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STEWARDSHIP



AND YOUR MONEY



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Editorial

Stewardship and Spirituality

DON SMITH

"Patterns of giving are uncertain, and institutional loyalties are shaky. This is a recipe for financial turmoil." This quote from a review of a new book on church finance, spirituality and future directions is not the most inviting opening. But read on! * The comment needs to be reckoned with. We find ourselves in a fast-changing economic environment. Unprecedented social and cultural trends surround us. Every social institution, including the church, is being pressured. * Our single and family units are confronted with the challenges of changing economic



times. Past stability now eludes us. * If we believe the church has a message, there is a need for us to be confronted and challenged about the opportunities. Where churches attempt bold initiatives there is evidence of response. Crucial to bold initiatives is the provision of adequate funding. * We are all in danger of being seduced or overwhelmed by an economic environment which can turn us in upon ourselves to principally consider our own needs. * Where issues of stewardship and the meaning of money and work in our lives are dealt with out of a focused spirituality, there is every prospect that funds will flow for mission tasks. Experience shows that the higher the demand the more we respond. The lower the demand the lower our response. Our "world view" is fundamental to our stewardship. A narrow view elicits a narrow response. A large view brings an enlarged response. * This is a time for decisive leadership in local churches about the "need of the giver to give" and the needs of church and society. The motivation for our response is the ultimate example of the sacrifice of Jesus. * The late Donald McGavran of Church Growth prominence observed that "Churches seldom grow without bold plans". This is a truism we see constantly demonstrated. * Local leadership which discerns the needs and the spiritual challenge of a full-orbed discipleship is fundamental to overcoming the negatives of a limited "world view". Every congregation needs a reassessment of financial potential, probably with an outside consultant. There is an urgent need at state and national levels for new thinking, planning and initiatives to take us into a new era of fiscal growth. *

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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.

Drugs—Harm Minimisation

To the Editor,
Warwick Murphy ("AC" 8.4.98) in response to my article ("AC" 25.3.98) wrote that Harm Minimisation is an illogical, poorly-thought-out theory, that in reality is the first step towards liberalising drug laws. In my article I supported harm minimisation on the basis that it is impossible to eradicate the use and abuse of drugs. It is, therefore, important that the problems that eventuate from drug abuse need to be addressed through strategies that will minimise the harm. Warwick Murphy also recognises that we can never eliminate drug use and goes on to give the analogy that we should not try to teach people to safely speed or safely steal. The first analogy lacks logic and the second is irrelevant. On today's highways, traffic legally travels at high speed (up to 110 km/hour) and people need to have the skills to handle the inherent dangers of driving on these roads.

Similarly with drugs, particularly the legal drugs such as alcohol and pharmaceuticals, people need to be made aware of the benefits and the dangers associated with their use. Like motor vehicles, drugs are also potentially lethal. With regard to illegal drugs, harm minimisation includes warning of the dangers and risks to health along with possible social and legal consequences. But should

people choose to use drugs, harm minimisation advocates that they do so in a way which minimises the risks to themselves and to others.

With regard to Warwick Murphy's assertion that harm minimisation has been a failure, this can be easily countered by Australia's record of controlling the spread of HIV/AIDS and Hepatitis C, reducing the consumption per head of alcohol and the percentage of the population smoking tobacco. Harm minimisation strategies in the areas of health, education, law enforcement, and media campaigns have been recognised worldwide as having put Australia ahead of other countries in reducing the harms associated with alcohol and other drugs.

Warwick Murphy is correct in saying that drug problems are increasing. This is not because of harm minimisation, but despite the many strategies that have been put in place. It must be remembered that Australia is a lucrative target of an international trade that in size is second only to the arms trade, and has an expenditure on illicit drugs exceeding seven billion dollars according to ACCESS economics. Harm minimisation is not about winning drug wars, but of urging the responsible usage of drugs for positive results with the least harm.

—Bob Aldred

(Alcohol & Drug Foundation, Spring Hill, Qld)

Christians in China

To the Editor,
I read with great interest the article by Gordon Moyes on faith in China ("AC" 13.5.98). Some twenty years ago, when I was a mature-age entrant to ministry and theological college, I was much involved in the work of the church in Communist countries.

Letters to the Editor

At that time, it was an unpopular cause in Australian church circles. Left-wing influence, both theological and political, in our churches and theological college was very strong. There was a culture of, "This business of persecution in communist countries is a figment of the imagination of the right", and those who endeavoured to point it out were sneered at (albeit politely) and treated as odd relics of a bygone age.

Institutions such as the "House of the Gentle Bunyip" were very strong on injustices in countries with right-wing governments (quite rightly), but were totally silent on injustices in Communist countries—indeed they denigrated such people as Richard Wurmbrand, who had spent fourteen years in prison and suffered terrible tortures for his Christian faith. This "selective vision" was one reason why I personally could never join with them. (I might also say that this attitude was part of the reason I ultimately left the ministry, and the Churches of Christ).

However, the demise of the European communist countries a few years ago, and the revelations that followed it, have proved that Wurmbrand and others like him were totally correct.

The article by Gordon Moyes is a timely reminder that Communism is not yet totally dead and that Christians are still persecuted wherever it holds sway.

—Len Martin.
(Halls Gap, Vic)

Drug Crisis

To the Editor,
Our nation has a crisis on its hands involving drugs and alcohol. Our 25 street van crews working round Australia are reporting a growing number of homeless youth, increasing problems with marijuana, heroin, other illicit

drugs and, tragically, with alcohol—the easiest to obtain drug. Our counsellors are increasingly busy listening to the tragic stories of parents who having done their best for their own, have found them stealing, lying and killing themselves while wrecking their own family with their reckless drug and alcohol abuse.

Yes we have Teen Challenge, Bridge Programs, DRUG-ARM and other Christian-sourced alcohol and drug centres, but it is not enough. I have come to increasingly recognise drug abuse and the addictive personality as spiritual problems.

We need to pray for wisdom and authority for all working in drug and alcohol treatment and prevention. Second, we need to pray for business and for government that our leaders will see that unemployment provides the culture for drug use to spread at epidemic levels. Third, we need to become targeted in our prayers—seeking out from organisations specific matters and, confidentially, specific people to pray for.

We need to be encouraged by the powerful examples of prayer groups praying for overseas missionaries. Today as perhaps never before in the history of Australia, as a nation we need to pray for our land. We will gladly supply notes for prayer to your readers.

—Graeme Rule
(Drug Arm, Dandenong, Vic)

Update

Dear readers,

As I write this, our office is almost overwhelmed with news items, feature articles and advertisements. That is a great situation to be in, but not every item will find a place in the issue. Sometimes material has to be held over for some issues. We appreciate the patience of contributors. Don't hesitate to send us your news. Good photos and concise reports are preferred.

This issue has a focus on stewardship and money. Readers, especially those who are leaders, may wish to note that Bob Smith, the National Coordinator of Churches of Christ, is inviting contact from churches interested in obtaining help regarding church finance issues. He may be able to help personally or recommend an alternative contact. His address is PO Box 1628, Crows Nest NSW 2065, or telephone (02) 9437 0992.

Since commenting on the recent establishment of our web site, further plans have been made, including allowing the wider use of forms (currently only Netscape users can access this feature) and including links to other sites within Churches of Christ in Australia.

Last year we ran a report on an e-mail discussion list started by Russell Kilgour where issues raised in the paper could be discussed at greater depth. Russell is delighted to report that there are currently some 40 subscribers. You can join the list by pointing your browser to <<http://www.xcel.net.au/christian.index.htm>> and clicking on the subscribe button.

In this issue we introduce a series of cartoons on our back page. These are by Janet Woodlock of the Ringwood, Vic, church. Janet is the recently-appointed coordinator of the Women's Ministry Unit of the Vic-Tas Conference. She has a particular interest in evangelism and issues related to the sharing of faith.

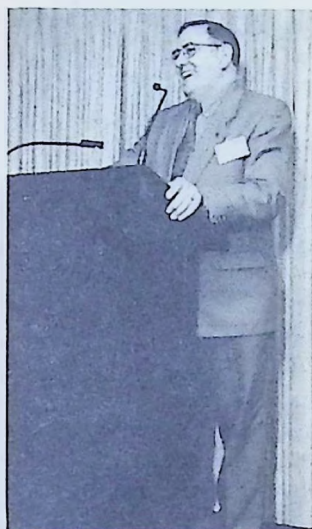
We are now in the midst of enlisting new subscribers. We would encourage you to invite people in your congregation to consider our special offer of three free trial issues or an introductory subscription at the special rate of \$10 for the rest of 1998.

Pontius' Puddle



Church Planting Conference

Multi-denominational conference in NSW



Bruce Armstrong

Bruce Armstrong, Ministry Coordinator of Churches of Christ in NSW, spoke at the launching banquet at the "Evangelising Australia Through Church Planting" Conference on behalf of Churches of Christ. The conference was held in Sydney 4-7 May under the sponsorship of the United Evangelistic Council of NSW. Over 300 guests attended the function. Guest leaders at the conference included Bishop Frank Retief of South Africa and David Jackman of the UK. Workshops included "Large-Church Evangelism and Church Planting", "Market-Place Christianity", "Developing the Evangelis-

tic Prayer life of a Congregation", "Helping Church Planters Survive" and numerous other practical subjects. Ten denominational networks covered participants from the

various churches. Milton Oliver led the Churches of Christ group. The strategic importance of church-planting initiatives was seen as paramount in evangelising the Australian community

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Time To Build

Whitford church has exciting start to large development program

Almost 22 years ago a group of committed Christians left the comfort of their congregation to commence a fledgling church work at Whitford Shopping Centre, WA.

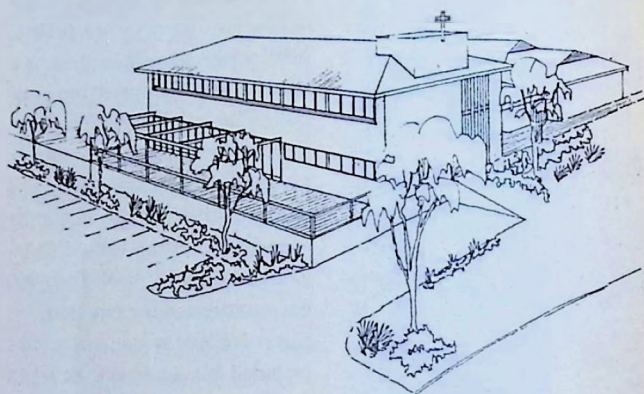
Twenty-two years ago the small congregation was on the edge of Perth's expanding northern suburban sprawl. Today Whitford Church of Christ lies in almost the centre of the largest local government area of Western Australia, and one of the fastest growing in Australia. Almost 210,000 people live in the area. Nestled in the northern coastal suburb of Mullaloo, Whitford Church of Christ now comprises in excess of 300 families with some 750 plus people attending weekly worship services. The continuing growth of the church created a significant space problem.

Whitford church has planted four different local churches in past years. It supports pastors, Bible men and women, and an orphanage and school in India. Doing

things a little differently is not unusual for this church. It once owned the adjacent shopping centre. The sale of that asset paid for the development of the current facilities. The church continued to hear the call to reach out to those in the community and beyond. As the people at Whitford respond to this call, people keep coming, ministries keep growing, and a major building-extension program had to be considered.

Known as "Time To Build", Whitford recently spent a seven-week period of specific focus on the ministry of the group of believers. "Time To Build" is based around a process used by the Saddleback Community Church in Los Angeles during a number of their redevelopments. The process was given a distinctive Whitford family flavour. During the campaign the focus was on four primary areas of church family life:

- spiritual maturity
- family relationships



- thanksgiving
- generosity

The call for commitment of funds was made on Commitment Sunday, 29 March 1998. There was a confidence that the target of \$650,000 for this "Time To Build" campaign would be reached. Sunday 5 April 1998 was Victory Sunday.

Pastor, Mark Wilson was not aware of the total amounts given whether in cash or other one-off offerings on the Commitment Sunday, or in commitment pledges to be paid over the next 2 years. Mark's task on the Victory Sunday was to construct a small wall of bricks during the morning worship service. Each brick equated to \$50,000. As Mark laid each brick in place he and the congregation chorused the increasing value it represented. The one-off offerings were stopped after the fourth brick was laid in place. One-off cash gifts amounted to \$184,097.70. Mark continued to place the bricks to the resounding chorus—"250,000, \$300,000, \$350,000, \$400,000, \$450,000, \$500,000, \$550,000, \$600,000, \$650,000". The goal had been achieved, and the church clearly expressed its excitement. But there was still more, and as the

wall continued to grow you could hear—"700,000, \$750,000, \$800,000, \$850,000". The final brick added represented \$21,777.70.

The combined total of the bricks reached \$871,777.70. People jumped to their feet, hands together in joyous clapping, mouths were opened in loud cheering and tears spilled out of full eyes. After several minutes of great jubilation a hush fell over the congregation. Some knelt in prayer, some stood in awe, others sat in humbleness, but all offered their heartfelt thanks to God. The words expressed were from the depths of souls, but nothing seemed to adequately express what all felt at this time.

The funds were but one part of the fourfold purpose of the "Time To Build" campaign.

In the following weeks people have matured spiritually, faith has been strengthened, love deepened, and characters moulded. Who says a large church can only be unfriendly? At a church banquet the congregation expressed thanksgiving to God, for what he has done in the past and what he is going to do in the future. These are the miracles that brought forth the rejoicing.

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NSW Women's Conference

104th annual women's Conference in NSW

NSW. celebrated their 104th Women's Conference day at Auburn on 1 May. President Judy Cayzer's theme has been "The Same ... But Different".

This year was the first for a successful coffee and dessert evening. We were privileged to have Marj Dredge, World President of Christian Women's Fellowship, bring challenging messages at both meetings. Incoming President, Jean Porteous has as her theme "Jesus Christ is the same, yesterday and today and forever". As a result of the February Forum



Judy Cayzer, NSW CWF President, with Marj Dredge, World President

the overall structure of women's work in NSW is being addressed.

New Strategic Plan for Vic-Tas

New plan presented to churches and agencies during annual Conference

Dean Phelan, Chairman of the Vic-Tas Board presented a strategic plan which will incorporate all sections of Conference and local churches as part of the 133rd Annual Conference held at the Blackburn Community Church in May. Entitled "Mission Beyond 2000—Priorities and Directions for Churches of Christ in Victoria and Tasmania", the plan has been developed over the last year. Churches and Conference agencies will be invited to reply as to how they will respond and contribute to the plan and vision.

Lindsay Dewberry, Conference President, gave a moving address on his theme "Are Churches Living Dangerously?" Gordon Stirling challenged delegates on the theme "Vic-Tas Churches of Christ—Where to Now?"

Moses Abbatangelo (Matthew's Party) and Norm Fitzgerald, (South Yarrowonga Christian Fellowship) spoke about their new churches, prior to formal affiliation. The Indigenous Ministry Unit, led by Reg and Marceil Lawrence, gave a presentation of the



Dean Phelan, Chairman of the Vic-Tas Conference Board presented the new strategic plan

issues that confront the church and nation in reconciliation and justice. Many signed the *Sorry Book* which was presented to representatives of indigenous Australians on National Sorry Day.

Workshops were conducted on: evangelism; healthy churches; living with change, conflict and reconciliation; seniors ministry; native title and justice; computers. Tim Costello spoke at the Celebration Rally at Camberwell Civic Centre. Young people participated in music, singing and drama; dancers from the Indonesian Praise Church added a colourful dimension to worship. Chek Chia was inducted as Conference President, 1998-1999, introducing his theme, "Soaring to God's Frontier".

A record 140 ministers attended the Ministers' Summit at Southern Community Church. Victoria's church membership grew by 5.8% and Tasmania's by 0.4%.

PNG Deaths

The Overseas Mission Board has received advice from PNG that Fred, the third son of Toni Waulik died on 7 May. Toni is the Confer-

ence chairman of Churches of Christ in PNG. His wife died in March, following the delivery of their fourth child.

Kalgoorlie Church of Christ, WA Centenary Celebrations

7-9 August 1998

Guest Preacher: Pastor Glen Rogers

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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It Takes Faith and Prayer

Plagues hit a forgotten people



Australian aid worker, Bernard Vicary

There are parts of the world where no-one would choose to live. Places where the combination of natural and man-made disasters makes the most basic standards of safety and living conditions difficult.

It takes faith and prayer to survive in such a place, as World Vision's Bernard Vicary discovered in Sudan.

A series of plagues of an almost Biblical nature have hit the troubled country of Sudan over the last few years. There have been floods, droughts, swarms of locusts and even earthquakes,

alongside the misery of the ongoing famine.

Then there are disasters only humans can be blamed for: conflicts between government forces in the Muslim north and rebels in the animist and Christian south which have led to a civil war where torture, abductions and summary executions are common. Aid workers estimate more than 1.5 million people have been killed and 75 per cent of the population displaced during the war.

It sounds difficult and dangerous, but to Bernard Vicary, it was home for five years. While he acknowledges it was "one of the hardest places in the world to live", he loves the people and misses living there. "You're always surrounded by people, you're never alone ... I miss being with a team that cares for each other." As a relief worker, Bernard made friends at all levels of Sudanese society. "You're mixing with people at a grassroots level, but you're also making contacts with the authorities." Bernard said the suffering faced by his friends "just breaks your heart ... you want to do more to help them."

While working in Sudan as a World Vision operations manager,

Bernard saw the ethos of aid distribution change to a more holistic approach. Rather than just delivering curing an emergency, long-term food security programs were set up to help people deal with emergencies. And as World Vision teams become more experienced, they develop better ways of delivering relief and setting up programs.

In spite of ongoing relief work, the crisis continues. Hundreds of thousands of people in the south are facing one of the worst famines in Sudan's history—brought on by war and drought. The World Food Program has called it "a potential disaster".

Bernard is angry that the famines continue, despite the land in Sudan being capable of supporting its people. He says the country has great diversity in its landscape, and is starving only because of underdevelopment and oppression. "They don't need to be starving ... the ideological battle is the greatest threat to the people."

Threats are nothing new to Bernard, who has twice feared for his life—in altercations with a gun-toting local in Somalia and while being evacuated and

searched by soldiers in Sudan. "I thought 'OK Jesus, here I come'," he recalls. "Each time you give it back to God and say 'Your will be done'."

For information about supporting the 40 Hour Famine call World Vision on 13 32 40.

—Kate James

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Vic-Tas Women's Conference

112th annual Women's Conference



(L-R) Shirley Wallis, Past President, Marion Rowe, Secretary and Liz Tilson, President

Liz Tilson presided over the 112th Women's Conference held at Monash City Church, Vic, on 30 April, where over 250 women attended. Highlights included the

dedication of the new Women's Ministry Unit under the leadership of Janet Woodlock.

The Conference Commitment Offering of \$2,850 was given to the Urban Neighbourhood of Hope (UNOH).

Judith Turner, Colac, Vic, is the incoming President.

Worship and music focused on the theme "Praise Shall be My Song".

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Wesley Mission Wins Appeal

Presbytery told to review termination decision

Wesley Mission has won its appeal over a Sydney Presbytery decision not to renew the settlement of Dr Gordon Moyes as Superintendent. This is the outcome of a meeting held in Sydney at which the Uniting Church's Sydney Presbytery was told to review last year's decision to not approve a renewal of Dr Moyes' appointment. The panel asked the Presbytery to reconsider the matter "expeditiously". Wesley Mission senior pastor Dr Tony Chi said the outcome was "what we had hoped for".



Gordon Moyes's appointment as Wesley Mission Director to be reviewed

Volunteer of the Year

Carol Davis honoured for her contribution

Former President of the Knox Community Volunteers, Vic, Mrs Carol Davis, was named Knox City Volunteer of the Year for her dedicated work in a number of local community organisations, including Meals on Wheels, Knox Information and Support Centre, and the Bayswater Church of Christ.

One of her major achievements in the past 11 years was to chair a steering committee that led to the formation of the Knox Citizens Advice Bureau. Knox is a large eastern suburban municipality in Melbourne. Carol is actively involved in the Bayswater church and was recently invited to address the church.



Carol Davis, of Bayswater Church of Christ, Vic, named volunteer of the year.

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.

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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:

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- 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.

Churches of Christ in Victoria and Tasmania

The Conference Board of Churches of Christ in Victoria and Tasmania invites expressions of interest from suitably experienced and skilled people for the full-time position of

Executive Assistant

The Executive Assistant will report directly to the Conference Executive Officer and will be responsible for the efficient management of administrative responsibilities, delegated by the Executive Officer, other Directors and staff as required. The successful applicant will have excellent organisational, interpersonal and communication skills, a strong working knowledge of Microsoft Office, a commitment to the ethos of Churches of Christ, and the flexibility to work within a ministry team, delivering services to the whole Conference.

Commencement date to be negotiated, preferably July.

Applications close 30 June 1998.

Written applications and requests for detailed position description should be made to:

Mrs Lynette Leach
Conference Executive Officer
Churches of Christ in Victoria and Tasmania
77 Capel St, West Melbourne Vic 3003
Telephone (03) 9326 8900

All initial inquiries will be treated in the strictest confidence. The Conference of Churches of Christ in Victoria and Tasmania is an equal-opportunity employer. The Conference Board reserves the right to invite individuals to apply.



Creative Ministries Director

Monash City Church of Christ is seeking to employ a Creative Ministries Director to work three days a week.

Monash City Church of Christ is a large church that has a vision for worship services to honour God by being worshipful, contemporary, positive, challenging and creative.

The church has many talented singers, musicians and actors, and sound, light and video technicians.

The suitable person would plan, with the Senior Minister, all worship services, develop existing and possible new talents and build excellent worship teams.

The Creative Ministry Director will need to be open to God's leading, gifted in music, effective in administration and be a team player.

Applications and/or inquiries to:

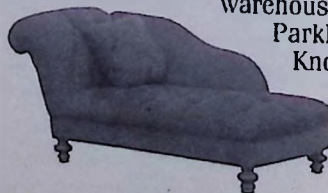
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Stewardship

Tithes, First Fruits and Offerings

JUDITH FLETT

"Here's your threepence for Sunday School, and would you put this in the plate?" Mum would rummage through the little envelopes, discarding the out of date ones and add 2/- to the current one. This was my introduction to stewardship via the "Well's scheme". I became a Christian in my early teens and through a youth Bible study was

Although dollars are needed to run a church, this is not the reason I give.

challenged on my use of leisure, time and giving—not just my giving. From about this time, I began to tithe (give a tenth) of my pocket money and then later, my wages. This has continued through our married life, always taking our giving out of the wage first. Of course, I've grown to understand God doesn't really need my money to help out his work. I don't pay the minister or keep the church going! This brings a negative and begrudging attitude. Although dollars are needed to run a church, this is not the reason I give. Over the past couple of years, our offering envelopes have featured verses on giving and God's blessings. These encourage a thankful heart. Giving becomes an act of worship.

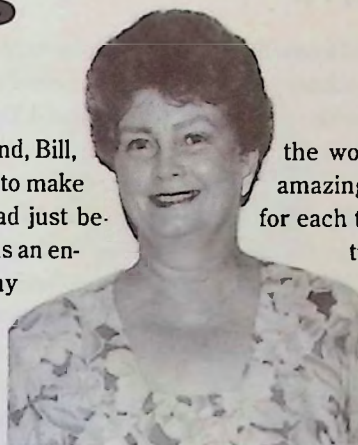
Tithing was part of worship for the Israelites. Above this, they gave first-fruits and offerings. God called his people to give generously and not grudgingly and he would bless them. Paul echoes the same thought. At one stage

in a ministry, my husband, Bill, was working part-time to make up a wage. A friend had just begun work and handed us an envelope—"For you, my first fruits". This concept was new to me. The giving of her first wage to God! What a blessing that was for

us. Throughout our ministry, others have also given out of love, above their regular church giving. Sharing in the wider work of God's kingdom around the world through prayer and giving brings great satisfaction. Didn't Jesus say, "Where your treasure is there is your heart also"?

My home is one of my treasures. It reflects the things I've made, collected, inherited—a haven where I feel secure and happy. I can choose to keep it selfishly to myself, or share it with others. My trusty old car is another part of our stewardship—a treasure used to ferry kids to Kids Club, ladies to meetings, and enabling me to be involved in church and conference committees and activities.

In the parable of the talents, Jesus shows the necessity of using well all that God has entrusted to us. As well as money this includes our time and talents. "Use or lose" was the catch cry in my younger days. Exercising spiritual gifts was not as prominent as "being available for God to use". What doors of opportunity opened. My music career took off around fourteen years of age. I played for the evening services when the musicians failed to return from their afternoon's golf on time! Teaching Sunday School opened



the word of God to me in an amazing way. God does equip for each task—Kids clubs, Scripture teaching, ladies' bible studies.

Time is the hardest commodity to give to God. It's easy to be busy doing good things and not be

available for people. It's great to see retired couples giving their time to visiting shut-ins. That's time invested in people for the Kingdom. We need to be good stewards of our time.

When the tabernacle was built the Israelites gave generously of their jewellery, fine fabrics, time and skills. In time, their commitment declined and hearts grew cold toward God. Their worship became a ritual. Some of the religious leaders in Jesus' day even went so far as to tithe their spices, but were condemned because they had neglected justice. Stewardship is a whole-of-life attitude—towards the world around us, with our responsibility to relieve human suffering; toward our environment, with the responsibility for the use of our resources, not to be careless or wasteful.

That's a long way from one tenth of my pocket money! Our gifts of money, time and talents are a token of our spiritual commitment. Our lives are a gift from God. God measures our giving not in terms of how much we give, but rather in terms of how much we keep for ourselves.

Judith Flett is a past QCWM President, a member of the Qld Advisory Board and Conference Council. Her husband Bill is minister at Ann St, Brisbane.

Stewardship

Dancing Down the Aisles

BOB SMITH

Most ministers I know hate to preach about money. If circumstances—like a rapidly diminishing church bank balance—make a sermon on stewardship necessary, then they will usually try as hard as possible to camouflage the punchline—the one that says “Will you please give more money”—by building the sermon around the theme of stewardship of time, talent and treasure, with plenty of softeners like references to the “widow’s mite”. This, of course, is quite appropriate. That poor widow is probably the greatest role model we

The offering is the only time during the service when the people smile.

have of faithful stewardship; but not in the way that we often use her story. The point of that story is not the relative unimportance of the amount we give, but of the absolute importance of what it represents to us.

Don McCullough from California writes about the way Scottish Presbyterian missionaries established some churches in Ghana last century. The worship style of those churches still resembles the formal Presbyterian services that those dour Scottish missionaries brought with them. However, those canny Scots were smart enough to allow one traditional African expression into the worship service.

It appears that when they get to the time in the service when the offering is to be taken the old pedal organ and Scottish Psalter are replaced by African drums and a local beat that gets the worshippers out of the pews and into

the aisles where they dance down to the front to present their gifts. The missionary who told Don about this said that the offering is the only time during the service when the people smile. No doubt God does too!

Maybe that’s the way to improve our offerings—make it more fun than the rest of the service. But then, people aren’t supposed to enjoy giving, are they? Well, one wouldn’t think so considering the way most churches approach the subject. It is, to the modern church, what sex used to be a generation ago—a very private subject that one doesn’t talk about except when absolutely necessary. And then only in the most indirect way.

It is just bad luck that the result of our reticence is churches, conference departments, missionaries and a whole host of other worthy causes being strapped for money, locked into a never-ending grind of trying to do more with less, or just not doing it at all. The words of Scripture are still as true as they were when Paul wrote: “How can they preach unless they are sent?” (Rom 10:15). It is the faithful stewardship of money by God’s people that makes it possible for God’s work to be done effectively.

There’s no doubt that God can, and probably does, cause his Kingdom to grow despite our money. But that doesn’t alter the fact that faithful stewardship is what he calls us to.

Maybe we should take a lesson from the people of Ghana and stop assuming that the giving of money is objectionable to our people. After all, the Bible does speak about being “cheerful givers” (2 Cor 9:7). It also relates such “cheerful giving” to an abundance of blessing on the givers (Mal 3:10, Matt 6:33).



For over twenty years I have been involved in stewardship education—teaching churches what the Bible has to say about the giving of money.

Experience has taught me that, if handled sensibly and positively, stewardship doesn’t create antagonism but actually promotes spiritual growth, as well as producing healthier offerings. It is not difficult to achieve a 30% increase in giving in a church that is in good heart and has a program its people think is worthwhile.

However, there is an even more important reason for positive teaching on stewardship. The giving of money is an integral part of discipleship. Church leaders who fail to teach about giving are failing to adequately disciple their people. They are also keeping them from the blessings that accompany such maturity. It is a sobering thing to recall that Jesus actually had more to say about money, and our relationship to it, than any other subject.

You may not actually dance down the aisles, but you will get to know something of the joy of giving.

Bob Smith is National Coordinator for Churches of Christ in Australia.

Stewardship

Planned Giving

TED KEATING

Planned Giving Programs were the answer for the financial problems of many of our churches in the 1960s and 1970s. Their results were reasonably predictable. Usually 60% of the church would pledge, there would be an increase in giving of about 50% the first time a church had a program, and when you went back three years later the offering would go up by another 20%. Things have changed since then. We have learned a lot about other effective ways to encourage a congregation to give. Despite many changes, the pledged giver is still the most effective giver in

Despite many changes, the pledged giver is still the most effective giver in the congregation.

the congregation. For example, at Wollongong, NSW, only 40% of the church is pledged, but they give 90% of the offering.

It is more difficult to have the majority of a church committed to regular and sacrificial giving, especially if it is a young congregation. Young adults generally feel a distance from the "institution" and would rather give to projects that inspire a response.

The worshippers who respond to the "sacrifice and commitment" approaches now make up a third of the congregation. The next third will respond to challenging and exciting projects. The remaining third will probably only give if there is something in it for them. (For example one businessman who is reluctant to give regularly,

is happy to occasionally sponsor the church paper and claim the sponsorship as an advertising expense!)

The onus is on the church to present new and exciting challenges to attract the support of the "middle third", who give only when inspired.

Churches that hide those challenging projects in their budget need to rethink their approach for they may be failing to reach

that group. For example, Wollongong used to have a gift to World Vision as a part of their budget. Now it is covered entirely by a special appeal at Christmas.

A church needs to remind members annually of the responsibilities of giving and the new directions that will be taken by the church. The postmodern generation thinks of change and innovation and the church cannot afford to be seen as just maintaining the status quo. An annual reminder is also important because of the rapid changeover that occurs in a congregation. Wollongong experiences a changeover rate of approximately 10% every twelve months.

Many churches are working harder at the issue of tax deductibility and are realising that this is more effective if offered to high income earners. Some churches have an educational institution as a part of their plant. Many churches support benevolent and other causes that would attract tax deductibility and have set up trust funds that can therefore offer deductibility to the individual giver who in turn gives his or her tax saving back to the church.



We are only slowly learning that our worshippers need encouragement to give beyond their death. To encourage Christians to leave their entire estate to the church could develop some unhealthy resentment, but an

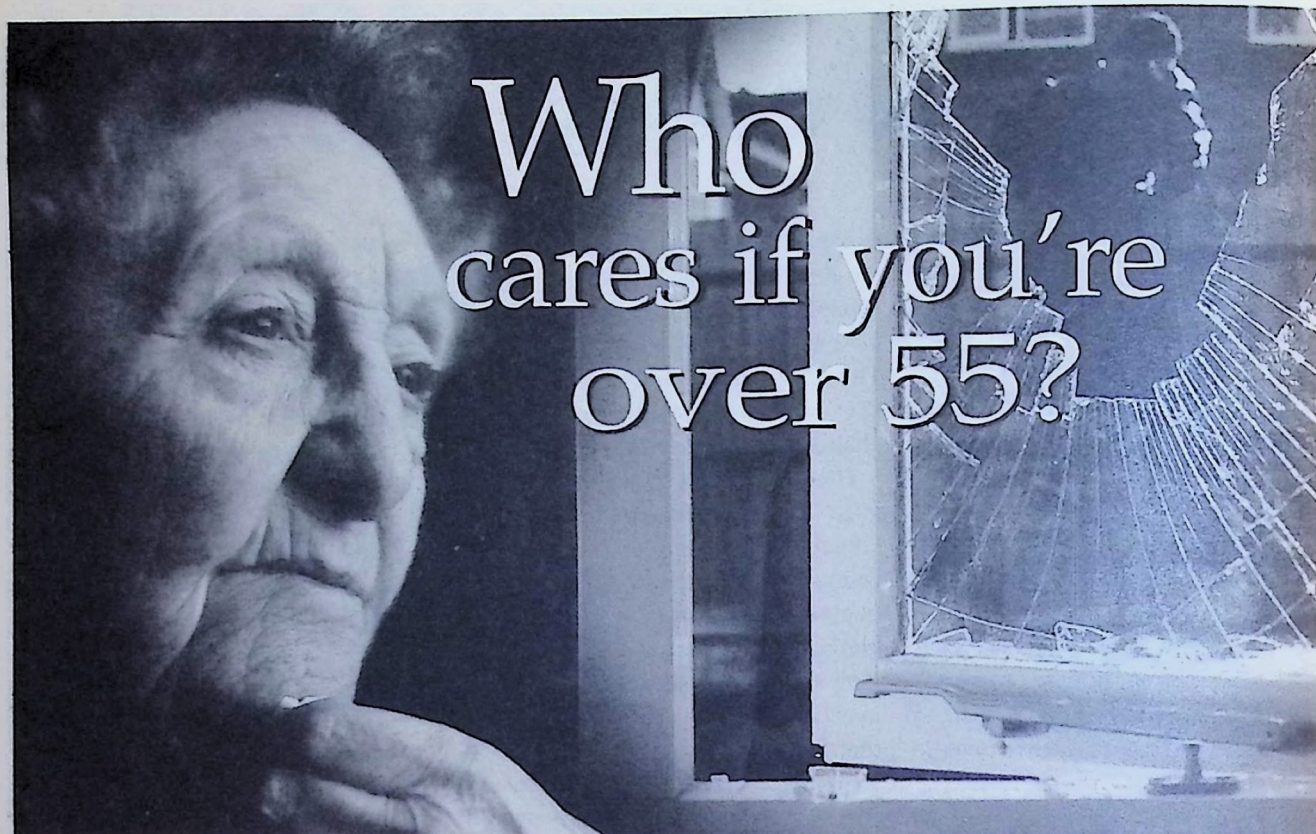
approximate tithe of the estate could do so much more for the Kingdom of God. It is a modern tendency to avoid having cash in the home

or the pocket. Many churches are benefiting from developing a culture of giving that encourages the use of bank transfer and credit card facilities. Will we be ready for the advent of the "smart card"?

Church leaders have learnt not to make too many assumptions about the giving levels of their congregations. One church had a teaching emphasis to raise the need of regular weekly giving and despite outstanding success, was able to go back to the congregation seven months later for support for a major building appeal. Again, the second appeal was also successful.

Despite all of these recent developments, there is still nothing as effective as the signed pledge accompanied by a system of accountability to give a strong base for regular and reliable giving. Inspiration continues to flow down hill and church leaders themselves must continue to set the pace for inspiring giving. These important principles have not changed!

Ted Keating is the senior minister at Wollongong, NSW. In earlier years he worked with the Victorian-Tasmanian Conference with responsibilities as a field director for conducting planned giving programs in churches.



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Stewardship

The Wider Church

LYNETTE LEACH

How large is your understanding of the church? Don't read this article if you think that the church means only your own local Churches of Christ congregation.

The timing of this article could not be more appropriate! During the last month, at Board meetings, in discussions with church leaders, visits to local churches and informal conversations with people, a common theme has been the financial difficulties which churches face in supporting anything beyond their own local work. For those

If resources shrink, the whole church shrinks.

involved in leadership in the wider church, it is a constant struggle to find the resources to support all that churches expect that the wider church will do—either for them or on their behalf.

Local churches rely on the money which members give in their tithes and offerings to sustain the life, witness and service of their own churches. As Churches of Christ we are joined together in what we call the "Conference", which expresses our common life together and which then carries out the mission of the church in a wider dimension. There are even voices which argue that we no longer need "Conference". Dare I say that many churches would become even more inward-looking and parochial than they are now, without the challenge that comes through wider

agencies about our mission in the world.

Resourcing the mission and ministry of the church in the world is the responsibility of the **whole** church.

This has local, state, national and international implications. Cut the resources to any of these dimensions, and the whole church is affected. The results may not be seen immediately, but long-term it would have serious consequences for the viability of the church. If resources shrink, the whole church shrinks.

A healthy, vital, whole church has a multi-faceted approach to mission and ministry. All of these areas need adequate resourcing: theological education; welfare, community services and aged care; property advice; church development; camping programs; children's, youth, family and singles ministry; pastoral care of ministers and churches; church planting; mission among the poor; mission training; evangelism in contemporary culture; leadership development; Asian ministry; indigenous ministry; ecumenical cooperation; overseas mission ... The list goes on.

Each area faces enormous responsibilities. Every year as budgets are prepared, those responsible confront agonising decisions about how costs can be further reduced. Where is our big vision for the church?

In the Victorian-Tasmanian Conference, local churches pay an affiliation fee based on membership and Christians in fellowship statistics.

Local churches and individuals give additional amounts to specific agencies, special appeals and different causes. This is how the local church participates in the wider work of Churches of Christ—work which a local church cannot do on its own and which has been considered of strategic importance for a healthy, vital church.

Naturally, churches question whether they are receiving value for money. The issue of accountability to local churches for how the wider church uses the money received is crucial. However, some local churches are able to be assisted in many ways, beyond what they are able to give, because other churches are generous in their support. Some aspects of wider church life will be supported without the givers directly seeing the results of their offerings, for example, supporting overseas missionaries, assisting indigenous people in remote areas of Australia, enabling important work to be implemented such as codes of ethics and practice.

I am sure that churches become tired of yet another letter begging for financial help. Perhaps we do not have enough, because we do not ask enough! Spirituality and stewardship are two sides of the same coin.

Stewardship is a personal and church responsibility. The spiritual health and vitality of people and churches is directly related to giving. Every gift given by individuals and local churches to the wider mission and ministry of Churches of Christ is appreciated and needed.

"The righteous are generous and keep giving." (Psa 37:21)

Lynette Leach is the Executive Officer of the Conference of Churches of Christ in Victoria and Tasmania.



Stewardship

Giving to Live

ROBERT LEANE

For many years, scientists and philosophers have tried to find the elixir of youth in an attempt to prolong life on earth. Some have even had their bodies cryogenically frozen in the hope that one day, once the discovery is made, they can be unfrozen and have the advantages of new-found knowledge.

It would seem that in spite of this, we will one day die. Those who have responded to the call of God will experience the eternal life Jesus promised. Consequent to this is that the things of earth do not go with us. They are left behind in our known material world.

It will not be the elixir of youth that we will be providing, but the money that will ensure the needs of the future

However it is these "things" that can live on in the work of the church if we make the right plans for this to occur. The service that we have given to the church and its mission can continue through the work of others.

The willingness for members of our churches to consider ensuring that their will includes the church as a benefactor is an issue we need to consider. If we make the decision to do this, I believe that we should do it in such a way that allows the legacy to be used to meet the needs of the church as they change over the years.

A friend of mine recently said that there was no point in the church dying rich. Churches or agencies of the church can have funds provided by thoughtful peo-

ple for purposes that time has overtaken. Unless specific provision had been made, it becomes very difficult to reallocate those funds to other needed and relevant mission activities.

Officers of our state Conferences, national and state agencies have all indicated in recent times the difficulties they are having in maintaining their work. This is in spite of drastic cuts in personnel and other expenditure, while ensuring a service and appropriate ministry can be provided.

It was hearing these comments and understanding the long-term effects this will have on church development, ministry formation and other mission work that prompted this article.

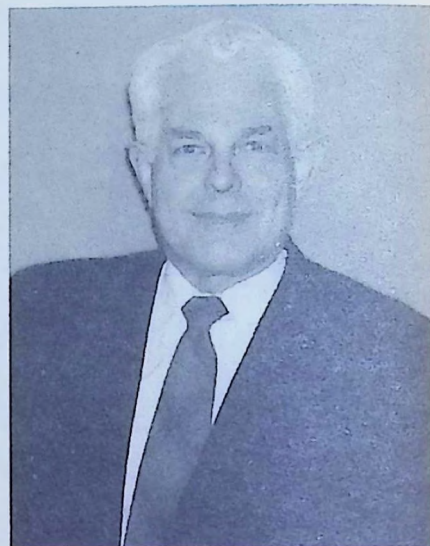
It is understood that the funding problem at the state and national level is being replicated in the churches, with their mission and ministry being carefully evaluated.

The difficulty with this is that often it is the cutting edge and "risk" ventures that are closely looked at and curtailed.

However, it is just these types of activities that will allow the church to meet the needs of the present and future in new and exciting ways.

Many of us who are older feel we would like to leave our surviving children something substantial when we die, to help them in the future. To some extent we all want that. However, most of those who will survive us will know of our involvement with the work and worship of the church.

With that knowledge, they would also no doubt understand we would want the work we were involved in to be maintained in some way after our death. It would be important for recipients of these bequests to keep in touch with



relatives in some general way in order to let them know of what the church is doing in the various areas of contemporary ministry and mission. This would indicate in some small way our gratitude and provide a means for the church to keep in contact with them.

Churches of Christ are not alone in facing the problem of finding sufficient money to continue the needed work of the church. However, thinking now of how we might give in order for the church to live, will help our successors to ensure the Church of Jesus Christ can continue its mission.

It will not be the elixir of youth that we will be providing, but the money that will help meet the needs of the future, caring for its associated hurts and communicating the hope that the Gospel can give.

Eternal life as we know it, has been granted to us by the grace of God in Jesus Christ. We shall be aiding the future life of the church by making plans now to "give in order for the church to live".

Robert Leane is the National President of Churches of Christ in Australia.

Sorry, I Gave at the Office ...

ANONYMOUS

The offering plate was handed to me, and, with colour rising in my cheeks, I shook my head and passed it back to the usher.

Once again I had neglected to put anything in the plate and I felt as if the eyes of the congregation were on me, noting that I had not given of my "tithes and offerings". Some time ago, I made the decision to have my offering deducted from my fortnightly pay and debited directly into the church's bank account. I did this for several reasons.

I felt that it was important that before I spent money on anything else, I should set aside my offering, knowing it would reach the church undiverted by other priorities. Too often in the past, I had found that by Sunday morning I didn't have the right money to give—either I had overspent or I didn't have the right change.

By getting my money deducted before I even see it overcomes these two problems. It also means that the church receives

a regular income every fortnight (barring computer hiccups or my dismissal), the church can rely on receiving my offering, whether I'm physically present in church or not. It also allows the treasurer to budget more accurately, knowing the regular income that will be received. Because I don't "see" the money going, I don't really miss it because it's just not there in my purse to spend. My finances are calculated on the net figure I have each week AT (after tax) and AO (after offering)!

Some people don't feel comfortable with this approach to their offering as they believe it distances them from their giving. However, I know that in this, at least, I've given God first calling on my finances (apart from the tax office!) before any other demands.

Every time I receive my pay slip, the figures of my pay and offering are in front of me, as a reminder that everything I receive belongs to God. And if I receive a pay rise, I am con-

fronted by my pay slip which asks me what I am doing regarding an increase in my giving?

The other issue that concerns people about this method of giving is the issue of privacy. The church treasurer knows the amount I give because I have requested that the income be divided into different ways (for missions, etc). However I believe it can remain an anonymous transaction if desired. I don't have any problems with the treasurer knowing (I trust his discretion) and perhaps our obsession with privacy about our finances isn't necessarily a good thing!

So what are the drawbacks? Only one that I've been able to discover, and that is the problem I've mentioned above. What do you do when the offering plate is put before you? As I sit there I'm plagued with questions like, "What if people think I've had an argument with the minister and I'm not giving anything because I'm angry?" "What sort of role model am I presenting to young people by not putting anything in the plate?" "Should I put in a token

amount so it at least it looks like I'm giving something?"

So while serene in my heart and mind that I am doing the right thing, I do sometimes feel a little awkward as I pass the plate back without a contribution.

Perhaps the next lot of offering envelopes could have printed on it a little box that could be ticked "direct deposit", so I could hap-

However, I know that in this, at least, I've given God first calling on my finances.

pily put in my empty offering envelope.

Or perhaps during the time to collect the offerings I could concentrate on the Giver of all things rather than my meagre offerings in return!

This article was written by one of our readers who wishes to remain anonymous to protect the innocent.

Associate Minister: Small Groups and Pastoral Care

Toowoomba Church of Christ (Hume Street) invites applications for a full-time associate minister to work primarily in the areas of pastoral care and small groups.

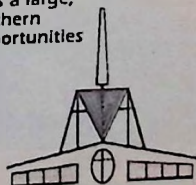
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Graham Agnew Bound for Sydney

MARLENE MESSENT

Marlene Messent interviews Graham Agnew who is about to complete 17 years at Marion Church of Christ in South Australia and become the Senior Minister at Northside Community Church on Sydney's North Shore.

Seventeen years in the one church: is that what you set out to achieve when you came to Marion?

Yes and no! Very early in my ministry I became convinced about the desirability of long-

I'm on about nurturing quality relationships within the Body of Christ, based on authenticity and acceptance.

term ministries as the most effective way to build a strong church. However, my initial term was for five years, then seven, followed by an open-ended arrangement which just seems to have flown by! Honestly, the seventeen years have gone quickly because there's hardly been a day which I would not rate as "incredibly exciting" and time flies when you're having fun!

What is the hardest thing about leaving after seventeen years?

Saying goodbye to people who have given their all to make my ministry look good! I'm not suggesting that this was their primary motive, but in their selfless service to the Lord over the years, hundreds of people

have helped to build a fellowship which today has a powerful reputation within SA and around the country as a centre of growth, excellence, community service and Christian nurture. My name and those of the team are usually linked to this "success", but we are just the front people. The real success of Marion lies in the fact that we have a mix of folk who call Jesus Lord and who will do almost anything to ensure that his will is achieved in Adelaide's southern suburbs.

What factors contributed to your decision to move on?

My farewell from Marion will be Friday, 26 June and that happens to be the day when I turn 50! Just on a year ago, I began to think about the next decade of my life and came to the simple conclusion that it could involve more of the same (a very pleasant and somewhat comfortable prospect) or something completely different! In seventeen years I have learnt how to do church reasonably well in the suburbs, but now I have the opportunity to explore ministry in what is effectively a "downtown church", right in the commercial centre of greater North Sydney. An area which is the size of Adelaide's CBD!

Should I be surprised that you are going from a church of around 600 per Sunday to one less than half that size?

Not really! I have never measured the health of a church purely on the basis of numbers. I've been to some huge churches where people have demonstrated about as much warmth as a Saturday night cinema crowd! Conversely, I've been to small struggling churches which were so introspective that even the Lord himself would receive little more

than a handshake and a hymn book.

So size alone is not where it's at! These days I am not so much interested in how many people I speak to on Sunday, but rather how many of those people are speaking to each other! I'm on about nurturing quality relationships within the Body of Christ, based on authenticity and acceptance.

In your opinion, why aren't there more growing churches in Australia?

The reasons are many, but the short answer is leadership. We have large numbers of ministers who are excellent pastors, effective teachers, reasonable administrators and even some who are above average when it comes to preaching. But against this we have what I consider to a lack of leaders. Men and women who are prepared to pay the price of leadership, run the risk of failure, go out on a limb, take the harsh criticism, really attempt to make a difference!

People tell me that times are tough and we are facing the grim realities of pluralism and the post-modern era. But in 25 years of ministry I have never seen higher levels of receptivity among ordinary Australians. After seventeen years of ministry at Marion,

the church is now way more than double its original size and

whereas when I started we accounted for 4.5% of the SA Conference (based on weekly communicants), we now make up 12.3% of the total! I'm no Billy Graham, but over the years we have applied well-worn principles for growth, outreach, community service and Christian nurture. In the context of a positive environment we have managed to attract new people virtually on a weekly basis!

Martin Luther King didn't say, "I have some wonderful nostalgic memories"; he said "I have a dream" and that's what is needed in churches as we move toward a new millennium.

Finally, what would you say to Ministers who are yet to "dig in" for a long term ministry?

Try it! Ask God for a vision of what could be possible in your church if you were to stay for seven, ten, twelve years or more! My most difficult years at Marion were the first three or four, trying to carve a pathway through the resistance to change. It would have been easy to accept some of the tempting calls which I received at that time, but I became totally convinced that I was meant to stay and explore the long-term possibilities for growth and service. It's been an exciting journey and today I leave

at the midway point of one of our best years ever!



Bev and Graham Agnew

Francis of Assisi: Preacher to the Birds

BILL TABBERNEE

While on a pilgrimage to Rome, a young man in his twenties named Giovanni de Bernardono (born 1182) was so moved by the plight of beggars outside St Peter's Basilica that, according to legend, he exchanged clothes with one of them and spent a day begging. Upon his return

Disowned ... Francis, lived on what people would give him

home to Assisi, he determined to devote the rest of his life to prayer and serving the poor. Disowned by his father, a wealthy cloth merchant, he took the name Francis, lived on what people would give him, commenced a ministry to lepers and started to restore the old church of St Damiano. Before long, others joined him and he devised a simple daily regimen for himself and his companions. They wore a distinctive, long, dark-brown garment tied at the middle with a white cord. In 1209 he returned to Rome and received official permission from Pope Innocent III to start an order.

The Franciscans vowed to live lives of chastity, poverty, obedience, and in service to humankind. Francis himself travelled widely on mission tours, as did his "friars", going out "two by two" without money and carrying only the bare essentials as commanded by Christ (Matt



10:7-19). Francis' form of monasticism was not confined within walls. In 1212, a noblewoman from Assisi named Clare caught Francis' vision, and together they founded a parallel order for women. This order, housed at St Damiano's church, naturally came to be known as "The Poor Clares". In 1221, Francis added a third order (the "Tertiaries") for lay people who wished to adopt his ideals and carry them out as far as practical while remaining to live in traditional society.

Francis died in 1226 and was canonised as a saint two years later. A kind, generous spirit whose simple lifestyle and devotion to the poor inspired countless followers to put their Christian faith into action, Francis is probably best remembered for his love of nature and all God's creatures. His "Canticle of the Sun", written in the garden of St Damiano's in the year before his death, contains the famous line: "Be thou praised, my Lord, with all thy creatures, above all Brother Sun". The most enduring image of St Francis is that of him, surrounded by small animals, preaching to the birds.

WAYNE BETTS

"Avoid cliches like the plague!"—so an article on writing once told me. I must admit to getting a bit nervous around neat little slogans or pithy sayings. Over the years, I've discovered that, for all the truth in such sayings, they leave just as much unsaid. Life doesn't always correspond to a slogan. Here's one I've heard (and used): "The Old Testament is about Law—the New Testament is about Grace". Now we know what is meant by such a

"Avoid cliches like the plague!"

phrase—and it's true—but it doesn't tell the whole story, and certainly doesn't do justice to either the Old or New Testaments.

Read the Old Testament carefully (even the bits full of law) and you'll detect God's grace. The fiddly regulations in books such as Exodus & Leviticus are given to people who have already been redeemed by God. Check out Exodus 20:2, read through the opening chapters of Deuteronomy and see what I mean. God is the one who acts to save his people—they are called to respond in obedience. But what about the New Testament? Yes, it's true that Paul teaches us that we are justified by faith, apart from works of law (Rom 3:28). He also says that the law of the Spirit of life has set us free from the law of sin and death (Rom 8:2). And like the law-codes of the Old Testament, Paul's letters describe what God has done in saving us, then how we should live as redeemed people.



God's intention has always been that his already-redeemed people should live in grace-full obedience, as Paul's use of the example of Abraham in Galatians and Romans shows.

Where humanity always tends to get it wrong is in trying to obey the law to get God's attention and approval. And that can happen for followers of Jesus as much as for followers of Moses.

There's wonderful continuity as well as development in God's interactions with humanity. The New Testament message of grace and responsibility flows out of the Old Testament's message of grace and responsibility. If we forget that, we're either in danger of throwing the baby out with the bath water, or getting the cart before the horse.

(Sorry—couldn't resist the cliches!)

Overseas Mission Board
Victorian Regional Meetings
15-16 June 1998

Dr Philemon & Shalini Pawar

Dr Pawar has been medical Superintendent of the Ashwood Memorial Hospital in Daund, India, for the past 15 years.

For further information, phone Jack Edwards (03) 9794 9419.

OMB
Overseas Mission Board

Classifieds

DEATHS

OAKES, Carl Percy Beloved husband of Lois. Father and father-in-law of Dudleigh, Geoffrey and Sandra, and Margaret and Dennis Piltz. Grandad to five grandchildren. Brother of Lily and Harold. Percy died suddenly on 7 May 1998, aged almost 85 years. A memorial service held in the Bribie, Qld, church was conducted by long-time friend Kevin Jenner. Formerly of Lismore and Caloundra, Lois's present address is Unit 25, Bribie Island Retirement Village, Foley St, Bongaree Qld 4507

PITT, Adrian Howard 22 May 1998, aged 27 years (result of accident). Dearly loved husband of Belinda, much loved Daddy of Matthew and Mitchell. My husband and best friend, you will be in my heart forever. Dearly loved son of Keith and Frances. Loved brother and brother-in-law of Raeleen and Graeme (Cross), Alison and Rohan (Carr), Rebecca and Ian (Mason). Loved Uncle of Alyssa. Eternal love and peace. In the arms of Jesus.

PITT, Adrian It's hard to explain the sadness we feel. You'll always be our big brother and hold a special place in our hearts. Loving memories. "We'll miss you." In God's care. —Rebecca and Ian

PITT, Adrian Much-loved grandson of Beth and Will Broad (both dec). Wonderful nephew of Arthur and Heather, David and Lorraine, Raymond (dec), Barbara (dec), Trevor and Joan, Elsie and Graham (Smith), Lois and Barry (Lea), Glen and Glenys. Fun-loving cousin of all his cousins. "When family chains are broken, Nothing is quite the same, But as God takes us one by one, He links the chain again."

PITT, Adrian Treasured nephew of Elsie and Graham Smith. Much-loved cousin of Ashley (dec), Narelle and Stephen, Darryn, Tanya and Deborah. Until we meet again around God's big table.

PITT, Adrian Loved and special nephew of Auntie Lois and Uncle Barry. Cousin and friend to Angela and Dallas, Hayden (dec), Teresa, Travis

and Latasha. Thanks for the love, laughs, and great times we shared which will always be treasured. Safe in God's care.

PITT, Adrian Howard Much-loved grandson of Keith and Edith (dec). Loved nephew of Richard, Robert and Rhonda, and Kevin (Luttrell). Big cousin of Andrew, Simon and Cathy, Stephanie, Aaron, Taliha, Bonnie and Anthony. Nana has her little "beaudie" in heaven.

PITT, Adrian Howard Our very special brother and brother-in-law. We will miss your cheeky grin. "One more angel in heaven, One more star in the sky." At home with Jesus. —Alison and Rohan Carr

IN MEMORIAM

ANDREWS, Olivia In Memory. Born to Michelle and Paul on 14.2.98. In loving memory of a special baby, ours to cherish for a little while, but not ours to hold. Safe in God's loving arms. "We shall carry you with us forever".

HOLIDAYS

AYR, NORTH QUEENSLAND Travelling up the Queensland coast? Stop over in the "Bountiful Burdekin" at Ayr Shamrock Motel. Friendly service, reasonable rates. Phone (07) 4783 1044. Owned and managed by Dudleigh Oakes.

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ern cons, has everything. Fully furnished, carpets, colour TV, washing machine, dryer, microwave. Short stroll to Bay, boat ramps, shops and parks. Bookings phone (02) 9790 3710.

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Excellence from Several Cultures

VINEY LONGTHORP

The American sociologist Peter Berger once wrote: "The study of other cultures helps us the better to understand our own". That said, here are three recent media offerings—a film, literature, and music. Each in their own way have something to say. From Russia comes the film. *The Thief* is being currently screened in cinemas. From start to finish you will find it absorbing, as all classics are. Its quality is enhanced by being packed into a ninety-minute span. Every scene counts. *The Thief* adds to the impressions we have that

It is clear that Tolyan loves Katya. It is equally clear that he would leave in a heartbeat.

the Russian film industry is alive and well.

This movie is a mesmerising Journey into post-war Russia as seen through the eyes of one small boy named Sanya. The film details the relationship be-

tween a young widow, her six-year-old son and the handsome stranger who enters their lives. Katya and Sanya are travelling by train when they meet Tolyan, a dashing military officer. By the time the train reaches its destination Tolyan has thoroughly charmed Katya. Sanya hates him. But gradually, Tolyan becomes the father-figure Sanya so desperately needs. It is Sanya who narrates this story, looking back as a grown man. We feel his struggles with conflicting feelings. There is the surrogate father battling with the ghostly image of the dead one. Tolyan is a brutish rogue, but clever and charismatic. He teaches Sanya how to survive by force and deceit in the harsh social climate of the Stalin era. It is a shock when mother and son learn that Tolyan is not what he claims to be. They reluctantly become accomplices in his criminal ways. Tolyan's robberies, in his disguise as a soldier, are a mixture of guile and cynicism. It is clear that Tolyan loves Katya. It is equally clear that he would leave in a heartbeat. As harsh as it seems, the family still forges some strength, even warmth. When Tolyan is arrested, Katya and Sanya stand vigil outside the prison to see him led away.

The boy rushes forward and cries out for the first time the words Tolyan could never get him to say: "Daddy! My Daddy!" From this time on, any image of a real father vanishes with tragic circumstances.

Our reviewer comments, "This is a rare and touching film". It depicts both

the strength and the vulnerability of love in its many-sided nature and as a universal need at all ages.

From Egypt comes the literature. This is the recent paperback edition of the *Cairo Trilogy* by Naguib Mahfouz, Egypt's greatest living writer, a holder of the Nobel Prize for literature. Through the novel we live the life of a large merchant family and their friends in Cairo from the turn of this century up to the political upheaval which brought Colonel Nasser to power. At first the struggles are against "the infidels". It comes as a mild shock to all Anglophiles to realise that this refers to the English, who occupy Egypt. Above all, we enter the minds and hearts of individual people who are devout Muslims. One cannot help but compare their all-embracing religious culture with our own attitudes to Christian faith. Their faith is their strength as they face personal and social calamities. But there are also acts of hypocrisy, struggles with changing ideologies, heroism and cowardice, as well as patterns of relationships which are still embedded in the Middle Ages.

The books—all three volumes, combine a broad canvas, such as in *War and Peace*, with the piercing personal insights of a Marcel Proust. One can agree with the reviewer who wrote: "It



Sanya meets a not-so charming father figure in "The Thief"

is shamelessly entertaining"—made more so because of its infinite riches in describing the human scene.

From Britain comes the music. EMI has just re-released that excellent CD, *Best Loved Hymns from York Minster*. Those who have visited this largest of English Gothic churches will have high expectations of anything relating to it—especially from the choir and that magnificent organ. This represents the origins of much of the culture of so many of us. These hymns, so beautifully rendered, expound much of the riches of Christian faith.

Charles Wesley is represented by "Love Divine", "O For a Thousand Tongues" and "Rejoice, the Lord is King". Then there are two hymns by the heroic John Newton: "Amazing Grace" and "How Sweet the Name". From Isaac Watts: "When I Survey" and "Jesus Shall Reign". You will especially enjoy the imaginative and sensitive rendition of Francis of Assisi's "All Creatures of our God and King". There is a full-bodied rendition of "How Great Thou Art". Billy Graham would be impressed.

Church music, like all art, is in a state of constant change. Here are examples of lasting greatness that retain their popularity and meaning midst all the changes that we are heir to.

Red Hill Church of Christ Full-Time Minister To commence 1999

Red Hill Church of Christ is a rural church on the Mornington Peninsula in Victoria, which has just celebrated its 113th year of ministry. It has average attendances of 60 at morning worship.

We are looking for a minister who is a Bible teacher, a pastoral carer, has interest in youth and is able to relate to all ages.

Applications close 30 June 1998.

Contact:

Secretary Red Hill Church of Christ
Fred Dickson
60 Lombardy Ave
Dromana Vic 3936
Phone (03) 5981 4096

BAPTISMS

•Karen, Leslie, Tonelle, Joeline and Margaret Miller, Alan Proctor **Fremantle, WA** •John Dunbabin, **Red Hill, Vic** •Matilda Beezley, Scott Layton, Peter Draper, Nicki Kirk, **Hume St, Toowoomba, Qld** •Rose Sheldon-Collins, **MI Clear, Vic** •Colin Wilson, Sabrina Storey, Jeremy Ewers, **Warwick, WA**

MARRIAGES

•Alison Diggle and Brett Styles, Heather Taylor and Bob McSwain, **Mildura, Vic** •Tamara Scarth and Phillip Seni, Leesa Bell and Terry Deacon, **Dalby, Qld** •Tanya Harvey and Gerald Broere, **Launceston, Tas** •Kristy McIntyre and Darren Fielder, **Hume St, Toowoomba, Qld**

DEATHS

•Frank Leslie Verco, Ivy Beatrice Franke, **Fremantle, WA** •Alex Andrew, **Red Hill, Vic** •Kevin Alfred Leith, **Hamilton, Vic** •Cherie Winton, **Warwick, WA**

OBITUARIES

Obituaries are limited to 100 words
ANDREW, Alexander Russell
(4.5.98) Alex Andrew was born on 28 December 1911. He had a strong faith,

growing up on the Mornington Peninsula and attending Red Hill Church of Christ, Vic. At the age of eighteen he was baptised and in his own quiet way he became a real influence in the faith lives of many people. Married to Evelyn since December 1935, Alex had four daughters, eleven grandchildren and ten great-grandchildren. He was loved and respected by all who knew him. His life was a credit to the Lord and his contribution to the lives of others will always be remembered.

—Paul DeWildt

ELLERBY, Lorna
(5.5.98) Born in Inverell, NSW, 16.7.09. Later moved to Hornsby and at age 14 was baptised on 28.5.22. From then on her life was fully committed to the Lord in the Hornsby, Thornleigh and Metro North Christian Centre churches. Active in many aspects of the church's life, Lorna was a deaconess, treasurer & organist for over 30 years. Her first husband Roy Bishop died in 1974. In December 1975 she married John Ellerby. A memorial service was held on 8.5.98. It was a time of celebration with about 200 family and friends. She is survived by John her husband, 4 children, 13 grandchildren and 14 great-grandchildren.

—J. Ellerby

FRANKE, Ivy Beatrice
(9.5.98) Born in 1899, "Our Frankie" came from Staffordshire to Perth, WA,

as a child with her family, later moving to Bunbury. While there Frankie was baptised. Married to Ern, an SEC employee, meant moving to several country towns. After Ern's return from army service, they settled in Fremantle from where, after his death, Frankie moved to Illawong, NSW. Frankie leaves one son. Frankie is lovingly remembered for her quick wit, her generous hospitality and fun-loving nature. She took part in all aspects of church life. Frankie attended all the church camps until her 96th birthday. She will be greatly missed by family, grandchildren, great-grandchildren and all her church friends.

—GL

HILL, Leslie Ernest
(3.5.98). The Strathmore, Vic, church shared the sorrow of Cora and family when her husband and their father, Les, succumbed to a severe stroke. Les was born at Charlton in 1915 and attended Sunday School and church at Wedderburn. He enlisted in the army early in World War II. He married Cora (Werner) at the Dimboola Church of Christ in 1946, was baptised in the

Horsham church, and after discharge from the army settled in Oak Park and became a valued, faithful member at Strathmore. A large gathering representing family, church and community organisations paid glowing tributes to a gentle gentleman.

—FBA

VERCO, Frank Leslie
(14.4.98) Frank was born over 81 years ago. His family were connected with the Fremantle, WA, church in its earliest years. He followed in membership his father, mother, two brothers, Clem (deceased) and Allen, also sister, Thelma. Married to Hazel, he leaves behind two children, Leslie and Janet, daughter-in-law Dianne and son-in-law Bruce. Also three grandchildren and two great-grandchildren. Frank was a carpenter, using his skill to build the present manse. He served on the board and its maintenance committee, was a regular communion service president as well as helping and reading. For many years a Sunday School teacher, also superintendent and a Boys' Brigade Officer.

—A. Johnson

Ormond Community Church of Christ 73rd Church Anniversary

to be held
28 June 1998

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Church News

NSW

TELOPEA (D. Wilson, L. Berthelsen, J. Berthelsen, J. Elsmore, S. Hall) "Resident Aliens" a preaching series on chapters 1-6 of Daniel much appreciated ... A team of 16 young people (some grey-haired) travelled to Cairns to live & work with an aboriginal community ... Church welcomed Peter & Sharon Stephenson whose ministry included some great new music ... Latest Alpha Course well attended by local community after door to door personal invitations by team members.

SA

DARWIN (Jim Larkham) Members of the church involved in assisting flood victims from Katherine & Daly Waters ... Shrove Tuesday celebrated with the traditional pancakes. Group meeting for Lenten studies. Maundy Thursday Passover meal held. Good attendances for Easter services ... Church sent representative to SA Conference.

STRATHALBYN (Paul Smalley) Combined tea & service with Milang. John & Jeanette Nicolle updated church with news of their Kenya work ... Circuit tea, baptismal service at Strathalbyn ... Morning service taped for Radio Encounter FM ... Manse building ready to move in early June ... Pentecost service held in Anglican church, combined choir ... Patterson family touring for long service leave ... Rogers family in Tasmania relieving veterinary clinics.

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WA

FREMANTLE (John Caporn, Bob Fairman) Guest speakers included Ruth & Phil Culver, our PNG Living Link, Allen O'Loughlin, Interserve, & Frank Wilton, Gideons ... 31 May combined with Fremantle Wesley church to celebrate "Week of Prayer for Christian Unity" ... Church saddened by death of Ivy Franke (our Frankie) ... 7 June revert to 5.30 pm evensong, tea service. Guests Peter & Pearl Sumner.

WARWICK (J. Longbottom, K. Bowes, G. Hill, P. Sanders, J. Mullaley) Pat Smith active home & hospital visitor seriously injured by car while bike riding ... Fashion parade & sale of clothes raised funds for YP's Singapore mission trip ... "Growing Forward as a Single", theme for Singles' Camp ... Silver wedding celebrated by Evan & Margaret Verge (Margaret currently chairs Elders' Board) ... "My Mum", Through the Eyes of a Child", very interesting feature of Mothers' Day service.

TAS

NUBEENA (Keith Moulton) Australian Director of International Mission & representative from International Needs shared with church ... Visiting speakers have been Geoff Morffew, Howrah, & Brett Nichols, Hobart ... Church continues to support missions ... Interim ministry of Keith Moulton extended for a further six months ... Steve Apriana gave mini concert ... Kid's Own group has grown to over 20 ... Church in good heart.

LAUNCESTON (C. Spaulding, W. Kerrison, T. Gray, S. Fitzallen) Jean & Suzanne Piper spoke at afternoon fellowship on "Mothering, Then and Now" ... Dave Hammond of Fusion spoke on 17 May ... 37 seniors had a trip to Poatina & learned of work of Fusion ... Baby Joshua Horder dedicated at morning service on 24 May ... Good number of our ladies among 80+ at Women's Camp at Bicheno 24-25 May.

QLD

DALBY (Tony Ochse) Church camp held with studies on spiritual gifts ... Follow up being done by elders to encourage folk to use their gifts ... Group of Irian Jayan students from "Cornerstone" attended camp ... Ladies visited tourist attractions at Highfields, near Toowoomba ... Love offerings taken for Owen Vogler (cancer patient in Brisbane) & gift Jnr. Mubhauhi (lad in Africa with medical problem).

TOOWOOMBA, HUME ST (Dale White, Ross Savill) Cheryl Gramenz appointed to staff 2 days a week as assistant secretary & book room manager ... Minister involved in a 4 day Pastors' Prayer Summit for Toowoomba ... Church now has web site: <<http://members.xoom.com/tmbachurch>> ... MOPS State Conference to be held here 8-9 August ... Tele-link providing care through hook-up to 32 seniors ... 10 young people baptised so far this year.

VIC

MILDURA (S. Risson) Induction service for college chaplain held 20 March ... Davis Cup "Welcome" banner displayed on front of church for 2-5 April ... Easter services well attended, 219 Easter morning ... Wedding ceremony for couple conducted at evening service 26 April ... CWA members attended for annual church parade 3 May ... Lay preachers served the church while minister at Conference ... 3 members attended Conference.

MORNINGTON (Allan Avery, Bronte Stanford) Associate minister Bronte Stanford settled in well & has developed a number of small groups ... Bronte & Katherine celebrated arrival of son Cooper Lawrence 16 April. Cooper born with a hole in the heart. He is doing fine ... Second service commenced 9.00 am. conducted by members ... Jean Preston, Myrle Beerling & Heather Preston have all been hospitalised. Noel Ebert has recovered after his visit to hospital.

RED HILL (Paul De Wildt) Church anniversary speaker Charles Bayer, followed by luncheon ... Young families camp at Newhaven well attended ... Church hosted World Day of Prayer ... Home study groups meeting fortnightly ... Conference sessions & celebration attended ... Arthur Pigdon lectured on church & Jewish people ... Coffee morning held with Pat Wright speaking on Vietnam ... Youth concert with Doug MacFarlane ... Church saddened by death of Alex Andrew.

HAMILTON (Roy Hope) Harvest Thanksgiving produce taken to Bible College students ... Thank offering sent to Katherine flood appeal ... Church secretary touring England ... Church recently carpeted ... Two members attended Women's Camp at Camp Acacia, Halls Gap ... Guest speakers, Larry Holt, Keith Whitbourne, George Mackley & Phil Hopewell ... Shared lunch after each Sunday morning service ... Members took part in "Walk of Witness" & Dawn Service at Easter.

MOUNT CLEAR (Rod Ratcliffe) Good crowd for Mother's Day service. Sunday school sang and gave chocolates to ladies ... Bill Sutcliffe conducting interim ministry at Colac ... Boy for Sharon & Justin Peart—Conner Samuel ... Elders assisting with preaching sometimes ... Church voted for part-time pastoral assistant to co-ordinate small groups and visitation ... Newsletter front page series on elements to enable Kingdom growth ... Youth group assisted collection for Red Shield Appeal.

SWAN HILL (Alan Fletcher) 120 plus in attendance at evening "guest" service on 24 May ... New families attending services morning & night ... Gordon Owers, Ian Dodgshun, Bev Looney, Ross Brinkman & Colin Mitchell have filled speaking appointments on Sundays Alan Fletcher is unavailable ... Another successful church camp held at Hall's Gap with minister as study leader & a team from York St, Ballarat, leading children's ministry.

Exploring the Day

Certainties

JANET THOMPSON

I know where I was on the first day of winter 21 years ago ... standing on my front porch, waiting for a friend. He was late, so I stood and enjoyed the sunshine.

There was an odd sound in the bushes—a rustling, twittering sort of noise—and I realised that the garden was filled with tiny birds. They hopped through the trees, moving slowly from west to east. I kept very still and watched until they moved over the fence and out of sight.

They returned the following year, on exactly the same day!

I wondered if they might be like the swallows which return to Capistrano.

Over the next few years I saw them several times, always moving from west to east, and always within a day or two of the onset of winter—you can't set your calendar by their appearance, but their punctuality is a delight!

I have to stop and watch them—I love the gentle noise, and their bright eyes and quick movements.

For five or ten minutes a year (depending on the absence of cats, and other alarming intrusions), I enjoy my visitors.

When the leaves start falling from the trees, I watch for them.

My bird book tells me they are honeyeaters—the colouring isn't exactly right, but the book says local variations are common.

Last year I was away at the end of May, and the birds arrived on schedule—at the holi-



day house! Had they missed me, and come to join me at the beach?

I took a closer look, and realised that their colouring was slightly brighter, so they weren't "my" birds.

But it was a reminder that, in my front yard 100 km away, life was continuing—whether I was there or not!

It is reassuring.

The proverb says, "Nothing is certain except death and taxes," but nature keeps showing us that we can be sure of many things.

I'm sure that the leaves on my liquidambar will change colour in late autumn, reminding me that the honeyeaters are due, and I'm sure that, "For everything there is a season, and a time for every purpose under heaven." (Eccl 3:1)

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The Last Word

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"Did I ever tell you about my grandchildren?"

"No you didn't, and I really appreciate it!"

"Well, father," exclaimed the prodigal son, as he made his appearance at the family fire-side, "Are you ready to kill the fatted calf?"

"No," replied the old man grimly, "I think I'll let you live."

"Sir, you insult me with your proposal of marriage. Go at once, or I will ring for the servants to throw you out!"
"Am I to take this as a refusal?"

Passenger (to pilot): "Why are you so nervous?"

Pilot: "We have lost both wings."

Passenger: "Never mind, we'll get new ones when we land."

"Why did you leave the boarding house after being there for three years?"

"I found they had no bath"

"You seem to cough much easier this morning," remarked the resident physician.

"It isn't any wonder. I've been practising all night."

"This is an ideal place for a picnic."

"It must be, fifty million insects can't be wrong."

