

THE AUSTRALIAN

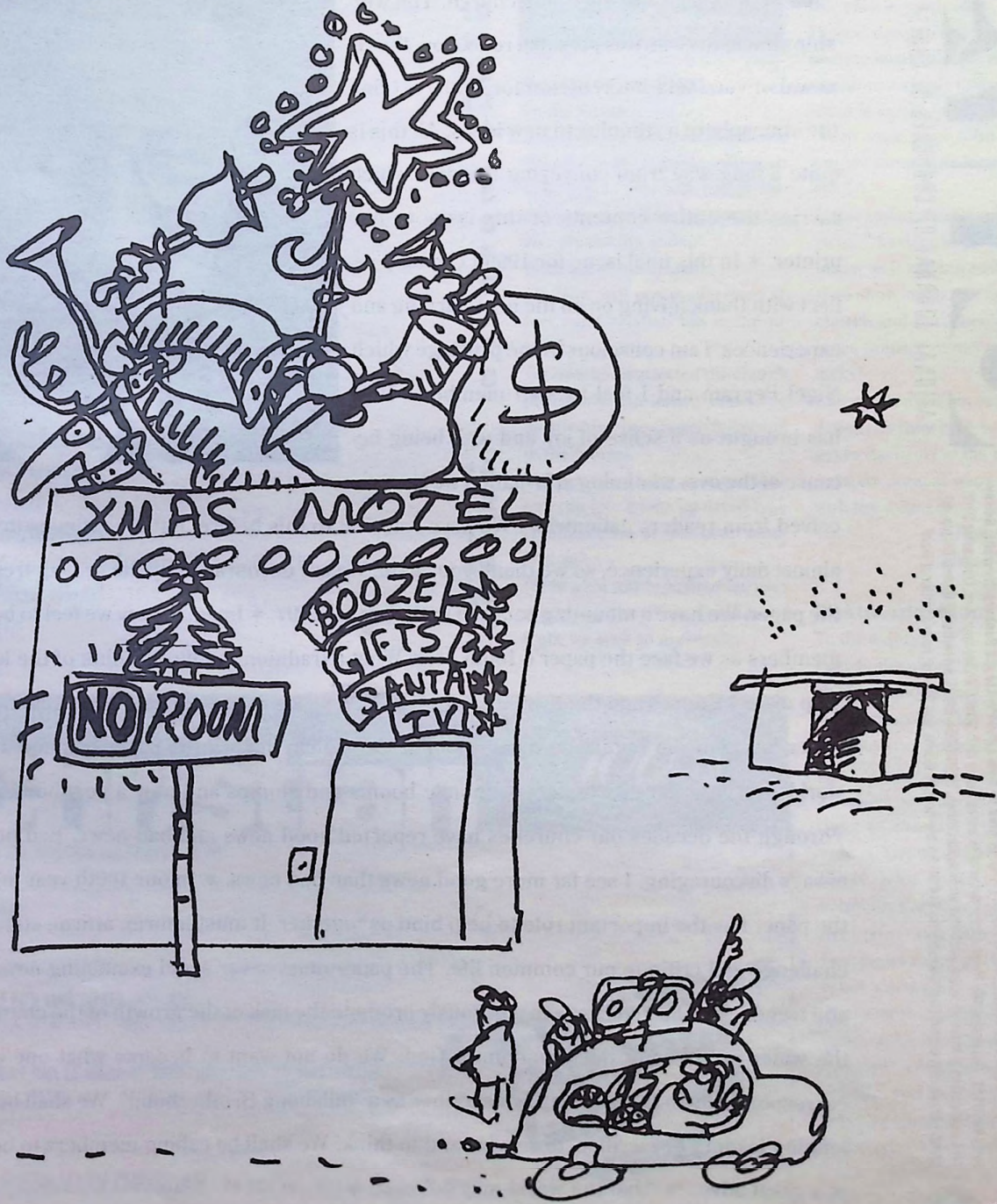
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# Editorial

## Optimism for '97

DON SMITH

**T**his editorial began in a recent morning worship service of my home church. The worship atmosphere invites personal reflection, the renewal of vows and intercession for leaders. I find the atmosphere a stimulus to new ideas. All this is quite a long way from conveying the disk which carries the entire contents of this issue to our printer. \* In this final issue for 1996 I can only reflect with thanksgiving on all the new learning and experiences. I am conscious of the privilege which Nigel Pegram and I feel as staff members. 1996 has brought us a sense of joy and well being because of the overwhelming affirmation we have re-



ceived from readers nationwide. We have referred to this before, but it continues to be an almost daily experience, so we thank you again. We are encouraged by the growth trends in the paper. We have a mounting sense of optimism for 1997. \* Imagine how we feel to be staff members as we face the paper's 100th year. What a tradition to follow! Think of the leadership of past Editors and the many hundreds of thousands of readers into whose homes the paper has come so regularly. What events in Australian history the paper has noted. Two world wars, a great depression, economic booms and slumps and now a postmodern era! Through the decades our churches have reported good news and bad news. Bad news is always discouraging. I see far more good news than bad news. \* In our 100th year in 1997, the paper has the important role to help bind us together. It must inform, affirm, stimulate, challenge and critique our common life. The paper must never avoid examining new ideas and trends. We shall continue to vigorously promote the task of the growth of the church for the wider progress of the Kingdom of God. We do not want to become what one of our correspondents in this issue aptly describes as a "billabong Brotherhood". We shall be challenging leaders to sacrifice, to service and to think. We shall be calling members to be part of a great advance "that the world may believe". \*

## Christmas

We continue our focus on Christmas with some personal reflections, some thoughts from the text of the Gospel of John and an historical perspective from Dr Bill Tabbernee.

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**The Australian Christian welcomes letters from its readers. Short letters up to 175 words stand the best chance of publication. All letters may be edited. We reserve the right to omit letters altogether.**

## Postmodernism

To the Editor,  
Now that you have established a foundation about postmodernism ("AC" 16.11.96), will you please tell us in clear language just what you are talking about. Here are some ideas.

- (1) How will postmodernism affect our Christian life in the future?
- (2) How has it affected the church previously and how it is seen to be affecting the church today and in the future?
- (3) Are you saying that we have entered into a new up-dated type of Gnosticism or just plain modernism?
- (4) In what way is postmodernism affecting the New Testament truth we seek to present?

(5) Does postmodernism have something to do with what is quoted in Luke 18:8 "I tell you that he will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless when the Son of Man comes, shall he find faith on the earth?" I was interested in Mark Brett's article, "The Root of all Evil", and this para in particular:

"Some despairing versions of postmodernism seem to promote tolerance on basis that everyone's truth is equally valuable and our truth can never be brought into meaningful dialogue with others."

Is this saying that 'New Testament "truth" hasn't got the same value today, as it used to have?

If so, how does the present day church and our Theological Colleges prepare ministers for their tasks?

Can we then get beyond the foundations as they have been set and get to the heart of the matter and possibly present ways of dealing with the issues?

—Doug Holloway  
(Caboolture, Qld)

## Postmodernism

To the Editor,  
Postmodernism ideology arguably presents as big a challenge to the church as the modernism controversy of half a century ago.


The idea that there is no such thing as absolute truth will provide a strong justification for those who wish to deny or subjectify Christian revelation and live self-serving lifestyles.

Despite its name, postmodernism is not a new philosophy.

The view that truth was a matter of opinion and "socially constructed" was propounded by the sophists two and a half thousand years ago and had its expression in rhetoric—the art of persuasion. Truth was what people could be made to believe.

THE AUSTRALIAN

# Christian



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A Christmas Gift that lasts all year

# Letters to the Editor

In the ancient world the rhetoricians were strongly opposed by the philosophers (particularly Platonic philosophers) who believed that absolute truth could be apprehended (albeit dimly) by deduction from observed phenomena (see Rom 1:20).

Pilate's question "What is truth?" (John 18:38) expresses the central dilemma of his age (and this age): was Jesus in an absolute sense the Son of God or merely what the mob believed him to be?

The early church drew on both schools of thought in its apologetics, but rejected both as explanations of truth.

Paul specifically repudiated these competing epistemologies in 1 Cor 2:1-5 (and elsewhere) in favour of revelation. The truth of God is not discovered by persuasion or logical deduction, but on the basis of demonstration—on the cross, in people's lives and

through the continuing presence of the Holy Spirit.

—H.E. Hayward  
(Pymble, NSW)

## Postmodernism

To the Editor,  
The Board of Management and the Editor of *The Australian Christian* are to be congratulated on moving the "AC" from a news oriented journal to a forum for current ideological thought that is relevant to our mission as Churches of Christ. The 16 November issue which dealt with the concept of postmodernism was particularly relevant as it has a direct bearing on our mission today.

The issues our founders faced are not the issues today. The aims and slogans they formulated no longer have relevance in today's culture. If we continue to push these outdated issues out of a sense of his-

torical loyalty we will become a billabong "Brotherhood" (pardon the anachronism) by-passed by the mainstream of today's cultural life.

The essential content of our Christian dogma is challenged by the ideas loosely labelled New Age thought and postmodernism, but it must remain authoritative for the church. It is an axiom of all missionary work that the messenger must understand and relate the message to the culture to which he/she speaks. We must understand New Age and postmodern thought if we want to enter into dialogue with today's youth, because they are surrounded by these all-pervasive

ideas that are inimical to their faith.

(For those who want to know more about postmodernism I recommend *A Primer on Postmodernism* by Stanley Grenz and *A Crash Course on the New Age Movement* by Elliot Miller.)

—Arthur Pigdon  
(McCrae, Vic)

**Re Postmodernism.** Thank you for your comments and letters. It was our intention in the issue of 16 November to open up the theme. We also plan to develop the theme during 1997, much along the lines of Doug Holloway's suggestions. Stay with us, new epochs never come easily!  
—Ed.

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## Update

Dear Readers,

In this issue we welcome the cover illustration from Bruce Petty. I'm sure many of you will recognise his work, which regularly appears in major Australian daily newspapers. It is a privilege to have his contribution. Likewise we welcome Ralph Petty's help with his cover photograph on our last issue. You may be interested to know that Ralph and Bruce are cousins.

This issue is being completed with a steady flow of last minute news items and letters. They won't all fit! With the letters we have selected a representative range on some of the issues. News items are mostly chosen to try to include things from all states. We have just received bound copies of the 1995 issue. These are supplied to Historical Societies, some Conference Departments and theological college libraries. They look most attractive. We have recently re-

ceived requests for 1995 indexes which have now been posted. If you would like to discuss obtaining a bound copy of the 1997 Centenary issues please be in contact by February. The current cost per copy is \$38 plus postage. This volume will be available early in 1998.

We have now received \$3500 in gifts towards the new computer equipment. This is a great response to date. Thank you. Our target is \$6000.

Nigel Pegram joins me in wishing you greetings for Christmas and the New Year. 1997 will be a great year of celebration and advance. Oh, by the way, our New Year resolution is to completely eliminate errors from the text, especially when it comes to the names of German theologians, sorry Karl!

*Sam Smith*

## Clinton Retires

**Ken Clinton retires after 40 years with Literature Department**



*Rex Prince, retiring Treasurer, Ken Clinton, retiring Chairman, and Janet Thompson, current Literature Department Chairperson at the farewell dinner.*

Ken Clinton's 40 years of service with the Federal Literature Department of Churches of Christ was recognised at a dinner held in his honour at Blackburn Community Church of Christ, Vic, on 22 November.

Ken (centre) is pictured here with Rex Prince the retiring treasurer and the Department's chair Janet Thompson. Ken's leadership through his intellectual, spiritual and physical vigour has been a major factor in the outstanding growth of the Department in the last forty years. In an acknowledgment, Gordon Scambler, a past

member and treasurer, noted how the Department's funds had grown from some \$117 when Ken began to in excess of \$100,000 today. Ken commenced as a member in 1956 and became chairman in 1973.

The work of Rex Prince, who became the treasurer eight years ago, was also recognised.

Both men were presented with gifts to show appreciation for their work. Members of the Victorian Historical Society were also present to recognise Ken Clinton's involvement with that Committee.

## Goodwill to All

**Christmas Greetings from the Board Chairman**



*Staff and Board members of "The Australian Christian". Back row: Allen Smyth, Nigel Pegram, Tom Glynn, John Batchler, Lindsay Mayes; Front row: Dean Phelan (consultant), Don Smith, Keith Aird (Chairman), Bob Smith, Kevin Bray*

In the next week or so you all will receive Christmas messages of "Peace and Goodwill" My first encounter with the word goodwill came many years ago when studying accountancy. It suddenly appeared as an item in the balance sheet. As to the the meaning of the word many have tried to define it as well as to create a formula to value its worth. Perhaps we may define it as " Goodwill is a process of building relationships. It is created over a period of time by implementing such virtues as love, trust, honesty and wisdom."

God has expressed His "goodwill" to us in many wonderful ways and Christmas time certainly reminds us of this. As we express our "goodwill" to those we meet in the coming weeks, let it be more than an expression in words, let it indicate a desire to offer to them our "goodwill" which consists of love, trust, honesty and wisdom. Christmas also brings with it a reminder that 1996 is almost at an end.

For *The Australian Christian* it has been a year of change. We have a new Editor as well as a full time sub-editor and a new format to our paper. New articles and writers have appeared. To our Editor Don Smith and our sub-editor Nigel Pegram the Board is sincerely grateful for the work they have done in producing a paper of which we can be very proud.

1997 will be very special for all of us involved with *The Australian Christian*. We celebrate 100 years of serving our churches. For a religious paper this is an outstanding achievement. We invite you our subscribers to share with us in this centenary year. There will be numerous "exciting specials" for you to enjoy.

On behalf of the Management and the Board we would wish you a Christmas where you will experience God's joy and peace. May we also determine this Christmas to create amongst all those we meet "goodwill".

—Keith Aird  
(Chairman)



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Gospel Celebration

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Lunchtime Service

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# National Council

## Report on Council and Assembly

Adelaide was the venue for the first meeting of the National Council and Assembly held 8-11 November 1996. An overwhelming sense of unity prevailed. Tribute was paid to the work of Ian Allsop as the Secretary of the Council. Ian is to become a consultant in planning and management. Applicants are currently being sought for a 1/2 time appointment of a Coordinator to assist the work of the national body. Plans have been made to hold a Convention of the members of our churches, most likely in September in Sydney in 1998. This will provide for celebration, sharing visions and being encouraged and empowered for ministry.

A proposed "Code of Ethics" applicable to ministers of Churches of Christ was discussed. After consideration by State Ministry Departments, it is expected to be adopted by the states as a national code in 1997.

The following snippets and comments of the meetings of the Council and the Assembly represent some of the issues discussed.

- How do we encourage active cooperation with other churches while maintaining the fundamentals of Churches of Christ?
- Recognising that the major task is the development of a focus on mission, how do we bring people to a relationship with Jesus Christ which is culturally relevant?

- How do we create the environment and resources that allow agencies like Overseas Mission, Aborigines Mission, Church Development, *The Australian Christian* and others, together with the States and churches, to do their work?
- What about the involvement of

young people in decision making and action?

- E-mail, marketing, communication, letting people know the stories.
- What does it mean to be a Churches of Christ congregation in a post-denominational era?

—Robert Leane

## Death of Merv Lawrie

News is to hand from South Australia that Merv Lawrie, a well-known minister in our churches, died on 26 November. An obituary notice will follow in 1997.

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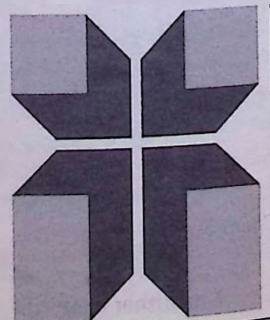
**Duties:** Administrate the Financial Accounting services of the Properties Corporation and Conference Board and other administrative duties.

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**Remuneration:** An appropriate remuneration package will be available.

Applications in writing, with curriculum vitae to:

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The Properties Corporation of the Churches of Christ  
77 Capel St  
West Melbourne Vic 3003  
Telephone (03) 9326 8900



## Seniors' Getaway

### Second NSW seniors' getaway

Following a successful Seniors' Getaway in February this year the Ministry Team for Seniors in NSW is organising another few days away in February 1997. The Getaway to be held from the 24-27 February at Boronia, Stanwell Tops is designed to be a relaxing time of fellowship, input and relaxation especially for the over 50s.

This year the program will be less structured, with plenty of time to explore the local area, catch up

with old friends or make new ones. Each morning there will be a study from the book of Joshua. A varied evening program will include a trivia night, a movie night and the opportunity to join in indoor games or just chat.

The accommodation at Boronia is modern and comfortable, with en suite bathrooms in each room. The site is set amongst bushland not far from the beach. Seniors from interstate are also welcome to participate in these few days, but accommodation is limited. Further information can be obtained from Pam Clapshaw (Ministry Leader—Seniors NSW) on (02) 9150 7435.

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### Churches of Christ in Victoria and Tasmania

The Conference Board of Churches of Christ in Victoria and Tasmania invites expressions of interest from suitably experienced and qualified people for the newly-created part-time position of

### Director—Ministry Division

The Director, Ministry Division will report directly to the Conference Executive Officer and will be charged with the responsibility to facilitate the effective management and pastoral oversight of those in ministry within Churches of Christ in Victoria and Tasmania. The position is for two and one half days per week. Commencement date to be negotiated, preferably early 1997.

The successful applicant will be a person with proven people and communication skills, theological understanding, commitment to the mission and ethos of Churches of Christ, appropriate administrative skills and demonstrated capacity for leadership.

#### Applications close 31 January 1997.

Written applications and requests for further information should be made to:  
Mrs Lynette Leach  
Conference Executive Officer  
Churches of Christ in Victoria and Tasmania  
77 Chapel St  
West Melbourne Vic 3003  
Phone (03) 9326 8900



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

## Kenmore Looks Forward

### Kenmore College graduation

"Forward Looking Vision" was the theme of the Kenmore Christian College Graduation Service, held at the Sunnybank Church of Christ, on Friday 22 November 1996. The tone of the whole service was marked by a positive anticipation of what God can do in the future. This was expressed particularly in the enthusiastic singing of the hymns and contemporary songs (some say it's the best they've heard!), led by the Sunnybank church band. The energetic preaching of David Timms, lecturer at the Churches of Christ in NSW Theological College, also reinforced the positive tone of the service. "A vision is much more than a dream. We



Robert Warwick presenting diploma to Noel Barnes (college dux)

must work toward making the vision of what can and should be a reality, in our churches, marriages and working lives," David said.

Alan Hermann was also formally welcomed on to the College staff as Ministry Centre Coordinator by a symbolic handshake of farewell from Robert Smith (Director of DCDE where Alan has been employed), and a welcoming handshake by Randall Edwards (Principal of the College). The Service concluded with an enthusiastic singing of "Be Thou my Vision". Many of those who attended rated this year's graduation as the "best ever". The college gives thanks to God for so many blessings through the past year and expresses appreciation to all who made the 1996 Graduation a night to remember.

### Here and There

#### New Moderator

Dr David Thompson has been appointed Moderator of the United Reformed Church in the United Kingdom. David was previously a member of Churches of Christ prior to their decision to unite with English Presbyterians and Congregationalists in the new body. At that time some two-thirds of Churches of Christ members entered into the union, with the remainder continuing as Churches of Christ. David was installed as Moderator at the General Assembly held at York in May. In acknowledging his appointment it was commented that the contribution of our churches to the union was out of all proportion to their size. David Thompson is the author of *Let Sects and Parties Fall*, a short history of Churches of Christ in Great Britain and Ireland.

**Boronia  
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Speakers: Keith Milne & Gordon Stirling

Services from 2 February,  
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Inquiries (03) 9762 1277

# We Call Australia Home

## Statement by Churches of Christ on racism

One Sunday, recently, over a "cuppa" after church, Graham Warne was talking to another member of the church. That member is Asian, and was recounting recent experiences as a result of Pauline Hanson's statements reported in the media. He asked, "Why haven't our churches made a statement condemning racism?" It was a difficult question. Graham went home and pondered on it. As a result, he and his wife, Jeanette,

wrote a "personal manifesto" outlining what they believe.

On Monday morning, Graham was discussing the incident with Don Stewart, Executive Director of Churches of Christ Care in Queensland. Don himself had been wrestling with the issue over the past few weeks, not knowing what he could do about the situation.

Here was a positive step he could take! He offered to create an ad

(pictured here) and place it in Brisbane's *Courier-Mail*, taking a public stand against racism. So the ad was placed to run on Saturday, and an invitation went out to seven churches throughout Queensland to place the ad in their region's paper also.

About 11:30 Saturday morning, the phone rang at the Smith household. It was the ABC Radio newsroom. They wanted to know "Why, now, are you taking this stand?" Marilyn Smith, Publicity Officer for Churches of Christ Care in Queensland, answered "Because one of our church members needed to know we cared enough to take a stand. And so we did."

Every hour, on the hour, that day

as part of the news, Australians heard that Churches of Christ affirm the right of all residents to equal treatment and opportunity regardless of race, culture or ethnic background. And everyone who heard the news, heard an invitation for all Australians to join us in offering acceptance to all people who call Australia "home". Note: Any Church of Christ is welcome to place the ad in their local paper, also!



**CHURCHES OF CHRIST**

- We deplore any expression of racism which sees one sector of the human family as superior to another.
- We affirm the right of all residents in Australia to equal treatment and opportunity, with equal access to public institutions and welfare regardless of race, culture or ethnic background.
- We express our deep concern and sympathy to those who have suffered or are suffering persecution as a result of anti-Asian or anti-Aboriginal sentiments which may have been generated by statements made recently in the media.
- We acknowledge our slowness to express solidarity with our suffering brothers and sisters, and ask their forgiveness.
- We recognise our Christian responsibility towards those of other nations whom the Lord has seen fit to place in or bring to this land, whether as indigenous peoples, free settlers, migrants, students or refugees and invite others to join us in this responsibility.
- We commit ourselves to the process of reconciliation, working together with our Aboriginal and Asian sisters and brothers in order to develop a genuinely multicultural society.



### Visiting Victor Harbor at Christmas? Join with us at our special services.

10.00 am 22 December  
Family Service—"Why Me?"

8.00 pm 24 December  
Carol Service

9.30 am 25 December  
Family Christmas Service  
"A God with Skin"

*Join us any Sunday  
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Victor Harbor Church of Christ, 11 Seaview Road, Victor Harbor SA 5211.  
Minister Graeme Rogerson, phone (085) 52 5029.

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# Christmas

## A Little Box of Reminders

BARRIE YESBERG

I was reading again, recently, the Christmas story from Matthew. The wise men and their journey have always fascinated me, along with their gifts to Jesus. The length of their journey was about 2 years, according to the context, and they were constantly guided by the bright star. That is a long time to travel and I often wondered where they came from. The Bible only says the East. \* I gained a better understanding of the story recently. I had the opportunity to

*It is worth very little in monetary value today, but I was led to believe that the value of frankincense far out weighed the value of gold, in Jesus's day. It was a tradeable commodity.*

visit the country of Oman, on the HMAS Melbourne on our way home from a deployment in the Arabian Gulf. It was here that I learned that the frankincense and myrrh that the wise men brought to Jesus are found there. I was led to believe while there that Oman is one of only a couple of countries in the world that has these commodities. The other is Somalia. \* Armed with this knowledge I headed to the souq (markets) to make a purchase. Just about every shop was selling some and the aroma of burning frankincense was very strong. I had a lot of fun going through the souq and bargaining for these items. \*

I was not sure what these two items looked like or what was their purpose. My education has expanded as a result of my time in the souq. \* Myrrh is an aromatic tree resin and is amber in colour. \* In conversation with a shop keeper there, I learned that myrrh is used for medicinal purposes. It is a cure-all and so is taken for headaches, stomach aches and any sort of aches and pains that one may have. It sounded a bit like a Panadol, that we might take for these very same complaints. \*

The Scriptures also mention it, as being traded along with spices (Gen 37:25), used as an ingredient in anointing oil (Exod 30:23), applied as perfume (Esth 2:12), placed in clothes to deodorise them (Psa 45:8), given as a gift (Matt 2:11) and used to embalm bodies (John 19:39). \* Frankincense is a yellowish resinous substance. It is derived from certain trees in the Balsam family. It is only used for burning today, in brightly coloured burners. It is dropped onto glowing charcoal and a pungent odour is the result. \*

It is worth very little in monetary value today, but I was led to believe that the value of frankincense far out weighed the value of gold, in Jesus's day. It was a tradeable commodity. In the Scriptures it is also mentioned as an ingredient used in making the perfume for the most holy place in the tabernacle (Exod 30:34). \* The local gold is 22 carats and is made into large, rather gaudy jewellery that is used in dowries, for example. The jewellery is found in shops all through the Souqs. \* If you were to look at the map of the Arabian Gulf area you would see that it would easily have taken the two years



for the wise men to ride to Bethlehem. With temperatures soaring into the 40s and 50s, it would have been very uncomfortable for them. I admire their stickability in their task, considering that driving for two hours into the desert, in an air conditioned car at 120 km/h, is equivalent to 6 days on the back of a camel. \*

The monetary and health value of the gifts brought to Jesus reminded me once again that our God is a provider and knows what is ahead. Those gifts would have been important for the journey of Joseph, Mary and Jesus into Egypt. \*

This Christmas, as I open my miniature Bedouin box in which I keep some of the frankincense and myrrh, I will remember my deployment to the Gulf. Most of all it will remind me of God's goodness, his ability to provide and that he so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. \*

Barrie is a Churches of Christ minister and Royal Australian Navy Chaplain.

# Christmas

## What if God was One of Us?

STEVE FAHEY

**O**n 24 March 1996 the new Withcott Early Childhood Centre was officially opened on the church property. The number of children who attend continues to increase, and the centre enjoys a good reputation for care in the local community. To help enhance a Christian influence in the centre I committed myself to read to the children about God each Thursday. \*

Late one Friday afternoon I dropped into the centre where I spoke with some of the staff and pushed a few children on swings. As I was leaving the

*In John's day the difficulty was believing he was human; today the problem is seeing him as God.*

Director of the centre, Juanetta, said to me, "You've gone up in stature Steve." Confused, I asked her, "What do you mean?" \*

"Well," she said, "When you were outside, one of the children (Kate) came running inside and said to her sister, 'Quick come outside, God's here! Come outside and talk to him.'" Wisely Juanetta explained to Kate that it was not God, but the local minister who teaches people about God. Kate was wrong about me. Really wrong. But the idea of God becoming one of us and living amongst us is clearly taught in Scripture. \*

The apostle John opens his Gospel concerning Jesus with these words, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God."

And then in verse 14 of that opening chapter he says, "The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth." \*

John, an eyewitness, shows us that Jesus (the Word) is unique as God's special Son, yet he is fully God. Because he is fully God, Jesus is able to reveal God to us clearly and accurately. \*

At Christmas we celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ. When Christ was born, God became a man. Jesus was not part man and part God. He was completely human and completely divine. "For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form." (Col 2:9) God became visible and tangible in Christ. The most common errors people make about Jesus are to minimise his humanity or to minimise his divinity. Jesus is both God and man. \*

Concerning heresies, the Life Application Bible makes the comment that through the centuries, many heretics have denied that Jesus was both God and man. In John's day the difficulty was believing he was human; today the problem is seeing him as God. Jesus' divine human nature is the core concept of Christianity. \*

Listen carefully to what religious leaders believe about Jesus. To reject either his divinity or his humanity is to consider him less than Christ, the Saviour. \*

Max Lucado has written a book based on John 1:14 entitled *God Come Near*. In the book there is a chapter entitled "Absurdity in Flesh" which contains these comments: \*

What God did makes sense. A sacrifice was needed to justify man's presence before God. God used the law to tutor Israel on their need for grace. It makes



sense that Jesus would be our High Priest. What God did makes sense. It can be taught, chartered and put into books on theology. But what God did is absurd. \*

In leaving the method and examining the motive, the logic begins to tumble. That type of love isn't logical; it can't be neatly explained in a sermon or examination paper. \*

Lucado is right. When we consider how we and generations before us have let God down, we must wonder, why didn't God give up on us? \*

Even today as millions pursue power and pleasure, God still waits for them. It's absurd, but it's true. Only God could love like that. \*

I don't really understand the love of God, but I sure appreciate it. Christmas is a special time, a happy time to remember again, that out of love, God in Jesus became one of us. \*

Steve Fahey is minister of Withcott Church of Christ, Qld.

# Australian Churches of Christ **Digest** Historical Society

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## Henley Beach Church of Christ

Mark Dodd

Mark Dodd, a CCTC Mulgrave student with a long association with the Henley Beach SA church, presents an overview of the church's history, 1891-1996.

Digest Editor, Graeme Chapman, presents us with the challenge to join the pursuit of our history as churches and a movement.



**H**aving spent the greater part of 17 years in the Church of Christ at Henley Beach, this church occupies a very special place in my memory. Researching the history of this congregation developed in me a deep admiration for the people involved in its formation.

The church at Henley Beach is 105. To attempt a comprehensive history is not possible and the limited space would not do justice to the enterprise and spirit of the people involved in its life over these years.

This brief review will focus on three ten-year periods.

### Humble Beginnings 1891-1901

The first ten years of a church's life are of prime importance, as they determine its direction.

To discover how the Henley Beach congregation came into existence, we must go back to 1881, when two young men (G. Noble and S. Sherriff) heard an exposition on Christian baptism. The explanation disappointed them. Being members of the Hindmarsh Church of Christ, they invited their preacher, H.D. Smith, to conduct Bible classes in Mr Sherriff's home at Lockleys. These meetings commenced with 12 people in attendance. It was not very long before the group moved to another member's house. *The Australian Christian Standard* (March 1893, p. 75) reported that "about 1881 Bro. H.D. Smith started a Bible Class in Bro. Sherriff's house near Fulham, which soon got too small. After a while, Bro. Lewis opened a door into a larger room, where the knowledge of the truth was still increased."

H.D. Smith left the district in 1886, and this factor, in the context of adverse times, led to the cessation of meetings. In 1888, "there was some kind of depression, and a number of people left the district in search of work. Reluctantly, it was decided to discontinue the meetings." (Davie, 1951, p. 1)

In 1891, the Lawrie family moved from Alma and settled at Henley Beach. They had been worshipping at the Grote Street Church of Christ. They called together the remnant that remained from the defunct Fulham church. "They conferred with some of the remnant of the Fulham Church and a meeting [was] called for June 25th 1891 to consider joining forces to form a church. The meeting was adjourned for a fortnight, but on July 9th it rained, and only a few gathered." (ibid.)

It seems that a favourable response was received to the July 9 meeting, because, on 6 September 1891, the first communion service was held at Henley Beach with 8 members present. In the 1891 *Christian Pioneer* a reporter from the Hindmarsh Church of Christ commented: "We were delighted to meet once again with the band of brethren of the Fulham Church, Henley Beach, yesterday. What a refreshing time we enjoyed as eleven of us gathered around the ta-

ble. May the Lord bless and multiply them." (p. 318)

The little band of Christians meeting at Henley Beach possessed a sense of vision that was quite remarkable. The congregation grew from 8 to 11 in the space of a month.

On 5 November 1891, the first business meeting of the church was held. It proved significant for the fledgling church. At this meeting, it was resolved that the church would erect a building for worship. It was agreed that "a substantial brick and iron building be erected capable of seating about 200". (Davie, 1951, p. 2)

In March 1892, at the annual conference of Churches of Christ in South Australia at which two members of the Henley Beach Church were present, the young congregation was accepted into the South Australian Churches of Christ Evangelistic Union.

Of the new chapel, which was opened in 1893, it was written: "It is a pretty building, set upon a hill, having a most picturesque appearance for miles around from land and sea, composed of white sand bricks with red facings, portico and iron roof, a pretty coved ceiling of stained wood, seated with cane bottomed chairs, reflecting great credit on all concerned." (*Christian Pioneer*, vol 11 No. 5, p. 47)

Three services were held on the day of the opening of the chapel. Dr J.C. Verco preached in the morning, T.J. Gore in the afternoon and H.D. Smith in the evening. In 1893 the membership of the Henley Beach church stood at 20.

The years that followed were times of significant growth for this seaside church. By 1895 the numbers had increased to 68. The church had an impact on "older" generations as well as on the young. A Sunday School was started in February 1893, with an average attendance of 16. By 1895, it had increased to 56.

Even in these early years, the little church at Henley Beach displayed a wonderful spirit of cooperation. In 1898, Henley Beach joined with the York and Glenelg Churches to support Jesse Colbourne as evangelist. After a short time Colbourne moved to Melbourne, although he returned two years later to work once more with the Henley Beach and Glenelg Churches of Christ. Following Jesse Colbourne's departure for Brisbane, Henley Beach became independent of the circuit system, engaging a total of 12 evangelists up to the time of the church's jubilee in 1941.

### 50 Years. What Next? 1941-1951

The years 1941 and 1942 were of great importance for the small congregation at Henley Beach. The church celebrated its Jubilee from Sunday 7 - Wednesday 17 September. Church records are lacking for this period and the only report of celebrations was an article written by A.R. Jones for *The Australian Christian* 24 September 1941.

The progress made since the church's humble beginnings was reflected in the

membership of the church and Sunday school. The jubilee celebrations had a positive effect on this growing church. As A.R. Jones put it: "The celebrations will long be remembered for the happy reunion, the rich fellowship, the crowded meetings, the stirring messages, the happy labour as the brethren sought to renovate and beautify the Lord's house, as the ladies prepared the teas. The church will remember these days as a time of inspiration and reconsecration. Every soul has been encouraged and inspired." (p. 450)

The jubilee celebrations also reflected the impact that Henley Beach Church of Christ had upon the surrounding community. Jubilee meetings were crowded and the offering raised was £34. A.R. Jones' concluding statement reflected the impetus resulting from the celebrations. He commented, "We face the future with a strong faith and resolute will". The resolve reflected in this comment carried Henley Beach church into the future.

A "Victory Through Christ" crusade was held at the church 4-20 October 1942, with Thomas Hagger as evangelist. The crusade was strongly supported by the people of Henley Beach, as well as other city and suburban Churches of Christ. "Mr Hagger's messages were vital and uplifting, and through them the church should be stronger in faith and love and deeper in spirit." (*The Australian Christian*, 1942, p. 534)

Although the church freely and unashamedly admitted that the crusade mainly benefited the church, strong appeals were made for people to surrender to Christ and the church was encouraged when five young people confessed faith in Christ.

The years 1941-1951 were marked by both growth and decline. Membership at the time of the jubilee in 1941 was 85, and peaked at 104 in 1943. By 1945 it had fallen to 95. Rapid decline set in from 1947 to 1951. The years 1949-1950 saw the membership plummet from 83 to 42. By the end of 1951 there were 52 in membership.

A.R. Jones, who accepted a continuation of his war-interrupted ministry, remained at Henley Beach until 1949. Some of his reflections capture the excitement and enthusiasm at Henley Beach during those years.

"The church was very active and reached a membership exceeding 100, with a Sunday School which reached 127 and a junior C.E. of 27 ... I can remember the excitement of purchasing the 60' x 40' military hut from Plympton Barracks. It was dismantled, the floor cut into sections and moved to Henley ... In 1946 a severe storm hit the coast with 84 mph winds. It was on a Sunday. Church was cancelled and we spent all day holding the roof down with ropes." (*Henley Beach Church of Christ Centenary Souvenir*)

These were exciting years at Henley Beach.

That wind-blown army hut was used as a youth centre, which was an important aspect of the church's activities. Youth



Church Officers 1903. Top: G. Noble, J. Stanford, G.A. Hurcomb. Bottom: J.W. Cosh, A. Lawrie, J. Colbourne, S. Lewis

activities were held every night and the centre catered for 80–100 young people.

These years saw considerable fluctuations in membership. It is difficult to account for the severe losses recorded. What is certain is that the large exodus would have diminished the church's impact on the community. As Albie Jones commented: "After the war when the service personnel returned there was a movement away from the church which was to have a profound effect on the work. The young people married and moved away and the church passed through very lean years." (ibid.)

Through times of growth and decline, through times of prosperity and of financial difficulty, the church at Henley Beach, largely under the leadership of A.R. Jones, never lost the original vision with which it started out, reflected in a strong faith and resolute will that would once again carry the little church at Henley Beach into the next 43 years of service to the community.

### A Centenary and the Future! 1975–1996

The period from 1975 to the present has witnessed the church's fluctuating fortunes. These years have been characterised by a

wide range of experiences. There have been good times, when the congregation has rejoiced in the birth of new life or as a consequence of a confession of faith in Jesus. There have been times of consolidation, of working together to carry on or to recapture the original vision. While Henley Beach Church of Christ has had good times, it has also known times of sorrow and pain. These experiences, like the joyful episodes, also contributed to the way in which the church now perceives itself.

During the period 1975–1996, several events took place that were important in the life of the church. In 1976, the church celebrated its 85th Anniversary. "Henley Church of Christ continues to play an effective role in the community—a role which it has played for 85 years. The church also continues to provide activities for all age groups through Girls' Brigade, netball, indoor bowls, women's fellowship, men's fellowship, youth club and Bible school." (clipping from Messenger Press, June 1976)

During the 1980s the congregation was under the leadership of Don Sonsee.

In five years, to the end of 1985, the church maintained numbers and showed signs of steady increase. During these years the congregation was eager to be involved

in the life of the wider community. Visibility, community outreach and mission were top priorities. These five years were characterised by support, encouragement, love, acceptance, growth and friendship.

A new era began in 1986. The church began to look seriously at its future direction. This direction involved styles of worship and leadership. As happened in all-too-many congregations, the church agonised over the tension between traditional and charismatic experiences of worship. Relationships and numbers were casualties of the pain engendered by this tension, so much so that at the end of 1987, church membership had fallen from 72 to 47.

Brian Hill, who succeeded Don Sonsee, faced a difficult situation. The focus of his ministry was on reconciliation and healing. Hill's ministry, which lasted to the end of 1992, was necessary and appreciated.

The Centenary Celebrations in September 1991 were a highlight of this period. Not only was the day itself a success, but the period of preparation was also beneficial, as the recent past was laid aside and the people worked together to celebrate the passage of 100

years. The report in *The Australian Christian* captured something of the atmosphere of the day and reflected a sense of optimism.

The years 1992-1994 have seen the church start down a new path.

In 1992, Henley Beach, along with Brooklyn Park and Flinders Park, began discussing the amalgamation of resources. In 1993, this process led to the formation of the "Westside Cooperative Ministry". A task force was set up to oversee this process. A further innovation was the appointment of Robyn Walsh, the first woman minister to be employed by the church. The congregation has appreciated Robyn's ministry.

Sadly, the amalgamation of the three churches will not be proceeding, and Henley Beach will cease to function as a separate

entity. Its life and rich tradition will contribute to many new ventures. Henley Beach, "The Little Church on the Hill" will remain firmly imprinted on the hearts and memories of its members and the many people whose lives it has changed over the course of 105 years of ministry.

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# How Can I Best Encourage You?

**M**ark Dodd, a student at CCTC, researched and wrote the brief history of the congregation at Henley Beach that appears in this issue, in partial fulfilment of assessment requirements for a B.Theol unit at CCTC, Mulgrave, on the history and theology of Churches of Christ.

I am seeking to encourage students to tackle research projects to better acquaint them with the ethos of Churches of Christ, to hone their skills as budding historians and to build up a file of material on the history of Churches of Christ in Australia.

For many years I have been seeking to encourage those open to suggestion to tackle historical projects. I was hopeful, after writing *One Lord, One Faith, One Baptism; A History of Churches of Christ in Australia*, that the book would stimulate others to fill in the gaps and to debate with me over interpretations, so that we could enhance the panorama into a three-dimensional artwork. My arguments were broad brush-strokes, suggestive rather than definitive. While some have been enticed, and have produced significant work, there are still many gaps. Could I again challenge those with an interest in history to pursue a clue-by-clue unravelling of a range of mysteries.

We live in a society that has a diminishing sense of history, a malady from which we in the church also suffer. It reduces our perspective on the present and robs us of the sort of strength and confidence that comes from an awareness of our roots. This is particularly important at this stage in our

history when we face increasing diversity in what some are calling a post-modern world.

Part of the process of historical research involves debate over interpretation. In the last *Digest* we featured Richard Lawton's brief biography of Thomas Jefferson Gore. This was appropriate in the year that the Grote Street Church celebrated its 150th birthday, and, concurrently, the 150th anniversary of the founding of Churches of Christ in Australia.

Trevor Lawrie, in a recent manuscript, challenged the traditional account of our beginnings, arguing that immigrants, previously associated with Churches of Christ at Beith and New Mills, in Ayrshire, Scotland, were meeting together for worship in South Australia before the formation of the Franklin Street congregation, with which the Grote Street church is associated. This paper precipitated debate. Because a healthy sense of identity is bound up with our history, as individuals and congregations, such challenges are not comfortably accommodated.

In one sense, it does not really matter who was "first". Significant developments occur simultaneously in a range of contexts and it is the texture of such developments, rather than the question of who was "first", that is historically significant. Nevertheless, healthy debate that conflicting interpretations evoke is significant in thickening our understanding of the past.

In the next issue I intend publishing a manuscript I received from Ken Patterson on the beginnings of Churches of Christ in South Australia. In accepting the article, I am not taking up a personal position, but I am wanting to encourage considered, courteous assessment of the issue. I am not intending to foster a lengthy debate, but I will provide limited space, in the following

issue, for a response, should one be forthcoming. —Graeme Chapman

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# Christmas

## 25 December: Christmas?

BILL TABBERNEE

**T**he actual day on which Christ was born is unknown. Complicated arithmetical calculations based on ingenious theories have produced various claims. The *De Pascha Computus* (c. 243), for example, gives 28 March. Other early documents propose 2 April, 19 April, and 20 May. The earliest author known to have suggested 25 December is Julius Africanus (c. 221). 25 December, however, did not become the official Christmas day in Rome until c. 336, and much later elsewhere. The patriarchates of Constanti-

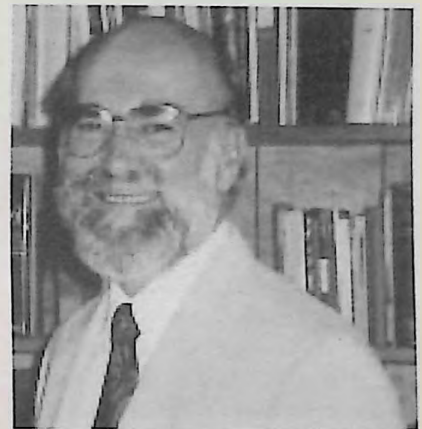
*Many non-Christian practices could easily be given Christian meaning.*

nople and Antioch (the Greek and Syrian Churches) adopted it c. 385, but Alexandria and Jerusalem did not do so until 431 and 549 respectively. \* The Armenian Church still celebrates Christ's birth on 6 January, which appears to have been the most common date until "The Feast of the Nativity" was moved to 25 December. Epiphany was originally a festival commemorating various aspects of Christ's "manifestation" or "appearance" (*epiphania*). These included his birth, the star of Bethlehem which led to the adoration of Jesus by the Magi, and the manifestation of who Jesus really was at his baptism and the miracle at Cana. The choice of 6 January for Epiphany probably stems from Egypt where there was a festival on that day during which water was drawn from the Nile. \* Gnostic claims that Jesus became divine at his baptism was one factor leading orthodox Christians to separate the

commemoration of the nativity from that of Jesus' baptism. A more significant factor was the victory of Christianity over Roman religion in the post-Constantinian era. 25 December, the day of the northern winter solstice according to the Roman calendar, was also the alleged birthday of the Persian god Mithras. In the Roman pantheon, Mithras was designated *Sol Invictus* ("the Unconquerable Sun"). The emperor Aurelian reinstated the cult of *Sol Invictus* in 274, making 25 December the official day of its festival. This cult was a major rival of Christianity in the early fourth century. The significance of Christians celebrating the birth of the one they worshipped as the "Sun of Righteousness" also on 25 December would not have been missed by their opponents. Christ's victory was not only over sin and death as commemorated by Easter, it was also over all false gods—including the (so-called) "Unconquerable Sun". \*

Adopting 25 December and transforming a festival already celebrated throughout the Roman Empire forced the celebration of Christmas to include (and transform!) various practices not originally or directly related to the birth of Christ. This explains, at least partly, many of our current Christmas traditions. Some, such as the Teutonic sacred tree and the Scandinavian Yule-log, are derived from national expressions of winter solstice festivals. Feasting (including special foods such as "Christmas" cakes), decorating with greenery and lights, and exchanging gifts may all be traced to other Roman festivals held at that time of year. \*

Many non-Christian practices could easily be given Christian meaning. Votive cake offerings could become mince pies and cut into shapes suitable for



Christmas decorations. The story of Santa Lucia could provide Christmas lights. Holly could signify that the babe of Bethlehem would one day wear a crown of thorns. The exchange of gifts could be reminiscent of the Magi and of Christ, the greatest gift of all. \*

Christians not only adapted previous practices but added to them. St Nicholas ("Santa Claus"), the fourth-century bishop of Myra (Lycia), patron saint of children, was linked with Christmas because of his alleged practice of placing gifts in children's shoes or stockings. In the Netherlands, children receive their main gifts on St Nicholas' Day (6 December). The Christmas season was, in time, extended to "the Twelve Days of Christmas", culminating with Epiphany but including the festivals of St Stephen (26 December), St. John (27 December), the Holy Innocents (28 December), and the Circumcision of Jesus (1 January). "The Day of Stephen" inspired the story surrounding "Good King Wenceslas". \* Christmas itself, of course, derives its name from "the mass" which is traditionally part of the liturgy. In fact, in some churches it is normal for there to be three eucharistic celebrations (midnight, dawn, day) on 25 December. \*

# Christmas

## Unwrapping the Gift

LAWRENCE HIRSCH

**I**t is always a delight to watch a child receive a gift. One of the observations that I have made is that most children don't care too much for the wrappings. The wrapping paper is torn off in a frenzy to get to the real thing—the present. All the effort, time and skill taken in covering the present is hardly appreciated. \*

We live in a modern society that places too much value on outer appearances. A great deal of time and effort is spent on the wrappings. We think that if we can only beautify something on the outside (be it people, products or services)

*I am sorry that all the wrappings around the story of the birth of Jesus, hid the true beauty and significance of that event from my understanding.*

and market it successfully, then we don't have to be too concerned with what is inside. Our culture is too concerned with image and superficiality. Unfortunately, wrappings can often hide the true nature and beauty of the gift. Children show us that it is what is on the inside that really counts. \*

As a Jewish child I knew that Christmas was the celebration of the birth of Jesus. I also knew that we as Jews don't celebrate Christmas because it was for the Christians. I took it for granted, from looking at the pictures of blond baby Jesus on the Christmas cards, that he was definitely not Jewish. As far as I

was concerned, the story of Christmas was all about Christians for Christians. I assumed that Bethlehem must have been a very cold place because of all the snow, and I always wondered what Christmas trees and a little fat man in a red suit had to do with it all. \*

I am sorry that all the wrappings around the story of the birth of Jesus, hid the true beauty and significance of that event from my understanding. I wish I had known what I know now. That he was born as the Messiah of Israel, the Son of God in fulfilment of the prophecies given in the Jewish Bible. That his mother was a good Jewish woman called Miram and that both his mother and earthly father were from the royal lineage of King David. That his name given to him at his birth was Y'shua, for he shall save his people from their sins. That he lived a life in complete obedience to the Jewish Law and then died on the cross as a sacrifice for my sins according to the Jewish Scriptures \*

I also wish that this message, the message of Jesus the Jewish Messiah, would be shared with more of my people in a way that they can understand. I wish that more of my people would discover the Jesus of the Bible and come to know the love of God so perfectly demonstrated in him. \*

This time of year, with all the Christmas parties and functions, provides us many opportunities to share this Gospel message with those around, including Jewish people. Let's be aware of this and be ready in and out of season to give an account for the hope that is within us. \*

By all means, celebrate the birth of Messiah in a way that is culturally relevant to you. But don't let the cultural wrappings of Christmas hide the mag-



nificence of the gift—the gift of righteousness that comes through faith in Jesus Christ. Let's unwrap the gift for all to see. \*

"But the free gift is not like the transgression. For if by the transgression of the one the many died, much more did the grace of God and the gift by the grace of the one man, Jesus Christ, abound to the many. And the gift is not like that which came through the one who sinned; for on the one hand the judgement arose from one transgression resulting in condemnation, but on the other hand the free gift arose from many transgressions resulting in justification. For if by the transgression of the one, death reigned through the one, much more those who receive the abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the one, Jesus Christ." \*

Romans 5:15-17

Lawrence Hirsch is Director of Celebrate Messiah Australia, an evangelistic organisation reaching out to Jewish people.

# Christmas

## I Like Christmas Stockings

SHIRLEY LUDGATER

I remember when the smell of nutmeg on the top of Santa's eggflip was the finale of a busy Christmas eve for us as youngsters. \*

I remember when 2.30 am blowing up of giant balloons and 7.00 am singing of carols in bed with all the children was the Christmas morning pattern for us as parents. \*

Most of us have our own special family traditions and certain ways of celebrating Christmas. We are convinced that Christmas would never be the same without them. Other cultures and tra-

*Is our Christmas simply a repeat of what happened in our own childhood, or do we ever look at creative ways to bring added meaning and honest-to-goodness joy into our traditions.*

ditions, seem very strange, but do we ever stop to think why we do what we do? Is our Christmas simply a repeat of what happened in our own childhood, or do we ever look at creative ways to bring added meaning and honest-to-goodness joy into our traditions? \*

Many non-religious people will say, "Christmas is only for children", and because we all have the picture in our minds of little ones around a gleaming tree on Christmas morning, it is understandable that some who are without families or whose children have left home, should feel that there is little reason to bother decorating a tree or

making the home look festive. Older folk are likely to say, "There's no need to fuss for 'Darby & Joan'." \*

The question is therefore highlighted: **Why do we do what we do?** with the added question: **Is Christmas with all of its trimmings only for children?** \* When 25 December was chosen to celebrate Christmas Day, 350 years after Christ's birth, it coincided with old pagan winter solstice feasts as well as the Roman Saturnalia festival, and with the Hebrew Festival of Dedication. Fires and lamps to help refuel the sun god's light for another year, street dancing and gift giving were an integral part of these festivals, all intended to be hailing the victory of light and life. \*

Instead of worshipping the sun at the start of a new year, early Christians were already worshipping Christ as the Light of the World and the Lord of Life, and praising God for the unique gift of his Son. Making the December "Feast of Christ" official was therefore readily accepted by most. \*

But why bother with these trappings of Christmas when so many bear the vestiges of ancient paganism? \*

Almost all of our customs and symbols can be identified with non-Christian origins, with legends and a variety of folk practices. But who, as a Christian, can fail to identify a Christmas star with the star of Bethlehem or with the biblical imagery of Jesus as "the bright and morning star". As an evergreen tree has, since ancient times, been used to celebrate new life, so to us it signifies the eternal life made possible by the birth of Christ Jesus. Its lights remind us of Christ as the Light of the World. Similarly, other customs and symbols have been endowed with Christian significance. \*

We "bother" because they are graphic



reminders of Gospel joy, breathing an atmosphere of celebration. \*

**Why do we do what we do?** If the answer for you includes "to celebrate the gift of the Child born to be King", then even the pulling of a Christmas cracker may be a hallowed custom. \* **Is Christmas only for children?** Of course it is! Only a child can gaze with awe at the glowing lights of a towering tree and hear the flutter of angel's wings in its branches. Only a child can take undisguised delight in the painstaking preparations of "special" gifts for special people. Only a child can "see" Jesus smiling when we sing "Happy Birthday". Unless we become as little children, we are a very long way from the kingdom of heaven, and our celebration of Christmas may be little more than an anti-climax to months of commercial hype. \*

Christmas is a whole season to be celebrated with child-like joy that is able to make the most of cherished traditions, but is not dependent upon them for the blessing of "God with us". \*

Shirley Ludgater is a Churches of Christ minister working with Interchurch Trade and Industry Mission, Victoria, with experience in local church ministry and overseas mission work in Vanuatu.

# Reviews



## Help M.E.

by Ruth de Lacey (Vital Publications) \$16.00.

An inspiring story of a sufferer with chronic fatigue syndrome. Ruth de Lacey, who lives in Perth, is a very private person who never dreamed she would write a book that would reveal everything about her. A very active person, both at home and at church, it was a terrible surprise to her when one day in 1992 she completely



collapsed and remained bedridden for ages with chronic fatigue syndrome. She had no energy to do even the simplest things. When she began to recover she was persuaded to write about her experiences. The result is the book, *Help M.E.*, published this month by Vital Publications. On 1 December, over 150 joined Ruth and her family at the Lakeside Recreation Centre in North Lake, WA, to launch the book. *Help M.E.* is both practical and inspirational. Ruth tells what it is like to have chronic fatigue syndrome or myalgic encephalomyelitis (hence the "M.E." of the title).

She details the symptoms, and what to do—and not to do—if you or someone you know has this condition. The book is full of helpful hints and advice for both sufferers and carers. Even Ruth's husband, Peter, has discovered things about ME and how his wife was suffering of which he had no idea at the time. At the same time Ruth tells us about her journey with God from darkness to light and how she found strength, hope and healing through her faith in an all-power-

ful creator, who made, loved and healed her.

This is for those who are interested in the healing power of God in people's lives. Over 100 copies were sold at the launch, and more since, so the book is selling fast. *Help M.E.* is available from Vital Publications, PO Box 101, North Essendon 3041 (telephone (03) 9379 1219, fax (03) 9379 0015) for \$16.00 plus \$1.00 postage, or in Perth from Ruth de Lacey, PO Box 835, Cannington 6107. An ideal Christmas present.

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 2 January 1997  
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**Camp Waterman Mission Impossible? Camp**  
 5-10 January 1997  
 Directed by Paul Fry, this camp  
 is for those aged 13-16.

For further information and  
 camp forms, contact Paul Fry on  
 (03) 9756 6120 or the Conference  
 Office on (03) 9326 8900.

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# Media Matters Resources for Celebrating Christmas

VINEY LONGTHORP

**O**n one occasion the late Manning Clark wrote a letter of condolence to a former colleague whose sister had died. In it he told how he coped with bereavement; he wrote (in part) "I read from the Book of Job and listen to the B Minor Mass of Bach." \*

Clark is saying, in effect, that when we are confronted by life's deepest experiences only the best can minister to us with any meaning. And these deep experiences come from opposite poles—from the direction of either joy or sorrow. As the English poet and mystic, William Blake once expressed it:

"Joy and sorrow, woven fine,  
A clothing for the soul divine." \*

Thus joy too is an ineffable mystery. Its essence lies in the Christmas story. And there are magnificent depths in this story. It requires the best resources to make our celebrations complete and effective. \*

The Egyptian Jesuit scholar Henri Boulad (*All is Grace*) re-

minds us of the meaning of Christmas: "Something enormous is going on within our history. The Lord has come. The Lord will come again. The Lord is coming. That is our hope ... The eruption of God at the heart of the world evokes the unexpected, the inexplicable, the unforeseen, which escape all scientific forecasts." And again: "This fusing of time and eternity came about historically in the incarnation." \*

This is something to ponder on, but above all to celebrate and address our offerings of praise by the best means possible. \* At this Christmas the media will offer some glorious resources to help us in our celebrations. \* There is **radio**—in the main, ABC FM

**Saturday 21 December:** Handel's *Messiah* with the Sydney Symphony Orchestra and Choir. (Check the time of broadcast). \*

**Sunday 22 December:** "For the God Who Sings" with Kay McClennan 6.00 am – 8.00 am. Program includes: Advent Carols from St John's and Chorale motets by Trinity College, Cambridge. \*

**Monday 23 December:** 11.00 am – 12.00 noon. The Sixteen present a Christmas Concert. \*

**Tuesday 24 December:** 11.00 am – 12.00 noon. A Christmas Concert with the BBC Singers. \*

**Wednesday 25 December:** Christmas Morning Breakfast 6.00 am – 8.00 am. Includes: Carols from Ely; A Christmas Fantasy from Winchester Cathedral; A Lutheran Mass by Praetorius; Christmas music from Medieval and Renaissance Europe. 8.00 pm. The Sydney Philharmonia Choir sing Christmas music. \*

**Recorded music** as available from Move Records Phone (03) 9497 3105. Fax (03) 9497 4426:

*A Golden Christmas on Flute and Harp* with Elizabeth Koch and Suzanne Handel of the Adelaide Symphony Orchestra. Tracks include: "The Christmas Song", "Frosty the Snowman", "Away in a Manger" and 17 others. \*

*We Wish You a Merry Christmas* as by the choir of Ormond College, Melbourne. Items include: "Good King Wenceslas", "All This Time the Song is Best", "The Three Kings" and others. \*

*Raffi's Christmas Album* (especially for children). \*

*Merrily at Christmas* (also especially for children). \*



*Music from Heaven* The choir of Ormond College sing works by Allegri, Bach, Poulenc, and others. \*

*Sacred Carols* An anthology for classical guitar, including: "Hark the Herald Angels", "Si-

*Thus joy too is an ineffable mystery. Its essence lies in the Christmas story.*

lent Night" and others. \*

*Carols of Many Nations* by the Australian Children's Choir. Includes: "Notte Placida", "Bright December Moon" and others. \*

Available from The Open Book (stores in capital cities):

*The Majesty and Glory of Christmas* 46 favourite hymns and spiritual songs. \*

Available from St Andrews Cathedral, Sydney:

*Sing with the Spirit* The St Andrews Cathedral Choir offers a rich smorgasbord of sacred music, including renditions of favourite hymns. \*

I wish all the joy and blessings of the Season. \*



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Phone (062) 88 2050

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

Advance bookings appreciated

# Classifieds

## BIRTHS

**HARDWICK** Glenn and Simone give thanks to God for the gift of their first child, Jaycob Peter Graham Hardwick. Born 10 November 1996.

## RUBY WEDDING

Ryall-Galloway Roger and Betty of unit 2, 7 Seaforth Rd, Balcatta WA celebrate the 40th anniversary of their wedding, conducted by George Smith at Cottesloe Church of Christ, with an "At Home" on 11 January 1997.

## GOLDEN WEDDING

**WAKEFIELD (BRADLEY)** Don and Rita of Morwell are happy to announce their 50th wedding anniversary, celebrated on 21 December 1946 at the Church of Christ Raleigh St, Footscray. Parents of Glenda, Janice, Peter, Christine and Karen, and grandparents to ten.

## DIAMOND WEDDING

**FERGUSON** Olive and Bryce married at Carnegie Church of Christ by A.A. Hughes on 19 December 1936. May the Lord bless you both as you continue in your lifetime of service to him. Congratulations and love from Ian and Judy, Barbara and Len and families.

**STIRLING (CARNABY)** Gordon and Lesley married Lower Hutt Church of Christ NZ 5.12.36. Congratulations and lots of love, Jeanette, Beth, Heather and families, and the Boronia church.

**STIRLING (CARNABY)** Gordon and Lesley at Lower Hutt (NZ) on 5 December 1936 by the late W.G. Graham and A.G. Saunders.

## DEATHS

**FUNSTON Ivy Isabel** at Betheden on 17.11.96. Widow of Frank. Loving mother of Ron and Ruth (dec). Fond Gran of Gary and Wayne. Great-Gran of Michael. Sadly missed.

## IN MEMORIAM

**GOLDSWORTHY** Loving memories of our parents, Reginald (12.1.41) and Amelia

(2.1.54). Till we meet again.

## EMPLOYMENT WANTED

**CHRISTIAN NZ GUY** 27 seeks permanent position in Christian employment. Hard-working, pleasant disposition. Anything considered. Arriving May 1997. Phone (NZ) 64 7 888 5921.

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**HOUSEBOAT "White Heron"** 8-berth. Moored at Blanchetown, SA. Phone (08) 365 1153 or (085) 40 5250 or write 7 Gameau Rd, Paradise 5075.

**PORT ELLIOT & VICTOR HARBOR SA** are perfect holiday spots. 2 and 3 bedroom self-contained units in each location for hire. More Uniting Church owned units at Belair, in the Adelaide foothills. Phone UCA (08) 212 4066.

**VISITING HOBART 3BR** fully furnished house, \$40 double, \$50 family. Phone (03) 6234 1637, fax (03) 6223 2446 (or write to Johnson, 75 Mt Stuart Road, Mt Stuart Tas 7000).

## TO LET

**PHILLIP ISLAND HOLIDAY HOME** situated at Rhyll in a quiet court. Sleeps five. All mod cons. Barbecue in garden setting. \$350 per week. (03) 9802 3514.

# Coffee Break Blessed or Stressed?

CAROL PRESTON

**W**ith Christmas upon us it's a good time to look at stress management! One of the best ways to manage stress is to plan ahead, so everything is not left to the last minute. Even if planning ahead is not your usual method, there's still time to think about what you can organise and delegate to prevent that last minute panic. When you're planning, make sure you've put in adequate time for sleep, eating properly, and exercising. If self care suffers when there's an extra activity in our lives, then

## Christmas is not a time for martyrdom.

we are dealing with the pressures with lowered resources, and we will pay the price. So remain aware of what's happening for you, listen to your body, hear yourself speaking, stay in touch with what you are feeling. Otherwise when Christmas is over you may have spoiled what should be a wonderful time with tiredness, business, tension, and indigestion. \*

If you are already in a highly stressed state, arrange for someone else to do what you cannot cope with. Christmas is not a time for martyrdom. It's a time for celebration and thanksgiving! Which brings me to the most important thing about stress management. So many of our battles in all aspects of living are won or lost in the mind. Knowing what is really important, what is worth a fight, what is worth losing sleep over, what is worth speaking out about;



that is where we win our most difficult struggles, and prevent so much of what becomes a threat to health, happiness and relationships. \*

So take a moment before the Christmas rush to evaluate your resources. What state of health are you in? What and who do you need to help you to prepare for Christmas? What expectations do you have about the Christmas get together? Are they realistic? What are the most important things about Christmas? Are you putting your energy and resources into making sure they occur? What are the things that upset you, make it more difficult for you to enjoy Christmas, are likely to spoil the occasion for you or others? Can you let them go? \*

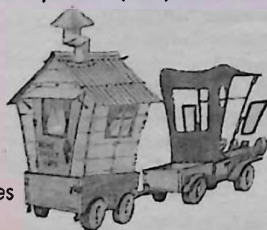
It's important to see how we contribute to our own stress and continue in patterns of relating and behaving which perpetuate or exacerbate our stress levels. Next year we'll continue to look further at building a way of life that brings balance, health, contentment and effective ways of coping with our crises and challenges. For now, consider how you can work towards a blessed and relaxed Christmas celebration for you and those you love. May the love of God be very present for each of you. \*

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## CHANGES

**TWEED HEADS, NSW** The church will meet in the Scouts' Hall, Scott Street, Coolangatta 9.30 am and 7.00 pm, 1 December 1996 to February 1997.

## BAPTISMS

•Craig Westrup, Knoxfield, Vic •Karen Otten, Mark Otten, John Creeley, Bendigo, Vic •John Kamu, Morwell, Vic •Joyce Farrell, Salisbury East, SA

## MARRIAGES

•Michelle Dixon and Ian Curry, Tweed Heads, NSW

## DEATHS

•George White, Tweed Heads, NSW •Dor-

othy M. Turner, Alice Milligan, Strathmore, Vic •Elsie Seal, Ringwood, Vic •Melva Comber, Jean Garth, Bendigo, Vic •Fran Bristol, Belconnen, ACT

## OBITUARIES

Obituaries are limited to 100 words  
**FUNSTON, Ivy Isabel**

(17.11.96) Born in Harvey, WA, in 1906, Ivy married Frank at the Shepparton, Vic, church in 1927. They then moved to Bendigo until 1937, when they shifted to Essendon and immediately associated with the North Essendon church. Aunty Ivy (as she was popularly known) was associated with girls' club and various women's organisations, as well as serving Red Cross for forty years. By 1982 they had moved to the Christian Guest Home, where Frank died in 1984. She at-

tended Oakleigh church. Failing health this year caused her to be admitted to various hospitals and nursing homes (finally to Betheden in September). Her funeral at Oakleigh was conducted by Homes Chaplain Peter Bradley.

—Ron Funston

**MILLIGAN, Alice (Hosking)**

(24.11.96) Alice Milligan was born in Brunswick, Vic, (18.9.13) and was baptised in the Moreland Church of Christ. She was an active member of the churches she attended (Moreland, Harcourt, Strathmore), mainly in children's ministry. She taught Sunday School, ran Good Companions clubs and children's hospital visitation. She was also a keen worker for the CWF. She married Bill in 1937 and they had five children, Alice, Pam, Sandra, Francis (dec) and Christine. She loved flowers and dressmaking. She was a loving caring person with many talents and interests. She will always be remembered as a lady who loved God and other people before herself, and as one who lived her life to serve.

—JMP

**SAUNDERS, Lily**

(12.11.96) Born 18.3.19, Melbourne, Lily had five brothers and two sisters. Her working life included office cleaning, takeaway foods and pamphlet de-

liveries. She had two children and was a member of the North Essendon church for almost forty years. Lily was an enthusiastic show bag packer, had a loving heart, walked everywhere and liked to surprise friends with generous gifts. She loved being with her friends and enjoyed outings with them. Lily died suddenly in hospital after two operations. Her memorial service was held at Berry St. Greatly loved and missed.

—ME

**TURNER Dorothy M.**

(9.11.96) Most people called our mother a "gracious lady". Indeed she was—and now she has gone home. She was born in South Australia 11.12.06. A young minister turned up one day at Moonta. He fell in love with the beautiful sixteen-year-old and six years later they commenced a lifetime of service to our churches in South Australia and Victoria. She used her gifts well during those years: beautiful voice, organist, youth leader, women's groups; all the tasks that a minister's wife was expected to perform. Her passionate interest in people continued all her life, as her many friends of all ages and nationalities will tell. We, her daughters, do indeed "rise up and call her blessed".

—Joy Irvine

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Mrs Anne White, Administrative Secretary, 429 Scoresby Road, Ferntree Gully Vic 3156. Phone (03) 9801 5798.  
Mike Folland, Chairman Vic-Tas Department of Ministry, 77 Capel Street, West Melbourne Vic 3003. Phone (03) 9756 7240;

# Church News

## VIC

### MOUNT CLEAR (Dale White)

Lorikeets (CWF) group contributed \$980 toward purchase of new Roland Electric Piano ... 165 people enjoyed family service with Covenant Players drama group ... BBQ held to farewell 8 international students who graduate this year & return to Asia & Africa ... Forum on membership & constitutions held with John Gilmore (CCTC) ... Church participated in local Bill Newman Crusade 8-10 November.

**MAIDSTONE (A. McMillan)** Geoff Casey (Footscray) & Andrew exchanged pulpits ... Geoffrey Freiberg congratulations 21 ... Thank offering used to replace photocopier ... Explorer boys in recess till February & need another leader ... Church enjoyed

pleasant Sunday evening 29 November ... Carols on the Lawn & Christmas service at Tottenham, Baptist church to come.

**SURREY HILLS (Jonathan Moore, Julie Adam)** Project Day offering & fair proceeds raised over \$6000, half given to Urban Neighbourhoods of Hope, Springvale ... 1997 church program, 2 pages, including inter-church council activities, prepared & distributed ...

Children & youth groups restructuring in progress ... Musical presentations of Adventure Time led by Cathy Bradley & Tim Adam appreciated by congregation ... Babies Hamish Goodwin & Erin Wilson dedicated ... Jonathan Moore attended National Council in Adelaide.

**BENDIGO (John Sweetman)** Over \$3000 given in support of missions. Bible Buddies raised \$270 for Bibles for Egypt ... Swanston St Mission team conducted services on 8 September ... Bubble Club service conducted at Comet Hill School 15 September, preceded by family BBQ tea ... John Sweetman finishes 10 year ministry, January 97 & is currently on long service leave ... Ross Barnes commences 5 year ministry January '97.

**LATROBE TERRACE, GEELONG (David Jones)** Minister accepted ex-

tension of ministry to 2004 ... Jack & Beatha Wilson, Dianne Osborne & Mrs Jacobi welcomed into fellowship ... Mrs Kidman turned 90. Celebrated with friends at an "At Home" ... Jenny Smith qualified as Integration Aide ... David McGregor serving as voluntary worker at Nazareth Hospital ... CWF having break-up luncheon at Shrimpton home ... Bible study groups held morning tea & supper ... Carol service held at Grace McKellar.

**WARRAGUL (Les Medley)** CWF Country Council held at Warragul ... Combined home groups luncheon held ... Steven Ward appointed deacon, also appointed school chaplain Warragul Regional College 1997 ... Youth group hosted dinner for seniors ... Young people organised evening youth serv-

ices ... Play group held fair ... CWF street stall successful ... John Farmer speaker at morning service ... Allen Ronalds overseas with Mobile Mission Maintenance.

**KANIVA (Paul Bauer)** Needed renovations & recarpeting of chapel in progress thanks to Saltmarsh bequest. Local members giving appreciated assistance ... National Conference President, Robert Leane, addressed both services 24 November, basket tea preceded evening service ... Sunday School preparing for combined anniversary with Uniting Church ... Combined Carol Service to be held 19 December ... Sympathy to Lawrie family on death of loved former minister, Merv Lawrie.

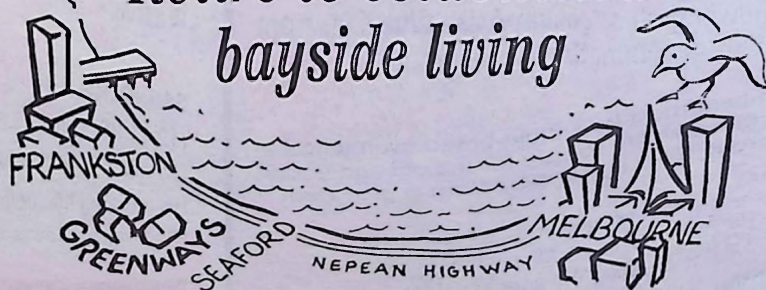
**RED CLIFFS (Steve Mackie)** Annual

CWAF luncheon held at Sprigg's home well attended ... All churches combined for 75th anniversary of Red Cliffs ... Dr Greg Elsdon, Conference President, recent speaker ... After encouraging ministry Steve & Marg Mackie leave to go into chaplaincy work in Wodonga in 1997 also Leigh (elder) & Jenny Mellberg & family chaplaincy transfer to Bendigo.

**MONASH CITY (Martin Gillespie, Craig Brown)** New group, "Single Minded" commenced ... Seniors bus trip to Arthur's Seat ... F-Troop outing to Warragul ... Craig Brown's ministry term extended to April 1997 ... Ron Elbourne's ministry concluded after 26 years of dedicated service ... Visiting speakers Greg Elsdon & David Ratten ... Day of prayer & fasting held.

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RESPONSE 0150

# Church News

**MORWELL (Andrew Ogden)** Family & friends gathered with the Morwell members when John Kamu was baptised on 24 November ... Several carloads of people attended the CCTC Graduation Service when Alf Thistlethwaite (ex student minister) graduated ... Church saddened to hear that Graham Teese (previous member) is most unwell at this time.

## TAS

**LAUNCESTON (C. Spaulding, W. Kerrison, J. Ratcliffe)** Annual Report shows 14 small groups operating involving some 150 people ... 3 Girls Brigade members working for their Queen's Award Badge ... CWF presented costumed Christmas Pageant at their break-up, when Jan Fulton also delighted over 50 present with a musical program on pipe organ ... Michael Thurlow graduates for Wollongong Institute ... Morganti family leaving for 6 months in America.

**NUBEENA (G. C. Cumbers)** Three church members elected to local Council ... Baby Nicholas Berry dedicated at morning service 10 November ... Peter Willis, Devonport, & Geoff Morffew, Howrah, spoke at morning services while minister away ... Allen Anderson (grief counsellor) visited Peninsula for the third time to speak with different groups and individuals.

## NSW

**TWEED HEADS (Bruce Warwick)** Several attended meeting at Southport for launching "Gold Coast Regional Campus" under direction of Kenmore Christian College ... Alan Hermann & Graham Warne, speakers on that Sunday ... Renovations to layout of chapel under way, providing more seating ... 25 shared in Ross Wakeley seminar, Ross speaker at morning service. Inspiring weekend, 14 rededications and one confession of faith ... Graham & Mau-

reen Parrish welcomed into fellowship.

**MAITLAND (R.N. Hawkins)** Over 100 at mid-week Palliative Care service, minister spoke, Debbie Grant sang ... Swedish Musical Duo, Birgitta & Swante took evening service ... David Cohen of CNEC spoke on Partnership in Mission .. R. Hawkins spoke at David House Fellowship Annual Rally on "Jerusalem" ... Car boot sale & market day very wet, but fun & profitable.

## WA

**CARNARVON** Painting & refurbishing manse is under way for arrival January of new minister Gavin Law Davis & Donella. Gavin has just graduated from Adelaide College of Ministries ... Team from Rivervale church spent a week doing maintenance on FAB properties. Their contribution to Sunday services much appreciated with Ross Burton preaching ... Christian School has fur-

ther two year lease on church facilities. **ALBANY (John Spencer)** AGM flowed smoothly on 20 October. Three deacons, A. Middleton, F. Pellicaan & W. Phillips re-elected, & T. Engledow elected for first time ... Church enjoyed Trash & Treasure day 2 November. Good evening of food & fellowship when group from Perth churches organised by T. Streeton visited on 5 November ... Target 2000 used church for Night of Mission 9 November.

# COCOA brings HOPE



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# Snippets from History

## Kist o' Whustles

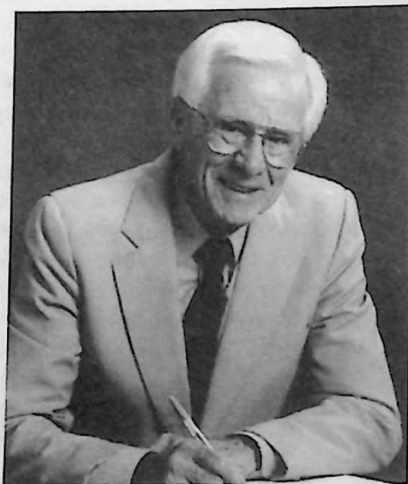
GORDON STIRLING

**R**ichmond was the last church in New Zealand to resist using an organ in worship. They used one at night to attract "sinners", but not in the mornings for the "saints". But young radicals stacked a business meeting and the proponents won. The problem was that the only person who could play it was against the use of organs in worship. Organs were bitterly opposed because "they did not have organs in the New Testament". \*

The Scottish anti-organists described harmoniums as "kists o' whistles" or chests of whistles. One old Scot left his church when an organ was introduced and attended the local Methodist church. When chided with the fact that his new church had an organ he replied that it was all right because it was "no the hoose o' God". \*

The introduction of organs into Australian Churches of Christ blew up a storm for a while. In 1886 the SA Conference had two motions before it. One asked that churches with organs dispose of them in the interests of church unity. The other motion invited Conference to refrain from making any judgement on the matter in the interests of the unity of the churches. The question was deferred to the next Conference which decided to take no action. \*

In the US, the controversy over instrumental music in worship, caused bitter division. Today, non-instrumental Churches of Christ, number some 2,000,000 members. \* In Midway Christian College (USA) they have an organ as an historical exhibit. Ori-



inally it was stolen from the church by an anti-organ elder who hid it in his barn. In Texas the notorious Grandma Driscoll attacked the new church organ with a hatchet. Leading anti-organ protagonist, Moses Lard, said it was better to be out of the church than to attend "an organ grinding church". \*

The organ controversy began at the end of Alexander Campbell's life. He described the harmonium as an unnecessary innovation that lowered the quality of worship. He said that an organ in worship was "as appropriate as a cowbell at a concert". Incidentally he was tone deaf. After his death the organ was introduced to the Bethany church, but it was not played on the occasions that the ageing Mrs Campbell was able to attend, in respect for her. \*

## The Last Word

**Let us walk softly, friend;  
For strange paths lie  
before us all untrod,  
The new year, spotless  
from the hand of God;  
Is thine and mine, O  
friend.**

—L. Gray

*Most people go through three Santa Claus stages. First you believe in Santa Claus. Then, you don't believe in Santa Claus. Finally, you are Santa Claus.*

*The best way to keep a New Year's resolution is to yourself.*

*Most new Year's resolutions go in one year and out the other.*

*How many evolutionists does it take to change a light bulb? One, but it takes eight million years.*

*While the minister was speaking a man fell asleep. The minister raised his voice and pounded the pulpit but the man would not wake up. Finally the minister called to a deacon, "Go and wake that man up". The deacon replied, "Wake him up yourself. You put him to sleep!"*

*Customer in clothes shop: "Can I try on that blue suit in the window?"*

*Manager: "No, you'll have to use the changing-room like everyone else!"*

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