

# THE AUSTRALIAN CHRISTIAN

NATIONAL JOURNAL OF CHURCHES OF CHRIST IN AUSTRALIA

Registered for Australia Post  
Volume 93, No. 10

Publication No. VAR 0761  
23 June 1990



*All set to go to Conference, Vanuatu, May 1990*

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# THE AUSTRALIAN CHRISTIAN

Vol. 93

No. 10

23 June 1990

Managing Editor: Chris Ambrose  
Assistant: Geoff Alves

Issue	Deadline
7 July	27 June
21 July	11 July
4 August	25 July

Address for All Correspondence  
(including all subscription payments)  
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Telephone (03) 379 1219  
After Hours (03) 337 8349



Member  
publication of the  
Australian  
Religious Press  
Association

National logo of  
Churches of Christ  
in Australia



"The Australian Christian" is published  
by the Board of Management of the  
Australian Christian, a Department of  
the Federal Conference of  
Churches of Christ in Australia.

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Printing by New Litho Pty Ltd,  
63 Sunbury Cres,  
Surrey Hills 3127

Responsibility for electoral material is  
accepted by Chris Ambrose,  
3 Hamlyn St, Essendon 3040

This publication is indexed in the  
Australasian Religion Index

ISSN 0004-8852

## Advertising Rates

Displayed: \$4.40 per column  
centimetre

Classifieds: \$9 for the first 25 words  
and 10c for each additional word

## Guest Editorial

*We don't seem to be able to communicate the "good news" very well to the "welfare class" or even the "working class" of our society*

# Class Distinction

by Kelth Farmer

**A**s I sat in church last Sunday night I could hear the noise from the young people outside. Didn't they know that the drop in centre only operated on Friday and Saturday nights? Oh well, at least the Telopea church is trying to make contact with the kids who live in the Valley and who mostly come from the Housing Commission units surrounding the church building. I reflected also that the church, through its Family Resources Program, is trying to minister to families in the area. But we don't seem to be able to communicate the "good news" very well to the "welfare class" or even the "working class" of our society.

Jesus indicated that the poor were a very important part of his sharing of the good news (Matthew 11:5). Throughout the Old and New Testaments there is a theme that because of God's grace and compassion the powerless people, e.g. widows and fatherless, will hear God's word as good news.

Why is this not so in Australia today? There is a bias in active membership in Churches of Christ in New South Wales towards a higher than average education level and lower than average occupancy in Housing Commission accommodation. It is clear that there is more likelihood that churches in middle-class suburbs will grow than those in inner suburban areas or poorer areas.

This question is even more important when we reflect that the major proportion of the worldwide growth of Christianity in recent years has been in areas where poverty is widespread and it is primarily the poor who are responding to the gospel.

Perhaps we have changed the message subtly but significantly by interpreting the Bible through middle-class eyes.

Perhaps we have become blind to scriptural teachings in areas such as materialism.

Perhaps we have made it an intellectual faith where ideas and concepts are valued more than the practice of faith.

Perhaps we have emphasised the "thou shalt not's" to the point where the positive of the power of the Spirit of God is lost to the common person.

Perhaps our training for ministry gradually educates a person out of being able to

communicate effectively with relatively uneducated people.

Perhaps we have stopped being flexible enough to meet people where they are and have expected them to come to us.

Perhaps our worship services are out of touch with respect to what will communicate to the poor. We may deal with irrelevant issues, being too afraid of censure from middle-class people if we deal forthrightly with important social and political issues.

The Australian "middle class" is gradually shrinking in proportion to both ends of the socioeconomic spectrum, i.e. the poor and the very affluent. If we do not recapture the willingness and capacity to relate to people on the lower end we will not only be being unfaithful in our presentation of the gospel, but in fact we will run the risk of dying as a movement. (We don't seem to communicate very well with the very affluent either.)

The poorer people in Australia actually are more inclined to have traditional Christian beliefs than are the affluent but they find it very difficult to relate to the structures of the church.

As Churches of Christ, with our "back to basics" approach, we are in a great position to be flexible, bridge the gap and have a great ministry to the poor and the powerless.

Thank God those young people were disturbing my worship. I need to be disturbed. How about you?

• *Kelth Farmer is Principal of the Churches of Christ in NSW Theological College. He is married to Margaret and has three children. He has had ministries at Canley Heights, NSW, Epping, NSW, and Doncaster, Vic, while a lecturer at the College of the Bible.*

This and other issues are discussed in greater detail in Kelth Farmer's pamphlet, "Churches of Christ: Possible Directions for the Future", included with this issue of *The Australian Christian*.

## Northside's Ministry Team



Norris Brook, left, and Jay Back, senior minister, have been joined by Geoff Payne, from SA, at the Northside Community Church, Crows Nest, NSW. Geoff's ministry will major on young adults, young marrieds and the development of Christian education and worship

## Profile— John Bond

The following appeared in *Good News*, the publication of *Sonshine FM*, a Christian radio station in Perth, WA.

Every weekday morning at 9.30 am, John Bond presents a program on Sonshine FM called "It's Your Turn". In the program, John answers listener's questions about Christian issues and other concerns that anyone may have. But, just who is John Bond?

Until December 1988 John Bond was the senior minister of the Thornlie, WA, church. In the last 12 years, the church has grown to over 1,000 worshippers at Sunday services, and has a Christian Community Centre offering services to the surrounding community seven days per week, as well as a Christian school with over 250 students. Throughout the years of John's ministry, the church developed a strong missionary emphasis. Many young people from the church are now in training for ministry or missionary service.



Following his time at Thornlie, John established *Sonlife Ministries*—a full-time faith ministry focusing on:

- Doing the work of an evangelist.
- Teaching, equipping and mobilising Christians and local churches in evangelism.
- Training and discipling potential evangelists.
- Reaching out to tertiary students in Australia.

As well as his busy ministry, John is on the National and State Board of Youth For Christ, the WA Evangelical Alliance Council, and the Board of Indian Village Evangelism. In 1988 the City of Gosnells recognised his contribution to the youth of the

## Missionaries Honoured

Two Churches of Christ members who have served in India for many years were awarded the Medal of the Order of Australia in the Queen's Birthday honours. Edna Vawser and Hazel Skuce were awarded the OAM for service to community and rural development in India through the Churches of Christ Overseas Mission.



Hazel Skuce

Hazel has been in India over 40 years. She and Edna have contributed immeasurably to the lives of the people of the Conference of Churches of Christ in Western India, as well as to others in the area not associated with the church.

Their contribution has been to both the spiritual and physical needs of the people. Edna encouraged the formation of a water conservation program which continues today. From this came the Baramati Agricultural Trust for which both Edna and Hazel have worked. Such programs as water management, farms, afforestation, and livestock, are aspects of the work of the trust.

Hazel still helps to co-ordinate the *Way of Truth Bible Correspondence Course*, which has been going for many years now, teaching many about the Christian faith.

Hazel and Edna are tireless and dedicated workers who have faced many hard times but continue to love and serve God's people in India.

[Brian Kidd, Hurstbridge, Vic, received an AM (Member of the Order of Australia) for his services to architecture and design, particularly for those with physical disabilities and the frail aged. A story will appear in the next issue.]



Edna Vawser

Edna has lived and worked in India for 64 years. She began her work there at the Shrigonda Girls' and Babies' Home. 14 years later she left Shrigonda to work at the Boys' Home at Baramati. In 1952 she decided it was time to return to Australia, get a job and save for her old age. But God sent her back to India. She never has had that opportunity to save for her old age, but instead is able to delight in the providence of God as she continues to serve him.

city by awarding him a Bicentennial Youth Award.

John is married to Julie, his wife of 16 years, and they have three primary-age children. John is keenly involved in sport, having played district cricket for North Perth, "A" grade district and state basketball and amateur football.

## Overwhelming Singles Response

The Singles Ministry arm of the Vic-Tas Department of Mission, Education and Development is experiencing significant growth and attracting a deal of media interest.

Five divorce recovery workshops are planned for 1990 with two more already being explored for 1991. At a recent workshop held at East Kew, Vic, with 30 involved, 50% were from the surrounding community and 50% were men. These seminars are leading to continuing contact and ministry with some of those attending.

Evening singles services are being held twice a month (second and fourth Sundays) at East Kew church by "Serendipity Singles", with up to 40 worshippers. These special services, orientated to the needs of singles, are conducted by Cheryl Johnson, Singles Co-ordinator with the Department of Mission, Education and Development.

A recent Singles Happening at Swan Hill, Vic, hosted by the Swan Hill church and their singles group, had 60 singles from all over Victoria enjoying a weekend of social events, workshops on aspects of singleness, and worship. A similar weekend is planned for Bendigo, Vic, on the March long weekend next year.



Cheryl Johnson

## Richmond Rolls Along



The Richmond congregation on their second birthday

Last month the Richmond, NSW, church celebrated its second birthday. The church was born in March 1988 when the Penrith church started a second preaching centre in the Richmond Neighbourhood Centre, 20 km away. Part of the

idea behind this was to minister to a number of church families who had moved to the Richmond area; but it also fitted into a much larger vision of the Penrith church to develop a network of daughter congregations in the surrounding towns and developing areas.

The start of the Richmond church happily coincided with the posting of Chaplain (Squadron Leader) Alan Fletcher to

RAAF Richmond. Alan and his wife Margaret enthusiastically supported the new work and soon were giving excellent pastoral leadership. Over the past two years there has been steady growth and the congregation has an enthusiasm for outreach.

With no traditions to follow, the Richmond church is developing its own distinctive character. The future looks bright as the church considers its next big step forward.

Visitors are always welcome at the Neighbourhood Centre, West Market Street, Richmond, each Sunday at 9.30 am and 6.30 pm. For more information contact Alan Fletcher on (045) 725 730 or Don Norling on (047) 213 640.

—Bob Smith

### Semaphore, SA, Church of Christ 80th Church Anniversary

12 August, 10.30 am

Speaker: Ron Roberts,  
State Minister

Lunch & PSA to follow  
For hospitality RSVP by  
28 July

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Sunday, 15 July  
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Eric Hollard, a former  
minister, presiding

RSVP 30 June 1990  
Church Office  
24 Towers Terrace  
Edwardstown 5039  
Phone (08) 293 5754

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**CELEBRATION BANQUET**  
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Guest Speaker: **GORDON MOYES**  
Meet K.C.C. past & present students

**Friends of Croydon Church of Christ, SA,**  
are invited to the 80th church anniversary  
Sunday, 29 July 1990  
10.30 am worship and communion followed by  
fellowship luncheon  
RSVP 6 July  
Mrs Joan Bartlett, 8 Classic Court, Westlakes 5021  
Phone (08) 353 1681

## Domestic Violence Seminar



**Louis van Laar making a presentation to the seminar, and Helen Last, Community Development Officer with CASA, another of the seminar presenters**

Four Australian women die of domestic violence every week. 80% of women who are sexually assaulted know their attacker. One in five men believe that it is acceptable to use violence against their wives under some circumstances.

These were some of the devastating statistics that confronted us at the beginning of the Seminar on Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault at the Churches of Christ Theological College, Mulgrave, on 23 May.

The most impressive aspect to this seminar was the way Christian faith permeated every part of it. It was different to other seminars I have been to. It approached our Christian "response-ability" to the whole issue and kept that focus for the entirety of the seminar.

I greatly appreciated Des Purnell's session on ministry to female victims. Des highlighted the concept that for women suffering from abuse, it is not a case of needing someone to fix the problem but someone to empower them to deal with it. This puts dignity back into the person's life, whereas "rescuing" denies it.

Des illuminated the social and cultural factors creating a situation that almost always has women as the victims of do-

mestic violence. From this she outlined the critical issues in caring for those who have suffered from domestic violence and sexual assault.

Des gave insights into the way scripture treats the dignity of women. Take the woman at the well as an example. So often she is cast as a loose, immoral woman, dropping husbands at will. But it is to her that Christ first reveals who he really is. A little more thought brings the realisation that she, a woman in a society that allowed men to divorce their wives at the slightest provocation, was probably the victim of an unjust discriminatory practice that denigrated women's humanity. She had been dumped four times. Jesus, as he so often did, was bringing healing.

Peter Wing Tang in his session on ministry to the perpetrators of domestic violence pointed out that violence is a cyclic thing. Without therapy the cycle will usually repeat, despite good intentions and temporary abatement. But the central issue is the legitimisation of the subjugation of the woman to the man. As the brochure said, the people taking these sessions had developed expertise. Peter has a firm belief that a change in behav-

our can be effected. He has obviously seen a high degree of success.

The representatives from CASA (Centre Against Sexual Abuse) House challenged us to break the silence in the church community through theologising and community development. It is a shocking fact of our society that women and children are more at risk in the house than anywhere else. Violence is 10 times more common in marriage than in de-facto relationships. Yet it is rarely mentioned, especially in the church. With this sort of level of domestic violence, why has the church not mounted a major assault on the problem? If we break the silence we give people permission to talk about it. As people who believe in the sanctity of marriage we cannot allow this situation to continue unchallenged.

CASA House seeks to support women who have been assaulted/abused, to ensure that their experiences after

reporting assault are not going to compound the injury already suffered.

The seminar had four major pluses for me:

- It retained a Christian perspective at all times. It was not just another social services seminar. It clearly addressed the possibility and challenge of ministry within the church around this issue.

- The obvious expertise of the people leading the segments.

- It addressed the question of ministry to the perpetrators of domestic violence. They too are people created in the image of God, and worth saving.

- While remaining practical, the seminar also approached the philosophical and theological issues that need to be addressed if there is ever to be a wider solution to the problem.

—R.B. Waldron

A short course on dealing with family violence and sexual assault will be held in July and August. See below.

## Dealing with Family Violence and Sexual Assault

A short course designed to help participants understand and deal with those involved in situations of family violence and sexual assault. Within the informal friendship groups of a local church, women and children will hint at their experience of violence and sexual assault. Their acquaintances, even friends, often pretend they have not heard because few people know what to do. This series provides participants with necessary skills to respond and be of help.

Tuesday evenings, 17, 24 31 July and 7, 14, 21 August

### Course Content

- Family violence and sexual assault
- Hidden violence within church families
- Resources for victims
- Recognising the perpetrators of violence
- Skills for helping
- The church breaking the cycle of violence

The course facilitators are Christian workers with experience in the area of violence to women and children.

Sessions: 7:30 to 9:30 pm, at the Churches of Christ Theological College, 40-60 Jacksons Road, Mulgrave.  
Cost: \$35

To register, phone Graeme Wigney, Registrar, Churches of Christ Theological College on (03) 790 1000.

**Sponsored by the Vic-Tas Department of Community Care**

## Rosalie Returns

At the beginning of June Rosalie Rofe completed 28 years mission service in Papua New Guinea on behalf of the Australian Churches of Christ. These 28 years have seen a variety of ways of serving God through ministry to and with his people in PNG.

Rosalie went to PNG in May of 1962 and taught in schools at Tung, Chungribu, Asau and Bunam. She was the key person in the establishing of the Momonup Training Centre at the end of 1981. This centre was funded by World Vision and gave practical training to people so that they could take back to their village improved ways of agriculture and animal husbandry. In recent years Rosalie has worked in the area of Christian education and teaching. She has served for many years as the Chairman of the Overseas Missionary Committee. Rhonda Whan writes: "A farewell from the Yar people to Rosalie Rofe was a special experience. I've lost count of the many times Rosalie has come to our rescue, but one vivid memory of 26 years ago comes to mind. I remember Rosalie walking for five hours to find a new stranded missionary and how relieved I was when I was found.

"Rosalie has always gone more than the second mile in my experience and I'm only one of many who would say the same thing. This was very evident in the feast and the

speeches as people spoke of the loving concern and ministry given to them. These thoughts kept being expressed until we took our departure from them at midnight. Then at the crack of dawn they were down at the house, weeping and wailing, faces covered in mud, to express their grief at Rosalie's departure. This continued well after the plane left and bore Rosalie out of sight. It was really heart-rending."

After a short holiday, Rosalie will join the Chatswood, NSW, church as associate minister. On behalf of the Overseas Mission Board and the Australian Churches of Christ I would like to thank Rosalie for her faithful service and witness to Christ in PNG and in Australia.

—Jeff May



Rosalie Rofe

## Appointed to PNG



Scott, Helen, David and Rick Nolan

The Overseas Mission Board is pleased to announce the appointment of Richard and Helen Nolan to the position of Director of Technical Services with the Churches of Christ in PNG. Rick and Helen, together with their sons, Scott and David, come from the Brighton, SA, church. Rick's background is in plumbing and Helen's as an occupational therapist. They have responded to the request of the Conference of Churches of Christ in PNG to come and take over the position previously occupied

by the Flood family. The Floods intend to begin ministry training at Kenmore Christian College in 1991.

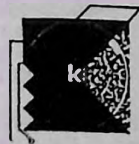
We would encourage you to be in prayer for the Nolan family as they go through the many adjustments of packing up in Australia and leaving family and friends behind to go to a new country and a new ministry.

Please pray also for the process of applying for work visas for them.

—Jeff May

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## Music and Worship Seminar at Warragul



**Judy MacLeod leading seminar**

A music and worship seminar was conducted recently at the Warragul, Vic, church. It dealt with practical aspects of music and worship and was aimed at the average church member.

The seminar was conducted by Judy MacLeod from Faith and Ministries International. The seminar covered topics such as basic music theory, tips for musicians, praise and worship, (our) attitudes and song leading.

The aim was not only to assist people in developing their abilities but also that music in our services will bring the presence and anointing of God that people will be healed and lives changed while praising and worshipping God.

—Souzy Kett

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## Federal Conference '90

8-14 October in Brisbane

**Over 400 Registered**  
Plans for Federal Conference are coming together. Over 400 are now registered. There is an expectation that a further 200-300 more will do so.

### Ministers Seminar for 200

The Ministers Seminar Program is ready, and there is accommodation for up to 200 ministers and spouses.

### Special Childrens Program

The special childrens program, "Adventures in the City", is being planned to be both exciting and educational.

### Cairns, the Islands and Western Queensland Tour

A 12-day bus tour up the Queensland coast, with visits to the Whitsundays, the Barrier Reef, Kuranda and the Stockmans Hall of Fame, with dinner, bed (motel accommodation) and breakfast, as well as all cruises and entrance fees (all you have to pay extra is for your lunch on those days there is no cruise), will be available for \$920.

### Day Tours Program

This program is almost finalised, with some tours of church facilities still to be completed. Professional tour operators are being used.

### Workshops and Seminars

Just a few of these remain to be finalised. It is an exciting opportunity for people to



choose the areas of their interest and participate in the discussion with experts in the various fields. Everyone will need to choose the areas of activity that interest them.

### Displays

20 displays were planned to circle the back of the City Hall Auditorium. Only four remain to be taken at this stage and a number have indicated their

interest but have not as yet completed and returned the form.

### The Presidents' Reception

An exciting and spectacular program is being planned to officially launch the Conference on 10 October.

If you haven't registered yet, then hurry—it costs more the longer you wait.

## WA State Youth Games

The WA Youth Ministry's contribution to the Centenary Year celebrations was the annual State Youth Games. Just over 500 young people from 19 churches attended the games, held at Hay Park, Bunbury, over the June long weekend.

Netball, football, softball, squash, basketball, table tennis, badminton, volleyball, surfing and tennis were all keenly contested, with the climax to the games being the triathlon, which was won by Subiaco in the male section, and Warwick in the female teams. Warwick were the overall winners with 138 points, followed by Rivervale (118) and

### Harvey (116).

The weather was magnificent for the event, and the young people enjoyed a time of fun and fellowship together. The highlight of the weekend was coming together for the worship services led by Mark Wilson in the Bunbury church. We were privileged to have Richard Pengelly from Christians in Sport share with us over the weekend and in testimony during the service.

Bruce Eagles from Warwick church was the guest speaker and was very inspirational in his challenge to the young people.

—Lyn Devlin

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# Letters to the Editor

Letters are limited to 200 words.

## "Binding Satan"

To the Editor,

The Holy Spirit seems to emphasise the importance of binding (article by Bruce Anderson, "AC" 12 May) by recording it four times in the Gospels (Matthew 12:29, 18:18, Mark 3:27, 11:22, and a similar passage on the authority of the church in John 20:23). It is best understood as a simile by which Jesus points out that he casts out demons because he has already deprived Satan of his power (Colossians 2:15).

Jesus spoke directly to the demons (Satan's agents) as did the disciples, Paul (Acts 16:18) and the seventy (Luke 10:17). Luke 10:10 gives broad scope to our authority to overcome all the power of the enemy.

The basic question is, "Do we have the authority to limit Satan's power?" The answer is, "Yes." However there are obvious limitations as Satan is able to operate until Christ's Second Coming. We can only bring temporary and restricted limitation of Satan's power but we can do that. The language of Ephesians 6:10-18 and 2 Corinthians 10:3-6 specifies direct person-to-demon warfare. Part of the problem may be with semantics but I would have to disagree that all I have to do is call on Jesus to bind Satan when and how he chooses. Let us do that but also engage in spiritual warfare directly.

The Bible teaches us as Christ's body that we have weapons and divine authority to demolish the enemy's strongholds and to make inroads in Jesus' name into the kingdom of darkness, and our world is desperately in need of this.

—R.S. Williams  
(Geelong, Vic)

[Letter edited to fit 200 word limit of Letters to the Editor]

## Overpopulation—Again

To the Editor,

If I appear to have compared Bruce Waldron with Scrooge, I apologise to him. ("AC" 26 May)

My intent was to draw attention to the fallacy of Scrooge's famed observation on overpopulation. That was made, of course, before his conversion.

Ebenezer Scrooge was truly a fine fellow no more to be saddled with his pre-conversion attitudes than Paul.

After his spiritual experience from On High (and Below) he was quick to acknowledge that his work practices were a mite employer-biased.

Repenting of this he swiftly instituted employee benefits unheard of in Victorian England, with special consideration to the disabled.

Who can doubt that he would have become a noted vestryman, a strident tenor in the glee club and, most important, a generous contributor to the missionary society's overseas projects?

—Wal Johnson  
(Essendon North, Vic)

## "Inner-Link"

To the Editor,

Chris North's letter ("AC" 26 May) concerned me greatly. He hopes to set up a postal network, which he claims will "allow people to exchange religious ideas and insights and to investigate the common heart (emphasis mine) of all religions".

Although we must respect the views of other religions, the suggestion that Christianity has a common heart with them is absolutely unbiblical. Christianity is fundamentally different. God's forgiveness is a gift, freely and graciously given upon our acceptance of Christ's atoning work on the cross. All cults and other religions, while usually giving token recognition to Christ, at the same time reject him as God in the flesh, and with that, his saving work. Christianity and other religions are therefore poles apart.

Chris North wants to "promote spiritual understanding between different religions". I hope he does not mean that Christians can gain any spiri-

tual truth from other religions. When Paul wrote: "Test everything, hold on to the good" (1 Thessalonians 5:21) he did not have other religions in mind. As he says elsewhere: "How can right and wrong be partners? How can light and darkness live together?" (2 Corinthians 6:14, GNB)

May we be awake to the threat of New Age thinking, which I fear is permeating even Christian circles.

—Colin Dennis  
(Hobart, Tas)

## Bridge Chairs Wanted

To the Editor,

Do you think the readers of *The Australian Christian* could help us in a request we have from the Christian Guest Home, Oakleigh, Vic, activity room.

While the residents find our easy chairs very comfortable, they are also finding getting in and out of them quite a problem. We wondered therefore if anyone could donate to us, in good condition, some bridge chairs.

## Letters from Tertius

### The Reverend

To the Editor,

The Melbourne Age reports Kate Abba, presenter of the ABC World of Worship, as saying, "To help break down the barrier between clergy and people I refuse to use clerical titles such as Father or Reverend. No disrespect intended."

Well apparently that's what Churches of Christ were saying 150 years ago.

I wonder what our fathers in the faith would think of the new fashion of giving our ministers the prefix "pastor"! Are we removing one barrier to replace it with another?

When I read Kate Abba's words I looked up "reverend" in the dictionary. It says "deserving reverence by age, character or association".

Our minister doesn't wear any fancy titles, but he is revered all right. Not because of his age...he's only about 45. Not because of his character...he's as human as the rest of us, thank God. Not because of his association...our lot don't hand out undeserved bouquets!

He is revered because he toils and loves and cares and encourages and preaches sermons that you can understand and that say something about where his people are at. And with him there's no barrier between clergy and people. He'd have the horrors if we called him "Reverend"...or "Pastor". He likes us to call him Jim.

Yours respectfully,  
Tertius



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If anyone can help they can ring on (03) 569 0748 or (03) 569 0749 and ask for Sally or Lois.

—Sally Bunston  
(Activities Co-ordinator)

### Authority of Scripture To the Editor,

I found Ron Graham's Guest Editorial on authority ("AC" 9 June) disappointing. Bluntly an uninspired Bible is at once uninspiring and unauthoritative. It is unique only as the Qur'an is unique.

If we can't believe the teaching that "all Scripture is inspired by God" (2 Timothy 3:16, RSV), why should we believe that Jesus is the Christ (John 20:31)? Further, if we ask why Jesus never wrote a book, the answer is easy if we believe in inspiration; not so if we don't. Since Jesus himself was to send the Spirit (John 16:7), who was to glorify him (16:14), he knew full well that the disciples he had trained would eventually produce the written gospel required. (14:26, 15:26, 1 John 1:1-4, cf. 2 Peter 1:21). Truth was guaranteed (John 8:31f, 17:17, 21:24 etc.) On any other thesis it was not, for it was confined to the fading memories of fallible, weak, confused and uncomprehending men (Luke 9:45, cf. John 16:12f).

Ron's presuppositions appear to be those of old-fashioned liberals—rationalistic and antisupernaturalistic. For him the Bible is very much the product of men; for its writers and careful readers it is also the product of God the Holy Spirit. (1 Thessalonians 2:13, Galatians 1:6-9, 4:12 etc.)

—Ken Stothard  
(Essendon, Vic)

P.S. I wonder why Ron fails to find Paul's inspired statement in 1 Timothy 2:14a uninspiring?

When people attend church for worship on Sunday, 15 July, many will find all the Bibles locked tight!

The third Sunday in July is set aside as National Bible Sunday. The "locked Bible" idea is an attempt to show in the International Literacy

Year that the Bible is a closed book to many people around the world.

This is only one of a wide range of suggestions that have been developed to help plan for a helpful celebration of the day.

Some would ask: "Why Bible Sunday? Every Sunday is Bible Sunday, surely!" The two agen-

## NATIONAL BIBLE SUNDAY

CELEBRATING THE GIFT OF GOD'S WORD — TOGETHER

Sunday 15th July 1990

ciessponsoring Bible Sunday—Scripture Union and the Bible Society—claim that a special day each year is useful. It offers the chance to celebrate the Word of God in the life of individual Christians, in the work and worship of the church and in the nation. It is also an opportunity to encourage Christians to give Bible reading a

higher profile in their lives—through regular personal devotions and also in small groups.

The theme for 1990 is simply:

"Grow!"

taken from the Gospel reading for the day on the Parable of the Sower in Matthew 13.

Congregations who wish to celebrate National Bible Sunday should make contact with the state office of the Bible Society or Scripture Union. Posters, worship leaflets and reading guides are available. Particularly useful is a leaflet offering sermon outlines, children's and youth programs and a drama script.

## Venture for Victory



The Australian "Venture for Victory" Basketball Board is committed to sending a team to the Philippines and Hong Kong December 1990 to January 1991.

This is another opportunity for Christian basketballers to share in an exciting and demanding missionary outreach

to South East Asia.

They have been requested by Philippine Crusades to send another Aussie VV team into their area.

In a recent letter Chuck Holsinger and Lito Cabochan stated: "We can greatly motivate and mobilise local churches to participate in evangelism through

sports ministry."

A week in Hong Kong is also on the itinerary where the team will play in high schools and prisons in association with Prison Fellowship.

This is an opportunity to present the universal message of Jesus Christ through the international language of sport.

The board is calling for applications now from men who are above average in basketball ability, in excellent physical condition and are spiritually mature.

An integral part of the ministry is the free Bible correspondence courses made available to people who are interested in learning more about Christianity.

A direct result of an Aussie VV team visiting the island of Marinduque in 1981 was the commencement of a church. This year a person who was saved during the VV visit donated land on which to build a church. Today the church has a membership of over 40.

For application forms and information contact Bruce F. Townsend, Secretary, V for V Board, GPO Box 1717 Adelaide 5001. Phone (08) 212 4611.

## Books

### Wattle Park Church of Christ 1948-1982

by Mel and Arthur Hartvigsen, \$10

"To God be the glory great things he hath done. What a rich and wonderful heritage! The history of the Wattle Park, Vic, church is an occasion of real thanksgiving in that the blessing of God has enriched the lives of all who have been associated in any way. However we cannot live in the past but the spirit of the past must be maintained."

So state Mel and Arthur Hartvigsen in the epilogue to the booklet they compiled. Mel and Arthur have captured the enthusiasm, dedication and sense of community in their comprehensive record of the "little church on the hill". From the original house meeting at 1 Chestnut Street, Surrey Hills, on 12 May 1948, the account follows the growth of the church to the tragic fire of 12 March 1981. It also relates the new beginning for the congregation, initially at the Orana Peace Memorial Chapel to the amalgamation with the Surrey Hills church on 12 September 1982. Every aspect of the life of the church is covered in this booklet, and the authors have been meticulous in their research. Photographs, copies of significant services and functions are included. Those who have had the opportunity of reading this booklet are extremely grateful to Mel and Arthur for preserving this part of the history of our church and for giving us the opportunity to relive some wonderful times.

The booklet is available at cost (\$10). To obtain a copy ring (03) 808 9659.

### 44 Ways to Revitalize the Women's Organization

by Lyle E. Schaller (Abingdon Press.) \$17.95 plus postage

A fresh book from Lyle Schaller is always an event. In "44 Ways" he has ventured into the area of women's work in the local church, a task which no other man before him has tackled.

Schaller brings his long experience of observation and analysis to this study of women's groups and activities in the local congregation. His opening chapter is a fine analysis of the development of groups such as our Christian Women's Fellowship from the 1860s onwards. He recognises that changing times have raised fundamental questions about the role of CWF-type groups in the church of the future. Of special interest is his section on the evolution of our CWF in the United States Disciples of Christ.

Having raised many issues, he writes from the assumption that there probably will continue to be a distinctive role for the women's organisation that can respond to a variety of needs that otherwise will be overlooked. He says clearly that irrelevance leads to oblivion. The issues of policy and direction are well outlined in chapter one. The remaining chapters discuss a wide range of issues, from leadership to practical helps and program directions. The discussion tackles issues and needs through all the age groups. The book must be a great resource for any group of women interested in ministry among women. For CWF leaders at any level—state or local—it is a must if adequate direction is to be set for the future. The book is highly commended to ministers who wish to understand issues about creating new points of entry into the church, outreach, education, the dynamics of group life and utilising women in the ministry of the local congregation.



Available from the Vic-Tas Department of Mission, Education & Development, 52 La Trobe Street, Melbourne, 3000.

—Don Smith

### The Road Less Travelled

A New Psychology of Love, Traditional Values and Spiritual Growth

by M. Scott Peck (Rider) \$14.95

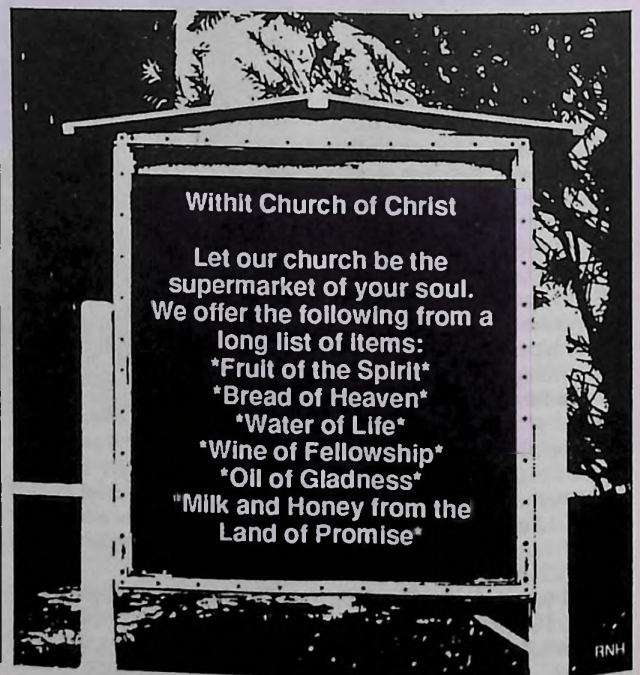
During a time of personal difficulty I followed the advice of a friend and read this book. Its theme is love. Dr Peck, a psychiatrist, gives us his understanding of what makes love. He argues that love is the will to seek growth for ourselves and others. This requires a determination to work through problems and the emotional suffering inherent in them. Dr Peck refines his concept of love by arguing what it is not—it is not "falling in love", nor "romantic love" nor "self-sacrifice". He puts forward a convincing case that love is an action, an activity. He states, "I define love thus: The will to extend one's self for the purpose of nurturing one's own or another's spiritual growth."

In a very readable manner Dr Peck introduces the reader to fascinating insights into aspects of love, i.e. growth and religion. He challenges "science", including psychologists, to be open to the mystery of religion, especially its most compelling force, grace. Dr Peck argues that love, or commitment to spiritual growth, confronts our desire to avoid such hard and painful work. He argues further that God desires such growth for us so that we can take on God-like responsibilities for ourselves and others. He warns that most people avoid such responsibility. They prefer a "nice old God who will take good care of us from a lofty position of power..."

Dr Peck touches an incredibly large range of topics, which may appear only of interest to thinkers, not doers. However, he writes for doers. Love is what love does! His reflections on evil, sin etc. always point towards insights and examples that touched my heart and will provide blessing and encouragement.

A mere review cannot adequately describe the impact of the book on me and others I know.

—Louis van Laar



## • Lebanon

### Rediscovery of the Bible

Amidst the rubble and agony of a country torn by 15 years of civil war, a positive sign is clear to Lucien Accad, the General Secretary of the Bible Society in Lebanon.

"The Bible used to be considered a Protestant book," said Mr Accad, "but now the other churches are rediscovering the Bible. The Good News New Testament in Arabic is proving very popular and more and more clergy are encouraging their parishioners to read it. The best way to bring back hope is to read the Bible. Our hope is in God and the comfort we get from reading his Word."

Lucien Accad said one of the main reasons for the continuing presence of the Bible Society in Lebanon was to get the complete Arabic Bible published. He said the 14 members of staff in the devastated city of Beirut were given the opportunity to leave but none accepted. They have chosen to continue living and working in great danger to keep Bible work alive, but the difficulties they face are often beyond endurance.

The sound of gunfire is constant and nerve-racking. The printing press is no longer functional, there is no electricity or running water, the telephones no longer work and all the schools are closed.

"We stay because I believe we are in the midst of a spiritual war. This is not a war of Muslim against Muslim or Christian against Christian. The vacuum created by our leaving would only be filled with evil. Some missionary organisations who left a few years ago have tried to return, but the Lebanese don't want them. Those who leave are regarded as deserting a sinking ship and cannot get back on board. If the Bible Society wants to retain its credibility with the churches

we must be prepared to suffer alongside the churches. Individuals have left, those who could get visas, but the ordinary Lebanese cannot just run away. They are still here, and somebody has to help them. For the first time, food and clothing parcels are addressed to the Bible Society because they feel they can rely on us being here. If we pull out, how will the people get Bibles?"

Yet despite the hopelessness surrounding Lucien Accad and his staff, there is clear evidence that the Scriptures continue to bring encouragement and hope. Lucien quoted Lamentations: "Hope returns when I remember this one thing: the Lord's unfailing love and mercy still continue, fresh as the morning, as sure as the sunrise. The Lord is all I have, and so I put my hope in him." (Lamentations 3:19-24)

## • Singapore

The 18 November 1989 issue of *The Australian Christian* included a paragraph advising that the Overseas Missionary Fellowship needed child care workers for six- to eight-week periods during 1990 to care for children of new missionaries during orientation courses in Singapore.

Most readers of the "AC" probably cannot remember seeing this paragraph, but not Graham and Val Underhill of the Kingsley, WA, congregation! They read it several times and could not dismiss the need from their minds. Eventually they contacted the OMF Candidates Secretary in NSW and have been accepted as child care workers from 10 October to 2 December 1990. As grandparents with plenty of experience in looking after grandchildren, they are thrilled to have this opportunity for Christian service. A commissioning service was a feature of the OMF Rally at the Scarborough, WA, church on 18 May.

## • Ethiopia and Eritrea

### Reafforestation and Restoration

Only 1% of Ethiopia remains forested out of an estimated forest cover of 40% at the turn of the century. The main causes of this rapid decline are clearing for agriculture and the cutting of trees to provide wood for cooking and heating—the only available source of fuel for most of the rural population.

Since 1986 the Ethiopian Orthodox Church has conducted an ambitious reafforestation program supported by a number of international partner church agencies, including the Australian Council of Churches. So far, more than 6 million seedlings have been raised or planted contributing greatly to the restoration of degraded lands.

In June, Force Ten is supporting this long-term reafforestation program in Ethiopia as well as agricultural restoration programs in Eritrea.

The reafforestation program not only provides seedlings to local villages but also trains local people to plant and look after the growing trees and pays for fencing material. To supply the seedlings, 27 tree nurseries have been established, growing more than 20 different tree species including eucalypts, acacias and multipurpose indigenous species. With plans for more nurseries the long-



term aim of the program is to plant more than 20 million trees to help re-green Ethiopia.

To the north of Ethiopia, the Eritrean Relief Association is continuing their long-term agricultural rehabilitation program, which aims to help more than 75,000 households regain a degree of self-sufficiency in the face of ongoing drought.

Assistance is being provided in the form of seeds and agricultural tools to replant crops, oxen for agricultural work and water and soil conservation projects.

This region is currently experiencing another severe drought and widespread famine is beginning to take hold due to a lack of emergency food

aid. If the people are forced to leave their land to seek food at refugee camps it will be a great setback to long-term recovery as one of the aims of the rehabilitation program is to enable

the people to stay in their villages and replant their crops when the rains do come, rather than become totally dependant on food aid in the camps.



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# Happenings

"Wisdom in Ministry" is the theme of the 1990 Christians in Sport Conference held by Sports & Leisure Ministry. The conference will be held at Helensville on the Gold Coast 9-12 July. Details from SLM, "The Study", 3 Shelley Rd, Wailacia 2750. Phone (047) 73 8594.

Jennie Flack, Australia's leading composer and recording artist of children's gospel music, is conducting a seminar for children's workers at the Nunawading, Vic, church on 28 July. Hands-on experience will be provided in song leading, puppetry, drama and story telling. On 29 July two family concerts will feature Jennie and her songs. These will be held at 2 and 7 pm. Bookings can be made on (03) 877 6077 or to Rosemary König on (03) 878 5506 (AH).

A private member's bill that would have outlawed the distribution of pornographic videos from the ACT was defeated by one vote on 24 April.

More than 4,000 video cassettes of the film *Jesus* were sold in 6 months by the Bible Society in a special project jointly sponsored by Life Ministries in NSW last year. The video is now available in other states.

The Governing Body of the [Anglican] Church in Wales has voted to begin a process of discussing at the parish and diocesan level the possible ordination of women as priests. Currently Welsh Anglicans ordain women as deacons.

Acting on a complaint filed by 2 Eastern Orthodox priests, the Greek Supreme Court has ruled that "Jesus Jeans" and "Jesus T-shirts" cannot be sold in Greece. The court said that to use the name Jesus, or other religious symbols, on commercial merchandise is "an abuse to be forbidden in all circumstances".

The rapid growth of evangelical churches in Guatemala is being reported in the secular press, and has prompted a strong reaction from the once dominant Roman Catholic Church. Noting that evangelicals have grown from 2% of the population 30 years ago to nearly 35% today, the Catholic Church issued a stinging pastoral letter, charging evangelicals with weakening the sense of family and cultural identity.

A total of 3.73 million Australians, or 22% of the population, were born overseas, according to the Bureau of Statistics. The number of overseas born people here rose by 3.2% in 1988-89. Overall, the population growth rate for the year was 1.6%. The fastest growing migrant group came from Hong Kong, followed by the Philippines, Malaysia and China. Among the 10 largest migrant groups, the Vietnamese community had the highest proportion of people under 19 years, while the Polish had the most old people.

Illiteracy among workers costs more than \$3.2 billion in lost productivity each year, the Governor-General, Mr Hayden, said in launching the International Literacy Year in February.

Over half of a 600-person battalion in Lima, Peru, has responded to gospel presentations by Cinevan, SIM International's mobile cinema. Team leader Percy Vallente reported: "During an evangelistic meeting when we showed the film *Fury to Freedom*, there were 260 soldiers from the battalion present. In response to the invitation to accept Christ as Saviour, they all stood up!" Cautious about such a response Vallente scheduled a team follow-up session for the men the next week. "This time we showed *Pilgrim's Progress* to teach not only the way of salvation but some aspects of Christian life. Another 60 soldiers responded!"

A bid by an indigenous Baptist denomination to conduct evangelistic activities among Venezuela's Pemon people in the state of Bolivar has been rejected by the Supreme Court, which has ruled that the Roman Catholic Church is the only "recognised organism" entitled to conduct religious activity in this state.

Phnom Penh's government-owned Chenla Theatre was the site of an historic gathering of over 700 Cambodian Protestants, who met on 29 April for the first officially sanctioned public evangelistic crusade to be held in over 15 years.

4 members of the Jehovah's Witnesses movement in Rwanda were sentenced to 10 years in prison on 30 April for disturbing the peace and organising unauthorised rallies.

More than 1,940 committed their lives to Jesus Christ during Luis Palau's evangelistic campaign in Bangkok, Thailand, 3-6 May. About half made first-time decisions for Christ, many coming from a Buddhist background. It is estimated that this number of decisions increased the number of Christians in Bangkok by 5%.

Bangkok's Protestant churches have united with about 875 other churches throughout Thailand to make the 1990s a "Decade of Evangelism". Their goal, based on a 600% church growth rate in Bangkok over the past 14 years: 5,000 new Thai churches and 500,000 new Christians by the year 2000.

The Church of Ireland, the Anglican church in Ulster and the Irish Republic, is expected to ordain its first women priests soon. The Irish Church in General Synod voted strongly to legitimise women priests and bishops in late May. Voting was clergy 126 to 55, laity 172 to 29.

A planned first-ever national

conference for church leaders in Liberia had to be cancelled at the last minute because of the increasing threat of civil war. The scrapping of the conference followed the withdrawal from Monrovia of Youth With A Mission's 2 full-time workers and an 11-member short-term team of students.

The General Assembly of the United Reformed Church in England voted overwhelmingly to consider union with the British Methodist Church. The URC was formed in 1972 as a union of Congregationalists and Presbyterians with many of the Churches of Christ joining in 1981. URC membership is about 130,000.

The Egyptian government has announced plans to send Christian-Muslim teams around the mostly Muslim country to try to calm tensions between followers of the two religions, which have flared into violence in some places.

The first 5 students have graduated from St Andrew's Greek Orthodox Theological College in Sydney. This is the first time that Greek students from Australia are able to get local, bilingual theological training.

George Capsis, chaplain to the Cronulla Sharks Rugby League team and Sydney Metro Baseball team and the Sports and Leisure Ministry's "Sports Evangelist", held a 10-day mission in Western Australia (6-16 May), which saw many of the estimated 12,000 young people who attended rallies being won for Christ. The largest youth rally, with about 1,500 attending, was held at the Warwick Church of Christ.

Seven new SLM chaplains to Rugby League teams this year include Guy Cooper to the Gold Coast Giants and Jay Back to the North Sydney Bears.

Two Victorian sport chaplaincy appointments

made recently have been Paul Burnham (minister of the North Balwyn Church of Christ) as chaplain to the Melbourne AFL club and David Brooker (minister at Surrey Hills Church of Christ) to the North Melbourne Giants NBL team (this is the first chaplaincy appointment for a Victorian basketball team).

Trans World Radio has added 8 new languages to its broadcast schedule in the last 3 years and another 4 languages will be added to its schedule before the end of 1990.

The Church of Scotland General Assembly voted overwhelmingly to support the invitation of evangelist Billy Graham for a crusade in Scotland during Summer 1991 and to prepare the church for it. Billy Graham last held a mission in Scotland in Glasgow in 1955 when more than 2.6 million attended over 6 weeks.

Hundreds of Catholics each year are seeking to have their marriages annulled by the church. The church reports requests for marriage annulment have doubled and created an unprecedented demand for more qualified staff to sit on the marriage tribunals judging the applications.

South Australia's biggest church has enraged its neighbours by arranging to pay about \$80,000 for the installation of traffic lights to ease congestion caused by its 2,200 strong congregation. The local Council had also unanimously voted to oppose the installation of the lights requested by the Assemblies of God church at Paradise.

1989 Australian woman Tenpin Bowler of the Year, Dana Miller-Mackie, a native American, became, in early May, one of a handful of women to have won the US Open twice. Dana Miller-Mackie is a strongly committed Christian who thanked God for producing the desired result.

# THE RACE BEFORE US

Running together,  
Supporting and encouraging each other.  
Continue this partnership and ministry by giving to the  
Overseas Mission Board Annual Offering in July.

## The Race Is Set before Us

When I think of these words, an Olympic runner going for gold does not come to mind, but a handicapped boy, Ratan Naidu, of the Boys' Home, Baramati. A boy whose life, until he came to the Boys' Home, was spent in begging on the Pune Railway Station (the only home that he had ever known). The goal that was set before Ratan, in those days, was to collect enough money to enable him to eat and to pay the "basses" above him. These "little beggars" have a very hard life.

Today Ratan's goal is to achieve in all walks of life and to show that although handicapped, he is capable, independent and will work to support himself. If he is in a swimming race, off comes his wooden leg and into the canal he goes with his one arm and one leg. He streaks through the water to the finishing line, ahead of all the others, attaining his goal. Ratan's greatest goal is to be a child of God. He loves the Lord and wants to serve him.

Isaac Kamble, evangelist at Daund, retired in December 1989, with joy, saying, "I have run and finished this race, another race is before me now." He may have retired but he has not retired from the Lord's service. Daily he is out in Daund witnessing for the Lord.

When Christ called me to full-time service, the goal that I had at the end of the race was that through my witness, life and love I would be able to bring someone to the place of accepting the Lord Jesus Christ as their own Saviour. I can remember the joy that I had when a Bai,

whom we had been visiting and praying for, accepted the Lord Jesus as her Saviour one Monday morning about 36 years ago. Today she is still a graceful Christian woman.

There are many goals that we, as Christians, have set before us. But we do not run alone, the Lord goes before us and prepares the way. Together let us run the race that is before us, praying that through our witness, many will come to know and accept the Lord Jesus Christ.

—Hazel Skuce, India



Hazel Skuce cutting the ribbon of the  
Ghatkopar church, Bombay

# Overseas Mission Board

## Heavy Feet

I clomped and splashed my way to the Chugribu village church through the muddy water. I was wearing my knee-high gumboots—two sizes too big, but good for keeping the feet dry in a low flood. Then it happened. I put my foot in a hole, and my boot was full of dirty water.

Suddenly my boots were no asset. Have you ever tried walking half a mile with gumboots up to your knees full of water, water within and without, sloshing around? Not easy, but the alternative was to stand on one leg in the floodwater while empty-

ing the water out of the other boot—and no guarantee that it wouldn't get filled up again! The ten-minute walk to church extended to nearly half an hour and I was tired when I got there.

I was reminded of Hebrews 12:1—it's so much easier to go the allotted distance when we're not weighted down. "Let us rid ourselves of everything that gets in the way, and the sin which holds on to us so tightly, and let us run with determination the race that lies before us." (GNB)

—Fay Christensen, PNG

# THE RACE BEFORE US

As we run there are obstacles and trials,  
Our eyes are set on Jesus,  
Others are witnesses to our race,  
"So do not let yourselves become discouraged and give up."  
(Hebrews 12:3, GNB)

## The Nature of the Race

Over the years "the race" in Papua New Guinea has assumed certain characteristics.

It is a race against time: It has become increasingly more difficult to have missionary visas and work permits approved or extended in recent years, which may suggest that in the future our missionary presence may be restricted. While the indigenous church has certainly matured significantly since we were last here ten years ago there is still a great need for support workers with organisational and pastoral skills working alongside the national Christians. We need to take the opportunities while the door is still open.

It is a race against evil influences: mostly the mission work in PNG has been concentrated in the bush village setting. Over recent years there has been a growing infiltration of unhelpful worldly influences making inroads into village life. The positive thing in all of this is that in many of our villages the strong devotional life of the people helps to ward off the worst of these evils, but others are sorely tested.

Increased mobility has meant that such things as gambling, juvenile delinquency, alcoholism and prostitution are all evils of town life that are becoming a threat to stable village life. Christians are being tested at the point of their commitment to Christ. Praise God that many are standing strong. But that doesn't prevent the evil onslaught and we need to be praying in these days that the presence of evil will only serve to strengthen the Christian commitment of our brothers and sisters in Christ.

It is a race for people's souls: humanistic, communistic and cult teachings and practices are having an increasing influence. The call of Hebrews 12:2 to "fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith" has never been so much needed as it is in this present time.

A multitude of conflicting voices are clamouring for attention. We who know that the Gospel of Christ is the only "power of God for salvation" are exercised to spread that message with urgency while there is still time.

—Bob Whan, PNG

Where? Who Doesn't Dare?, page 171)

The "back to the future" challenge before us is—can we recapture the nature of a frontier movement in the conversionist tradition that has revivalistic freedom and a naive ecumenicalism?

### Questions for group discussion

1. What conclusions do you draw from the statistics of active membership since 1960 with respect to Australian Churches of Christ?
2. Discuss the statement that the early Restoration Movement was "a frontier sect in the conversionist tradition, which had revivalistic freedom and naive ecumenicalism". Do you think we should strive to recapture these qualities?
3. What are the strengths on which Churches of Christ in Australia should build?
4. What are the most important changes you think should be made in your local church in order that it can become more evangelistically effective?
5. What can we do to communicate the gospel more effectively with "working class" and "ethnic" people?
6. How would you diagnose the state of health of "your" local church, particularly with respect to the "slow death syndrome"?

Keith Farmer is Principal of the Churches of Christ in NSW Theological College. He is married to Margaret and has three children. He has had ministries at Canley Heights, NSW, Epping, NSW, and Doncaster, Vic.



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

Published by the Federal Literature Department of Churches of Christ in Australia

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Supplement to *The Australian Christian*, Registered Publication VAR 0761

23 June 1990

Churches of Christ



Possible Directions  
for the Future

by Keith Farmer



The Pamphlet Club 369

# Churches of Christ Possible Directions for the Future

## I Introduction

In the pamphlet "Ministry and Church—Restoration or Ruin" (Pamphlet Club No. 363) I presented that Churches of Christ in Australia are at the crossroads. There is a strong possibility that the future will see a gradual diminishing of—

- the number of active members within our churches;
- the effectiveness of our outreach to the Australian community;
- the effectiveness and numbers involved in full-time ministry within Churches of Christ in Australia.

This pamphlet aims to take the discussion of these important issues further by seeking to pinpoint the specific areas where renewal is most needed and the directions that should be taken.

The essence of the Restoration Movement (of which Churches of Christ in Australia are a part), during the 19th century in the USA was the plea for the unity of all Christians on the basis of a return to Christianity as presented in the New Testament, to the end that the gospel be more effectively proclaimed. (John 17: 20–21) Its rapid growth during that period is presented by a current eminent sociologist of religion as resulting from the fact that it was a "frontier sect" in the "conversionist tradition", which had "revivalistic freedom and naive ecumenicalism." (Bryan Wilson, *Religious Sects: A Sociological Study*, p.52) I wish to argue for a return of Churches of Christ in Australia to the frontier as a group strongly emphasising conversion and expressing a "revivalistic freedom" and "naive ecumenicalism".

## II There are two questions which need to be addressed before we consider possible future directions

### 1. Should we be desiring to keep the Restoration Movement emphases alive today or have its initial aims become irrelevant?

The fact that more than half of the Australian people who describe themselves as religious do not attend church regularly (Peter Kaldor, *Who Goes Where? Who Doesn't Dare?*, p.38) may indicate that the churches have failed to communicate clearly the good news that the common people heard gladly from the lips of Jesus.

I believe that not only is the recapturing of basic New Testament Christianity still a needed emphasis within the Christian church in Australia generally, but it is also something from which Churches of Christ in Australia have drifted. This New Testament basis to Christian faith will be responded to in Australia today with a positiveness resulting in part from a general disillusionment with the traditional churches. The 1983 Australian Values Study Survey (Gary Bouma and Beverly R. Dixon, *The Religious Factor in Australian*

## V Conclusion

In recent years Churches of Christ in Australia have tended to be—

- part of a movement that has not moved much itself and is having a gradually decreasing capacity to move people in our society;
- a group of churches that have been taking on more of the characteristics of a mainline Protestant denomination by moving in directions of—
  - increasing middle class characteristics;
  - increasing accommodation to secular values;
  - decreasing emphasis on outreach;
  - increasing bureaucracy and institutionalisation leading to inability to change appropriately.

While strongly rejecting that we should see ourselves in sectarian, exclusivist terms by considering ourselves to be the only Christians or believing that we definitely have the total truth, I would plead that we should recapture the key qualities of a religious movement that has as its aim, in the name of Christ, turning the world upside down.

I would also plead that you not dismiss the major message contained in this pamphlet because you do not agree with one or more of the points I have presented. This is not a time for us to squabble over words or individual issues.

The next two or three decades will largely determine our future. The combination of traditional, once and for all delivered doctrines and contemporary organisation and methodology is potentially a very powerful one.

I have concentrated in this pamphlet on the areas of needed change. Needless to say there are very many aspects of Churches of Christ in Australia that are very positive and need to be kept firmly in place as emphases and even priorities. Our strong tradition of Biblical teaching within worship and at mid-week groups, the recognition that prayer is a key to personal and church power, the relatively unstructured and nonritualistic approach to worship, the emphasis on the priesthood of all believers, etc should not be undervalued.

It is, however, usually not possible for an institution to renew itself from within. It has become too comfortable to have the motivation to do that and those who could lead the change are those with vested power interests to protect. God has a habit under these circumstances of raising up new movements through which his Spirit can work with freshness and power.

"Until relatively recent times most, if not all, human societies ordered their affairs with reference to the past. Only in this century have societies come to organise themselves principally with regard to the present and, increasingly, the future." (Bryan Wilson, *Religious Sects: A Sociological Study*, page 121) Churches of Christ in Australia must hear this message.

"The lessons of the experiences of the last 20 years are about the importance of allowing people to give expression to their faith in ways that are true to their own culture and context. At the risk of generalisation, if it is true that those born before World War II saw worship in terms of reverence and the church as a certain pillar in an unstable world, the post-war generation has looked towards more lively and participating worship for self-expression and places of intimacy. To respond to these challenges will be very testing of the mainstream churches—testing and critical for their futures." (Peter Kaldor, *Who Goes*

slaves and free, Jews and Gentiles (Galatians 3:28, Ephesians 2:11–22), and the evangelistic principle that like will communicate most effectively with like. We cannot expect those who are not Christians, or even those who are young Christians, to respond as if the work of the Holy Spirit in breaking down prejudices has already been mostly accomplished. Therefore we need a focused approach for evangelism. This will hopefully make it more likely that the person will respond to the gospel and become a part of the church of Jesus Christ that preaches and practises oneness in Christ. For many years I struggled with the church growth principle of homogeneous groups because I was not able to distinguish between what we can expect of the non-Christian and what we expect of the Christian.

Outreach will often be better done by those of one ethnic background reaching out to people of the same background. A church may choose to have a specialised ministry to single or not-now-married people. Ministry to those who are at the lower end of the socioeconomic scale is a very specialised capacity that we have not learned to do very well yet. One reason may be that those who train for this ministry focus gradually become people who express themselves in middle-class ways.

One church may have two or more congregations that have different ways of expressing their Christian faith. Wesley Central Mission in Sydney has 45 such congregations. I do not see any real problem with specialisation on the basis of age group or generation, provided the focus of that is effective outreach. However, it is really sad when people who have been Christians for many years, and who should be relatively mature, are not willing to be a part of a church because the worship is not exactly as we want it, especially if the services are being necessarily geared to reach a different group of people.

There are many examples of specialised ministries in our cities, with people being prepared to drive many kilometres from all over the city to be a part of the group, e.g. Northside Community Church in Sydney specialises in ministry to singles, particularly those in middle years, who have experienced marriage failure and had rejected or been rejected by other churches. There are ethnic congregations such as the Korean church at South Granville in Sydney. Canley Heights church has an Slavic congregation and an "Australian" congregation.

Specialised ministries, either as part of a suburban church or as a special area, should be taken more seriously by Churches of Christ in Australia.

## 7. Be aware at the local church level of the "slow death syndrome"

In my previous pamphlet I proposed the presence of a combination of factors (increasing average age of the congregation, a slow decline in the number of active members and a widening gap between the socioeconomic status and cultural ethos of church members and those who live in the community surrounding the church) that is already present in a significant minority of our Australian Churches of Christ.

The fact that some churches in apparently difficult areas for ministry are growing rapidly, e.g. Wollongong, and other churches in apparently more receptive middle-class suburban areas are either stagnant or in decline should help us to accept that something can be done. In God's strength we need to face up to the hard questions and be prepared to consider how things can be changed. I have suggested in this pamphlet what I think are some of the answers.

*Life*, page 87) in which the church was rated 12th when respondents were asked to indicate those institutions in which they have "quite a lot of confidence" (the police and Australia Post were among institutions rated higher) and third when people were asked which were the institutions in which they had "no confidence at all" (behind trade unions and the press), indicates that churches need to give serious thought to the way they are presenting to the Australian public.

This, taken together with an often expressed disillusionment with institutional bureaucracy by the under 30 year olds, may well mean that a "back to basics" approach to Christianity will be better accepted. *The 1986 Joint Church Census Report No. 1* (by Peter Kaldor and Ross Homel) shows Churches of Christ already having a higher percentage of under 30 year olds attending church than most of the mainline denominations in New South Wales, e.g. Anglican, Uniting, Presbyterian and Lutheran churches have approximately half the Churches of Christ percentage of 23.7 (NSW population—21.5%). Most churches in Australia are as much in need of a Restoration Movement emphasis today as were the churches in the United Kingdom and the United States of America at the beginning of the 19th century.

The "naive ecumenicalism" dream is also relevant in Australia today. There is a grass roots turning from traditional church denominational allegiances. People are now more willing than at any previous time in our history to become actively involved in the church that meets their needs and/or does what they think a church should do. Many of our Churches of Christ regularly have people crossing denominational lines and becoming active participants. This "naive" type of ecumenicalism provides us with an opportunity to gradually supersede the traditional divisions within Christianity.

To be in the "conversionist tradition" simply means that we have evangelism as a priority. This is, I assume, not something from which we would willingly depart, even if that has happened to some extent.

"Revivalistic freedom" as mentioned by Wilson probably refers to such happenings as the early "camp meetings" that propelled our movement forward and at which there was very clear and strong evidence of the working of the Holy Spirit in the lives of many ordinary people who attended.

Would we desire today to restrict the freedom of God to work in whatever way he chooses? Would we want to quench the work of the Holy Spirit? Has our strong desire to ensure that things are done "decently and in order" sometimes tended to limit the freedom of the Spirit of God? The very conservative attitudes that exist in many of our churches with respect to the potential powerful work of the Holy Spirit to disturb us and change lives is a far cry from our early history. I feel a strong tendency to try to control what happens so that it does not become too emotional. This may mean that I don't trust what God will do through his Spirit.

The bottom line for Churches of Christ today is whether we will be open or closed to what the Spirit of God wants to do among us and through us. Are we willing to allow him to restore us or are we going to cling to familiar but powerless structures and practices?

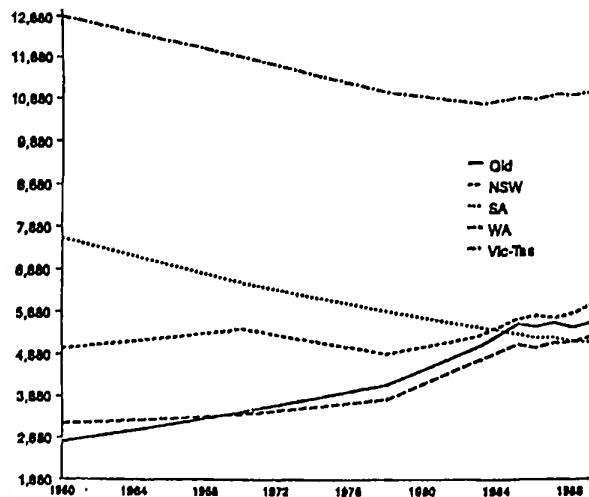
The idea of a religious movement implies an organised attempt to introduce change in religion. The need for such changes as were dreamed about and begun by our Restoration Movement forefathers are still needed today. As Churches of Christ in Australia we need to take notice of our gradual drift towards being a mainline Protestant denomination and do some "in house" restoration to remain a movement.

## 2. On the basis of the data presented (primarily in the previous pamphlet), is there any real need for concern?

### (I) An update of data

#### (a) Active membership 1960-1989

	1960	1970	1978	1983	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989
Qld	2,790	3,509	4,138	5,052	5,568	5,516	5,584	5,479	5,585
NSW	5,022	5,486	4,873	5,309	5,689	5,759	5,698	5,800	6,013
Vic-Tas	12,877	11,893	11,022	10,745	10,880	10,848	10,961	10,955	11,028
SA	7,618	6,559	5,887	5,497	5,330	5,241	5,246	5,146	5,127
WA	3,229	3,446	3,800	4,730	5,080	4,999	5,118	5,132	5,250
	31,536	30,893	29,720	31,333	32,547	32,363	32,607	32,512	33,003



Testament as working through the leaders. In the New Testament that leadership was initially through the Apostles and then through itinerant evangelists and local church elders. One key to effective leadership is Christian maturity. Paul indicates that the leader should not be a novice because that may lead the person to be tempted by the enticement of power and pride. (1 Timothy 3: 6)

A plurality of elders is possibly also a biblical safeguard against leadership that does not follow God's way. For too long we have accepted limited vision, small thinking and faithless planning because any decisions made in the local church of an important nature must be voted on by the whole church. The biblical pattern probably is that the leadership should be endorsed by the church (I say probably because it is difficult to discern a biblical blueprint on these matters) and then allowed to make most of the decisions concerning the operation of the church. Regular confirmation of leaders (each three to five years) would hold leaders accountable to the total church.

The key factor is that people who are mature Christians and are being led by the Spirit of God should be allowed to lead. These people do not need to have been trained in a Bible or theological college, although our experience would show that a depth of theological understanding and the sharpening of gifts through training gives a greater capacity for other than short-term leadership responsibility. It is not being suggested here that the leadership is other than a servant leadership. Leaders should be strongly accountable to a leadership group and indirectly to the whole local church. To work as a leader amongst leaders is sometimes frustrating, but the risks of autocratic leadership are so great that I believe all leaders should be directly and strongly accountable to a wider group. Leaders of vision, maturity, and commitment must be allowed to lead. Hard decisions must be made that lead churches out of the comfort zone of continuing movement towards institutionalisation and secularisation. Those who are forging the way must have been able to give their best, most constructive thinking and praying time to the task.

We make no apology for the fact that at the Churches of Christ in NSW Theological College we are challenging those who are called to full-time ministry to see a major part of that calling as involving visionary, accountable leadership. There is possibly no single factor in our present situation that is more important than the development of Christian leaders at the local church level. It is great to see that many of the most effective, dynamic leaders in Churches of Christ in Australia today are choosing the local church as the context of their ministry. They are having a vitally constructive influence on the total Australia scene through our networking. In some ways they are dragging us reluctantly towards being a relevant church.

## 6. Develop ministries to people with particular needs or who are in natural people groups

We have tended to think in terms of neighbourhood churches, i.e. churches that minister to the people who live in the immediate geographic vicinity of the church property or where the church meets together. Note that 84% of Uniting Church attenders in NSW live within 2 km of their church. (Peter Kaldor, *Who Goes Where? Who Doesn't Dare?*, page 62) We may need to think in wider terms than this.

There is no contradiction between the biblical teaching that the gospel breaks down barriers that exist between subcultures, e.g. in Paul's time between males and females,

I pray that we can return to a more aggressive church planting emphasis. We tend to work out our plan in financial/rational/traditional terms rather than being prepared to be faith oriented. Schaller states, "Every denomination reporting an increase in membership reports an increase in the number of congregations. Every denomination reporting an increase in the total number of congregations reports an increase in members. Every denomination reporting a decrease in membership reports a decrease in congregations. Every denomination reporting a decrease in congregations reports a decrease in members. While this does not prove a cause and effect relationship, it does introduce the first component of a denominational strategy for church growth." (Schaller, chapter 16, page 351, in Hoge and Roozen). Our church planting strategy could volitionally use homes, community halls, schools etc. for much longer than the initial few years. Perhaps the church that meets primarily in homes, but rents a suitable hall for Sundays will not only be financially more viable but in lessening the emphasis on "a church building" might also be closer to a New Testament pattern.

Our colleges could be challenging people to train for church-planting ministries. We should be studying groups such as the Southern Baptists in the United States of America in order to discover novel ways of moving where people are. It would be an exciting thing to be training more people than our established churches need for ministry and to be challenging a significant proportion of each graduating group to begin new churches. We should also look for innovative ways of ministering in newly planted churches, e.g. having two ministry families with each ministry person working in a secular job for three days per week and with the church for two and a half days.

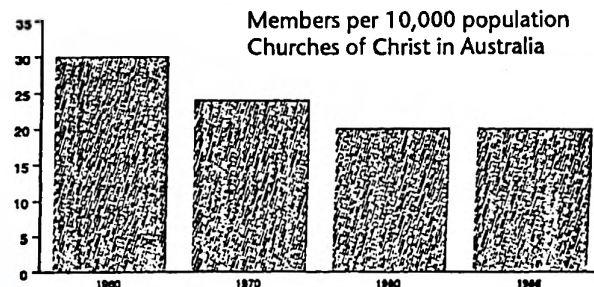
The study by Finke & Stark referred to earlier showed that because the Methodists and the Baptists challenged local people to involve themselves in ministry and did not seek to set up a special "ministry class", they had people willing and available to "...move with the people rather than waiting for them to call. As a result they were the only 'firms' operating in the new market areas." (Finke and Stark, page 39)

Recently planted churches are usually more evangelistically effective than those in their second generation or older. The churches the Apostle John penned messages to from Jesus Christ (Revelation 1-3) were probably 30-40 years old and at least some had lost their first love. A study of Churches of Christ in New South Wales covering the last five Conference years indicates that churches less than 30 years old have a 35% higher baptism rate than those over 30 years old. Older churches seem to find it difficult to keep up with the social and demographic changes taking place in their ministry area and therefore are less evangelistically effective. The Southern Baptists figures for the 1970s show that the effectiveness of a church in evangelism was inversely correlated with the age of the church and the size of the membership. Thus smaller, newer churches are likely to be the most strongly growing ones. (Jones, chapter 7, pages 170-172, in Hoge and Roozen)

## 5. Train and encourage leadership that is dedicated, visionary and accountable

I am not sure that the local church should be a democracy. There are many safeguards in strong congregationalism that make it very attractive particularly to a group that has historically believed that to develop a special class of people known as "clergy" is not biblical. In the Bible narrative God is depicted in both the Old Testament and the New

(b) Active membership in real terms, i.e. when population increase is taken into account, 1960-1989



Note that in real terms we have decreased in active membership by about 33%.

(c) The percentage of Churches of Christ in Australia that are stagnant or declining is approximately 60% in actual terms and 70% in real terms and is increasing by about 1% per year.

### (ii) Biblical and sociological perspectives

Some would submit that all we are seeing in these "last days" is the fulfilment of the Biblical teaching that people will turn away from God, e.g. 2 Timothy 3:1-6, and that lack of growth rather than indicating a problem may actually show how true we are to Christ. It is also argued (Bruce Wilson, *Can God Survive in Australia?*) that there are strong factors within the Australian culture, e.g. secularisation, that are the basic reasons for the stagnation or decline of Christianity. The implication is that under such difficult circumstances we cannot expect that churches will grow. A problem with these arguments is that there are churches that are growing despite the times in which we live or the nature of the society in which we live, e.g. in Australia Assemblies of God and Wesleyan Methodists and in the USA Southern Baptists. The antagonism or nonchalance of a society to the gospel does not automatically mean that the church will decline within that culture, e.g. the Church in China has grown remarkably to approximately 30 million or 5% of the Chinese population since the Communist revolution and the expulsion of Western missionaries 36 years ago, mainly through the underground house church movement. The present number of Christians is 80 times the number 36 years ago. (*Zadok Perspectives* No. 21, December 1988, p.9)

If the gospel is presented faithfully in ways that people can recognise it as Good News, then it will find a positive response. There will probably be particular types of churches and places of ministry that will be more difficult than others and may not show any growth. The need for the church to be faithful as its highest priority will mean that it is also faithful in the Biblical priority it gives to evangelism and the willingness to express Christian faith in the ways that are most meaningful to the non-Christian context in which it is placed.

Paul expresses in 1 Corinthians 9:19-23 a principle of flexibility in the way the gospel is presented so that those who need Christ will recognise its relevance to them. The gospel

can be good news to Australian people if it is presented relevantly. We have come to a point of crisis or semi-crisis because of our "institutional desire to perpetuate the status quo rather than the Biblical imperative to evangelise in a relevant way. Congregations need to discover what they are doing and not doing that is actually keeping people away. Perhaps the beginning for this is to recognise that a normal institutional characteristic of the typical congregation is that, like other organisations, it tends to be benign towards insiders (members) and hostile towards outsiders (non-members)." (Schaller, chapter 16 of Dean R. Hoge and David A. Roozen (eds), *Understanding Church Growth and Decline 1950-1978*)

Most church groups in Australia, including Churches of Christ, seem at present to be more able to communicate effectively with the middle classes in dormitory suburbs than with working class or ethnic groups. (Peter Kaldor, *Who Goes Where? Who Doesn't Dare?*, chapter 6) This should make us all the more determined to be flexible enough to adjust, especially as Jesus and Paul indicated that the poor and underprivileged will respond most positively to the challenge to Christian faith. (Luke 6:20-21, 1 Corinthians 1:26) This should be an even greater challenge when we realise that working-class people are less likely to have "no religious affiliation" than middle- and upper-middle-class people and the more highly educated people are less likely to have conventional religious beliefs. (Peter Kaldor, *Who Goes Where? Who Doesn't Dare?*, page 118) One relevant factor seems to be the working classes' "anti institutional" stance.

It is God's will that the church should grow and under many circumstances, if his people are faithful to Biblical priorities and open to the power of the Spirit of God, it will.

### **III What specific biblical emphases do we need to recapture?**

#### **1. An acceptance of the cost of discipleship**

Jesus made it clear that there is a very strong commitment needed on the part of the Christian. He said, "No one can serve two masters." (Matthew 6:24) He told the parable of the man who sold everything he had to buy the treasure of the Kingdom of God. (Matthew 13:44) He warned, "Anyone who does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me." (Matthew 10:38 etc.) As Churches of Christ we must return to a priority of commitment that takes Jesus seriously.

The strange thing is that this is the gospel to which people will be attracted. Dean Kelley, in his book *Why Conservative Churches Are Growing*, put forward the thesis that by fitting in with the cultural dictates of this generation the Western churches, particularly the mainline Protestant denominations, are signing their own death warrant. Other sociologists have shown that this is certainly not the whole story as to why some churches are declining, but it does have sufficient validity for us to consider it seriously.

Kelley says that this type of Christianity provides people with answers to ultimate questions, which is the major function religion has in human life. The secularisation of Christian mainline Protestant churches has left people to feel that the church does not have anything unique to offer any more.

It is a mistake to think that this "strictness" or "seriousness" necessarily involves an authoritarian approach to Christianity and/or a fundamentalist doctrinal approach.

#### **3. Make the local congregation the centre of activity**

One of the key reasons why the Restoration Movement grew so rapidly during the 19th century in the United States of America was that its structures were flexible enough to allow personnel to be on the frontiers and their methods were not so strongly established as to be out of date or irrelevant. The building of a powerful centralised bureaucracy is counterproductive to a vital, relevant church. There is the need for good communication and co-operation in functions that are possibly best undertaken by a number of local congregations together, e.g. training for ministry, co-ordination or new church planting etc. Conference should only exist to serve the needs and to foster the ministry of the local church.

This basic of our movement appears to be in keeping with modern theories of management, e.g. Naisbitt, 1984, Peters and Waterman, 1984. Networking or loosely coupled systems are presented now as the most efficient structures for dealing with contexts in which rapid change is taking place. Naisbitt states that "hierarchical structures have been shown quite clearly to be a failure because they are too inflexible and do not facilitate people talking to one another. Those who would change the world, begin doing it locally, in clusters of like-minded people with a single ideological purpose." (John Naisbitt, *Megatrends! Ten New Directions Transforming Our Lives*, page 191) Networks emerge when people are trying to change society "No matter what the cause, the goals or beliefs, and no matter what type of movement" it is—political, social, religious...whenever people organise themselves to change some aspect of society, a nonbureaucratic but very effective form of organisational structure seems to emerge." (Hine as quoted by Naisbitt, page 196) In the networking environment rewards come by empowering others, not by climbing over them.

Within Australian Churches of Christ we must resist the tendency to develop more and more "denominational structures". In analysing why in the United States of America during the period 1776-1850 the Methodists and Baptist churches grew while other churches declined, Finke & Stark comment, "It appears that the situation facing the churches in this period placed very stern demands on denominations to become what might best be described as lean, mean, competitive organisations prepared to seek souls to the ends of civilisation and beyond. Perhaps local 'congregationalism' was not a sufficient basis for meeting these demands, but it appears to have been necessary." (Finke and Stark, page 34) Movements that have had considerable influence in recent years through networking rather than hierarchies would include those that aim to protect the environment, diminish the exploitation of women and children and reduce the threat of nuclear war. Churches have been even more conservative and unwilling to adapt to the prevailing conditions than have secular institutions. Let us ensure that we have lean administrative machinery in order to remain as flexible as is constructively possible and put most of our resources into the frontier.

#### **4. Have a strong, flexible church planting program**

One of the hallmarks of our movement during the 19th century was that we were where the people were. This required the willingness and ability to move geographically as the frontier advanced. Those who were advancing the cause were prepared to "travel light" and be resourceful in how a witness was established.

people to respond emotionally to communication that has feeling in it, because the younger generations are quite open to appropriate emotional expression. A challenge that only deals with the intellect will not be as effective as one that deals with the whole person. Some of us who are afraid of any emotional expression may need God to free us up in this area! When God is in control, our emotional responses will be healthy and appropriate.

For many people the greatest need is for resources to cope with the pressures of life. This "strength to cope" is a modern theme that is biblical (2 Corinthians 12:9) and touches people at the point of a felt need.

## 2. Foster church structures that build fellowship and community

The church is essentially a community. God has not only given us himself but he has also given us one another. We are called to build up one another. (1 Thessalonians 5:11) The New Testament church seems to have met in homes for their teaching, prayers, fellowship and breaking of bread. (Acts 2:42-45)

Postwar generations have a yearning for community. In our society because of the growth of bureaucratic organisations in the state and in industry, personal contact becomes something that is more highly prized than it was in traditional society in which all relationships were personal relationships. Loneliness is the plague of modern Western civilisation. Most people have many relationships of convenience and circumstance, but few people whom they can trust. The church therefore has a great opportunity, in keeping with its essential nature, to develop structures for the building of closer relationships.

This means that the effective church will place more and more emphasis on study, prayer, fellowship and ministry to one another in homes. Perhaps we will move from the transient and flexible programming of small groups to an emphasis on geographically determined house groups. These groups would meet each week for two to three hours with a maximum number of about 20 involved in each group. They would be the major opportunity for Christians to be built up in their faith and for new Christians to find nurture, support and fellowship. Many geographically determined house groups could be part of a church. The meetings of all the house groups combined would major on praise, inspiration and preaching that has an evangelistic edge. Under this model the "breaking of bread" may appropriately take place in the house groups. This change of emphasis from "Sunday worship services" as the major meetings of the week for Christians would be for the purpose of offering Christian support, ministry and building community in a more effective way than is happening in most of our churches at the moment. In the house group context there is the possibility of developing support and accountability relationships that are very important to Christian growth. The "Seriousness" Kelley presents could develop initially within the house group. This structure of love and care can then allow Christian discipline to again be an important part of the church. New Testament Christianity needs the smaller group in order that James 1:16a ("So then confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another, so that you will be healed.") and similar ministries can become more of a reality. The house group is also the context in which an exposure to and appreciation of the heterogeneous nature of the church is best developed.

"There is no reason why the members of a non-fundamentalist congregation could not sit down and ask themselves (as the Anabaptists did) what, if anything, they are prepared to be serious about, and then do it." (Kelley, chapter 15, page 343, in Hoge and Roozen) This seriousness can come from a closer accountability to one another through the development of Christian community.

People are looking for personal meaning for life and will respond to a strong counterculture explanation of the realities of life and a strong indication from the people of the church that this alternative way, when really believed and lived, works. We have tended to have Christian faith as one of the emphases of our lives rather than the emphasis. The ways in which we use resources such as time, energy and finance show where our heart really is. Let's get serious!

How many of us, if offered a promotion that would bring more money, prestige and power, but that would take us away from family and leave us too tired to share vitally in Christian fellowship, would choose God's way rather than money?

## 2. An evangelistic priority

As mentioned earlier this was a strong emphasis of the early Restoration Movement, particularly in the United States of America. The Churches of Christ should have the same emphasis on outreach as did Jesus. He called those whom we know as his disciples to "Follow me and I will make you fishers of men." (Matthew 4: 19)

There is a tendency for a church's emphasis to change from conversion to education; from addressing matters of faith directly related to the experience and concern of everyday life to discourses on theological matters. Studies have shown that when people become Christians, because of the change of life style that ensues, there is a tendency for their income to rise. There is a negative correlation between the average level of family income within a church and the emphasis placed on evangelism. A strong positive correlation was found between family income and liberal theology. The higher the average family income the less distinctively Christian is the life style. This is called the "Redemption and Lift" phenomenon by sociologists. (Hoge, chapter 8, page 343, in Hoge and Roozen) This research indicates one aspect of the drift towards denominationalism is that the church fits more and more comfortably within the prevailing culture and gradually loses its evangelistic fervour. The 1986 Joint Church Census. Report No. 1 shows that NSW Churches of Christ have almost triple the percentage of people with university degrees compared with the general population (14.6% cf. 5.2%), a lower percentage of Housing Commission residents than for NSW generally (4.1% cf. 5.8%). These figures give the indication that the Redemption and Lift process is true of Churches of Christ in New South Wales. Therefore we have probably lost evangelistic fervour.

Evangelism is likely to be most effective when the membership of a church reflects reasonably accurately the demographic characteristics of that church's ministry area. Congregations that thrive and change are those that relate effectively to their context and program towards that context's future rather than hanging on to a past. Some churches don't seem to be able or willing to keep up with social changes in their area and therefore become increasingly socially and evangelistically distant from their neighbourhood.

Like all energy systems, social organisation gradually run down—they are subsiding towards a state of rest. This is true of most churches after their initial enthusiastic phase and is, I believe, true of Churches of Christ in Australia with respect to evangelism.

Outreach disturbs the comfort zone and we have become too comfortable.

I sense within myself that my need to be regarded by my neighbours as "a good bloke" who could never be accused of being a religious fanatic takes priority over their need to at least hear the good news I have.

### 3. An excellence in our capacity to love others

There is a question mark in my mind as to whether a gaining of excellence in love (1 Corinthians 13) would involve a recapturing on the part of the Restoration Movement, or whether we need to go right back to the New Testament Church for this. The 19th century Restoration Movement, particularly in the United States of America, was primarily a restoration of biblical ideas. The major impact made was doctrinal, followed by organisational novelty. The Anabaptists, who had many of the same doctrinal emphases about three centuries earlier during the Reformation, appear to have expressed a great deal of love within their groups. This was the basis of their strong discipline. Alexander Campbell, however, was a man of great intelligence who was able to argue the Restoration case against all comers very well. Perhaps one of the reasons why Churches of Christ in Australia struggle to place a primary emphasis on love is that we never really had it. If that is so, then it is understandable that the movement would and should, after initially flourishing, gradually die.

The caring expressed within the New Testament church is clearly seen in passages such as Acts 2:42-45 and Acts 4:23-31. Paul commends to the Corinthian church that they follow a way that was more important than the expression of the gifts—love. We need to take seriously that we can have gifted speaking and preaching, deep faith, total commitment and accurate doctrine within our churches, but without love it will all come to nothing. (1 Corinthians 13:1-3) This love gives us a quality of character and personality that leads to non-Christians taking great notice of what God has given us and what we want to share. This is the unique and powerful indication to the non-Christian world that we are disciples of Christ. (John 13:35) This love is developed by us opening ourselves not only to the word of God but also to the Spirit of God. Love is the first of the fruits of the Spirit. This love will be developed through fellowship and ministry together. We need to allow the word of God to prompt us to open ourselves to the ministry of the Spirit of God, in order that the personality and character of God will be formed in us.

In training people for ministry we should facilitate the development of the capacity to love others deeply. This spiritual capacity is demonstrated by teachers being able to love deeply with the sacrificial, gentle, patient, strong, honest love of God. Lack of love is the foundering point of many a ministry.

Even if we have the purest doctrine in the world, our witness will be of no real value unless we develop the capacity to love.

This love will be demonstrated by us being willing to put ourselves out, to make some sacrifices in time, money and comforts to help those who are within the fellowship and then those outside it. Our love will be kind and costly. We will willingly experience some personal deprivation because we care. This love will unite the fellowship and amaze the world.

Love is the strongest and healthiest motivation for outreach. We evangelise because we care about the earthly and eternal well-being of people, not in order to boost numbers or appear successful. Then we will be able to reproduce Christians who love. Jesus

commanded that his disciples love one another as he loved them. (John 13:34-35) Thus they matured in love because Jesus' love had won them. This love will reach people where they are and will be prepared to pay a heavy price in order that they come to know the love of God.

### 4. An openness through prayer to the life changing work of the Spirit of God

The Restoration Movement has had a very strong biblical doctrinal basis since its inception. Churches of Christ in Australia have expressed this doctrinal emphasis very strongly. There is the need however to demonstrate that this doctrine, which is Biblical, is more than just intellectual knowledge. Christian faith is for living. (John 10:10) Our doctrine should guide us to salvation that includes the strong work of the Spirit of God to change us as people. We need to be given personally and corporately to this spiritual growth towards Christlikeness.

## IV What can we do to re-establish frontier evangelism?

### 1. Start from where the people are

We need to be flexible in method. An ancient, true message expressed in a modern, pertinent way is very powerful. Paul's principle of "being all things to all men" was designed to have us start where the non-Christian people are. He went into the synagogues in order to get the best opportunities. His message on Mars Hill in Athens was pertinent to the thinking of the people in that knowledge-oriented city. (Acts 17:16-34) Our training for ministry should look critically at any emphasis that will take trainees away from a capacity to communicate well with the people to whom they wish to impart the gospel. Thus those who are called to evangelise the working-class people will be very practical and down to earth—straightforward in their communication. Historically the most effective religious movements have involved ministry from people who identified with and belonged to the people with whom they were sharing. (Roger Finke and Rodney Stark, "How the Upstart Sects Won America", in the *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 18(1), 1989, pages 27-44)

Meetings that have an outreach emphasis should, for example, have the type of music that communicates well to those we are seeking to reach, e.g. if we are seeking to reach young people, then music that appeals to them and has a Christian message should be used. This will threaten the comfort zone of some of the church people. The Redemption and Lift process seems to operate in this area.

The themes of our message will take account of the issues of the subculture to which we are communicating. Thus "meaning of life" issues will be expressed in ways that will connect with the peoples' experiences. Communication methods will take account of the most effective communication which takes place in the culture.

In Australia we cannot ignore the influence of television. It has shaped the expectations and therefore the responses of the younger generations, if not all generations. For this reason I believe church services should be well organised and well presented within a basically low-key, warm, personal atmosphere. We should include the opportunity for

# THE RACE BEFORE US

The work continues,  
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Support the Overseas Mission Board Annual Offering in July

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## The Race in Vanuatu

Few people who come to while away their time in this timeless South Pacific paradise have any concept of a race being run here. In Port Vila, the capital, there is the Vanuatu Cup run by about ten horses on what can be vaguely recognised as a race track. There is a yacht race once a year. Oh, and I must not forget the round-the-island relay.

But there is a race on today and the pace is hotting up. It is over the issue of eternal life. In Vila you will see the men on bicycles with their white shirts and black ties. The Jehovah's Witnesses are making inroads. The Baha'i religion has sent missionaries all over the country. There are some pockets of cargo cult belief. There has been a resurgence of animistic customs in some places. Legalism and deadness are problems in many of the mainline churches, while breakaway groups lack sound doctrinal foundations.

Amidst all this the church of the Lord Jesus Christ surges forward triumphantly. The Spirit of God is moving powerfully in many places and Christians are becoming the front runners in all walks of life. The magistrate for Ambae/Maewo, Samuel Bule, is paid to go from place to place holding court. Each night on tour he is sharing, witnessing and teaching about the Lord Jesus. On Malekula both the chief agricultural officer and the education adviser move around with their work and their Lord receives the glory for what they do. In Vila and on Tanna few people go to

hospital without first going to ask Pastor Wilson and Pastor Shadrak respectively to pray for their healing and many of them never get to the hospital after that. They go home already healed and witnessing to what Christ has done for them.

There are those who go to their grave without Christ but few go without having been given the chance to receive Christ as Lord and Saviour. There is a real commitment to perseverance in this race, witnessing to all that Christ has done.

Those in the race here are very appreciative of the prayer and financial support of the church in Australia. There are less missionaries here now. You might not get as much news of the victories and struggles but your support is still vital. The church in Vanuatu remains faithful in their prayer support of the Australian church, which has been so supportive in the past.

—Lyaal Muller, Vanuatu



Pastors and their wives at Annual Conference, Vanuatu, May 1990

## The Race of Faith

Pastor David Tabi is running a race in the northern areas of Santo Island, Vanuatu. Pastor David has a burden for the souls of men and has a faith in God that will allow him to finish the race with distinction. He is unhindered and disentangled and his eyes are set on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith. David's race is based on a strong faith that the Lord is in control of his life and will provide his needs and direct his paths.

Money is a real problem in this South Pacific country, especially for pastors who often have to fend for themselves or work in a tentmaker-type ministry. David has very limited finance and what he has is needed for essentials for his wife and two young children.

Once he took a truck with many other students and the driver would not take any payment for the ride. David felt that the Lord was telling him to pay and so he insisted that the man take the 1,000 vatu note that he had. After a time the driver did take it and this left David with no money. He had a peace about it and felt that the Lord would provide. Not long afterwards he was given an envelope and, upon opening it, found it contained 8,000 vatu. To this day he doesn't know who gave it to him.

On another occasion he had the money to pay for a plane trip back to his island but felt that he should pay for a fellow student who had no money. He did this and was left with no money. Despite this he went to the airport with the other students but was not checked onto the

flight. Not long after arrival another pastor arrived and gave David a ticket to his destination. This had not been planned nor talked about.

The last story, of many that could be told, is when he needed to come down to town. He walked down to the nearest village where there was a truck but he was late, as the truck had left for town at first light. Now David faced two problems, as he had no transport and had only 100 vatu, which he had found that morning. The normal fare on a truck is 200 vatu. While sitting on a stump of a tree praying, he heard a truck and found it was the truck he had come to travel in. The driver had got a considerable distance along the road and then turned around to get someone to go with him as he didn't want to travel that far on his own. The amount charged at the end of the trip was 100 vatu.

David feels secure in the ministry that he is in because he has never found that God has failed him when he exercised faith. He runs with perseverance the race marked out for him.

This is a tremendous encouragement for me as I also struggle to run my race. Seeing brothers and sisters who we are assisting growing in the Lord and maturing in the faith is worth all the investment that has been made over many years. The need to support our family in Vanuatu as they exercise ministry to their own people is vital.

—Roger Bawden,  
Vanuatu



Roger Bawden and David Tabi

# THE RACE BEFORE US

As we run with faith,  
We remember...

"...they shall run and not be weary"  
(Isaiah 40:31, RSV)

# Calendar

## National

- July**  
1 Overseas Mission Offering  
15 National Bible Sunday
- August**  
5-12 "One World Week"
- September**  
2 Federal Board of Christian Education Annual Offering  
New South Wales
- July**  
2 CWF, Burwood  
1-6 Net 9/10 Camp, Stanwell Tops  
Junior High Camp, Otford
- August**  
3 CWF, Burwood  
3-5 Canberra Camp  
5 Community Care Sunday  
18 DCD Seminar on Prayer and Growth
- September**  
7-9 CWF Camp, Stanwell Tops  
15 Community Care Fete, Pendle Hill  
22-27 Mini Midgets Camp, Stanwell Tops  
28-1 Oct Black Stump
- ### Queensland
- August**  
3-5 Northern CWF Camp, Magnetic Island  
28 Queensland CWF Rally, Boondall  
South Australia
- July**  
2-28 Kennon Callahan Visit  
21 Eyre Peninsula Conference  
21-22 Social Justice Workshop  
23 CMS Dinner, Marion
- August**  
2 Women's Ministry Thursday Focus, Grote St  
11 Children's Ministry Seminar  
18 YMC Oldies Night  
19 Community Care Offering  
25 State Board  
28 Ministers' Association
- September**  
7-9 Family Enrichment Weekend  
22-26 Teens' Camp
- ### Victoria
- July**  
20-22 Ski Touring Weekend  
27-29 Ski Touring Weekend  
28-29 Children's Ministry Leadership Training Weekend
- August**  
3-5 Explorers' Ski Weekend  
4 Central and Northern District Conference, Swan Hill  
10-12 Ski Touring Weekend  
11 State Youth Games  
17-19 Sunraysia District Annual Convention  
19 Dept of Community Care Annual Offering
- September**  
1 Children's Sports Event  
7-9 CWF Camp, Monbulk  
14 Joint Presidents' Reception  
14-15 CCTC Prospective Students' Seminar  
21-23 Western Victoria Conference Family Camp, Halls Gap  
24-28 Youth Camp No 1  
30-5 Oct Youth Camp No 2  
Western Australia
- September**  
14 Women's Auxiliary Conference Feature

# News

## Churches of Christ Top in Worship Attendance

By far the most devoted church attenders are adherents to the Churches of Christ, according to a census analysis of five mainstream Protestant faiths.

The study, which took in questionnaires from more than 2,200 congregations, found 405 of each thousand people professing adherence to the Churches of Christ actually went to church to worship regularly.

A former President of the Federal Conference of the Churches of Christ—established in Australia about 150 years ago—Neil Gilmore, said in Canberra yesterday he was encouraged by the figures.

"One of the reasons I suspect is that we do not baptise infants," he said.

"So the decision to join our church tends to be an adult choice. We find that once that decision has been made people tend to stick.

"Another thing is that we are a small church with a close-knit membership with a lot of pastoral care involved."

Bottom of the attendance class is the biggest of the Protestant churches, the Anglican Church of Australia. The survey suggests only about 40 of each 1,000 professed Anglicans worship in church.

The most devout, behind the Churches of Christ, are those belonging to the Uniting Church, where 105 of each 1,000 adherents worship.

The Lutherans are only fractionally behind with 104 per 1,000. The Presbyterians number 66 per 1,000.

The study suggests by far the most patronised congregations are Churches of Christ assemblies in what are described in the survey as "transient" city areas—suburbs with rapid population turnovers. About 907 people out of 1,000 in such areas go to church, the survey indicates.

The least patronised churches seem likely to be Anglican in what are described as "new blue collar" metropolitan regions. Only 23 per 1,000 nominal Anglicans go to church in such suburbs.

The survey, largely organised by the research division of the Uniting Church Board of Mission indicates people of all the Protestant denominations in small rural communities (42 per 1,000 church adherents) are more likely to go to church, with those in blue collar, multicultural suburbs (13 per 1,000) the least likely.

The Churches of Christ, similar in beliefs to the Baptist church, does best in all surveyed communities and is challenged only by the Lutherans in specific communities.

About 266 Lutherans per 1,000, for example, attend church in small rural regions and 228 per thousand go in large regional towns.

—Errol Simpler in the *Weekend Australian*

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# Classifieds

## BIRTHS

**BYRNE (BROWN)** Patsy and Alan thank God for a beautiful little daughter Sarah Kathleen, sister of Simon and Nathan. Stillborn on 12 June 1990. In God's loving care.

## ENGAGEMENTS

**O'BRIEN—LYDEAMORE** Ian and Beth of Ballarat have much pleasure in announcing the engagement of their eldest daughter, Meredith, to Darren, son of Leila and Murray of Craigmore, on 12 May. Love and congratulations from both families.

## GOLDEN WEDDING

**WAINWRIGHT—REESON** Owen and Gladys, together with their children Robyn, John, Stephen, Geoffrey, Lindsey and Debby, and their families, praise God for the blessings of the last 50 years. Owen and Gladys' wedding on 13 July 1940 was the first in the Seven Hills chapel. They are now fellowship-

ping with the Moorebank Church of Christ.

## DEATHS

**RITCHIE**, Denzil Charles, on 20 May 1990. Dearly loved and loving husband of Dora. After many long years of patient suffering, gone to be with the Lord he loved. Sadly missed.

## IN MEMORIAM

**HARTNEY** Jim 22.6.87. I speak your name with love and pride, I smile through tears I try to hide, Thank you Jim for the years we shared, The love you gave and the way you cared, I miss you Jim and always will. Your loving wife Betty.  
**JONES**, Dr Lloyd Edwin. Treasured, loving memories of our dear husband, father and Grandy, who passed away to be with his Lord, 24 June 1986—Isabella, David, Wendy and family. Missed, but his ministry still continues on, and we thank God for every remembrance of him.

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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.

## Perestroika in Action!

During the next four years the aim of the United Bible Societies is 30 million Bibles for USSR and Eastern Europe. It is the largest single project ever embarked upon by the United Bible Societies. Due to the social, political and economic changes in the last 12 months, it is now possible for these countries to import large quantities of Bibles unhindered. This new-found acceptance is truly perestroika (restructuring) in action! "Operation Family" is the response of

the Bible Society in Australia to this initiative. The project aims to provide a Bible, New Testament or Children's Bible to at least 70,000 families in the USSR and Eastern Europe in its first year of operation. "A turning point in history has been reached. Australians have clearly indicated that they want to help the peoples of USSR and Eastern Europe. The Bible Society will provide the Bible—a treasured book that millions of these people want but just don't have," said Bruce Pearce, Australian General Secretary.

During the launch of Operation Family a video that graphically demonstrated the desperate need or Bibles in the USSR and Eastern Europe showed how Operation Family can deliver the Scriptures to two families for a cost of \$15. Financial support should be sent to the Bible Society, 23 Liverpool Street, Ingleburn 2565.

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## Glasses at Eight Months!



**Yajaira**

Little Yajaira was born in Costa Rica with cataracts blinding both eyes.

When Yajaira's parents realised she had a handicap they took her to Christian Blind Mission's "Caravan of Good Hope" in San Jose.

Dr Montero operated on Yajaira, removing the opaque

lenses from both her eyes. This means that Yajaira, aided by a strong pair of spectacles, will be able to see clearly.

Christian Blind Mission relies on supporters in Australia, whose financial support is saving many children like Yajaira from a lifetime of blindness.

## StreetWalker

musical

has had to be rescheduled to early 1991.

Details following. Apologies.

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Afternoon tea will be provided

# Kids Klub, the Place for Children

by Jenni White

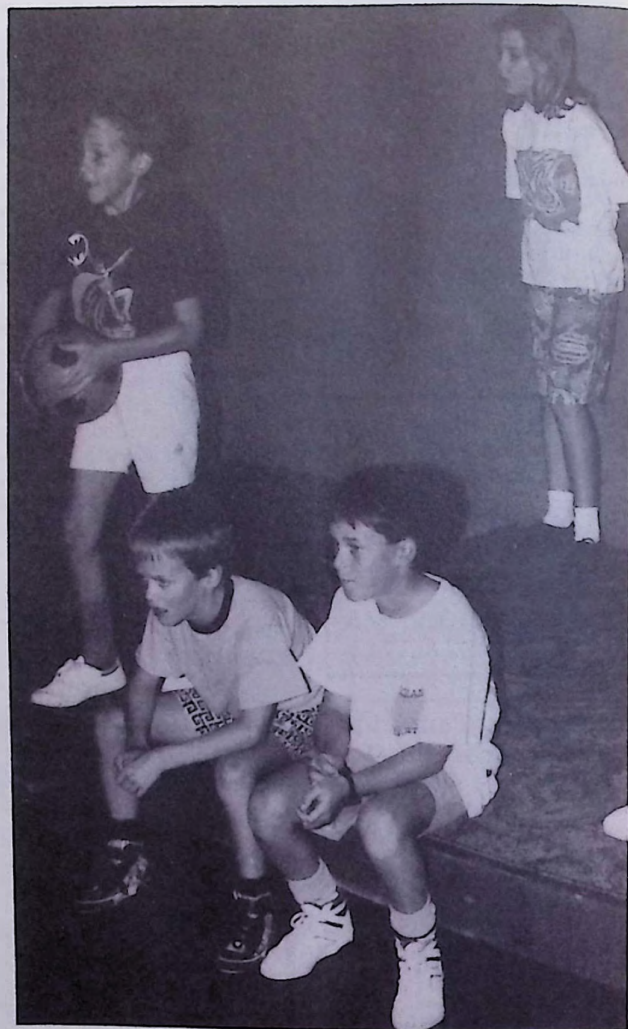
**M**any churches are now following the trend towards afternoon "clubs" for children in the primary age group. As defined in the Concise Oxford Dictionary a club is an "association of persons united by some common interests". Too often I think churches fall into a trap where they expect children to act like adults. Many words and phrases we so often use in our Christian circles are far beyond most children and therefore don't give children a sense of "belonging", instead they can make children feel inadequate and left out. Like all of us, children need to feel

they "belong" and if they don't "belong" in our churches they will find somewhere else where they do "belong". To me, an afternoon club that is Christ centred is the most important club children can find themselves in. It helps children feel they are the church of today as much as the church of tomorrow. Afternoon "clubs" give children a "real" sense of belonging by providing a comfortable atmosphere where they can learn about God at their level of thinking. The program I run at Caringbah, NSW, church, is called "Kids Klub"—the name speaks for itself...it is a "Klub" for Kids. Our "Kids Klub" is designed to meet the needs of the children by showing the children they are loved and accepted no matter what, giving the children an opportunity to be "children" and teaching the children at their level.

It also meets the needs of the parents by giving them a couple of hours to do what they want to do.

The program runs every Thursday night between 4.30 and 7.30 pm. It involves games, worship (story time), dinner and craft, all for the cost of \$2.

The main aims for Kids Klub are to give children the opportunity to learn about God and themselves, to help children develop a positive attitude towards the church—to have a real sense of "belonging" and to help develop a positive self-esteem.



The program is as follows:

- 4.30 pm Games: This is a time when the children release any surplus energy and have fun!

- 5.30 pm Worship (story time): This includes singing, a drama and a small group discussion.

- 6 pm Dinner: Hot dogs, pies, sausage rolls, hamburgers etc. Great time to talk and have fellowship.

- 6.30 pm Craft: Crafts include resources used from Children for Christ. These activities look good and therefore the children are interested in doing them. It also develops children's self-esteem as they see a good finished product.

I have come into contact with many successful Kids Klub type programs. This shows children are out there waiting to "belong" and it's up to us to make sure we're meeting their needs, not just our own.

If you would like any information about what is involved in setting up a Kids Klub in your church please don't hesitate to call me at Caringbah Church of Christ on (02) 524 8849, or contact David Young, Children for Christ Resource Centre, First Floor, 288-290 King Street, Newtown 2042. Phone (02) 516 5431.

• Jenni White is a member of the Caringbah, NSW, church.



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Will of God or Will of Allah?

Youth Discipleship

by Ian Todd

In the world series cricket match in Lahore in 1987, the manager of the Pakistani team is alleged to have publicly stated that the match with Australia was a contest between Islam and Christianity. During the game, fanatical Muslims chanted prayers for Allah's support. They were shocked when the Australians won. But a Muslim is always consoled by the belief that "everything is the will of Allah".

Unfortunately, some Christians have an understanding of the will of God more akin to a Muslim's understanding of the will of Allah. "Submission" (for that is what Islam means) to the will of Allah is resignation to predetermined events that are immutable and unchangeable. The will of Allah is everything—happy or tragic, for "it is written".

In the biblical narrative, however, we observe that God has always given a high degree of autonomy and responsibility to his people. God has given his people the responsibility to nurture creation, defend and champion truth and justice, and restore what has become marred. Jesus gave us imperatives to love, reconcile, give, go the second mile, and be salt and light in the world. He gave imperatives to change the world and heal what is broken, not to resign ourselves to predetermined events that are unchangeable.

God delights in the creative expressions of initiative and responsibility of his children, as any parent delights in the creative responsibility of their own children. God's will is expressed in the scriptures in general terms, like love. The detailed have to be fleshed out by us in creative love and initiative, which is harder than being told precisely what we must do, and more liberating than submitting to the inevitable, as if it were "the will of Allah".

—Stephen Curkpatrick

When I was a teenager I became a Christian. Two weeks later I was started on a six-week follow-up study in which I answered questions on a study sheet, handed them to a man each week and when he had finished marking the answers he gave them back. After the course I was deemed to be a knowledgeable Christian who should be able to stand on my own two feet. Two years later I had left the church because I felt a failure to God, the church, and myself. I was very mixed up and felt that nobody cared one way or the other.

The greatest example from which we can learn concerning discipling is Jesus himself. He didn't tell Peter to do a quick six-week discipleship course and then send him off to make disciples wherever he went. Jesus was a model to his disciples. He was with them all the time. It was a matter of watch me, listen to me, ask me, learn from me, and then go out and do what you have learnt.

We need to spend time with our young people. It is an important step in their lives and we need to help them through this initial stage of the Christian life. A person learns more from someone when they are in constant contact with them and even though they learn the good points and the bad points of that person, they also learn that he or she cares about them.

• Ian Todd is associate minister at the Pine Rivers, Qld, church.

**"The greatest example from which we can learn concerning discipling is Jesus himself. He didn't tell Peter to do a quick six-week discipleship course and then send him off to make disciples wherever he went"**

They care enough to be available to answer all the questions that are floating about in the young person's head.

When young people take that first step in the Christian life they are not really sure of what they are doing. I don't believe anyone is, no matter what age they are. All they really know is that Jesus died for them and they love him and want to share their life with him. They don't really know how he could be God in a human body, why he loves them, or why God even bothered creating mankind in the first place. They don't know the answers to these and other questions but they want to know.

Jesus was there for his disciples when they needed him. The answer for our young people is to be there for them continually teaching and encouraging them and when they make mistakes we need to correct them. We need to show them the love of God and to be good models for them. Very importantly also is the necessity for us to teach them how to read the Scriptures, to pray to God, to listen to God, to be a working part of the body of Jesus.

Studies are important for the spiritual growth of our young people but we need to give them more. We need to give them not just the love of Christ, but Christ himself.

**"We need to spend time with our young people. We need to help them through this initial stage of the Christian life"**

Edited by Andrew Ball, Field Director of the Vic-Tas Department of Mission, Education and Development and the Federal Board of Christian Education.

## A Letter from an Adventurer

**D**ear Mr Editor, Sometime ago, ah yes! way back in 1969, I reported to your predecessor the results of the first Explorer Tassie Trek, held in January 1969. At the conclusion of the report I commented that the lasting result would be best assessed in seven years time. Now, 21 years have passed and, understandably, *The Australian Christian* has not got back to me, so, being a very meek and mild fellow, I will grab the bull by the proverbial horns and submit this summary for your microscopic investigation.

Since that first trek 22 treks have been conducted, plus four canoeing expeditions and a cycling trek. As well as treks through Cradle Mountain-Lake St Clair National Park, adventures have been held in the Victorian Alps, the Snowy Mountains, the Flinders Ranges, Southwest Tasmania, New Zealand, the Cobberas, Vic, and even in the USA.

The Explorer Committee developed into the Adventure Committee and has grown from that humble beginning of a single bushwalking trek into an organisation that embraces canoeing, ski touring, rockclimbing, canoe polo, cycling, surfing and trail bike riding, as well as the occasional overseas tour.

There has also been an Explorer team each year in the Murray Marathon from its inception in 1970. The Explorer Canoe Club came into being from the committee and organises canoeing days and weekends ranging from basic flat water to adventurous white water canoeing and rafting. Added to this is a subcommittee that organises canoe polo, which is growing in popularity and has seen some significant success.

Ski touring in our organisation was introduced about 12 years ago and has also been an outstanding success, with ski touring weekends being conducted to cover beginners

through to advanced skills.

The Explorer Adventure Trust was introduced at an early stage as a means of providing financial backing for the activities of the committee, especially in the realm of equipment. The trust has made it possible to purchase a fleet of canoes (kayaks and Canadians), rafts, trailers to transport same plus a rack attachment to carry up to 30 bicycles, ski touring equipment for at least 25 persons, bush walking equipment for a party up to 20 persons, rockclimbing gear, compasses for orienteering, maps and numerous other items to be used to promote our activities in some way.

Ho hum! you may say, after reading all that. For what has it got to do with Christianity and the work of his church? A very good question! So don't stop reading. I'll attempt to fill you in.

The original concept was that committed Christian leaders would have the opportunity to "live out" their deep belief of the presence of Jesus in their lives in the closeness developed by being together with others in the rough and tough environment that is evidenced in adventure activities and at the same time provide an opportunity for young Christians to grow in strength and character.

In other words we would have the opportunity to walk, eat, sleep together in sometimes pleasant and oft times trying conditions. We would have the times of sharing around the campfire, or on a mountain top, or a peaceful lake, or a mountain stream.

Well! my dear Mr Editor, we have done all this and far more. We have worshipped on the mountain top, the peaceful lake and even the snow. We have been in situations where large parties have sat silently after a time of devotion for 15 minutes lost in "wonder, love and praise". We have heard people



Les Stewart

marvel at the grandeur and majesty of God's handiwork as we have watched from the mountain top, we have sat spellbound at the beauty of the sunset/sunrise and the reflections upon numerous lakes.

Ah yes! you say, sounds impressive, but what about the results? I'm glad you asked that question for it is the real crunch line. For I see a significant band of people, especially the young, who are now actively serving the Lord in our churches: some in the ministry, many in local church leadership and even some on the mission field. In fact I've had missionaries write expressing their appreciation of the basic training received through being involved in our treks. And as for young couples who met while on an adventure and are now "happily married" I'm afraid they are far too numerous to begin to name.

Of course there have been some failures and disappointments, but these are far outweighed by what has been positively achieved, through

the Lord's guidance.

The committee, which includes three of the originals, is warmed by the achievements and humbled to know that God has blessed this area of outreach and Christian development.

I, for one, am deeply grateful for the Lord's leading in this area of my life and thank him for using one who felt so insufficient for the task.

Your co-worker in the Lord,  
Les Stewart

P.S. We are in the process of planning a 21st birthday celebration in September of this year. Look for an advert in the "AC". Although we are sending out invitations there may be some we have inadvertently overlooked. We would like to hear from these folks—please contact John Sallows, 4 Fuller Street, Mitcham 3132 (phone (03) 872 3806), Les Stewart, 51 Alston Street, Thornbury 3071 (phone (03) 484 6142) or the Vic-Tas Department of Mission, Education and Development.

• Ephesians 6:14

## Do the Right Thing?

by Greg Murphy

I remember (painfully) a period in my late teens when I allowed my financial obligations to exceed my income. The shame and embarrassment of my dilemma was so great that for some time I avoided communication with some of my creditors: the knowledge of my "unrighteousness" in their eyes paralysed me. Such a reaction on my part was both irrational and immature. A rational and mature reaction would have been to negotiate a revised repayment schedule and regain my "right standing".

This example has both similarities and contrasts to the New Testament teaching of "righteousness". The Greek word *dikaioúne* connotes the innocence which stems from having fulfilled one's obligations. The embarrassment and shame at being "financially" unrighteous before one's creditors parallels, albeit infinitesimally so, the embarrassment and shame of being found "morally" unrighteous before one's creator. The gospel then is all about negotiating a less embarrassing set of obligations for "morally" bankrupt creatures.

The writings of the apostle Paul are replete with teaching on this subject. In the first three chapters of Romans Paul argues that all people (both Jews and Gentiles) are "unrighteous" in God's sight: the Gentiles (Romans 1:18-32) because they chose to ignore God (and thereby opted out of their obligations) and the Jews (Romans 2:1-29) because they failed to fulfil the obligations of the law. So he concludes that "there is no-one righteous, not even one" (Romans 3:10). Paul then delivers the good news that God has announced in Jesus Christ the long-awaited "renegotiation" of obligations for all people to which the Law and the Prophets pointed (Romans 3:21). In the one event of the death of Jesus, the ground was laid for all his disciples to be declared "righteous" by God (Romans 5:18-19).

Personal experience had taught Paul the significance of this revelation. In a letter to the Philippian Church he shows no hesitation in abandoning his meticulous pharisaical efforts to justify himself before God in favour of accepting the free gift of righteousness offered by God to believers in Christ (Philippians 3:7-11). His strong opposition to Peter in Antioch (Galatians 2:11-14) and the Christian Pharisees at Jerusalem (Acts 15) arose from this strong belief that Christians must see their faith in Jesus, and that alone, as the basis of their acceptance before God.

That Paul exhorts Christians to take up the breastplate of righteousness indicates his apprehension that Satan will attempt to make them feel once again embarrassed and ashamed before God and inclined to abide by Christian morality out of guilt rather than out of relieved innocence. Indeed, Christians will inevitably fail to keep to their moral obligations: that's precisely why Jesus was sent—to provide a way other than moral perfectionism for people to become innocent before God! The appropriate response to moral failure is not guilt initiated works of attrition but confession, an approach that John assures us (1 John 1:9) will result in the removal of any associated "unrighteousness" and the re-establishment of a situation where we can serve God out of the joy of innocence.

## John Adermann



John and Tina Adermann with Rachel and Timothy

During my first year at KCC my wife, Tina, told me that on our wedding day, four years earlier, she knew that she was marrying a future minister. I had thought about it but had not reached a firm decision at that time. As is so often the case, she was absolutely correct.

We had both been brought up in the church and were actively involved at Nambour. The minister there, A.G. Leane, had a tremendous effect on both our lives. We had spoken a number of times about the possibility of entering college, and I believe God enabled him to see abilities in my life, which I could not, but which God could use in ministry.

There were no flashing lights or thunderous noises, yet we have no doubt we were guided and led in this direction by God.

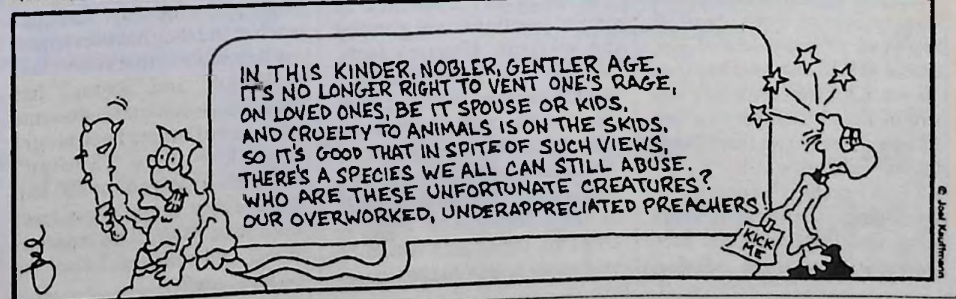
We faced the traumas faced by all people when they dig up their roots and move from their families, friends and jobs, and yet right throughout God has been with my family every step of the way.

As college training draws to a close for us, and as we look back, we can say we have never regretted once the decision we have made. We have gone through hard times and yet not once has God deserted us and left us on our own.

It is that thought that helps us when we think of the future. At the moment we are scared and excited. If God was not with us we would be terrified.

• John Adermann is in his final year at Kenmore. He is married to Tina and they have two children, Rachel (5) and Timothy (3), with another baby due in July.

## Pontius' Puddle



**U**ngarra is situated in the lower Eyre Peninsula of South Australia, 75 km north of Port Lincoln and 26 km north-west of Tumby Bay. It is a wheat and wool growing area. The town is connected by rail with Port Lincoln, but not therest of Australia. The Eyre Peninsula has been through tough times lately, with bad seasons, especially to the north. However the week before last some of the first rain for the year arrived

The Church of Christ is the only church in the town, although other churches are represented in the area. It commenced in 1911. The first building was made of iron but around 1930 the present structure of solid stone, which from the outside doesn't look much like a church, was built. There is a chapel, hall and kitchen.

The membership of 29, the lowest number for some years, is drawn entirely from the surrounding farming community and many of the members are related. The average attendance is around 30 plus children. It is a fairly young congregation. Services are held each Sunday at 10.15 am.

The ladies are very active in the church. They have a Know Your Bible group weekly and women's fellowship meetings monthly.

The outreach to children is a feature. RE classes are held in the local primary school, which has about 60 pupils. About two-thirds of the school council are members of the church. The Sunday School, with about 25 pupils of primary-school age, is held at 9.15 am, and has four classes. Children are also a feature of the church service and occupy most of the front pews for the children's talk.

The church is involved in organising a Christian farmers camp and they are keen supporters of overseas mission

work and the Bible Society. They help with a stall at the Yullunda Flat agricultural show, where their puppet ministry draws a large crowd. In the past few years they have

also been involved with the beach mission at Tumby Bay. Many local children holiday

there as well as the tourists. Family picnics are also held.

Currently the Ungarra church is examining seriously the role of eldership. At present Ungarra does not have a minister, although there was a full-time minister from 1977 to late last year. Prior to that there was a circuit ministry with other churches in the area. However with dedicated elders and support from Tumby Bay (some of whose members are retired Ungarra farmers) and many visiting speakers the preaching of the Word continues.

The church has been in a very small community and is still surviving. Older members remember travelling by horse and cart to the Salt Creek for baptisms in a water hole, perhaps the one that gave the town its name, as Ungarra is Aboriginal for water hole.

One of the church's first ministers, in 1913-14, Roy Raymond, is still alive, and will be 100 this year. The church once had the largest Christian Endeavour group in SA outside the metropolitan area and at least eight former members have gone into the full-time ministry.

When many churches in similar positions have gone by the wayside, Ungarra feels, despite any problems they might have now, that God must have some plan in store for them to be still in existence.

And if any minister with a special aptitude for a country ministry feels called to go to Ungarra, the church would be more than happy to consider it.

## Focus on Ungarra

## Nanjing News

from Heather Ferguson

**G**reetings from Zhongguo, China!

I have just had my hair trimmed by a fellow who spoke no English!—What a risk! And I've just ridden my bike home (half an hour) in the dark and in the rain. (No headlights on bikes here!)

Hong Kong was fantastic! What a place!

Met some very interesting people, and have even heard Jackie Pullinger speak at St Andrew's, Kowloon, on 11 February. (Jackie has worked with the opium/heroin addicts from the Walled City of Kowloon. She is from England. Her story is told in *Chasing the Dragon*.)

China is unbelievable! Nanjing is a city of bicycles—with cars and trucks trying to assert their superiority on the roads, sounding their horns every 15 seconds! (The cyclists never look back—or around, and they just keep going.)

It has been very cold. I "dress" for bed! Long-johns, fleecy T-shirt, flannellette nightie, bed-socks, beanie hat! It snowed last weekend. The school has no heating and most of the windows are left open. Words fail me. Freezing! Everyone wears coats in class! Basic conditions. Words fail me.

Freezing! Everyone wears coats in class. There are concrete floors in the staffroom—no comfort here!

The teachers are very friendly, even if we cannot communicate much. There are 2,000 students and 250 staff and about 17 Chinese staff speak English. I'm the only "foreign" teacher and they have arranged my timetable so that every class in "Senior 1" and "Senior 2" has me once a week so the students can boast of having been taught English by the "foreign" teacher!—that's about 680 students every week. Class sizes are about 53-56. The students are so well behaved. I also "in-service" staff.

The bike-riding began in earnest yesterday. I've been riding around, practising, but the school picked me up in their minibus for the first two weeks, for which I was very thankful. It takes half an hour to ride to school. I haven't seen any other foreigners on bikes on my way to or from school. Some cyclists have a close look at me as they pass. If they stare too much, I simply say, "Ni hao (hello)." Then they really wonder!

The "Middle School Attached to Nanjing Normal University", my school, is considered to be one of the best schools in Nanjing. It is a "key" school, which must mean that it is important, and there are about five key schools in Nanjing. About half of the students "board" at the school in dormitories, which are spartan to say the least... We would not survive. I have lunch in the staff canteen (army style): boiled rice, vegetables boiled eggs fried in oil, meat balls, or whatever I think is OK to eat. Only about one or two dishes look OK!

The food at the Nanshan Hotel where I live (don't be misled by the word "hotel"! ) is also basic. One tends to retreat to larger guesthouses or hotels every now and then for better quality food. The local market in Nintai Road, outside the uni campus, sells some fruit. I found tissues today—I have been looking for three weeks!

There are two other teachers from Victoria here at the moment. Both are good fun! Many Africans are living at the same place. They are here for five years, learning Chinese for one year, and then completing a degree in engineering etc. in Chinese! Some of them are gracious Christians.

• Heather Ferguson is on a teaching appointment for one year at Nanjing University in association with the Ministry of Education of Victoria. She is a member of the Essendon, Vic, church.

The Church of Christ in Wingham, NSW, is seeking the services of a minister.

A three-bedroom home is available with easy access to good schools and all essential services.

Wingham is a friendly town, rapidly expanding and having a tremendous potential for evangelical work.

For further enquiries phone (065) 53 4068.

## Discipleship

•Peter Sykes, Andrew Sykes, Nicholas Sykes, Mark Dumesny, Port Fairy, Vic •Matthew Verco, Brighton, SA •Jan McLeod, Katherine Muller, Robyn Kambouris, Sarah Parry, Brent Kingdom, Bianca Rowlands, Anita Bird, Harlaxton, Toowoomba, Qld •Michael Clarke, Jodie Foster, Cameron Daniel, Launceston, Tas •Michelle Longbottom, Geoff Clare, Box Hill, Vic •Leon Burgan, North Essendon, Vic

## Marriages

•Juanita Carron to Herbert Nelson,

Nunawading, Vic •Joy Hannaford to Eric Stevenson, Leanne Dickson to John Nation, Brighton, SA •Janece Taylor to Tony Williamson, Angelina Schubert to Stephen Enright, Karen Jensen to Stephen Wood, Harlaxton, Toowoomba, Qld •Julie Petts to Ian Peck, Launceston, Tas

## Deaths

•Tim Bannam, Hamilton, Vic •Phillip Brown, Dandenong, Vic •Don Dempster, Joyce Norman, Innes Renton, Betty Crawford, Brighton, SA •Rebecca Cuthbert, Numurkah, Vic •Jack Reid, Chatswood, NSW

## Changes

Warracknabeal: Secretary—Stephen Christian, 98 Jamouneau St, Warracknabeal, Vic 3393. Phone (053) 98 2512.

Alexander Heights: Minister—John Caporn, 55 Osprey Circle, Ballajuna, WA 6066. Secretary—PO Box 390, Mirrabooka, WA 6061. Burn, W.B. (retired minister): PO Box 400, Morwell, Vic 3840 (3/9 Elgin St, Morwell). Phone (051) 34 6138.

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## MELBOURNE COLLEGE OF DIVINITY DEAN-REGISTRAR

The college seeks a person, preferably with postgraduate qualifications in a theological discipline and significant experience in ministry-education-administration.

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The Secretary, Melbourne College of Divinity  
85 Studley Park Rd, Kew 3101  
Applications close on 31 July 1990

## CHURCHES OF CHRIST IN QUEENSLAND SOCIAL SERVICE DEPARTMENT CHAPLAIN, BRISBANE REGION PO Box 3, New Farm 4005 Phone: (07) 358 3603

The Brisbane Region of the Social Service Department invites applications for the position of Chaplain to the Department's Aged Care Homes in Brisbane.

This is a full-time ministry which will involve the organising of Bible studies, services of worship, preaching, chaplaincy and pastoral care to both the residents and the staff of the Brisbane Homes, involvement in social and community activities and home visitation to applicants for residence in the Brisbane Homes, residents families and to staff. The successful applicant will be required to work in close co-operation with the Administration of the Brisbane Homes, the local Churches of Christ and the Social Service Department. The Chaplain will also need to work with other local Ministers and Churches.

The Brisbane Homes consist of Burdeu House (13 Nursing Home Beds and 30 bed Aged Care Hostel), Hillcrest Nursing Home (84 Beds and 5 self care units), Brig-o-doon Nursing Home (36 beds), Gleneagles (97 self care units), Kedron Hostel for the Active Aged (11 beds). Major changes are envisaged for the Brisbane Homes that will result in the following reorganisation over the next 5 years: Burdeu House (30 bed Hostel), Hillcrest Nursing Home (63 beds and 5 self care units), Brig-o-doon Nursing Home (40 beds at new location and 17 self care units), Gleneagles (30 bed Nursing Home and 99 self care units), Alexandra Gardens (50 bed age care Hostel and 6 self care units), Kedron Hostel for the Active Aged (11 beds).

The Chaplain will need to provide her or his own accommodation but an office will be provided.

It is envisaged that the workload will be shared with another Chaplain. Terms, conditions and job description are available on request. Salary is based upon recommendations by Queensland Conference.

Applications will be treated confidentially and should be made on the form provided and supported by the names, addresses and phone numbers of at least two referees.

Applications close 3 August 1990 and should be addressed to the Administrator, Churches of Christ Brisbane Homes, PO Box 3, New Farm 4005.

\* Bible College Lecturer  
required to serve at  
Banmatmat Bible College, Vanuatu

\* Director of Finance and Administration  
A person with administrative experience  
and financial ability  
is required to work in  
Papua New Guinea

For more details contact  
Mr J. May, Australian Churches of Christ  
Overseas Mission Board, PO Box 320,  
Unley 5061. Phone (08) 271 3620

## ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR: EDUCATION SERVICES

The Joint Board of Christian Education invites applications for a new and challenging position managing a wide range of education services—adult education, youth ministry, children's ministry, and curriculum development for Christian Education.

This is a senior position working with a staff team to develop high quality educational services at national level to the Uniting Church in Australia and several co-operating denominations.

To commence as early as possible in 1991  
Applications close 1 August 1990

For further information contact:

Executive Director  
The Joint Board of Christian  
Education  
2nd floor, 10 Queen Street  
Melbourne 3000  
Telephone: (03) 629 5076  
Fax: (03) 614 8820



## Obituary

Obituaries are limited to 100 words

**Boxhall, Donald William** (15.4.90) Don was secretary of Newmarket for 30 years and Superintendent of the Sunday School. He was actively involved in church cricket and tennis. He married Effie in 1948. When Newmarket closed, they came to Ascot Vale, where he

was doorman for many years. Don always greeted people with a welcoming smile and handshake. He was an elder for four years. His health deteriorated in the last few years. While Don was in hospital, Effie had a fall at home, and was also admitted. Her bed was beside his, and she held his hand as he passed into the presence of God.

—Ross Bourdon

## Vic

**HAMILTON** (Ray Eldridge) Girls' Brigade continues. Numbers being maintained ... Boys' Club building numbers to become a Brigade ... Tragic accident with front-end loader claimed life of 19-year-old Jody Forrest. Committed his life to Christ in St Vincent's Hospital ... Church saddened by death of one of longest-serving members, Tim Bannam, who filled many roles. Church packed to overflowing for both funeral services.

**SWAN HILL** (L.J. Mayes, S. Willis) Church has moved to two morning services meeting for worship at 9 & 11 with a "cuppa" served in between ... Bible School numbers continue to grow ... Hall floor has been carpeted & new outdoor notice board erected on church property ... Church planning for outreach program with John Bond

during September.

**PORT FAIRY** (Roy Hope) Betty Baruch helped at Passover feast celebration with 65 participating. Betty also spoke on her work among Jewish folk in Melbourne at CWF coffee morning with over 50 ladies attending ... All services well attended including 12-15 regularly at mid-week Bible study ... Four Bible School scholars baptised ... Recent garage sale & street stall raised over \$1,000 for manse fund. **ASCOT VALE** (Ross Bourdon) Church deeply saddened by death of Carol Connell & Jed Forrest ... Praying for Paul, nine years old, in a coma. Excited at change & expecting a miracle ... Deeper sense of worship experienced in service ... New people attending ... Playgroup mum has made commitment ... Great new sign, "Jesus, the Good Shepherd" erected in worship area ... Dot Murphy co-ordi-

## Church News

nating prayer group.

**MORWELL** (Graham Woodward) Morwell will be celebrating its 50th anniversary on the weekend of 7-9 December & would like to hear from past members & friends. Please contact Pam Ellingham at 6 Nuntin Court, Morwell 3840. Phone (051) 34 51 36.

**DANDENONG** (G. Foon, M. Butler) Church family worship service held a drama entitled "Ministry of Self" ... Dr Cliff Warmbrunn spoke on sexuality as God intended it ... Neville Thomas, past member & missionary in the Philippines spoke followed by a basket luncheon ... Three adults & six young people collected for the Springvale Salvation Army collecting \$850 ... Church saddened by the deaths of Les Aurisch & Phillip Brown.

**NUMURKAH** Bible study & clubs all commenced after break ... All members working hard towards fete in November ... Church saddened by passing of Rebecca Cuthbert after stroke. Aged 82 years ... Ladies spent afternoon at CWF making new cushions for church hall ... \$100 sent to Ken Birch (missionary in WA) re further studies in America.

**WARRACKNABEAL** (Kevin & Rhonda Luttrell) Recognition of Evelyn Harmer, 17 years church secretary. New secretary Stephen

Christian ... Congratulations Stephen & Kylie Christian first child Melanie Louise 1 June.

**KANIVA** (M. Goldup) Recent musical Sunday evening was special treat ... Andrew Williams shared experiences of his week with God Squad after their recent visit to Kaniva ... Ian Allsop here for 3 June morning service, the following luncheon & afternoon seminar ... Boys' & Girls' Club well attended, also Bible study groups ... CWF meet this month at Hazel Jewell's for annual working bee.

**BOX HILL** (J. Edwards) Six baptisms & three transfers in six months ... Minister participating in Graduate Diploma of Ministry ... CWF & CWF celebrated birthdays ... Six cell groups meet weekly ... Friendship Group & Prime of Life good monthly attendances ... Playgroups meeting real need ... Missions target well over \$7,000 ... Vi Gray & Marg Mitchell celebrated 80th birthday with morning tea after church ... Garage sale raised \$1,700 for building fund.

**NORTH ESSENDON** (Graham & Bev Burgan) Youth group held camp at Monbulk ... New carpet in lounge ... Large gathering celebrated Elsie Rowlings' 80th birthday and presented her with shopping jeep ... Ministers' son Leon baptised ... CWF street stall raised \$201.75 ... Don Smith, Ian Tippett at board meeting ... Ladies toured Radio 3RPH ... Dedication service for baby Kevin Roberts ... Max Viney guest preacher ... Crazy whist evening.

## WA

**CARNARVON** (Donald Bone) The chapel is looking good following a painting bee & some striking sign writing ... Ron & Cris Jones travelled to Victoria to join a family gathering to celebrate Ron's mother's 90th birthday ... Young folk meeting weekly for a "jam session" at Moore's Plantation. Lots of talent emerging.

**ALEXANDER HEIGHTS** (John Caporn) Attendances increasing ... Ryall, Metcalf welcomed in ... 35 at church camp ... Frank Johnson spoke at evening service ... Kids' Klub reaching locals ... Basketball season underway. 11 teams ... Church welcomed first church baby, Adam Richard Dunning ... Youth group commenced. Held camp June ... Craft group continues ... Christian social held, 50 attended from basketball & Kids' Klub families ... Minister preached Kingsley, Warwick ... Cell groups popular.

## A Gift Will Help

The Kensington Christian Network relies on a group of friends for prayer and financial support. Mike Esbensen is part of a team committed to reaching a community with stark needs. Your gift will go to the heart of these needs.

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52 La Trobe Street, Melbourne 3000



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# Church News

## SA

**PROSPECT** (S. Schmaal) First Sunday in May special service we celebrated wedding of Joseph & Helen, followed by sharing morning tea ... Items being collected for a garage sale in June ... Ray & Cheryl Jenner completed a successful week-long seminar in the church ... St John's Uniting Church invited all to a special service featuring Kyle Waters ... In prayers we remember Glad Gaston, Evelyn & Roy Groves.

**STIRLING** (John Main) Church manse being extensively renovated. Work done by Mobile Mission Maintenance & members voluntary labour ... Seminar on Effective Communication with Jim Keatch ... FOG in Stirling (Friends of God) meet weekly at 10.30 am ... Youth orchestra plays for services every second Sunday ... Kath Ravesteyn acts as co-ordinator for women's interests ... Offerings are keeping ahead of budget.

**BRIGHTON** (Neville Moore, Keth Bowes) Church involved in Callahan's long-term planning for mission ... High school youth group with Peter Manning in bike-a-thon to raise \$1,385 for Fiji mission ... Kid's Club attendance 63 ... Kate Graham appointed church secretary ... Keith Bowes on special four-weeks leave to edit Overseas Mission history ... John Graham took part in commissioning three chaplains for local high schools at ecumenical service.

**NAILSWORTH** (Daryll Telfer) Junior youth group numbers increasing ... Two recent baptisms ... "Patchwork Circle" each fortnight being well received ... Anniversary offering going to Mobile Mission Maintenance ... Monthly prayer meetings well attended.

## Qld

**HARLAXTON** (Daryl Thorpe) Bus load attended opening of Kenmore Christian College family units ... Series of eight marriage enrichment films well attended & enjoyed by all ... Noel Newton guest speaker at 68th church anniversary.

**BUNDAMBA** (Don Stewart, Cheryl Hoskins) Entering exciting era with Don Stewart as interim minister & Cheryl Hoskins as youth minister ... Welcomed five new members into fellowship ... 13 attending mid-week prayer & Bible study ... Strong youth group with average of 25 attending each week ... Two encouraging ladies group. One at night for working women ... Looking forward to time of teaching & encouragement 19-22 Au-

gust with Bob Hudson, Capernwray Missionary Fellowship.

## Tas

**LAUNCESTON** (Rod Foster) John Rees baptised three young people at farewell evening service 3 June when 216 present ... Over 50 participated in half night of prayer 6 June ... Greg Foot spoke at evening service 10 June focusing on World Vision & his visit to three fields ... Four new members welcomed 10 June & one decision at evening

service ... Church sad at passing of Eric Armstrong.

## NSW

**CHATSWOOD** (Ian Alves) Church welcome Living Link missionary Rosalie Rofe after 27 years service PNG. Plans for her to become associate minister at Chatswood ... We celebrated 125th anniversary of Willoughby (now city) at combined churches Civic Centre service ... Board met with Chinese church leaders at special dinner to plan future outreach in Chatswood area

... Family camp at Vision Valley planned. Bob Smith guest speaker. **THORNLEIGH** (Franklyn Elliott, Stuart Wesley) Church welcomed back Stuart Wesley (youth minister) & wife Carolyn from six months stay in USA studying youth disciplining ministry on 27 May ... Pentecost Sunday church combined with all churches in Thornleigh/Pennant Hills area for combined service in Pennant Hills High School new auditorium at 7.30 pm. It was a great service with all churches participating. Over 600 present.

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# Tears of Ministry

by R.N. Hawkins

Jesus cried!  
Peter, Paul, and the Elders cried!  
Why then shouldn't we?  
There are many reasons for tears, even within the realm of ministry. Sometimes we cry because of pleasure or pain, maybe because of personal folly, or another's stupidity. Whatever the reason, tears are a fact of ministry.

Nothing can in fact prepare a person for the sorrows inherent in serving others in the name of Jesus. It is impossible to remain unmoved at the heartbreak of a family, or the return of a prodigal.

I wonder whether God was in tears when he said, "Why will ye die...?" There is no pleasure for God in the death of the wicked, nor should there be for us.

The amount of tears shed by the church on behalf of the battered and shattered of life I feel sure would float an ocean liner. Each congregation knows the heartbreak of a beautiful young life raised through the church seduced by the phoney glitter of the broad way. We all have our stories of young men reduced to mere "husks" through misplaced bravado and inflamed passions.

Who can handle this burden of ministry? Who can carry on with an aching heart and not become cynical, fatalistic, or callous? Perhaps behind many a "burn-out syndrome" casualty can be found the torment of tears.

There are those who advocate, quite rightly, for pastors to have a pastor. This is easier for some than for others. Reluctance may stem from distance or from personality or a number of other issues as it is not easy to share the sorrow of the heart. There is one however with whom the minister can feel comfortable, He wore the title Man of Sorrows and acquainted with grief, and he understands. It is from out of this rela-

tionship that an enabling arises that handles the ordeal of tears positively.

The testimony of 2 Corinthians 1:3,4 is only appreciated by those who have suffered. Its positive conviction is endorsed by the servant of the Lord as he/she arises from prayer with wet eyes. "Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God."

Jesus is the only real and lasting answer to the tears of ministry. For he is able to give hope to the heart and power to prayer. He is the light when all else appears as gloom and he does have the authority to fulfil the words of Isaiah 61:1-3. He can bind up the broken hearted, comfort those who mourned, give beauty for ashes and remove despair with praise.

Tears begin to dry when we grasp again the truth that the Spirit of the Lord is able to turn apparent defeat into victory, to reach the unreachable and to raise up the fallen.

There is only one place where tears are not permitted. Revelation 21:4 declares that God will wipe away all tears and from that time forth all that caused such things will be no more. Until then we will continue to shed tears for any number of reasons. However those tears which flow on behalf of others do not drop in vain. Nor should they be considered as weakness, hidden behind a false piety or stoicism. Let them be as libations of the heart, offered up to the God of all comfort so that he might be honoured, the church edified and the object of the tears "washed".

• R.N. Hawkins is the minister at the Maitland, NSW, church.

## The Last Word

Never look back unless you want to go that way.

Australians are getting stronger. 20 years ago it took two people to carry \$50 worth of groceries. Today a five year old can do it.

★★★★★

"Did the speech have a happy ending?"  
"Well, everybody was glad it was over."

★★★★★

Gossip is like a photograph...something negative gets developed, then enlarged.

★★★★★

The lazier you are the more you intend to do tomorrow.

★★★★★

The truly useful person is so busy being useful that they haven't time to consider how useful they are!

★★★★★

"I sold everything I had to buy this. Then I found out that Stradivarius never made banjos."

★★★★★

Salesperson: "This grandfather clock is so old the shadow of the pendulum has worn a hole in the back."

★★★★★

"You will be poor, alone, diseased and in misery until you turn 30," the fortune teller told a despairing client.

"And then?" asked the client.

"And then," said the fortune teller, "You'll get used to it."

★★★★★

Composer: "It took me 25 years to write this lullaby."

Publisher: "Why so long?"

Composer: "I kept falling asleep."

★★★★★

Then there was the student who read a joke here and decided to take it to school but decided that was carrying the joke too far.

★★★★★

Personnel manager: It looks to me as if you've been fired from every job you've ever had!

Job applicant: Well you've got to admit I'm no quitter!

★★★★★



The trick in life is to die young as late as possible.



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