

THE AUSTRALIAN

Christian

NATIONAL JOURNAL OF CHURCHES OF CHRIST IN AUSTRALIA

Vol. 101 No. 1, 11 February 1998

“The test of our progress is not
whether we add more to the
abundance of those who have much;
it is whether we provide enough
for those who have too little.”

Franklin D. Roosevelt



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Editorial

Strong Convictions

DON SMITH

Strong convictions are generally seen as positive aspects of life. Our feature writers express their convictions on a range of social issues. In churches we admire leaders with strong convictions about the Gospel, the Bible and the church. Strong convictions have sustained, enabled and empowered men and women of every age. A leader of strong conviction is a great asset to any movement or cause. * Experience tells us that sometimes convictions create their own complexities. Last year we became aware of opposing convictions on homosexuals in leadership within the Uniting Church in Australia. Opposing viewpoints sprang from deeply held convictions, with both groups citing Biblical warrant. Within our own ranks over the decades various issues have produced people with different convictions. Among these have been conscientious objection to military service, objection to our military presence in Vietnam, the consumption of alcohol, dancing, matters of Biblical interpretation, ecumenical involvement and more. This year we could possibly add convictions about a republic as potentially troublesome. * It is easy enough to list the problems, but this should not nullify the need for conviction within the Christian life. The New Testament gives helpful guidelines about relating to each other when contentious issues arise. * One further issue is how far we should expect to influence a secular society when we do not have a theocracy such as the Old Testament era which certainly gave prophets free reign to speak of a code by which the people professed to live. * What do we say to a recent writer to a metropolitan daily newspaper who said, "The church must know its place"? The writer dismissed any idea of the Church being a moral saviour of Australia. * For the future we shall probably best present Biblical and Gospel values through public presentation and persuasion rather than direct appeal to Scripture. There is no longer any clear national conviction or "world view" on these matters, especially in a rapidly changing society. Our own example as individuals, leaders and corporate bodies or fellowships must genuinely reflect the values of Jesus if we are to be heard and have an influence in our society. *





Convictions

Our writers express and reflect on their convictions concerning practical aspects of Christian witness.

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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.

a bibliography of 67 scholars, a 36-page index of subjects and names, and about 1000 bible references. With all sincerity, I recommend it to your recent correspondents on this subject, Mr Keeler and Mr Luxton, as well as anyone looking for a "miracle" in their bible reading.

—David Allison
(Cheltenham, Vic)

Wik Debate

To the Editor,
The Wik Debate is taking an increasingly unfortunate turn and the Bill before the Federal Parliament will not mend matters. If not thrown out by the Senate, it will be thrown out by the High Court. Aborigines have a valid title to this land. This situation must remain until we make a valid treaty with the indigenous people to share the land with us. Leasehold does not usually extinguish the previous title and there is no justification for it to extinguish native title. It is time to sit down with the Aborigines and make a treaty, free from racism, which does justice, as much as possible, to all.

—John J. Alderson
(Havelock, Vic)

Leadership Styles

To the Editor,
I was a little disturbed, though not surprised, to see the announcement in the "AC" (13.12.97) that a Diploma in Church Leadership and Administration is to be offered from mid 1998. It seems that ministers are the main targets for such a course, for it will carry "refresher" aspects in Biblical study and theology.

Just what are we expecting our ministers to be? I believe our churches would in the long-term gain greater benefit from the ministry if we adopted Charles Bayer's point that our ministers are best seen as "theologians in residence". That is, they are not to spend most of their planning, praying, reading, visiting, etc, on administration, time management, etc, but on being preachers and teachers who know their theology and help people to actively think and grow up in their understanding of the Bible and the Christian faith.

"Help" for Bible Reading and Study

To the Editor,
Since my letter ("AC" 15.11.97) I have found a wonderful book in the church's library to help anyone reasonably familiar with the Bible to understand and comprehend it. It is very readable and illuminating, even though published in 1938.

In fact, with over 50 years of study, I've not read this quality anywhere.

It is simply A Guide to Understanding the Bible written by scholar, preacher and author, Harry Emerson Fosdick, published by SCM. It has 300 pages,

Ministers let churches seduce them into being good administrators, PR officers, team leaders, etc, when they should be stirring the congregation's brains and teasing them to grow up in all things.

It is also the case that some churches let ministers seduce them into thinking that they are doing the required job if they have polished management, but never challenge a childish level of Bib-

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Letters to the Editor

lical understanding, and never disturb long-held but erroneous opinions with good theological scholarship.

I hope this course does not further confuse ministers as to what their real job is: being theologians in residence.

—A. Cant
(Carine, WA)

Single Adult Ministry

To the Editor,

Further to your articles on Single Adult Ministry. As a minister specialising in ministry to single and single again adults the past 14 years, I write to share some thoughts to assist leaders who are ministering to or want to start a ministry to single adults.

First, it must be asked, what core values are your singles ministry based on?

Let me share some thoughts that may be helpful. The list is not exhaustive, but rather a starting point.

Value 1: Single adults matter to God. (Yet they are the most unevangelised demographic group, according to Barna.)

Value 2: Single adults must be valued by the church. (Yet, in many churches, single adults feel they don't belong.)

Value 3: A warm sense of community must be fostered in singles ministry.

Value 4: The unique needs of singles must be addressed openly, honestly and directly.

Value 5: Singleness must be affirmed as a Biblical lifestyle.

Value 6: A single adult ministry needs to be an integral part of the church.

Value 7: Ownership and participative leadership are essential for the ministry to reach its potential.

Value 8: The single adult ministry should be ministry/service-oriented.

Value 9: The ministry must be unapologetically Christian.

Value 10: God's grace and the opportunity for a new beginning is an important emphasis.

Value 11: A growth emphasis is an important balance to an emphasis on recovery.

—Colin Murdoch
(Parramatta, NSW)

Update

Dear Readers,

With the new year before us 1997 seems to sink quietly away. Yet for the paper 1997 was a significant year. It marked our 100th year, there were widespread expressions of support, a significant intake of new readers and a strengthened financial base through generous gifts from readers and churches. A further legacy in memory of the late Mervyn and Mercy Lawrie of South Australia has also been an encouragement.

When I began the role of Editor, the aims were to build on the past strengths. These aims included enlisting new writers, increasing the participation of women contributors and pursuing new design and content opportunities. In 1998 these processes will continue. Some are already evident in this issue. We welcome Wayne Betts, a minister at the Whitford, WA, church, as a regular contributor, with his new column "Thinking Biblically".

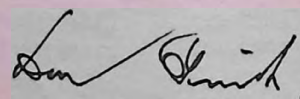
We invite contributors with new ideas and comment for our "Letters" forum. Reports for the "Church News" are welcomed. Churches with achievements they see as important are encouraged to report them. A good photo always helps. This is a great time for Churches of Christ in Australia. We are united, with a sense of wellbeing and optimism. There is more that can be reported from state and local levels.

This issue has been prepared with help from World Vision in Sydney and Melbourne. Readers will note in this issue an important conference to be held in

Sydney in March under World Vision's sponsorship. Our cover photo and the one on page 16 are by Ken Duncan and come from a World Vision publication *Vision of Hope*. This outstanding book is available for \$30.

We welcome two new Board members, Dr Lea Nelson, representing the ACT, and Bev Grenfell, representing Qld. These are our first female representatives on the Board. They will join our other board members at our 1998 annual meeting on 4 April.

The final comment is a sad one. On 31 December the last postal item I opened was our regular copy of the national Anglican paper *Church Scene*. As I scanned the front page I read to my amazement that this was the final issue. There had been no warning. Suddenly this important 25-year-old paper had failed financially. The news left me stunned and saddened for days. I feel for the dedicated staff who lost their jobs and for the disillusioned among Anglican readers. One comment from the editor struck me. He pondered how the Anglican Church will hang together and subsume its tribalism in a greater sense of fellowship. As a reforming movement we have always lived lean. Now this paper enters its 101st year. Longevity is no guarantee of "immortality". Our joint efforts must be to build a strong paper for a new century, a new millennium and a new audience.



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Indigenous Meeting

Momentous changes for ministry with indigenous Christians

Forty key and emerging Christian leaders met at Camp Waterman, Monbulk Vic 5-7 December 1997 to develop an Indigenous Ministry in Victoria. Reg and Marciel Lawrence, who are leaders of the recently formed Indigenous Ministry Unit of the Victorian-Tasmanian Conference, convened the event. Guest facilitators were Ray Minnicion of the World Vision Indigenous Program and Maori leaders Monty and Linda Ohia. Monty and Linda initiated the Inaugural World Indigenous Chris-

tian Gathering in Wellington, NZ in 1996, which attracted 6000 indigenous Christians from over 45 countries.

The first day of the conference was spent in prayer and general discussion. The issues ranged from politics to church spirituality, leadership of organisations to personal and economic suffering. Just as the picture seemed almost overwhelming Monty and Linda gave a rousing "Hakka", a traditional Maori war dance and an inspiring speech. They told their story of how God changed their lives and their struggle to be both authentically Christian and Maori. They told how a new youth movement had been raised up with over 800 workers among 10,000 young people. They told stories of universities, churches, politicians



Participants at the Indigenous ministry conference

and industries that were all authentically Maori and an integral part of New Zealand.

It was observed that at this point in the conference hope began to rise.

On the second day of the conference a draft of a Christian Indigenous Manifesto was prepared. It

is proposed to share this draft with the next World Indigenous Gathering in the USA later this year.

The final day saw recommendations prepared for the Victorian-Tasmanian State Board which have subsequently been accepted. Three main outcomes are the formation of a new "Christian Indigenous Leadership Council" (CILC), comprising Churches of Christ, Baptist, Aboriginal Evangelical Church and World Vision, concerned for training, strategy, church planting, evangelism, the manifesto and justice and mercy responses among indigenous people.

A second outcome was agreement to develop a training program that can be offered by "providers" nationally, with culturally-relevant training provided at certificate, diploma and degree level.

It was also agreed that Reg and Marciel Lawrence lead a fully-fledged Indigenous Ministry Unit within Churches of Christ in Victoria and maintain links with the Federal Aborigines Board to develop a model of church planting among Kurnai/Gunai people.

Making News

Mission Wins Ratings

Wesley Mission's "Australian Christmas" show on Channel 7 and presented from Darling Harbour on Christmas Eve won the time slot ratings in Sydney, Melbourne and Adelaide, and came second in Brisbane.

Refugee Fares Needed

UNOH Mission, Springvale, Vic, announces that the Australian Government has approved refugee status for two adults and two children who Ashley Barker recently met on the Thai Border. The mission urgently needs gifts for fares. Contact (03) 9547 1129.

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Favourite Hymns

Epping surveys community for favourite hymns

"I'm thankful that I was born early enough in this century to have been exposed to hymns, with all their richness of melody and meaning. I'm sorry for those in later generations who have not had the same opportunity."

This quote is typical of the motivations of about a hundred people (mainly "seniors") who gathered on a Friday afternoon in November at Epping Church of Christ, NSW, to sing hymns and to hear the results of a community-wide survey to determine the most popular hymns.

During the month or so beforehand, the hymn-singing afternoon had been publicised by distributing voting forms to community groups, including seniors, Rotary, Probus, Community Care, and other churches.

The voting form listed ten hymns that had been voted as most popular in a recent British survey.

Voters were invited to indicate their own order of preference for these ten hymns. They were also asked to add four further favourites, and to attend the hymn-singing session to hear the results of the survey. The results formed

the basis of the choice of hymns for the afternoon of congregational and solo singing.

The result:

1. How great Thou art (5th in Britain)
2. When I survey the wondrous cross (4th in Britain)
3. Abide with me (3rd in Britain)
4. Praise, my soul, the King of heaven (8th in Britain)
5. Great is Thy faithfulness
6. Love divine, all loves excelling
7. Dear Lord and Father of mankind (1st in Britain)
8. Guide me O Thou great Jehovah
9. The day Thou gavest Lord is ended (2nd in Britain)
10. Shine, Jesus, shine

Other favourites:

1. Amazing grace
2. What a friend we have in Jesus
3. Blessed assurance
4. And can it be
5. Onward Christian soldiers
6. There is a green hill far away
7. The old rugged cross
8. Jesus loves me
9. A few Christmas carols

"Mad" to be Ministers

Ordination service in SA

For only the third time an ordination service has been held in South Australia. John Williamson and Bryan Sellars were ordained in late 1997 in a service held in the historic Grote Street building, the oldest Church of Christ in Australia. The service was conducted by Robert Leane, President of National Council.

John Williamson will minister at Box Hill, Vic. John felt the call to ministry and did his preparation at Parkin-Wesley College, Adelaide, and CCTC, Mulgrave, Vic. He served a three-year student ministry at Maylands, SA.

Bryan Sellars comes from the Elizabeth, SA, church and is now minister at Colonel Light Gardens, SA. He prepared for ministry at the Bible College of SA and with the CCTC, Mulgrave, Off-Campus program. He served as part-time chaplain at Urrbrae High School, SA, for six years.

Ordinants were Graeme Wigney and Dawn Lawton for John and Linda Baird and Richard Lawton for Bryan. David Brooker gave the address, in which he said that the ordinands were mad to be entering ministry, but hoped they would retain that madness.

Hear Don Carson

Don Carson is coming to Melbourne next August to speak at a preachers' workshop on *Preaching Christ from all the Scriptures—Insights from Biblical Theology*.

Don is a Research Professor of New Testament at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, Deerfield, Illinois, USA. A Canadian by birth, he is a gripping speaker, prolific author, and clear herald of God's word.

This is a non-residential conference, especially for ministers and those in training for preaching the Bible.

Date: Monday 10 - Friday 15 August, 1998
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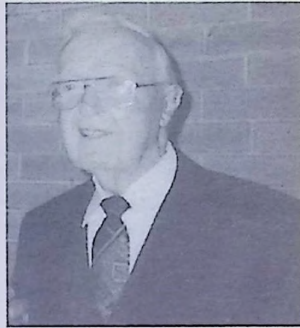
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Seventy Years in Ministry

Celebration honouring W.W. Saunders

On Sunday 9 November some 70 friends gathered to honour W.W. (Dick) Saunders at Bambra Road, Caulfield, Vic, church, and to celebrate 50 years since Dick commenced his ministry there and 70 years since he entered the College of the Bible to train for ministry.

Ron Brooker was a light-hearted master of ceremonies. Rosemary Smith, Iris Winstone, Eileen McDonald and Dorothy Goodman provided items. Opportunity was given for those present to relate anecdotes. Greetings were sent by some unable to attend. Of particular interest was a fax message sent from the USA by Len Keillor, and a greeting tape from Queensland from the Male and Grenfell families. Maisie Lynch made a



W.W. (Dick) Saunders

presentation on behalf of those there.

The guest of honour responded with reminiscences revealing his amazing memory for events and dates, as well as the personnel connected with them. Memorabilia were on display in the hall. A time of fellowship and renewal of friendship was enjoyed during afternoon tea.

—Dorothy Goodman

Here and There

Russian Orthodox Remain in WCC

The Russian Orthodox Church recently resolved to continue its World Council of Churches membership. There has been heavy pressure to shift to an observer status. The Russian Orthodox is the largest of the Council's 330 member churches. Its loss or downgrading of association would have been a severe blow to the WCC, which celebrates its 50th anniversary in 1998. Criticisms of the WCC included "ecumenical liturgies", new trends in theology and practices of Western Protestantism, such as the ordination of women ministers, the use of inclusive language for biblical translations and reconsideration of New Testament moral norms regulating relations between the sexes. (*Christian Century*)

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A Milestone for Women in Ministry

Graduation service for CCTC Carlingford



Back row: A. Blyth, Post Graduate Diploma in Pastoral Care. Remainder of students were awarded the Diploma of Ministry. Ian Firth, Peter Dines, G. Hill, J. Fragar and P. Douglas.

Middle Row: D. Walsh, T. O'Rourke, J. Templeton, J. Berthelsen, D. Wilson

Front Row: G. Wright, C. Tanner, C. Elliott, L. Clissold

Men and Women graduated in almost equal numbers from the Churches of Christ in NSW Theological College in December 1997. Nearly 500 witnessed the graduation of 21 students with various awards, including that of Allan Blyth, the first to be awarded the Post Graduate Diploma of Pastoral Care. Wollongong Campus held their own Graduation the following Sunday as part of their evening service where Graduating students combined with the Institute for Contemporary Leadership students for a Graduation Service.

The Carlingford Graduation was celebrated with an electric atmosphere and inspiring worship, enjoyed by the large crowd. At the graduands' request, Dr Lionel Berthelsen spoke on the urgent need for vision in church leader-

ship. Dr Berthelsen commissioned the graduands with the exhortation to hold God before them whatever they do. Student representatives, Jo-anne Berthelsen and David Wilson reflected on their years of training with the College, and vividly painted entertaining pictures of the unique character of each Ministry Centre of the College.

Earlier, the graduands and their families and friends enjoyed dinner together, organised by the Student Council, where the Student Presidency changed hands. This year, students graduated from Ministry Centres at Manning Valley, Wollongong and Carlingford.

First graduates from Northern Rivers will emerge in 1998, with South Perth graduates appearing the following year

The Glue that Holds us Together

Some things can only be done together



A General Minister of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)—traditionally our closest American cousins—recently described his leadership role as being like “herding cats”. I know the feeling. More than half of my 30 years in ministry has been in positions where I have been required to coordinate around 80 autonomous congregations of varying degrees of rugged individualism. I love cats and I love Churches of Christ, but it is mighty hard to ride herd on either.

Despite our independent-mindedness, there are few of us who would not want our wider association, as Churches of Christ, to remain—a viable and cohesive expression of uncluttered and compassionate Christianity. The old

adage, that there are some things that we can only do together, is as true today as ever. What’s more, the whole tenor of modern society is highlighting the importance of synergy—working together. It is constantly reminding us that the effect of the whole is greater than the sum of the individual parts, just as a coordinated team of mediocre footballers will almost certainly beat an uncoordinated group of star players.

I watched a prime example of this last year in the far north of Western Australia. A new Church of Christ was planted at Port Hedland. It set itself, ambitiously, to minister to both white and indigenous Australians, in both town and hinterland. Last year it baptised over 70 people. Some of the stories are almost sagas. Yet, left to ourselves, I doubt that any one congregation would give much thought to the deep spiritual needs of a remote and inhospitable place like Port Hedland. But, as a national association of churches, we did. The primary movers were the Conference of Churches in WA, the Federal Aborigines Board (FAB) and Don and Helen Norling (who had been working in the area with FAB).

These were supported by a significant grant from the National Council’s National Home Evangelism Fund, and an even more significant grant from a foundation administered by Mr Brian Gibson, an elder of the Northside church in Sydney. Add to this the efforts of a volunteer work team from the Perth churches and you have a powerful example of synergy—what the larger family can do when its efforts and resources are coordinated.

Keeping this national synergy alive is the task of our National Council. Though you may not often hear about it, it is happening constantly in many ways. It happens through seven major na-

tional agencies and three national committees, and a growing number of national networks as diverse as Overseas Missions, and a Provident Fund. Its focus varies from ministering to the urban under-classes, to chaplaincy in the Australian Defence Force. The National Council also provides a voice for Churches of Christ in those councils where Australian churches together address issues of national importance.

In an age of increasing parochialism, and despite our catlike tendencies, the National Council is the glue that holds us together as a national expression of Churches of Christ.

—Bob Smith,
National Coordinator



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Family and Youth Worker

Brunswick Christian Fellowship is a small and growing Melbourne inner-suburban church. We are seeking a part-time (0.5) person to participate in planning, implementing and resourcing a family and youth ministry. The person must hold a Bible College or equivalent Christian qualification, demonstrable experience in family and youth work, and counselling. Initial appointment for 12 months as per Churches of Christ salaries and conditions guidelines.

Applications in writing close Friday 27 February 1998.

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Chasing a Challenge

Challenging times ahead for Chatswood, NSW

The Chatswood Church of Christ, situated next to "Chatswood Chase" shopping complex, faces challenging years ahead. This is what Allan Blyth believes. Allan was inducted as Chatswood's new minister on 23 November. He is keen to see Chatswood church, after 82 years of faithful witness, experience a new birth, enabling it to fulfil its mission: "For its members to live and work together to serve the people of the City of Willoughby and beyond, with the Good News of Jesus Christ".

Two hundred gathered for the special service of induction, including the Mayor, civic dignitaries and Conference representa-



Allan Blyth

tives. The choir and members of the Chinese Evangelical Free Church, which shares the building, plus church members and many old friends of Allan and wife Julie attended.

Let the Flame Burn Brighter

CCTC Mulgrave graduation service



Ordinands (front row) Greg Illingworth, Mike Janssen, Simon Risson, Bill Sharrock.

Back Row, Greg Elsdon, Stephen Curkpatrick, Roger Risson, Alan Niven.

We were strangely moved as a procession of people, colourfully attired in their purples, pinks, oranges and reds, floated brilliantly down the aisle of Blackman Hall, at the Hawthorn Institute on 28 November 1997. What means this graduation service of the Churches of Christ Theological College, Mulgrave? Why do these young men and women long to be "living voices", "bread, broken for others"?

Those questions were answered by Graham Agnew, Senior Minister of the Marion Church of Christ, SA, when he reflected in his address on the "If Only's" in our lives. If only we had seen the opportunities in our lives, we may have acted differently. These graduates of the college, though, had acted differently—they were ready, as Ross Langmead had written in one of his songs, "to plunge into the sea".

Albert Fitt, Penelope Galbraith, Michael Janssen, Simon Risson, William Sharrock, Mavis Uldrich, Cindy Waters, Jack White and

John Williamson (in absentia) received a Diploma in Ministerial Formation. The following, who had completed their Bachelor of Theology, were also recognised: Ian Breguet, Wal Henningsen, Gregor Illingworth, Ruth May, Romanus Mphande, Kerrilyn Reader, Ruth Reader, Julie Renner, Suzanne Sharp, Jennifer Simmons and Rohan Waters.

Later Robert Leane, President of the National Council of Churches of Christ, conducted the Ordination Service for the ordinands. Those ordained were Graeme Cann (Berwick, Vic), Albert Fitt (Parkdale, Vic), Penelope Galbraith (Ringwood, Vic), Gregor Illingworth (The Church by the Bay, Vic), Michael Janssen (Preston, Vic), Simon Risson (Mildura, Vic), William Sharrock (Boort/Pyramid Hill, Vic), Mavis Uldrich (Northcote/Ivanhoe, Vic), and Cindy Waters (Doncaster, Vic). (Early this year Jack White was called to Ballarat Central Church of Christ, Vic, and will be ordained this year.)

Calendar Photographs Wanted



The National Literature Department invites the submission of colour slides for possible inclusion in the very popular Churches of Christ Calendar for 1999.

Photographs are needed from all states and territories of Australia, and from PNG and Vanuatu.

Criteria for selection include photographic excellence, variety of subject matter and the church year.

(Please include location of scenes.)

Forward to: National Literature Department
PO Box 101
Essendon North Vic 3041
by 31 March 1998.

Convictions

Who Would Believe?

GRAHAM LONG

Who would believe that the church could be lulled into a state where they were not moved by the cry of the poor? Who would believe that the modern church could feel so powerless that it saw ministry to the poor as a problem for government, while the church itself concerned itself with inner states, with worship experiences, and other issues that only the comfortable can afford?

Understanding our Christian Roots

The modern church is in a difficult spot. Our history has brought us to a time where we have little regard for our his-



Jesus' ministry began with a declaration (quoted from Isaiah) that he came to bring good news to the poor and it finished with his giving good news to the thief on the next cross.

tory. Our loss of foundation has left us insecure and struggling to understand where our own culture is going and why it's going without us. Generally, we are inclined in one of just a few directions. Some hang on to the old as if any moment now the world will suddenly revert to the time when Alexander Campbell spoke to the church and culture. Some have decided that all metaphysical and theological questions have very little value. (This second group operates on the assumption that the Holy Spirit has been asleep for the past 2000 years and has just woken up.)

Both of these directions are short-sighted.

Taking our Book and Story Seriously

Would anyone doubt that the story of his people begins when God hears the cry of his poor people in Egypt? The way of salvation and the journey to the Promised Land comes from the cry of poor people who were being used by the system of power and money at the time to build store cities. In spite of what Pharaoh believed about sensible economic progress at the time, God took these poor people seriously. He heard their cries and he acted for their deliverance. From this action comes our sacred book and our story that brings us to Jesus, and Jesus to us.

Jesus' ministry began with a declaration (quoted from Isaiah) that he came to bring good news to the poor and it finished with his giving good news to the thief on the next cross.

The gospel works for people in our time. When our primary concern is not so much with Jesus but with our passion for Jesus, there is no good news for the world. When our primary concern is to achieve a certain legal cor-

rectness about our biblical understanding, there is no good news for the world. When we pretend that we are a cut above the rest of humanity and that our book sets us free from the need to feel the pain of humanity, or that the Spirit gives us short cuts through our human dramas, then there is no good news for the world.

When the church hears the cry of the poor and responds by faith to care for other human beings, in Jesus name and in a practical way, there is good news that ordinary people recognise and warm to.

Salvation as a Two-Way Deal

I used to wonder how it was that I often felt so at home with "the lost" and so lost with "the saved". These days I find that that line that distinguishes between lost and found runs not so much around a particular people but through every human heart. I see a humanity that needs more than anything to be shown by the church that a community of people really can be learning the good news together—that real love, rather than real sentiment, is possible for a group of people. I see also a church that needs to be saved. It needs to be saved from its own easily created sense of correctness. (So many churches are dead right.) It needs to be saved from the hole it dug when it decided that salvation was a private, psychological matter.

When the church hears the cry of the poor and seeks to help out of love for Jesus, then both the church and humanity are saved. Christ has a body on earth when his people hear the cry of the poor and act.

Graham Long is Senior Pastor at Pendle Hill Church of Christ, NSW, is the current NSW Conference President and is Director of Community Care, Welfare, NSW.

Commitment

A Lifetime of Commitment

SYLVIA THOMPSON

Vi Watts has spent most of her life in Dareton, NSW, and during that time has worked extensively with Aboriginal people. Sylvia Thompson interviews her about her experiences and convictions.

Vi, I believe you have been working with aboriginal people for about 50 years. What led you to become involved?

I saw the plight of the aboriginal people in this area. They lived on the town rubbish tip. They were the underprivileged in our society and they also

They lived on the town rubbish tip. They were the underprivileged in our society

needed to feel that they belonged and "fitted in" somewhere—in the community, school, and church. I felt the call of God to get involved with them in their struggles and challenges. By becoming actively involved in their lives, I hoped to show them that they had value for me and that God loved them. *So you set out on your own to make a difference?*

Oh no, I wasn't the only one involved, but I admit that I was the "trigger" person to get something started. I can't remember just how it all came together, but after a while others became interested. Together we enlisted the help of the Save the Children Fund, a worldwide organisation committed to helping underprivileged children. They set up a centre open to all needy children, but mainly aboriginal children came. Every day as the children came to the centre, they were showered and dressed in

clean clothing and given breakfast. The older ones went off to school while the younger ones stayed to play. The school children returned to the centre for a cooked midday meal.

That certainly was a big step towards meeting the children's physical needs, but what about their spiritual wellbeing?

We set up a small building at the tip where church services were started. All the children came, but not all the adults came.

I guess there were disappointments. How did you handle them?

There were many disappointments and "shut doors", but I believed that I must keep on keeping on doing whatever seemed right to do. I believe that love, especially God's love through his people, ministered gently, and with grace, without push and shove, has tremendous impact. So despite any set-backs, I am always being encouraged in God's love.

Is there anything that stands out in your memory as special?

Yes. Two couples were married in the little church at the tip. Both these families live in the town now, and are well

I believe that God's love, ministered gently, and with grace, without push and shove, has tremendous impact.

respected citizens in the community. They have raised their families well and hold the love of Jesus in their lives. Another special joy is when I'm visiting aboriginal people and hear them say, "Please come in!" I know then that



I am truly accepted and our fellowship is sweet.

Times have changed since you began your involvement with the aboriginal community, what do you do now?

Every month I take the *Today Christian* magazine, published by MPA for aboriginal people, to households in the town as well as to the aboriginal village just out of town. This, for me, is a regular and important link with the people.

How would you sum up your life's work and commitment to aboriginal issues?

The new generations of today are quite different from the people I first set out to help. I think alcohol use has destroyed so much. I believe we of the non-aboriginal community have lost as much as they have lost, and that's tragic. There are two mistakes we can make in life: one is exaggerating our own importance in this world; the other is denying that we have anything to offer at all.

Thank you Vi. I do not think you have fallen into this error. You have given so much of your time, energy and self for more than 50 years to your aboriginal neighbours and no estimate of good can be made for the power of one person with that dogged will to keep on, and you are now 90 years old. God bless you!



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Convictions

Rainbow Church

ANJI BARKER

Crammed into a second story flat in Springvale, 15–20 adults and a number of children can be seen sharing a meal each Sunday night. The meal is nothing fancy, usually consisting of rice bread and whatever is going free at the UNOH food bank. The ages range from 7 weeks to 84 years old, and because of the diverse and colourful backgrounds of each person, we call ourselves the “Rainbow Church”. The Rainbow, with

The meal is now over, and the rowdy interactions soften only slightly as the “service” commences.

it’s many colours, reflects our different ages, cultures, and life experiences, as well as being a sign of hope and peace—something of paramount importance to this hurting, troubled group. The meal is now over, and the rowdy interactions soften only slightly as the “service” commences. Each week this has a very different flavour as we take turns in everything. Someone gives the “Talk”, someone else leads communion, another the singing, still another the prayers, and the all important “5 spec”, (the 5 minute surprise).

As we encounter God together, through our laughter, tears and shared struggles, we experience his amazing power and love. There is a true feeling of love and acceptance of all—no matter how odd or ill, or “off the planet”, we may be.

The Rainbow Church emerged as part of a vision we had after seeing a similar style church in another state. In this

church 90% of the members suffer from some sort of social or psychiatric disability, and seeing them participating in their own church and “worshipping God in spirit and in truth”, touched my heart as I thought of many of the people that I was involved with, who struggle to fit in anywhere, let alone church. At the age of 18, after hearing Tony Campolo speak, I was convicted by God to change the direction of my life, and to follow his call to serve the poor and the marginalised of society. This led me to change my university plans, and throw myself into work with needy people. Ten years later that conviction remains strong and clear, and a daily reminder of what God has called me to do in my neighbourhood.

Working with the poor and marginalised has made me increasingly aware of the devastation experienced by sufferers of mental illness, and their families. When our very dear foster son became seriously ill with schizophrenia, I became appalled at the lack of suitable support available.

As a Christian I am driven by the knowledge that God’s grace and love is the only true hope for an end to the pain and confusion that many in my neighbourhood experience.

In Matthew 25:31–46, we read the passage known as “The Sheep and the Goats”. In this parable Jesus identifies that what we do with the poor as the

We must also be proactive in creating worshipping environments that can meet the needs of the most ill.



Ashley, Amy and Anji Barker

measure by which God will judge our lives. Jesus demonstrated what is required of us by living his life with a priority for the hungry, the sick, (both physically and mentally), the thirsty, the homeless and the naked, and those in prison.

With 1 in 5 Australians reported to suffer from a mental illness, how can we not be involved in responding to this need? In UNOH we have found that this involves not just a weekly meeting, but an almost daily response to such problems as homelessness, drug abuse, family violence or simply needing a friend to ease the loneliness. We must also be proactive in creating worshipping environments that can meet the needs of the most ill. Many churches have contact with those that are “odd”, “misfits” and “ill”. Desperate and lonely people still seek acceptance and help from the church. This amazes me, as many of us know just how hard it can be to find acceptance in a church when we are new. If it is so hard for the so-called acceptable, successful ones of us to find a sense of belonging, how much harder is it for those who struggle with a mental health issue?

Anji Barker, with husband Ashley and daughter, is part of the Urban Neighbourhoods of Hope mission in Springvale, Vic.

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Convictions

An Indonesian in Australia

ALEX LALOH

Alex, as a Christian, is convinced of the Biblical ideal of men and women of whatever race being equal before God. He reflects on his experience in Indonesia and Australia.

After being in Australia for the past five and a half years, I am convinced that Australian Christians have a lot of reasons to be grateful and not to be complacent. We are fortunate to live in the land of "milk and honey". We need to

Although these things exist here, the society as a whole tries to stamp them out. The media is quick to react to racist remarks made in public.

be grateful because we are not living in a place where people are discriminated against because of colour, their economic status, their type of job, what they wear or their religious beliefs.

This is not to say that these things do not exist here. Wherever we go, we will find racism and discrimination, but what I am saying is that, although these things exist here, the society as a whole tries to stamp them out. The media is quick to react to racist remarks made in public. Moreover there are laws in place which deal with any type of discrimination. In Indonesia, people regularly are being discriminated against because of their skin colour, their economic status, their place in society, their religion and even the things they wear.

For instance, the Chinese in Indonesia are treated as second-class citizens. It is difficult for a Chinese to enrol at a government university, work in a government office or enter the political arena.

Since Pauline Hanson entered politics and made her maiden speech in Parliament, almost the whole nation accused her of racism. That tells me two things. First, Australians in general reject racism or discrimination. Second, racism does still exist within a minority.

Since we arrived in Australia in 1992, we could not recall any racist remark targeted at us. We knew that God had called us out of Indonesia to be missionaries. To me this also means that we are to be a blessing to the people that God will send us to. This attitude makes us more concerned to be a blessing to people. What can we do for them, rather than what are they going to do for us? When we started working at the Perth City Church of Christ, we were warmly welcomed. They did not look at our skin colour or treat us differently. They accepted us as we were. In Indonesia, people are being discriminated against economically. If they have money, they will get the best form of education and the best medical care available. If you are poor, well tough luck!

A friend of ours, who came to study English, told my wife how much he liked living in Australia. The reason that he gave was that people here are not too concerned as to what label or brand of clothing or shoes you wear.

Christian churches in Indonesia have recently experienced discrimination and persecution. In the last four years there had been direct attacks on some churches. When there was a riot, the people also took the opportunity to damage churches.



There is so much red tape that people have to go through if they want to build a church. When Christians here want to build a church, they have to follow the same procedure as anyone else without having to ask permission from any other religious body and bribe the local mosque.

Australian Christians are very fortunate not having to struggle with some of these issues (I hope I am not being naive). In Australia we have Medicare and Social Security to ensure that everyone will receive the medical care they need and when people are unemployed, there is something to fall back on. There is Austudy to help children through university.

Many of these so called "benefits" do not exist in most Asian countries. Many people are struggling just to meet basic needs. In Australia, we tend to take all these for granted. As a newcomer it seems that the positive attitudes of acceptance, equality and tolerance reflect basic Christian convictions and heritage in Australia. Amid the many changes taking place in this land, the church must strive to preserve and affirm these great convictions and values. Alex and his wife Irene came to Perth to continue work with YWAM. They now serve with the Perth City Church of Christ.

Convictions

What Can We Do?

GRACE THOMLINSON

Jesus commissioned his first followers to continue his work in all the world. He defined his own mission as preaching good news to the poor, proclaiming freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, releasing the oppressed, and proclaiming the year of the Lord's favour. Can we, his followers at the end of the twentieth century, do other than seriously contribute to this mission in our generation?

We are reminded daily that we are, more than ever, part of a global world.

New hope has come to many individuals and communities through overseas aid programs.

It is into this global world that we bring the light and life of Christ. As I have learned more about the needs of people beyond my city and my country—and seen some of them through my work with World Vision—I have become increasingly convinced of my responsibility, and that of the Australian community, to take action to see that the basic needs of all people are met. We are a privileged nation, at least in terms of material resources, and being generous from our abundance is a choice we are in a position to make, both nationally and individually. Sadly, our recent governments have failed to increase overseas aid allocation towards their promised target of 0.7% of GNP—it has been steadily eroded to the current 0.27%. Research suggests that Australian Christians are more committed to over-

seas aid than the general population, but are not well-informed about it. The causes of poverty and injustice are many and complex, and discernment and commitment are needed to effect change in appropriate ways in different contexts.

So what can we do to take more active responsibility for overseas aid? There are two main channels through which we can work—government and non-government.

Government aid is allocated through the annual budget. Australians can make their voices heard throughout the year, but especially in the months leading up to the budget—urging that overseas aid allocation from our taxes be increased towards promised levels, and encouraging its use for long-term and strategic benefits for recipient communities. Our letters and faxes to key politicians do have impact.

Non-government organisations can apply to manage government-financed projects, but they mainly recruit direct donations for their own projects. Individual, church or corporate donors can support organisations that will allocate their money to the kind of programs they consider worthy. Their gifts will usually be tax-deductible and they will usually receive a report about how their money is spent and what is being achieved. Many already give through their own denominational missions or Christian agencies like World Vision. World Vision has a range of overseas aid options in which concerned Christians and churches can participate.

Action News keeps **Action Network** members up-to-date with current issues of international concern on which they can lobby the Australian government for action—landmines, child exploitation and prostitution, and levels of over-



seas aid are recent ones.

A current lobbying project relates to **Jubilee 2000**, where financially-strong governments are being challenged to forgive the massive debts of selected Third World countries (based on the biblical concept of Jubilee).

GRID magazine, produced for leaders of Australian churches, includes discussion of World Vision's ministries. A recent issue gave practical suggestions on "Teaching Ethics in Parishes", and "Raising compassionate kids in a shopping mall culture". **Partners in Prayer** receive regular prayer material about World Vision projects.

And of course, giving to Child Sponsorship, 40 Hour Famine, and Emergency Relief appeals contributes directly to meeting the needs of children, families and communities across the world.

When sometimes I feel overwhelmed by the enormous global challenge, and wonder if my contribution through my organisation really makes a difference in the big scheme of things, I remind myself of the New hope has come to many individuals and communities through overseas aid programs. And I'm glad I'm playing a small part in bringing "good news to the poor"!

Grace Thomlinson has worked at World Vision for 14 years. She is editor of *GRID*, and can be contacted on (03) 9287 2228 or <thomlinsong@wva.org.au> concerning involvement in any of the above-mentioned programs.

The Many Ways of Love

VINEY LONGTHORP

As the old saying has it, "Love makes the world go round". Hence it is easy to appreciate the media's endless fascination with the many ways of love. A newly released film, *Lucie Aubrac*, by the brilliant French producer Claude Berri, is an inspiring love story. The film is based on a true events told by Lucie Aubrac herself, in her book, *Outwitting the Gestapo*: thus we know what to expect. The scene is the City of Lyon in German occupied France. The time: spring 1943. Lucie, a young history lecturer, is happily married to Raymond Samuel, an engineer. Both are active members of the French Resistance forces. Aubrac is Raymond's code name; they are both immensely proud of it. It is a symbol of their patriotism. Due to an act of betrayal, Aubrac and many of his team are arrested by the Gestapo and condemned to death. The notorious Gestapo chief, Barbie, out of desperation born of knowing that Germany is losing the war, metes out harsh treatment to the prisoners. Lucie, just one

month pregnant, is determined to set her adored husband free. In a series of breathtaking bluffs, briberies, beguiling of officials, brilliant team planning, and a display of relentless patience, Lucie plays a deadly game of hide and seek, always but one step ahead of disaster. At the end, Aubrac and his team are freed, then flown to England

Simply, this is an inspiring love story, albeit in a stygian setting.

by a special RAF operation. On 2 February 1944, Lucie's second child is born in an English hospital. They named her Catherine, "the child of the resistance".

Lucie and Raymond are still alive. At 84, friends say that she has never changed—great beauty, a steely determination, a profound love for her family. Many of her anecdotes were used in the film. The story of *Lucie Aubrac* is a challenge to any cynics among us to rethink the ways of conjugal love. Simply, this is an inspiring love story, albeit in a stygian setting.

Also about love was the account in the Melbourne *Age* of the sixteen-year-old schoolboy who was charged with the destruction of the controversial photo, *Piss Christ* in the National Gallery of Victoria, late last year. The court was told that the boy decided to smash the photo with a hammer "after watching his mother cry when the Catholic Church failed in its Supreme Court bid to ban the photograph's exhibition". It was further reported that the boy's family "were committed Catholics". Understandably, the magistrate said that he was "outraged by the defendant's vandalism". Even so, there is something very moving about this teenager's anger in seeing his mother so upset, due to his close identification with her feelings. Here is another teenager who denies the stereotype of "generation gap". Here is one who, in love, shares his parents' faith. And that family's identification with their church somehow makes many of the "footloose Baby-Boomer" generation appear wantonly fickle and without a substance of faith, as far as church allegiance is concerned. As for the court action by Dr George Pell, the Roman Catholic Archbishop of Melbourne, while many of us felt that his action to be unfitting and useless, at least the good Archbishop must be given credit for having a pastoral understanding of the religious loyalties of many of his people. This also is love—the love of the church. Finally, something of a homily, if you will. In one of his regular columns in *The Weekend Australian*, 10–11 January 1998, Don Edgar, an experienced commentator on family life patterns, pointed to a trend which he calls, the "growing legion of



The love of Lucie and Raymond Samuel is shown in the story "Lucie Aubrac".

live out lovers" and went on to ask "what it meant for the heart of humanity". He pointed to the fact that one in four dwellings in Australia is home to a single adult person and noted the fact that this gave opportunity, where desired, for many kinds of fleeting sexual liaisons or similar arrangements. He concluded: "Call me old-fashioned, but a world of individuals leading separate lives, foraging out or opening up their doors and beds occasionally to accommodate their own and another lonely soul's need for a bit of closer intimacy, is not a very human place ... I'm all for the full monty: living with someone you love, (warts) and all; learning from the daily grind of compromise, conflict, boredom and joy; coming home from work (or whatever) knowing a certain person will be there, sooner or later, to share your day's stories, your whinges and your triumphs, to tell you to get your act together or lick your wounds." Mr Edgar is well aware that there is much more to be said about love than this, but the building of the real thing does at least require this kind of commitment and steadfastness.

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HICKLING, Anita and Darryn are pleased to announce the birth of Rachel Beth on 4 December 1997 in Penola. Thank you to all our family and friends who have sent messages of loving congratulations.

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BANKS-CRACKNELL Married 8.1.58 at Balwyn. R. Banks and E. Brooke officiated. Trevor and Helen together with Lisbeth and Mark, Kelvin, Lyle and Angela, Rohan and Lil and five grandchildren thank God for their great years together.

DEATHS

EMMETT, Elsie J. (Bryant), 9.12.97, passed away peacefully at Traralgon Nursing Home, aged 85 years. Loving wife of Clem (dec), dearly loved mother and mother-in-law of Wesley, Bev, Graham, Frances, Elaine and Brian (dec), loved nan of grandchildren and great-grandchildren

RACKEMANN, Bernard Harold (Harry) Taken home 25 January, 1998, aged 85. Loving husband of Ellen (dec). Leaving three children, nine grandchildren and eight great-grandchildren. Thanksgiving service held 28 January at Twyford St Church of Christ, Bundaberg. Lovingly remembered—Alan and Irma Rackemann (Melbourne) and Beth Anderson (Bundaberg).

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Thinking Biblically You Have Been Warned

WAYNE BETTS

I remember the moment when my love affair with the Old Testament began.

It wasn't listening to stories in Sunday School that did it. Neither was it the verses I memorized as an earnest teenager. It was during an otherwise uneventful class at Bible college when, in those pages towards the middle of my Bible which



*Amos rattled
my cage.
He still does.*

had to that point remained pristine, unthumbed and unread, I encountered this masterpiece of diplomacy: "Hear this word, you cows of Bashan on Mount Samaria, you women who oppress the poor and crush the needy and say to your husbands, 'Bring us some drinks!'" (Amos 4:1).

Talk about winning friends and influencing people! Now evidently, "cows of Bashan" in those days was not quite the insult we might imagine today. Rather, it was a picture of well-fed, well-groomed women, wanting for nothing. However, I thought it was a pretty good turn of phrase! Fascinated, I explored further, and discovered other vivid pictures of so-

cial injustice, and God's abhorrence of complacency and exploitation. In fairness, Amos 6:1-7 describes the idle rich men who come in for judgement—sitting around on fancy furniture, "jamming" on harps! What was the problem—were these guys not going to church? Quite the contrary, they attended religiously. But they couldn't wait for the Sabbath to be over, so they could go back to shonky dealings and treading on people to get ahead (8:5-6). When I discovered Amos, the Old Testament started sounding very contemporary! And very disturbing! Listen to God's response: "I hate, I despise your religious feasts; I cannot stand your assemblies. Even though you bring me burnt offerings and grain offerings, I will not accept them ... Away with the noise of your songs! I will not listen to the music of your harps. But let justice roll on like a river, righteousness like a never-failing stream!" (5:21-24). How's that for a memory verse! It wasn't and isn't enough just to have great worship services. Consistency and integrity through the week—that's what the life of faith is really about. So, have a careful read of Amos if you think you're up to it, but do remember, you have been warned!

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Comment The Republic

TED KEATING

With the Constitutional Convention currently in progress in Canberra, we asked Ted Keating to comment on some recent statistics released by the National Church Life Survey.

Churches of Christ usually are somewhere between the Baptists and the Uniting Church in National Church Life Survey reports on attitudes and beliefs. However, when asked, "Should Australia become a republic?" the results were astonishing. For once, Churches of Christ showed distinctive attitudes.

We show the highest percentage of those who want a republic introduced within the next five years

See here the potential for polarisation! We show the highest percentage of those who want a republic introduced within the next five years and also show a relatively high percentage who want to retain the monarchy. Why is this?

Could the pro-republic attitude be related to our early association with the democratic and autonomous spirit of the American and British Churches who influenced our early days? Probably not. If history were a factor you would expect the Anglican Church to be strongly pro-monarchy, but that is not supported by the NCLS figures. Ministers trained in the tradition of the Glen Iris and Mulgrave Colleges could be transmitting a culture and theology with a strong social justice emphasis. There could be an association with a "left wing focus" and pro-republic sentiments. Unfortunately we cannot break down the figures state by state, but we can assume that the Victorian and South Australian Churches would have been more pro-republic than, say, the Queensland Churches.

We can also assume that the numerically strong southern states may be less conservative in their attitude to the Scriptures. According to NCLS figures, there seems to be an association with Biblical conservatism and conservatism about the monarchy. Could our more liberal friends "down south" be to blame for the greater eagerness to adopt a republic? Perhaps. While Churches of Christ show themselves to be more Biblically conservative

than the main denominations, there may be significant groups within Churches of Christ who are less conservative who influence survey results. However, state factors are largely a matter of conjecture. The more educated you are the more likely you are to approve of the rapid introduction of a republic. At last we may have a significant factor! Affiliates of Churches of Christ are more likely to have a University degree than any other denomination apart from the Baptists (P. Hughes, *Religion. A View From the Australian Census 1993* (CRA, Kew)). The number of attending graduates within Churches of Christ is about the same as the national church average. The relatively high approval of a republic within our denomination may be measuring an educated, middle-class attitude. Compare the results of the "blue collar" groups (the Salvation Army and the Assemblies of God) with the Churches traditionally regarded as "middle class". The 20-39 age group is more in favour of a republic. While Churches of Christ have a "middle-aged spread", they are closer to the age distribution of the Australian population than traditional denominations. Our

Denomination	Yes Next 5 yrs	Yes Next 10 yrs	Not Next 10 yrs	Not Sure	Never
Anglican	16%	18%	20%	17%	28%
Assembly of God	16%	10%	12%	31%	30%
Baptist	14%	16%	20%	23%	26%
Churches of Christ	19%	16%	6%	28%	31%
Lutheran	15%	13%	16%	25%	32%
Salvation Army	15%	9%	12%	29%	35%
Uniting	16%	20%	22%	16%	25%

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The 20-39 age group is more in favour of a republic. While Churches of Christ have a "middle-aged spread", they are closer to the age distribution of the Australian population than traditional denominations. Our

younger worshippers have probably expressed a strong republican sentiment.

Males are overwhelmingly more likely to approve of a republic. Churches of Christ have a higher male ratio than the more traditional denominations (41% male compared 39% national average).

Which is the main factor?

Who knows! So, as the debate warms up we will find in our churches a 30 year old male who has come into the church recently, who is a graduate and who has less conservative views about the Christian faith. He will be impatient about the pace with which the republican debate proceeds. In the same congregation will be a 55-year-old dressmaker, who is biblically conservative, who loves her minister (but not his politics) and has been in the same church most of her life. She is a royalist and knows that many of her church friends feel the same.

If ministers must speak about social issues, they would do better concentrating on the constitutional crisis in Nigeria!

Ted Keating thanks Graeme Chapman (CCTC, Mulgrave) and Ewen Heathdale (NCLS) for their assistance.

Ted Keating is Senior Minister of our Wollongong, NSW, church.

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The Mystery of the Cosmos

KIM THODAY

The big orange sun fell into its hole in the ground. A cool, still, summer evening in the bush. Some leftover solar rays rush around for somewhere to hide, fading into obscurity. Someone is switching on little lights that hang here and there on the immense dome above. A few cicadas begin their alien chorus. Here is an invitation to the mystery of the cosmos: watch and partake as the great drama unfolds; contemplate afresh the miracle of existence. The blue-grey canvas vault turns into ex-

The wonder and terror of the cosmos only exists because of the gifts of human consciousness and contemplation

quisite black velvet, offering up an eternal cache of diamonds. Distant worlds beckon like ship's beacons in pitch-black night. The "eternal now" extends its slippery palm. Linear time distorts and is useless as I contemplate the most distant pulsations of light. I am looking back into aeons of time. From other points in the universe I exist in the future. I am overawed with a sense of wonder. I try to comprehend the experience, but it scurries away. Something else is happening. The Milky Way's thick blanket of trillions of shiny grains of sand is rolled out across dark ocean, revealing yet diffusing

more distant galactic layers. Deep space continues to yield up its secrets as my eyes grow into its hiddenness and as my being attunes to its infinite play. The blade of vulnerability strikes. The universe threatens. Fragility, insignificance, mortality, drop like daggers to the heart. Yet the hairy hand of humility arrives. I am overwhelmed by grace; by womb-like compassion that has created this vortex of wonder and light and this darkness and silence. Caught in paradox. A moment of acute anxiety. Crucial decision. Meaning or meaninglessness? Hope or hopelessness? Faith or despair? God or The spirit of love and compassion tugs somehow—like gravity. Doesn't it? A sudden flash of cognition merges with intuition. I think, I feel, therefore the cosmos is.

I recall that physicists such as John Polkinghorn and Paul Davies argue that scientific study of the universe has increasingly revealed the fingerprints of design. Davies, in fact, suggests that if we accept that there are "fingerprints of design" then we must surely ask why did God produce this design? Davies reminds us that because the laws of nature are so finely balanced to produce

conscious life forms, this in itself is evidence that God structured the cosmos so that conscious beings would develop to the extent to be able to be increasingly conscious of the "fingerprints". He asserts that it would seem that our own existence in the cosmos is central to God's plan. I stand again in awesome wonder before the God of the cosmos. I offer my praise and thanks to this compassionate God, this womb-like God, who gestated a human consciousness able to participate and cooperate in the creation of infinite possibilities for life and in-



deed in the creation and appreciation of the cosmos itself. Thus says Yahweh: *Is Ephraim [Israel] my dear son? My darling child? For the more I speak against him, The more I do remember him. Therefore my womb trembles for him; I will truly show motherly compassion upon him.* (Jer 31:20) Kim Thoday is minister of our Hewitt Community church, SA.

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CHANGES

KEITH, SA—Secretary Robert Hore, PO Box 434, Keith SA 5267.

BRIEBIE ISLAND, Qld—Secretary Church of Christ, PO Box 604, Briebie Island Qld 4507.

ACT CONFERENCE—Secretary Paul Potter, Conference of Churches of Christ in the ACT, 82 Limestone Avenue, Ainslie ACT 2602. Phone (02) 6253 1672 (office), 017 877 064 (mobile).

BAPTISMS

•Nathan Milhinch, Kerensa O'Sullivan, Katherine O'Sullivan, Verity O'Sullivan, Bev Stott, Danielle Stott, Emma Stott, Northam, WA •Carly Lawrence, Werribee, Vic •Telani Farmer, Wenli Wu, Balwyn, Vic •Il Won Park, C. Cipallone, C. Pix, S. Miller, E. Canavan, G. Canavan, R. Canavan, J. Canavan, C. Canavan, North Turramurra, NSW •Jason Landers, Arthur McLoughlin, Trevor Elfverson, Lillian Roberts, Levi Taylor, Toowoomba North, Qld •James Parker, Nathan Parker, Diane Stead, Don Stead, Balaklava, SA •Ruth Eldridge, Warrnambool, Vic •Hannah Cartmel, Cristy McGrath, Jayson McGrath, Frankston, Vic •Kim Harper, Swan Hill, Vic •David Bailey, Steffany Willis, Pierson Willis, Devonport, Tas •Alice Fischer, North Katoomba, NSW •Benjamin Salvador, Greg Ness, Susan Watson, Michelle Tuariki, Roxburgh Park, Vic •Nicole Labb, Springvale, Vic •Esther Petrusma, Howrah, Tas •Heidi Silberman, Angela Stratton, Linda Murray, Carolyn Sutton, Lyons, ACT •Steve Marks, Belconnen, ACT •Travis Brown, Melissa Lynes, Simon Hitchcock, Mt Clear, Vic

MARRIAGES

•Nicole Beard and Michael Smyth, Northam, WA •Jayne Usher and Richard Thorpe, Rachelle Smith and Anthony Lowe, Raechelle Ramage and Chris Grams, Cindy Gordon and Trevor Elfverson, Toowoomba North, Qld

•Sarah Davies and Greg Byrne, Janice Carr and Ralph Darling, Brooklyn Park, SA •Lynda Papworth and Paul Stuttard, Elisa Shaw and Jonathan Broadbent, Warrnambool, Vic •Emma Scott and Damian Wills, Frankston, Vic •Zen Nuam and Soe Thiha, Springvale, Vic •Gina Szcetpko and Mark Morffew, Howrah, Tas •Karen Peart and Steve Fitzallen, Launceston, Tas •Hilary Sargeant and Glen Tozer, Belconnen, ACT

DEATHS

•Agnes Lane, Northam, WA •Gordon Mackie, Werribee, Vic •Kev Reed, Toowoomba North, Qld •Elsie Gayther, Bayswater, Vic •G. Lampshire, W. Blackeby, M. Smedley, I. Clift, O. Moyle, Brooklyn Park, SA •Michael Lee, Warrnambool, Vic •Jean Taylor, Frankston, Vic •Lindsay Tune, Lillian Gillies, Grote St, Adelaide, SA •Phyllis Dove, John Eden, Tweed Heads-Cooloongatta, Qld •Norma McCarthy, Ivor Hocken, Winifred Minter, Springvale, Vic

OBITUARIES

Obituaries are limited to 100 words
ANDERSON, Robert John (16.12.97) John (Jack), was born on 29.4.12 at Kerang in Northern Victoria. The son of David and Jessie (Gerrand) Anderson. Baptised at Swan Hill church, where he met and married Roberta (Bobbie) Fulford in 1936. In 1933 he went to the College of the Bible. He later ministered at Springvale, Gardenvale, Bentleigh, Geelong, Wangaratta, Vic, Wollongong, Mayfield, NSW, Carnarvon, York, WA, Boonah, Qld, Nelson, NZ, and Whitebridge, NSW. In retirement he was Chaplain at Mayfield aged care units. He gave to people a love for the Lord, the Word and the Church. His children and those blessed by his ministry praise God for this faithful servant of God. —Allan Anderson
BERTHELSEN, William Charles Henry (9.12.97) Bill Berthelsen was born

11.8.08 and made his decision at a Tent Mission at Sunnybank, Qld, in 1929. Making a re-dedication at Preston Church of Christ, Vic, Bill entered the College of the Bible in 1935. He married Alice in College and after graduating, they went to minister at Collie, WA, for two years. Then twelve years with the Aborigines Mission Board at Roelands, Carnarvon and Norseman. They attended the Prahran, Dandenong, Chelsea and again Dandenong Churches of Christ, where they were always very active. Bill was Elder Emeritus at Dandenong. Alice died in January, Bill departed peacefully in December 1997.

—PAP

GAYTHER, Elsie M.D.

Born of Scottish parents, she lived her early life in Westgarth, Vic, during the Depression. Elsie met Ted Gayther at the Christian Endeavour Convention at Belgrave. They married soon after at Moreland Church of Christ and then lived in Donne Street, Coburg. Ted became Mayor of Preston and Elsie, though a very private person, carried out her duties as Mayoress with dignity. Elsie moved to Bayswater Church of Christ soon after the death of Ted. Elsie's life was devoted to her family, church family and in service to her Lord. She will be sorely missed.

—Peter Clayton

MARRIOTT, Ken F.

Born to Samuel and Annie 20.7.04 at Balaklava, SA. He married Olive Amy

Webb in November 1931 and all their married life lived in their only home at Croydon. Ken gave years of service to Croydon church as a deacon and elder. He was Bible School secretary for 27 years and also leader of the boys club and tennis team coach. He is mourned by four children, one of whom is Bruce, a minister and President of the SA Conference, and eleven great-grandchildren. His wife predeceased him thirteen years ago. H.M. Long conducted the funeral on 24.11.97, with son Bruce assisting.

TAMBLYN, Claude Albert

(24.1.197) Born at Pinery SA, where he attended school. Married Annie Lawrie at Long Plains. They had two children, Jim and Margaret. Was a farmer for a number of years. Baptised at Balaklava and later served on the church board. Attended Elizabeth church, then was one of those who commenced the Salisbury East church. Final years were spent at Victor Harbor. Was a helper with the church Friendship Centre. Claude battled cancer for five years and these last years were very difficult ones, but he was a man of great faith and courage. He faced death with confidence, knowing that he would soon be with his Lord. We praise God for his life.

—T. Lawrie

T.E. Rofe Settlement

Applications for grants to assist with fees and books from the T.E. Rofe Settlement are invited from ministers who are graduates of the Churches of Christ Theological College, Vic, and who are studying at an Australian tertiary institution.

Application forms are available from CCTC (PO Box 629, Mulgrave North Vic 3170; phone (03) 9790 1000) and will close on 6 March 1998.



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Church News

NSW

NORTH TURRAMURRA (R. Hewitt, S. Cathcart) Record attendances for Ron Hewitt's final Sunday ... Family of five baptised at morning service. Total of 9 baptisms in recent weeks ... Evening service a dedication for three young babies & their parents ... Ron & Shirley retiring to Mid North Coast ... Cooina Club provided Christmas dinner for about 85 seniors ... Christmas Carol Service organised in conjunction with local Primary School ... Three Alpha Courses conducted through the year.

LOWER BLUE MOUNTAINS (Stephen Templeton) Council approval received to use house for ministry ... Christmas attendances up by about 100%, resulting from introduction of Christmas Eve service ... Les Penrose left for mission work, was commissioned by elders on 21 December ... Church moving forward with vision of two congregations ... February introduces same theme & sermon for both services ... Eldership: Keith Larcombe retires, Glenn Holdworth elected.

TWEED HEADS-COOLANGATTA (Bruce Warwick) Children's Ministry, led by Cheryl Warwick, presented Christmas story in music and drama ... 130 sat down for European Christmas Dinner, followed by carols and items ... Church supported local "Half-Way House" with groceries at Christmas ... Special "setting aside" for James and Aleisha McAuley as James begins full-time study through Kenmore College ... Pastoral Studies from Kenmore held ... Church saddened at loss of Phyllis Dove and John Eden.

METRO NORTH CENTRE (Franklyn Elliott) Following morning service 21 December, outreach carol service held Dural Business Centre outside McDonald's ... Christmas Day service well attended ... No services 28 December, but church shared worship & fellowship at BBQ & picnic at Viney's Road. Highlight was baptismal service by Gordon Barr, with 3 young men

baptised, each giving testimony prior to baptism.

CHATSWOOD (Allan Blyth, Rosalie Role) Warm-hearted farewell to retiring minister Norris Brook & wife Edith on 2 November after greatly-appreciated 2-year term ... Incoming pastor Allan Blyth inducted 23 November. Attendance of 200 at special service of welcome. College Principal, Dr Keith Farmer, challenged church to the task of conveying the "Good News" to the people of the City of Willoughby and beyond.

QLD

RIVERLANDS—BLI BLI (Alan Leane) Church now 18 months old ... Induction of full-time minister David Allan 14 December. Greetings presented by Alan Hermann, Qld Conference, Colin Deacon, Sunshine Coast churches, Dr Alan Morrison, local fraternal. Charge given to minister & church by Alan Leane ... 130 at buffet tea ... Manse rented in Bli Bli providing room for family of five and a study.

TOOWOOMBA NORTH (Daryl Thorpe and Frank Langford) 75th Church Anniversary Weekend celebration in June 1997, including 10th year anniversary for our minister, Daryl Thorpe ... Toowoomba Region Churches of Christ Month of Missions held in October, with almost \$8000 raised, to be allocated to Zimbabwe, PNG and India ... Aileen Draney left for the Philippines for 3 months with FEBS ... Shayne Jones graduated from Kenmore College, in external studies. **WYNNUM (Charles Cole)** Highlights 3 months to Christmas: coach trip, PSA & dinner, Open Door Christmas Party, BBQ & "Carols on the Corner" ... Substantial bequest received from family of late Kathy van Dillewijn appreciated ... 1000 invitation book-marks delivered to Wynnum homes ... Many Christmas gifts donated to Care Dept. "Newstart" ... Well-attended Christmas day Service, COCOA offering \$1,135.95 ... Auxiliary programs

planned for 1998 with emphasis on more effective interaction.

SA

BROOKLYN PARK (J. Main) 73rd anniversary 12 October ... Renovations to Friendship Centre. \$5000 raised to air condition hall ... New elder, R. Dodd. New deacon, R. Gates. Liana Hughes at Vanuatu (Discipleship training Team) ... "Shout for Joy" service fortnightly for intellectually disabled.

BALAKLAVA (Grant Spangenberg) Church hosted visit for 170 ladies from city churches, Kadina & Owen ... SWAP shop providing substantial monetary gifts to Bible Society, C of C Overseas Mission, Community Care, SA, Balaklava Hospital & help for needy families ... Greeting card sales provide finance for Overseas Missions ... Junior Church participated in morning worship with luncheon following ... Funeral service for Ben, infant son of Michael & Roxanne Clisby, led by Grant Spangenberg & Graham Lawrie, Ben's grandfather.

NAILSWORTH (Andrew Evans) For 30 years, each week, our ladies have taken a posy with a greeting text to each patient of the Northern Community Hospital, this greatly appreciated gesture ended with recent closure of hospital ... Andrew & Cherilee Whalland farewelled after splendid two years' youth ministry ... Door-to-door distribution of calendars included invitation to "Carols in the Park", joint venture with Baptists, enjoyed by large district attendance.

TAS

DEVONPORT (Peter Willis) Christmas musical involving many children & adults had 400 attending 2 presentations. Sharon Churcher, Children's Director, directed the musical ... Members voted on possible courses of action for building extensions ... Annual camp planned for Riverbend, Smithton, 3-5 April ... Youth group experienced pleasing year, including

some baptisms & rededications ... New group "Breakout" enjoyed successful beginning ... 3 young people baptised, including pastor's 2 oldest children, Steffany & Pierson.

LAUNCESTON (C. Spaulding, W. Kerrison, T. Gray, S. Fitzallen) Terry & Lynne Heier raised \$640 in Bike for Bibles for Literacy program ... Steve Fitzallen appointed Youth Minister commencing February ... Kylie Birtwistle & Ray Gardiner married at Mt Martha 31 January ... Many visitors over holiday period ... George Green appointed church treasurer.

HOWRAH (Louis Clun) Children's Church presented Christmas theme 14 December ... Church Christmas luncheon held 21 December ... Lou & wife Cathy inducted as our "official" minister 11 January ... Esther Petrusma baptised at local beach, followed by lunch at parents home 11 January. At evening service Pru Gashumba spoke for Compassion Child Support ... Stuart & Gail Noble accepted for staff at "Shiloh" ranch, Grantville, Vic.

WA

CARNARVON (G. Law Davis) Challenging visit from missionaries, Geoff & Steph Bailey, now studying language in Tibet ... Shirley Birch speaker at ladies Christmas celebration ... Christian school renewed contract to use church facilities. Ian Blackburn taking over as principal in 1998 ... Elders & deacons went on retreat, camping in Kennedy Ranges ... Local churches combined for carol singing in town centre.

MERREDIN (Ray Hockley) Ray Hockley appointed from part-time to full-time ministry ... Church seeing growth & commitment ... Combined with other denominations for unity services ... All involved "Pray WA Service", Cummins Theatre 26 July, speaker Keith Edwards ... Reconciliation Service held in Aboriginal Hall. All churches participated ... Ray doing outreach to Chinese students training to be pilots ... Ladies running craft

Church News

group weekly ... Alma West thanked for 35 years' service in various roles. **NORTHAM (Jason Hemsley)** Bible School & Girls' Brigade being replaced by new children's program "Kid's Way His Way", to be run in two formats on Sunday & Monday ... Youth group attended camp at Dowerin with youth from Dowerin & York; travelled to Perth to the beach & Q-zar; plans to attend Youth Alive ... Church carolled around town on truck ... AGM held 14 December.

VIC

WARRNAMBOOL (Peter Broadbent) Well-attended family camp led by Peter & Kathy Downes of Vineyard fellowship ... Church family dinner held to farewell Broadbent family. Beautiful painting given to them last service 4 January ... Challenging presentation by "Hey Hey" children during morning service ... Obst family welcomed into fellowship. Amber Gysen & Alexandra Brough delightful additions to church family ... Joy Irvine recommissioned to Cambodia. **BAYSWATER (Peter Clayton)** Harry & Maribel Russell, Karen Nielsen, Betty Gill, Aaron & Tina Cai welcomed into fellowship ... Wedding presentation to Trudi Steele & Chris Brand ... Ben &

Julie Zambra leaving for Bible College in Perth ... Loved member Elsie Gayther died suddenly ... Peter Clayton accepted invitation for extension of ministry ... Christmas Play presented 14 December ... Daniel Hill's joined eldership team ... Regret Jim & June Easton's move to Queensland. **GEELONG EAST (Garth Paddle)** On 12 December a successful progressive dinner held ... Commencing at the Church of Christ with approximately 80 people, then to the Uniting & Catholic Churches where 100 people gathered, a Christmas message was given at each church, seven churches from Geelong East represented. **YARRAWONGA** Through 1997 Max & Beth Richardson from Wesleyans gave a three-month interim ministry, followed by Lindsay Thomas of Wangaratta and locals preaching alternatively ... Friends & Neighbours has been relaxed outreach through 1997 ... Lowered ceiling been installed ... In November 100+ audience, all local churches represented, appreciated PSA Concert by Diamond Valley Baptist Choir, arranged by Joy & Merv O'Brien now in membership here ... CWF Thanksgiving Day yielded \$500. **FRANKSTON (Tom Ede and Jason Potter)** Jason Potter now employed 4 days, previously 2 ... Over 300 at-

tended Geoff Bullock evening ... Peter Breen from CBM at Greenways PSA ... Dedication service for Olivia Carson ... Jim Backholer elected elder, Merv Chiswell elected deacon, to join Paulyne Mitchell & Graeme Woodhart on new Church Council ... Christmas Dinner well attended, as was party at Townsends ... Very good attendances at 7.00 pm services in December. **WEST PRESTON (Keith and Shirley Ludgater)** Many thanks to Shirley & Keith from members & friends for our delightful "Walk" through the 4 Sundays of Advent & the enjoyable festival of the Plum Pudding ... Bob Robb & Jean Hansom recovering from recent illnesses ... January's services shared with Preston alternately ... Charles McLeod's resignation from church board reluctantly accepted. Gwenda Hart welcomed as new board member. **PYRAMID HILL (Bill Sharrock)** Induction service for Bill Sharrock held 14 December. Church filled ... Christmas Tree social evening very successful. **SWAN HILL** Combined worship service with local Baptist congregation held in our chapel 7 December during which Kim Harper was baptised & welcomed into fellowship ... Glenys & Steve Dyer's week-old son Logan, dedicated at Christmas Day service ... Church hall temporarily re-named "Solid Rock Cafe" when used as venue for Melbourne-based Youth Dimension

team visit in Swan Hill 28 December - 6 January. **ROXBURGH PARK (Mathew Salvador)** First baptismal service held at East Keilor church with four baptised. Shared meal followed ... Church enjoying growth with 72 attending recent service ... 3 home groups active, 6 planned for 1998 ... Official opening 5 April ... Church consultants Wally and Theo Tersic continue to mentor Mathew and Maree as well as train 8-member Leadership Community. **SPRINGVALE (John Carmichael)** Board planning day held, new Board inducted ... Presentation made to Zen Nuam & Sue Thih, young Burmese couple worshipping with us prior to wedding ... Church saddened by home call of Norma McCarthy, Win Minter & Ivor Hocken (our organist) ... BBQ held for Children's Church (Sunday School) families ... Laurie & Kay Bull set aside for ministry & farewelled as Laurie enters Bible College. **MT CLEAR, BALLARAT** Carols night organised by Pam Wythe attracted 750 people at local University ... 350 attended farewell for Dale & Wendy White. Church presented a quilt, each square representing a church family ... Church unanimously voted for Rod Ratcliffe to commence ministry here in March ... 8 young people returned from very fruitful missionary trip to Vanuatu, despite experiencing two cyclones and a riot.

Ministry Opportunity

Ideally suit a married couple.

Kingsway Community Church is offering a live-in ministry position for a female for 30 hours per week. The position is to be the Lead Tenant of a young women's refuge in the the Sutherland Shire in New South Wales. The successful applicant will need to have the ability to relate well to young women and to provide quality care and nurture. Experience in this field and tertiary qualifications in the helping profession would be an advantage, but not essential. Available to start late February 1998.

Apply in writing to John Sutton, Ministry Team Leader, Kingsway Community Church, 278a Kingsway, Caringbah NSW 2229. For more information contact John Sutton on 0416 056 742.

Full or Part-Time Ministry Position

Salt Ash Community Church of Christ Port Stephens NSW

Salt Ash is a small semi-rural community 25 minutes from Newcastle, NSW, at the heart of Port Stephens shire. It has enormous potential.

The Pastor Salt Ash Community Church is looking for is a man who is a visionary, a discipler, an encourager and is keen to work with a strong leadership team.

The position is vacant now.

For further details send introductory letter to:
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Exploring the Day A Good Book

JANET THOMPSON

A summer afternoon means sitting in the shade with a good book, a cool drink, and the cricket (quietly!) in the background ... the game, not the insect!

The heat was a bit fierce, so I stayed inside, and turned on the fan. As for the book—I received twenty-one books as Christmas gifts, so I was set for a very long summer indeed.

One of my friends gave me five second-hand books. Her gifts are always different, and intriguing, because she spends every weekend looking for bargains at garage sales. She gave me two books of literary quotations—one of them a battered antique—two poetry collections, and a poet's manual. I had to put them to one side, or I would have been lost in their pages for the rest of her visit.

When I am buried in a book, the world ceases to exist. But this is not socially acceptable, even though it might have shown how much I appreciated her thoughtfulness!

It's great to have books which start me thinking.

Books of quotations and books of poetry send my mind on unexpected journeys—which makes them perfect reading matter for the holidays. I can stay at home, and travel far.

And when I read poetry it makes me feel like writing some myself—so the poet's manual brought me back to earth with a timely thud.



These are not books that I will finish reading and put away. I will rediscover their delights for years, so they are welcome additions to my library—which contains another book that I keep dipping into and making discoveries. The poetry of the Psalms and the quotations in Proverbs send my thoughts in all sorts of directions, and bring me back to reality—with words like these: "An intelligent person aims at wise action, but a fool starts off in many directions." (Prov 17:24)

Writing poetry is not unwise—no more than reading it—but the summer has to end, and I have a year of columns ahead of me. I doubt that the editor wants a spate of poems!

I hope you had a relaxing summer. Who won the cricket?

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The Last Word

It is always a relief to believe what is pleasant, but it is more important to believe what is true.

—Hilaire Belloc

Church Notices courtesy the "Canadian Disciple"

The choir invites any members of the congregation who enjoy sinning to join the choir.

Eight new choir robes are currently needed, due to the addition of several new members and to the deterioration of some older ones.

The pastor will preach his farewell message, after which the choir will sing, "Break Forth Into Joy".

Ushers will eat latecomers.

Remember in prayer the many who are sick of our church and community.

Don't let worry kill you off—let the church help you.

Hymn 43: "Great God, What Do I See Here"

Preacher: The Reverend Horace Blodgett

Hymn 47: "Hark! An Awful Voice is Sounding."



Every graduate's deepest fear.

From The Silence of the Lambs by John McPerson (Zondervan, 1997).