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7 May 1994

THE AUSTRALIAN CHRISTIAN

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Poor Beggars

—page 12



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५ दिना विषयी काही मर्यादा प्रत्यक्षात
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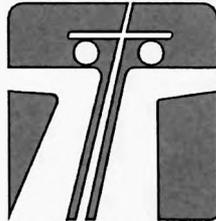
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Guest Editorial

Whatever Happened to Hell?

David Timms



It sure isn't fashionable to speak of hell these days. I can understand that. In a world full of bad news, who needs more? In any case, scholars have concluded that hell is the superstitious by-product of primitive societies. At best, it is figurative language. At worst, manipulative, and none of us like to be coerced.

Today, it is more "politically correct" to speak of people as eternally disadvantaged than destined for Hell.

Thus, we preachers speak almost exclusively of positive attitudes, possibility thinking and living life to the full. Rarely, are people "saved". Now, they just "become Christians".

Hell seems to belong more to a past age and culture which was preoccupied with future judgment and condemnation. But that's not us. We've been taught to live only for the present. Our age is dominated by pleasure-seeking. In such a climate, it's no surprise that hell has slipped almost entirely from our language (if not our theology).

But for all of my cultural sensibilities and political correctness, I find that Jesus paints a radically different picture! He challenges my "lolly-theology".

Oblivious to my sensitivity, Jesus declares that I'd be better off maimed in heaven than perishing in the fire of hell (Matt. 5:22, 29-30). It's Jesus who warns me to "fear him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell" (Matt. 10:28). In his teaching, Jesus seems quite convinced about "the furnace of fire (where) there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth". (Matt 13:42) Later on, as I listen to Jesus preaching again, he's the one who speaks of escaping "the sentence of hell". (Matt 23:33)

Perhaps Jesus was just using figurative language. Did he really mean a literal place of eternal torment? What about some of the prominent modern theologians who assert that "no-one is punished eternally for finite, temporal sins"? Frankly, I prefer the sound of that. So, I retreat again to my comfortable, non-urgent, unconvicting and

placid evangelistic style ... "Maybe you'd like to think about the possibility of some day giving your life to Christ?"

Then he hits me with another story. It's the account of the rich man and Lazarus (Luke 16:19-31). Is this just the fanciful storytelling of the master of communication. Or could it be a true incident recounted by the creator and sustainer of all things, the very one who understands eternal realities better than any of us?

Clearly, the Bible teaches that hell was not created for men and women, it is designed for the devil and his angels. (Matt. 25:41) But anyone who rejects the lordship of Jesus Christ in their lives, will share that destiny. It's not a matter for negotiation, nor the mythical concoction of a primitive mind. The uncomfortable reality is simply this—hell is the devil's alternative!

Will there be flames licking at people's feet? Will there be sulphur and brimstone? Will there be weeping and wailing? Is hell a place or a state of consciousness? Does it matter? It is certainly a place of eternal anguish and separation from the living God.

How could a loving God create such a place? It's a common question. But only a generation consumed with pleasure-seeking, rights—demanding individualism would even ask the question. It would be equally valid to ask how a just God could not make provision for such a place.

But the wonderful news is this. His love is so enormous, that while we were yet sinners (fully deserving the destiny of hell) Christ died for us (to deliver us entirely)!

Whatever happened to hell? It's not popular theology, but it is genuine reality. May we see more people saved in our day!

David comes most recently from a five-and-a-half year ministry at the Foothills church in Western Australia. This year, he commenced as a lecturer in biblical theology at Carlingford in NSW. He is married, with two young boys, and is reordering his allegiances in the AFL, NSWRL, and Sheffield Shield.

Camp Waterman 50th Anniversary

Fun fair commemoration



• Old residence at Camp Waterman which was destroyed in the bushfires of January 1962

Preparations are already in hand to celebrate 50 years of operation of Camp Waterman as a Churches of Christ camp site at Monbulk, Vic, on 26 November. The event will take the form of a fun fair day with opportunity being taken to commemorate the founding of the site and offer recognition and thanks for the achievements of the years and the people who have served the campsite in many capacities.

The site was acquired from the Waterman family in 1944.

Camping programs commenced soon after and buildings were progressively developed. The first managers were Mr and Mrs W. Davis, 1944-1953. The current managers are Paul (Senior Manager) and Linda Fry, and Geoff and Kendra Caldwell.

Church leaders and members are asked to note the date and plan to participate. Old campers will be especially welcome. Ideas for the day may be forwarded to the managers or telephone (03) 756 6120.

Missionary Convention

Prayer and mission

"Reaching the Unreached" was the theme of Swanston St, Melbourne, Vic, church's 23rd annual Missionary Convention, 24-27 March.

This year's speaker was Dr Don Richardson, internationally acclaimed author and missionary statesman. Drawing from his 15 years of missionary experience among the Sawi people of Irian Jaya, Don shared many powerful illustrations and examples of how to reach the unreached.

Assisting him at each meeting was a 21 voice choir from the Sarabetu Church of Christ at Port Vila, Vanuatu. The choir added a new dimension to this year's convention. Through

songs, skits and drama they endeared themselves to the hearts of the congregation.

There were many highlights to this year's convention. Once again the church responded magnificently in the area of giving. On the Sunday morning a special love gift offering was received for 43 members of the Swanston Street missionary family. This offering exceeded \$33,000 and the faith promise renewal offering amounted to \$228,279, the largest ever in the history of the church.

On the Saturday night, a special recognition service was held for all who have been part of the missionary family over the past 25 years. A total of 96

Inaugural Commencement Service

WA Ministry Training Centre

1994 got off to a great start for the Ministry Training Centre in WA on 28 February when its inaugural commencement service was held.

The Registrar, John Clapp, led the gathering in worship, creating an atmosphere of rejoicing and celebration, and introduced both the Board Chairperson, Barry Ryall (Dalkeith Road) and the Association President Roger Ryall, who gave brief words of greeting and congratulations.

Five students were introduced as forming the inaugural student body, Rob Price (Dalkeith Road), Tim Sullivan (Applecross), Mark Wilson

(Whitfords), Ray Hockley (Dowerin) and Barron Bonney (Kwinana). Barron is a final year student from Carlingford completing his course here under the supervision of the Ministry Training Centre.

An occasional address was given by John Bond (South Perth) in which he guided us through ten "commands of grace for Christian students" as distilled from 2 Timothy.

The Centre is now underway in WA and as more students take advantage of the opportunities for training that it offers, the more significant it will become among our churches.

—John Clapp



• Barron Bonney and Rob Price with Registrar John Clapp (centre)

were recognised (50 adults and 46 children). Each family was presented with a personally autographed copy of Don Richardson's book *Eternity in the Hearts*. The church regards it as a privilege that God has called so many from Swanston St into missionary service.

On the final Sunday night, Stuart Robinson (Blackburn Baptist Church) brought the concluding challenge and a further seven responded.

Perhaps the key to understanding the impact of this year's convention was prayer—powerful, persistent, persevering, prevailing prayer. The convention was preceded by a 40-hour prayerathon, the opening

service was a half night of prayer and the mid-service was a prayer brunch. This emphasis arose from a two-fold conviction: there has never been a supernatural outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the mission field without a previous outpouring of the human spirit in preparatory prayer and there will never be a release of power on the mission field unless and until we see a restoration of prayer in the church.

The church spent much time praying for one of the unreached people groups of North West China—the Uyger people, a people numbering some 10 million who are without a church or a pastor.

Enjoy Your Marriage

Growing as a couple

In the Year of the Family, an opportunity is provided for couples to relax and nurture their relationship. There will be a weekend retreat, 24-26 June, at Forest Edge Retreat Centre, Neerim East, led by John and Linda Rowe. John is in the ministry team at the Nunawading, Vic, church. Linda and John are accredited leaders with Couples for Marriage Enrichment Australia.

They will lead another weekend, 12-14 August, which has been set aside specially for couples

in ministry to be free from responsibilities and be helped by a couple who understand the demands and stresses experienced by families in ministry.

There are limited places available at both weekend retreats, which feature fully catered accommodation in en suite units.

For further details and bookings, contact Lynette Leach, Vic-Tas Department of Mission, Education and Development, on (03) 326 8900.

Peer Support for Teenagers

Coping with long-term illness

For teenagers who have a chronic or life-long illness, there is an excellent peer support program. The Chronic Illness Peer Support Program (ChIPS) involves small groups of young people, aged 13-19, meeting for eight weeks to discuss issues that are troubling them in regard to their on-going illness. Young people who have haemophilia, cystic fibrosis, epilepsy, cancer, heart disease or other illnesses frequently have difficulty coming to terms with their conditions. Some of the topics covered in the program are stress, hospital experiences and coping abilities.

The groups are led by young people who have already been participants in the program and have become trained leaders. There will be three groups meeting in 1994. The first group commences on 4 May. Other groups commence on 27 July and 19 October. The sessions will be held at the Centre for Adolescent Health, Parkville, Melbourne. There is no cost involved.

For further information, please contact Lynette Leach, Department of Mission, Education and Development, 77 Chapel Street, West Melbourne 3003. Phone (03) 326 8900.

A Model for the Future

Seaford Ecumenical Mission

The trans-denominational mission at Seaford, SA, was officially established during a "Transfer of Authority" ritual on the evening of 25 January.

The company sponsoring the venture (Ecumenical Endeavours Pty Ltd) came into existence towards the end of last year. The directors are the heads of churches, or their nominees, of the Anglican (Diocese of The Murray), Catholic, Churches of Christ, Lutheran and Uniting churches. A committee of management is the authoritative planning group and an advisory committee has been established to give advice concerning the different denominational practices.

Land situated at the epicentre of the mushrooming new district of Seaford has been purchased. The design for the buildings is getting close to final approval. The Seaford Ecumenical centre is to be a staged development with stage 1 consisting of two chapel spaces and an administration centre. Negotiations are in progress with the Seaford Human Services Committee and government bodies for stage 1A (a community development centre).

There are three opportunities being offered for people to experience some of the ecumenical ideal behind the Seaford Ecumenical Mission and also support the Mission in its development. First, two

ecumenical encounter weekends are being held (4-5 June and 3-4 September) with accommodation available at Seaford. Second, the Mission has organised an ecumenical adventure tour (24 October-9 November) of Greece, Turkey and Israel [See advertisement page 5]. The third level is that of foundation membership in the Seaford Ecumenical Mission. Information on this level will be included in a future issue when the venture is about to commence.

Details can be obtained from Dr Tom Atherton, 50 Robertson Rd, Moana 5169. Phone (08) 386 2953.



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Some selected subjects are also now available externally (by correspondence), but AUSTUDY assistance is not available for these courses

For further information, write to: PO Box 55 Kenmore, 4069



Rod Tippett
Principal

MCD Graduates

A degree of celebration

22 April saw a large crowd at Wilson Hall, University of Melbourne, for the annual graduation service and conferring of degrees of the Melbourne College of Divinity. Nine Churches of Christ Theological College (CCTC) students graduated with the Bachelor of Theology degree, including students who graduated from

CCTC last November.

Barry Jenkins and Robyn Schaeffer were both awarded the Master of Ministry degree. This degree is undertaken by course work and a project. Barry's project was titled "Churches Responding to Multiculturalism" and was a study of government policy on multiculturalism and how four

churches were responding to that policy.

Robyn's project was titled "Theology and Spirituality of the Evangelical Free Church Tradition as expressed in their Hymns: A Reflection on how Evangelicals have Sung their Liturgy".

Also graduating was the Dean of the Evangelical Theological Association, Merrill Kitchen, who received a Mas-

ter of Theology. Her thesis was "The Parable of Pounds: A Reading of Luke 19:11-28 within the social and narrative framework of the Gospel of Luke".

Greg Elsdon, Principal of CCTC, was awarded the Doctor of Theology degree. His thesis is entitled "Affirmation and Reorientation: A Study of composition and intention in Matthew 9:35-11:1"

Mt Barker now 10

Special celebration service

The Mt Barker, SA, church was initiated in 1983 as an outreach of the Aldgate Valley church by the late Jim Dow during his time of ministry. During the winter months of that year, several evening home meetings were held which laid the foundation for regular services to commence the following year. Ministers and lay people from Aldgate Valley have over the years greatly helped the development of the church, assisting with pastoral care and worship.

In 1992, Mt Barker joined with Strathalbyn, Milang, and Pt Sturt to form a circuit and call Julie and Grant Simpson to a team ministry. The Simpson family live in Mt Barker, a rap-

idly growing town 35 km from Adelaide. The church has reflected the town's rapid population growth, doubling in size in the past year, with attendances now of 35-40.

On 29 May, the church celebrates the 10th anniversary of the commencement of regular worship services. A special service will be held at 10 am in the TAFE College where services are held each week. Julie will lead the worship and Grant will be the speaker. Past members and friends are invited to return for this special occasion and stay for the luncheon provided. (RSVP to John or Leonie Goodger on (08) 388 0248).

—Grant Simpson

Easter Family Festival

Being visible in outreach



• Worship team at Easter Festival

Easter Saturday morning in the city centre of Kalgoorlie, WA, bands from the Church of Christ and Christian Outreach Centre entertained shoppers and promoted the Family Carnival to be held that afternoon at the Boulder Railway Reserve.

There was a real carnival atmosphere, with rides, clowns and plenty of food stalls.

In the evening, once again the bands and John Callaghan presented a gospel concert.

On Sunday evening, there was a combined service in the Boulder Town Hall where a large congregation enthusiastically celebrated their risen Lord. Pastor Rowan Tochnell of Rhema Family Church was the speaker. The events were organised by the Church of Christ's Evangelism Committee to encourage Christians to be visible in outreach. Their next project is the March for Jesus in June. —Larry Gibb

Ecumenical Adventure Tour

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Building is About People

Guest homes enhanced

The Christian Guest Home, Oakleigh, Vic, enjoys the reputation of providing excellent care for elderly people. The level of care demonstrates a clear commitment to the importance of people, which is reflected in the general well-being of the residents.

Now, big changes are being made to the buildings. These will enhance the opportunities for care. Over the next five years all the existing buildings, with the exception of the original Victorian house, will be demolished and rebuilt. The original house will be substantially renovated.

Five new houses are to be built, providing facilities that are appropriate to the care needs of elderly people in the 90s. Each house will comprise 12 en-suite rooms, a kitchen, dining room, sitting room and study. The new accommodation will express homeliness and quality of life.

The first of the new houses is already under construction and due for completion in July. Work on the second will commence as soon as possible.

The cost of demolition and construction of the first two houses is close to \$3 million. Of this amount, just \$329,000 will

come from Commonwealth Government funding.

"Building is About People", a major capital appeal for funding, has been initiated by the Vic-Tas Department of Community Care. Submissions have been made to major trust funds for financial support. Donations will also be sought from suppliers and traders with whom the Department has contact. Further information about the upgrading and capital appeal can be obtained from Trevor Giles (Executive Director) or Ivan Humphries (Business Manager) on (03) 326 8977.

—Ian Tippet

Calendar

Foundations of Church Growth

As part of their Doctor of Ministry program (others can attend the lectures) Fuller Theological Seminary is offering "Foundations of Church Growth" with C. Peter Wagner and Brian Andrew at Churches of Christ Theological College, Carlingford, NSW, 30 May-9 June. The course covers the basics of church growth. Further details from Carlingford on (02) 630 7533 or Doctor of Ministry Program, Fuller Theological Seminary, 135 North Oakland Ave, Pasadena, CA 91182, USA. Phone or fax 1-818-584 5313.

Organ Donor Thanksgiving

The 1994 service of thanksgiving for those who have been given a new lease on life through organ or tissue transplants is being held at Wesley Uniting Church, Lonsdale St, Melbourne on 5 June at 2.30 pm. The service also allows those who have been donor families to give thanks and to say goodbye to a family member. A similar service is held in most Australian capitals at around this date.

Philippines Tour

The Philippines Christian Solidarity group is conducting an exposure tour of the Philippines 1-8 July. Cost is \$1700, which covers travel and accommodation. Participants will spend time in rural villages and visit a variety of Christian organisations and groups working in justice and development ministries. Inquiries to Nadine Liddy on (03) 689 9665 or Mal Rowe on (03) 370 7489.

Women's Conference

An interdenominational women's conference "Return to Love" is being held in Bundaberg, Qld, 9-11 September. Speakers will be Carmel Boyle, Maureen Ward and Noreen Plath. Topics will include The Bondage of Unforgiveness, The Freedom of Forgiveness and The Love of God. Billeting is available for women who attend and further details can be obtained from Noreen Plath at 124 Barolin St, Bundaberg 4670 or phone (071) 52 0817. Registrations close 19 August.

Family Seminar

1994—Year Of The Family

1994 has been designated as the Year of the Family. Newspapers and magazines feature articles on the family in almost every issue. Some churches are holding special events. Dr Moira Eastman will be the guest speaker at a Family Seminar to be held at the Nunawading, Vic, church on 31 May at 8 pm.

Dr Eastman has been involved in developing family

education and support programs in community, school, church and local government. She is a member of the Reference Group of the Australian Institute of Family Studies. Her work has been recognised overseas. She is currently Coordinator of the Pastoral Studies Course at the Australian Catholic University, Melbourne.

She is the author of several books, published by Collins

Dove: *Family the Vital Factor: the Key to Society's Survival* and *The Magical Power of Family*. Her latest book *We're Okay. Secrets of Happy Families* was featured on the front page of *The Age* recently. She defines healthy families as those where children fulfil their potential, family members are able to communicate and express affection, and there are high levels of respect for each other.

The cost of the seminar is \$5 per person. For information and bookings, contact Lynette Leach, Department of Mission, Education and Development (03) 326 8900 or John Rowe, Nunawading church (03) 877 6077.

Chronic Fatigue Syndrome

Chronic Fatigue Syndrome (ME) was mentioned in Minister's Musings in the 23 April issue. One of our readers felt that the symptoms and results of this disease were misrepresented in that article. We hope to run an article in our next issue on the disease and the way it affects sufferers and possibly the way that the church could support such people.

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Australia

777 2nd at Moomba

In the Melbourne Moomba parade radio Triple Seven FM won second prize in the Professional/Corporate section with their float "The Land of Narnia". 20 adults and children from Bayline churches transformed a Toyota ute into a mythical wintry land, melting into a scene glistening with gold and jewels. Children in Narnia animal costumes greeted the crowd while others roller-bladed in formation, radiating as radio waves from a satellite dish. The lion, Aslan, headed their parade.

Listening to the Sower

The Bible Society in Australia has produced an audio-cassette version of the *Sower* magazine for the first time. The *Sower* has been the Bible society's membership magazine for the last 36 years. The audio *Sower* is intended primarily as a service to visually impaired members. The audio cassettes are available from Bible Society offices in every state.

Wireless by Wire

Radio Rhema-FM in Newcastle will be conducting test transmissions to two areas outside their own immediate locality and it's all being done by landline, something unique in Christian broadcasting. A three-week test transmission to Taree in the Manning-Great Lakes area commenced in mid-March. This will be followed a week later by a test transmission to Port Macquarie. Radio Rhema-FM is hoping to receive a licence by mid-1995.

Overseas Aid Decreasing

ACFOA (Australian Council for Overseas Aid) is campaigning for 0.38% of GNP to be allocated to overseas aid in the 1994/95 Federal Government budget. To achieve this target, the Government will need to increase aid modestly from the 1993/94 level of 0.35%, which in dollar terms will be \$1,626 million, an increase of \$224 million over last year's Budget. Under the Labor Government, Australia's aid level has fallen drastically from 0.51% of GNP in 1983 down to the current level.

LicenSing

Making copied music legal

Have you ever seen music on a Sunday morning that has been photocopied? Chances are it was copied illegally. Music publishers are becoming much more strict about charging churches with illegal reproduction of music.

An international partnership of Christian publishers has developed a program called LicenSing which makes it possible for Protestant churches, through the purchase of an annual licence, to have legal access to a wide selection of Christian music.

Under LicenSing, congregations may make overhead transparencies, flip charts, bulletin inserts, photocopies and their own permanent song books. Congregations are required to record their use of the music for one six-month period every two and a half years.

Royalties are paid to the authors and composers of the music based on these records.

To help congregations pick music from the large number of pieces available the LicenSing program provides a specially selected list of 1,500 songs and hymns. The list is cross referenced by biblical passage, church season, subject, source and publisher. Music is evaluated so it suits the needs of mainline Protestant churches.

A quarterly periodical informs church musicians or those responsible for selecting music about new developments in the worldwide religious music field, introduces new music, gives suggestions on using music in the church context and suggests hymns that fit the Revised Common Lectionary readings for each Sunday.

Subscribers also receive a directory of all the publishers and copyright holders whose music may be used under LicenSing.

The annual fee for LicenSing varies from \$75 to \$495 depend-

ing on the average number of people who attend worship.

LicenSing was developed by International Christian Resources (ICR), a newly formed partnership between MediaCom Associates Inc in Australia, Wood Lake Books in Canada and Logos Productions in the United States.

The companies initiated the partnership out of the collaboration in the production of four editions of the popular Christian education curriculum, The Whole People of God.

ICR operates in accordance with the jointly held principles of inclusivity, equality, global vision, and environmental responsibility. Its purpose is to provide the international, ecumenical, Christian church with resources that serve unaddressed or under-addressed needs of congregations and clergy.

LicenSing is represented in Australia by MediaCom Associates Inc. They can be contacted at PO Box 610, Unley 5061. Phone (08) 371 1399, fax: (08) 297 8719.

Fusion Training Centre—Orange
Equipping for Life and Mission in the 90s

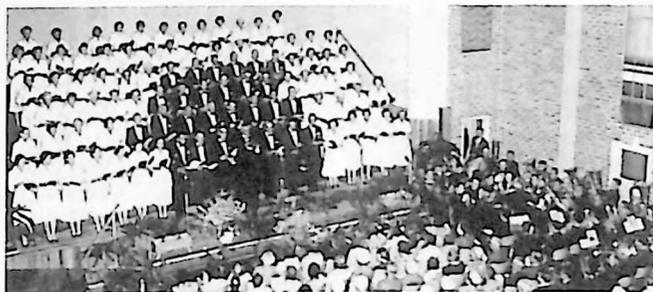
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Conference Choir



The 1960 Federal Conference Choir with the Salvation Army Band in the Perth City auditorium. The choir was conducted

by Charles Nelson who also conducted State Conference choirs. An obituary for Charles appears on page 22.

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Letters to the Editor

Letters are limited to 200 words

Definition of Family

To the Editor,

In the article "What is a Family?" by Pass the Salt ("AC" 2 April), your writer appears to be desperately trying to reword the definition of a family to accommodate all forms of variant human groups. The "narrow" definition published is quite right; a family consists of Mum, Dad, "and a batch of kids". Now this basic unit of our society may be damaged, e.g. by the death of a parent or child, or it may be made up from parents and children from previous broken marriages, but it can still fit that narrow definition. In general, other groupings of adults and/or children are not a family, even though they may have some of the characteristics of a family, e.g. "a married couple without children", is just that!

Members of a church are commonly referred to as a "family"; but this is only analogous and the description depends on the narrow definition of a family to give it meaning.

To take up Pastor Salt on his "Let's Accept Homosexuals" article ("AC" 26 March.), two homosexuals or two lesbians living together, with or without children being involved, do not make up a family.

We certainly should not be about "excluding from our consideration those" who hold different viewpoints, and/or are in need of love. But unless we jealously guard the true concept of family, we will soon be unable to use the word to even complement the good side of other human relationships!

—Vin Waters
(Footscray, Vic)

RACV Elections

To the Editor,

The Royal Automobile Club of Victoria sells alcoholic liquor at its club rooms in Melbourne. More liquor, in fact, than any other club in the state.

The RACV likes to be seen as a booster of road safety—but they seldom, if ever, warn against the dangers of alcohol.

Some new blood on the RACV Council seems to be called for.

When your copy of Royal Auto arrives, complete the voting application form, mail it to the RACV and when they send your ballot paper, vote for Greg Warmbrunn and Graeme Rule.

These two men have undertaken to do something about the above-mentioned problems.

—Arnold Jago
(Mildura, Vic)

Church Government

To the Editor,

Owen Wainwright ("AC" 23 April) states: "we are not taught history, otherwise we would know that democracy was unknown in the days of the early church". The British historian, G.P. Gooch states in his book *English Democratic Ideas in the 17th Century*, "the 16th century Reformers appealed to the democratic organisation of the early church". This claim is supported by many historians. Gooch's title refutes Owen's claim that modern democracy commenced with the 18th century French Revolution. Confirmation of my analysis of democratic decision making in Acts, which Owen disputes, can be found in Wayne Meek's book *The First Urban Christians*, and in several other books.

The history of Churches of Christ shows that we have links back to the 17th century beginnings of the modern democratic movement. The oldest existing Church of Christ in England dates from 1662.

What then is the real motivation for attempting to legitimise autocratic leadership by devaluing democratic practices in our churches? I have asked this question many times, but the answer is always silence. Is it that authoritarian leaders realise that our congregations not only have the right to elect their leaders but to also terminate them?

—Bruce McIntosh
(Upper Yarra, Vic)

Gays

To The Editor,

In response to Gordon Stirling ("AC" 23 April) I would like to make a few points:

1. "So what are we to do with gays?" We could do what medical science has done with cigarette smokers. We can do everything in our power to convince them that they are on a way of self-destruction and persuade them to change. This I submit is a way of Divine compassion.

2. The Sydney Mardi Gras did not seem to express the feelings of those unhappily "stuck"; nor does the demand for special legislation to protect the gay way of life.

3. There is no question of God's love for gays. He loves them so much that he seeks to save them, along with others sinners, from destroying themselves. The problem is not the condition of homosexuality, but the practice of it.

4. In the New Testament gays were saved by the power of the

Gospel when they confessed their desperate need to change and accepted Christ as Saviour. The New Testament does not accept that people are stuck with any sinful way of life.

5. It seems that Gordon is defending a counselling relationship rather than gays; and I believe he would serve the truth better if he made the distinction more clearly.

—Allan B. Clark
(Croydon, Vic)

Yes, I Remember

To the Editor,

Rex Morris asked whether we remembered "when people dressed in 'their best' to attend church". ("AC" 23 April). Yes I do, with great pleasure; and I still "dress", as do many of my contemporaries. My husband,

Continued on page 9

Letters to a Travelling Companion

"Near-Death" Experience

Dear Daniel,

This morning, whilst eating a McMuffin, I read in the local newspaper about a lady who was wanting to hear from people who have had a "near-death experience". I was tempted to write to her about the time I accidentally sprayed my wife's prize fuchsia with weed killer, but I realised that's probably not the type of near-death experience she's looking for.

The article told the stories of a few people who, through illness or mishap, had experienced a moment of clinical death, prior to being resuscitated. Although the language and images differ, the features of each story are surprisingly similar. In each case, the person spoke of bright light, a firm but gentle guiding voice and an overwhelming sense of complete peace and well-being.

I am intrigued by these "near-death" experiences, now more common thanks to the wonders of modern medicine. It is fascinating how so many of those who have had such an experience, although less concerned about the prospect of dying, also gain a much greater awareness of the sheer joy of living. They appear to gain a deeper appreciation of the mysteries of life and death and a world-view greatly expanded by a personal experience of some of that mystery.

I am not sure that reading these stories is going to help me accept the prospect of death any more readily. What they do, however, is to remind me that our earthly experience of life is just the "tip of the iceberg" and that God has things in store for us more wonderful than we can ever imagine. These are mysteries worth celebrating.

Until next time,
Pastor Salt.

Journey to the Cross

New study well received

Marion, SA, church had about 100 involved in Jeff May's study *Journey to the Cross* prior to Easter. The group leaders had the benefit of a briefing session with Jeff May prior to the commencement of the series. Graham Agnew, senior minister, reports that the re-

sponse to the study experience was outstanding. Graham linked his Sunday preaching to the four themes of the study. This created interest and stimulus to the discussion. Participants welcomed the Australian emphasis of the material.

Sales of *Journey to the Cross*

have been most encouraging prior to Easter. Use of the study is not restricted to this time and it is appropriate for any time of the year.

A further study suitable for pre-Easter use is proposed for 1995. A recent check of sales of studies prepared by the Australian Board of Church Development and Education and published by Vital Publications (Federal Literature De-

partment) indicates steady demand and interest. Details of all resources were recently forwarded to all congregations.

To mark the Year of the Family, a new study, *The Art of Marriage* by Helen and Grant Spangenberg of Queensland, will be available by mid-year.

Enquires may be directed to ABCDE, 77 Capel St, West Melbourne 3003. Phone (03) 326 8900. —Don Smith

Surprise!

Palm Sunday at Southport

The Children's Choir at Southport, Qld, gave a re-enactment of the triumphal entry of Jesus into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday.

Two, dressed as disciples, went to ask for the use of the colt for their Master and, as some sang "Hosanna, Lord!", a procession of children wearing colourful robes and hoods, as in Jesus' day, and carrying palm branches, entered the church from the northern doorway, moving silently down the aisle; much to the surprise of the congregation.

They were followed by a donkey and his rider, also in

costume. The whole procession passed by and departed through the door on the southern side of the church.

As the choir finished their song these children stood in a line on the top of the green bank outside the church, with the backdrop of the bush behind them. The donkey and his rider waited nearby.

The Children's Choir are trained by Carol McCallum, and Tricia Napper.

The evening service was a special program for families.

—Nancy Evans

Continued from page 8

now gone to be with his Lord, always said, "We should dress for church as if we were going to meet some very important person", after all, isn't that exactly who God is? We come to meet him, in his house, so why not dress accordingly?

There are those who are in professional and managerial jobs, who go to work dressed accordingly, but come to church and take part in the service, very casually dressed. At times I feel embarrassed for God, as I look toward our serving people. I know God loves all who come to him to worship, but think about it.

Then there's the point about example. Surely worth thinking about.

—(Name and address supplied)

Church of Christ
Maryborough Vic

132nd Anniversary
Sunday 29 May

10.30 am Service
Speaker Louis Clun

12.30 pm Luncheon

Regional Ministers Meet

Growth and revitalisation



• Seminar participants (L to R) Louis Clun, Darren Kittel and Neil Galbraith with Jeffrey Wilson

Ministers from Ballarat, Geelong, Western and Central Victoria met at York Street, Ballarat on 23 March to hear Jeff Wilson of the Disciples National Centre for Congregational Growth and Vitality. Included in the two presentations by Jeff Wilson were issues relating to leadership and the revitalisation and transformation of congregational life. On the issue of transformation, the need for serious self-assess-

ment will be required before any mission can become clear or be embraced.

Paul Cameron, Alan Hirsch and Don Smith represented the Vic-Tas Department of Mission, Education and Development which sponsored the visit.

A brief presentation was made on state regional growth patterns and the many encouragements evident through the current church planting program.

Pontius' Puddle



Media Review

Papers

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE: It Doesn't happen at our church ... or does it?

(LifeCare) Kit \$10, booklet \$3.

Domestic violence is all but invisible to the outside world—yet it touches one in five marriages in Australia. And it's just as common inside the church as it is in the community at large.

Responding to this problem in the community, the staff of LifeCare, an activity of Baptist Community Services in NSW, has produced a resource booklet on domestic violence.

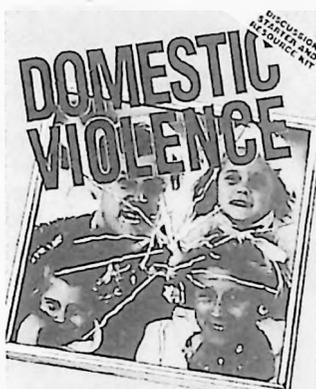
The booklet probes the causes and extent of domestic violence, and its effects on victims and aggressors alike. Designed to serve as a discussion-starter for church congregations, the publication also provides a Biblical perspective on the issue.

One of the booklet's main aims is to alert congregations to the size and seriousness of the problem. It also explains how they can respond with a positive ministry to everyone involved in the situation.

"Domestic violence is far more widespread than people realise", Valerie Cox explained. "Tragically, it's just as common inside the church as it is in the general community. In fact, misinterpretations of certain Biblical passages are often a real part of the problem for Christian families."

Our booklet seeks to inform congregations, and challenge them to take bold and decisive action."

A full kit is available for \$10 with the discussion starter booklet costing \$3 from LifeCare, 20 Glassop St, Bankstown 2200. Phone (02) 708 2112.



It doesn't happen at our church... or does it?

Books

One Life at a Time

by Robert A. Seiple (Word Books) \$12.50.

This book was written to recognise 40 years of World Vision. However, it is not a history of the 40 years, but simply a collection of stories about people taken from the experience of Robert Seiple or that of his friends. There is no listing of world problems, but stories of people with those problems. There is no record of relieving machinery, but stories of children given another chance. There is nothing about evangelism in general, but the story of a friendless youth who found Christ as a friend.

One story stands out—that of a Vietnamese Hosea deserted by his wayward wife. He searched until he found her in the act of burying alive her illegitimate child. He frantically dug up the boy, now blind and brain damaged from lack of oxygen. He took him as his own and took his wife back again. The rest you can read for yourself.

—GRS

Center City Churches

edited by Lyle E. Schaller (Abingdon) \$21.00.

Center City Churches is part of a new series under the theme "Ministry for the Third Millennium". It is an analysis of 14 growing churches in diverse situations in American cities. Schaller shows how churches in urban settings can attract and hold

people. Each profile focusses on the quality of the church's ministry, the personalities of its usually long-tenured and visionary ministers, community outreach, members, preaching, music, weekday programs and reputation. A highlight is the listing of 30 recurring themes that surface in the study of the churches. These themes help explain the challenge and complexity of urban ministry and provide a framework for future development. The book is suitable for leaders of middle and larger sized churches in Australian cities. The emphasis is strongly upon mission and growth.

Available from Australian Board of Church Development and Education, 77 Capel Street, West Melbourne 3003 for \$21 plus postage.

—Don Smith

The Persistence of Faith

by Norman Pritchard (Albatross Books) \$7.95

This commentary of Philippians is a passage by passage exposition of a letter whose theme the author identifies as "persistence in faith whatever the odds" (p. 58).

There are 161 pages (seven chapters) of chatty, passage explanation, with four discussion and four "widening our horizons" questions at the end of each chapter.

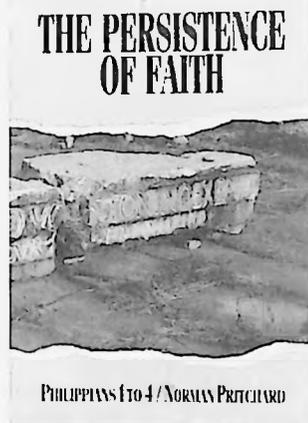
The explanation remains connected to the theme throughout,

and individual verses of the text are only mentioned as keys to understanding the explanation.

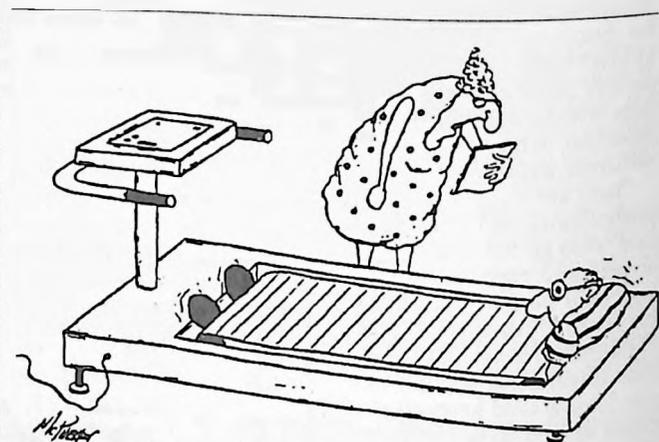
Many writers and speakers are quoted and there is a good range of illustrations. Other passages of Scripture are used appropriately to strengthen the discussion and to show common scriptural themes.

The questions are ideal for a Bible study group who are prepared to think. The reader is not asked to regurgitate the author's explanation, although its pre-reading would be helpful.

—Don Cameron



PHILIPPIANS 1:10 / NORMAN PRITCHARD



"Here you go, right on page 13 of the manual: 'Never stop walking while the treadmill is on.'"

Source: *McPherson's Sports & Fitness Manual*
by John McPherson (Zondervan, 1993)

Australians For Reconciliation

Learning and playing our part

The Australians for Reconciliation project is an initiative of the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation which was established by Federal Parliament with cross-party support in 1991.

The Council has a vision of "a united Australia which respects this land of ours, values the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander heritage and provides justice and equity for all".

To achieve this vision, a willingness is necessary on the part of all Australians to take this opportunity to improve the re-

lationships between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders and the wider community.

To learn more, and to play your part, contact Australians for Reconciliation and find out how you can become involved in this project, whether it be through awareness raising, study circles or community activities.

The Australians for Reconciliation project would like to hear your views on Reconciliation and to know of your experiences with Reconciliation activities.

Please telephone 1800 060 265 (freecall) or (03) 4814470 for lit-

erature and further information on this project.

Reconciliation

Continuing Aboriginal reconciliation



• The Sunday evening group led by Theo Mackaay (left) includes (L to R) Wendy Hewitt, Vera Patterson, Ray Vincent, Ken Patterson, Marg Somerville (kneeling), Kath Durbridge, John Somerville, David Hawks, Kay Jorgensen, Trish Hawks and Fen Hewitt

One significant outcome of last year's International Year for Indigenous People has been the production and promotion of a study kit on reconciliation by the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation.

John Clapp, Wembley Downs, WA, encouraged the local Anglican and Uniting Churches to call a public meeting to launch the studies in his area. The meeting was addressed by Sir Ronald Wilson, Deputy Chairperson of the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation, and local Aborigines were invited to attend. 75 at-

tended the meeting and just over 30 decided to join one of four study circles which were established that night.

Each study looks at one of the eight issues identified by the Council as significant in the process of reconciliation. Group leaders have gathered significant resources to heighten participants' awareness of these issues.

As 18 of the participants are from the Wembley Downs Church of Christ, we would have to say that this is one of the significant ecumenical events for them this year.

Ruby Revels

Ainslie CWF celebrates 40th anniversary



• (L to R) Verna Bennett, Judy Fergie, Molly Ongley and Dorothy Jackson

Original members of the Canberra Christian Women's Fellowship were present at the ruby anniversary of Ainslie CWF on 26 March. They were Judy Fergie (original Treasurer), who presented the devotion, Verna Bennett, Dorothy Jackson, and Molly Ongley. Memorabilia from those early years was displayed, as was ruby-coloured glassware suitable to the occasion. Rev Neil Adcock, minister of Canberra Baptist Church, spoke on "Canberra—Past, Present and Future from a Christian Perspective", and the birthday cake was cut by Beth Butler, on behalf of her mother, Lesley Stirling, the

founder of Christian Women's Fellowship in Canberra.

Have you thought of helping
"The Australian Christian"
in its ministry among
Churches of Christ?

Why not include us in your will?
The following wording could be used
in your will:

I give and bequeath \$ (or a percentage of the total estate) to "The Australian Christian", the national journal of Churches of Christ in Australia, absolutely for the use and benefit of the organisation free from all debts, funeral and testamentary expenses.

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by Ruth & Keith Skillicorn

Because of an indefinite delay in republishing the above book and due to an increasing demand for copies, the text is being released on 3.5" diskette (IBM compatible)

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For further enquiries phone (08) 265 0417

We Are Poor Beggars

Reflecting Jesus' light and love

An evening was fast approaching and, being November, a long cold night was the forecast. Standing on the road near the Indian Government Hospital, was a young blind girl. One could see that she was having excruciating pains. The old man standing beside her was her father, the five-year-old boy, who was clutching a piece of dry sorghum bread, was the eldest child of the blind girl.

The young mother had begun to feel the labour pains since morning, but now the pains were more frequent and intense. Her father, who was holding a bundle of old rags, was a beggar and now was begging for help for his daughter who was standing with great difficulty due to pains.

There were few passers-by but none had time for these beggars. Just then an auto rickshaw stopped near the tragic trio. Seeing the pregnant blind young woman crying, the driver inquired, "What is the matter?"

"Sir," the old man replied, "my daughter is just about to be delivered, we don't know where to go, we are confused, we are poor beggars." The rickshaw driver was moved as he heard of their tragedy. He asked them to get into the rickshaw quickly and drove them to the Churches of Christ Mission Hospital.



As the rickshaw came up to the hospital the driver called to the nurse, "Sister, this blind girl is in terrible pain, perhaps the last stage of her delivery, please, take her into your hospital. They are beggars and will not be able to pay fees. Please request the doctor for me to do this. It is only in your Mission Hospital that this poor girl can get help." Seeing the emergency the sister admitted her to the labour room, gave her a sponge bath, removed her dirty sari and gave her clean clothes.

The doctor examined her, "She needs glucose injections urgently, she is very weak."

But the father, with tears in his eyes, began pleading. "Doctor sahib, we have no money to get glucose bottles we are beggars. My blind daughter's husband fell into a well and died five months ago. He was an epileptic and he had a fit near a well, he fell into the well and drowned. Now we three are left helpless. We are from Khanota near Diksal."

"Okay," said the doctor and the woman was put on glucose saline within a short time. The blind beggar gave birth to a fair lovely little girl with beautiful eyes.

The nurses in the hospital treated her with great compassion and care. The father could not restrain his tears as he saw the love and care given to his daughter.

The whole staff of the hospital showered favours on the old man and his five-year-old grandson. The boy was a smart

little fellow who had a knack of making friends with people easily. To him, the nurses and other staff members were his close relatives. He started calling them aunties and uncles. The staff also began to like this little beggar boy.

Soon it was time for the party of beggars to leave the hospital. But where to go? The hospital helped them with some money for travel and directed them to Kedgaon.

Before leaving the hospital the old man had accepted Jesus Christ as the Lord, the only God who loved blind beggars. He left the hospital with gratitude for Christian hospital and Christ in his heart. His blind daughter and the new-born girl were accepted with love by Ramabai Mukti Mission of Kedgaon. The boy would soon be admitted into Boys' Home at Baramati.

It was on the 4 November, 1993, that this blind woman gave birth to a seeing daughter in the Ashwood Memorial Hospital at Daund.

The hospital, founded by Australian doctors, is serving the poor and needy and has done so continuously for the last 65 years. The aim of the Australian missionary doctors is still pursued by Indian staff with the same vigour and sacrifice reflecting the light and the love of their Lord and master who loved the sick and the blind.

—Dr P. Pawar
(Medical Superintendent,
Ashwood Hospital)

International

Sudden Growth

Sudden growth in numbers of Christians in small villages in Egypt, often miles apart from each other, is being put down to the Holy Spirit—without the presence of missionaries or foreign financed projects. Despite persecution, and even killing in the Assiut region, churches have been filled to overflowing and meetings every night except Saturday often go on into the night, says Middle East Media.

Steps Forward and Back

Christianity is gaining about 70,000 new believers every day, mainly in developing countries, according to Augustin Vencer, international director of the World Evangelical Fellowship. But in the developing world, secularisation causes about 53,000 a week to leave the churches. "Two-thirds of the 1.8 billion Christians live in the South", Vencer said. He also said that according to predictions, in the year 2000 missionary work will not be permitted in 80% of the "least Christianised countries".

Anglican Women Priests

32 women were ordained to the Church of England priesthood by Bishop Barry Rogerson in a protest-free and moving ceremony in Bristol Cathedral on 12 March. There are now well over 2,000 women priests in the Anglican Communion world-wide.

Ghanan Growth

60% of all Ghanaians call themselves Christian, however only 12% attend church regularly, according to the recently completed *National Church Survey: Facing the Unfinished Task of the Church in Ghana*. The survey revealed that the increase in church attendance is not keeping pace with population growth. Most of the Christians live in the southern half of the country. 5.5 million (one third of the population) identify with the Muslim and animist religious practices of the north. More than 70% of the villages in Ghana are without a Protestant church. There are four broadly defined Christian traditions in Ghana today: Protestant (36%), Pentecostal (26%), Roman Catholic (19%) and African Independent (19%).

Sydney



Blue Mountains

8-15 October 1994

Fully Motel Accommodated
Luxury 5-Star Coach Travel

Jenolan Caves—Mt Tomah Bot. Gardens
The Three Sisters and Echo Point

Darling Harbour Aquarium—Matilda Discovery Cruise

8 Days for \$665.00

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On Being a Charismatic Congregation



ministries at Newmarket and Boronia, in Melbourne, and at Ann Street, Brisbane. He is Professor Emeritus of New Testament, Lexington Theological Seminary, Lexington, Kentucky, USA, and, in retirement, lives in Johnston, Iowa.

Some Scripture quotations are from the 1989 REB (*Revised English Bible*); all others are from the 1989 *New Revised Standard Bible*.

A Study of 1 Cor 12-14

Ronald Graham

Pamphlet Club • 387

Opinions and viewpoints in issues of the Pamphlet Club are the authors', and do not necessarily reflect those of the publisher.

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c/o PO Box 629
Mulgrave North 3170

Supplement to *The Australian Christian*
7 May 1994

Introduction

One of the striking features of Christianity this century has been the rise of Pentecostalism in North America, Latin America and Africa, and more recently, England and Australia.

There are varieties of Pentecostal denominations. To take only the United States: there is the Church of God of Cleveland, Tennessee (1907), which adds baptism in the Spirit as a third blessing after regeneration and sanctification; the Assemblies of God (1914), which profess baptism in the Spirit as a "second blessing"; and the Apostolic Church (1918), which restores the offices of apostle and prophet on the basis of Eph 4:11.

A characteristic of Pentecostal churches is that they and their members claim to be charismatic. I have taught Charismatics in the United States. I have worshipped with one Australian charismatic congregation and I have served a church that was split by Charismatics (see my last point).

Over recent years, there have been frequent references in *The Australian Christian* to this or that congregation being charismatic. But what is meant by charismatic? My impression is that among Churches of Christ it often refers to these: less conceptual forms of communication, such as hand-clapping, raised arms, dance, visions, and prophecy; oral participation by the congregation; sometimes speaking in tongues; open expressions of feelings; and a personal "pentecostal experience of the Holy Spirit".

In terms of doctrine, many Pentecostal movements in America and Europe have adopted conservative evangelical doctrine, premillennial eschatology (the doctrine of the Last Things) and a fundamentalist approach to biblical interpretation; but these are seldom to the fore in "AC" articles and reports.

I believe that every congregation is and should be charismatic, but if we are a Scripture people, then I think we would be wise to be guided by Paul's understanding of what it means for a church to be charismatic. His fullest discussion is in 1 Cor 12-14.

Charis and Charisma (pl. Charismata)

Charis is the great multi-faceted New Testament term for (God's) grace. We rightly associate it first of all with Paul. He uses it 28 times in the two Corinthian letters alone.

Charisma is also his. If he wrote 1 Tim 4:14 and 2 Tim 1:6, the only non-Pauline use of the word is in First Peter. It means "grace-gift", a gift of God's grace.

striking the newcomer as meaningless and the outsider as repulsive. So he said: "I would rather speak five intelligible words, for the benefit of others as well as myself, than thousands of words in the language of ecstasy." (14:19, REB) Intelligible language is spoken in the public domain, for anyone to agree or take issue with.

At least at Corinth, speaking in tongues needed to be controlled, but preaching and teaching with intelligence, making the faith contagious, hoping in others and never giving up on them and in all things exercising love—these there was no need to curb or ration, in Corinth or anywhere else for that matter.

On Being a Charismatic Congregation

For three months in 1991 I served a congregation which had had a minister whose name, as it chanced, was Paul. He "went charismatic," which he defined in terms of speaking in tongues in worship, raising arms at the mention of Jesus, informality, and emotions let loose. He won a following, but it was at the expense of that congregation's unity, and it took the church quite a while to recover from his ministry.

So, having 1 Cor 12-14 in mind, I said to the people just before my time was up, "Being a responsible administrator of some phase of the congregation's program—that is being charismatic. Teaching the Christian way of life to teenagers by example and with intelligence—that is being charismatic. Making the faith contagious—that is being charismatic. Being an indefatigable helper of others in all good things—that is being charismatic. Having the knowledge, wisdom, and insight to serve as a reliable guide to others, especially those newly attracted to Jesus Christ, as all the Corinthians were—that is being charismatic. Being a generous steward of one's possessions, one's native abilities and psychic energy—that is being charismatic. In all things exercising love, which means, respecting other members, appreciating them, never taking them for granted, paying attention to them—that is being charismatic."

I was speaking generally, but had it been appropriate, I could have named names, for that congregation was, in the sense that the Apostle Paul, not the minister Paul, used the term, a "charismatic" congregation.

Ronald Graham graduated from the College of the Bible in 1944 and had

need for members to respect and appreciate one another, to value one another's gifts and to use their own for the common good (v. 7).

Six, Paul goes on to say—he does this in chapter 13 (although neither he nor any other biblical author wrote in chapters and verses; that is a 16th century aid to the study of the Scriptures)—that God is love and so the greatest grace-gift that he gives the church is love. The one who loves will respect, appreciate, sympathise with, and value the contributions of the other and will use his or her own gift to support and enhance the lives of all. It is in loving that the member's many and various grace-gifts reach their consummation.

What, then, does it mean to love? Paul's answer in brief is stated in terms of the stance that one adopts towards the other person:

Love is patient and kind.

Love envies no-one, is never boastful, never conceited, never rude;

Love is never selfish, never quick to take offence.

Love keeps no score of wrongs, takes no pleasure in the sins of others, but delights in the truth.

There is nothing love cannot face;

There is no limit to its faith, its hope, its endurance (vv. 4-7, REB).

Love is the most important grace-gift because it can be trusted to build up the church. Also, since God is love, the gift of loving reflects God's nature as no other gift does and so it has a quality of permanence that no others have.

The fruit of the Spirit is neither doctrine nor emotion, but morality, chief of which is love (Gal 5:22-23a).

Tongues

In Paul's estimation, the most problematic gift in the Corinthian church was "tongues." He discusses this rather fully in 1 Cor 14.

First, he granted that in some instances an experience of the Spirit might be expressed in emotional and unintelligible utterance. Within limits and under certain controls, "tongues" could be respected. "Thank God," he wrote, "I am more gifted in tongues than any of you." (14:18, REB; which could mean, "When speaking in tongues, I am more unintelligible and emotional than any of you!")

Second, Paul saw a threat in speaking in tongues. For one thing, it could be disruptive of fellowship, whereas love supports and enhances every other gift. For a second thing, it was centred upon the self, concerned with one's own elation, as compared to prophecy, which was directed towards others, illuminating, encouraging, and comforting them (14:1-5). For a third thing, it was detrimental to the church's witness,

As has often been the case in the history of the church, the Corinthian church's *charismata*—gifts given by God in his grace—turned out to be both unifying and divisive.

The Corinthian Situation

In writing First Corinthians, Paul stressed the fact that the church is the body of Christ, and that Christians are individually members of it and of one another. He has no concept of the isolated Christian outside the community of faith, hope and love. It is characteristic of a healthy body that it is constituted of many parts and that these several parts function for the good of the whole. The church is given members with a variety of gifts for the purpose of "building itself up in love" (Eph 4:16).

What were the problems in Corinth?

Paul understood that one of God's purposes in sending Jesus Christ was to set us free: God loves freedom (Gal 5:1). But things were such in Corinth that the question could be asked, "Can too much freedom be claimed in the name of the gospel?" Paul could contend that in making judgments as a marriage counsellor he had the Spirit of God (1 Cor 7:10), but he found it necessary to ask of the Corinthians how we can know for sure that what is claimed to be the work of the Holy Spirit is really the Spirit's doing.

Corinth was a many-gifted congregation, but by its own admission it was seriously divided over, for instance, loyalty to its leaders, sex and marriage, the conduct of worship and church dinners. Those grace-gifts that had been given by God to enrich life together were being used in such a spirit that what should have built up, tore down and what should have brought together, separated.

1 Corinthians 12:4-11

In interpreting Scripture, we need to ask three questions: What did the author say? What was meant by what was said? How might, or how should, that apply to the church today?

These are the nine grace-gifts that Paul said the church in Corinth had been given and my understanding of the terms he uses:

- v. 8, "the utterance of wisdom"—making just judgments and translating them into action, comprehending the truth of God and courageously communicating that truth to others (cf 1 Kgs 3:16-28; Isa 11:2; Luke 21:15; Acts 6:10).

- v. 8, "the utterance of knowledge"—knowledge of the nature and

purpose of God and knowing how to apply in daily life the deep things one has learned about God; knowledge of the teachings of Jesus (although Paul himself seldom makes explicit use of those teachings; cf John 14:26).

• v. 9, "faith"—probably not saving faith, that is, our faith in Jesus Christ as Lord, since that faith has to be ours rather than a gift from the Spirit of God; although faith is elicited by that in God and Christ which we judge to be trustworthy. *Pistis*, "faith", a gift of the Spirit in Gal 5:22, is usually translated as "faithfulness". Most likely, "the faith that removes mountains" (13:2), or such trust in God and Jesus Christ that makes faith contagious is being referred to here.

• v. 9, "gifts of healing"—being able to make the sick well (cf Luke 9:2; 10:9); although neither in the book of Acts nor in Paul's letters do we have any idea what kinds of healings were performed in Corinth, nor was Paul, in spite of his oft-repeated appeals to the Lord, able to be ridden of the "thorn in the flesh" that so tormented him (2 Cor 12:7-9).

• v. 10, "the working of miracles"—presumably being able to make crooked limbs straight and restore folk to sound minds in sound bodies by exorcising demons, the believed-to-be cause of disease and personal-ity disorders, although again examples are not cited (cf John 14:12; Acts 4:29-30).

• v. 10, "prophecy"—not, in Paul's writings, predicting the future, but telling with enthusiasm, perhaps in ecstatic speech, what one knows of God's heart and mind and will (cf Jer 1:9; 2 Chr 20:14-15; Joel 2:28-29; Acts 2:16-21).

• v. 10, "the discernment of spirits"—differentiating between what confirms our presuppositions and what challenges them, what is exciting and what is true, what is of passing interest and what is of lasting value (cf 1 Kgs 22:1-40; 1 John 4:1).

• v. 10, "various kinds of tongues"—pouring forth one's feelings in strange speech (if "speech" it is), so strange as to scarcely be understood by any worshipper (cf Acts 10:44-46; 19:6).

• v. 10, "the interpretation of tongues"—making what is unintelligible, intelligible.

Each one of these, writes Paul, is a *charisma*, "grace-gift" (v. 4), and "all ... are activated by one and the same Spirit, who allots to each one individually just as the Spirit chooses" (v. 11).

Six Comments on 12:4-11

One, in at least some circles of the church (including churches beyond Corinth), these gifts of the Spirit, some of which we may regard as "unusual", continued to be manifested into the next century. To take but

two examples, Justin of Rome, who was martyred AD 165, in his *Dialogue with Trypho the Jew*, said: "For one receives the spirit of understanding, another of counsel, another of strength, another of healing, another of foreknowledge, another of teaching, and another of the fear of God" (39); and Irenaeus, bishop of Lyons from AD 178, in *Against All Heresies*, tells how, in the time of Marcus Aurelius (Roman Emperor from AD 161), "gifts from God," such as exorcisms, foreknowledge, prophecy, healings, and even raisings from the dead, had been seen in a church that was "scattered throughout the whole world" (2.32.4).

Two, most of the gifts mentioned are paralleled in the ministry of Jesus which was subsequently portrayed in the Gospel written by Paul's companion, Luke: wise judgment (Luke 20:20-26); insightful knowledge (7:36-50); faith that accomplishes what appeared to be impossible (8:42b-48); the gift of healing (7:22); the working of miracles (9:10-17); prophecy (18:31-34, the teaching fulfilled in what is recounted in chapters 22-23); and the ability to distinguish between spirits (4:1-13; 9:49-50).

Three, the list of nine grace-gifts in 1 Cor 12:4-10 is not exhaustive, not even in this letter, for in vv. 27-30 Paul repeats some but adds others: "apostles, prophets, teachers, ... [and those who have the] ability to help others or power to guide them" (REB).

He gives a different list of grace-gifts in Rom 12:6-8: prophecy or inspired utterance, ministry or administration, teaching, exhorting or counselling, giving to charity, exercising leadership, helping others in distress. In Romans, Paul shifts the emphasis from the public platform or more observable talents and particularly-endowed members, to the attitude that should inform all that is done in the name of Christ: using gifts maximally, in a humble and generous spirit; giving without begrudging, leading with enthusiasm, rendering aid cheerfully (cf REB).

Four, Paul has in mind not members who receive first the gift of "wise speech," then "the power [to] put the deepest knowledge into words," then "gifts of healing" (cf REB), and finally, climactically, the gift of speaking in and interpreting tongues, but one member who is marked out with this gift and another with that.

Five, although the gifts related to tongues are placed last in both places in chapter 12, Paul's objective is not to rate them but to insist that all grace-gifts, whether showy or obscure, whether attitudinal and inward or visible and obvious, whether usual or unusual, come from one source. His first aim is not to put down the Corinthians with their intense and vigorous use of grace-gifts, but to lift up the Spirit who powerfully energises the church. His second aim is to stress that it is the Spirit who distributes grace-gifts severally to the members and so no-one has occasion either to boast or to feel inferior. His third aim is to underline the

People

Theological Achievement

Roman Catholic theologian Michael Novak is the 1994 recipient of the Templeton Prize for Progress in Religion. The prize worth \$1 million US is the world's largest cash prize for professional achievement.

APCM Mission Director

Ian Rowse has been appointed Mission Director for Asia Pacific Christian Mission. He will take over the position from the present Director, Ray Averill. Currently Ian, together with his wife Betty, is serving in Tari, Papua New Guinea as APCM's Mission Liaison Officer working together with the Evangelical Church of Papua New Guinea.

Richmond FC Friendly

John Northey, the Richmond AFL coach has been elected as the 1994 Friend of SLM. The award is presented to a coach or administrator of a professional sport who has supported and encouraged the sports chaplaincy ministry. This is the fifth year of this award.

Bible League Vic Representative

The Bible League has appointed Eric Petrusma as their official state representative in Victoria. Eric has been associated closely with the work of The Bible League for the past 20 years. He is available to speak at meetings and services on The Bible League including providing Scriptures for the world's bibleless people and church planting. He can be contacted at 5 Romana Court, Boronia 3155, phone/fax (03) 762 6589.

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Sharing the Faith

US Visitor for Warmbrunn Lectureship

Jeffrey Wilson, of the Disciples National Centre for Congregational Growth and Vitality, was the guest lecturer at the Leonard P. and Dorothy Warmbrunn Memorial Lectureship held at Doncaster, Vic, church on 25 March. The lectureship is under the sponsorship of the Vic-Tas Department of Mission, Education and Development (DMED).

In the lecture, Jeff Wilson offered a contemporary definition of evangelism, church growth and mission, discussed the importance of vital leadership to any church and factors which inhibit growth. He defined evangelism as that which happens when someone personally and powerfully experiences Christ to the point that they feel compelled to share that reconciliation with another person; church growth as the systematic and/or methodological approach of practising evangelism in order to increase the numbers and vitality of the congregation; and mission as the act of moving out into the community, global and local, in the name of Jesus and doing all we can in order to meet the spiritual and physical needs of people.

Stress was laid upon the necessity for churches to provide people with skills to share faith in ways they can feel comfortable. The need for vision and risk-taking was emphasised. He saw churches as either

growing or dying and noted that all growth brings change, with the consequent potential for conflict.

Dean Phelan, chairman of DMED, chaired the meeting. Paul Cameron, minister of the Doncaster church which had sponsored Jeff Wilson's visit to Melbourne, welcomed the audience. Alison Pitt led the worship with a group of local musicians.

The lecture is available on tape from the Doncaster church office (03) 848 1546, for \$5.



• Jeffrey Wilson

Prior to visiting Melbourne, Jeff Wilson spent time in Perth and visited New Zealand before returning to Indianapolis. His contribution in each centre has been greatly appreciated.

Change of Focus

From ministry to mission



• Ian and Julie Adams

On 6 February, a new phase of ministry began at Hurstville, NSW, under the leadership of Ian Adams. Ian's vision is to begin the change of focus from a "church" ministry to a "mission" ministry.

The church has good worship and fellowship, with auxiliaries to cater for the needs of children, youth, ladies, men, prayer/Bible study and home fellowship meeting. While these "church" activities are quite effective, there is a need and wide scope for "mission" if the community is to be reached for Christ.

During the recent AGM, Ian shared the following thoughts: "In looking at the church and community and comparing the number of nationalities repre-

ented, it is clear that the congregation needs to be able to present a "familiar face" to the community. Already in membership are Chinese, Indian and Egyptian families and among the latest additions is a young Maori man. The church needs to look to God to add others until "cultural relevance" is achieved and the multi-cultural mix is equal in church and community. One possible way to reach this goal is to have "ethnic missionaries" so that like reaches like and true integration occurs in building up the church family. Resource materials have been developed and a teaching program to motivate and empower the congregation to reach and win others is the next step."

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Media Matters—Television

Credo

Viney Longthorp

An important program commences on ARC Television on 8 May. Under the general title "Credo", there are 10, half-hour episodes commencing at 11.30 am, which offers a comprehensive introduction to some of the major indigenous religious traditions of Europe, both Christian and non-Christian. The majority of these traditions are found in Australia, some in very large numbers.

The dates of the episodes are:

1. Catholicism—Rome
May 8
2. Catholicism—Poland
May 15
3. Greek Orthodoxy
May 22
4. Russian Orthodoxy
May 29

Sagacious Folly

The bankrupt wisdom of an
inverted world,
Reproaches sacrifice.
But the logic of the cross
transcends sophistry,
To function on a deeper
plane,
Where sacred folly is
profound
And holy weakness strong.

—Garry Harris

(Inspired by 1 Cor. 1:18-25)

5. Lutheran—Sweden
June 5
6. Calvinism—Hungary
June 12
7. Russian Jews
June 19
8. Dutch Jews
June 26
9. Bulgarian Muslims
July 3
10. French Muslims
July 10

The focus of each episode is on the beliefs and important doctrinal emphases of each tradition. The programs share with us the views of some of the highest authorities in each tradition as well as the idea and convictions of ordinary believers. Special mention is made of the cultural and political implications which accompany these beliefs.

We should never underestimate the importance of creeds, beliefs, doctrines or dogmas—call them what you will. Whilst most of us opt for a simple faith, preferring to leave the "farther shores" of credal interpretations to those who enjoy "that kind of thing", the fact is that the mind of man is meant for believing, as Nels Ferre constantly reminded his readers. Also, creeds may be criticised for their divisiveness when used as tests of membership; nevertheless, for many they are the benchmarks of spiritual identity. No wonder so many

have made great sacrifices for particular beliefs as well as for faith in general. Since "the test of a dogma is its prayer value", the significance of creeds go far beyond concepts to be argued about.

The programs, then, present creeds and beliefs of many traditions as enabling gifts and sources of strength, not just as causes of divisions:

- For Polish Catholicism (Episode 2), creeds as a means of national identity have been very important. "The cauldron of Europe" as many historians call it, has been fought over and dismembered for centuries. In quite recent times we have witnessed the crucial role of Christian teaching in the struggle for political freedom.

- In the case of the Russian Orthodox people, creeds at first seem to play but a small part in their tradition. Rather, the appeal seems to be to the senses by means of incense, colour, symbol, movement. These offer a "vision of the invisible". But behind the imagery of their mosaics and icons, whose forms reach back to Byzantine times, there are precise meanings and theologies. Exact doctrinal points are part of their iconography.

- Then, we are aware how some of the teachings of John Calvin have been used to legitimise the South African gov-

ernment's policy of apartheid. The Dutch Reformed Church made one thing of Calvin's teachings about predestination but in another social context, such as Hungary, the same teachings focus on other values.

There are good reasons, then, for us to follow this series. It may give us a better understanding of many of the peoples now in our communities and help make the ideals of multiculturalism a firmer reality. It may also assist in ecumenical endeavours.

The words of Johann Metz well express the value of "Credo": "If Western Christianity is to mature into a culturally polycentric world Christianity, then it must remember and realise its biblical heritage as the ferment of what can be called ... a culture of the acknowledgment of others in their otherness, a culture of togetherness, of the earthly 'Oikumene' which in its heart is freed from (what Nietzsche called) 'the Will to Power'". ❖

Credo

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Minister's Musings

Sunday

Musing more on the children's talk: does its existence say to the children, "You're special"? Or does it say, "The rest of the service is not for you"? Could we get away with a segment for women, men, oldies, retired people, blue-collar workers or for migrants? Do we give a children's talk because we know that the rest of the service is not suitable for children: it has an AO rating? Sure, we don't want to reduce what is said and done to the lowest common denominator, but if the interest level of the whole service were raised, would it not benefit everybody? Might not dullness and tedium in worship be sins?

Monday

In the one afternoon I heard about a medical specialist whose Scottish accent made him hard to understand. When he laid the situation before his patient and her husband, both were sufficiently in awe that they could not ask him to repeat himself. I heard of another doctor so abrupt that his patient was scared of him and afraid to query what he said. That's a major problem for the medical profession and for their patients. But what about ministers? Are some of us so far above the congregation (physically in the pulpit, or in attitude) that they are afraid to question us? It is not only dog-collars and gowns that separate us from people. We need to keep working on our attitudes and especially on our approachability.

Tuesday

Who has heard of Raymond Beckering? Who has heard of Robert Schuller? Schuller and the Crystal Cathedral that he founded have a world-reaching ministry: not popular with all his colleagues, but undeniably significant. Raymond Beckering was the Reformed

Church official who conceived the idea of a church in Orange County and asked Schuller to consider commencing it. Without Beckering, the Crystal Cathedral and Schuller ministries would not exist, at least in their present form. We talk about and praise many famous people, but equally vital are many whose names we have never heard. All people are important to God. So are the ministries of countless unknown people. Thank God for the unknown!

Wednesday

Attended a funeral today at which the priest, by request, read the readings from the King James version. The request came because it was known and loved by the man whose life we were celebrating. But I felt for the non-church attenders who were there: their rare experience of worship or, at least, Christian ritual was marked by antediluvian language that must have confirmed their thinking that the church was not relevant to them and their living. Don't we confuse form with meaning? The reading is God communicating to us. In that context, if it had been read in Japanese it would have meant nothing. It might as well have been in Japanese! Thank God that Jesus came in a form that we could understand.

Thursday

I was invited to lunch with people who are working with disabled people. The idea was to set up a network so that people would know each other, be able to contact each other easily, exchange ideas and be better able to serve the disabled of the area. They were not all Christians. God uses all kinds of people to serve those who are in need, especially when the church cannot or does not want to do it. Perhaps as Christians we have a special depth of car-

BIRTHS

GREAVES (KRANEN) To Mark and Jenni, a son, Luke Christian, born 21.4.94 in Nambour. We are delighted, particularly grandparents Jeanette and Alan (Warragul), Ann and Henk (Brisbane).

DEATHS

HADEN, Ronald Charles On 19 April as result of an accident. Beloved husband of Rose. Loved father of Glenda. Loving Pappo of Jane, Stuart and Cameron. Aged 76 years. Thanks Darl for a wonderful partnership of 48 years.

HADEN We have many treasured memories deep within our hearts. You were such a special man. Your kindness and understanding, gentle caring, and helpful ways will be remembered by all who knew you. Enjoy the Garden where you are Dad. Love you always. — Glenda, Jane, Stuart and Cameron.

NELSON, Charles M. Passed away peacefully on April 16. Dearly loved husband of Jean (Dec). Loving father of Betty and Lew Carter, Dot and Wal Bennett, Helen and Trevor Wormes, Allison Nelson, Maureen and Bob Furr. Grandfather of 14 and great-grandfather of 15. A Christian gentleman who successfully mixed his daily work with his faith and love for his Lord. A thanksgiving service was held at the Dalkeith Road Church of Christ on April 24.

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ing to infuse into such gatherings so that they are not merely forums of people who are frustrated because of their limited financial resources. Or is that a presumption?

Friday

She told me why she had stopped coming to church. Her husband had complained about her subscription to the music society. Yet he gave several times that amount to the church. She had stopped going to the music society to fit in with his wishes; but she had also stopped going to church in protest. It was a sad story of a relationship gone wrong. But how can we let any human foible stand between us and the worship of God? Fortunately, nothing can separate us from God's love (Romans 8). It seems

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that sometimes we try awfully hard to achieve that separation.

Saturday

Tomorrow is Harvest Thanksgiving. People were bringing produce (both fresh and manufactured) for the display. As we are not in a rural area, one might question the relevance. There is room at other times for industrial and service displays, but now we are stopping to acknowledge our dependence on God and so many people for the basics of what we eat and drink. We are grateful to the growers, the transporters, the manufacturers and the shopkeepers. Sure, the seasons vary and do not always suit us, but we are grateful for God's provision which goes on and on. It is good to stop occasionally and acknowledge that.

What On Earth Is God Doing?

Gordon Stirling

John (1:9) tells of Jesus coming into the world to reveal God who enlightens everyone.

Is John saying then that all enlightenment is from God? Is every discovery of truth and meaning, every scientific discovery and every insight into what is compassionate and just, the work of God in human minds, whether those minds are aware of him or not?

When Mr Gorbachev, bred and reared in hard-line Communism, began to see new possibilities for world well-being and peace, was it God giving him those insights, and being the light that enlightens every one? And likewise, was God having difficulty breaking in with his light into the minds of the Christian American leadership with their evil empire fixations?

I am not aware of whether or not the discoverers of antibiotics, lens implants and the technology of heart-lung transplants were Christians. But was it the light of God breaking into their open and questing minds that enabled their life-saving discoveries?

Maybe there is a lot of adolescent bungling about the UN peace-making initiatives in the world's trouble spots, but world peace making and peace keeping are the great new things of our age. Was it a patient but inexorable God who kept shin-

ing his light into formerly darkened minds to bring this about? Is this why the New Testament counsels us to pray for leaders, so that they may be open to God's enlightenment?

Paul seems to have echoed John's word about God being the enlightener of all people. In his address to the Athenians (Acts 17:22-31) he said, God gives to all people life and breath and everything. He said concerning all people, In God we live and move and have our being. And writing to the Ephesians (5:9) he said, The fruit of (God's) light is found in all that is good and right and true. James echoes the same thought (1:17) when he writes, Every good and perfect gift comes from the Father of lights.

During National Convention, Cecil Grant and a group of people from the Albury and Wagga Aboriginal congregations presented a series of graphic tableaux representing the phases of the initiation of young Aboriginal people into tribal manhood. Cecil pointed out that the principles of redemption, as we understand them from the New Testament, are in the initiation processes. There is death to the old and rising to new life. There is the shedding of sponsor's blood for the initiates. There is washing for purification. There is new birth. Cecil said that Aboriginal culture is their Old Testa-

ment preparing Aboriginal people for entry into the New Testament (Covenant) between Aboriginal people and God. Was the God who enlightens every one giving his light to the original inhabitants of The Great South Land of the Holy Spirit?

Missionaries no longer attack the religious traditions of those whom they seek to lead to Christ. Rather, they point out in the various religious traditions those elements that are similar to Christian principles and beliefs, trying to show how Jesus Christ completed and fulfilled some of the truths contained in their religions. Obviously, God has always been giving enlightenment wherever the minds of people have been open to his truth, to the extent that they have been open. The glory of it all is that his enlightenment became flesh and dwelt among us, so that we can see it in Jesus.

There are many implications of the understanding of God as the author of all enlightenment. One of them is that it answers the question, What on earth is God doing? Another is that it gives some clues about the meaning of the doctrine of the sovereignty of God.

The doctrine of the sovereignty of God is not about a God up there somewhere manipulating the whole complex machine of humanity, with peo-

ple thinking that they are free when, actually, they are not. This is not the God revealed in Jesus. Could it be that God exercises his sovereignty over the world by enlightening everyone to the extent that they are open to any of his truth? If so, people are not puppets on a string, but enlightened human beings making intelligent choices to be just, compassionate or positive in their attitudes. They may not have come to know God in Christ, and thus knowingly do his will, but they may be doing his will without knowing it because God has enlightened them to see that what they are doing makes sense.

If the sovereignty of God is expressed through his enlightening of human minds, he is truly being our Father. A good father does not manipulate and regiment his children into doing his will. A good father finds ways of encouraging his children to discover truth, beauty, goodness and commonsense, and to live by them. And God is a good Father. If God enlightens everyone according to their openness to his light, even if they do not realise it, and if intercessory prayer is one of the ways of getting the minds of leaders and others to open to God's enlightenment, we had better take seriously the injunction to pray for those leaders and others (1 Tim 2:14). ❖

Christian Reflection

Reflections on a Wedding

Naomi Neville

We have just celebrated a wedding in our family and I have been reminded again of the similarities that Jesus observed be-

tween marriage and the Christian life.

The analogy that he used most often was of himself as the Bridegroom and the church

as the Bride. In most relationships there is a development of understanding and a growth in love and trust. Similarly, we have grown up in, or have

grown into, our faith.

Just as "love at first sight", happens often enough to bring it out of the realms of fantasy into reality, so the demands of

Christian Reflection

the gospel can be just as immediate and compelling on some lives. One man described his conversion experience to me by saying simply, "Jesus picked me up by the scruff of the neck and turned me round."

While radical conversions are dramatic and profound, those of us who grew into faith should not envy their experience, or feel that ours is any less real; for we all tread our own path to Christ and each experience, although different, is valid.

Baptism, like the marriage service, is really a public declaration of a mental, emotional and spiritual commitment, which has been previously thought through and resolved.

Guests at a wedding are invited, not only to celebrate a happy family occasion, but witness an important contract. This contract changes the status of the bride legally, in the community and the family. It makes a difference physically, emotionally and financially. Her first loyalties shift from family to her husband. They become one and that unity extends to the direction and purpose of their lives, their attitudes, activities, and friendships.

Any close human relationship needs a good deal of give and take on both sides to make it work. To yield or submit doesn't come easily to any of us. Yet, to give up our preconceived rights and be concerned,

instead, for the best interests and happiness of another, brings us our greatest fulfilment.

In the church family, we are required to obey God and the legitimate authorities, whether secular or spiritual. However, the most difficult thing we are asked to do is submit to each other and honour one another above ourselves. It is difficult because aggression is the trademark of this generation, while humility is the hallmark of a Christian. Sometimes, we feel that in giving another person priority, we will subjugate our personality and lose our identity. I have found the opposite to be true. The secure base of a good marriage gives us the free-

dom to develop our potential, inside the home, or in the church or community. Success or failure are both growing experiences when we know we are loved and accepted.

Equally, we may feel that to yield to the claims of Christ on our life and to obey him will mean giving up our independence and losing control of our destiny. Not so, Jesus' love and forgiveness releases us from the hang-ups and guilt of our past and makes us free to be the best that we can be. He empowers us to realise our full potential, so that one day we will be able to say, "For me to live is Christ and to die is gain".

❖ *Naomi attends our Hobart City Church, Tas.*

gLeenings

The War is Over—The Battle Continues

Adrian van Leen

In the mid-1960s lone Japanese soldiers were found on several Pacific Islands apparently unaware, or not wanting to know, that the war had ended 20 years earlier and that Japan had been defeated.

Though the war had long been over, these lone soldiers "battled" on, surviving for the glory of the Emperor and Empire. Had someone accidentally stumbled across one of these soldiers at the wrong time he

may have fired his last remaining bullet. That one last bullet could have been as fatal as the billions of bullets fired during the war 20 years earlier.

For us as Christians the war is over. Christ has conquered.

However, there are still battles and mopping up skirmishes going on in the fight for faith.

This can be seen in many areas, particularly in the growth of the cults, the occult, and ex-

treme religious groups. The pressure is on for people to change their allegiance away from the one true God who revealed himself fully through Jesus Christ.

Contrary to popular opinion or wishful thinking, there is no quick and easy way to change this situation. There is no instant formula guaranteed to help a person out of the cults, the occult, or an extreme religious group.

We must recognise that there is a wide variety of cultic groups, and an even wider variety of differing individuals in such groups. Effective communication of the Gospel of Jesus Christ in such a context will not be easy. It calls for love, commitment and maturity of faith.

Our attitude, as well as our ability, will contribute to our effectiveness, or lack of it.

The people we face on the front lines of the spiritual bat-

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tle with cultic groups are not the real enemy. The real enemy is Satan, the father of lies, the founder of all cults.

On the Doorstep

How do we deal with this battle at our front door?

If there's a knock on the door and you open it to face young men, short back and sides haircuts, white shirt and tie, dark trousers (and a pushbike down the street), it's the Mormons. If it's an older woman and a younger woman, possibly with a little child in tow, it's probably the Jehovah's Witnesses. Of course, there could be any number of other groups sending their representatives to your door to seek your involvement.

Here is one way of witnessing to such people (but please do not do this if you are not a committed Christian, or you do not intend to follow it through. This is not a matter of scoring points or proving that you are smarter than the cult member):

Remember, it is *your* home, not theirs. You are in charge. Remember also that you are a VIP—Paul declared that you are Christ's ambassador, and God is making his appeal through you (2 Cor. 5:16-20). You have divine authority! Don't allow yourself to be bullied or intimidated by religious salespersons.

Take the initiative. As soon as you see two persons at your door, introduce yourself. Ask them who they are, and to which religious group they belong.

Excuse yourself. Leave them at the front door while you find pen and paper. Then, as you return to the door, repeat aloud the names of your callers and their religious group, as you, write these details down in front of them. (Do not repeat the word "Elder" if you are noting the names of Mormon missionaries—that's their label for their "High Priesthood". If you repeat it back to them, they

regard you as having acknowledged their "high priestly" authority over you. So just repeat their surnames. They will be more reluctant to tell you their given names.)

Your callers may be a little worried about your actions, and may try to interject. Ignore any attempted interruptions, and when you have finished writing and repeating their names, etc, say something like this:

"Excuse me, there's something I would like to say to you. As a Christian, I want to thank you for taking the trouble to come and visit me. I appreciate your interest and concern. As someone who loves Jesus Christ as my Lord and Saviour, I want you to know that I love you, and that I am concerned for you. Now that I know who you are, and to which group you belong, I will be praying for you, that God may lead you into his truth through Jesus Christ the Lord. May God help

you into the light of his truth real soon. Good morning!"

There is probably not much more that you can do at your doorstep. Psychologically, your religious callers are not able to really listen to you. They have come to tell you the truth. They have not come to ask you to explain the truth to them.

The preceding suggested way is more effective, as a possible witness, than a two-hour discussion that ends in argument, probably with you as the loser.

If you want to witness more effectively and at greater depth than is possible on the doorstep you could invite the people back at a time that suits you. You certainly need to go further than the "doorstop technique" if you want to effectively witness to relatives, friends and neighbours who are caught up in the cults.

Some suggestions for going further in witnessing will follow in coming articles. ❖

Comment

Sacred Space

Garry Harris

What do we mean when we talk about sacred space? Is this just ecclesio-babble, or does it really affect us?

Recent years have taught us terms like hyperspace, and personal space. But what is meant by sacred space? One operational definition is: "The space where people meet God."

Sacred Space in Scripture

Throughout Scripture, holiness is imputed to sites of divine-human encounter. The OT abounds with such place names. Bethel, Mount Moriah, Mount Sinai, etc, are ascribed sacred significance because they were locations of divine-human interaction. Yahweh's pronouncement to Moses supports this contention: "Take off your sandals, for the ground where you are standing is holy ground." (Exod.3:5)

The New Testament repeatedly reminds us that Jesus lived in space as well as time. He performed his first miracle at Cana; he preached his first recorded sermon at Nazareth; and he raised Lazarus from the dead at Bethany.

Christianity is a religion characterised by incarnation. This is its fundamental doctrine: "The word was made flesh, and dwelt among us." (John 1:14) Without this essential tenet, Christianity is reduced to an idealised ethical system. But the Christian faith is not merely a theoretical construction. It is anchored in history. The incarnation occurred at a particular time and in a particular place, and forever changed how we think about space. This is ap-

parent in the name given to the region which was cradle of our Judaeo-Christian heritage. We call it "The Holy Land".

All Space As Sacred Space

In one sense, the division between sacred and secular is forced and arbitrary. Since all creation is God's, it may be argued, all is sacred. The environmental implications of this are compelling. Acid rain and ozone depletion are tragic indictments of our stewardship. The deadly secrets of Maralinga, Chernobyl, and the Black Sea signal an unholy indifference to our caretaking responsibility.

There is, however, a particular sense in which sacred space

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Comment

in the Judaeo-Christian milieu has come to be understood as that place of interface between God and humanity. It is precisely this notion which has been appropriated to buildings sanctified for the worship of God. The chapel has become the centre of the worshipping life of the community of faith. It is here that the people of God congregate to meet with God in the breaking of bread and the preaching of the word. Consequently, such places may be legitimately designated "sacred space".

Sacred Space and Theology

Our use of space in worship clearly reflects our theology. High-ceiling cathedrals with ornate frescoes depict a majestic, but transcendent deity. A pulpit perched metres above the congregation reflects a highly authoritative theology of preaching. The centralised location of the Lord's Table or the pulpit will demonstrate an emphasis on either the priestly or prophetic function.

Theology is also proclaimed in the spatial dimensions of the

Eucharistic celebration. The use of table or altar emphasises either a memorial or sacrificial interpretation of the sacrament.

The proximate location of the baptistry to the pulpit may indicate the essential connectedness between hearing and belief. Similarly, a baptismal font at the entrance of a place of worship declares baptism as the means of entry into the family of God's people.

Temple or Mountain?

A discussion of sacred space should not be seen as suggest-

ing that God may only be encountered at specific predetermined venues.

Far from it! Jesus' response to the Samaritan woman's enquiry (John 4:5-24) demonstrates that "right attitude" takes precedence over "right place".

God can be worshipped as faithfully in a tin shed as in a cathedral!

What I have attempted to argue through this article is that wherever God is encountered, be it tin shed or cathedral, that place is sacred space. ❖

A Personal Relationship with God

Dear Marjeena,

You asked, "What do you mean by a "Personal relationship" with God?" It all seemed so simple to me, after 30 or so years as a Christian, that I was eager to explain. Somehow or other, what I've taken for granted and enjoyed, has become submerged in platitudes, as shown by the blank stares you gave my "profound insights".

How can you have a "Personal Relationship" with God who is beyond our finite understanding, the Creator? To make matters worse, he lives within a different dimension to ours, so that to all intents and purposes we cannot see him.

At this point, the wonder and beauty of the Christian faith becomes apparent. God crossed the barrier and came to us. That was the incarnation (Oops, that's a religious term better understood by most as the Christmas event). The Bible tells us that God was in Jesus Christ making himself known, entering into the pain, pressure and pollution of humanity in order to reclaim it (see John 1). That too is the testimony and mystery of Easter—Jesus' resurrection verifies his claim to be the Son of God, as well as the way to God.

How do you move from an intellectual acceptance of Chris-

tianity, into a relationship with God that is beyond doctrine or duty, but influences both. It begins with a cry. How the words are formed is unimportant, the desire of the heart is the crucial issue. The "cry" is something like this, "God, I believe what you have done in and through Jesus Christ for me. I don't understand it all but, this I know, I need you and what you've done for me in Jesus Christ. I give myself to you and believe that you accept me because Jesus said you would when I came to you through him."

The Bible tells us that all who call out to the Lord will be saved. You and God are able to get together without you being rejected or God's person being violated by your sinfulness. Jesus stands between you both, making you acceptable to the Father.

That is the beginning of the "Personal Relationship". God has access to your life, through the ministry of the Holy Spirit who comes to dwell in your life. How do we "know" that this has happened? Some try and tell us it is through doing, seeing or feeling things. The only unshakeable assurance we have initially is that Jesus said he would send him and we would receive him when we

believed his Word. That is the crucial issue—believing. The Holy Spirit doesn't usurp our personality and make us religious robots, but patiently works within us to make the things of God more real than the things of this world.

Then there is the Bible. We can be related to God without reading his Word, but to have a relationship in any meaningful way requires serious attention to knowing his Word. The impact of the Scriptures upon your understanding of God's involvement and investment in your life can be gauged from reading Psalms 119 and 19.

You will discover your inner awareness of God's presence develops as you put into practice what he has outlined for you to do. This may be baptism by immersion, prayer, worship and communion, restitution, forgiveness, financial faithfulness, behavioural matters, etc.

When you live your life on the conviction that God is involved in it with you, the intimacy of a relationship develops. It is taking God at his word that he is with you as you drive your car, pray, face a critical situation, etc; talking in your heart to him on that basis. As you do this, you become aware (in a way that is beyond the senses) of his presence and

work with you. I must admit that, at first, it felt strange and, sometimes, even a little silly (because I thought no one else did it), but over the years, God has taken me from merely being a "relative" into a personal relationship with him.

Why, then, do people find it difficult to enter into such a relationship with God? There are no simple answers, however, I believe that there are a couple of general principles.

The first is ignorance. Whether this ignorance deals with salvation, the nature of God or whatever, it robs people of the wonder of God's mercy.

The second is unbelief. It will block the door to salva-

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tion, but even for a saved person it can become a barrier to blessing. To deny God the right to your life is to be like an estranged relative and miss the intimacy inherent in the term "son and daughter".

The third is linked with unbelief—fear. Fear comes

with many masks, some subtle and some frightening, but all make us cower. As we learn more of God and do those "little" things he asks, we find that fear is contained and friendship flourishes.

The fourth factor says it all—rebellion. None of us will ever

be free of this tendency, yet God has even made allowances for it. That is the wonder underpinning the first letter of John, especially the first chapter. Truly God is more keen than we are that people come into a personal relationship with him.

I sincerely pray that what I have so briefly written may be of assistance to you as you grapple with this mind expanding concept. For to enter into a personal relationship with God is an eternal affair.

Yours sincerely,
Ray Hawkins

Biblical or Cultural Faith?

Chris Field

An issue that begs our attention is the validity of our Christian faith. There have been many attacks against Christianity over the past century. It is time to audit our faith, to assess the level of damage we have suffered from this onslaught.

A key question is, "On what basis do we believe what we believe?" Along with that is the question of our "real" beliefs, as opposed to our professed beliefs. It is one thing to profess to believe the Bible, for instance, but another matter entirely to actually bring our lifestyle into line with what the Bible teaches.

Isaiah 55:8-9 tells us clearly that if we are going the way which our culture thinks is fine, or if we are going the way that seems right to our own thinking, we are falling far short of what God considers to be the right way. God's ways are so distant from man's ways that our humanness will revolt at their absurdity and irrationality. If we have learned how to

go God's ways our lifestyle should be marked by its distinct contrast to the lifestyle of the world around us. Our attitudes, values, processes, purposes, aspirations, goals, etc, should be far removed from those of the unsaved. If this is not so, then we are in grave danger of having accepted the value system of the world, replacing Biblical lifestyle with worldly enculturation.

In addressing this issue I have prepared statements in two areas that may appear blatantly offensive. I am not trying to pick any fights, but prompt reflection. We need to take stock of whether our preferred belief about an issue is Biblical or cultural. My concern is that we rethink our values and that out of the assessment come to a confident position that delights the Lord and honours the faith we profess.

Feminism is an unchristian response. Feminism, that is, the hardening of attitudes toward men, the focussing of attention on advancing the cause of women, the intolerance of any form of treatment toward women which is not for the advancement of women as a class or individual women in particular, and all the associated political, social and moral agendas, is a violation of 1 Cor 13:4-7. It is a violation of Paul's instruction, "Be not overcome by evil but overcome evil with good". (Rom 12:21) It violates the principle of bitterness set out in Heb 12:15, which basically says, "Do not fail to apply God's grace (forgive the offenders) or you will end up under

the power of a root of bitterness which will trouble you and defile many others".

Christ teaches us to forgive (Matt 6:14-15) and Scripture teaches us to rely on God (Jer 17:5-8), but feminism teaches women to harden their attitudes toward their offenders and to rely on themselves and the power of human institutions and processes. Be cognisant of the implications of choosing a preference based on social conscience, personal experience, by what is expected of you by others, etc.

I believe that women have been treated with great contempt. They have been used, abused, neglected, denigrated, rejected and put through many pains. But I see a grievous outcome when a victim embraces hardness of spirit, self-reliance, convictions that defy God's design, adversarial attitudes, and the other trappings of such systems as feminism. God is the only one who can bring wholeness and freedom.

Worldly achievement leads to destruction.

The popular cultural belief is that we are living in the best of all times. Evolution is delivering us continued improvement, so to go back to values, lifestyles, beliefs, processes or systems of the past is to regress. We have never had it so good. Today's education, nutrition, science, philosophy, morality, technology, entertainment, employment conditions, social structure, etc, are the best in human history. So to succeed in this culture, and to possess all it offers, is to be as blessed as

any person could ever be in human history.

The variety of this cultural deception is laid bare in the statement of Christ, "What is a man profited if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul? What shall a man give in exchange for his own soul?" (Matt 16:26)

The world's system and all its processes for achievement are the best man can discover at this time. But Prov 14:12 says that the way that seems right to a man is the way of death, and Isa 55:9 says that God's ways are higher than humanity's ways. The clear reality is that anyone who pursues the best of this world is gaining destruction for themselves. They are entering into the corporate death of purpose, death of spiritual potency and death of intimacy with God, which our world has long laboured under. The fact that certain conditions are "normal" in this world does not mean that they set the standard of God's design for our lives.

Just in these two issues I trust you can see that it is time to rethink. It is time to re-evaluate our beliefs and audit them, based on whether they are consistent with what God says, or beliefs that are convenient because they bring us into line with populist worldly thinking. If we do not clarify our beliefs we will simply be swallowed up by the world and be impotent and irrelevant in the context of our culture. Isn't that the position the church has arrived at in many ways? ❖
Chris is minister of our West Preston, Vic, church.

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Baptisms

•Cameron Turnbull, Kathie Andriotis, **Springvale, Vic** •Mrs Terri Nicholls, **Twyford St, Bundaberg, Qld** •Pam & Bruce Hunter, Mary-Ann Burrows, **Pine Rivers, Qld** •Julie Atack, Sarah Moore, **Kalamunda, WA** •Julia Seymour, George Condon, Helen Patrick, **Morwell, Vic** •Craig Wheaton, **Kaniva, Vic** •David Knight, Narelle Critchley, Rebekkah Haylock, **Castlemaine, Vic** •Jeff Haselden, Sharon Love, **Byron, NSW** •Meaghan Leviston, **Mount Clear, Vic**

Marriages

•Lynden Nash and Andrew Hull, **Kaniva, Vic** •Naomi Bridgford and Andrew Furlong, **Castlemaine, Vic** •Elizabeth Wallbank and Aaron Brown, Kath Noble and Henry Ringrose, **Knoxfield, Vic** •Karen Galliford and Andrew Shinnick, **Colonel Light Gardens, SA**

Deaths

•Mrs Zoe Holt, Ann St, Brisbane, **Qld** •Mary McKindley, **Castlemaine, Vic**

Obituaries are limited to 100 words

Nelson, Charles Milbank (16.4.94) At Subiaco, WA, Charles was baptised at 12, playing the organ at 16, became choir conductor at church then state and federal conferences. He took weeks off work to organise and prepare the combined WA churches choir for the Billy Graham Crusade. At 23, having trained in optometry in WA, he went to the London Eye Hospital to study. On return he built up the largest optometry business in WA. He testified to his faith in his Lord. Outstanding in his generosity, very few missionaries, ministers or bible college students paid for glasses. Established The Nelson Trust for

WA Conference to buy land for churches in new areas. Always interested in sport, particularly a winning team. An active member of the YMCA, the first member worldwide to clean and process 1 million stamps, then 2 million and to his last week was working for his third. In Rotary, he was the oldest, longest serving member in WA. He married Jean Rattray in 1928. He loved his four daughters Betty, Dorothy, Helen and Allison. In 1964, Maureen Furr came to Australia to join his extended family. He was proud of his 14 grandchildren and 15 great-grandchildren. Jean was his childhood sweetheart, they spent 55 years together until 1984.

—WEB

Church News

WA

MERREDIN (David Jolly) David away Ministers' Retreat & Conference ... Doug & Bev Croot shared overseas mission work, followed by fellowship lunch ... Members attended Men's Eastern Wheat Belt Fellowship at Dalwallinu ... Mrs Travis recovering after knee operation ... Bob Oliver in Merredin Hospital ... Maundy Thursday celebrated with foot washing & *agape* meal ... Visitors welcomed to Easter service ... Divine Drama Bible studies have 80% of congregation attending plus people from other churches.

FREMANTLE (J. Capom) Visit made to us by Trevor Streeton (Conference President) ... At a pm service Tom Scotland, World War II Pathfinder pilot, spoke of some of the spiritual & other experiences narrated in his two books ... Craig Francis (Vanuatu) now our "Living Link" ... John Capom led teenage youth group's camp at Club Capricorn.

KALAMUNDA (David Shalley, Paul Sanders) Paul White & Balga team conducted our first Seeker service ... Easter services included celebration of feast of Passover, Good Friday march of witness through Kalamunda, joining with Hills churches & Sunday city march ... Brett & Jenny Butler & Kimberley Christian Fellowship shared in morning service, Jonathon Bates guest speaker. Evening service led by group from Burmese church. Time of great blessing as we worshipped with fellow Christians.

DIANELLA (Tony Armstrong) Easter services well attended following *agape* meal on Maundy Thursday ... Over 60 working through Crossways Bible study. Two weekly sessions available ... Two baptisms 17 April & five welcomed into fellowship ... Alexander

Heights also used building for recent baptisms ... First of regular evening services run by youth. Young board member Darryl Baker gave first address ... Minister mobile again (rides bicycle to visit!) following broken leg.

Qld

TWYFORD ST, BUNDABERG (Paul Scully) An excellent week-

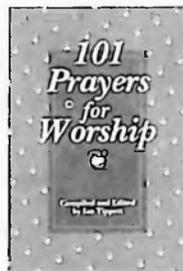
end of motivation with Allan Cosgrave held 26-27 March ... Sunday School camp (21-22 May) with Paul Johnson (OAC) ... Youth Exchange with Springwood church 29 April-1 May ... Prayer partners luncheon 17 April ... Good Friday offering for a water pump for TEAR Australia collected \$650.

DALBY (A.C. Ochse, S.L. Colyer) Easter services well attended with many visitors present ... Local Minister's Fraternal organised family

fun festival in Thomas Jack Park. Free entertainment for all the family provided & cost of food sold was minimal. Estimated that 1000 attended over the four hours. Good coverage in local papers ensured a worthwhile exercise brought the churches before the people of Dalby.

PINE RIVERS (Neale Proellocks, Wayne Kirk, Alan Hermann) Two seeker services in recent months have proved very successful with a

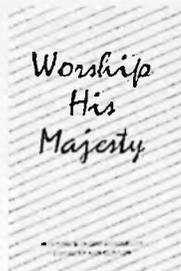
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Church News

number of commitments & enquiries following ... Three baptisms 24 April during morning service ... Christian Life & Service seminars conducted by Alan Hermann during this year ... 35 families attending Playtime each Wednesday ... Monies raised from last lamington drive going to the work at Dakabin School chaplaincy.

CABOOLTURE (Ian Todd) Family camp at brand new camp site—Ewan Maddock Dam at Landsborough. Studies on "user friendly church" series produced by Alan Hermann led by Ian Todd. So much gained that second family camp to be held later in year to continue studies ... In last couple of months attendance risen from 35 to about 75. Every week someone new coming to service ... Implemented Children's Church for grades 1-3. When we have more room we will commence one for grades 4-7.

ANN ST, BRISBANE (W. Flett, M. Harris) Recent CWF activities included visit to Logan City Aboriginal Community Church ... Church saddened by death of Mrs Zoe Holt on 20 April ... Indonesian Christian Fellowship using chapel for services ... Board chairman Dudleigh Oakes resigned pending move to motel business in Ayr, North Queensland ... Youth group held camp at Mt Tamborine Anzac Day weekend ... Several elderly members still hospitalised.

NSW

BYRON (Stephen Templeton) Mission to Byron progressing well ... Two baptisms at combined service in Bangalow ... Start of second ministry centre at Suffolk Park & induction service at Mullumbimby ... Weekend attendances reached 119 ... Combined attendances expected to settle around 70, half being children ... Outreach week being planned with Corazon ministry team mid May in Mullumbimby ... First members set aside after completing Abundant Living Seminar 1, 11 in all.

SA

STRATHALBYN (G. & J. Simpson) ROCK, Reach-Out Club for Kids, first meeting 13 May, 7-8 pm. Games, singing, stories & activities in place of Sunday School ... Friendship Circle continuing to meet needs of lonely ... Several elderly in hospital & home not well ... John Nicolle, home from Kenya, gave an outline of different cultures to contend with, Jeannette meeting for supper, not able to be present ...

Marj Dredge, Conference President, morning service, luncheon followed.

COWANDILLA (W. Shepherd) New minister, Wayne Shepherd, & family welcomed into church ... Home Bible study, kids club, men's & women's fellowships continuing well ... Picnic in the park well attended ... Parents becoming involved in kids club ... Easter letterbox distribution ... Children involved in Palm Sunday & Easter service ... Every Wednesday in April there was a lunch break special—minister's talk, lunch & activities.

COLONEL LIGHT GARDENS (John Beasy) Annual meeting held March. Col Smith elected elder ... "The Wounded Healer" theme of special Easter services which were well attended ... Church enjoying ministry of new minister John Beasy ... Successful garage sale. Proceeds of \$700 for maintenance of church buildings ... Progressive tea planned for June ... Wedding of Karen Galliford to Andrew Shinnick celebrated March ... Concern over health of Dot Chiswell, Molly White, Howard Grover & Claude Purdie.

Tas

NUBEENA (C.G. Henderson) Successful Convention held in March with about 150 registrations. David Ratten guest speaker. 140 attended Sunday morning worship service ... District & church saddened by the passing of Brian Noye ... Luke Williams received third prize in Tasmanian Science Talent Search in the senior computer programs section ... Monthly after-school activities for Sunday School students recently commenced.

Vic

SPRINGVALE (John Carmichael) 15 folk enrolled for Bethel NT studies ... Good attendance for morning baptism service 13 January ... Robert & Carol Coleman led morning worship 27 February as prelude to leading workshops on worship ... John & Kay Rowse, AEF missionaries on furlough from Chisela Bible Institute, Zambia, brought message 20 February ... Grow group children participated in Palm Sunday pageant ... Shadowlands music group provided music at family service with Springtime puppets from Dandenong.

CARNEGIE (Neville & Pam Wight) At annual meeting two new elders & one new deacon elected ... Seven new members welcomed into membership with three associate mem-

bers ... Prior to Easter 1000 Easter eggs with Bible Society pamphlets given out in shopping centre ... Olive & Bryce Ferguson farewelled as they take up residence at the Baxter Retirement Village ... 50 members & friends enjoyed BBQ following service on Easter Sunday.

PRESTON (Steve Blacket) Open Door gave a surprise morning tea party to Linda Morgan for her 84th birthday ... Alan Niven & Chris Sharpe ran a weekend workshop on morning worship services, music & singing ... Congregation went to manse for shared luncheon following Good Friday service ... Lynette Leach was guest speaker at Boomerang Kid's Club church service ... Monthly evening fellowship in homes well attended.

NORTHCOTE (F.B. Alcorn) Final Conference President's Reception held in our church. 90 from 16 churches attended ... Alan Niven (CCTC) was the speaker at the third Sunday at 5 pm ... Sam Watchorn holidaying in Ireland for three months ... Elva Faulkner home after surgery on both knees ... Evening services during May to September at 5 pm ... Vandals breaking windows in church buildings causing great concern also in cost of replacing.

MORWELL (Alf Thistlethwaite) Recent baptisms Julia Seymour & George Condon. Helen Patrick baptised 8 May ... Littles, Wakefields & Bannons on holidays ... Fiona Ogilvie sharing in course at CCTC ... Sherburn family moved to NSW & were suitably farewelled. They will be greatly missed ... Gwen Walker undergoing therapy in Melbourne ... Alf Thistlethwaite student minister for 1994. He is from CCTC & his ministry appreciated ... United services held with local Baptist Church.

TOOTGAROOK (Mal Glezendanner) Inter-church rally held on evening of Palm Sunday ... Good Friday & Easter Sunday services well attended with many visitors ... April CWF meeting well attended (40+) with Helen Hall speaking on Community Care ... Successful "garage" sale held ... Three new members received into fellowship ... Elder Dorothy Smith suffered fractured hip from a fall, making rather rapid recovery.

KANIVA (Martin Goldup) Harvest Thanksgiving offerings of \$4559 to COCOA, Mission project, FAB & local needs. Goods to Community Care ... Marriage service of Lyndy Nash & Andrew Hull conducted by former minister Pam Bowers ... Many visitors at Easter morning service, also baptism of Craig

Wheaton. Bordertown YP provided music for baptismal service. Church luncheon followed ... Prayers for members in indifferent health.

PARKDALE (Keith Pitt) Meaningful Passover celebration supper led into well-attended Good Friday & Easter sunrise services with Uniting Church ... Harvest Thanksgiving gifts sent to CCTC students ... Good Companions continues to thrive with the new name of "Monday Moppets" ... Janelle Scott welcomed to board of officers ... Allan Cunningham recognised for long service as church organist ... Congregation involvement in "Awakening '94" & Faith Comes By Hearing project.

CASTLEMAINE (P. Haylock) Haylock family spent summer holidays in Holy Land. Church members ably led services during this time ... Donation from member enabled purchase of a photocopier ... Church property for sale as a part of relocation plan ... Sunday School growing under leadership of Phil Chapman ... Several baby dedications so far this year.

KNOXFIELD (Rod Brown, Jason Potter) For church's 30th birthday celebrations, presentations were made by Swedish gospel singers, BirGitta & Swante ... Elaine McLeod from Boronia commenced as a pastoral worker as part of her CCTC studies ... Church has been involved in presentations at the Conference Presidents' Reception & the State Conference rally ... Involved in a progressive dinner to support school chaplaincy in the district.

SWAN HILL (Lindsay Mayes, Graeme Sonsie) Annual meeting elected four new members to board, Ross Oliver (elder), Maren Chandler, Bevan Looney & Neil Johnson (deacons) ... Sound system in chapel has been upgraded ... Small groups ministry restructured following leadership training during first term ... Church represented at Vic-Tas Conference Presidents' Reception in Bendigo ... Sunday School regularly featured at 10.30 am service.

MOUNT CLEAR (Dale White, James Leviston, David Jones) Church library established with over 300 Christian books available for loan ... Food pantry cupboard set up in foyer for giving to those in need ... Church hosted regional Conference Presidents' Reception and regional CWF Day of Prayer ... Church worship team provided music for Vic-Tas Conference Celebration. Bus load travelled to Melbourne for this event ... Six members teaching CRE in local primary schools.

