

THE AUSTRALIAN



Christianian

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NATIONAL JOURNAL OF CHURCHES OF CHRIST IN AUSTRALIA

Vol. 101 No. 8, 27 May 1998

PRINT POST APPROVED PP349181/00418

PENTECOST





Vol. 101 No. 8, 27 May 1998

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Christianian

NATIONAL JOURNAL OF CHURCHES OF CHRIST IN AUSTRALIA

Editor: Don Smith, Production Manager/Sub Editor: Nigel Pegram Issue 10 June Deadline 28 May; Issue 24 June Deadline 11 June; Issue 8 July Deadline 25 June. Address for all correspondence: PO Box 101, Essendon North Vic 3041. Telephone (03) 9379 1219, Fax (03) 9379 0015. E-mail <editor@ozemail.com.au>, World Wide Web <www.ozemail.com.au/~editors>. Member publication of the Australasian Religious Press Association. Published by the Board of Management of The Australian Christian, a Department of the National Conference of Churches of Christ in Australia. Keith Aird, Chairman (SA); Lindsay Mott, Treasurer (Vic); John Batchler (Tas); Tom Glynn (NSW); Bev Grenfell (Qld); Lea Nelson (ACT); Allen Smyth (WA). Printed by New Litho Pty Ltd, Surrey Hills Vic. Responsibility for electoral material is accepted by Don Smith, 2 Larkspur Ave, Doncaster 3108. This publication is indexed in the Australasian Religion Index. ISSN 0004-8852. Advertising Rates: Displayed: \$6.00 per column centimetre. Classifieds: \$15.00 for the first 25 words and 25c for each additional word.

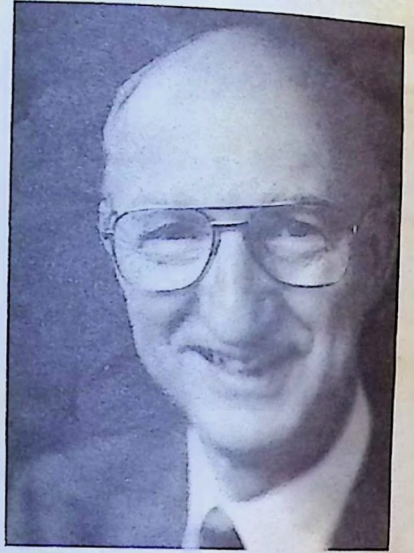


Editorial

Scary Stuff

DON SMITH

In the epic film *Lawrence of Arabia* the desert wind with its scorching heat by day and piercing cold by night is portrayed with a sense of mystery and awe. The wind's elemental force can be described as incalculable, irresistible and invisible. In the Old Testament the idea of "spirit" is connected with the wind. The Spirit in both Old and New Testament settings is the source of passion and conviction. The Spirit's power not easily domesticated. * Karl Barth in his book *Evangelical Theology* says that the Spirit can depart from theology (and the church) "whether it is primitive or exceedingly cultivated, whether



old fashioned or perhaps more fashionable". He observes that in one moment, theology or the church may stand in out-and-out fear of the Spirit or in another it plays dumb or pretends to be better informed on the issue. Barth suggests a another possibility where familiarity or domestication takes over. We may act as though we had hired or even obtained possession of the Spirit. * In the real world of this century we cannot avoid the dramatic growth of the Charismatic movement—growth all the more remarkable in the last forty years. Charismatic churches have far outgrown our own fellowship of churches, both in the number of churches and members. Such a movement cannot be ignored. In our own ranks some of our largest and most dynamic congregations are firmly developing within this stream. It is to the credit of all that we have both accommodated and grown with this experience. * The gifts and fruits which the Holy Spirit brings will allow us to live together in diversity. The challenge is surely for all to strive to discover the meaning of the charismatic phenomenon described as the most powerful influence in the church since the first century. * If we are to maintain the momentum of a reforming movement, we do need to listen to what the Spirit may be saying to us. As painful as this experience may be for some among us, there is the dread spectre and possibility of being sidelined. The challenge is to take our Movement forward, driven by a Holy Spirit whose power is incalculable, irresistible and invisible. Scary stuff for us all! *

Pentecost

We include an overview of the Holy Spirit in the Bible, a review of the Toronto Blessing and ask some personal questions about ourselves and the Spirit.

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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.

Reconciliation Week

To the Editor,
I want to commend the Week of Prayer for Reconciliation (27 May – 3 June) to all churches and individuals.

In this unique event Churches of Christ can affirm their support of the move towards reconciliation and become more aware of the richness of Aboriginal and Islander culture and spirituality. In this way our churches complement the work the Federal Aborigines Board as it seeks to encourage indigenous people in their expressions of culturally-relevant Christianity.

We pause to acknowledge that our national history contains many things that have been to the detriment of our indigenous brothers and sisters.

We commit ourselves further to being agents of reconciliation, recognising that true reconciliation comes as a matter of the will, rather than as the result of the passing of laws that end racism and usher in integration or multiculturalism.

May this week encourage other churches to follow the lead of some congregations who have already consciously reached out to Aborigines and Islanders in gestures of friendship, understanding and the promotion of a reconciled national community. Much has been achieved, much remains to be done.

—A.W. Moyle
(Wangara, WA)

The Way Forward

To the Editor,
I commend Bruce Armstrong for his article under this heading ("AC" 29.4.98), but I would like to comment on two references at the conclusion of his article.

A large number of small churches can be a good sign if they indicate a church-planting ethos. Of the 25 churches in NSW which have less than 29 members, it appears that eleven have been planted since 1984.

The other reference was to a longing for past grandeur in NSW. I would dearly love to know when that was. During the period 1961 – 1996 active membership in NSW grew by 20% and the average number of communicants by 53%. These increases are lower than Queensland and Western Australia, but are not insignificant. Then there is the enrolment of ministerial students; 112 in NSW, including 17 new students in 1998 (these figures exclude casual and postgraduate students).

Perhaps some people have longer memories than mine, but the *Jubilee History of 1903* lists only 20 churches in NSW with a total membership 1,936. Indeed let us move forward and not dwell on the past. God can and is doing great things in many places.

—Alan Rackemann
(Croydon, Vic)

Biblical Terminology

To the Editor,
We should thank Ken Dawson for drawing our attention to the present dilemma of needing to use some terms for which we have little or no Biblical precedent. Terms like Senior Minister, Conference Secretary, Ministry Coordinator and even Conference President, which office Ken has held. Being "a people of the book" has caused us to retain the use of some KJV book-words that have

Letters to the Editor

now become either offensive or misleading.

What we are really trying to do is to use "Bible concepts in present day contexts".

So "the brotherhood", now politically distasteful, could be the network; "worldly influences", community values; "congregation", audience; "outsider", seeker; "brethren", church family; etc. Bear in mind that we are endeavouring to communicate to a general public that is biblically illiterate.

It is just possible that "Senior Minister" is a good descriptive term denoting responsibility, as a "captain" of a team. That allows the general public to know with whom they are consulting. No doubt some will abuse it. They may even want to be "the greatest". If that's the case, it doesn't matter what they are called!

Most things have two options of use.
—Bruce Armstrong
(Sydney, NSW)

Questioning Communion Practice

To the Editor,
Jack Goldsworthy ("AC" 29.4.98) rightly points out the weekly

breaking of bread or Lord's Supper as being the central part of the local church's activity. Yet he expresses his concerns about the presence of collection bowls being present on the table. The bread and the cup, being the symbols the Lord selected, call to memory his sacrifice, love and ministry and demonstrate the extent of his love for us.

Through these two insignificant emblems the greatest mystery is brought to our minds and hearts.

The collection bowls surely represent our response as his children to his divine love. Our giving financially is part of our worship, for the whole ceremony is in fact an offering of ourselves. The Passover was never called an offering in Egypt, but the next time (Num 9:7) it was celebrated it is referred to as such.

We talk of receiving communion, which is an incorrect term. Communion is given, it is an act of giving even when we take the bread and the cup.

Likewise, our financial giving is an act of worship. As we look at the bread and the cup we see what Jesus gave for us, we then look at the collection bowls and ask what can I give to him. Giving was an integral part of the early church's worship (1 Cor 16:1-2).

One demonstrates his love for us, the other our love to him.

—Graeme Ellingsen
(Gympie, Qld)

Update

Dear Readers,

We have just established our Web site <www.ozemail.com.au/~aceditor>. Readers will find information about advertising rates and publication schedules including forthcoming themes. You may use the forms provided to send items such as church news, articles or letters. Items from recent issues will be available plus special features such as the article by John Rees on the Serrano photographic controversy.

A reader has provided us with a copy of the National Literature Department Pamphlet 222. Thank you.

We carried a report of the involvement of members of one of our churches in Arkansas in the school shooting incident ("AC" 29.4.98). A reader has found difficulty in getting through on the e-mail address provided. We understand that the response has been so great that their system could not cope. For further contact write to the minister, Benny Baker, 211 Church St, Bono, Arkansas 72416 USA.

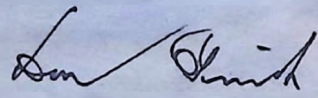
In this issue we include all items of church news received until the close of copy date nominated. If your church does not report, you may like to consider

doing so. Report forms are supplied upon request.

In this issue we welcome a number of new subscribers from all states. Readers are encouraged to invite attenders at local churches to take out a new subscription at \$10 for the remainder of 1998 or a free trial subscription for three issues. A growing list of new readers will help develop an informed membership and strengthen the paper for further developmental moves.

A volunteer to assist with office work on a one day per week or part thereof basis is required at our North Essendon office. Some computer skills would be useful. If you are interested or know of someone who could help please be in contact. Phone (03) 9379 1219.

In the issue of 29 April the reference to Colin Orr's service as Tasmanian state treasurer should have read "more than three decades".



Here and There

Promise Keepers Staff

Promise Keepers, US has recalled its paid national staff after standing them down due to financial problems. The reversal of the earlier decision came about because of donations which have been received since workers were invited to serve on a voluntary basis. The current influx of funds has ensured enough funds to pay bills, reinstate the 315 staff members available and prepare for the upcoming conference season, which includes 19 stadium events including 10 in new cities.

Pontius' Puddle



Canberra Gathering

National gathering of Christians to pray for the nation

Thousands of Christians from every Australian state and territory will meet in Canberra on 30 May.

The focus of the event will be on intercession for the nation.

Marchers will gather at four points at 11.00 am for worship, prayer and briefing.

At 12.00 noon each march, led by dancers, will move to encircle Parliament House.

At 1.30 pm, as they stand together around Parliament House, there will be a service of prayer and reflection in which all participants will be linked by radio.

A service in front of Parliament House will follow at 2.00 pm. This service will include massed children's choirs, the Wesley Institute of Dance and Drama and a number of musicians.

In the evening, prayer vigils will be held on the lawns of Parliament House. These will continue throughout the night. Pentecost Sunday will coincide with the international Global March for Jesus, which is a special time of prayer, celebration and proclamation. Canberra Churches of Christ members have been happy to offer hospitality for participants.



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Kenmore Staff Changes

Graham and Jeanette Warne to leave Kenmore

Graham Warne has announced his resignation from Kenmore Christian College after 15 years of service to Queensland Churches of Christ. The resignation will become effective from the middle of this year. Graham and Jeanette have served at Kenmore since 1983. Students and staff will greatly miss the pastoral and theological contributions which Graham has made to the preparation of those aiming to be involved in ministry. Graham's thorough approach to theological reasoning, his constant ministry to the personal needs of students, and his support role for faculty and staff have made his contribution outstanding in every way. During his time at Kenmore, Graham completed his MA by writing a thesis in which he challenged the accepted view that Paul's understanding of the human person had direct links with the Jewish writer, Philo. Instead, he demonstrated that one could trace Paul's understanding of humanity directly to the Hebraic perspective found in the Old Testament. His thesis has since been published by Mellen.



Jeanette has also made a significant contribution in the college library. Donating her time over many years, she not only has created one of the most efficient theological libraries within Brisbane, but she has consistently sought ways to improve its functioning. While volunteering her time, she also managed to complete formal studies in library management. Graham will take long-service leave during the second half of 1998 before deciding his future. The college wishes Graham God's blessing as he leaves this productive ministry. A recognition of Graham's valuable service will be held at the college graduation service in November.

Mission for New Millennium

Summit to wrestle with our practice of mission

Bob Smith, National Coordinator of the National Council of Churches of Christ in Australia has announced what he sees as the most important project since the Council's creation two years ago. Called the "International Summit on Mission", it will bring together the best thinkers, practitioners and emerging leaders in mission from Australian, British and New Zealand Churches of Christ. The Summit will be held at Stanwell Tops, NSW, at the end of October.

Participants will wrestle with the question of what it is that God is saying to us with regard to our practice of mission in the coming millennium. The Summit will focus on three issues—recovering our identity as a movement for mission, recalibrating our structures to that end and recapturing a passion for Christ and his mission.

In his comments to the Vic-Tas Conference in May, Bob Smith said he believes that the Summit could prove to be our most significant national gathering in years. Bob said, "There is a synergy and



Bob Smith, National Coordinator, introduces our most important project

dynamic at work when you bring together the sort of leader who will be at this event that has the potential to launch us into the new century with renewed vigour. The presence of significant leaders in mission from the British and New Zealand Churches of Christ will add an extra dimension to the process leading to a range of possibilities in future cooperation.

Visiting Canberra? Stay with a Church Family

A number of Canberra church families offer accommodation in their homes at basic bed and breakfast rates to help raise funds for "Home Mission" extensions in the ACT

If you would like to enjoy friendly "one of the family" hospitality in Canberra write for particulars to:

Lyn Swift
34 Yiman Street,
Waramanga ACT 2611
Phone (062) 88 2050

Barbara Kennedy
6 Sharp Place,
Melba ACT 2615
Phone (062) 58 1360

Advance bookings appreciated



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Celtic Christianity

Wembley Downs explores Celtic Christianity during church camp

An exploration into the Celtic church was the theme at a recent camp held by the Wembley Downs, WA, church. Dennis Ryle, minister of the church, led campers in a study of this invigorating period of Christian history.

Participants were surprised and delighted to find that the fire, love, compassion and earthy courage of our Celtic forebears enlivened our own sense of fun and passion. We created ballads, danced and told stories. We experienced the haunting words of prayers that drew us closer to the heart of God and each other. Our final experience of communion emerged from a moving worship service featuring a Celtic cross created by many hands.

We came away determined to follow our faith with the same vim and verve which was demonstrated by those who went before us under the Celtic sun. We were encouraged by each other to value particular individuals who have led us in our faith journey and to consider how we might be playing similar roles as "soul friends" to others.

We were challenged by the notions of building a "rhythm of



Bob Brittain and the cross made by "many hands"

work and worship" into our daily living, and of finding that "sacred space" in which we may allow God to nurture and challenge us regularly. The Celtic cross was made from cardboard boxes under the guidance of our artist-in-residence, Bob Brittain.

—Alan Cant

Turning the Clock Back

Balaklava, SA, celebrates 90 years



(L-R) Dorina Cottle, with grand daughter Belle McGuire, Daphne Clark, Murray Gates, Grant Spangenberg and Lynette Lee

Dressed in turn-of-the-century clothing, Balaklava, SA members celebrated the church's 90th anniversary and the laying of the foundation stone on 19 April 1908. Members travelled back to 1908

with a service conducted as it would have been 90 years ago. Grant Spangenberg, minister of the church, says that a lot of positive comments were received from young adults as the service made them aware of the older style of worship. In the congregation were sixth-generation descendants of the founding members of the original church, which now houses the National Trust Museum.

Grant also comments that following good rain the country is alive, with farmers preparing their ground for seeding. Photo and anniversary detail by courtesy of *The Plains Producer*.

**Charles Bayer
&
Merryl Blair**

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Leadership 2000

Vacancies for worship leaders

The next Leadership 2000 program to be held in January 1999 will have five vacancies for ministers and others who are involved in worship leadership and music development in their church. They will be given opportunities to meet with music directors in leading churches in Los Angeles and Phoenix. Christian Projects will fund airfares and accommodation. Priority will be given to those employed by their church or who are intending to seek employment in a church team. Other conditions will be outlined on the application form.

Application forms can be obtained

by ringing (02) 4226 5022, faxing (02) 4228 3828 or E-mail <wgongcoc@wollongong.starway.net.au>.

Prayer for Oneness

Extract from the message of the Presidents of the World Council of Churches at Pentecost 1998.

"We recognise that we are not of one accord on all matters, but we reaffirm our intention to stay together and grow together towards the fulfilment of the prayer of Jesus for oneness among the believers."

Kalgoorlie Church of Christ, WA Centenary Celebrations

7-9 August 1998

Guest Preacher: Pastor Glen Rogers

Friday, 7 August	Rally
Saturday, 8 August	Churches of Christ Council Centenary Banquet Cost \$35.00 per person. Tickets available from Mrs E. Kinney, PO Box 10146, Kalgoorlie WA 6430.
Sunday, 9 August	am Thanksgiving Service pm Celebration Service (Combined Churches)

All inquiries, please contact church office on (08) 9021 2296, PO Box 10146, Kalgoorlie WA 6430.

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reo

A journal of theology and ministry

reo is a quarterly journal promoting theological education and ministry formation at CCTC, Mulgrave, Vic. The name reo emphasises the nature of Christian gospel which constantly brings disorientation and reorientation to our lives. reo is invitational, taking us into the world of faith, tradition, and challenge of the people of God as it is told and retold in the biblical tradition, and beyond. This can be disorientating, as we discover a certain dissonance between the world of gospel and our perspectives on life. reo seeks to reorientate us to the gospel's life-giving character. reo promotes open, honest and creative exploration of Christian faith



through the Christian story, to nurture theological and spiritual formation. reo is available from CCTC for \$40.00 (subscription) or \$10.00 for single copies.

York Street Church of Christ—Ballarat invites applications for



Children's and Family Ministry Pastor/Director

York Street is a large, vital and robust church, and is offering excellent conditions for someone to lead all ministry to those below high school age and their families.

The areas of responsibility are:

- Sunday School
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- Outreach after school clubs / Holiday clubs
- RE in local schools
- Liaison with our playgroups and kindergarten

An ideal applicant would be:

- Proven Ministry record showing excellence, quality and growth
- Leader Be able to create, lead and inspire, train and direct multiple teams
- Gifted Specifically for this ministry
- Contemporary Utilising the latest trends in children's ministry
- Credible Have an attractive rapport with children and good liaison skills with parents
- Committed To the two aims of evangelism and nurture in children's work
- Trained Probably teacher trained and theologically trained, preferably both
- Up-Front Have a highly-developed impressive ability to operate in front of a large, discerning congregation

This is a paid, full-time/part-time position.

Applications to Senior Minister: Larry Galbraith, 410 York St, Ballarat Vic 3350. Phone (03) 5331 1079. Fax (03) 5333 2454.

Pentecost

A Brief, Brief History of the Holy Spirit

PETER NELSON

The story of the Holy Spirit “originates” in eternity and is never ending. With the Father and the Son, the Holy Spirit is God and being a person has feelings (Eph 4:30), a will (Acts 16:6-7) and a mind (Rom 8:27).

We humans like to domesticate the Spirit, making him fit our moulds and be at our beck and call. But the Holy Spirit is far, far greater than our experience of him and far more powerful

Wherever the Spirit acts, he brings new life and possibilities.

and loving than our thoughts about him.

He is involved with creation and life from first to last. In Gen 1:2 “The Spirit of God was hovering over the waters.” The Spirit of God was disposing the chaos to hear in obedience the Word of God. The last reference to the Spirit in the Bible is in Rev 22:17, “The Spirit and the Bride say ‘Come’ and let whoever hears say ‘Come’ and let whoever thirsts come. Whoever desires let them take the waters of life freely.” The Spirit, and the church, inspired by this word, invite everyone to enjoy abundant life with God.

In between, the Holy Spirit is involved in breathing new life into dead bones and transplanting hearts of stone with sensitive, vulnerable fleshly hearts. Wherever the Spirit acts, he brings new life and possibilities. He is proactively engaged in human lives and affairs, breaking through the fog of human sin,

power and understanding and bringing God’s empowering presence right into the fabric of life. In the Old Testament period the Holy Spirit acted powerfully, but occasionally in the human arena.

As Michael Welker puts it in *God The Spirit*, “The Spirit breaks the tried and true flow of experience”. We see the Spirit overwhelming Saul and David and giving them

a taste of heavenly reality. We see the Spirit equipping a craftsman like Bezalel (Exod 31:1-3), clothing himself with Gideon (Jdg 6:34), and inspiring prophets like Micah (Mic 3:8).

All this was done with the purpose of making the people of God a nation whose life among the nations would bring glory to the living God. However, scattered through the Old Testament are promises of an outpouring of the Spirit upon all people. (Joel 2:28)

In Jesus we see the fullness of the Spirit expressed in a human life. The birth of Jesus came about by the Holy Spirit and at his baptism the Holy Spirit came upon him. His commission to preach good news to the poor, to bind up the broken hearted and bring liberty to the oppressed came from the Holy Spirit. Indeed the healings, exorcisms, miracles, teaching and the suffering life of Jesus were all accomplished by the Spirit’s power. If Jesus was the man of the Spirit then, the Spirit today wears the personality of Jesus and seeks to show the attractiveness and worth of Jesus to the world.

Jesus described the Spirit as another comforter. As Jesus came alongside the

disciples so would the Holy Spirit come alongside them after his ascension, continuing this ministry to them and through them.

The pouring out of the Spirit at Pentecost stamped the church as

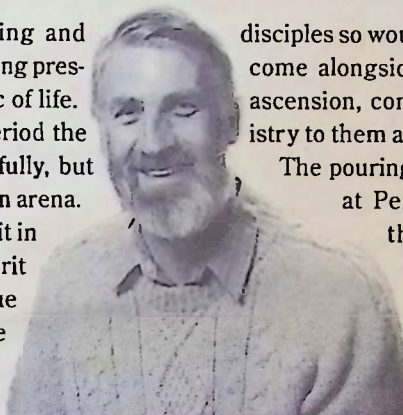
“Made and owned by the Holy Spirit”. All church life from evangelism to teaching, to

building the community through prayer or a prophetic word or a kind deed is motivated, energised and directed by the Holy Spirit.

The church is the community of the Spirit and is a living demonstration of the coming Kingdom of God. The Spirit enables the church to bear faithful, powerful and loving witness to Jesus as Lord. With such a ministry of reconciliation, no part of life is exempt from the Spirit’s recreating power

The Holy Spirit is also in the business of remaking individuals by pouring out the love of God in their hearts (Rom 5:5) and changing believers from glory to glory. (2 Cor 3:18) The New Testament is saturated with the importance of the Spirit and his constant activity of bringing glory to Jesus in this world. Although the story of the Holy Spirit never ends, part of this experience in this era is to groan within until all creation experiences glorious liberty from the claws of corruption. With this groaning, he honours us, as his partners in bringing about this liberty.

Peter Nelson is in the early stages of planting a church at Gungahlin, ACT, and serves as a chaplain to the Australian Institute of Sport.



Pentecost

What's in the Orchard?

CHRIS COHEN

Growing up in Tasmania, it wasn't unusual that I lived in a house with a large, backyard apple orchard. This 100-year-old orchard was often a place of excitement as each season gave me different childhood pleasures. Dormant apple trees in winter provided me with a place for climbing. In spring I loved the arrival of blossom which brightly transformed my orchard playground. By summer the new foliage made the orchard ideal for the exciting discovery of new hiding places. In autumn, the fruit-bearing season, there were never more than a few hard crab apples out of all those trees; nothing that ever ripened. As a youngster I used to hope that one year the orchard would produce some yummy fruit, but, by my generation, it never did. I didn't think to question this.

Could the church be like my apple orchard? It may be giving us pleasure, but is it producing abundant, good-quality fruit? Do we think to question this?

Is it enough for us to attend one Sunday service and a mid-week meeting? Certainly when the church blossoms through conversions or renewal we feel transformed. It is extra exciting when the church has a season of discovering gifts and appears to flourish with the abundant growth of this empowered life. Isn't this enough? Isn't this maturity?

Thinking back over the past twenty years of my adult Christian life, I'm aware of waves of interest in the Holy Spirit-filled life—mostly in the dimensions of our corporate worship, "empowerment" or gifts. The Christian Scriptures give much attention to the fruit-bearing aspects of this in-filling. Do we? Fruitfulness is, in both the New Testament terms of good works and of



a virtuous character, the evidence of Christian maturity.

Why then do we seem to concentrate our debating and our developing on these other dimensions? Are we satisfied that this generation of the church is producing abundant, good-quality fruit? And, if we're not, what about the next generation?

The orchard exists for its fruit. Fruit hold the seeds of regeneration. Additionally, for the church, we must cultivate fruit to maximise these other dimensions of our church life.

For instance, how can we effectively nurture freedom in our corporate worship without the fruit of patience? How can we be empowered for service without the fruit of faithfulness. Perhaps simplistically, I question how one can effectively utilise the gift of hospitality without the fruit of kindness and generosity; the gift of tongues without the fruit of self-control?

As I grew through childhood, my anticipation for fruit turned to indifference. We'd probably never get any decent apples on those trees, but I didn't really care as long as we got pleasure from playing in the orchard. Is the church now indifferent about the fruit? Do we want the "spirit" but not the Holy

Spirit. After all, we're okay while it feels so good. Perhaps the blights of relativism and hedonism have struck the orchard of this generation!

How often do I hear "A few years ago I might have thought it was wrong, but I'm not so traditional now", or "I know it's a sin but lots of other Christians are doing it". Have we forgotten John the Baptist's warning that unless we bear fruit worthy of repentance we'll be threatened with the chop! I hope we're better listeners than the Pharisees af-

I used to hope that one year the orchard would produce some yummy fruit, but, by my generation, it never did.

ter Jesus warned, "The Kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people that produces fruits of the Kingdom". (Matt 21:43)

If Jesus walks by me, as he did the fig tree on the road, I don't want him to see me flourishing with leaves and yet be frustrated with my lack of fruit and give me the same curse, "May you never bear fruit again!"

Psalms 92:12-15 exemplifies how we could flourish and produce abundant fruit into old age if our cultivation of holiness prevails. How exciting that we, the church, could not only be a pleasurable orchard, but also produce abundant, good-quality fruit! After all, fruit is the primary product of the orchard.

Chris Cohen has been a minister with Western Australian Churches of Christ for nine years and is currently Associate Minister of Mandurah City Church of Christ.

Pentecost

The Toronto Blessing

ASHLEY BARKER

What do we make of the Toronto Blessing four years after the Holy Spirit is said to have moved among a small Vineyard church in Canada? While sensationalised in the media for manifestations such as laughing and roaring like lions, the movement notes the following results over four years:

- 600,000 different people sought the blessing, a cumulative attendance of over 2,000,000.
- Over 30,000 pastors visited the church.

Some would build an institution out of "the Blessing".

- Over 15,000 people "have come to Christ".
- Over 2,000 people now attend the church.
- Church facilities include a 4,000 seat auditorium, a School of Ministry and a television program which airs weekly across North America and Europe.
- Five new churches planted.
- A network of 15 churches launched, with 50 churches applying to join.
- Over twenty countries have experienced "the blessing".

What does this phenomenon mean for us? I cannot confirm the statistics. However I do know two people who have been touched by "the blessing"

Ray Tickner, after a long struggle, made a commitment to Christ at a Rodney Howard-Brown conference. As a part of a discipleship course with Urban Neighbourhoods of Hope (UNOH) he felt prompted by God to "feed the hungry". He now runs our UNOH food-

bank, which feeds 50 people a week. Roy often repeats the phrases "an empty belly has no ears" and "you can't be a Christian one day a week" that he learnt at the conference. Roy's life has been transformed by the Holy Spirit.

Metus Temu, our 18-year-old foster son, has a different story. He attended a meeting at Christ Church, Dingley, Vic, a few years ago. He "went down" under the power of the Spirit and laughed. He later said the experience was "better than drugs". This experience however did not change his life. After a long struggle with mental illness and drugs he died of an overdose three weeks ago. The promise of the blessing for him was not realised here on earth. These stories illustrate the struggle of understanding the Spirit's work among us.

First, the Spirit does work in unexpected ways. God cannot be boxed into a formula. The Spirit's power cannot be limited to dry dogma. The fact that millions of people would travel vast distances to get "a touch from Jesus" reveals an unmet spiritual hunger. Following Jesus has always had a supernatural element. Where it is denied, people will go to any length to sense the reality of God. The Toronto Blessing however is not a Holy Spirit dispenser. Living the reality of a Jesus-centred life requires more than just being prayed for by others, although that can help.

Second, the Holy Spirit must be found beyond renewal. In Pamphlet Club 390 ("AC" 15.4.95) I wrote, "When does a refreshing, become a self-indulgent diversion from the mission of Jesus Christ? The willingness to say, 'No more' to the blessing, 'It is time to live out our faith' will be the supreme test for leaders of the movement. The Christian community in the West has a habit of building up reputations and expect-



tation of people and movements to the point where they end up spending their lives trying to live up to these reputations and expectations."

Many have moved beyond renewal to reach out in evangelism and social concern. This is especially true in the form of the Alpha course, designed by a church central to "the Blessing" in the UK. However, many, still dissatisfied after "the Blessing", do not want to move on. Some would build an institution out of "the Blessing".

What good for the lost could have been accomplished with all the money, time and energy Christians spent on airfares, hotel fees, books, videos, conferences and tapes? The reason so many people die without transformation is not that the Holy Spirit does not care for them. Rather, we become preoccupied with feeding the idols of "happiness" and "self comfort". We too often fail to touch Jesus as "the least of these" at our doorstep. We must never forget that the Holy Spirit's ministry has life and death consequences. We need the Spirit's presence to transform us and our society.

Ashley Barker is minister at UNOH, Springvale, Vic.

Letting the Spirit Move In

JEFF DEUBLE

I like John Maxwell's four-step recipe for an effective church: the Holy Spirit must move in; the pastor must move over; the members must move up (into ministry) and the church must move out. The first step is the most crucial (Luke 24:49, Acts 1:8) yet usually the most difficult, especially in the ecclesiastical culture of Churches of Christ.

I would suggest the following process for any church wanting to more-fully embrace the Holy Spirit:

1. Recognition We need to become aware that the ministry of Jesus and the early church was a lot more "charismatic" than our conservative evangelical upbringing may have taught us. If

To embrace the Holy Spirit and to really allow him to move in power can be "uncharted territory" for some people.

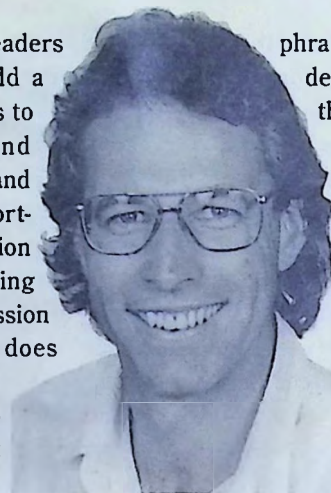
we are serious about restoring the New Testament church, where are our prophets (Acts 11:27)? Where are the divine healings, miracles and "sense of awe" (2:43)? Do our church leaders pray, fast and hear directly from God (13:2)? Are there fresh outpourings of the Holy Spirit (4:31)?

Do we unwittingly squeeze the Holy Spirit out through our traditions, entrenched mind-sets, human procedures and church machinery? Are there underlying issues of fear, control, comfort or selfishness? Recognition comes when we humbly examine ourselves in the light of the Scriptures and are willing to acknowledge our shortcomings.

2. Vision It's easy for leaders to subconsciously build a church which conforms to their personality and needs, or in which they and the members feel comfortable. We need a clear vision of the church God is calling us to be as a local expression of Christ's body. This does not mean the church has to be either evangelical or charismatic. It can embrace both. Richard Foster speaks of the "five streams of spirituality" evident in church history, represented by the desert fathers (i.e. prayer-filled life) and the holiness, evangelical, social justice and charismatic movements. He pleads for churches and Christians not to adopt one or two of these emphases at the expense of others, but to affirm the importance of all five. Certainly all five were evident in the early church and in the life of Jesus. His ministry was prayer-based, spirit-filled, compassionate, evangelistic and holy. At Castle Hill, NSW, the elders have sought to promote a Christianity which is balanced and wholistic. We have identified ten key characteristics of the ministry of Jesus and use these as a model and for self evaluation

3. Solidarity Once the overall vision is clear, it must then be accepted and owned by the key leaders. Here the aim is not just tacit approval, but a struggling and praying through the issues until there is a common heart—being "one in spirit and purpose" (Phil 2:2).

4. Communication This shared and owned vision then needs to be given to the church. There should be teaching and opportunity for interaction. Beware of stereotypes or emotive words and



phrases. There also needs to be demonstration—exposure to the things being taught and opportunity for application. For example, when we gave teaching on the more controversial spiritual gifts, trusted people with these gifts (prophecy, word of knowledge, healing, etc) came and ministered those gifts in love and give insight and training. We equip our elders and prayer

team to be attuned to the Holy Spirit's prompting and to hear from God as they pray.

5. Prayer To embrace the Holy Spirit and to really allow him to move in power can be "uncharted territory" for some people. There needs to be much prayer for wisdom, guidance and protection (James 1:5). We need a balance of sensitivity and boldness (2 Tim 1:7). We need to be willing to be stretched beyond our comfort zones while respecting others who wish to remain within theirs. Spiritual pride, a judgmental or critical spirit and fear of change can easily surface.

Based on world-wide growth trends, Stuart Robinson claims the modern charismatic movement is probably the most significant Christian advance of history, outside the first century. I believe this is because, in spite of mistakes and some extremes and abuses along the way, charismatic churches have taken this first step. They have allowed the Holy Spirit to move in. God's power has been released and the church has become healthy and dynamic. Can this be said of your church? Jeff Deuble is the minister of the Castle Hill, NSW, church.

Pentecost

Receive The Holy Spirit

JOHN REES

John 20:19–23 is a curious passage of Scripture. The resurrected Jesus appears to the disciples, then “breathed on them and said ‘Receive the Holy Spirit’” (20:22). That happens at Pentecost in Acts 2! Is John claiming to know of a different Pentecost? Maybe, but I doubt it.

There are more-plausible reasons. First, these were words of assurance about the Spirit’s presence. Jesus promised the disciples that he would not abandon them, but that the Spirit would be with them (14:16–18). Now his return to the Father was near, Jesus trans-

It was the Spirit’s role to pick up where Jesus left off, to empower the disciples for God’s mission

formed their fear into peace by assuring them of the Spirit’s coming (20:19). Second, they were words of importance about the Spirit’s agenda. The presence of the Spirit meant that God’s mission of forgiveness and judgement (20:23) could continue with the disciples. It was the Spirit’s role to pick up where Jesus left off, to empower the disciples for God’s mission (16:7–11), and “guide” them “into all truth” (16:12).

Third, they were words of authority that could only come from Jesus. John the Baptist had identified Jesus as the one “who will baptise with the Holy Spirit” (1:32–34).

John’s Gospel asserts that before Pentecost only Jesus was marked by the Spirit (e.g. 3:34; 7:37–39). Only the risen Jesus could impart the Spirit to the disciples.

Jesus had powerful reasons for saying “Receive the Holy Spirit” to the disciples **before** Pentecost. He also has powerful reasons for saying those same words to his disciples **after** Pentecost. Here’s three ways we can “receive the Holy Spirit” today:

1. Drink Filtered Coffee The best cup of coffee, the filtered variety, often takes much longer to make than instant coffee. In a similar way, the richest, most profound experiences of God take time. Consider the life of Peter in John’s Gospel. From positive beginnings (1:42) to the bitter failure of denying Christ (18:15–27) and finally the emotional reconciliation with Jesus (21:15–23). What makes Peter’s journey so rich is the assurance that Jesus was committed to him for life.

Jesus is for Peter what the Spirit is for us, our blessed life-long assurance of God’s presence, or, as John calls him, “the Comforter” (14:16). Those of us in today’s church seeking to “move on in the Spirit” need to remember this title. It would be a tragedy if, in seeking the Spirit’s “visitation” in our churches, we stopped promoting the assurance of God’s love for the long haul.

2. Take Two Books To Church Jesus told Nicodemus that as “the wind blows where it pleases ... so it is with everyone born of the Spirit” (3:8). In other words, people of the Spirit are open to the agenda of the Spirit.

Are we?

Take two books to church next Sunday—your Bible and your diary—and ask yourself these questions: What is the Spirit saying about my agenda? How can the truth of Scripture find a way onto the pages of my diary? Ask God to make a way for this to happen. By receiving the Holy Spirit, we can let God shape your lives.



3. Organise a Reunion When Jesus promised that the Comforter would come to the disciples, he actually said “another Comforter” (14:16). Jesus is the first Comforter. The Spirit brings glory to Jesus (16:14). Acts 16:7 even refers to the Holy Spirit as “the spirit of Jesus”.

How do we know that a Spirit-manifestation in the church is from God? The first test is whether it reflects the character of Jesus (e.g. Matt 11:25–30) and the purpose of his mission (e.g. Luke 4:16–21). In the past, both conservative and charismatic believers have divorced the Spirit’s work from the attributes of Jesus. By receiving the Holy Spirit **from Jesus** we reunite the Son and the Spirit, for the glory of God. John’s Gospel looked forward to the power of Pentecost. Today, it calls us back to the Spirit-life of the disciples. “Receive the Holy Spirit”.

John Rees is a graduate of Churches of Christ Theological College, Carlingford, NSW. He lectures in New Testament Exegesis (John’s Gospel) at the School of Christian Studies, Robert Menzies College and is completing an MA in Early Christian and Jewish Studies at Macquarie University.

Classifieds

ENGAGEMENT

HOLDEN-GRAHAM Vivienne and John of Wangaratta, together with Rennice and Alan of Bendigo, proudly announce the engagement of Heather and Craig.

GOLDEN WEDDING

RIMMINGTON-HUME Jack and Vi, married 15.5.48 at Dawson St, Ballarat, Church of Christ by Mr G. Andrews. Congratulations to you both for 50 years of happiness together. Love from your Matron of Honour, Beryl.

DEATHS

FISHER, Norman Arthur (7.3.15-25.4.98) Passed away peacefully in the Benlyne Private Nursing Home. Dearly loved husband of Audrey. Father and father-in-law to Judith and Malcolm, Ron and Dawn, Ross and Beth, Margaret and Michael, Anita and Bill; and Papa to eleven grandchildren. Audrey and family wish to thank the many friends for their thoughts, prayers and kind words on the loss of Norm.

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Here and There

Brazilian Catholics—Massive Growth Predicted

The number of charismatics in Brazil's Roman Catholic Church is likely to increase rapidly, according to a survey of seminaries which showed that seminary students are closer to the charismatic movement than to liberation theology. Some commentators believe that charismatics could even outnumber non-charismatic Catholics in Brazil. There are now eight million who meet in more than 60,000 prayer groups, according to Latin American and Caribbean religious news agency ALC. Brazil's Catholic Church has a total of 120 million members. Charismatic Catholics dominate much of the broadcasting by Brazil's 181 Catholic radio stations.

(Challenge Weekly, NZ)

Coffee Break Let the Children Be

CAROL PRESTON

After talking about new mums and babies last month, I read an article in Sydney's *Good Weekend*, (11 April), which reinforced my concern for our society's lack of priority on relationships. The report read, "Have your children taught every skill possible, their every fault corrected, and they can't fail to be winners in the race of life". The reporter was investigating our "culture of improvement, where being average is the worst fate of all". It made clear that relationships between parents and small chil-



Exchange a few classes for playtime

dren are focussed on pushing children as early as possible into every conceivable learning situation, providing every possible opportunity and technical device for stimulation of their senses, to fast track their growth to success. The results of this may be smarter, faster, busier children, but the outcome also includes highly-stressed, anxious, overstimulated children, whose bodies are continually overproducing adrenaline to keep up with the "excitement" and pressure of life. Those who don't keep up are labelled with one of an ever-increasing list of "learning disabilities". Children's emotional stability, relational skills and general health are suffering. And all of the stress-related emotional and physical problems keep emerging in younger and younger children. So mums emerging from the haze of post-natal blues are im-

mediately faced with the pressure of enrolling their children to start learning language, sport, or a range of culturally-desirable skills, fearing they will be left behind. And we're talking about two and three-year-olds! Whatever happened to playing in the backyard with friends, where growing to trust, love and respect parents and learning to share and get along were the greatest priorities? Is this what we want for our children? Semi-exhausted youngsters, who will most likely grow up to join the increasing number of adults we call "adrenaline junkies": unable to relax, bored if not constantly stimulated by increasingly exciting and dangerous experiences, and feeling guilty and worthless for being average. Biblical wisdom assures us that if we raise our children this way, when they are old they will not depart from it. Biblical wisdom also assures us if we raise our children to love God with all their hearts, to love others and love themselves we give them the greatest gifts and skills they will need for their lives. Let's allow children to be children, exchange a few classes for playtime, a few lessons for laughing and loving and developing relationships which show them the value of people above all else.

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Meet Mr Gardener

VINEY LONGTHORP

Because of our keen interest in gardening, Lois and I regard the ABC's weekly *Gardening Australia* on Fridays evenings, as essential viewing. Judging by the nation-wide popularity of this program, we are not alone. Imagine then, what a joy it was to listen to the show's presiding "genius", Mr Peter Cundall, when he was interviewed on ABC FM radio by Margaret Throsby. Such revelations! There is much more to Peter Cundall than his extolling the virtue of blood and bone and our watching his almost athletic ap-

edge of all growing things. I'm sure he could grow potatoes in Saudi Arabia.

He was born in Manchester, England, on April Fools' Day, 1927. We would have guessed the place anyway, his accent is a dead give-away. As a boy he grew up in abject poverty. The family of six was always on the move from one lot of "digs" to another, just one step away from some landlord. Peter told how his father was trained as a chef, but in the depression could find no work. In winter he shovelled snow for one shilling and sixpence a week. He would have been better off on the dole. The father found solace in alcohol, but was never violent. He would often "go missing" for long periods, as many men did in those desperate days. Peter remembers the "smell, the dirt, the piercing cold, and the hunger" of such poverty when a boy.

He attended a local church school and was constantly beaten by the teachers, in efforts to change his habit of writing with his left hand. He vividly remembered the severity of the punishments. Hence, when he and three his mates left school at twelve years they looked back on the building with its religious associations and said in all solemnity to each other, "There is no God".

During World War II in the heavy blitzes on Manchester, Peter was an emergency messenger who took instructions from one fire-fighting point to another when the telephone lines were down. He admits having a couple of close shaves, but with a typical combination of England midlands grit and nonchalance he regards these years as a time of fun and laughter!

Immediately after the war he was old enough to join the British Army. In the early years of the Cold War he was posted to Austria, and there remembers being appalled by the evidence of the Holocaust. I gather from his remarks that this contributed to his deep compassion for suffering and to his humanitarian philosophy.

He had a most amazing adventure when aged nineteen. He was beguiled by a young woman to escort her down an out-of-the-way street in occupied Austria. She slipped away from him after they had crossed a boom barrier. She used him, of course, to cross a national frontier. Then, as Peter says, "All hell let loose". He was thrown into solitary confinement and for two weeks was utterly on his own. He relates how he was not perturbed, but enjoyed his own thoughts. Peter did give his guards cause for amusement when he mistook a bowl of coffee as dirty washing water and promptly sluiced himself down with it.

In the early 1950s he came to Australia in answer to an advert for an army librarian based at Bondi. But he was promptly shipped off to Korea and then later to Japan. He became deeply impressed by the Japanese style of gardening.

How did he come to love gardening? As a small boy in wintry Manchester he laid bricks on the ground to give an even surface for skating when the ice formed. The smell of soil and worm castings as he gathered the bricks appealed to something deep in his nature.



He did not tell about his coming to the ABC but he did mention how one executive told him that, "With that face and that accent you will never last". But as Margaret was quick to point out, "That executive has now gone but you are still with us".

There were two lasting impressions I took from this interview. Peter represents the best of those many people who have migrated to Australia. What a great resource to our national life many of these have become and how grateful we should be. Then there is his denial of God. This is a worry especially when many of us never feel so close to our creator as when tending our gardens. What a responsibility our religious institutions have in keeping their spiritual ideals and practices consistent one with the other. All churches face this challenge.

One day, perchance, one of Peter's six sons will write the biography of their dad. The first line must surely read: "This is the story of a gardener with a keen sense of humus."

And now, quote, unquote: "That, I'm sorry to say, is your lot for the week".

One executive told him that, "With that face and that accent you will never last".

proach to the pruning of overgrown roses. His enthusiasm for the things of the good earth is matched by his expert knowl-

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BAPTISMS

•Ann Lane, Keith Wilson, Nailsworth, SA
•Rachel Weatherall, Melissa Brady, Pine Rivers, Qld

MARRIAGES

•Katalin Ambrus and Simon Fletcher, Latrobe Terrace, Geelong, Vic

DEATHS

•Norm Fisher, Frankston, Vic
•Lorna Ellerby, Hornsby, NSW

OBITUARIES

Obituaries are limited to 100 words
BURDEN, Ivy

Ivy was 11 when the Boronia church commenced in 1923 and was one of its earliest members. She remained a faithful, loyal and generous member for the rest of her life. As a young girl she became church organist and remained so for 55 years. She was a lover of good music and her choice of voluntaries and other incidental music as well as her interpretation of hymn music helped to create the atmosphere of worship. In a quiet and unobtrusive way she was a great encourager. She and her late husband, Vic, met and were married in the Boronia church and contributed generously to its life. They are survived by two sons, Peter and Chris, and three grandsons.

FISHER, Norman Arthur
(25. 4. 98) The eldest of three preacher's kids, Norm was born at Tumby Bay, SA, 7 March 1915. From 1928 his father served at Preston,

Vic, where Norm was baptised. After his marriage to Audrey Briggs in 1940, he was active in the Ivanhoe church. Norm's practical skills were a driving force behind projects using voluntary labour. After 39 years, Norm moved to West Rosebud and served the Tootgarook church as secretary and maintenance supervisor. In 1989 he moved to a retirement village and until health prevented it he drove residents to Frankston church. He was a faithful husband to Audrey and a loving father to five children and their partners and grandfather to eleven.

—Jack McCormick

TUCKWELL, Beryl Margaret
(20.4.98) Beryl was born to William and Innes Yelland of Point Sturt, SA. At age 12 the church purchased a pedal organ (still used) and Beryl played for the Sunday School on the first Sunday. She played the organ for 68 years at Point Sturt and later at Goolwa. Ernest Pittman composed 12 voluntaries for her use. She was baptised in 1924 and in 1939 married Ron Tuckwell. As a member at

Goolwa, Beryl was active as a musician and in CWF. She was secretary of the Southern District Women's Conference for 13 years. Ron died

in 1969. She is survived by daughters Barbara, Margaret, Glenys and Raleen, 12 grandchildren and 11 great-grandchildren.

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Church News

QLD

PINE RIVERS (Neale Proellocks, Mick Cross, David Van Leen) Seven people welcomed into membership recently ... Discovering Church Membership seminar conducted by Alan Hermann ... Budgeting seminar conducted by Carl Coleman ... "Lifelighters" concert held, proceeds to *Jesus* video distribution ... Twelve local churches represented for combined prayer & praise service, guest speaker Graham Clark (Dakabin High School Chaplain) ... Half-yearly meeting held ... Elders shared preaching duties while Neale Proellocks on annual leave.

SA

NAILSWORTH (Andrew Evans) Over-30s group "Weekenders" commenced for fellowship & recreation ... Tom Tzabo, youth worker, conducted teen camp ... Evening youth services with music, testimonies, drama, monthly ... Contractors started work on new office block, kitchen & toilets, after some demolition work by volunteers ... "Prayer Triplets" arranged for May-June ... "FISH" food in someone's home enjoyed by hosts & guests ... Women participated with singing, prayers, readings on Mother's Day.

VIC

HARTWELL (Viney Longthorp, Nick Tuohy) Guest speaker Lindsay Dewberry, Conference President, led prayers for church leaders & congregation ... Over 100 attended Maundy Service with Covenant Players participating. Taizé music by church group. Good Friday meditation. Easter Day joyous experience ... Friendship

group, play group & youth groups continue community outreach ... Prayer & study group reading John Stott's *Basic Christianity* ... CWF craft night great success ... Church buildings painted & kitchen refurbished.

FRANKSTON (Tom Ede, Jason Potter) Liane Carson welcomed into membership ... Youth ministry now has 8 people in charge of separate areas ... Catherine Scott & Tristian Cole en-

gaged ... 32 ladies attended Ede's house in McCrae (from 19 to 90 years old) ... Jean Harper had bypass operation ... Gaylene Hawkins, Heather Jurinec, Maryanne Woodhardt, Stephanie Ogilvie & Jason Potter in leadership roles at Easter camps.

LATROBE TERRACE, GEELONG (David Jones) Sunday School children presented mothers with a gift on Mother's day ... Ladies presented

Cinderella at Grace McKellar Centre concert ... Laurie Barlow spoke at morning service on behalf of Gideons ... Secretary spent time in hospital following operation. Other members also on sick list ... Seven ladies attended CWF Conference ... Dr Mackenzie delegate to General Conference ... Over 100 bags of home-made biscuits given to prisoners in Barwon Prison.

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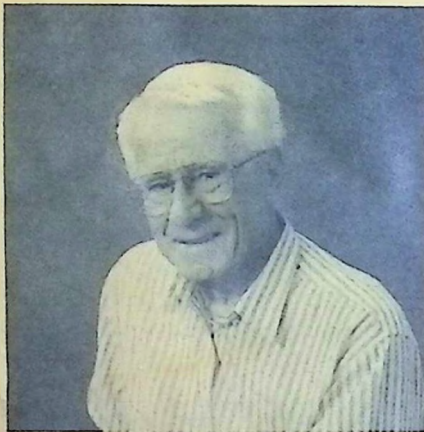
GORDON STIRLING

We all know that The Australian Christian has been celebrating 100 years of service to Australian Churches of Christ. But what happened 100 years ago to get it started?

Aaron Burr (A.B.) Maston was a great advocate of the use of tracts to inform people of the message of Churches of Christ. They were cheap little four-page pamphlets on such subjects as "The Plan of Salvation", "Baptism", "Christian Unity the New Testament Way" and "The Meaning of Discipleship".

He commenced a ministry at North Melbourne, Vic, in 1885 and soon inspired his members to form a tract society. Soon other churches became involved and "The Sower Tract Fund" was opened for the purpose of printing and distributing tracts. Within a year 2,400,000 pages of tracts had been printed and distributed across Australia. A.B. Maston and his wife packed and posted all of them, while both involved in a busy ministry and raising a young family.

The whole project soon became too big to be handled from the Maston home, even with help. So eventually he inspired a number of leading laymen to support the establishment of "The Austral Printing and Publishing Company" to print and distribute tracts and other literature concerning the witness of Churches of Christ. We didn't believe in creeds, but our tracts left no one in doubt about what we stood for. Soon there were 180 different tracts written by qualified writers of Churches of Christ.



The first five years of the Austral were hard going financially. The same was true of the two papers that were distributed among Australian Churches of Christ, *The Australian Christian Standard* and *The Christian Pioneer*. These three serious problems were faced with Christian grace and mutual understanding. It was decided to cease distributing the Standard and the Pioneer and to have one paper only, and that it be printed and published by the Austral Company. It was to be called *The Australian Christian*, the first issue coming off the press on 6 January, 1898, to be published weekly.

F.G. Dunn, former Editor of the Standard, wrote the leading articles and D.A. Ewers, former Editor of the Pioneer, wrote the editorial notes. A.B. Maston was Managing Editor. His successors were simply Editors, with the Austral Company doing the managing.

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The Last Word

Pulpits preaching rationalism only magnify hunger in the pews for heart-felt religion.

—William S. Banowsky

*Where do sick ships go?
To the dock.*

Put a hammer in my spouse's hand and you've put together two things of roughly equal intelligence.

Fishing is a jerk on one end of the line waiting for another jerk at the other.

Good fishing is just a matter of timing. You have to get there yesterday.

A friend is someone who dislikes the same people as you do.

When God invented men, she was only testing. (Graffiti)

*Patient: "After the operation, will I be able to play tennis?"
Surgeon: "Of course you will!"
Patient: "That's great, because I never could before."*

Two astronauts went into a restaurant on the moon, but soon came out again. They said it had no atmosphere.

*Grandma: "You've left all your crusts, Mary. When I was your age I ate every one."
Mary: "Do you still like crusts?"
Grandma: "Yes, I do."
Mary: "Well, you can have mine."*

Pontius' Puddle

