

THE AUSTRALIAN

Christian

NATIONAL JOURNAL OF CHURCHES OF CHRIST IN AUSTRALIA

Vol. 102 No. 22, 22 December 1999

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*"Go and search diligently for the child...so that I
may also go and pay him homage." King Herod Matthew 2:8*



CHRISTMAS NEW YEAR 2000

*"The light shines in the darkness, and the
darkness did not overcome it." John 1:5*



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Editorial

Shadows

DON SMITH

Our cover painting by Ray Drayton confronts us with part of the Christmas story which does not sit well with our happy celebrations of Christmas. Yet it is a stark reality of Matthew's narrative. * Whatever our activities on New Year's Eve, we shall all be hoping that our personal world will slip quietly into 2000. And that most likely is how it will be! * It was not like that in the Gospel story. After the birth of Jesus, Joseph and Mary were in a life-threatening situation as they fled from Bethlehem as refugees. The light of the coming of Jesus was shadowed by the darkness of Herod's evil



intent and subsequent massacre. * The proclamation of the Gospel, the discipling of Jews and Gentiles, and the growth of the church expressed the light shining. But darkness was always present. The church soon faced persecution and terror. Within a few years Paul, the principal evangelist, church planter and theologian, was executed. * This story has been repeated through the centuries. There have been periods of great advance and catastrophic decline. This century has witnessed some of the worst and most widespread persecution of Christians for a long time. Note the experience of Albanian Christians in our feature article. We must take the gospel affirmation that the light shines and the darkness does not overcome it both seriously and by faith. * Our own existence as a movement will have its shadows, darkness and light. Progress will not come by slipping quietly from one year to another. The advance of the gospel in our midst will come through toil, sacrifice, possible suffering at times and the best use of minds that can be marshalled as we plan directions and strategies needed to engage our darkened world. It is only a deep commitment about the "lostness" of men and women that will hold us to this task. * And what of our wider world? In an analysis of this century, the distinguished historian Eric Hobsbawm looks to 2000 and beyond and suggests some similar patterns will emerge in the totality of global experience. No reader will reach 2100, but in the years ahead we will by faith hold fast to the light amid the darkness. *

Christmas

Christmas and the coming New Year, our writers comment.

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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.

East Timorese Asylum Seekers

To the Editor,
The President of the Victorian-Tasmanian Conference, Mr Stan McCredden and I have recently written to the Hon Philip Ruddock, Minister for Immigration and Multicultural Affairs, concerning the situation of East Timorese asylum seekers in Australia. The government has resolved to deny these applicants a special visa category, with the result that these people face deportation within six months. From first-hand involvement with some of these people through our UNOH mission at Springvale, which has supported some 70 of these families, we are concerned about the decision to deport them.

They have been in Australia from five to eight years after fleeing their homes following the Dili massacre in 1991. Many of their young were born here and have grown up here. These families are a part of our youth clubs, soccer teams, community events and prayer meetings.

A copy of our letter to the Minister has been published on the web site of *The Australian Christian* <http://www.churchesofchrist.org.au/ac/Special_Items.html>. We invite interested readers to view this letter and note the various points made which we believe justify a review of the decision. The Victorian Heads of Churches have also sent a letter expressing the same concerns.

—Lynette Leach
(Vic-Tas Conference
Executive Officer)

Zero Tolerance

To the Editor,
In his letter ("AC" 22.9.99) Dr Arnold Jago advocates Zero Tolerance. The only answer to the drug problem is, of course, Jesus Christ. The difficulty is communicating this message, both to governments and to users alike. We recently spent several weeks in Esperance, WA, doing some painting at the Teen Challenge Academy and shared first hand in the wonderful work they are doing. Their program is some 85% successful. We mingled with many who had spent time in gaol, but who are now rejoicing in the Lord as they study to discover the relevance of God's Word for them. The WA Government will not assist financially as they see the end product not as rehabilitated lives but new Christians. We commend your prayer and financial support for this excellent organisation.

—Jack M. Christie
(East Fremantle, WA)

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Stirling's Churches of Christ

To the Editor,

Gordon's much-needed reinterpretation of the Churches of Christ is based on Scripture and tradition. (We have never been a sola Scriptura people.) By tradition he means our tradition as a movement, not that of the church through the centuries. Sometimes he is critical of our tradition, often he affirms it, at times he adds to it.

In our tradition he singles out restoration, unity, and evangelism. To that I would add the liberty of the local congregation to order its own life, which has been a strength and a glaring weakness. For Anglicans, the final authorities are Scripture, which has primacy, tradition, and reason. (In practice, leaders like T.H. Scambler and E.L. Williams were Anglicans.) For Roman Catholics, the basic authorities are Scripture and the Magisterium (that is, the Church's official teaching).

For many Methodists, the ultimate authorities are Scripture, tradition, reason, and the experience of the grace of God. With this I have much sympathy.

For me, these are the criteria for Christian doctrines: (1) They must present the faith as intellectually credible. (2) They must demonstrate that the faith is morally responsible. (3) They must offer a distinctively Christian standard for evaluating doctrinal statements and moral action, namely, the gospel of Jesus Christ.

—Ronald Graham,
(Johnston, Iowa, USA)

Harm Minimisation

To the Editor,

Government responses to the drug problem in Australia continue down a liberalisation road. Based on the concept of trying to minimise the harms associated

with drug use, South Australia and the ACT have decriminalised cannabis use, and NSW and Victoria are planning on setting up so-called safe injecting houses for IV drug users.

These responses are based on humanistic foundations, selective research and pressure from a small group of people with vested interests. It is important that the Christians of Australia become active and vocal in this debate—after all we have the answers.

Lets not fool ourselves, the drug problem is in the church. Our office is receiving regular calls from church families requesting help with a drug problem. It is time for the whole church to respond, not just leave it up to Tim Costello or Brian Watters to make the running on this.

There are three things that churches can do.

Become informed. Become active; talk about it in your church, contact your MP, etc. Become creative in your response. There are many ways that churches can actively respond to this problem. We should be the ones putting forward proposals and ideas to government. If we do not engage in this debate, then we should not complain when our agencies are called on to help cope with the ensuing problems. Australia needs our input.

—Warwick Murphy
(DRUG-ARM, Victoria)

Chairman's Statement

Dear Readers,

Keith Aird, chairman of the Board of *The Australian Christian* has announced a new partnership with the Fellowship of Churches of Christ in the United Kingdom and *The Australian Christian*. The Board has unanimously approved a partnership involving six joint issues in 2000, commencing with the first issue in February.

The partnership has arisen from increased contacts between Australian and UK leaders in recent years.

Keith said that the joint issues will enrich the life of churches in both countries.

The special editions of the paper will appear with a new masthead. Other design changes will be introduced to all issues in 2000.

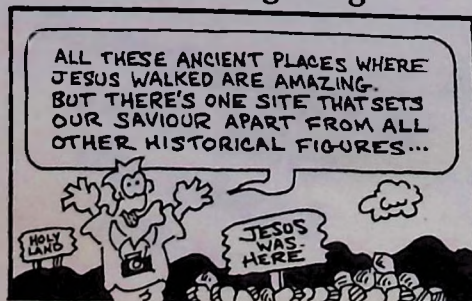
News items from UK churches will be integrated alongside Australian news, and other relevant material will also be introduced. Feature articles will be shared by UK and Australian writers. The partnership will also give the paper access to an increased range of writers.

Reports of the negotiations have been carried in previous issues of the paper this year. UK churches will take bulk copies of the paper which will be despatched though the current overseas mailing contractors. Keith Aird comments that in the earliest days of the paper it was shared with New Zealand churches. The new arrangements are almost a return to this earlier practice. Additionally, Keith said that the paper had completed another successful year. The issues of an increased readership and a strengthened financial base continue to be major challenges for 2000 and beyond.

On behalf of the Board and staff members he extended greetings for Christmas and the New Year and expressed the appreciation of the Board for the many expressions of support through the year.



Pontius' Pilgrimage



Our Covers

Invaluable voluntary contributions acknowledged

Ralph Petty was responsible for the photograph on the cover of our first Christmas issue.

Ray Drayton produced a fine oil painting for the cover on this current issue.

Ralph Petty then photographed the painting for reproduction.

Readers will recall that Ray Drayton's painting used last Christmas (pictured here) won an ARPA Award for Highly Commended Original Art Work.

We are indebted to both these readers for their enthusiastic interest.

Our graphic designer contributes with the cover design for each of



the 22 issues. These are all voluntary contributions. Thankyou!

Clayton Church Of Christ Fellowship Children Ministry Pastor (part-time, leading to full-time)

Clayton Church of Christ Fellowship is in the south-east Melbourne metropolitan area and in close proximity to Monash University and the Monash Medical Centre. We are a dynamic fifty-year-old church and have a large multicultural church family. The leadership is highly committed to cell church and to missions.

Our current children ministry is resourced mainly by volunteers, but the work is requiring professional input. Current ministry includes creche, kinder Sunday school, children's church and weekday playgroup for the community.

You may be the right person for us if: you have the distinct call of God to minister to children and have had experience in children's work in churches; you believe in the principles of Children's Church; you are an exciting up-front leader, relating well in large groups and also one-on-one with children; you feel confident relating to parents and are able to raise, build and lead a team of volunteers.

For more information or a visit, please call
Ps David or Ps Philip.

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E-mail: <cocfclay@vicnet.net.au>.

Vanuatu Earthquake

Details on the toll of the recent earthquake



Banmatmat Bible College buildings, damaged in an earlier earthquake, now destroyed

Morrie Tabi, Secretary of the Churches of Christ Conference in Vanuatu, has expressed appreciation for expressions of sympathy and support in the devastating earthquake which struck off the south-east coast of Pentecost Island on 26 November.

A number of people associated with our churches were killed in the earthquake or drowned by the subsequent tsunami.

Craig Bossie of the Adelaide-based Overseas Mission Board said that immediate action had

been taken by sending Brian Mason, a builder, of the Ocean Grove, Vic, church to Pentecost to assess damage and report on what decisions need to be taken in respect of the extensive reconstruction work needed. Initial reports indicate that few buildings have been left untouched, while some have been totally destroyed or severely damaged.

Most of the buildings at Banmatmat Bible College which were severely damaged in August by an earlier earthquake (see photo) have now collapsed.

In 2000, work teams with building, electrical, bricklaying and plumbing skills will be needed. An additional problem in some villages such as Ranwas is that wells have caved in and water tanks have been cracked.

At Ranwas an additional hazard is the threat of landslides while mild tremors continue to be felt. Ranwas church was to celebrate its 50th anniversary this month. The celebrations have been cancelled.

Gifts which are tax-deductible may be made through the Board's COCOA Appeal.


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Getting on with Business

Jeff Weston, Overseas Mission Board Director, comments on his recent visit to Vietnam

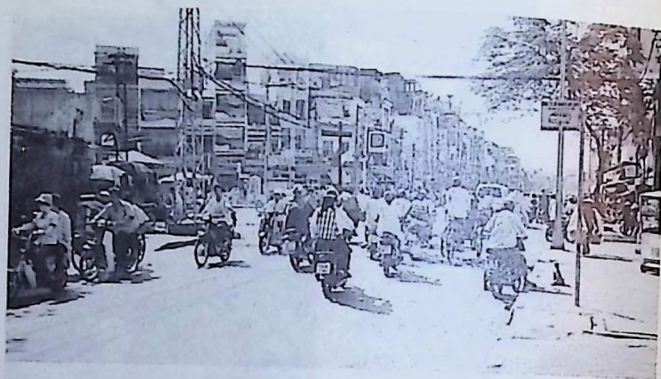
One of the first things that strikes a visitor to Vietnam is the amount of development taking place in the major cities. It seems everywhere you look there is a crane working on a new multi-storied building. In Ho Chi Minh City alone there have been six new international-standard hotels developed in the last three years. There are new highways being developed, old housing areas being cleared and new multi-million-dollar housing and factory estates being developed. Although its economy is in a mess, with its currency barely worth the paper it is printed on, Vietnam is on the move. The government is aiming to make Vietnam the tourist centre for Asia. With this new, open approach, the Protestant Church is looking to make the most of its opportunities with the government. Although the Roman Catholic Church (which has registration with the government) has had relative freedom, the Protestant Church has suffered under government policy designed to restrict its growth. Although tolerated, the Protestant Churches, grouped under the Vietnam Evangelical Church (VEC), have operated with government restrictions on all their activities. From our discussions with Ho Chi Minh City pastors, it appears the most difficult of these restrictions has been the lack of a theological college and the restrictions placed on contact with churches and organisations outside Vietnam. It is even very difficult for a pastor to obtain a passport to another country. It is hoped that this will soon change. Currently, a select group of twenty people are meeting with the Vietnamese government to

discuss the registration of the VEC. It is hoped that these discussions will lead to formal registration by late 2000, thus opening up a new era for the Protestant Church in Vietnam.

Meanwhile, churches are getting on with the business. We were excited by what we experienced in South Vietnam. Despite government restrictions, the church is growing rapidly! One church visited is located in a regional centre of about 200,000-300,000 people. On the Sunday, over 600 attended the two-hour service which began at 8.00 am. About 200 of these had to sit in an adjoining hall and watch the service through a video link due to lack of space in the chapel. The exciting thing is that 60% of the congregation was aged under 35 years.

The church secretary in giving the announcements indicated that at the beginning of the year they had set a goal of winning 110 people for 1999. He was pleased to announce that the previous week they had baptised the 120th person for the year and still had three more months to win others! The interesting thing is that the church does not have a pastor at this time. One of the elders, a young man in his late twenties, presented an excellent teaching message that had most of the congregation taking notes and looking up Scripture passages.

The emphasis on winning people to Christ and baptism isn't something unique to this particular congregation. Almost every church visited had a board or printed notice telling the congregation (and visitors) how many had been saved that month/year.



Vietnam is changing

At one church, the monthly figures for attendance and baptisms for the last three years are on display, with a challenge that they can do better for the Lord.

However, the emphasis is not on quick conversion. In fact I never heard an altar call at any of the services attended. The emphasis is on holiness and having a living faith walk with God that involves one in sacrifice. For most Vietnamese Christians this means ensuring that you are walking with integrity and looking for God's hand in all things. For some it has meant being prepared to risk everything, including personal freedom, to serve God. The sacrifices being made for the underground church is evidence of this trust relationship. One group of people, among a range of activities, has sacrificed and

purchased a printing press. They now secretly print and distribute over 15,000 copies of daily Scripture notes for distribution around the country.

The Vietnamese Church is busy getting on with God's business, despite the fact that they risk long jail sentences, and in some extreme cases loss of life. They view the church as the body of Christ, reaching out to a world in desperate need of a Saviour.

Many Australian churches, despite their freedom and enormous resources, still lack a passion for the real business. Jesus said he came to "seek and save what was lost". The Vietnamese church is busy about the same agenda, despite persecution and lack of resources, and the "Lord is adding daily to their number those being saved".

Campbell Singers

Reunion weekend

28-30 April 2000

Ovens Valley, Vic (in the Autumn)

Registration forms from Greg Strack on
(03) 5752 2021. E-mail <gstrack@netc.net.au>.

In The Face of Death

Anji Barker faces the curse of Thailand

Staring into the face of a man that can hardly be recognised as a man, I tried to concentrate on the task at hand, as the smells and oppressive heat made me feel weak.

My task was to massage, and to apply various creams and ointments on the bodies of the 38 patients that lay there everyday waiting to die. As soon as someone died the bed would be filled by another emaciated, scab-covered soul who would join this queue of death. AIDS can be described as the curse of Thailand (and many other countries I'm sure). In some northern villages five people a day are dying at home and on the streets. In the slum that we stayed in, the lucky ones got one of these beds.

From July to September 1999 I was a volunteer with the Human Development Centre in Bangkok's largest slum, Klong Toey. We stayed in a slum house close by and had many adventures, such as the regular flooding of our place, a friendly rat, cockroaches and the regular traffic of people in strange and bizarre states after obtaining their drugs from the neighbour above us. (Not unlike life in Springvale, Vic, really).

Right away, I had to come to terms with the death of the young men and women at the hospice, massaging a person one day; finding them gone the next. I felt relieved for those who died, as their pain had finally stopped, but sad for the many who looked on.

One man told me that he wished it had been him that died, but that he was terrified of dying. I struggled with the fact that my Thai language was so limited that I could not on my own share Christ with anyone. Each day an Italian

Priest who spoke Thai and English well, would share with and pray for each patient. A number of the patients told me that they had become Christians through these times.

I looked forward to going to the hospice each day and felt that God was teaching me so much through what I experienced there. I found that I could not fix anything or make anybody better, and tried to see each patient as Jesus, laying there waiting for his crucifixion. The pain that these patients were racked with, was perhaps similar. In September we received news from Springvale, of the suicide deaths of four people that were part of, or connected to the Rainbow Church. This devastated our community and left me wondering at the injustice of this crazy world. I would spend each day with people who would give anything to have their lives back, while the team in Springvale attended the funerals of those who couldn't bear to live. I feel so strongly that as missionaries we have an urgent task that involves helping people to value and celebrate life! Jesus came that we might have life, and life more abundantly—we have to share this with everyone.



Anji and Amy Barker with a hospice patient in Thailand

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Church leaders to tour significant US churches

There will be eleven people in the party that travel with Bruce and Iris Armstrong on Enrichment 2000. This is an important venture and may open the way for other church leaders to join us on a later occasion, say January 2001.

There has been a great deal of interest shown in this move to open such a tour for church leaders, but we all need time to save and plan. We will spend time with the leadership and staff of four churches in LA, including Corona Christian Church, Inland Vineyard, College Baptist and Coast Hills. We will take in the Schuller Institute, with over 50 assembled presenters, including our own Graham Agnew, on the phases of church growth.

In Arizona we encounter another four churches in Phoenix and

Mesa, especially Central Christian in Mesa (formerly LeRoy Lawson). Some of us will stay on and visit Lorraine and Lindsay Jacobs at World Convention headquarters as well as Bob Russell's Southeast Christian Church in Louisville, Kentucky.

Take a look at January 2001 and indicate your interest. Those who will share the E2000 are Bruce and Iris Armstrong; Alan and Cheryl Norton (elder and wife, Newcastle); Yoonkak Uh (Pastor, Granville Korean); Valerie Baker (Associate Minister, Rockdale); Judy Cayzer (Women's Ministry team facilitator), Diana Catts (Elder, Kingsway), Fay Christensen (Missionary/Translator, PNG) Dorothy Porter (Toowoomba, Qld), Malcolm Hinde (UCA, Tas).

Subscription Record

Ballarat, Vic, church returns greatest response in new readers

York Street, Ballarat, Vic church achieved the 1999 record for new readers in one day. Sixteen new subscriptions and trial offers were received.

Don Smith and Nigel Pegram visited Dawson Street and York Street churches in Ballarat on 5 December to promote the paper. Other attenders took sample copies and trial-offer cards, with further subscriptions expected.

A feature of the day was the strong backing the paper received from ministers Larry Galbraith, York Street, and Darren Kittel, Dawson Street. Their commitment to the paper was appreciated by staff members.

Vibrant worship and enthusiastic attenders were features of both services. Special trial-offer cards and sample copies of the paper are available for promotion in 2000.

14th Adelaide Girls' Brigade

Noarlunga Centre Girls' Brigaders enjoy a varied program



A group of girls trying their skills at "rock climbing" at camp.

As part of their syllabus on people who help in the community, the youngest members of 14th Adelaide Girls' Brigade (Noarlunga Centre, Church of Christ, SA) visited the Christies Beach Meals on Wheels.

They were hosted by Grace Russell and Doris Cordes, both workers at the kitchen, who also worship at the Noarlunga Centre Church of Christ.

More recently, the Company held a camp at "Douglas Scrub" campsite, McLaren Flat. The weather was ideal for the outdoor activities planned. On site was an animal enclosure where the girls could

view Australian fauna. They were able to hand feed the kangaroos. Nature walks helped give the girls a healthy appetite!

The Captain of this Company, Anita Barnes has recently retired to await the imminent arrival of her second child. Anita has worked with 14th Adelaide in a leadership capacity for more years than she cares to remember, ten of those as Captain.

14th Adelaide Girls' Brigade is a happy Company with a band of dedicated leaders who, together with assistance from the Church family, ensure that the girls enjoy an active and balanced program.

Ashburton Church of Christ

Friends and past members are invited to a
closing celebration

of the life and witness of Ashburton Church of Christ, Vic, on Sunday 6 February 2000, at 2.30 pm

Speaker: Neil Gilmore (first full-time minister)
Inquires to Mrs F. Morris (03) 9571 2982.

Sri Lankan Needs

Christmas Bowl Launch in Toowoomba



Archbishop Battersby with some of the young people and church members.

The Queensland launch for the Christmas Bowl Appeal of the National Council of Churches in Australia took place at the Hume St, Toowoomba church at a special evening service on 28 November.

Interchurch representatives attended from Brisbane and participated in the service. Guest speaker was the Rev Prince Devanandan of the National Christian Council of Sri Lanka, who spoke of his own experience as a displaced person.

He vividly described the community unrest and the devastation of the war-torn northern regions of Sri Lanka. Two of those present, Catholic Archbishop of Brisbane, John Battersby, and Queensland Conference President, Peter Overton, had earlier visited

Prince in Sri Lanka as part of a pastoral visit on behalf of the NCCA. Photos from Peter Overton's visit were used in Powerpoint presentations to highlight needs faced by Sri Lankan refugees.

Dale White, minister of the Toowoomba church, said the service was especially helpful to the many young people present, helping them experience the breadth of the church and the needs of a hurting world.

Following the service, a large supper event was held enabling the young adults to mix with the visitors.

This year the Toowoomba church is providing church members with the opportunity to give to both COCOA and the Christmas Bowl Appeal.

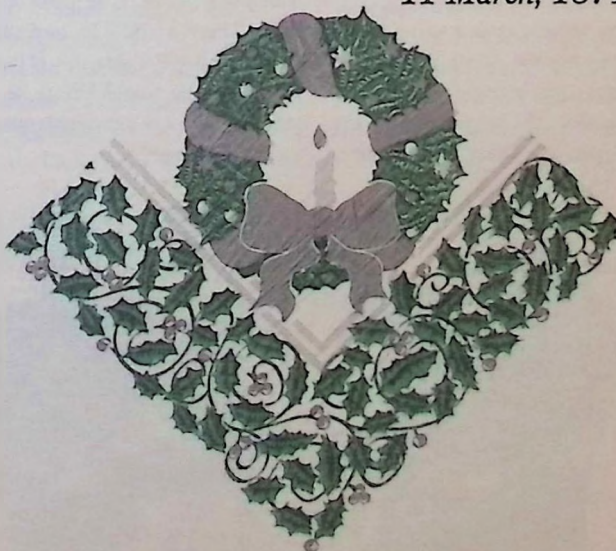
Boiled Plum Pudding

The US Disciples of Christ Historical Society recently discovered in their archives a small notebook used by Alexander Campbell, one of the founding fathers of Churches of Christ. Campbell used the notebook as a ledger to record student payments. Selina, his second wife, used the same book for recipes. A daughter recorded that her parents had used the notebook for over 50 years, the first entry being made in 1843. Selina Campbell's recipe for plum pudding is reproduced here.

It is intended to serve 6-8 persons.

Take 1 lb. [450 g] good suet cut into small pieces and add one pound of currants and one of stoned raisins, eight eggs, one peel nutmeg grated, one teaspoonful of ginger, one pound of flour and one pint [570 ml] of milk. To the eggs previously well beaten, add one half the milk and mix well together. Stir in the flour, the spice, fruit and suet, and as much milk as is requisite to reduce the mixture to a plastic consistency, but quite thick. Boil from four to five hours.

11 March, 1874.



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Gandep

What an Experience!



Gandep—site of the work party

Seven men, six from Warragul Church of Christ and one from Hartwell Church of Christ (pictured below) recently travelled from Victoria to PNG to help with the building program at Gandep. Gandep is situated approximately fifteen minutes walk from the Keram river and three hours walk from the Ramu River. It is set among lush tropical forest, with many good trees suitable for sawing into timber for the buildings. The local gardens provide many vegetables and fruit, including sweet potato, pumpkin, paw-paw, bananas and pineapple.

The team's task was to frame three houses. Quite a lot of the timber was already sawn and on site. With the help of some of the locals, the team set to work.

Manis, a local worker, was kept busy sawing up logs to provide more timber. The days were hot and humid so water bottles were kept handy. The work went smoothly and by 3.00 pm on the last day, after two and a half weeks, the task was finished, with three houses framed and one having iron on the roof.

On Sunday mornings team members walked to a local village to share with the villagers in worship. Ben Richards, one of the team members from Hartwell, stayed in Gandep for a further 2-3 months to continue with the work. There is still a lot to do at Gandep. Allen Ronalds, one of the team, says he would like to see other churches or individuals take up the challenge.



Flame Burning Bright

Mundulla recipient of FLAME project support



Mundulla minister, Darryn Hickling speaking to farmer neville Wiese

Mundulla, SA, church has been the welcome recipient of the second Churches of Christ in SA Inc FLAME (Friends Linked Across Mission Enterprises) project in 1999.

We (like those who have gone before us) have embarked on a journey of discovery and service in ministry.

This year the Board of Elders has met with an independent voice (State Minister David Brooker) on a number of occasions to discuss current expressions of and future ministry possibilities.

An area of specific ministry for the congregation is our children.

Mundulla has an ecumenical Sunday School and their participation in the Sunday morning service is

very important.

There is a children's spot each Sunday during the service and we encourage presiders to include a children's song as well.

Other areas of ministry are a family service (once a quarter), pastoral care, participation in community events, support of our own missionary (Rose-Mary Hunt in Zimbabwe), women's ministry as well as a number of others.

It is a wonderful experience to have the wider body of the church support "our" expression of ministry.

As the journey of faith and service at Mundulla continues, we look forward to what God has in store for us.

—Darryn Hickling,
Minister

Spirituality and Pastoral Care

Spirituality issues raised in day conference



(l-r) Bev Borig, Glen Wegner and Vicky Kingston at the spirituality and pastoral care day conference

Community Care Vic-Tas recently sponsored a day event entitled "Spirituality, Pastoral Care and the new Millennium".

Glen Wegner, Chaplain Coordinator, Box Hill Hospital invited participants to reflect upon and explore this renewed interest in spirituality. He asked participants to see how this challenged the way we offered pastoral care to those in need.

Thirty years ago the word "spirituality" was not in vogue. Indeed, it was often viewed suspiciously by those within evangelical Protestant churches.

A majority of people, who never

"darken the doorway" of a local church, are quite comfortably exploring issues surrounding spirituality.

This contemporary interest in things spiritual provides a great opportunity for those involved in pastoral care and mission, both within and beyond the local church.

Beverly Borig (Chaplain) led participants through a spiritual wellness inventory.

Chaplains Vicky Kingston and Peter Bradley commenced and concluded the day in worship.

The fellowship and luncheon were well received.

WABC Graduation

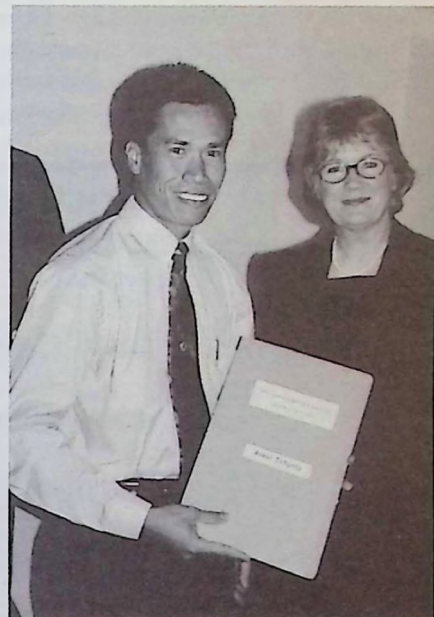
43 graduate from a range of courses in WA

Three hundred and fifty people filled the Kalamunda, WA, church on 4 December for the 1999 West Australian Bible College graduation service. The Hon Judi Moylan MP, the federal member for Pearce, presented awards and added personal comments to 43 students from English Certificate 1 up to Graduate Diploma level.

The service featured the graduation of the first group of students who have completed a one-year course in English and the first students who have completed a two-year Diploma in Children's Ministry.

The principal, Rev Geoff Fewster, reported that the College now had 78 full-time students and a total student body of 160. He also reported that the College has just received a building permit to begin additions which will include a new library, a new lecture room,

and a student common room. At the conclusion of the service Mary Sita (Kalamunda Church of Christ) and Joshua Christofer (Noranda Church of Christ) received the ABPS Real Estate Achievement Award. WABC is looking forward to a new year in new college buildings. Contact the College on (08) 9453 9189.



Arnel Infante, from the Kalamunda Church of Christ, receives his Advanced Diploma of Christian Ministry from the Hon Judi Moylan MP

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Servicing all areas

Spring Gully Baptism

Baptism during annual camp prompts questions

For the Spring Gully church, Bendigo, Vic, the annual camp is always a highlight of the year. Spring Gully is a younger congregation, with an average attend-

ance of 40 at worship each Sunday. But camp is so popular that people who are not regular worshippers also join the church family for this one weekend of the

year. Campers usually number 60-70.

The camp is held on the Loddon River at Laanecoorie, so when a baptismal service was to be scheduled, it seemed appropriate to have the baptism as part of the camp. Timing the baptism for early in the morning to avoid the noise of speed boats, the whole camp gathered on the edge of the river to witness the baptism of Jonathan Prince.

The baptism was a memorable time and prompted questions from non-regular church attenders.



Minister Blyth Mann with Jonathan Prince

Portland Church of Christ Portland, Victoria

60th Anniversary Celebration

16 January 2000

10.00 am — Worship Service
12.00 noon — Lunch
Guest speaker: Robert Hough
(Church's longest serving minister)

All past members, ministers and friends are invited to share with us as we celebrate our 60th anniversary. There will be a display of old photos and memorabilia. Contributions welcome. For information, phone the church on (03) 5523 1574 or contact Arthur Butler on (03) 5523 6117.

Vanuatu Training

Two PNG nationals to study in Vanuatu

Two Papua New Guinea pastors and their families are heading to Vanuatu to begin training at Banmatmat Bible College. They are Pastor John Injam from Tsumba village and Pastor Johanis from Lolarbu. These two pastors will spend three years in Vanuatu undertaking a diploma at the College.

Australian
Christian
Postcards

Postcard from Trent



Dear Don,

There's a shared and understood silence as we stand collected at the lookout. Excited children are hushed, cameras focused and eyes fixed. No one moves, there is an incredible peace. We daren't blink or take a breath. We might miss one of the shades of colour that make the sunrise viewing so special. None of us are here, we're in the land of Awe, captured and cultivated by God's best. Black, grey, purple; brown then red. It lasts a few precious moments until a coach driver breaks the spell.

"That's about all you'll see, folks."

His passengers clamber back in and the bustling begins, starting engines, breakfast preparations, traffic jams. Some are making

speed to the Olgas, others back to the cafes at the resorts (and of course the souvenir, photo and gift specialty shops). The intrepid are planning their climb.

But one man is still mesmerised by what he's just experienced, willing it not to end, squeezing the last drop of Awe and Peace. Of course it has to, the day has begun. There's much to see and do and often a schedule to keep. But today was special. We all stopped to witness a miracle taking place before our eyes. The scene is Sunrise on Uluru. The miracle: **another day.**

Enjoy!
Trent Harris

Here and There

Banmatmat Graduates

Mike Folland reports from Banmatmat Bible College in Vanuatu that five students will graduate with a Certificate in Ministry, the first group to graduate with the accredited South Pacific Association of Theological Schools course. This is also a special occasion because there will be three students who will graduate with the Carlingford Diploma.

Chaplains Conference

Third ecumenical aged-care chaplains' conference



Churches of Christ Chaplains' Conference delegates (l-r) Ruth Harrison (NSW), Dorne Stevens (SA), Max Kingham (NSW), Rosalie Rofo (NSW), and Graeme Spice (NSW)

One hundred gathered at the Merroo Conference Centre in October for the Third National Ecumenical Aged Care Chaplains' Conference. In this growing area of ministry, we gathered to be resourced for the task. The theme was "The Pastoral Journey: Being there for God, Being there for Others, Being there for Self". Leslie Underwood led creative studies from Ecclesiastes.

Ross Kingham, from Barnabas Ministries, emphasised the need to care for self. Presentations from workers in the field and personal conversations answered many needs and sent us home motivated and with new ideas to implement. Churches of Christ had six delegates.

—Dorne Stevens

Cult Ministry Continues

CCGM celebrates 20 years of ministry

Twenty years of grappling with sects, fringe groups, controversies, legal challenges, conflicts, threats and more have not deflected Churches of Christ minister Adrian van Leen and founder of "Concerned Christians Growth Ministries Inc" based in Nollamara, WA a suburb of Perth. The organisation is currently celebrating 20 years of ministry and service to churches, Christian leaders and interested people who have faced difficulties with cult groups. In the twenty years the work has grown significantly and has widespread acceptance across denominations in Australia. Adrian has visited overseas centres to assist with local difficulties. In a notable experience in 1997 he appeared as an expert witness in the Singapore High Court where a defamation action against the *Straits Times* was being taken by a cult group.

A recent highlight has been the establishment of new premises in Nollamara, which greatly facilitates the ministry. Details about the program and subscription details about the organisation's magazine *Take a Closer Look* are



Concerned Christians Growth Ministries Director, Adrian van Leen broadcasting on Sonshine FM

available from 50 Carcoola St, Nollamara WA 6061. Phone (08) 9344 2200.

Here and There

450 Years of Division Ends

Almost 450 years of division between Catholics and Lutherans came closer to ending with the signing of a historic agreement on the doctrine of justification. A joint statement said that there was a consensus of basic truths of the doctrine. It is clear, however, that their positions are not identical. (*Catholic Life*)

Help Make the News!



"By including 'The Australian Christian' in your will, you can help make the news for years to come. A bequest will help ensure that your newspaper continues to provide news and information to our future readers."

—Lindsay Mott, Treasurer

A bequest to The Australian Christian can be made through your solicitor, or contact us for the appropriate wording.

Christmas

'Tis the season ...

PHILIP HUNT

Living in Vienna has made us much more aware of the seasons. The weather has distinct cut-off points when trees turn gold, snow begins to fall, or later spring flowers appear. People follow the seasons too. There is a leather-jacket season, a pumpkin season, a season for grape juice before the new wine comes. There seems less need here for advertising

These are traditions that extend back into antiquity.

and banners to tell us Advent is upon us. We have the snow already on the ground, and Christmas markets in every town square.

These are traditions that extend back into antiquity. And they have the effect of bringing the past closer to the present.

In Australia, we live with an Aboriginal history of true vastness, and a European history of extreme briefness. History is either so far in the past that we cannot access it, or so short that we have no sense of really how recent it is.

In Australia we seem to have made a clear distinction between history and the present day. History is something for Aboriginal culture, or the National Trust. Its bearing on our present is inconsequential. Here in Europe history is all around us. Very close. And still living and shaping our world, attitudes, our lives.

Around the corner from my office is an apartment in which Ludwig van Beethoven completed the 9th Symphony, from which we get the wonderful "Hymn of Joy"-number 35 in our

hymn book. The apartment block is still there, and looks the same as it must have almost two hundred years ago. Someone lives in Beethoven's flat and doubtless doesn't give it a passing thought.

Many Austrians talk about the Austrian-Hungarian empire of the Hapsburg family as if its absence since the end of World War 1 is just a temporary democratic inconvenience. In Sarajevo, Bosnia, you can see the place where that war started. It's a block from the present World Vision office. World Vision staff pass over the spot on the way to lunch.

Not too far from Vienna, if poorly sign-posted, is a concentration camp from the second World War. The murder of millions of Jews, homosexuals, communists, and mentally ill people, is just a blink of an eye in the past. Even this past month, the Nazi world echoed strongly around Austria amidst the electioneering.

In some ways this is a good thing.

It is sobering to realise how fragile society is. How quickly "things fall apart. The centre cannot hold. Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world" (W.B. Yeats). It is thin ice between peace and violence.

When we talk to friends and relatives back home in Australia, we urge them to take seriously the violent and divisive forces within society. It is a short step from banning boat people, to racist rhetoric, to full scale violence. European history, including the present day history in the Balkans, in Chechnya and in the Middle East, shows this to be horribly true.

Just before Christmas I shall be in Jerusalem again. I was there a few months ago. History is close there too. At every turn there is another "sacred



site". I have visited most of them. At first I was bothered about feeling so little for the experience. Interesting. Worth doing. But not a high spiritual moment.

This is because my time working among the poor and oppressed in Eastern Europe and the Middle East teaches me that, unlike humans, God is not a product of history. Indeed, history is **not** His-story.

History is mere human history.

Jesus came to earth to sweep aside human constructions. To demolish mere materialism. To obliterate hierarchy and politics. Instead he came to be present in an eternal way-beyond history. And for us to be fully present with him.

You don't need to go somewhere to discover the meaning of Jesus Christ. The only place we need to go, is to him.

Merry Christmas.

Philip Hunt is Regional Vice President of World Vision International, Middle East & Eastern Europe Region, and a member in absentia of Doncaster Community Church of Christ, Vic.

Christmas

Good News for the Poor

MICHAELA MARTIN

Christmas. I cannot believe that it is that time of the year again. The time of celebrating the birth of Jesus, the season of goodwill and cheer, and the time of celebrating with family and friends.

What are we doing? Are we running around trying to get organised? Frantic late-night shopping, and spending money on items we really cannot afford? Have we felt harassed by marketing ploys, and are we feeling stressed by all that needs to be done in the next few weeks?

I don't see much extravagance here.

Do you ever wonder what comes over us at Christmas time? As much as I love Christmas, there have been times recently where I have questioned the whole process: not why we celebrate, but more how we celebrate.

For many families, Christmas is just a time of heartache and sorrow. I know diligent, beautiful, hard-working, conscientious mothers who cannot afford presents, and who are facing a Christmas away from their partner. I know a Sudanese man who is facing his 6th Christmas away from his family. He is here in Australia having fled his homeland because of war, and is waiting so patiently for the bureaucratic system to allow his family to join him. How patient or sane would we be if we had been separated from the ones we love for six years? There are many other Sudanese families who haven't seen members of their family for up to seventeen years. One of our local families only one month ago lost their five-year-old son in a tragic car accident. I find a worrying impulse in me to insulate myself



Graham Long, Director Community Care—Welfare, Michaela Martin (centre) and a crisis centre family

from these circumstances. Is this what the Christmas rush is about? Meeting people in their grief, or even looking into their eyes, seems to confront our mad season of consumption.

Stop for a moment and think of Mary riding into Bethlehem, in a very pregnant state, with tired Joseph walking beside her. I see a scared fourteen or fifteen-year-old girl, who today would be a single mum, and an unmarried couple who ended up having to sleep in a stable because they could only afford cheap lodgings and there was nothing cheap available. I think of shepherds as their first visitors, and I doubt that there was much ceremony in that first meeting. I don't see much extravagance here.

When I look at the reality of the birth of Christ, I cringe at what Christmas has become for us. I am quickly realising that we are doing Christ and Christianity an injustice by getting caught up in the presents, an overabundance of everything, and the need for more.

I'm not saying that we shouldn't enjoy God's provisions, but we are on a fine line if indulgences cause us to forget the reality of Christ and the realities surrounding us in our society.

I believe that Christ called us to be good news to the poor. That is the message of the Bible. And the poor and down trodden are all around us.

Would it hurt us this year to forgo a present if it meant that a young child received one in our place?

Would it really hurt this year to say "I'm sorry" to the relative you haven't spoken to for the past two years, when there are people who haven't seen relatives for the past seventeen years and would love to be in contact with them?

The answer is **no**. It won't hurt at all to reach out and see a battered Christ in the eyes of someone who is hurting or to offer the hope of Christ to a hurting world. In fact it will probably be good.

Michaela Martin is a Child Support Worker at Pendle Hill Crisis Centre, NSW.

Christmas

Christmas is Here Again

DR IRIS PAUL

Here at Malkangiri the phrase for Christmas is *Jesu Mapru Janmo Dhino*, literally translated it means "The Birthday of Jesus Christ". Some refer to it as *Bodo Porbo*, meaning the "Big Festival".

The tribal folk rise before sunrise and *Jesu Mapru Janmo Dhino* is no exception. There is excitement in the air. The cold breeze of 4.00 am sends a shiver through the body. They all march to the

Just making rice and meat or chicken takes three to four hours.

common pond for an icy water bath and walk back to their huts wearing fully-drenched clothes. Then, in the dim light of the early dawn they adorn themselves with a new *sari* (a dress commonly worn by the tribal women), *doti* and shirt (attire commonly worn by tribal men) or the best that they have. They leisurely oil, de-lice and meticulously comb their hair, helping each other. They are in no hurry and time seems to stand still. Children clamber here and there, laughing and shouting. The church's metallic bell sound rends the air. The sound comes at periodic intervals, thrice and then the Christians march to the worship place (at most times it is the verandah of a

hut or a very small hut), usually called the *Gudi* or *Mandir*. The Christian music blasts the loudest (in almost all places with the help of a hired PA system). Then for a long time, about an hour, there is singing and clapping which almost brings the hut roof down. The prayer begins, followed by worship and sermon, with singing and clapping in between.

After the morning worship is over, all trek to their huts. Here some join and cut a goat, or an individual house may cut a chicken—for some it is only during Christmas or Easter they have meat or chicken, so it is very special to have a non-vegetable diet on the *Bodo Porbo* (Christmas).

Tribals have one solid meal a day and this day they are all excited. Men and women take part in the cooking—a handful of red hot chillies is ground to a fine paste and cooked with the meat or chicken on a firewood stove, where there is more smoke than fire. Just making rice and meat or chicken takes three to four hours. While the meal is being cooked, those of us who go as visitors to the village chat on various issues. After partaking of the red

hot food, where eyes and nose water profusely, the children and youth assemble to the loud music of the loud-speaker and for individual and team sports. Everyone cheers. The onlookers are highly excited and have great fun.

With the sun going down, all gather again for a time of prize distribution and a time of singing and prayer. After prayer, both the old and the young start dancing to the drum beat and the songs they made up on the spot to the tribal monotone rhythm. A leader sings a sentence like, "We got up in the morning" and all repeat 3–4 times. Then the next sentence is sung by the leader, for example, "We cut a chicken today as it is *Jesu Mapuru Janmo Dhino*". This goes on and on and they dance all through the night.

In the early hours of the next day about 2.00 or 3.00 am, they are exhausted and go back to their hut whispering that it is a great day today and life goes on till the next *Bodo Porbo* knocks on the door again!

Dr Iris Paul leads the ministry of the Reaching Hand Society, working among the tribal people in the Malkangiri district of Orissa state, India.



Christmas

On New Year's Eve

DAVID MARR

At a neighbour's barbecue recently I learned about the "Beach Party" being planned for New Year's Eve. Asked if we were intending to be there, I replied that all police leave was under review and all personnel were to be available for duty. This also included a number of police support agencies. It soon became clear many people were excitedly planning celebratory functions, while others are looking for inclusion in major events in the heart of the city or meeting with friends at churches or privately.

The peculiarities of date create expectations this New Year's Eve will be different

For myself, I have always been happy to quietly share the evening with family or friends and retire once midnight has sounded. There can be no doubt the peculiarities of date create expectations this New Year's Eve will be different.

I don't know your plans for the evening, but already advertising regarding the celebrations is emerging and people are considering their options. One church recently advised a New Century Worship Service beginning at 11.30 pm with "Lots of singing, kissing, hugs and good wishes to begin the new era". This is "followed by supper and drinks shared with Christian friends". Besides functions planned by local churches and youth groups in our area, I am aware of street parties and celebrations being organised by restaurants, hotels and a variety of organisations. The com-

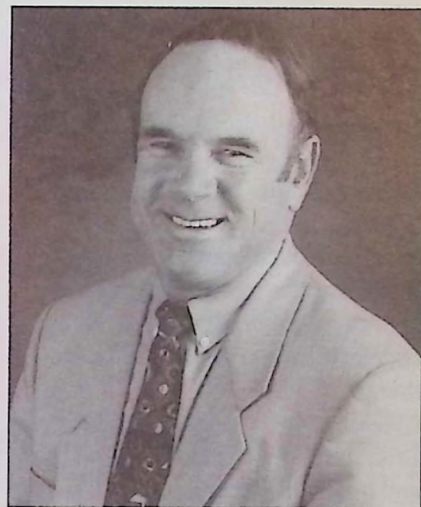
mon perspective is for people to get together to have a party, enjoy themselves and get the new century off to a good start. Many are planning to do that by including a sense of God in their celebrations. Many are not.

If only it could be a happy occasion for everyone. It won't be. Coppers, nurses and other emergency services people will be working while others are enjoying themselves. My wife always works New Year's Eve and I seem often to be called on New Year's Day. Celebratory occasions often become events of sadness, hurt and trauma for someone. Harsh trophies of foolish or thoughtless behaviour. It would be good if this year was different.

Some jobs are tough too. Particularly those performed by our emergency services people—jobs that test your commitment and ability to cope. I don't know if you've ever worked beside doctors and nurses in an operating theatre on New Year's Eve and been verbally abused by injured bloodstained youths, or found yourself attempting to assist a teenage girl so "out of it" she is unable to tell who she is, or who her parents are. I don't know, either, if you've ever worked for hours at the site following an horrific accident, or gone in the early morning hours to advise the family of the death of their loved one.

These are all tough duties and naturally take their toll on those who perform them. Their families suffer too. They are absent for the occasion and then miss out afterward as someone is trying to catch up on sleep, or come to terms with the trauma of the previous hours. It is not an ideal way to celebrate a holiday. There are times when I just wish people would stay home.

It is important to ensure a balanced view of life or one risks becoming nega-



tive or introspective. Life goes on and it is important to keep up with it all. Great occasions like next New Year's Eve can be happy events that remain vividly in our minds forever. It is important we prepare ourselves and plan the occasion ensuring the well being and safety of everyone.

This is important if we are wanting the blessing of God upon our celebration activities. We might sensitively offer assistance to others in their planning and how they conduct their evening. This should help us to enter into the joy and spirit of the party. Problems occur when people forget about others and become self-centred in their focus and behaviour. The happiness of many can be destroyed by the thoughtlessness of others.

I hope New Year's Eve will be celebrated happily by us all and be memorable for positive and enriching reasons. As you celebrate, please remember those working to ensure your protection, safety and well being. They are happiest when the phone is silent and the emergency room vacant.

David Marr is Senior Police Chaplain SA Police and a Churches of Christ minister.

Christmas

A Thumping New Year

ROBBIE TYNAN

New Year's Eve? Well there are plenty of things to do, e.g.

- Constitution Dock in Hobart for all the Sydney to Hobart yacht race action,
- Bridport for huge parties on the beach,
- my parents' house just to hang out,
- Youth Alive's Millennium Thump.

Well there are a lot of choices, but of course why would you choose any of them?

Constitution Dock? No, all drunk.

Bridport? No, don't like the place much and the people are all drunk again.

Parents? No, too boring.

Thump? Yes! Fantastic. It'll rock. It'll be huge. I'm willing to support Youth Alive, they do a great job of everything

they do. Youth groups from all around the state will be there and give me a chance to disciple more people to further the Kingdom of God.

My Vision for 2000?

HA HA HA, well I'm trying to get a part-time job to earn a little more money. I wish to also help my youth pastor Steve Fitzallen to further youth ministry in Launceston with the talents God has given me. Launceston Church of Christ is where God is going to break things in Launceston and I support the vision one hundred percent.

As a Christian, I wish to bring the Gospel of Jesus Christ to my friends and family and also to many people at the Launceston Skate Park. I see skating as an important part of my life as a



Christian and am glad for God's grace and forgiveness and for placing me in that area. My vision for the year 2000 is to stay alive and serve God and that's it, just to stay cool.

KATE HEIER

Well it's almost New Year and the big question everyone is asking themselves is, "How am I going to see in the New Year?" After all, seeing in the new millennium is (for most people) a once in a lifetime event. My brother is hoping to go to the beach with a group of his friends and see in the new millennium there, and my boyfriend is hoping to make a small fortune by playing a gig with his band. One of my friends is seeing in the New Year over Sydney Harbour with tens of thousands of other people, while another friend in Western Australia parties with her brother on the banks of a river. I remember dreaming with a friend at the beginning of the year about seeing in New Year in Fiji. However, since that is a little bit out of the question, I'm going to be doing the next best thing and rocking up to

Thump 2000. Thump is going to be the biggest drug and alcohol free youth event in Tasmania this new year, and I will be partying into the new year with hundreds of other youth from around the state. Thump is going to have great live bands, a big screen movie, a nearby waterhole to swim in and lots and lots of new friends to meet.

Next year is going to be huge, if this year was any indication. I believe that the Christian youth of Tasmania are going to take the state for the Lord, growing in both numbers and faith. They will become a driving force in their school, encouraging, helping, and building each other up at the same time. Next year for me is going to be a whole new experience as I head off to university, but I can't wait.

Robbie and Kate are both from the Launceston, Tas, church.

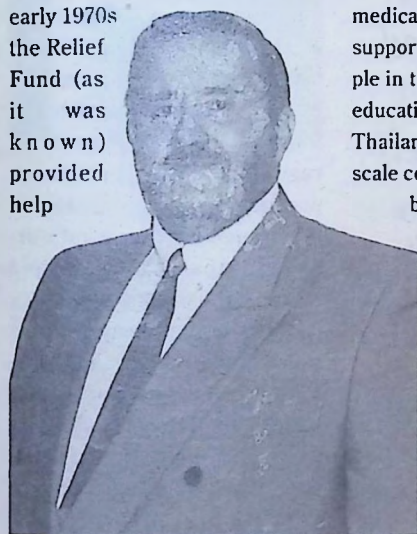
Stay alive and serve God and that's it, just to stay cool



More than just a warm feeling

JEFF WESTON

For one hundred years the members of Australian Churches of Christ have been giving generously to emergency relief overseas. Our first combined activity was in 1899 to support those needing relief from famine in India. Since that time, many thousands of people have been assisted in a range of ways. Until the early 1970s the Relief Fund (as it was known) provided help



in crisis times. In 1972 the Overseas Mission Board instituted a specific relief fund, Churches of Christ Overseas Aid (COCOA), to provide funds for a range of activities, including medical, development and educational aid, as well as emergency relief. Since its inception, COCOA has made funds available to assist many projects around the world. These include: education for medical and nursing staff in India, support of work among deaf people in the Philippines, HIV/AIDS education in secondary schools in Thailand, development of small-scale cottage industries in Zimbabwe and famine relief in many countries.

In 1999, as well as on-going programs in India, Zimbabwe, PNG, Vanuatu and Fiji, COCOA has financially supported a range of relief efforts around the world. These included funds to Albania for sup-

port of Kosovo refugees, feeding and care of refugees on the Thai border, and relief assistance to earthquake victims in Turkey and Vanuatu. A seed planting program in Africa (in conjunction with SIM Aid) was supported. Vocational training in Vanuatu and Papua New Guinea, and a literacy program in PNG have also been carried out.

One of COCOA's strengths is that from its inception a strong empha-

some of the causes of poverty, rather than rescuing them from a crisis. Almost all of these projects are undertaken in close consultation with Christian organizations or churches within the country involved. Funds are usually made available to them so they can direct and oversee the project.

Another feature of COCOA is that **no administrative charges are removed from specific, designated donations.** All publicity and administration costs are met from interest received and non-specific gifts.

The good news of God's love in Jesus Christ is about the whole person. When someone is starving, a Christian response is to offer food and other support. This is in line with Jesus' own understanding of his mission as recorded in Luke 4:18-19. Through COCOA the Australian Churches of Christ have an opportunity to express in a united way the love of Christ to those in need.

—Jeff Weston

A strong emphasis has been maintained on development projects

sis has been maintained on development projects, that is, on long-term projects that enable disadvantaged people to overcome

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HAROLD E. KNOTT

Mandurah City Church of Christ SENIOR PASTOR

We are seeking a mature, experienced person, aged 35-50 years, with gifts of leadership and teaching, to pastor God's people in this fellowship of charismatic character and great growth potential.

Current maximum attendance is approximately eighty adults, and fifty children and youth.

It is likely that a part-time Youth Pastor or worker may also be appointed, requiring the Pastor to be prepared to work and lead in a team situation.

Mandurah is a growing, popular resort city of approximately 45,000 people, situated on the coast 70 km south of Perth, WA. The population consists of low/middle income workers and retirees.

Expressions of interest may be made to:

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Mandurah City Church of Christ,
Lot 25 Terancia Road,
Riverside Gardens, Mandurah WA 6210.

CAROL PRESTON

FORTHCOMING MARRIAGE

MOIR-WESLEY Phil and Justine have much joy in announcing that their wedding will take place at 3.00 pm on 23 January 2000 at Camelot Castle, Yellingbo, Vic.

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VICTOR HARBOR Peaceful setting close to beach. UCA-owned, 2 and 3 bedroom self-contained units for rent. Good rates. Phone Adare Caravan Park and Holiday Units. (08) 8552 1657.

It's not hard to recognise those who are the kind of "person gifts" that I want to point out as we finish this year. They are those who are already celebrating Christmas, who are already partying with their friends and workmates. These are the people who were in the mind of the writer who penned the words "Eat, drink and be merry, for tomorrow who



If you are in a crisis and need a hand, they'll be there, to help, to give it a go, to get the task done.

busy and tied up with schedules and appointments and routine, these people can be a breath of fresh air. And they can show us that our lives are often over-regulated, without room for opportunities, the unexpected, the spontaneous, the "God surprises" that these people enjoy, and participate in. They can be the good Samaritan because they have time and inclination to be distracted from their routine. They can also help us see the funny side of situations which weigh others down. They can help us laugh at ourselves.

These are people who can help us to worship and praise with joy and freedom. In the church these are not people we should try to lock into a permanent role or put too many restrictions on, but they can be of great value if we appreciate their gift and give them the freedom to use it.

This Christmas season is a time for giving and receiving, for rejoicing in the gift that God has given us in the person of Jesus. It is also a time for giving of ourselves to others, and receiving from others the wonderful gifts that we all have in our different ways of being, relating, and doing things. Let us celebrate each other and give thanks to God for his wonderful creativity that is evident in our uniqueness, our being gifts, as his people.

knows?"

They are also those who may frustrate and alarm others by never being in one place for long, by seeming unable to commit themselves to anything, and by not taking too seriously what the rest of us feel is terribly important.

So why are they gifts, you ask? Because they can be inspirational in their capacity to change, to take up an opportunity which others will miss by hesitating. Because they rise to a challenge with great enthusiasm, and motivate others to do so with their own excitement.

If you need a job done quickly, if you are in a crisis and need a hand, if you're facing a challenge and don't know how to approach it, you can call on someone who has this gift and they'll be there, to help, to give it a go, to get the task done.

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A Christmas Gift

by Yvonne Kenny (ABC Classics) \$29.95.

The soprano Yvonne Kenny is one of Australia's best-loved singers. She is a consummate artist. Under the ABC Classics label comes this new issue of Yvonne Kenny singing a marvellous selection of Christmas music, eighteen songs in all. In most she is accompanied by the Adelaide Symphony Orchestra, a felicitous combination!



The selection is a wide one. There are the traditional carols, "O Come all ye Faithful", "The First Nowell", and "Angels We Have Heard on High." Then the less well known "Coventry" and "Sussex" carols bring further dimensions to the meanings of the Christmas story. From Handel's *Messiah*, in a superb rendition of the aria "Rejoice Greatly" her mastery of tone is never more evident.

Five songs emphasise our Australian heritage. These include the carols, "The Three Drovers" and "Christmas Bush for His Adorning", set to music by W.G. James. These songs will gladden our hearts and help us celebrate the significance and wonder of this season. The music in its variety has something to offer everyone remotely open to the Christian experience. —Viney Longthorp

Colonel Light Gardens Church of Christ, SA 75th Anniversary Celebration

Sunday 6 February 2000
10.00 am Worship Service

Theme: Being Faithful Servants of God

We invite all past members, ministers and friends to share with us.
A special morning tea will follow the service.

CHANGES

NORTHERN COMMUNITY CHURCH OF CHRIST—PO Box 499, Northcote Vic 3070. Phone (03) 9486 1902. E-mail <info@NCCC.org.au> This new church combines the former congregations of the Ivanhoe, Northcote, Preston and West Preston churches.
Richmond, NSW—PO Box 299, Richmond NSW 2753.

BAPTISMS

•Miranda Tinetti, Joel Tinetti, Dianella, WA •Roly Skinner, Melissa Stephens, Shirley Johnson, John Packer, Michelle Bradley, Chris Grant, Modbury, SA •Lorraine Buschel, Christina Varidel, Alastair Varidel, Drew Gatfield, Aaron Gatfield, Leif Jensen, Greta Jensen, Dan Owens, Blair Roberts, Ashley Roberts, Lance Smith, Kathy Smith, Dwayne Buschel, Tanya Pedrazzini, Withcott, Qld •Rex Howell, Launceston, Tas •Iling Chua, Sammo Kut, Cherith Masters, South Perth, WA

MARRIAGES

•Gaylene Dallinger and Dave Steepe, Withcott, Qld •Anne-Marie Harrison and Peter Harback, Launceston, Tas •Mandy Tallon and Daren Robinson,

Hume St. Toowoomba, Qld •Carissa Bond & Andrew Dunn, South Perth, WA

DEATHS

•Vera Morrison, Edna Scambler, Dorothy Baker, Mollie Spear, Hartwell, Vic •George Perry, Joan Ramsay, Doris Salisbury, Caloundra, Qld •Neil Green, Grote St, Adelaide, SA •Jack Peake, Yarrowongs, Vic •Juan Cabellero, Withcott, Qld •Graham Geddes, Hume St. Toowoomba, Qld

OBITUARIES

Obituaries are limited to 100 words
CHANDLER, Alice

(20.9.99) A large group of family and friends gathered in the Lilydale Crematorium, Vic, to celebrate Alice's life and to express their grief. Ian Graham, a nephew, read "My Golden Years" written by Alice and poignantly outlining her life, including years at Boronia. She came to Boronia from Northcote in 1983, married Gordon Chandler soon after, and in partnership acted as hostess to Koinonia, CWF and special functions at their property "Calanthe". Alice, who was born 18.10.17, will be remembered as a happy, kind, gentle, caring, positive person. We commend husband Gordon, son John and daughter-in-law Heather to the God of all consolation. —BJR

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Church News

SA

MODBURY (Phil Munro) 250 encouraged by Reunion Celebrations 17 Oct ... Great family camp at Mylor. 50 attended ... Alpha courses an exciting part of church life ... Youth Alpha groups continuing tool of outreach ... Exciting youth services in Civic Park, include guest bands ... 160 people privileged to witness 6 baptisms 28 Nov ... Small group focus in 2000 with leaders & coaches appointed.

TUMBY BAY (Trevor Simpson) CWF camp held at Redcliffe 5-7 Nov. 23 women from Wudinna, Port Lincoln, Tumby Bay, Ungarra attended. Marj Dredge study leader. 3 ladies from Adelaide accompanied her. Weekend of study & fellowship enjoyed ... Nancy Brougham celebrated her 90th birthday with a party at church ... Church pleased to welcome visitors from other churches, near & far.

MAGILL (Keith Ridge) Advent festival (Hanging of the Greens) started Advent season. Christmas decorations, a new wall hanging depicting magi, all added to the service, culminating with lighting of first Advent candle ... Open-air carols service planned for Christmas Eve ... Corner Playgroup had a good year with added development of "Mums" Bible study & share group led by Nat Stormouth ... Church board retreat developing vision for 21st century.

TAS

CAVESIDE Ron & Lyn Chapman finished their ministry 10 Oct. No minister at present. Church relying on help from other churches & local people ... 5 attended leaders' seminar on change ... Deloraine home fellowship group combined with Caveside-Chudleigh group ... Special Christmas service planned for 19 Dec.

LAUNCESTON (C. Spaulding, W. Kerrison, T. Gray, S. Fitzallen, A. Fair) Drama workshop held 28 Nov & car boot sale for Girls' Brigaders to attend Fonomarae in WA ... Cradle Roll

Call on 5 Dec ... 37 attended Seniors' trip to Sheffield 1 Dec ... Girls Brigade & others prepared a number of "Shoe Box" gifts for CBMI Operation Christmas Child.

VIC

RED HILL (John Sutton, Keith Milne, Tom Frazer) Church continually challenged by vibrant ministry team ... Young families enjoyed luncheon & hike ... Youth watched *Jesus* video ... Gifts from Israel donated by Liba Jenkin for young people's project "Life of Abraham" ... Gordon Stirling speaker 14 Nov, luncheon followed by sessions on platform presentation by Gordon ... Breakfast with Debra Hirsch as speaker 27 Nov ... Ladies Red Hill Market efforts blessing to all.

HARTWELL (Malcolm Taylor) African Dinner through International Needs raised financial support for Girls' Home in Zambia ... All Saints Day provided opportunity for congregation & visitors to take part in an Act of Remembrance ... New evening study group well supported ... Books placed in library in memory of loved past members ... CWF dessert & coffee proceeds to Banmatmat Bible College, Vanuatu.

MITCHAM (Martin Gillespie, Peter Rivett) Recent fete proved good outreach to community ... Church family to celebrate with Enid Lancey on her 90th birthday ... Men's breakfast, Halliday Park 4 Dec. ... Baby dedication—Tessa Huiswaard ... Mitcham Primary School RE break up held at church, led by Chris Barnett. Children made Christmas banner ... Ecumenical Christmas Carols 12 Dec. Children's choir participating ... Christmas concert 19 Dec. ... Youth fundraiser bought drum kit.

TOOTGAROOK (Mal Giezendanner) Annual meeting 21 Nov. Plans put forward for 2000. Officers appointed ... Arthur & Dorothy Wren invited church to celebrate their Golden Wedding 2 Nov. Dorothy now in hospital recovering from surgery ... Madge Leigh

home after surgery ... 117 sat down to Christmas lunch at Open Door 24 Nov ... Advent Service at church for Inter-Church Council well attended.

NORTHERN COMMUNITY Over 40 Women's Fellowship members met & enjoyed a fun night recently. Devotions by Mavis Uldrich, song from Betty Quaife. A getting to know you quiz, a skit & sing-a-long warmly compered by Pearl Alcorn with Bruce as pianist. Supper duties thoughtfully provided by a few menfolk much appreciated by all present.

YARRAWONGA (Ron Goodwin) Church arranged sponsorship afternoon, raising \$500 for Jack Gore participating in Bike for Bibles ... Garage sale raised \$1000 towards new amenities block, also raising \$500 for the same from sale of craft at market stalls ... Ladies enjoyed fellowship on thanksgiving day with Shepparton & Wangaratta CWF & ladies from local churches ... We regret the passing of Jack Peake.

BALLARAT, DAWSON STREET (Darren Kittel, Isaac Khan, Pam Harrison) Springfest '99 raised nearly \$1000 for Vision 2000 Relocation Fund ... "Bounce" & "Challenge" youth groups sausage sizzle raised \$116 for future activities ... 2 Nov Australia's celebrated band "Endless Praise" led packed evening worship ... Final "Fishes & Loaves" cook-up for '99 ... Thousands of meals distributed to charitable organisations throughout the year ... December senior members' luncheon, singing led by Jon & Jenny Jones. 50 members present.

MT CLEAR (Howard Sanders) Howard Sanders now full-time ministry, extended to Jan 2001 ... Lyn Edwards elected as elder ... Ian & Nicole Wilson & 3 children farewelled at commissioning service to serve with MAF in Gove, NT ... Young adults had a "Do You Need Help with Anything" day ... Christmas Star shining from top of the church ... Carols sung at local supermarket.

MONTROSE (Harvey Clark) Community participation in monthly car boot

sale gradually increasing ... Retired people from surrounding hostels & community groups invited to "Pleasant Tuesday Afternoon" organised by retired church members ... Combined evening service held with surrounding Churches of Christ. Fellowship enjoyed afterwards over supper ... Montrose to join with other churches in community to jointly present Carols by Candlelight at town centre.

WA

DIANELLA (Jennifer Turner) Building extensions & renovations to proceed ... Jennifer ordained at Conference Celebration Sunday ... Fiona Vincent home following successful lung transplant ... Sunday School involved in "Operation Christmas Child" to supply gifts & Scriptures to Third World countries ... 10 weekly & 2 monthly small groups operating ... Minister on leave until December.

SOUTH PERTH (J. Bond, D. Stanford, R. Nancarrow, L. Pethrick, R. Thom, D. Lim, C. Craggs) Pastors exploring questions we'd like to ask God ... Super Sewerage Sunday offering celebrated sewerage pipeline installation ... Generations of Christmas memories shared at ladies' dessert & craft night ... John & 7 other Australian pastors in USA for mentoring with Bill Hybels ... Christmas lunch for 250 ... Christmas hampers prepared for needy.

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NSW

LOWER BLUE MOUNTAINS (Stephen Templeton, Debbie Cox) Church attendance on increase ... Purposes accepted by church. Teams being developed: outreach, worship, community, teaching and service ... Debbie Cox as ministry support person has helped church move forward ... Zachary Powell dedicated in evening service ... 4 people off to short-term missions ... Church responding to Vanuatu crisis with love offering. COCOA offering to be taken in January as well.

BYRON DISTRICT Church services Sundays 9.30am just 4 km south of Byron township in Suffolk Park Community Hall, Clifford St ... Strong play-group averages 16 mums plus their children, with 25+ on roll ... Sewing group, Tuesday discussion group, nursing home singing group make up our activities ... Visitors on holidays always welcome.

QLD

PINE RIVERS (Mick Cross) Church packed to celebrate 18 years of wonderful ministry with Neale & Kerry Proellocks 28 Nov. Love & prayers go with them as they join ministry team at Hume St, Toowoomba ... Alan Hermann to assist with preaching next year ... Members participating in raising money towards "Bibles for Persecuted" ... Service times Dec-Jan 9.00 am & 6.30 pm.

CALOUNDRA (David Jolly) Sunday School anniversary 31 Oct. Meg Noack speaker ... Ministers & elders held one-day retreat to plan church strategy for next 5 years ... Brian Pickering, National Director Australian Prayer Network spoke 14 Nov ... Last monthly men's breakfast for year 27 Nov ... Farewell dinner 28 Nov for Stan & Merle McAneny, moving to retirement village at Kippa Ring.

DALBY (Tony Ochse) 45 attended BBQ & dedication of Millers' new home ... 35 ladies heard Debbie Dodds speak

on "Who cares about age anyway" ... Youth group enjoyed camp at Bunya Mountains ... AGM reports show healthy spirit of anticipation as church heads for 2000 ... Church encouraged by attendance of new families ... Bible Society held meeting & BBQ at church.

WITHCOTT (S. Fahey, D. Clayton) Over 330 shared in 17th anniversary service 7 Nov ... During November

14 baptised, also three recommitments ... Stuart Templeton from Ballarat, Vic appointed associate minister, commencing 24 Jan ... Church excited about future.

HUME STREET, TOOWOOMBA (Dale White, Ross Savill) Daren Robinson concluding 15 months as assistant youth worker ... Church looking forward to 3 new staff in 2000 ... Launch of fund-

raising for building expansion ... 24 Hours of Prayer brought blessing ... 40 new worshippers attended Newcomers' Dinner ... Australian College of Ministries service held with Garry Hills & Keith Farmer ... Church constructing 2 new rooms for ACOM ... Hosted Qld launch of "Christmas Bowl Appeal". Many denominations represented.

COCOA brings HOPE



COCOA provides finance to develop food crops like this at Londua Training School in Vanuatu.

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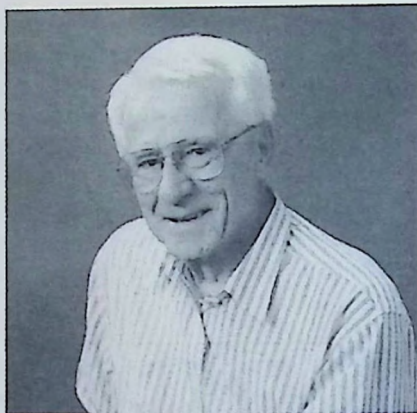
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Why I do not Attend the Theatre

GORDON STIRLING

A New Zealand friend sent me a copy of *The Australian Christian* for 21 July 1904. The subscription was six shillings a year. A weekly, it consisted of 14 pages of large newsprint. There were articles on "Why I Belong to Disciples of Christ", "How to be Certain of Forgiveness", and "What Think You of Christianity?" (the author was in favour of it!), and a leading article on "The Faith That Wins". There was the announcement of a competition for the best three statements on the subject, "Why I do not Attend the Theatre". A page of the best answers would be published in a subsequent edition. The best three would be awarded copies of Booker T. Washington's book on *Character Building*. He was the founder of the first tertiary institution for African Americans. A column of "Seed Thoughts for Sermons" was provided, including "When a person is down in the world an ounce of help is better than a pound of preaching". There was a "Christian Endeavour" page, with daily Bible readings and a study. It referred to a wonderful new invention enabling singers to use a phonograph to check their voices. Of course, a moral had to be pointed: "Never be sure that your idea of yourself is correct until it is confirmed by some unprejudiced echo from the outer world". News items revealed the existence of such groups as Sisters' Prayer Meetings, Dorcas



Societies, and Mutual Improvement Societies. Church news included reference to Balaklava's (SA) farewell to Harry Roberts, leaving to train for ministry at the Lexington Bible College. He was presented with a purse of sovereigns. Swanston Street, Melbourne, church held a lantern lecture by H.H. Strutton, pioneer missionary to India. There were many advertisements for such things as Pearsons Sandsoap, Taylor Bros' Cocoa, teething powders, and organs (£6 - £25) and pianos (£34 - £60). Underneath a picture of a Rescue Home with the title "Rescue the Perishing", the reader was told of the two-fold purpose of the Home: 1. For the **prevention** of young girls from going astray. 2. For the **restoration of the fallen**. There was an ad. for Kruse's Fluid Magnesia for biliousness (spelt like that!).

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Update Subscribe Again

Dear Readers,

In this issue, we have moved Update here because of our Chairman's Statement in Update's usual position on page four.

We hope that all our readers will subscribe again in 2000. Invoices will be sent in January. Your options are to pay then, defer payment to a time of your choosing, or make a part payment and we shall bill you for the balance later. From 1 July, under the new taxation legislation, we are required to add the GST amount to your invoice. As a balance to this, those paying income tax will benefit by paying less income tax. Readers receiving pension payments will have pension rates increased. In the midst of these changes we invite you to "Subscribe Again". We are an important partnership!

Thanks for all your support, comment and ideas offered this year. We especially thank our advertisers and encourage churches and readers to use the paper for advertising. We missed passing our all time record for advertising by only a few hundred dollars, so it has been a good year. Advertising income is basic to our financial viability and operation.

With this issue Carol Preston will complete her "Coffee Break" series, which has been published over the last four years. Thanks Carol for your lively and interesting perspectives on life.

Sam Smith