with special antiseptic and pushed naked, save for a flimsy gown, on a trolley through corridors and finally into the white operating room antechamber. Anaesthetists greet me and explain what will be done.

I next come to being aware that the room is on its side. It is evidently around 11.30 pm that night. They turn me towards the window and everything suddenly rights itself at the same time as I throw up. It seems there is much throwing up for the next day or so. I sense Janette is there and this is very important. I evidently ask over and over that the tumour was benign and that they got it all; and am assured that all has gone well. This eventually sinks in, although you have mild hallucinations in such circumstances..

Over the next few days I gradually become aware of everything hurting—lines in my arms, a catheter, oxygen mask, a beeping machine, an Andre Agassi haircut with my head clamped, numb and stapled together, right ear and face dead, my right eye not working, neck aching, a drain in my back and other parts complaining. My stomach hurts where they have taken some fat to plug the hole made in my head. My daughter says it is a good way to lose weight and it might improve my mental acuity. And so recuperation starts.

Lying in hospital, I more keenly reflect on what has happened and where I go from here. Everything seems very clear. In a way it is exciting that the core burns so brightly and I want to hang onto this clarity. Relationships and truth are two of the central themes in my mind. They have always been important to me, but they seem so fundamental. Love, care, justice and hope all seem very clear in what they mean and where they should stand in our affairs. I discover the paradox that is written about in the Scriptures, ie when you are stripped of everything, then everything can be made clear.

I am a stronger person as a result of all that has happened. The hearing and balance on my right side have gone, but I am recovering everything else and am able to function normally (or at least as normal as I was before the operation) with a prognosis of a normal life expectancy.

There is no doubt that suffering can produce strength. I can honestly say that I have received much more than I'd have ever conceived and I really want to make it count.

I have been reflecting on how one can best learn from the swirling emotions of fear and hope. I feel the answer lies in awareness and a deliberate habit of focussing on the positives. It is not a stoic, gritting of the teeth thing, but more a choice guided by an almost gentle faith that "all will be well".

Another significant part of the journey has been my experience of support and prayer. I have had an overwhelming sense of heartfelt thanks and warmth for the flood of support given to Janette, the family and myself—very practical assistance, food, cards, letters, posters, flowers, plants, gifts, calls of support and many, many prayers. I was told there were people praying for me in churches around Australia and even overseas. This has been very important to me and Janette throughout; and I can testify that you do have a sense of being buoyed up by a great ocean of love—a buoying up which has nothing to do with your own thinking or efforts.

This experience of being the recipient of so much prayer is

something that I have not previously encountered.

I want people to know that it is real and to take strength from my testimony. I have had an image of God's love and healing power shining down and being intensified and channelled like a magnifying glass by all the prayer. It seemed to me that this is how prayer works.

I had two totally unrelated people tell me that for the first time in their life God had spoken to them and had told them that I would be fine, and indeed, would go on to do great things. I'm unsure what to make of this or what to say about it, other than it was uplifting and I hope I am

open to whatever I am called to do.

I was also humbled and somewhat amazed at the extent of the Churches of Christ network and the way it responds to such an individual situation. There have been so many calls and letters of encouragement from Conference Departments, churches, and individuals. It really is a brotherhood in the best sense of the term. I chose to become a member of Churches of Christ because I believe passionately in who we are and what we aspire to be. What I discovered is one of the really nice "fringe benefits"—the sense of belonging and being cared for. It was particularly important to me to know there was a community who would care for my family if I didn't make it. I found I was very emotional about this. It is one of the church's strengths that we should never take for granted.

I discover the paradox that is written about in the Scriptures, ie when you are stripped of everything, then everything can be made clear

The request for this article has focused my thoughts around a recovery issue I have grappled with since leaving hospital, ie balancing between the poles of denial and indulgence. On one side, I want to move forward, to not really think about that period, to pick up and carry on from where I left off, to conduct business as usual. There is an element of proving I am just as good as, if not better than, before. On the other hand, there is a legitimate temptation to remain in convalescence, feeling tired and entertaining inquirers with the gory details and battle scars. Somehow both have been important—the telling of the story and the getting on with it. It involves time, action and reflection. My learning has been about integrating the experience. For it has been a significant journey involving all aspects of who I am—physical, mental, emotional, spiritual and social.

I would like to close this reflection by again expressing my heartfelt thanks to everyone. I am also interested in other people's experience and understanding of prayer. It is something that is an integral part of our Christian beliefs and perhaps a future edition of *The Australian Christian* could encompass a forum for interested people to share their views. ♦ *Dean Phelan is a member of The Patch, Vic, church and has been chairman of the Vic-Tas Department of Mission Education and Development since 1993.*

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A Pastoral Perspective on Suffering

Jenni Ashton

Jenni, chaplain at Bethesda Hospital (the Churches of Christ hospital in WA) and graduate of CCTC Mulgrave, reflects on pain and suffering as encountered in ministry to the non-Christian.

She has been with him every day for eight weeks now. This frail, yet determined woman whom I will call Mrs Jones. Day after day she comes to watch and wait, as the man she has loved for over 50 years, slowly dies. The air is thick with the smell of disease that no amount of air freshener will cover up, the groans cannot be drowned out by soothing classical music, and the reality of losing the most important person in your life cannot be denied. This is death at its most confronting and haunting. This is called suffering.

As you can imagine, Mrs Jones and myself have become quite close in the intimacy of this hospital room. Suffering is like that. It has the capacity to draw even the most incompatible people together. It compels us to look to each other for support, as it almost taunts us to face the fray. In a rather perverse and sickening way, suffering confronts us like the schoolyard bully who has just stolen our bag of favourite lollies. Something important to us is being threatened by someone or something bigger and stronger than ourselves.

The most distressing reality of suffering is that it strips us of all our security and courage. It reminds us that even though we may think we have control over ourselves and our circumstances, we in fact do not. We are at the mercy of life itself and sometimes that life stinks! As Mrs Jones and many others will tell you.

Today is the beginning of week nine, and Mr Jones is having a particularly difficult day.

I sit very close to Mrs Jones as she in turn sits very close to her husband. Suddenly Mrs Jones turns to me—and says, 'How can God let this happen?' I want to cry. I want to tell her that it is not God who is doing this to her loved one, but life itself. I want her to know that sometimes God's hands are tied. I

want to reassure her that while she sits here in this room, God sits right beside her and that every tear she cries, God cries also. But instead I sigh and say, "It's so hard isn't it?" For my experiences suggest that her question, like so many others I hear, is a cry for understanding and empathy not necessarily an invitation for theological debate.

It is a last-ditch attempt to get back the lollies stolen by the schoolyard bully. It is an indication that this person has reached the brink of their ability to make sense of their situation, and so in desperation they turn to God—if only to blame and question.

For the majority of people I come in contact with, their recognition of God is limited to times of need and great distress. Many of these people would call themselves Christian, then quickly define that label as someone who always does what is right and helps others in need. In my work there would be very few people who define their Christianity in terms of a personal relationship with Jesus. For many peo-

ple, God plays little or no part in their everyday lives and experiences. God is nothing more than a word used to express frustration upon stubbing a toe. Most people become quite successful at keeping God on the fringes of their life, until something happens that reduces the boundary lines and forces God

closer. As suffering strips people of their usual coping abilities, they are forced through their own vulnerability to look deeper into themselves and into God.

It is at this point, when questions of God and suffering are raised, that we need to be very careful of Christian clichés and easy solutions. It is not the time for words that say,

"Don't be silly, how could a God of love let your husband suffer?" It is a time for deep empathy that asks, "What is this situation like for you? What do you need from God at this time? How can I help you understand what God is like?"

When people question why God allows suffering, I suspect they are really asking, "Who is this God, that right now is allowing me to suffer?" It is a question that is often loaded with feelings of anger, uncertainty, resignation and fear. "How could you take my favourite lollies?" pleads the youngster with the schoolyard bully.

While I recognise that people often need the space and resources to explore the theo-



logical implications of such a question, it is my belief that the bedside of a dying person is not that space. The question raised at the bedside is often more pastoral than theological. It is a question that if answered appropriately can provide some comfort and reassurance that even in the midst of the most terrible pain, God is somehow with us. Even if God is being challenged and confronted for allowing suffering, God is still recognised as being there, and for those who are not accustomed to having God anywhere near them, it is a start. If handled gently and with respect, it may in fact be more than a start and even a reawakening of greater understanding to come.

It is the end of week nine and I am paged urgently to Mr Jones's room. I draw alongside Mrs Jones and as she turns to me she says, "It's finished he's at peace now." I hold her close and feel the relief within her. While her suffering is not complete, that immense pain that comes from watching someone you love die, has begun to abate. Mrs Jones is able to pull back from the brink of her suffering, reassess where she is and perhaps ponder more fully who is with her. It is my hope and belief that the God she questioned at the height of her distress is the very same God she recognises holding her gently and quietly now in her grief. ♦

This person has reached the brink ... and so in desperation they turn to God—if only to blame and question

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The Gospel of Peace in the Midst of Violence

Ashley Barker

So far this year has been incredibly violent for us. As missionaries who move into marginalised neighbourhoods in and around Melbourne, we have experienced the full force of the frustration and desperation of those around us. We have had some close shaves.

In January I was struck on the back of the head with a pair of sharp pliers and then bailed up with a kitchen knife at my throat by a friend desperate for drugs.

We survived.

In February a Vietnamese flat-mate of Marcus and Rachel Curnow (UNOHers serving Indo-Chinese in a Nunawading flats community) moved into another flat with some other people.

A few days later one of the man's new flat-mates was murdered and the other severely beaten by a group of Anglos with base-ball bats. The Curnows former flat-mate was the one the group was after, but he wasn't there and survived. Had the attack been a

few days earlier, it could also have been the equally innocent Curnows.

In March, the media showed a different kind of violence toward us. *A Current Affair* did an "investigative report" into the heroin problem in our neighbourhood. On national television they secretly purchased heroin from fifteen-year-old boys near our railway station in Springvale. Then, after the commercial break, came back with the police to "frame" these heroin addicts. No heroin was found. No charges were laid. Just innuendo and "they were lucky (perhaps innocent?) this time". Fifteen-year-old faces were shown to the nation and exploited to make a sensational story.

What does the Gospel require of us in this context? What does the Gospel of peace mean in the midst of urban violence? I would suggest that Jesus' call to discipleship in Mark 8:34-38 gives us the best perspective to understand what God is requiring of us.

Deny ourselves: Issues of motivation and idolatry.

If violence is "rough force", we must name the "principalities and powers" that help create it. Jim Wallis once said, "That which commands our time, energy and thoughts is what we worship. The things we usually think about, worry over, and plan for are the things we value most." An exercise of listing the top five things we "worship" and "value most" over the last week using Wallis' definition would humble most

of us. Even more humbling is the question, why are these things the most important things to us? Before we lay blame on others for violence, let us first examine how we have bowed down to the idols of our "unfaithful and sinful generation". If we buy into the worshipping of the "gods" of

Power, Security, Image, Self, Status and Survival of the Fittest, we are partners in the violent crimes that results from such worship.

Take up your cross: Issues of Resistance and Suffering.

There are consequences

in not "bowing down" to the idols of our age. By society's standards: our families will suffer, our careers will suffer, our "quality" of life will suffer, our bank-balance will suffer, our bodies may even have to endure violence as the powers "kick back".

There is no way to be both safe and resist the powerful idols of our era at the same time. Jesus was not crucified because he was nice, but because of his life. Jesus knew that cost of resisting the powers would, in the end, be his life; and yet he was still prepared to live this way. We must be prepared to ask, what is the worst these powers can throw at me if I resist them? The answers will not be comfortable, but then crucifixions never are. Follow me: Issues of discipleship and grace.

The Gospel is only Good News when it is applied. Jesus' life of single-minded attentiveness to God's will was such Good News for humanity that



the Father resurrected him to underline this kind of life. We must live a similar life to Jesus and encounter this resurrected Christ if we are to sustain the resistance movement. Our spiritual fitness, then, is crucial to the viability of such a life. The spiritual habits, choices and disciplines we build into our lives on are our foundations for action. Elite sports people do not simply "do their thing" on the big day. They practice and keep putting themselves into positions that make the "big moments" almost "second nature".

Will we serve Christ or Mammon? Such moments are choices for us that tell us where our allegiances really lie. In the end, we only believe what we do with our lives. A Christ-like life then, is the ultimate testimony (Greek: *martyr*) to the compassion of God in a violent world.

Ashley Barker and his wife Anji live in Springvale, Victoria, and serve with the Urban Neighbourhoods Of Hope (UNOH) Mission, a Department of Mission Education and Development outreach to the marginalised in urban Melbourne. New UNOH chapters are being considered in other capital cities.



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DODD-BEAUMONT Joan and Robert Dodd have pleasure in announcing the approaching marriage of their only daughter Jodie, to Greg Beaumont at the Brooklyn Park Church of Christ, Allen Avenue, Brooklyn Park SA, on Sunday 21 April 1996 at 3.00 pm. Officiating Ministers—Mark Dodd and Ron McLean.

WESLEY-BOYD Don & June Wesley of Pyramid Hill, Vic, announce with pleasure the marriage of Lyndon to Breallyn, daughter of Colin & Sue Boyd of Chimside Park, Vic, on 20 April.

GOLDEN WEDDING

STOCKS The 50th wedding anniversary of Dorothy and David Stocks, married at Ann Street Church of Christ, Brisbane, by Mr Frank Hunting, was celebrated 2 March 1996.

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Hospital Chaplaincy

Listening

Glen Wegner



God gave us two ears and one tongue. With such an anatomical arrangement it may be inferred that we have been designed to listen more than talk.

Good pastoral carers understand the art of listening.

Listening is more than hearing. A good listener hears more than words.

Pastoral listening looks beyond the words in order to understand the person who offers those words. If we only hear the words we may miss the essential message.

We need to be able to read body language as well.

Tradespeople are only as good as their tools, and the best tool a pastoral carer has

to offer is the capacity to be a genuine listener.

A common mistake beginners to pastoral care make is to talk too much.

The talkative pastoral carer is usually nervous or insecure. When nervous or insecure we ask questions, or try to cheer the other person up.

This usually results in the carer dominating the conversation, instead of leaving the one being cared for freedom to raise their issues of concern at their own pace.

Be slow to ask questions, but if you must, make them open-ended questions.

Questions draw out facts. If you only deal with facts the pastoral relationship won't go far. Focus on feeling more than fact.

Good listeners accept what is said and felt.

They provide a secure and confident

tial climate for conversation, and are comfortable with silence.

A good listener is slow to give advice and is aware that answers are not the solution.

(Remember Joh's friends.)

Often a good response is, "Um" or "Oh".

A skilled listener understands the power of brief responses, as these demonstrate that the carer can make contact with the hurts and feelings of the other person.

Appropriate brief responses encourage the other person to talk from the depth of their inner self.

Listening often assists healing by allowing the talking out of stress or concerns. This is called catharsis.

It is like lancing a festering sore to release the bad matter. Difficult emotional material can be released through listening. This may help bring relief from grief, anger, hurt or stress, which, if retained, is never good for one's well-being.

Good pastoral listeners never repeat what they hear. They know the meaning of trust and confidentiality. ♦

The best tool
a pastoral
carer has to
offer is the
capacity to
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For further enquiries, please ring (03) 9663 3884



Meet Paul Davies and the Big Questions

Viney Longthorp

By popular demand SBS Television is to give a repeat performance of "Paul Davies—The Big Questions". This is the six-part television series in which he is joined by broadcaster and commentator, Phillip Adams. As may be expected, "dear Phillip" provides the other half of a lively and fascinating dialogue.

Paul Davies is Professor of Natural Philosophy at the University of Adelaide. He is the author of an impressive range of books which have much to say about the relationship of theology to science, about metaphysics and philosophy and their significance for the Christian world view, of its view of nature and the cosmos.

Davies has expounded these ideas in such books as *Superforce*, *The Cosmic Blueprint*, *The Runaway Universe*, *God and the New Physics*, *The Edge of Infinity*, and more recently, *The Mind of God*. His books have so impressed, that our author has been the recipient of several prestigious awards, one in excess of a million dollars, for his contribution to philosophical thought as it touches upon religion.

These dialogues provide not only fascinating half-hour viewing, but mind-stretching ones at that.

But as Carl Jung once said, "A little bit of incomprehensibility is good for one." Even so, my advice is to sit in an uncomfortable chair in front of your telly.

fortable chair in front of your telly.

The title of Davies' post is significant: Natural Philosophy. This is the name given to certain branches of science some two hundred years ago before science and theology—"The Queen of the Sciences"—parted company. Thus the title held by Paul Davies is symbolic of many changes in the views which science has of itself as it openly and honestly engages in self-evaluation.

Those who saw the Compass program on ABC-TV on 24 March last, of the work and thought of the Reverend John Polkinghorne, an eminent scientist and President of Queens College, Cambridge, will get an inkling as to the ways in which scientific and religious thought are now being widely regarded as being complementary.

The once simplistic view that science and religion are inherently incompatible no longer holds good. For what is emerging are realisations such as: science is not as value-free as once thought; that the so-called "subjective" nature of religion is not necessarily a disability in the apprehension of truth; that scientific ideas and their formulations are far more culturally determined than once believed; that thanks to such concepts as quarks and the quantum theory there are discontinuities and mysteries in scientific theories which gives it the same "untidiness" as our concepts of God.

These, then, are some of the things which we are invited to consider. Interested? Then read on!

"In the Beginning" (12 April) Paul Davies and Phillip Adams meet on the outskirts of the remote opal mining town of Coober Pedy in South Australia. Here they discuss the origin of the universe.

"The Creative Cosmos" (19 April) Considered is the complexity of nature, the struggle between order and chaos. Paul and Phillip ask what is the destiny of intelligent beings in a universe whose fate is already determined by physical forces?

"The Riddle of Time" (26 April) Time—that elusive thing we never have enough of—is the topic here. Was Einstein right when he claimed that time can be warped? Is time travel a possibility?

"The Ghost in the Machine" (3 May) Our intrepid two ponder whether or not human beings are capable of unravelling



all the secrets of nature.

"In Search of ... The Theory of Everything" (10 May) Scientific endeavour is regarded by many as a search for unity. Paul and Phillip ask if there is a "theory of everything" that brings all things together in a single mathematical scheme?

"What Does It All Mean?" (17 May) In the final episode the question addressed is: "Is there a God?" What is the meaning of our existence? Where does science stop and faith begin?

Obviously, these programs give no glib answers to the question of the existence of God or the nature of God. What is needed still is that "leap of faith" which builds its own certitudes.

To conclude, here are three sayings by scientists who are "on the side of the angels":

"To admit the relativity of all merely human formulations is the most profound way of acknowledging the ultimate authority of God."

—Hanbury Brown

"A clash of doctrine is not a disaster—it is an opportunity."

"Religion will not regain its old power until it can face change in the same spirit as does science."

—A.N. Whitehead

Confirm times by consulting current television guides. ❖

Scientific and religious thought are now being widely regarded as being complementary

A Church is Born

On 19 May 1996 the Stonnington Church of Christ opens its doors for the first time.

The new Stonnington church is the result of the amalgamation of South Yarra and Prahran churches, following a combined service to the community of Prahran of 247 years.

"To God Be the Glory Great Things He Has Done."

Interview

John Grisham

Mike Cope

Mike Cope, co-editor of "Wineskins", a Churches of Christ (USA) journal interviews best-selling author John Grisham. (Article and photograph reproduced with permission.)

Sales of first six books: 55 million copies. Worldwide box office take for the three movies already made from his novels: \$572 million. First printing for his sixth novel, *The Rainmaker*: 2.8 million (an all-time record). John Grisham, lawyer-turned-megastar, is, according to *Time* magazine, "as bankable as the biggest movie stars".

But that isn't what made *Wineskins* co-editor Mike Cope, a self-professed addict of Grisham novels, want to interview him. Rather, it is the author's deeply-held Christian faith—a faith that shows in his attention to his family and friends and in his literary decisions.

In this exclusive interview for *Wineskins*, the author of *A Time to Kill*, *The Firm*, *The Pelican Brief*, *The Client*, *The Chamber*, and *The Rainmaker* allows us to hear about the central part of his life that will likely not be reported by *People* magazine or "Entertainment Tonight": his faith in Jesus Christ.

Cope: Readers of your books can't help noticing the absence of gratuitous sex and filthy language. This is so unusual for best-selling novels today. How does your faith relate to this decision as an author?

Grisham: *The Firm* became a best-seller for several reasons, not the least of which was the absence of bad language and gratuitous sex. Parents read the book, enjoyed it, then realised it could be recommended to teenaged children and grandparents. The book was passed around, word of mouth was good and it became very popular. When I started writing, I made the simple decision to keep it clean. The decision was based on my Christian faith and a certain lifestyle I'm trying to maintain and I've never been tempted or pushed to write otherwise.

Cope: What do you think this

says about the taste of the American public—whom many have assumed will only read racy novels and watch R-rated films?

Grisham: Most people care little for the R-rated fare continually shoved at them by our popular culture. Clean books and movies and albums, if well-done, can be exceptionally popular.

Cope: What are a couple of your favourite memories of growing up in the Southern Baptist Church? Especially—what had an impact on the formation of faith in your life?

Grisham: I grew up in several small Baptist churches throughout the South, and each church was an extension of the family. Much of our social lives centred around the church. Our friends were members. My school teachers were also my Sunday School teachers. There was a lot of warmth and love. Accepting Christ was a natural step for me as a young boy.

Cope: Have wealth and fame complicated your life?

Grisham: Yes, very much so, though we work hard at keeping life simple. We're generally successful, I think. The money is new and we're adjusting to it. Both my wife and I have middle-class backgrounds and we've struggled with the overnight financial rewards of being a best-selling author. We give a lot of money to churches, missions, charities. The fame is a first-class pain and something I could live without.

Cope: How are you able to keep your life in balance? When the choice is a book-signing or a



child's ball game, how do you solve the competing demands on your time?

Grisham: I go to the ball game. I've just completed a limited book tour for *The Rainmaker*—eight book stores—and I planned it around my Little League schedule. Next year, I plan to pub-

lish novel number seven on 1 March, so there will be no conflict with baseball. Kids keep your feet on the ground. Regardless of success, fame, ego, whatever, kids have a way of reminding you that perhaps you're not as cool as you think.

Cope: Writers are often viewed as an egotistical bunch. How do you combat the sinful human tendency toward pride?

Grisham: I struggle with it. And I constantly remind myself that this is only temporary. Five years ago I was struggling as a lawyer and five years from now the books will not be selling as they are now. Virtually everything is temporary.

Cope: Your attention to your wife and children has been a positive model for others. How did this devotion to your family develop?

Grisham: It didn't develop. My wife and I are both products of tight-knit, Southern Baptist families in which our parents were always there. It's simply a way of life. We've never wanted to do anything but devote our children.

Cope: Last year you went with a group on a mission trip to Brazil. What was the most powerful impression from the trip?

Grisham: It was my first visit to a developing country,

though Brazil in many ways is thoroughly modern. It made me ashamed for all the material things I possess and it showed me how little these things are worth. It also opened my eyes to the power of the gospel, because for the first time I witnessed hundreds of people touched by it at the same time.

Cope: In *The Chamber*, you wrestled with the issue of capital punishment. How did your faith affect the writing?

Grisham: In writing the book, I was transformed from a pro-death penalty supporter to a person whose daily ambivalence on the issue is disconcerting.

I find it difficult to believe that Jesus would have supported legal killings, yet at the same time I find myself angry and vindictive at the crimes.

Cope: In *A Time to Kill*, you refer briefly to a Church of Christ. Having lived in Arkansas, Mississippi, and Louisiana, you've surely had some picture of who we are. What's your "outsider's take" on us?

Grisham: My father was raised in a Church of Christ and I have many friends who are members. (One in particular is Dr Gerald Turner, the former chancellor of Ole Miss and the new president of SMU.) We view you as kindred spirits who should break down and enjoy the benefits of pianos and organs. It's just too bad we can't spend eternity together.

Cope: How do you want your fiction to be remembered?

Grisham: I honestly don't know. This career is still new, still in its infancy, so it's difficult to jump forward many years and speculate about how the books might be remembered.

Cope: What advice would you offer to younger readers of *Wineskins* who may be interested in entering the secular book market?

Grisham: Don't quit your day job. Start writing strictly as a hobby, but be dedicated to it. Write slowly and write about what you know and feel. And, be prepared for a lot of rejection. ❖



Churches Offer Hospitality through Host Atlanta

June Doster

The biblical message has a strong theme of hospitality running through both the Old and New Testaments. The Torah contains several laws concerning hospitality to strangers in both Leviticus and Deuteronomy. In Rom 12:13 Paul urges the Christians to "practice hospitality", and the author of the letter to the Hebrews warns, "Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares." (13:2) Peter writes: "Practice hospitality ungrudgingly to one another. As each has received a gift, employ it for one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace." (1 Peter 4:9-10).

The churches of Atlanta have taken this principle of hospitality to heart through one of the Quest Atlanta '96 initiatives called "Atlanta Host". Forty participating denominations

are working cooperatively with AT&T in providing homes for families of Olympic athletes during the 1996 Olympic Games. AT&T has provided the funds for advertising and has urged its employees to join with the church families in offering homes providing bed, breakfast and limited transportation to Olympic venues.

Because many athletes do not know until 10 days or two weeks prior to the Games that they have made the team for their nation, it is too late for their families to make reserva-

tions for places to stay and tickets for the events. Previous Olympic Games have been very disappointing to these families, when they have sacrificed per-

sonal finances to make the trip, only to go home without a room, transportation to the venues or tickets to the events. And for every athlete who wins a medal, there are numerous others who suffer great disappointment and are in need of friends and support.

Church fami-

lies can offer a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for these families to watch their athlete compete, and render love and support when disappointment comes. The goal for Disciples of Christ is 100 homes.

In addition to offering homes for athletes' families, the churches in the downtown corridor of Atlanta, 27 in all, are opening their doors during the Games in order to offer hospitality in other ways. There is a three-mile (4.8 km) pedestrian corridor from the Olympic Stadium to the Georgia Dome, the Omni, and Georgia Tech, where most of the Atlanta events will take place.



Hundreds of thousands of visitors will walk by these churches every day. They will find cold drinks, lounges for rest and visiting, rest room facilities, and musical concerts and art exhibits by Christian groups.

Peachtree Christian Church is one of these 27 churches. It is on the national historic registry because of its magnificent stained glass windows depicting the entire biblical message. There are ten clerestory windows rising above the roof of a flanking aisles, depicting in chronological order the revelation of God's love, law, and salvation through the Hebrew people and the Messiah, Jesus Christ. There are fine panels in each of these ten windows. The smaller windows in the outside aisles are the 10 great parables that Jesus taught. Two large windows at the front and back of the sanctuary depict the Great Commission and that Jesus Christ is Lord.

The Peachtree Church has printed thousands of colour booklets telling the story of these windows to give to visitors as they tour this historic gothic church. Just viewing these beautiful, historic windows is a witness to our Christian faith.

Through the efforts of these churches, it is hoped that when the world comes to Atlanta, they will see Christ in its people. ❖

It is hoped that when the world comes to Atlanta, they will see Christ in its people

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Reconciling our Theology with our Cosmology: The Trinity

Gordon Stirling

The doctrine of the Trinity was a fourth century development. Father, Son and Holy Spirit were certainly present in the New Testament, but the New Testament writers did not try to arrange the relationship between them into a fixed formula. But when three centuries of persecution of Christians were over, the church could afford the luxury of preoccupation with doctrinal efficiency, tying up in neat credal parcels everything that the New Testament writers had failed to tidy up. Hence the trinitarian formula.

And the new trinitarian formula fitted well with the flat earth three-storey universe that was generally accepted. God was on one throne governing the world "from a distance" and Jesus was on another throne waiting patiently for the *parousia*. As they were both in the top story above the solid blue dome and people were on the ground floor, they sent the third person of the Trinity, the Holy Spirit, to represent them on earth.

I visited the magnificent new cathedral in San Francisco. One of its features is the "Balchino"

hanging from the lofty dome to the floor, representing the Holy Spirit coming down from above. Here is a hangover of medieval thinking in a very contemporary building.

It had all been very tidy with the Father and the Son "upstairs" and their representative, the Holy Spirit "downstairs" on earth. The only problem was that in the New Testament there are many references to the presence of God and the presence of Jesus Christ on earth and working in the lives of people. Wanting to keep the Father and the Son up where they belonged, the church said that in these refer-

ences to the presence of God and Christ, what was really meant was the Holy Spirit.

But after Copernicus, when the new cosmology had shattered the three storey universe,

it also shattered the neat Trinitarian arrangement that went with it. So now we have to go back to the New Testament again to see on its pages that the first Christians experienced the presence and power of God as creator, sustainer and redeemer. They also experienced the powerful and stimulating presence of the risen Christ. They also experienced the insight from and the gifts of the Holy Spirit. They made no attempt to fit

So our cosmology has broken down the stiff constraints which put three persons into three mutually exclusive boxes

these experiences into neat categories. That is where we are today.

This should not surprise members of Churches of Christ. In our attempt to restore New Testament Christianity, we always insisted on "Bible names for Bible things" and as the word "trinity" does not appear in the New Testament, in our earlier history we avoided using the term. There was no section in our hymnals labelled "The Trinity". Some of the purists among our earlier people would not sing hymns in which the word "trinity" appeared.

So our cosmology has broken down the stiff constraints which put three persons into



three mutually exclusive boxes. We are set free to experience God and Jesus Christ his Son and the Holy Spirit without wondering if we are making a theological mistake if we refer to the experience as being that of one rather than the other. Paul had no such inhibitions. In his great prayer for the church in Eph 3:14-20, in the space of four verses, he speaks of the Spirit within, of Christ dwelling in us and of being filled with all the fullness of God.

So we worship God who continues his creative work within us as our gracious redeemer and we exult in his immediate presence. We walk the way with the living Christ our friend and guide who continues to save us from all that inhibits our eternal life and we rejoice in his immediate presence. With openness of mind we allow the Holy Spirit to lead us into truth and with openness of life we receive his gifts for the church's mission and we delight in his immediate presence.

Is this not what the New Testament benediction is all about? The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, And the love of God, And the fellowship of the Holy Spirit Be with you all.

(2 Cor 13:14) ♦

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Is God Just?

Merryl Blair

The question "How can God be a God of love and justice?" often arises whenever we experience the suffering of innocent people. Any pastoral worker can testify that one of the first responses to sudden loss is "Why did this happen to me?" or "Why that person?", often followed by "I/he/she always tried to live a good life". Many people cannot believe in God, because they cannot accept the Christian idea of an all-loving, all-powerful God in the face of so much suffering in the world.

This search, which is basically for some meaning in suffering, is by no means new. The people of Israel, like many before and since, wrestled with it constantly throughout their history. Over the centuries, they tried to grapple with understanding God and his action in the world, specifically within their own history, in such a way that allowed them to hold together their actual life experience and a deep belief in God as a God of love and justice.

Perhaps the most poignant expressions of this continual search lie in the Book of Psalms. Here we have the essence of the interaction between life and faith. Many psalms reflect the hard collision that occurs when life experience does not match up with faithful belief. In Psalm 44, for example, we hear a cry

from the whole people as they experience a crushing military defeat. What makes their pain shattering and unbearable, however, is not defeat at the hands of enemies, but the feeling that it is God who has caused the defeat (Psa 44:9, 12). While this is not a new experience in itself (defeat at the hands of enemies was considered a

fairly natural punishment for corporate sin), in this instance the people declare their innocence (v. 17). In other words, the people are lamenting, not military defeat, but the perceived injustice of God. The tone of the psalm is one of bewilderment, with the only possibility of finding an answer lying in the final words: "Rise up, come to our help. Redeem us for the sake of your steadfast love". (v. 26)

If any meaning is to be found in the experience of suffering for these people, it must lie in what they know—of the character of God: he is a God of steadfast love, who can thus be expected to act for his people, despite evidence to the contrary.

If Psalm 44 only hints at a way of reconciling the question of innocent suffering with the character of God, Psalm 73 is a detailed study of the problem. It begins with a statement of received faith: "Truly God is good to the upright, to those who are pure in heart". (v. 1)

Popular belief stated that "goodness" would bring its own reward (ie, a good life) as

a natural outworking of God's approval and blessing.

However, this faithful belief has collided with the reality of the psalmist's actual life experience: "But as for me ... I was envious of the arrogant; I saw the prosperity of the wicked".

The psalm goes on to describe the good life lived by the unrighteous, in contrast to the difficult life being lived by the psalmist.

One of our early questions is being asked, "Why is this happening to me? I've always lived a good life!"

Harold Kushner, in his helpful book *When Bad Things Happen to Good People*, suggests that the question "Why?", while very human and inevitable, is actually not a helpful question as there is often no answer (and an answer would do little

to take away the pain of the situation).

The psalmist moves on to this conclusion, too: "But when I thought how to understand this it seemed to me a wearisome task". (v. 16)

For this person, what was required was not an answer to the meaning of suffering, but a new perspective on the whole nature of life, and God's place in life: "until I went into the sanctuary of God". (v. 17)

In the presence of God, the psalmist sees that life goes beyond outward appearances. The goodness or badness of life lies deeper than the simple issues of whether life is enjoyable at the moment or not. It is



rooted in the deep awareness of meaning and content given by contact with the Divine. "Whom have I in heaven but you? And there is nothing on earth that I desire other than you." (v. 25)

There is no mention of suffering going away or of life appearing more "fair", but for this person, these issues lose their urgency (if not their pain) in the presence of God.

Thomas Merton writes:

If I have this divine life in me, what do the accidents of pain and pleasure, hope and fear, joy and sorrow matter to me? They are not my life and they have little to do with it. Why should I fear anything that cannot rob me of God, and why should I desire anything that cannot give me possession of Him? (New Seeds of Contemplation, p. 159)

From this side of the cross, we know that God has entered fully into our suffering, which gives us the hope of finding, if not meaning, at least his presence in the midst of pain. ❖

References

Harold Kushner, *When Bad Things Happen to Good People*. London: Pan, 1982
Thomas Merton, *New Seeds of Contemplation*. New York: New Directions, 1972
Merryl Blair is lecturer in Old Testament at the Churches of Christ Theological College, Mulgrave, Vic.

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Baptisms

•Sylvia Carter, Trish McBain, Brian McBain, **Salisbury East, SA**
•Michael Pasotti, Ross Hunter, Kalamunda, WA •Chris Fellows, Ballarat Central, Vic •Joyce Rouse, Essendon, Vic •Beryl Mitchell, Horsham, Vic

Marriages

•Ainsley Rasmussen and Travis Fancourt, Kalamunda, WA
•Lauren Peebles and Richard Hall, North Essendon, Vic •Deanna Marshall and Alan Hawker, Horsham, Vic •Rachael Brown and Max Campos, Fremantle, WA
•Kendahafte Abay and Bizuayene Yifter, Springvale, Vic

Deaths

•Norm Sumner, Applecross, WA
•Clyde Taylor, Oakleigh, Vic •Bill Greenwood, Ngaire Matthews, Kalamunda, WA •Nancy Elwin, Bridgetown, WA •Lorna Casson, Essendon, Vic

Obituaries

Obituaries are limited to 100 words

Drayton, Dulcie
(2.3.96) Dulcie Brownbill, born in Geelong on 2.11.1900, was a direct descendent of D. Murray, a foundation member of La Trobe Tce, church and had 83 years of membership following her baptism on 18.12.12. Dulcie married Percy

Drayton on 22.12.23 and they had 58 years together. They had five sons, Murray (dec) Don, Ray, Ken (dec) and Max, daughters-in-law Joan, Betty (dec), Dorothy, Margaret and Ann and families. Mrs Drayton loved her Lord and church and held positions in Sunday School and Ladies Aid, and was church organist for 40 years. A weekly prayer meeting in her home brought comfort to many. For nearly 60 years she was birthday convenor for the ladies.

—JUC

Daley, Mabel Irene (nee Renton) (30.12.1995) Irene was born at Wonthaggi in 1915. Upon the death of her parents, Irene, aged 12 years, moved to Kensington under the care of her brother Tom and his wife. Irene married Owen James Daley (dec) in 1937. The war years separated the couple. In 1948 they settled in Maidstone, where they raised Owen and Elaine (Pickersgill) and became connected with the Maidstone church. Irene was a strength to her family and a sterling worker at the Maidstone Primary School and supplied knitted garments for family, friends and fetes, and especially for blind children. Irene's quiet presence was always appreciated and her personal qualities endeared her to everyone.

—AM

Hince, Hugh
(7.12.95) The passing of this humble servant of the Lord has saddened many hundreds who were

privileged to come under his leadership, especially at the Thornbury Church where he served as Bible School Superintendent, club leader, song leader, elder, Bible teacher, CE leader for more than 50 years. To us at Thornbury he was a role model, a wise counsellor, enthusiastic encourager, a fantastic organiser (150% effort for 100% results), a warm and trusted friend, a master craftsman who dedicated his gift to the Lord as evidenced by the tables and cupboards still in use. "Well done good and faithful servant." Our sympathy to Olive and family.

—Les Stewart

Church News

SA

SALISBURY EAST (Will Philp) AGM held, Board re-elected for further year ... Three baptisms 17 March, many friends & visitors attended.

NSW

TAREE (Peter Wallis) Over 100 attended farewell to Peter & Jenny Wallis on termination of ministry ... Dennis Sweeney will conduct 3 month interim ... CWF held successful meetings: February, with 40 present at hat parade, many from Banyula Village; & March, with

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Church News

Shirley Mansell & soloist Jean Smith ... Olive Collins celebrated 90th birthday & later suffered brain haemorrhage, but now returned home & recovering.

TELOPEA (R. Lewis) Church released 11 to church planting ministry at Cherrybrook ... Child Care Centre, Family Day Care & Family Support ministries much used & appreciated by local residents ... ZAKS holiday activity ministry to the local community runs over Easter weekend, 10 hours daily ... Church has called Michael & Margaret Priddle to join pastoral team.

WA

APPLECROSS (Sean Bainbridge) Church voted overwhelmingly to employ Bryan Shoosmith half time as youth intern commencing 17 March ... LiveWires group growing to 20 ... Kid's Club still growing fast with 60+ attending ... 23 doing lay pastoral care course being taught by minister ... Federal Aborigines Board rally held 12 March, over 100 attended ... Church saddened by death of Norm Sumner, sympathy to Ethel & Neves.

KALAMUNDA (David Shalley) Church Together enjoyed by many members ... Enrichment group studying series "Anticipating Easter" ... Local churches combine for "One Voice" praise & worship ... Committee being formed for 45th anniversary celebrations in October ... Friendship Centre to distribute biscuits to all elderly folk at Easter ... Hall family farewelled at church tea ... Amy Marie Davis dedicated ... New youth group called "Crosfire" formed for ages 16-19.

WARWICK (G. Carslake, K. Bowes, R. Ratcliffe) Men's tea at church & ladies' breakfast at Frasers Restaurant in King's Park special February features for members & friends ... Theme of minister's messages in February, "Purpose of the Church"; in March, "Keeping in Step with Jesus" ... New carpet in areas 1 & 2 of church complex ... 80+ people studying G.R. Stirling's *Maintaining the Glow* in weeks leading to Easter ... 250 adults registered for Thursday morning craft classes. (100 children in care of paid child minders!)

FREMANTLE (J. Caporn, R. Fairman) AGM held 10 March, Officers' Board unchanged ... Visiting speakers in March were Dr Malcolm Dunjey, Interserve appointee to Yemen, Bob Boska telling of 11 years' work among Aborigines in the Kimberley, Ken Wilson from Gideons ... Samoan baby girl

dedicated ... Bicton UC Choir presented cantata, *Paid in Full* ... R. Fairman, associate minister, visiting family in Ireland then preaching in UK & Spain.

GERALDTON (Rohan Burcham) Half night of prayer held under leadership of elder Tony van Keule, with emphasis on Faith Promise, Youth Services, Outreach & Church growth ... Church continues to support High School Chaplaincy of Brett Findlay ... Ladies Fellowship & supper night held at local coffee lounge to further outreach in community ... Senior Citizens program continues to expand with two teams running morning teas & devotional program

Vic

DANDENONG (Malcolm Taylor, Bruce Moore) Elders assisted in induction service for new ministers who will lead church this year, a dedication service followed for church leaders ... Family camp held 16-18 February at Forest Edge, with 48 attending. Alan Niven was camp speaker.

OAKLEIGH (W.J. Edwards) Every member service was successful opportunity to meet incoming minister Don Milne & Topsy ... Church regrets death of Clyde Taylor ... All-female diaconate elected at AGM ... Finances show some improvement ... Ken Masterton delivered well-deserved appreciation of ministry of Jack & Barbara Edwards ... Duplicators, typewriters & other supplies sent from church to Vanuatu.

NORTH ESSENDON (Mike Esbensen) Lay members preached during minister's vacation ... Exterior woodwork & steps freshly painted, new foyer seating, attractive plants and prominent new sign, with assistance from House Church, who provide musical items at 10.00 am service ... Three new members from local retirement lodge recently welcomed ... Kim Thoday ministered to Karen people after initial postponement of trip owing to danger involved.

UPPER YARRA (Glenn Hardwick) Two planning meetings held in recent months involving whole congregation ... Very positive spirit. Exciting possibilities & challenges discussed ... Two new families received into membership on 10 March ... Midweek meetings contributing to the vitality of church ... Church involved in local Aussie Awakening celebrations ... Garage sale on election day raised \$500.

RED HILL (Bruce Butler) Conference president Pat Greig spoke at church anniversary on 3 March,

morning tea followed ... Bible school & Family Picnic held at Point Leo ... Young people enjoyed games night & sleep over at church ... Avon Moyle spoke on Aborigines Mission work on 17 March ... David & Joyce Holmes congratulated on 50th Wedding Anniversary ... Church farewelled Rick & Judith Kirkby, moving to Lilydale.

ESSENDON (Ken Stothard) On 25 February, Joyce Rouse was baptised & Ina Rodgers welcomed into membership (after an oversight some years ago) ... 81st Anniversary on 3 March with Ian Allsop as speaker ... Church manse repainted & grounds cleaned by working bee ... Church Dinner planned for 19 April.

ORMOND (Mark Dodd, Mavis Uldrich) Progressive dinner by CWF raised \$320 ... Prue Gashumba from Compassion Australia guest speaker ... Betty Cann, Joan Young & Desma Reeves received awards for community service ... Phil Short, SIMAid Representative, was speaker on 17 March & handed cheque for \$15 000 for two oxygen concentrators for Galmi Hospital, Niger, Africa ... Fete held 10 March proceeds \$3710 ... Farewell luncheon & supper on 24 March for Jonathan & Tricia Moore after two years of ministry.

BORONIA (Keith Milne, Darren Hickling) 75th Anniversary held 23-24 March with Dr Gordon & Beverley Moyes attending, with Gordon speaking Saturday night & Sunday morning. Appreciation for their presence expressed by Gordon Stirling as they returned to Sydney. Celebrations concluded with a dinner & concert Sunday evening ... Keith Milne commenced 11th year of ministry ... Sunday morning service now at 10.00 am.

BALLARAT CENTRAL (Martin Goldup) Visiting speakers March were Lynette Leach, DMED, Cec Grant & Darren Wighton, Federal Aborigines Board ... Chris Fellows baptised 10 March & welcomed into fellowship ... Lil Sheppard celebrates 90th birthday 7 April ... All auxiliaries & prayer groups in action for 1996 ... Revised evening services showing increase in numbers with church members participating.

SPRINGVALE (John Carmichael) Rediscovery Sunday celebration services on alternate Sunday evenings drawing increased attendances, volunteer musical group ministry, inspirational testimonies & messages much appreciated ... Cec & Laurel Grant from Albury with deacon Darren Wighton gave ministry on behalf of FAB 24 March. ... Young Ethiopian couple wel-

comed & were married at morning service on 24 March, church provided wedding breakfast.

Qld

WESTSIDE (Grant Spangenberg) Church growth causing accommodation problems, platform redesigned, wall removed to accommodate musicians ... Prayer seminars & much prayer ... Second pre school playgroup formed, many outreach contacts ... House next door purchased ... Church involved in current Awakening activities ... Australia-wide search for dynamic person to lead church from beginning of 1997.

ANN ST, BRISBANE (W. Flett) Several youth group members attended leadership course at Mt Tambourine 23-24 March ... Some members recently hospitalised now recovering ... Growing interest among young members in Bible study group ... Bedouin & Passover Meals planned to emphasise Easter meaning ... Church to participate in Awakening 2000 & Global March for Jesus ... CWF members prepared collected clothing for dispatch to churches at Mareeba & Normanton.

Tas

LAUNCESTON (C. Spaulding, W. Kerrison, J. Ratcliffe) CWF enjoyed visit of Win Thomas "India Revisited" on 18 March ... Bill Hybel's "Follow Up" on "Building Culturally Relevant Churches" held 11 March ... YP held Mega Car Wash in aid of Easter Youth Camp ... Catering committee has given \$2,000 to Church Building Fund.

NUBEENA (G.C. Cumbers) Deacons & their wives met at local restaurant for church planning ... Church activities back in full swing ... Phillip Bloomfield accepted into YWAM ... WEC College team shared in both services on 17 March ... Nine attended State Convention at Howrah, John Bond speaker ... One rededication at morning service 10 March

HOWRAH (P. Kerrison) Anonymous generous donation given to purchase new kitchen appliances ... Howrah host church for State Convention, John Bond guest speaker, theme "Ultimate Lifestyle," messages appreciated, every Tas church well represented, fellowship enjoyed & meals enhanced with new building improvements. Members from FAB present & gave testimonies, Vic-Tas Conference President Pat Greig & Bruce also present.

Exploring the Day

Who is Special?

Janet Thompson

The lights turned green as I approached, and there was no oncoming traffic, so I accelerated and turned right. As I did so I realised that mine was the only car at the intersection. There was no other traffic at all. The lights had gone through an entire cycle, just for me! Both roads are usually busy, and it's a tricky spot, but not this time. Is this how it feels to be a VIP? There was a grin on my face as I told myself to concentrate and get on with driving the car. Day-dreaming at the wheel is risky—and so is self-importance. But my thoughts ran on

I thought about being special enough to have things happen just for me. And then I remembered saying in a communion meditation that the meaning of Jesus' death on the cross becomes more powerful when I realise that he would have taken the same course if I had been the only person who needed his intervention to bring me back to God.

The traffic lights were not responding to any needs of mine. They were simply programmed to regulate the passing cars. But when God sent Jesus he was responding to his people, and he would have done this just for me.



Then my mind took the next step ... If Jesus had died just for me, it would mean that I had been the only one to betray him!

Sometimes I have read the Easter story and thought, "But if I had been there I wouldn't have deserted him. I would have been strong and loyal ... perhaps even prepared to die ... " The delusion hasn't lasted long. I know how fear topples the strongest people. What

makes me think that I would have been immune?

This was a sobering reflection. Jesus died for me because I have fallen short of being the person God would have me be—and God is merciful and forgiving. This is still beyond my understanding. It is much easier to rejoice in being special than it is to explore my active participation in the events that led to Good Friday.

Celebrating Easter is a necessity. It can stop complacency and reinforce the real reasons for rejoicing ... if I am willing to explore my thoughts. God doesn't reach out to me because I am special. Salvation and wholeness are gifts, not rewards, and I am special—because they have been given to me!

I hope your Easter has been thought-provoking, and joyful. ♦

The Last Word

In Christian service, the branches that bear the most fruit hang the lowest.

Doctor: "I want to take your appendix out to-night."
Patient: "Ok, but see that you get it home by midnight."

Landlady (to new roomer): "An inventor once had this room. He invented an explosive."

Tenant: "Oh, I suppose those spots on the ceiling are the explosive."

Landlady: "No, that's the inventor."

Plumber: "I'm sorry I'm late, but I just couldn't get here any sooner."

Husband: "Well time hasn't been wasted. While we were waiting for you, we taught the children how to swim."

How long can you use a tea bag?
Indefinitely, as long as you keep using rusty water.

Mother: "There were two slices of pie in the cupboard this morning and now there is only one. Can you explain that?"

Child: "It was so dark, I didn't see the other piece."

Dan: "I challenge you to a battle of wits."

Stan: "How brave you are to fight unarmed."

Customer: "Is this a second-hand store?"

Shopkeeper: "Yes."
Customer: "Good, I'd like to buy one for my watch."

"Did you catch all those fish by yourself?"

"Oh, no, I had a worm to help me."

Some people thirst after fame, some thirst after fortune and some thirst after knowledge. But there's one thing everybody thirsts after—salted peanuts.



30 Years Ago Reuben Boxhall, reporting on the Tasmanian District Conference, noted that all over Tasmania there was a pall of bush fire smoke and haze. Many blackened acres are evident. In WA young people had the opportunity to attend one of four Easter Camps.

60 Years Ago Keith Jones reported on 40 young people from SA and Victoria attending a Wimmera District camp at Dimboola. Leaders were Bolduan, Gale, Hughes, Withers and Jones. The lectures evoked enthusiasm and spirited exchange. Campers rowed up the Wimmera River to Picnic Point and consumed many water melons. The local paper made favourable comment on a camper choir singing hymns in the main street.

90 Years Ago The editor A.B. Maston spent 1½ pages in reply to a comment in the Wesleyan Spectator on growth in American churches, where it was claimed that the saner faiths prosper. Fancy bodies such as the Social Brethren, Dowieites, Spiritualists, Disciples of Christ and Communists show slow progress. A.B. Maston said he looked to a time when prejudice, deception and misrepresentation among our religious neighbours will cease.



"I only invented the darn thing yesterday, and this morning Watson calls in sick!"

Source: *The Best Cartoons from "The Saturday Evening Post"* edited by Steven Pettinga (Zondervan 1993).