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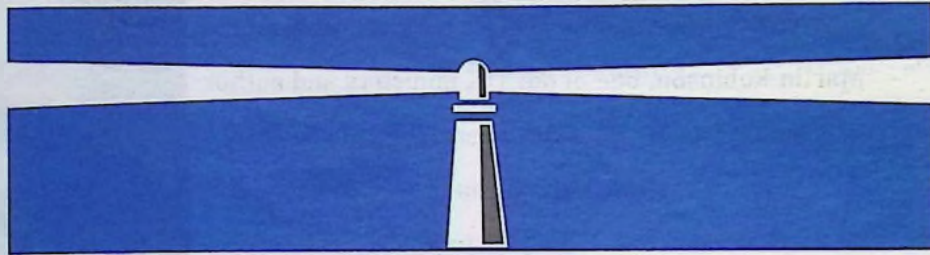


Christian

NATIONAL JOURNAL OF CHURCHES OF CHRIST IN AUSTRALIA

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"The new missionary church of the West seeks those who will have the courage to light a new beacon, one which will illumine the age which is to come."

Martin Robinson
The Faith of the Unbeliever

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Editorial

The Wagon Master

DON SMITH

This editorial relates to the Australian Board of Church Development and Education. Let me share two stories told by leaders I admire very much. Martin Robinson, one of our UK ministers and author of *The Faith Of The Unbeliever* concludes his book with the comment we have used on our cover. * It is a dramatic conclusion to the story he tells of the conversion of the British Isles and the life of St Patrick. He describes how the defining moment of St Patrick's mission revolves around the lighting of a beacon. The High King of Ireland had a practice of celebrating a pagan



feast on the hill of Tara. Custom had it that no one was allowed to light a fire before the one at the palace of Tara. St Patrick decided to celebrate Easter on the plain and light his beacon on the night preceding the king's feast. He knew the king would see the light on the plain. The story has it that the Druids warned the king that, unless St Patrick's fire was put out that same night, it would never be put out. They warned that the beacon's light would rise above their customs and that Patrick who lit the fire would overpower them all and reign for all eternity. Patrick's fire was not extinguished and the beacon burned ever more brightly. Now look again at our cover for the message for today. * The second story is related by Lyle Schaller in his recent book *Tattered Trust*. It is a story of the New World and the wagon trains carrying new settlers across the great plains and mountains of North America towards the Pacific Coast in the late nineteenth century. Schaller draws on a story by J.S. Ninomiya and describes the two crucial responsibilities of the wagon master. As each day began the wagon master got up and pointed to the west as the direction for the day. His second task was to maintain a reasonable level of harmony, cooperation, teamwork and peace among the members. Every day the journey was challenging, through often unexplored and sometimes dangerous territory. The wagon master never recommended retiring east. Who is your (our) wagon master, locally, state-wide or indeed nationally? Do we have one or indeed need one? Shall we go East or West? *

Our Future

With the focus on our Australian Board of Church Development and Education, we examine who we are and some issues facing us for our future.

- Leadership and Destiny* 10
- ABCDE* 11
- Results of NCLS 96* 15
- Mission in the Market Place* 16
- Hitting the Target* 17

News


- State Youth Games* 5
- Reunion at Camp Cal* 5
- Sexuality Issues* 6
- Vital for Kids* 7
- Diligent Service Recognised* 8
- Emmett Retirement* 8
- Australian Christian Forum* 8
- Vanuatu Conference* 9

Arranging Flowers

Jill Anderson advises on creative use of flowers in worship settings. 20

Regulars

- Exploring the Day* 24
- Media Matters* 19
- Pastoral Care* 18

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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.

Homosexuality

To the Editor,
 Mark Fletcher ("AC" 16.8.97) and I agree on one thing—it is essential that people with a homosexual orientation, including Church of Christ members, be accepted by other church members.
 I don't agree that homosexuality is something that is part of "the real person". There is still no proof that it is genetic. Dean Hamer's 1993 study made no such claim. The removal of homosexuality by the American Psychiatric Association from their list of disorders was not the result of scientific investigation but of political activism by committed homosexuals (see Jeffrey Satinover's book *Homosexuality and the Politics of Truth*).

Homosexual orientation develops when we try to compensate for incomplete gender-identity development, occurring through difficulties in the early relationship with the same-sex parent. It is not a disease, but a dysfunction of the psyche, and can be corrected. Many people have been healed through the love of God and his people and the support of organisations such as Liberty (Sydney, (02) 9798 4685), Exodus (South Melbourne, (03) 3699 1536), and similar ministries—I'm one of them. God wants us to be whole, and he offers us healing for our incompleteness. It's a hard road, but you can change if you want to.

—Kim Kemmis
 (Marsfield, NSW)

Opponent of Truth?

To the Editor,
 J.H. Luxton, ("AC" 2.8.97) accuses me of being one of the Churches of Christ members who "decry the Old Testament ... opposing Biblical Truth".
 If Mr Luxton looks carefully at my various letters published in the "AC" over the years he will find that in none of them have I done either of these things.

Coming from an English Baptist background, I moved into Churches of Christ fellowship in Boronia, Vic, in 1959, and gladly accepted the principle "Where the Bible speaks, we speak" but found, very often that this was not the case in all doctrinal statements and teaching. My stand in all my correspondence has been on the basis of what the Bible actually says, rather than what theologians tell us it says by tradition. Mr Luxton goes on to quote 2 Tim 3:16 and specifies the Old Testament which, I suppose, leaves him free to accept or deny as he likes any New Testament teachings. Incidentally, my Greek text literally reads "all God-breathed writings (scriptures) are...". In that same letter (2:15), Paul exhorts Timothy to "rightly divide the word of truth". This, in my opinion, means finding out what God is really saying rather than accepting what others say that God is saying.

—Geoff Keeler
 (Palmwoods, Qld)

Abusive Language

To the Editor,
 From time to time we have been offended by language used in the "Letters to the Editor". The recent letter of J.H. Luxton ("AC" 2.8.97) persuaded us that it was time to protest.

The use of terms like "Bible-believing Christians" and "so-called Christians" to describe those

Letters to the Editor

Christians with whom we agree and with whom we disagree respectively is offensive, abusive and, to many people, intimidating. We and many of our friends probably would not agree entirely with the writer's views on Scripture but we are not aware of any Christians who would describe teachings of the Hebrew Bible as "unscientific nonsense". Therefore the letter also misrepresents us.

We know this kind of language is used in more conservative and fundamentalist circles of the Christian church but we do not consider it suitable for the columns of *The Australian Christian*, the organ of a movement which arose as a response to division between Christian churches and which continues to protest that division.

By all means let us discuss and debate our position(s) on matters of theology, action and organisation. But let us respect the integrity of those with whom we disagree.

By the way, the topic of the letter slipped from our minds while we were distracted by the language. If financial support for an organisation is an assurance of Divine approval, perhaps we should change our minds about Crown casino! We think not.

—John & Joan Pye
(Richmond, Vic)

You imply church decline is due to this view, concluding that high Christology is the touchstone! Yet you yourself argue for that high Christology only because it creates passion and prevents decline. You do not ask what is true, but, "what works".

Is that the way you think we should read the Gospels? After all, Luke is famous for its "low Christology".

Did you not understand Dr Greg Elsdon's honest appraisal in the same issue that the Gospels differ very much in the way they present Jesus?

Indeed, your comment that viewing Jesus as a good man and great teacher is "opposite" to viewing him as divine and risen constitutes an outright attack on "liberal" Christians. It is one thing to give room for such views within the "AC", it is another to editorialise them.

Your editorial integrity now depends on what right of reply you give to the other or "low" side.

You concluded your editorial with this quote, "Tell me how it is with your Christology and I shall tell you who you are." Having told us of your high Christology, do we now know who you are? If so, I for one am more than a little uncomfortable about being judged from such a height.

—Mike Janssen
(Preston, Vic)

Update

Dear Readers,

We are receiving a steady stream of lists of new subscribers from churches as they respond to our Centenary promotion. Nubeena, Tas, Pyramid Hill, Vic, and Port Fairy, Vic have been among the first of the smaller country churches to meet their goal. Northside, NSW, and Berwick, Vic, two of our larger churches, have both exceeded their goal. Gordon Stirling returned from a promotion at Berwick with some 17 new subscribers. Congratulations!

Since having access to our rebound volume one (see "AC" 16.8.97), I have been enjoying reading through the issues. One cannot but admire the stamina of the readers of 1898 as they made their way through tightly packed pages of copy. It is also clear there never was a golden age. A.B. Maston, the first editor, was certainly into setting members, churches and other denominations right on a wide range of issues which were of concern in that day. The debates and expressions of opinion from readers show that human nature does not seem to change very

much! One thing I did identify with was the Editor's constant push for new subscribers. He never let up! I know the feeling! Our office is currently stacked with new publications for the National Literature Department. The 1998 calendars arrived this morning, some 10,000 of them. These will be packaged on 6 September by a team of volunteers. The calendar looks great, probably the best yet.

Included in our news items is an account of the launch of two new children's books. They are outstanding and definite candidates for the children's "Religious Book of the Year Award" in 1998. My wife Lois is delivering copies to our youngest granddaughter in Launceston this very weekend. A new book, *Seeds of the Spirit* by Arthur Pigdon, has also arrived. Our National Literature Department shares offices with us. Right now it is a prolific time for publishing by them, and there is more to come.

My Jesus Isn't Your Jesus

To the Editor,

In reply to your Editorial "Who Is Your Jesus?" ("AC" 2.8.97) I must conclude that my Jesus isn't your Jesus. You say, "A high apostolic view of Jesus creates conviction, passion and energy. A low view leads to dissolution of faith and decline." In one sentence you disparaged the faith and service of all who share a down-to-earth view (or Christology) of Jesus.

Pontius' Puddle



State Youth Games

Fun and games at Warragul



These five young people from the Ascot Vale (Vic) church recently attended the State Youth Games event at Warragul in June. The big smiles are the result of their jubilation in winning the trophy for the most successful "smaller church" team—an award given to encourage participation from smaller groups and create greater inclusiveness at the games. State Youth Games is an annual event organised by Youth Vision Victoria. Nearly 900 people were involved this year in a spectacular weekend, which featured eighteen different sports, huge worship meetings and numerous other activities. Previously held at Queenscliff, the move to Warragul became necessary following the remarkable growth in the event's popularity. Congratulations to Blackburn, who were the overall champions this year.

New Zealand Tour—1998—19 Days

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Reunion at Camp Cal

Fifty years of being a part of many Christians' lives



Some of the participants in the Camp Cal reunion.

Around 60 people recently converged at Camp Cal on Queensland's Sunshine Coast to mark the 50th Anniversary of camping on that historic site.

A hard working committee put together an interesting program, which involved participants in a range of exercises designed to help them reflect on the part which Camp Cal had played in their lives and in the lives of countless hundreds of adults and young people from our Queensland churches for so many years. The occasion also marked the

21st Anniversary of the opening of the A.C. Male Centre, and many people paid tribute to the imaginative vision, drive and energy of Alan Male, whose name is virtually synonymous with "Camp Cal".

Guest Speaker for the weekend was Graham Agnew, Senior Minister of our Marion Church in SA.

A moving communion service was held on the Sunday morning in the famous open air chapel, and was for many one of the real highlights of the weekend.

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Sexuality Issues

Homosexuals in the church

Sexuality issues and the church are much to the fore in the Western church. In the United Kingdom, the General Assembly of the United Reformed Church (previously Presbyterian and Congregational) has agreed to accept practising homosexuals as ministers. In the early 1980s a majority of Churches of Christ congregations united with this body. The remainder continue as the Fellowship of Churches of Christ. Local URC churches have the right to refuse to call a homosexual minister. Candidates for ministry cannot be rejected on grounds of being in a homosexual relationship. During the Assembly debate Phillip Morgan described the move as not worthy of the church. Prior to the union with the URC Phillip Morgan was a Churches of Christ minister and closely

involved in leadership of the churches. He was also a past secretary of the British Council of Churches. Lesslie Newbigin, distinguished missionary statesman and author, described the move as authorising what scripture does not. Strong dissent is evident within the denomination, with the potential for members and churches to leave the union.

In the United States, the Episcopal Church (Anglican) turned back by one vote a call for blessing of same-sex unions. Supporters of the proposal vowed to return in 2000 for another vote. Within the world Anglican community a meeting of Asian and African leaders recently held in Kuala Lumpur adopted a statement taking the Western churches to task for moral laxness and expressed vigorous

opposition to homosexual lifestyles and same-sex unions. There is an unconfirmed report circulating calling for the expulsion of the Episcopal Church on the grounds of moral and doctrinal error.

Much closer to home many readers will be aware of the turmoil within the Uniting Church of Australia and the debate at the recent National Assembly in Perth on the question of homosexual people in leadership. Vigorous opposition was expressed by ethnic churches and the Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Fellowship. The resolution passed commits the church to continuing dialogue on unresolved matters regarding the place of homosexual people

within the church. Some notable Uniting Church leaders opposed the moves. These included Alan Walker and Gordon Moyes, both of Sydney. In his speech Gordon called for the disciplining of Rev Dorothy McRae-McMahon, Director of the Commission for Mission, for her declaration to the Assembly that she is living in a lesbian relationship. The call was not acted upon. Evangelical leaders commenting on the report "Uniting Sexuality and Faith" said, "The theology is deficient, the ethics flawed and the societal amendments are destructive." Readers may like to remember in prayer these churches as they seek their way through these complex issues.

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David Brooker

State Minister, Churches of Christ in SA Inc
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CLINICAL PASTORAL EDUCATION

A training program for personal and professional development in ministry is offered each year at Peter MacCallum Cancer Institute. The course is full-time and designed in units of eleven weeks duration. Applicants may apply for one or more units commencing Autumn 1998.

A limited number of study grants (up to \$5,000.00) are available for those undertaking more than one unit. Training involves on-call weekend and evening duty for which allowances are payable.

Applicants should have previous experience in pastoral care. Closing date Friday 17 October 1997.

For further information please contact: Ms Jenni Wegener, Acting Director, Clinical Pastoral Education, Pastoral Care Department, Peter MacCallum Cancer Institute, St. Andrews Place, East Melbourne, Vic. 3002. Telephone: (03) 9656 1301, Fax: (03) 9656 1855.

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Vital for Kids

New series of children's books launched



Paul and Michelle Andrews read to an attentive audience

The noise and excitement of the Kidsmin, Vic, games seemed an unlikely setting for the launch of Vital Publications' latest books. But the 200 kids, their leaders and parents were quiet and appreciative as Michelle and Paul Andrews read them their new book, *Where in the World Is God?*

When Michelle and Paul's children, Elise, now 5, and Zachary, 3, began asking questions about God they searched in vain for suitable Australian books on the subject. Michelle is a qualified primary school teacher and Paul is a graphic designer with his own design studio, so they decided to write the books themselves. Paul asked one of his talented staff, Laurent Filippini, who was born in Paris and trained at that city's National School of Applied Arts, to do the illustrations. The result is two extremely colourful and attractive books.

Where in the World Is God? helps children to find God for themselves, and *Will Anyone Listen to*

Me? introduces children to the personal experience of prayer.

Vital Publications is very excited about these new additions to their catalogue, as this is the first time they have published titles for young children. These "Vital for Kids" books have received an outstanding response from parents, teachers and church workers as a resource for school religious education classes, Sunday school, children's story time, in church and at home.

Each book comes with a bonus wall chart offer—a colourful monster size growth chart and a calendar—while stocks last, so order soon! Order from Vital Publications, PO Box 101, Essendon North Vic 3041. Each book costs \$3.95 + \$1.00 postage and handling in Australia. (Maximum P & H \$6.00.) Phone (03) 9379 1219, fax (03) 9379 0015, e-mail aceditor@ozemail.com.au

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Diligent Service Recognised

Jack Brooker honoured during anniversary service

In December, 1996, Jack and Marnie Brooker were farewelled from the Semaphore, SA, fellowship as they moved to Glenunga and into membership with Dulwich/Rose Park United Parish. However, Jack's incredible era as church secretary for a continuous 52 years needed wider recognition. On 3 August, during the church's 87th Anniversary celebrations, Barbara Grear, Conference Treasurer and wife of guest speaker Barry Grear, presented Jack with a certificate of appreciation, honouring not only his enormous service as secretary and

also church treasurer for 14 years, but his significant contribution to State Conference.

Jack served on the then-known Preachers' Placement and Advisory Committee for 37 years, with 32 years spent as secretary. When he retired from this position he was recognised by the Conference for his diligent and caring ministry to the congregations and ministers in SA. It is significant that when Jack retired as secretary of the church last year, it took four members to replace him, such was the scope of his Christian service! —Roger Brown

Emmett Retirement

Farewell Function for Allan Emmett.

A retirement dinner was held at The Tudor, Box Hill, Vic, on 9 July, to farewell Allan Emmett, the outgoing Executive Officer of the Properties Corporation of Churches of Christ in Victoria. Allan, who officially retired on 4 July 1997, spent almost 30 years with the Corporation, during which time he oversaw the move to two new centres—from Lonsdale Street to Latrobe Street, and then the move to the current Capel Street centre. He also attended to the computerisation of the Corporation's accounting systems, as well as assisting churches throughout Victoria and Tasmania with numerous prop-

erty and financial matters. Over 80 guests, including family and friends, attended. The evening's program included a number of humorous speeches recalling past events. Deep gratitude was also expressed to Allan on behalf of Conference, the churches and the Trustees. Allan and Val were presented with a beautifully-crafted wall clock, which will, no doubt, take pride of place in their new home, when they relocate to Benalla, Vic, sometime next year. Allan, who made faithful service his priority, would simply like to be remembered as "the boy from Brunswick, who did his humble best".

Australian Christian Forum

Internet-based discussion on recent issues

An Internet discussion group has been set up by Peter Coburn at xcelNet Enterprise. Recent discussion topics have included postmodernism, conference structures and homosexuality. The discussion group can be accessed by subscribing (a free service). "The Australian Christian Forum" is located at <http://admin.xcel.net.au/christian/>. Once you subscribe you receive details of how it all works through e-mail.

We owe Peter Coburn thanks for his major contribution in setting up The Australian Christian Forum (he thought up the name too!). You will notice our site is

sponsored by xcelNet Enterprise. This is Peter's recently established business. xcelNet Enterprise is an Internet service provider, web page and site developer and provides consultancy on Internet and communication issues. Peter is particularly interested in working with churches, organisations and individuals who want to establish a Christian presence on the net. Web sites for Christian organisations can be "hosted" by xcelNet—even for those who don't even own a computer!

—Russell Kilgour
(kilgour@melbpc.org.au) and
Peter Coburn

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Vanuatu Conference

Here and There Chat Before Communion

Hong Kong has one of the world's highest concentrations of mobile phones. On the street, in restaurants and shops, on buses, trams and in the underground transport system, mobile phones are in constant use. But worshippers were still astonished to see one member of a congregation chatting into his mobile phone as he waited in line to receive communion at a service in Hong Kong recently. The conversation ended as the man was about to reach the top of the queue to receive communion. He told his caller, "I have to hang it up. I'm next at the Lord's Supper." The occasion was the Sunday Eucharist at the Lutheran World Federation's assembly. (*Cross-light*)

Hybels Does Hamburg.

This was the title in the US-based magazine *Christianity Today* for a news report on a visit to Hamburg, Germany, by Bill Hybels of Willow Creek fame in the United States. Some 4,400 believers gathered for Willow Creek Community Church's first ever church leadership conference in Germany. Leading supporters of the Church Growth Movement said the Willow Creek approach was transferable to the German church scene. One minister who had successfully translated the model to the German context believed that the principles were adaptable to the German state church. Sceptics believe the Willow Creek approach disregards Western European aversion to entering any church, suspicion of innovation and deep fear of sectarianism. One comment was that "many congregations are unwilling to pay the price so that a few stray non-believers could be converted and feel comfortable among us".

True relationship

"True relationship with Jesus" was the theme for the 37th Annual Conference of Churches of Christ in Vanuatu. "To have true relationship with Jesus, we need to surrender all our self only to him," challenged Joses Sali, study leader. John Liu, gave very challenging messages for four nights centred on this theme.

The provincial games were conducted in Santo during the school holidays in May, so we had to postpone the meeting to the first week of June. Then, because of the bad weather and engine problems in the ship that was picking up delegates, the meeting had to be postponed for

another week. Also, during the meeting, a dear old lady who was there a few weeks prior to the meeting especially to help with the preparations, suddenly died. It was a very sad moment. The meeting had to be adjourned until the next day. Apart from all the disturbances, we thank God for his care and guidance, as the meeting was successful. It was the first time we had representatives from our church in New Caledonia, and we had a good number of delegates from Norsup church on Malekula, one of the newly-established churches.

It is the first time in the history of our conference we have had



Morrie Tabi, Vanuatu Conference Secretary

a lady president. Adlean Liu, the wife of John Liu, comes from Tanmaeto, Maewo. Elder Abel Olul from Ranwas village, Pentecost, was elected vice president. Adlean Liu was a director of women's work for more than six years.

Adlean called for unity. "True relationship with Jesus will eventuate only if there is unity in the home, among church leaders, among members of this congregation. True relationship with Christ means total commitment of life to him," she said.

—Morrie Tabi,
Conference Secretary

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Our Future Leadership and Destiny

ALAN HIRSCH

This decade is literally crammed with destiny. Sadly, such talk of "destiny" as we approach the new millennium can tend to sound rather clichéd, but it is in such times that we find ourselves. Destiny in the biblical framework cannot just be considered as some inevitable future condition. Rather, it is a future directly resting on decisions made now. In Scripture, the link between past, present and future is inexorable and unavoidable. A sense of destiny engenders a sense of responsibility. *

Few would deny that we are at a crossroads in church history. But, true to the Biblical idea of destiny, it will be our contemporary responses that will see the Churches of Christ either become a movement that forges history and shape its future, or an anachronistic religious organisation. How we (and of course the broader church in Australia) manage the emerging situation will determine which road we take into the next millennium: the road of an expanding and viable witness or that of increasing irrelevance. It is only the hard choices we make now and the committed directions we put in place now that will go toward creating the future we live in. We cannot, and must not, avoid the task of fully owning our responsibility that this moment in history demands of us. *

At the risk of sounding reductionist, I believe that the single most important factor for a healthy future of the Churches of Christ is that of leadership. It will be the sheer quality, character and capacity of the key leadership that we allow to emerge and to lead that will indelibly shape the future of our movement. The direction leadership takes in the next few years (or to put it another way, the hard decisions which are ei-

ther made or avoided) will determine our witness in the next millennium. Destiny-shaping decisions and destiny-shaping direction are vital tasks of destiny-shaping leadership. *

Allow me to suggest what such leadership might look like *

Gospel Imagination and Missionary Zeal

At the core, such leadership is "apostolic". That is, it comprises two leadership characteristics which were essential to the original apostles: Gospel imagination and missionary passion. * Gospel imagination as I conceive it, means cultivating a visionary capacity that takes the Gospel as its immutable reference point. It means having a mind that is inflamed by the fundamental message of the Bible—the person and work of Jesus Christ. Such leadership is not merely visionary, but purposeful and productive. *

Missionary zeal is that spirited passion that refuses to be put off by what appear to be obstructions to the advance of the Kingdom of God. It creatively seeks ways to overcome humanly constructed bounds in order to implant the Gospel faithfully into human hearts and cultures. When gospel imagination and missionary zeal converge in a leader, they create a leadership that is innately compassionate, thoroughly creative and totally mission-minded. *

Model the Tasks

Furthermore, the type of leadership that will forge destiny will need to embody that which is demanded of the people and organisations that the leader serves. There is a gulf of difference between managing and leading. A person cannot be a leader from behind a desk (a manager "yes", a leader "no"). Real change in people and society only ever happens when a leader's deeds



A sense of destiny engenders a sense of responsibility.

approaches his or her words. The idea of modelling must be fully embraced. *

Pass on the Flame

History-making leaders are therefore natural disciplers of others. They recognise the gulf of difference between the training of religious technicians and the formation of spiritual leaders. Sure, it is important for leadership to impart concepts, skills and competencies. But it seems to me that it is far more important to ignite conviction and the courage to lead. The idea of "facilitating ministry" is rather cool and low-risk. The idea of truly apostolic leadership—of ministry engagement, of boundary-breaking mission, and of the redemption of this land—is impassioned and perilous. *

Risk Taking

Other characteristics of key leadership for our times must I believe include the willingness to take risks and to give permission for others to do the same. We need to be vigorously entrepreneurial if we are going to survive the postmodern missions context. This is

ABCDE

going to mean active, even daring, experimentation. Apostolic leadership throughout church history has always cultivated new ways of "doing" and "being" church. Our time requires no less. *

Strategic Mind and Focus

Finally, apostolic leadership is also, and essentially, a strategic form of leadership. The strategic leader is one who is able to identify and focus on core, fundamental tasks. This strategic approach recognises "high leverage" areas, those areas that maximise overall results with minimal effort. Such a leader is able to recognise the complex reality of human social systems and is committed to dealing systemically with structures as well as being engaged compassionately with real people. *

But one factor outside of the nature of leadership itself is vital to our future viability and effective witness: namely our corporate willingness to give organisational permission for destiny-shaping leadership to emerge and to lead. It is one thing to recognise the need for such leadership; it is quite another to make space for such leaders and to allow them to take a pivotal role in our ranks. *

Destiny therefore lies not only in our capacity to identify and place "apostolic" leaders, but also in the collective willingness to allow the right leaders to make decisions and so to forge direction. Whether we allow such leadership to lead will be the litmus test of whether we have the courage to be a movement and not merely a religious organisation. And God knows, to make history we are going to need to be a movement. *

Alan Hirsch is Executive Director of ABCDE and is Director of the Vic-Tas Division of Mission and Revitalisation.

The Australian Board of Church Development and Education (ABCDE) is the national network of all the state mission, development and education bodies. As you might expect, the range of concerns for ABCDE are broad and include all aspects of mission and ministry, such as: cross-cultural mission, church planting, evangelism, educational/training tools, literature, leadership development, church growth, youth work and national strategy. In the past few years ABCDE has shifted from a largely administrative function, and has focused on becoming a national network and think-tank for issues relating to the above mentioned aspects of mission and ministry.

Hence some of the articles in this edition of the Australian Christian. You will note that some of the activities of the ABCDE have included experimentation with new media. Paul Mitchell, the editor of our new Internet web site (which has been done with the support and partnership of the National Literature Department), will introduce you to our excellent on-line magazine called *Shoot The Messenger*. Ian Corlett has written an article reflecting the nature of church revitalisation in the nineties and some of the challenges characteristic of this kind of work. Bronwyn Hughes writes about the implications of the National Church Life Survey for the Churches of Christ. Finally, I have written about the characteristics of the leadership I believe is needed as we enter a new millennium.

All in all, we hope that you will be both stimulated and challenged to further support the work of the ABCDE as it helps Churches of Christ plot its way through the uncharted waters of the new millennium.

—Alan Hirsch

*What do you do when you live
in the country and your husband
is sent to a Brisbane hospital
in a critical condition?*

How do you cope when you're told that he will be there for months and you need to be near him? How do you manage in a strange city without your network of family and friends? Where does the money come from when you have to pay the normal bills at home and the extra ones from living in the city?

What do you do? Where do you go?

Who do you turn to?

This is the kind of story **Operation Newstart** deals with every day in our Hospital Family Support

WHO?

Who do you turn to?

"In August 1992, I was working under a 4-wheel drive, replacing the springs, when it came off the jack and broke my back. I spent 4 months in hospital."

Alastair Smales' life changed that day. But he's getting on with life. He decided to take up sports and began swimming again. A couple of years ago, he was on the team that represented Australia in the Paralympics in Atlanta where he came 12th in the 50m butterfly with a "Personal Best" and an Australian record.

Alastair is from Brisbane, so his family was nearby during that long hospital stay. But, coming out of hospital, he said it was like being "dropped off at the deep end." If there had been a place like Mirunya House for him as a transition, "it would have taken a lot of heartache and hard work out of moving from hospital straight to home. A half-way house would have people to guide and help you." We can't take away the pain of a tragedy like Alastair's - but we can help avoid further heartache and ease the way with loving care at Mirunya House.

Please help us realise this dream.

Programme. Every day we house the families of long term hospital patients at a price they can afford, providing the love and support they can't afford to be without.

But there's more to do! Over the next two years we hope to redevelop Mirunya, our hostel at Spring Hill. The new facility will have one, two and three bedroom units providing not only low cost accommodation for families, but a place where patients themselves can come and spend time with their loved ones. We also hope to provide specially equipped units for paraplegics and quadriplegics so they, too, can spend time away from hospital.

Who can these people turn to? They can turn to us. And right now we're turning to you for help. With your donation we can build and expand this vital and much needed program. Will you help?



You may receive a brochure and envelope in the mail, or at your local church. Please give earnest consideration to sending your gift to help us in our vital work. We're counting on you!



Your gift will help!

Your gift makes a difference in the lives of people you will never know.

Like Myrtle from one of our **Aged Care Retirement Villages**, who has made jam for more than 20 years, and did it last week. "If I were living on my own, I wouldn't be able to do any of this!"

Or George, from **Branch-Out** alcohol and drug recovery maintenance program... "I have hope and have been given the tools to deal with the problems myself!"

And Bronwyn, whose daughter, assessed with developmental delays, is cared for in one of our **Child Care Centres**... "You accepted her with an open mind (and heart), then encouraged her participation in the various social, educational and physical activities your centre provides. You surpassed my expectations. Thank you!"

Pictured right is Toowoomba volunteer Ivy Bonnette helping one of our Aged Care residents on an outing.



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Our Future

Results of NCLS 96

PETER KALDOR, RUTH POWELL AND BRONWYN HUGHES

If you attended church services or church activities in the last week of August 1996 you are likely to have participated in an important event in the life of the Australian churches, one that is unique across the world. In that week, congregations of 23 denominations in Australia participated in the second National Church Life Survey. *

The scope of the survey is immense. In 1996 more than 324,000 attenders from 6,900 congregations provided responses to the survey questions. Results for each congregation have been returned to them in the form of print-outs which provide a picture of congregational responses to each question. In 1996-97 well over 110,000 pages of congregational reports have been produced. *

It is important to understand that these results are preliminary. However, it is encouraging to note that attendance rates over the past five years have been stable, with an overall growth rate of 6%, which parallels the growth rate in the wider Australian community during the same period. It is not possible yet to determine the growth in attendance for the Churches of Christ, as growth rates for individual denominations are not yet available. *

The low levels of younger attenders remains a huge issue for the churches, the implications of which will only magnify in time. Some 33% of church attenders are over 60 years of age, a similar proportion (34%) are in their 40s and 50s, while 27% are between 20 and 40 years and 6% are between 15 and 19 years of age. *

Some denominations are relating better to young adults than others. Churches of Christ have 31% of attenders between the ages of 20 and

40. This compares to 46% in Pentecostal denominations, 33% in Baptist churches, and 19% in the Anglican Church. *

Given the aging profile of church attenders, it is encouraging to note that overall, newcomers to church life are more likely to be younger. Those between the ages of 15 and 40 years are over-represented (10% - 12%). *

Of all church attenders, 7% are newcomers joining their congregation in the last five years and not previously attending anywhere. Of this group, 4% say they returned to church after a long absence (referred to as returnees). The other 3% have no church background at all (first-timers). *

The rate of newcomers to church life in the Churches of Christ is also 7%, with newcomers in the 15-40 age group being over-represented (9% - 11%). *

It has long been the case that men are under-represented in church life. This pattern continues, although NCLS 96 shows that the gender balance in the Churches of Christ is somewhat better than the national average. The balance of males to females is 42% to 58% in the Churches of Christ, compared to 39% of males and 61% female across the national average. The high numbers of women in Australian church is partly related to the older age profile, however there is some discrepancy in every age group. *

Church attenders are also very well educated. Compared to 6% of the Australian community, 18% of Church of

	15-19	20-29	30-39	40-49	50-59	60-69	70+
Overall	6%	11%	16%	18%	16%	15%	18%
Denomination							
Anglican	5%	8%	11%	16%	18%	19%	24%
Uniting	4%	6%	10%	14%	17%	20%	29%
Pentecostal	8%	20%	26%	22%	13%	7%	5%
Baptist	7%	15%	18%	20%	15%	12%	14%
Churches of Christ	7%	14%	17%	20%	15%	12%	15%
Presbyterian	4%	8%	17%	14%	14%	16%	28%
Lutheran	6%	9%	16%	20%	17%	15%	17%
Salvation Army	7%	12%	15%	16%	17%	16%	18%
Other Protestant	9%	18%	21%	20%	14%	9%	9%

National Church Life Survey 1996
(adjusted for non-participants)
AGE

Christ attenders have university degrees (the national average of all church attenders is 19%). *

A significant finding of NCLS 91 was the high proportion of people who not only change congregations but also denominations. NCLS 96 suggests that this process of "religious musical pews" has not abated, with some 13% of attenders changing both congregation and denomination in the last five years. This percentage is higher in Churches of Christ congregations (22%). People switching denominations are more likely than average to be in their 20s and 30s. *

Results from NCLS 96 point to many challenges for the churches, but they also give indicators of hope for the future, highlighting the importance of the churches, both to attenders and to the wider Australian community. *

This summary of some initial NCLS 96 results has, of necessity, concentrated on only a few questions from the survey. A more comprehensive overview is available in a booklet called *Initial Impressions* which is available from the NCLS Research office. Participating denominations are also able to order a Denominational Report which includes comment on the research results for that denomination. *

Our Future

Mission in the Marketplace

IAN CORLETT

Fifty years ago our pioneers were vitally involved in the marketplace of the Australian community. During the 20s, 30s and 40s, tent missions placed our plea before the public at large. Churches were planted! The 50s and 60s were a time of reaping the harvest of those years of engagement and outreach. * The 70s and 80s have been much harder for us. Enormous changes have taken place in the Australian community—in values, technology, communications and with multiculturalism. The amount and rate of change continues to increase. *

Somehow or other the church has not kept pace with this new, ever-changing and increasingly sophisticated society. We are no longer in the marketplace. Our language, rituals and symbols are no longer understood by the vast majority of Australians. Church development today is about re-engaging ordinary Australians in their contexts—the market place—for Jesus Christ. * What does this marketplace look like and how do we engage people for Jesus in it? *

The marketplace today is an incredibly complex network of relationships, tasks, interest groups, and places. Less people live in the middle ground than before and the wealthy few are growing richer at the expense of a burgeoning poor and marginalised underclass. Many ordinary Australians are confused and disoriented. The search for meaning and purpose has taken on a sense of urgency. The New Age has arrived. *

The New Age is a response to the church's failure to stay in the marketplace and take seriously the questions about spirituality which are being raised in society. These people are ask-

ing the right questions! But we, the church, have lost contact and the right to join the dialogue. *

The next few years are a window of opportunity to develop strategies and networks which interface with existing community networks to bring an incarnational gospel to the notice of ordinary Australians—to consider as an alternative to the way they presently experience and interpret their spiritual reality. *

New models of church are emerging. Some retain traditional structures, others are radical and different in their

New models of church are emerging.

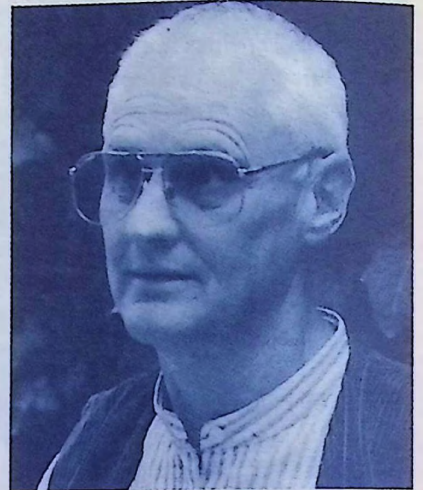
expression. However, they have three key principles in common: *

Worship which is contemporary, relevant and takes seriously the spiritual quest of ordinary Australians. The styles vary enormously but are always targeted to specific social and interest networks. *

The church of tomorrow will be a place of multiple worship opportunities. It will provide space and resources for ordinary people to explore their spiritual journeys in their context, their words and with their symbols. *

The church has a wonderful opportunity to reinterpret the eucharistic experience to the postmodern generation who have rediscovered their sense of mystery. *

We in Churches of Christ have the gifted opportunity of practising the "priesthood of all believers" by allowing ordinary people to express their journey in the face of Christ around the Lord's Table. Such eucharistic worship continues to be the pri-



mary experience for vital Christian living. *

Mission by which the local community is engaged in dialogue and action. Such mission takes seriously the justice issues of the community and sets the call of Jesus to discipleship in that context. It usually happens outside the walls of the church! *

Hospitality which declares to the poor, lonely, handicapped, hurting, marginalised person, "You belong here with us!" This hospitality is about living vulnerably and in openness to others in the places where we do our living. Hospitality is the basic building block of community. *

The new millennium is open to us. God will continue to make himself known in the market place of our space and time. Will we in Churches of Christ allow it to happen to us? *

Ian Corlett is the Associate State Minister in the South Australian Conference. He has specific responsibilities for church development. Ian previously ministered with the churches at Ascot Vale and Sunshine in Victoria and pioneered the Kensington Christian Network, an inner-city ministry in Melbourne. He has also served as an ITIM chaplain and chaplain to the Footscray Football Club, now the Western Bulldogs.

Our Future

Hitting the Target

PAUL MITCHELL AND TIM CORNEY

SHOOT
the Messenger



Shoot the Messenger, an on-line (Internet) magazine, represents an exciting leap into new technology for the Conference of Churches of Christ in Victoria and Tasmania. Located at Internet address www.shootthemessenger.com.au, the magazine aims to effectively interpret and engage popular culture from a uniquely Christian perspective. *

Since its inception in May this year, *Shoot the Messenger*, an initiative of the Conference's Mission and Revitalisation Division in conjunction with the Education Division and the Australian Board of Church Development and Education, has received more than 15,000 separate "requests" for pages on the site. While this does not translate directly to the total number of people viewing the site, it does suggest a solid ground swell of people interested in what this exciting site has to offer. * *Shoot the Messenger* has so far featured an interview with cartoonist Michael Leunig; an article about Reg Mombassa ("Mental as Anything" guitarist) and his Australian Jesus surf wear designs; and a fascinating article about a Christian woman who lost her faith after being "abducted by aliens". *

Shoot the Messenger has also had articles looking at TV shows such as *Friends* (where Melbourne minister Tim Costello speaks his mind), *The Simpsons*, *Ellen* and *Millennium*. With music reviews including "U2", Nick Cave, "Midnight Oil", Bruce Cockburn

and Ben Harper, and film reviews including *The People Vs Larry Flynt*, *The Castle*, *Breaking the Waves* and *Chasing Amy*, Shoot's music and film sections provide some of the most insightful Christian music and film criticism available. As well as covering literature (our '90s obsession with Jane Austen, *Generation F*), the site also features "Infowisdom", a section devoted to

A resource to help understand and interpret popular culture.

helping Christians who may not be as steeped in the symbols, metaphors and trends in popular culture with a place to start. *

Importantly, because *Shoot the Messenger* is on the Internet, all of the articles and reviews so far featured are still available at www.shootthemessenger.com.au. Though it is updated regularly, readers don't have to worry about missing an edition. Whenever they visit the site all the past information is in the site's archives. *

The idea for *Shoot the Messenger* was hatched when Alan Hirsch, the Director of the Conference's then Department of Mission Education and Development, and Tim Corney, a consultant in mission for the Churches of Christ, discussed feedback they had received

from ministers and parishioners wanting a resource to help them understand and interpret popular culture. *

"We decided to do a web site, to combine the need for a pop culture resource with the Conference's desire to be at the forefront of new technology," said Tim, now also the publisher of *Shoot the Messenger*. *

Paul Mitchell, a former assistant editor of national Christian magazine *On Being*, was recruited to edit the site. Siewke Siemsta, a specialist in communication through multimedia, was also recruited as the site's designer and technical consultant. Daniel Batt, a former editor of *On Being*, has also recently come on board the *Shoot the Messenger* team as a consulting editor. *

So far, feedback about *Shoot the Messenger* has been extremely positive. "We're really looking forward to more and more people becoming interested in the site and catching hold of the vision of what we are attempting to do. We also want to encourage people who want to write for *Shoot the Messenger* to contact us," Tim Corney said. (Telephone (03) 9326 8900 or e-mail at timc@enternet.com.au) *

Tim thanked the Churches of Christ National Literature Department for its financial assistance in keeping *Shoot the Messenger* up and running. He also thanked the Society for the Propagation of Christian Knowledge (SPCK) for their kind assistance. *

Classifieds

DEATHS

JENKINS, Joyce Lesley Left us 23 August 1997—78 years young. Loved wife of Alan. Wonderful mother to Geoff, Ian and Anne (Perrin). Her strength, positivity and love have impacted indelibly on her extended family—Sue, Lynley, Ken, Gareth, Michael, Simone, Belinda, Kristie, Rebecca, Raylene, Scott, Michael and Tim. Whilst grieving, we rejoice.

JONES, Alma Maud on 21 August at Mont Calm. Loved and loving wife of Keith (dec). Dearly loved mother of Lynne (dec), Ian, Meredith and Bruce. Loved mother-in-law of Alison, John Longmuir and Barbara. Dear grandma of Travis, David and Jenny Longmuir; Toby and Michael; Marcus, Nick and Simon. "A life lived for others."

HOLIDAYS

AYR, NORTH QUEENSLAND Travelling up the Queensland coast? Stop over in the "Bountiful Burdekin" at Ayr Shamrock Motel. Friendly service, reasonable rates. Phone (077) 83 1498. Owned and managed by Dudleigh Oakes.

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Writing and editing skills are essential. A flair for design would be necessary. Experience in desktop publishing would be an advantage (XPress, Photoshop).

This is a full-time position in a faith ministry. The appropriate person or people would be required to work at the MMM International Headquarters near Melbourne.



For more information, write or telephone the Personnel Manager, Mobile Mission Maintenance, 870 Yea Road, Whittlesea Vic 3757. Phone (03) 5786 5432.

Pastoral Care Visitation

GLEN WEGNER

Routine pastoral visitation by the minister requires time, energy and planning. Regrettably, other demands from the church often make it difficult for adequate time to be devoted to calling at members' homes. *

If a minister feels she or he has no time available to engage in routine pastoral visitation, then priorities need reorganising. Churches should have no compunction in keeping ministers accountable regarding their



*Visiting helps
the minister
achieve
credibility,
trust and
build
friendships.*

pastoral visitation. To protect themselves from unfair criticism in relation to pastoral duties, ministers should record their visitation program and report on the work of their visitation ministry. Such a report must not contain confidential material, but mainly statistical details. *

Visiting, when there is no apparent need, helps the minister achieve credibility, trust and build friendships. Visitation conveys symbolic values. It says that the minister and the church care. It suggests that the recipient of the visit is worth some of the minister's time. *

However, the main benefit from this type of visitation is that it helps build bridges. And that bridge may suddenly be required in a time of crisis. Because of pastoral bridge-build-

ing a minister is well positioned to be welcomed into a home in a time of crisis. *

If a minister has neglected home visits, such a home may turn elsewhere for pastoral help during a crisis. Such a home may turn to a person who has established pastoral trust with them on some previous occasion. *

Some ministers doubt the value of an unfocused visit. It just seems social, another cup of coffee. However, a minister with pastoral skills should be able to focus on what seems unfocused. A minister who is a good listener, perceptive and sensitive, will discover that the unfocused visit may provide pastoral material on which to respond at an appropriate moment. *

While I don't subscribe to the old saying, "A home-going pastor makes a pew-going people", I do believe that neglect of visitation is tantamount to a serious deficiency in ministry activities. Constant faithfulness in visitation is taxing on time. Churches where it is neglected may notice little at first, but after some years of neglect, either the minister, the church or both will feel the repercussions of such pastoral negligence. *

Race and Prejudice

VINEY LONGTHORP

Given the demographic makeup of Australia, questions of race are firmly on the national agenda. Questions as to what multiculturalism really means teases the wits of many. Then such issues as "The Stolen Children" is of deep concern to others, while the policies of the One Nation Party bothers many more. *

"I'm not a racist but ..."

Hence the season of programs on SBS TV 21-27 September, under the title "I'm not a racist but ...", could be a source of helpful comment and insight. The main fare will consist of movies, documentaries and other presentations; most will focus on situations involving racial prejudice. *

Listed below is a sampling of some of these programs. Consult your local TV guide for others in the series. Times given are for eastern Australia. *

Sunday 21 September

7.00 pm "Australian Biography" The life of Aboriginal writer

Ruby Langford Ginini is a drama of reality. Born on a mission station in Northern NSW she lost contact with her mother at the age of six. Her subsequent life was a series of tragedies which are related in her autobiography, *Don't Take Your Love to Town*. *

7.30 pm "Skin Deep—The Science of Race" Documentary hosted by David Suzuki. A variety of experts discuss the origins of racial intolerance and systems of exploitation, as well as the biological and cultural aspects of racism, including the trivial genetic differences between various peoples. *

8.30 pm "Awará Soup" The small town of Mana in French Guiana has a population of just 1500. The program shows the way many peoples relate in one community: there are American Indians, descendants of African slaves, Loatians, Brazilians, Europeans, and Surinamese. *

11.30 pm "The Dead are Alive" Belgian journalist, Els De Temmerman takes us to the killing grounds of Rwanda where he interviews eyewitnesses of the attempted genocide. *

Monday 22 September

7.30 pm "Bringing Them Home" This is a film produced for the Human Rights and Equal Opportunities Commission to document the investigation into the stories of the Aboriginal stolen generations. Sir Ronald Wilson details the physical and sexual abuse suffered by many of these children. *

8.30 pm "Frantz Fanon—Black Skin, White Mask" A profile of one of the major black intellectuals of the 20th century, whose books analysed the effects of colonialism on both black and white cultures. *

9.30 pm "Marian" The Czech director, Petr Vaclav, tells the story of a young Romany boy who falls victim to the prejudice against his culture. *

Tuesday 23 September

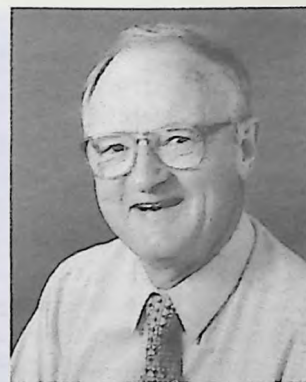
7.30 pm "Front Up Special" Andrew Urban presents this off-beat view of ourselves. In this special presentation he offers a compilation of interviews with Australians about our views on race and racism. *

8.30 pm "Blue Eyed" In this challenging program, Jane Elliot recounts her twenty-year long fight against prejudice, ignorance and racism. We see how in a period of half a day she builds up a microcosm of American society "warts and all" in its attitude to race. *

Wednesday 24 September

8.30 pm "One Land. Two Peoples" This New Zealand documentary focuses on one land claim against the Treaty of Waitangi, which has its origins in an injustice committed against the Maori people during the land wars last century. *

10.00 pm "The Rabbit Hunt" The title comes from the man-hunt that followed the escape of 570 Soviet officers and men from a Nazi concentration camp



in Austria in 1945. Local residents were ordered to shoot the escapees like rabbits. *

Thursday 25 September

8.30 pm "Buffalo Legends" "Australian Rules Football is more than a game for Aboriginal people", says footballing legend Bill Dempsey, who narrates this story of a group of men who hurdled the barriers of racism on the sporting field. At the same time they established a way of life based on tolerance, respect, and determination to find joy in life. *

11:10 pm "The River" From the great Jean Renoir comes a story of a way of life as it was lived in Bengal, on the banks of the Ganges River during the dying days of the Raj. *

Friday 26 September

7.30 pm "Lighting the 7th Fire" When the Chippewa tribe won a 1983 Federal Court decision allowing them to fish on the lakes of their ancestral lands, there began unabated angry protests by white fisherman and local small businesses. *

Saturday 27 September

8.30pm "You ANC Nothing Yet" In a battered church in the coloured township of Manenburg, South African satirist Pieter Dirk offers a send-up celebration of the second anniversary of Freedom Day. He lampoons the petty hypocrisies of both sides of the colour barrier. *

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Arranging Flowers

JILL ANDERSON

All moments of special significance in our lives are linked universally with flowers. We send flowers to welcome a new baby, they are part of weddings, and console and express love in times of sadness and grief. They are used for presentations, they grace stately functions and decorate our homes. Flowers are inextricably woven into the pattern of modern life, as they have been from the beginning of time. They are frequently used to beautify our place of worship. *

Flowers are God's creation and in their infinite colour and variety we can gain some insight into the miracle and complexity of God's design. *

I think, when I look back, that I have been arranging flowers since I was a small child. Of recent years this has developed into an absorbing and challenging hobby. I am not a professional florist and have not had any formal training in floral art. I have learnt from books and from observation of other flower arrangers. I am frequently asked how I develop a

flower arrangement? It is hard to describe all the processes involved and is perhaps best done by example. Frequently I will assemble a collection of elements related to the theme, but have no clear idea of the structure of the finished arrangement. A particular piece of wood, or branch or even a length of material may dictate the format of the arrangement. *

I am extremely fortunate in belonging to a church which has a wide range of activities and has given me the freedom to explore and create ideas in floral art. I particularly enjoy developing arrangements for Easter and Christmas, and illustrating sermon themes. Our service on Christmas Eve traditionally explores the message of Christmas through readings, reflections and song. Last year the theme embodied the colours of the rainbow and their associated meanings. To complement that theme I designed a multi-

tiered vertical arrangement, where the colours of the rainbow flowed from level to level. To include all the colours a mixture of fresh and silk flowers were used. Coloured cane representing a rainbow linked the tiers. *

An Easter arrangement I have used on several occasions utilises a cross made from a broken railway sleeper. Attached to the back of the sleeper below the cross is a small container which supports some red carnations. Angled across the upright I included some clipped palm sprayed black to represent the swords and spears. In place of the crown of thorns I have used barbed wire on the top of the cross and snaking around the arrangement. Sometimes at the base of the cross I have used a broken clay pot with additional red carnations. On Easter day white flowers are added to the base arrangement. All elements of the arrangement are sym-

bolic of the message of Easter. (See photo.) *

The church musical! Every year the Christmas story is presented as a musical. The themes have been many and varied including Dick Tracey, the characters from Gilligan's Island and

A particular piece of wood, or branch or even a length of material may dictate the format of the arrangement

from Star Trek! This is a great opportunity for some fun and creative "flower" arrangements for the church foyer. I particularly enjoyed creating a space theme for Star Trek. In the

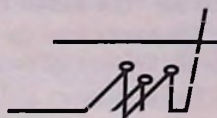
MINISTRY TEAM LEADER

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Comment

warehouse at work I found a collection of galvanised pipes of varying sizes, shapes and angles. These with a little imagination could represent space craft! In the top of several of these I placed a small container with florist foam. Using bright reds and yellows I constructed spheres of flowers—these represented planets. Coloured lengths of cane were used to interconnect the spheres, and the arrangement was completed by attaching small stars to the cane 'orbits'. *

A St Valentine's Day dinner dance has been an annual event of recent years and creating a romantic setting in the church function room has frequently been my task. One very simple but very effective arrangement used vast quantities of fish bone

fern. We used blocks of florist foam in plastic hanging containers and attached these to the walls all around the room. On the tables were tall glass spaghetti jars. All containers were filled with masses of fern. Some small fairy lights were attached to the ceiling and we created, for minimal cost, an atmosphere reminiscent of a tropical island. *

You will see from the arrangements I have described that all manner of accessories are used in creating a flower arrangement. I have to confess to being a compulsive "junkie". I am irresistibly drawn to indestructible rubbish collections and o-shops, much to the chagrin of my long-suffering family. *

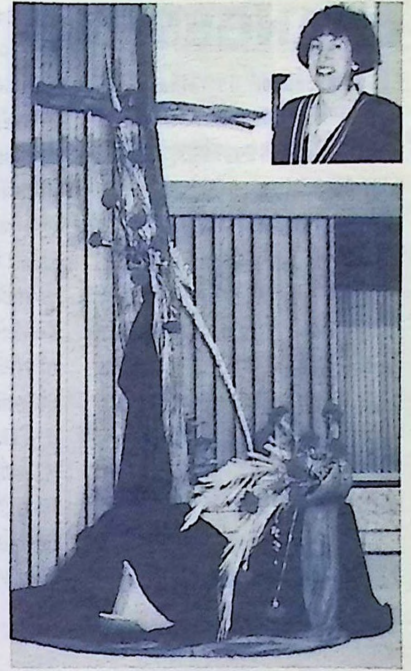
Any trip to the countryside or the beach results in a rich

harvest of bits and pieces. *

On a more serious note, I would encourage those of you involved in church flowers to consider using other elements from the natural environment. There are some wonderful colours and shapes in branches, driftwood, bark, stones, cones, pods, leaves, and even fruits and vegetables. *

Open your eyes to the beauty that surrounds you in colours, shapes and textures and let your imagination take flight! *

Jill Anderson is a member of the Blackburn, Vic, church.



Jill Anderson (inset) and one of the flower arrangements she made for use in worship.

PROFESSIONAL INDEMNITY WORKERS COMPENSATION DIRECTOR'S AND OFFICER'S LIABILITY

CHURCHES OF CHRIST PROVIDENT FUND—NO. 1 FUND

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CHANGES

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BAPTISMS

•Peter Emery, Frankston, Vic •Ian Scollo, Mount Clear, Vic •Allen Wilson, Ron Little, Portland, Vic

MARRIAGES

•Carolyn Foster and Chris Rothwell, Karyn Turner and Wayne Murphy, Bundamba, Qld •Jenelle Baggs and Matt Eldridge, Happy Valley, SA •Lyn Johnson and Kevin Willey, Portland, Vic

DEATHS

•Muriel Olive Bischoff, Chadstone, Vic •Mercy Lawrie, Bill Clements, Victor Harbor, SA •Mona Nicholls, Maidstone, Vic •Phyllis Melvin, Jess William Clark, Ann St, Brisbane, Qld •Phyl Everitt, Camberwell, Vic •Marj Simmering, Anita Turner, Portland, Vic

OBITUARIES

Obituaries are limited to 100 words
BISCHOFF, Muriel Olive
(23.7.97) Born in South Africa the family returned to Australia when Muriel was 6 months. Muriel was

baptised at a Hinrichsen-Brooker Mission at Ormond, Vic, at 13. Through her singing, she met Harold, marrying 61 years ago and serving with him in nine pastoral ministries in Australia and NZ. Muriel was very involved and took leadership in women's ministry, elected youngest ever President of CWF Conference at age 30 and treasurer of WICC when established in 1941. Following Harold's death three years ago Muriel moved to Betheden and worshiped at Chadstone. Muriel brought love, encouragement and compassion to many people whose lives she touched in her life's journey.

—Eunice Reidy

JONES, Alma Maud
(21.8.97) Alma, wife of the late Keith Jones, was brought up in the Yarravonga church. She married Keith in 1940, sharing ministries at Hampton, Vic, and Maylands, SA, and for 20 years at the College of the Bible. Gracious, caring, selfless and unconditionally accepting of people, she lived a life of cheerful service for her Lord, her family, her church, the College with the CWF College Committee, Freedom from Hunger, migrants through the Ecumenical Migrant Council, Meals on Wheels, and the countless numbers who enjoyed her hospitality. Gardiner church was crowded with those who gave thanks for her life and to surround with love, Ian, Meredith, Bruce and their families.

—GRS

VIC

MOUNT CLEAR (Dale White) Church hosted forum to discuss the "Code of Practice for the Protection of Children in Vic-Tas Churches", which attracted a crowd of 50 & local media interest ... 130 enjoyed church family tea & baptismal service for Ian Scollo ... 3 young people shared the preaching at recent youth service ... Trivia night with Graeme Kent raised \$1,200 for youth trip to Vanuatu.

PORTLAND (Blair & Julie Davis) Teen World Outreach ran program for children, plus drama & mime for teenagers & teachers, during school holidays. Visit well received ... Numbers continue to grow ... Renovations to building almost complete ... Alpha studies begun, besides many other groups ... Many sick folk during winter ... Church loan repaid.

BALWYN (Rob Culhane) Cafe Mo's commenced 17 August & will run one Sunday night per month ... Planning under way for outreach with Baptist church at local community festival in October ... 12 former North Balwyn members welcomed June–August... 2 new members welcomed 31 August ... Second play group commenced & now full ... Review of growth & strategy goals undertaken, which highlighted need for communication with a larger church constituency.

NORTH ESSENDON (Mike Esbensen) Fundraising for Indian children with games & old-time hymns ... Young people participating in 40 Hour famine stayed overnight at church ... Jean Hosking & Linda Lycett underwent surgery ... Tuesday church growth sessions ... Mike Esbensen conducted discipleship classes ... 15 attended Essendon's Cool Yule dinner ... Ray Chapple broke two ribs after fall ... Frank Rosol resigned as student minister for full-time study.

MAIDSTONE (A. McMillan) Church finances helped by \$545 garage sale proceeds ... Sympathy to Dulcie Beaumont on home call of her daughter ... CWCC held coffee morning with

Esther Dale, speaker from RBMU ... After years of failing health Mona Nicholls called home ... Much sickness, some hospitalised ... Andrew conducts monthly prayer for healing services ... On CCES Sunday, Geoff Scott speaker.

ORMOND (All Thistlethwaite) "Drop In" folk attended worship service & luncheon. Peter Bradley guest speaker ... Lindsay Hunt, Olive Ryall, Les Faragher, Ann McKay & Alf Knee have been in hospital ... Vern Collister made Life Governor of St. Vincent's Hospital for 15 years as blood donor ... \$1000 already raised for Darwin Appeal. A dinner/concert organised in hall "Alice's Restaurant" again for Darwin ... Lindsay Hone appointed CFA Agent.

OAKLEIGH (Don Milne) Worship services now commence 10.00 am ... Fellowship area created at rear of chapel ... Bible study group growing, studying "Ephesians" ... Craft group well attended ... Bi-monthly "Bring-n-Share" lunches proving popular ... Ladies raised \$2,127 at recent Chadstone stall over 3 days ... Task Force formed to look at "Vision" for church ... 6 members attended Seniors' Ministry Reflection Day ... Sadly record deaths of Elsie Tulloch & Allan Daff in May.

CAMBERWELL (Amar Raj) Attendances continue to be encouraging ... Local nursing homes appreciate regular visits by church teams ... John Tudor guest preacher at Father's Day service ... Church saddened by passing of Phyl Everitt ... Special "International Night" successful, with good attendance of several ethnic groups ... Youth minister working well ... Amar Raj's pastoral ministry greatly appreciated ... Regular "Sunday Forums" proving useful in examining biblical & social topics.

SWAN HILL August speakers—Graham Hush, Belconnen, ACT, Jack Edwards, OMB, John Forrerst, Colin Mitchell, Bruce Cockroft, Robert Clarke & Brian Greenwood ... Bruce Cockroft, Baptist minister, assisting with pastoral care during our time without min-

Minister Wanted

The Church of Christ at Camp Hill, Qld, seeks a pastoral minister to start **January 1998**. Must be a person of compassion and a team player who is prepared to work within the church and the community.

Applications close **30 September 1997**.

Expressions of interest or inquiries should be directed to:

David Markham
PO Box 182
Carina Qld 4152
Phone (07) 3390 6737 (AH).

Church News

ister ... 30 ladies from church attended 4th Annual CWCI Son Centre Convention, 22-24 August at local Hilltop Resort ... Bev & Gordon Owers welcomed home after 3 months caravan holiday to Qld.

FRANKSTON (Tom Ede, Jason Potter) Team led by Jason Potter visited Swan Hill in August ... New members Peter Emery, Wasył & Tania Kostiuik ... Many attend "Exercises for Health" with Bev Garfield on Tuesdays ... Lamingtons sold for Junior Church ... 130 young people attended "Formal" served by adults ... Recovering from illness—Ann Smith, Lucy Milner, Norma Watt, Dawn Kitching, Jean Taylor, Fred Combridge, Joy Cain, Rosetta Westgate & Mollie Preen.

SA

VICTOR HARBOR (Graeme Rogerson) Church looking forward to a weekend seminar on "Church Life" in September by Rowland Croucher ... Two garage sales held recently with over \$1,000 going towards the Building Fund ... Every Friday morning church has a prayer & praise time ... A lot of members gone north to escape the cold.

HAPPY VALLEY (Andrew Ratcliff) Faith-Life profiles a regular feature in

"Grapevine" newsletter ... Jenelle Baggs & Matt Eldridge married 28 June ... Ratcliff's on holidays in July ... Lois Engelhardt, Harold Baggs, Peter Kneebone recent guest speakers ... Film night showing *The English Patient* to raise funds for Mission '97 ... Regular craft mornings to prepare for Spring Fair.

BORDERTOWN (Darryn Hickling) New minister Darryn Hickling & wife Anita commenced earlier this year ... Friday night youth work going well with 35 attending, and enthusiastic leadership team ... Christian Women's Ministries meetings by Bordertown & Mundalla ladies with programs in form of coffee mornings, luncheons & evenings to meet all needs ... Youth camp held at Halls Gap in July school holidays ... Bible School going strong ... AGM 17 August well attended.

MOUNT BARKER (Julie & Grant Simpson) Church had month of great teaching services on John 6 ... Dedication service for Thornley children, Rachel & Michael ... Working bee replaced ceiling in church building ... End of circuit ministry of Simpsons recognised by special evening service & tea at Strathalbyn church 24 August. Simpsons will work full time at Mt Barker.

WA

FREMANTLE (J. Caporn, R. Fairman)

At an evening service Jenny Marshall spoke of experiencing close fellowship with Zimbabwe Christians earlier this year ... Robert Webb, chaplain at John Curtin SHS, Fremantle, spoke of opportunities to help students to discuss deep-seated personal problems ... Church building one of venues for Christian Life & Witness Classes (12 September - 3 October), equipping people to share faith with others in preparation for Festival WA with Franklin Graham 6-8 February 1998.

TAS

HOBART CITY (Clinton Wardle,

Andrew Tonkin) Over twenty newcomers welcomed at New Attenders Dinner to introduce them to leadership & church structure ... Excellent hymnfest in July with Jeff Cheal at organ ... Congregation involved in Impact World Tour meetings to be held in October/November ... Good number enjoyed family camp at Bicheno ... Bert & Jean Thodey celebrated 60th Wedding Anniversary ... Financial Passages seminar well attended.

LAUNCESTON (C. Spaulding, W.

Kerrison, T. Gray) Congregation voted for appointment of Tom Gray as pastoral care minister, 2 days per week ... Chris & Noel Towns interviewed on 3 August on returning from visiting Brian & Julia Coats in Nairobi ... Ted

Keating guest speaker for 113 anniversary and facilitated 2 congregational meetings to share dreams & concerns ... Nicole Smith scored 96% in Trinity London Theory of Music exam ... One baptism 24 Aug.

NUBEENA Missionary meeting held 11 August with Nonilo & Fely Sanchet from the Philippines ... Norman Pell guest speaker on 17 August ... Four new subscribers to *The Australian Christian*, 3 letters received as result of letter written to the Editor ... Fax sent to Thredbo conveying our love & sympathy ... Some sickness amongst our congregation.

QLD

ANN ST BRISBANE (W.J. Flett) Church further saddened by passing recently of members Phyllis Melvin & Jess Clark, the latter in tragic circumstances, wife Avice now moved to Bundaberg ... Jeff Morris, Newcastle, assisted in morning worship 10 August with ministry in song ... Phillip Smith, minister at Tent Hill Baptist Church guest speaker at both services 3 August Missions Sunday '97 ... Bill Law home recovering from recent surgery.

BUNDAMBA (Rod Foster) Church welcomes new babies Jarrod Liam to Steve & Kylie Christian & Timothy Mark to Frank & Kay Rademacher ... Young people took part in 40 Hour Famine ... Parent Dinner catered by young people ... Church had special dedication services for Alternate Placement Support Service and Caregivers. **MARYBOROUGH (D. Woodward, E. Heckathorn, F. Beale, N. Neville)** Church in good heart, services well attended with new people coming regularly ... David Woodward in his eighth year of ministry, church voted to add Frank Beale to ministry team on voluntary part-time basis and increase Eddy Heckathorn's ministry to full-time. ... Elsie McLeish president of Qld CWM ... Several have been baptised recently ... Long-time members saddened by deaths of former ministers Des Nelson & Don Mortimer.

Southern Community Church of Christ

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For an invitation write to:
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Church of Christ Gardiner
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Anniversary

We are celebrating our
83rd Anniversary on

10.30 Sunday 12 October

Everyone is invited to attend a

Thanksgiving Service

followed by morning tea.

Speaker: Pieter Petrusma

Exploring the Day Thinking of you

JANET THOMPSON

Dear Mairi,

It's very sad about your daughter's marriage break-up, and I can sympathise with your wanting to be with her when she goes to the Family Court. It's hard to be so far away, and to feel unable to help. I have a suggestion. This worked for me when a young friend was in a similar situation, and I wanted to support her through a very rough day. * I decided to keep her in my thoughts all day—praying for her, thinking of how she might be feeling, remembering good times—as if we were together. It was going to be a busy day for me, with interruptions and distractions, so I gave myself a focal point. *

I lit a candle, and put it in a central spot, so I could see it as I moved around the house. *

Every time I was near, its flickering attracted my attention. Whatever I was doing, my thoughts went straight back to my friend. If I passed the doorway, my eye was caught by the glow; the faint fragrance met me in odd spots, reminding me of her continuing need. The phone rang, people came to the door, but after each call my mind was drawn back. *

And something else was happening. The flame seemed to be echoing my thoughts, adding continuity to the support I wanted to give her. It's hard to explain. The candle was only an aid, but the life in the flame was a symbol of the



warmth I wanted her to feel. For the first time, I really understood what my Roman Catholic friend means when she says, "I'll light a candle for you." It's almost as though the light is a prayer all by itself. It isn't, but a symbol is a powerful thing, and the experience has taught me more about what happens when I pray. *

When I rang to hear about her day, I said, "I was thinking of you." * "I knew someone was," she said. "I could feel it. Someone was sitting beside me, holding my hand ... just being there for me." *

You might like to try it. It certainly worked for me. *

Thinking of you, with love,
Janet. *

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The Last Word

Circle me O God,
Keep hope within,
Despair without.

—David Adam

Bumper Stickers

- Sometimes I wake up grumpy. Other times I let him sleep.
- I took an IQ test and the results came up negative.
- We are born naked, wet and hungry. Then things get worse.
- i souport publik edekasion.
- Be nice to your kids. They'll choose your nursing home.
- There are three kinds of people: those who can count and those who can't.
- Always remember you're unique, just like everyone else.
- I didn't fight my way to the top of the food chain to be a vegetarian.
- If we aren't supposed to eat animals, why are they made of meat?
- Diplomacy is the art of saying "Nice doggie!" ... till you can find a rock.

"What's that peculiar odour I smell around this Post Office?"
"Probably the dead letters."

"Answer the phone!"
"It's not ringing."
"Why leave everything to the last minute?"



"Yeah, I know, it's a ridiculous committee, but we wanted to find some way to get more men used to the idea of serving on committees."

From McPherson Goes to Church
by John McPherson
(Zondervan 1994)