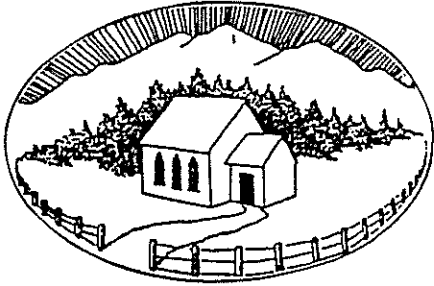


Rural Network News



No.5

May 1997

The Kingdom of God is mustard
a seed small enough
to get lost among others
a plant large enough
to shelter birds in its shade

Jesus of Nazareth

Please share this newsletter with any folk in your community you think may be interested. Please feel free to make photocopies.

Prayer - An Ecological Act

The summer-autumn season in Mid-Canterbury has been dreadful - for anyone who enjoys hot sunny days and especially for crop farmers. What a frustrating harvest! The odd dry day, perhaps the hint of a nor-wester then it's back to cloud and drizzle if not pouring rain. And just enough warmth to encourage that "cancer" of seeds and grain - sprouting. And I gather our district has not been alone in this.

Have you noticed how prayer seems to be a hot topic of conversation in such a season as this? And somehow we, as people known to be involved in the church, seem to be held responsible or, more kindly, thought to have some special influence to sort out the weather problems facing our farming folk.

I say "thank you for your confidence in me, but..."

I'm inclined to respond with the story about the weather rope. Apparently there was this rope you could pull to let Hughie know what kind of weather you want. A couple of farmers got in a tizz over it, because one wanted rain and the other wanted sun. You can picture it: each one pulling the rope and

getting more forceful as the other does the same. Until the rope broke.

Part of what it says is that it's a job for everyone, this prayer business, and we need to allow for that. It is not just us church folk, and certainly not just the minister, who is "close to God" (surely people know that about us!). "Ministry of the whole people of God" is the current lingo. God's got a relationship on offer equally and directly to everyone who wants to take it up, each in one's own way, relevant to one's own experience.

The other thing this story says is that it's an interrelationship matter as well. Our concerns about the weather, and prayer in general, don't just relate to God and me - my needs, wants, demands, etc. Our interconnectedness with other people is part of the picture, the wider picture that any prayer worth its words takes into account. Prayer means connecting ourselves and our needs and hopes with God, and that at once means connecting ourselves with other people And not just other people - connecting with everything around us, earth, air, water, plants, animals...

It's a way to link in, and to link together, tap into resources we call God and find our place in the wider network. For me, that's one major way that prayer works. It reconnects me, it helps me see where I fit, stop worrying so much and get on with my part in the whole.

Prayer is about reconnecting and getting in tune. It is an ecological act, of that I am convinced.

Robyn McPhail

'Listen to the Land' - Study Leave Report by Robert Bruere

I was asked to read and review this report by the Editor - thank you Robyn - a most entertaining and enlightening read.

"Pressing my ear as close as I could to the earth to hear sounds that didn't make a noise"
(from *Mad as Rabbits* by Elizabeth Lane)

Robert begins his report with this intriguing quotation and goes on to say that "...certainly places have a feel of their own... Taranaki has a different sense when you drive towards the mountain... the brown hills of Hawkes Bay are unique... I felt "Listen to the Land" would be a good title... I was concerned to hear how rural people in Australia were and keen to see how the earth is responding to the demand placed on it... I wanted to get a feel for the place... I enjoyed being in people's homes."

Robert covers time spent at the Trans Tasman Rural Ministry Conference held in Myrtleford in April 1996. His main focus was to see how parishes are adapting to rural population decline; how small

communities coped with traumas and the work of emergency services; land use and abuse and the Landcare Movement; learning from Church Surveys and Australian sociological writings.

The report is a good read with plenty of human interest stories along with a heap of information and available resources for rural ministers. It is spattered throughout with delightful cartoons and drawings (by the author himself?) and photographs to illustrate his findings.

Robert's observations on the Rural Ministry scene were interesting to me. He spent time in a scattered area called the Mallee (NW Victoria) with many 'dying' towns where he found quite a lot of ecumenical activity and co-operation between denominations but interestingly he did not find a strong tradition of lay worship leadership. Generally care of the land was seen as "an economical necessity rather than part of Christian Mission/Stewardship."

I was also struck by the information Robert picked up from the Rev Harold McSwain of the United Methodist Church, Ohio, who suggested that there is a change in ministry in the rural sector "from care of souls to management and teaching others to do ministry." A Questionnaire concerning child safety which Robert came across made me wonder if this is something that is of concern in the rural sector in NZ. There is a copy in the Report. Some questions asked were: "Do you have a safe, supervised play area on the farm for your child?" "Do you own a first aid kit?" This could be worth discussing with young mothers' groups, cradle roll groups.

Robert discovered in central NSW that they are addressing new models of ministry with new initiatives, such as employing Family Workers and specialist people.

His theological reflection entitled "Moses on the Murray" to do with water and the lack of it in Australia has him rethinking the OT story of Israel's migration, Abraham coming from UR and then Moses and relating that to our colonial past, leading into a discussion on pests.

Thank you Robert for your insightful Report and all the valuable information gathered. I suggest people who want to know more get in touch with the author direct: The Revd Robert Bruere, The Vicarage, 37 Nancy Street, Takapau, Central Hawke's Bay.

Pam Pruden, Mayfield

Singing the Experiences of our Land

Have you noticed the difference when singing some of the new songs that have been especially written for this country and to reflect life in Aotearoa New Zealand? Words speaking things that are part

of our experience. Doug Grierson, until recently minister in the rural part of the Waitaki parish and now in Greymouth, makes this comment and this offering: "I have been particularly aware of how daringly localised words for worship can become, so that a liturgy translates into recognisable experience of familiar setting and pastoral effect. Thus 'Byways of North Otago', hoping it may encourage others to share what may already be around, or try their hand."

Here is the song. The tune is Converse ('What a friend we have in Jesus'). Thank you, Doug, for passing it on to the rest of us.

BYWAYS OF NORTH OTAGO

God who carved this timeless landscape
snowclad ridge to valley plains
power of surging race and river
limestone crags and scarred terrain.
Maker still of earth, fire, water
artistry of sight and sound
Southern lights or sunset splendour
raise our eyes to where you're found.

Calendar of nature's balance
rhythms of the farming year
shearing, milking, ploughing, pruning,
manger setting ever near.
Lonely struggle in the byways,
nor'west dust or snow and flood,
fellowship of tears or laughter
with you, Lord, we're understood.

Giving thanks for those before us
village life with tussock track
as we turn to face the future
nineties wind upon our back.
Still widespread our congregations
each now share in ministry
bonding strength of work together
Spirit of community.

Alpha in the Rural Setting

Twizel Christians make a visual statement to the town: we all share the only church building. The Catholics worship separately, members of at least six other denominations form one congregation as the Pukaki Co-operating Parish. We are officially Anglican-Presbyterian with a part-time minister drawn from of these two denominations.

To strengthen our personal statements and outreach we have chosen the ALPHA programme which we highly recommend. It consists of 15 x 45 minutes video teaching tapes, each to be followed by

small group discussion over ten weeks, with a midway "weekend" of four sessions on the Holy Spirit. The Rev Nicky Gumbel of Holy Trinity Church, Brompton London, presents balanced, polished and lively basic Christian teaching.

The 25 members of our congregation who took part in the first course late last year and the ten present course members, who are mostly not committed to a congregation, are all enthusiastic and their faith and witness is being strengthened.

ALPHA needs to be followed up by home groups and requires group leaders in an ongoing programme of bringing people to a commitment to Christ.

Information about ALPHA may be obtained from the Rev Dr Ray Muller, ALPHA Resources, PO Box 26-119, Wellington 6030, ph/fax 04 478 1224.

Earle Williams, Twizel

Community asks of us: Vulnerability. Laying down of power. Trust. Commitment to others. Accountability. Faithfulness. Giving and receiving forgiveness. Openness. Acceptance of diversity. Kindness. Risking of ourselves.

Dorothy McRae-McMahon

Rural Realities

"[S]mall scattered congregations grappling with problems of budget, buildings and age structure" (Garth Cant, "Education for Rural Ministry: Unpacking experience and Mapping Mutualities", an address presented to the 1996 Trans-Tasman Rural Ministry Conference, p.3)

Is this something familiar to you? What do you think we should be doing about it? What's the point of all those little churches in the country?

Some words of caution before we jump in and close it all down. For the realities of our rural situation are at once points of hope and the very reason for our being.

Christ in our community

If our churches are as described above, then so is our wider rural community. The church is living the same struggle of change as its local community. The rural church *incarnates* the life of the community and in doing this it has the opportunity to be Christ incarnate for the place where it is:

You as rural church are an organic part of your local community; their strengths are your strengths; their struggles are your struggles. You are the people Christ has called, in the place where Christ has called you to be. (B. Wilson and F. Waive, *The Rural Church*

Perplexed: Darfield 1984 Australia-New Zealand Rural Ministry Consultation, pp.4-5)

There remains, in many of our rural communities, a country church, often a bit sad looking now because it has known livelier, more people-filled days. But it remains as the most accessible spiritual symbol for today's rural people, even and especially the busy ones racing past. It is the spiritual place, the rural reminder of Christ in the midst of everyday life, God "at home in our district."

What are we doing then if we abandon the incarnational task?

Transformation from the margins

The number of people in rural congregations is declining. Similarly the number of full time Priests and Presbyters in rural parishes is less. As the proportions shift, the political centre of gravity shifts. More and more of the decisions which affect you are being made by people with little awareness of rural realities. In political terms, you in your time are as marginal and as vulnerable as Amos was in his.

(Cant, *op.cit.*)

Amos, the sheep-breeder from Tekoa, country bumpkin from the south, brought from his rural context both God-breathed insights and the energy of anger: in all, a passion for transformation. The rural part of our church is important to the whole church right now simply because it is on the margins. It and its people speak from the margins and help us, the wider church, make sure we do not join the prevailing ethos in which numbers and money hold sway. We can model the advocacy the Gospel calls us to undertake in the way we treat the minorities in our midst (which includes not only the rural church, but other significant groupings as well).

Pioneering

The rural *crisis* is the rural *opportunity*.

Rural churches, like their communities, have undergone many changes already and there is no let-up. Episcopalians in West Virginia, United Methodists in Alabama, Mitchell Presbytery in Victoria, Australia, along with Anglicans, Catholics, Methodists and Presbyterians in rural Aotearoa New Zealand are discovering new ways to be the church: ways that build identity and self-confidence, encourage cooperation by clustering congregations and sharing resource people and enable each congregation to be more of a Gospel bearer in its community.

It means a change in our understanding of ministry with a clarified role for ordained ministry within the team of all the baptised.

The rural church, by a mixture of circumstance, intent and response to the

moving of the Spirit, is at the forefront of these changes. (*ibid.*)

"Pioneering the future" is a rural ministry theme in New South Wales. As crisis and opportunity converge the rural church is at the leading edge for the local community and for the church as a whole, as both "guinea pig" and pathfinder.

Close those country churches? No way! They are heading for a new future.

Robyn McPhail

[This article was originally published in *Candour*, the Presbyterian Ministers' monthly magazine, and is reprinted here with their permission.]

God our Mother and Father, be with us as we
learn to see one another with new eyes, hear
one another with new hearts, and treat one
another in a new way.

Corrymeela Community, Ireland



Library Resources by Mail

The Hewitson Library at Knox College in Dunedin has no membership restrictions, and is pleased to make its resources available to anyone interested in theological literature.

We suggest that you check out local library resources first, and make use of the nationwide Interloan system which is often the most efficient way of getting what you want quickly. If, however, you'd like to borrow directly from us, all you need to do to become a member is request a membership card, fill it out and return to us, and you are then free to borrow to your heart's content. You can ask for specific titles, books by a certain author, or just books on a particular subject: "Please send me a couple of good recent commentaries on Luke," for example, or "Have you got anything on dealing with church conflict?" We can also do searches on our CD-ROM Religion Index Database, and find and send you copies of journal articles.

There is no subscription payable (though of course we welcome donations) but unfortunately the service isn't entirely free. We need to recover some costs, which means we have to ask you to refund postage and courier costs, and to reimburse us for computer searching and photocopying.

For more information and a membership card, write to Barbara Frame at the Hewitson Library, Knox College, Arden Street, Dunedin.

Phone 03 473 0109 ext.53, fax 03 473 8466

email: hewitson@rivendell.otago.ac.nz

The Family Farm: where to from here?

In August last year a Workshop with this title was held at Lake Bolac for the Rural Counselling Services of South-West Victoria and South-East South Australia. A variety of interesting material was included in the workshop and we offer some summaries of three different aspects.

First of all something from the plenary discussion: a SWOT analysis for comparison with our situations.

Strengths of the Family Farm

- * ability to withstand short term crises as shareholders remain committed even though profit is low
- * prepared to invest in sustainable agriculture even though returns might be longer term
- * part of a local community which provides support
- * opportunity to work together as a family
- * self-sufficient lifestyles and independence
- * close relationship with the land and changing seasons
- * good and safe environment to raise children

Weaknesses

- * need improved financial and business management skills
- * need improved estate planning
- * could improve community involvement of all farm families
- * scope for improvement in productivity
- * more emphasis required on quality management of business and product
- * need improved marketing skills
- * debt levels and low profitability

Opportunities

- * expanding markets for food and fibre products in Asia
- * dairy continues to expand
- * cropping has a positive outlook
- * the only way for wool is up
- * diversification into horticulture, viticulture and new food and fibre crops
- * tourism and regional development offer opportunities for off-farm income
- * information technology advances expand opportunities for off-farm income
- * cooperative arrangements in sharing plan and marketing
- * restructuring farm enterprise

Threats

- * trade barriers are still a problem
- * tax reform required to reduce input costs
- * the land and water resource base has been degraded
- * access to services becoming more difficult as banks etc. rationalise
- * regional economy is depressed

Insights from Victoria

Is New Zealand part of the same global economy?

Frank McClelland, Manager of the Office of Rural Affairs, Horsham Victoria, has been collecting data and engaging in dialogue with farmers, rural groups and politicians. In April 1996 he met with Australian and New Zealand participants at the Rural Ministry Conference at Myrtleford. In August he presented a policy analysis to the Family Farm Conference held at Lake Bolac. What follows is a broad overview of the picture which is emerging out of this dialogue. The stimulus comes from Frank McClelland, any errors or misinterpretations are the responsibility of Rural Network News. The topic is too important for pussyfooting.

1. The Global Economy is leaving its mark on Rural Victoria.

Farmers in Victoria face the pressures felt by farmers worldwide: prices paid are increasing faster than prices received; the margin for the producer is being progressively reduced.

As margins fall, debt increases and there is less money to invest in infrastructure, save for retirement or educate and train the children.

The long term trend, through the 1980s and 1990s, is for two to three per cent of Victorian farmers to exit farming each year. This is happening across all farming types and in every region of Victoria.

2. The choices for farmers are stark: change or exit!

"If you are still doing what you are currently doing in five years time, you will be out of business - change is essential" (1996 Outlook Conference)

Farmers are responding (or not responding) in a variety of ways depending on circumstances and temperament:

- farm scale is increasing; farmers may be reluctant to buy more land - leasing land and buying in water are preferred alternatives;

- new enterprises are being initiated (sunrise industries and farm tourism as well as farm diversification) with variable success;

- more and more household income is being earned off farm; between 10 per cent and 55 per cent of domestic farm income across Victoria (Beef farmers in the Upper Murray currently earn 54 per cent of income off farm);

- welfare benefits (income support, parenting allowances, aged care benefits and Health Care Card) are increasingly important;

- the exodus from farms is an ongoing fact of life in all districts.

3. Farmer households in Victoria are older than the community at large and now have lower levels of income and education.

"Lifestyle expectations on farms are no different from the general community, however recent data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics indicates lower income and education levels."

- young people are leaving home for education and training; the number intending to return to farming is much lower than it was in the 1970s and 1980s;

- there is less pressure on parents to provide farms for the next generation and fewer job opportunities for farmers who move to the city;

- more older people are remaining on the land after they have lost interest in maintaining or improving properties.

4. Conservation vs Sustainable Agriculture.

There are positive changes in attitudes to the environment. Conservation works cost \$\$ which governments are more reluctant to pay for and only the top 10 to 15 per cent of farmers can afford.

Sustainable agriculture may or may not cost \$\$ and it can increase profits. Farmers in Victoria are willing to work together in Landcare groups.

"It's hard to be green when you're in the red."

5. Rural Counsellors are an ongoing part of the Victorian scene.

Rural Counsellors assist farm families in difficulty to deal with their creditors and work out their options. Economic analysis, crisis counselling and preventative advice are equally important parts of the task. They are trained to understand the economic pressures and the personal pain. Their mandate is neither to encourage families to stay in the rural community nor to leave for the city.

There are 19 Rural Counsellors in place in Victoria. Australia wide 90 Rural Counsellors have seen 39,500 of the 120,000 farmers.

6. The family farm will survive.

How can farmers equip themselves for the uncertainties of the future? Frank McClelland sums up with an action list for survival in the face of structural change:

-understand where you are and know your financial position in relation to others;

-think through you and your family's future in the industry;

-invest in a ticket/qualification for the next generation;

-get a succession plan in place and discuss it with your children;

-learn all you can about risk management, including the risks of new technologies and new enterprises;

-think through your situation and enlarge your options, on farm and off farm.

The Future of the Family Farm

Excerpts from a presentation to the Workshop by Bill Malcolm and Brendan Madden

Ironically the economic forces which so often make extensive farming a hard way to make a living also have the effect of ensuring that the family farm will remain the dominant form of business organization in Southern Australia's extensive agriculture (grains, sheep, cattle, dairying). The irony is that it is because profits and net cash flows in extensive agriculture are so variable and uncertain that the resilient family farm business is generally able to out-compete non-family operations for capital and labour.

The family farm has survived because it is an efficient form of business organisation. Most farm business arrangements comprise a small number of people who are actively involved in the operation and management of the farm, and are equally prepared to bear the sacrifices necessary to weather the periodic low incomes and expansion phases. Commonly, such arrangements have been based on close family ties. Why might these forms of organisation continue to be more efficient than other forms of business organisation, such as the private company using a lot of employed labour? The reasons are found in the biological nature of farming as a production activity, in the nature of the risks involved and in the nature of the sources of capital for investment in agriculture.

The point has been made that the chief advantage the family form of organisation has over other farms is in its ability to survive the mistakes they make. Mistakes will be made not because of any inadequacies of management and labour skills, but instead are unavoidable as they are inherent in the nature of farming and the operation of markets. By definition, a mistake is the production of quantities such that at the price received the resources used in production do not all earn a return above their cost. The argument then is that family farmers have consistently, for certain periods, produced output at very low prices. A consequence is that large non-family farms have not been able to become common where they have to compete on the open market with family farms simultaneously for both labour and capital. That is, family farms operate at times at very low wages and returns to capital. Farms of such large size that they would have to be relying considerably on non-family wages and non-family capital cannot consistently attract the labour and capital they require, because periodically the wages and returns to capital in farming are below that available in alternative uses in the non-farm sector.

A writer 25 years concluded: "A cynic might even assert that the family farm is an institution which functions to entice farm families to supply batches of labour and capital at substandard rates of return, in order to supply the general economy with agricultural products at bargain prices." (G.L. Johnson, 'The Future of the Family Farm' in *Economic Problems of Agriculture in Industrial Societies*, ed. U.Papi and C.Nunn, New York: MacMillan, 1969)

Have things changed nowadays? Not much!

The outstanding virtue of most family operated farm businesses is in achieving high standards of operations, timeliness and husbandry in a production activity in which very good levels of technical skill is such a large part of profitable production. It seems most likely to be risk, problems with acquiring and rewarding resources and the current technology available to ensure that expanded farm operations are technically sound, that will be the factors which will continue to set limits in the future to the inevitable increases in the size of successful family operated farm business.

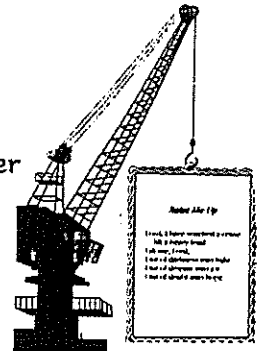
Lord, I have watched a crane lift a heavy load.
Lift me, Lord,
Out of darkness into light
Out of despair into joy
Out of doubt into hope.

Lift me, Lord,
Out of sadness into laughter
Out of sickness into health
Out of shadows into light.

Lift me, Lord,
Out of fear into hope
Out of frailty into strength
Out of foolishness into sense.

Lift me Lord.
You came down to lift us
You descended to hell to lift us to heaven
You entered death to raise us to life.
Come, Lord, raise me up, I pray you.

From *Power Lines: Celtic Prayers About Work*,
by David Adam, London: Triangle, 1992



Responses Sought

Rural Network News is looking for responses to the above material from the Victoria/South Australia Workshop on the Future of the Family Farm. Either articles or brief comments would be welcomed. Please forward to the editor before June 15.

Distance Theological Education - Moving Forward

From the Annual Report of the Ecumenical Board of Theological Studies

EBTS is now four years old. Like all toddlers it has had its teething problems but has a greater feeling of stability and solidarity about it as we move into the fifth year. During 1996 it was agreed that the name should be changed to indicate more clearly what the Board's work is about. EBTS is now EIDTS - the Ecumenical Institute of Distance Theological Studies which is administered by the EBTS.

Interest continues to grow and at the same time the Ecumenical Institute is increasing its ability and resources to provide quality learning. The total number being taught in 1997 is 146 students in 211 papers. Of the total number 49 have enrolled for the first time. Our students are to be found in 48 different areas of New Zealand. At the end of 1996, 123 students sat 154 papers with a 100% pass rate.

In 1996 the Ecumenical Board signed an agreement with Coolamon College in Australia to purchase some of their distance study courses. In 1997 four Coolamon courses are being used with plans to incorporate three more in 1998. Locally we have produced two more study guides and five more are in process of production. If all goes according to plan the Ecumenical Institute, in 1998, will be teaching twenty courses with Study Guides. College House Institute of Theology continues to provide some of our courses which are not supported by distance learning material.

In January 1997 two Summer Schools were offered - Homiletics and pastoral Care and three or maybe four are planned for January 1998.

Margaret Wood, Executive Director

For further information please contact:

The Academic Registrar

EIDTS Phone: 03 338 0363

PO Box 12 286 Fax: 03 339-0124

Christchurch



Lord, give me love and commonsense,
And standards that are high;
Give me calm and confidence,
And please, a twinkle in my eye!
The Christian Worker's Prayer

Camera left at Kurow

A camera was found left behind after the Rural Round-up at Kurow last May. If anyone thinks it may be theirs please get in touch with Howard Smith, 3 Bowen Street, Kurow, phone: 03 436 0773.

Newsletters please!

As indicated in the last issue, the editor of *Rural Network News* would be very pleased to receive copies of parish newsletters on either an occasional or a regular basis. Please highlight any bits you would especially like to share.

A Story

[Written for a recent Harvest Service]

Once there was a boy (it could have been a girl, because how things were for him happens for both boys and girls, but it happens it was a boy). No longer a child, almost an adult, and already feeling the effects of life.

Why was life such a pain? Why all these things that don't work out right? Why this feeling of unhappiness? Why this churning inside and wondering if there's any point to me?

One day the boy met a woman, pretty old but bright and kind. She said, "Why so down in the dumps, my friend?" (she'd seen it from the look on his face) "You are such a fine young man - you could be enjoying life!"

He told her he simply didn't feel life called for any enjoyment. And because she listened so well, he told her about things he hadn't told anyone else. About home, about school, about what hurt him most.

Then she said, "I know a way to change how you feel. I have something here that will show you where's the point of it all - it'll show you the reason to hope." And she gave him a little mirror that she had in her bag and told him to go home and sit in his room on his own and look in the mirror.

Well, what would the science teacher at school think of this - a mirror that shows reason to hope! Magic mirrors!

Anyway he thanked the woman and went on home. It was late that night when he decided - what the heck - let's try it anyway. It beats all this boring homework. Maybe it's one of those things that turns everything into gold. Ha!

It didn't do that. It was just a mirror and all it showed was his face!

He looked at that face. He looked at the sad eyes, the haircut that never seemed to be perfect, and remembered things. Memories of days nothing

worked out, of when they had to shift and he didn't want to, of bruises - from the bullies at school - and now he could see a couple of tears to go with the memories.

But as he looked all sort of other thoughts came to him - remembering the times.... It was hard... but he'd coped. And he remembered the little things different people had said, or done, that actually helped. The chat with another kid that made a difference, the smile from Mum, working on a project with Dad... He remembered too "that dopey old woman, who lent me this silly mirror."

In memory there is hope.

And he thought too that always deep inside, no matter what happened there was something that never stopped; kept wanting to say to him - you're okay... Is that you God?

Information from the Web

Some of us are now internet subscribers and rumour has it that there is an amazing amount of stuff out there on the world wide web, including no doubt much interesting rural ministry stuff. If anyone discovers anything that others in this network may be interested in, please let the editor know - either a print out of the text or the exact page number on the web. It could be a good source of material to include in this newsletter and thus share with more than just the internet freaks.

International Conference: Durham 1998

The Arthur Rank Centre at Stoneleigh Park in England advises that the next international Rural Ministry Conference will be held at Ushaw College, Durham, from August 10 to 14 1998. *Rural Network News* will provide further information, and contact addresses, as this comes to hand.

They are preparing for a page on the Internet by courtesy of the Royal Agricultural Society. (We offer a free subscription to *Rural Network News* for the first reader to find their way in and copy the page to us, complete with the www address! Ed.)

Stop Press! ..

New location, different landscape and definitely a different climate, but it's been no problem for Doug Grierson, now on the job at Greymouth District Uniting Church, to keep writing local songs for worship! Here's a song first sung at Moana, on the shores of Lake Brunner. It adapts a familiar hymn of praise (tune: *Lasst Uns Erfreuen*):

All creatures of our God come sing!
Lift up your voice, your praises bring.
Alleluia, alleluia.
Thou season's sun with shafting beam,
Thou silvery moon with softer gleam,
O sing ye, alleluia...

Thou rushing wind from ocean deep,
Ye Tasman tides that never sleep,
Sing praises, alleluia.
Cross of the Southern night rejoice
With lesser lights, the greater voice,
O sing ye, alleluia...

Thou mantled mountains, upraised long,
from silent form, bring forth your song,
Praise your Maker, alleluia.
Ye bush clad slopes your branches raise
let leafy patterns speak your praise
O sing ye, alleluia...

Dear mother earth, who day by day
unfoldest blessings on our way
Sing praises, alleluia.
Like wisdom nourishing our roots
Like Spirit bringing forth new shoots
O sing ye, alleluia...



We commit ourselves to join with you, O God, to nurture the plants and animals, the elements, the sacred womb of sea and soil. We offer you our ability to create and our potential to release people's loving energies for the benefit of all creation. We sing with you the song of the universe! We dance with you the dance of life! We are yours, and you in us are hope for the renewing of nature through the healing of the nations.

Ivador Martinez, Thailand

This occasional newsletter is printed and distributed by Diocese of Christchurch, PO Box 8471, ph 03 343 0519, fax 03 348 3827

Editor: Robyn McPhail. 9 Jackson Street Methven, ph/fax 03 302 8151, email: chirmac@voyager.co.nz. Thanks to Garth Cant for editorial assistance with this issue, particularly the Australian material.

Contributions of news, views, insights on anything to do with the rural church, its ministry and gospel mission gratefully received.