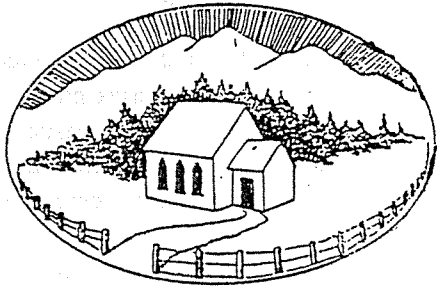


Rural Network News



No.11

February 1999

Dear God, please accept my resignation as general manager of the universe. Amen.

Upper Room Disciplines 1998

Please share this newsletter with others you think may be interested. Feel free to make photocopies and use articles.

Comments on any material in this newsletter are always welcome.

One Person's View of VisionNZ Congress

VisionNZ's third Congress took place recently in the warmth of a Waikanae summer. "Igniting 2020 Together" was the theme, but in a season of fire restrictions that needs to be pretty metaphorical. Literal or metaphorical: too often this becomes a divisive theological debate. What a waste of energy when that happens, for isn't it our passion for the Gospel that unites us regardless?

VisionNZ is a church revival movement that has drawn together evangelicals from a wide range of denominations. They have journeyed some distance already with respect growing between people as different as Pentecostals and Catholics. This year's Congress carried a strong theme of reconciliation, more than just words but an active process to pursue.

The evangelical ethos is at the heart of VisionNZ and its assumptions held sway throughout the week, so this steadfast and passionate 'liberal' (for want of a better term) did not easily fit - a bit of a fish out of water. However I found my place of belonging thanks to the Rural Stream. Hardly surprising given the rural spirit - the Spirit that stirs us to the best in rural life. Being rural is about neighbourhood relationships. Not having the luxury of choosing who to work with and who to socialize with, it means accepting community members 'as is' and making the best of it.

But then the only way to break down barriers is to build relationships. It doesn't matter if people are different, if they think or behave differently, so long as one is allowed, and allows oneself, to enjoy being there with them. Once the anxiety about difference goes away it is possible to see clearly what we have in common.

For example: singing, pentecostal style. I often struggle with the theology of the words and my arms don't incline skywards. But I like music, I love enthusiasm and I'm keen to spot God at work anywhere. Standing there in the midst of the singing I had my own kind of epiphany. I said to myself, this is just like being at a rugby match! I'm not into great yahoing, but I feel the thrill of the atmosphere, I enjoy watching other people in the midst of the fun and I know we are all there for the love of the same thing.

Now just a word or two about the Rural Stream of the Congress. We took the time together to share hopes and dreams, to get into tune with God's Dream and to name the demons that block the way to the Dream's (Kingdom) fruition. We heard stories from the Awatere, Taranaki, Martinborough, Ruawai, Hawkes Bay and Methven. We sparked ideas. We built confidence. VisionNZ plans to publish the work of Congress Streams as separate manuals available to purchase individually. Details will come later.

For the moment, here are some words we used in the Rural Stream to sum up our task in "Evangelising Rural New Zealand":

*Taking the Whole Gospel to the Whole Community:
Building Relationships to Foster Reconciliation of
Land and People.*

And when we worship in, for and with the community our task is this:

*To discover God in the midst of life,
give room for the Christ among us
and catch up with the Spirit at work in our place.*

Robyn McPhail

Rural Reflections on the Hikoi

Burning rough contact with bitumen road, hot sun on the back, biting winds in the face, curious cows along the fence lines, bird song from out of the bush. Up hill and down dale on the East Coast of the North Island, the Hikoi gets us in touch with the elements!

And it brings a change of tempo. Getting nowhere in a hurry and with much effort, together with the steady rhythm of legs in tune for the whole long haul, encourages a deeper reflectiveness. Let those noisy trucks speed by! A simpler but more satisfying hope springs up from within.

Plenty of time too, for conversations ... about our personal hopes and despairs, and the hopes and despairs of the communities we are walking for.

Or time to meet with the country school, children and teachers, to plant a pohutakawa, to talk of a better future, to promise to carry their stories with us to Wellington.

And no one walks alone. Always a community of walkers to support and encourage one another. With support of cars and cool water, and juicy oranges on hand to help us on our way. And at the longer stopovers, in marae or hall, a sharing of the local stories. Often depressed and depressing to begin with, the conversation begins to see that together there are resources, together there are ways forward, together there are alternatives. And out of that comes a commitment to meet again and to build on this renewed sense of community.

The Hikoi proves to be a real gift to rural New Zealand. For it began in our "remote" depopulated areas where all the marks of poverty are so apparent, yet so often ignored. Rural walkers may have to cover the longest distances. But in the process we also learn so much more about ourselves, our communities, and our God.

Murray J. Mills, Waiapu

More Reports from Durham

International Conference on Rural Culture and Spirituality held in Durham, UK, August 10-14 1998

The Conference was organised by the Arthur Rank Centre, an ecumenical organisation, which exists within the secular National Agricultural Centre. The keynote speakers, respectively Australian Aboriginal, Native American and Zimbabwean addressed the issue of 'natural' against revealed spirituality and came up with differing views on the topic.

The twin themes of the conference seemed to be indigenous spirituality on the one hand and making church structures work in rural situations on the other. Without wishing to encourage complacency, my overall impression is that we in New Zealand are the equal of what is happening elsewhere in the world under either of those headings.

The conference set us the task of exploring on successive days the issues of rural culture and rural spirituality in small groups. We found that "rural" for a black priest from Zimbabwe is different from rural Canada, rural America, Britain and New Zealand. We did conclude that, with the exception of the African situation, rural cultures (note the plural) are under threat from a global western culture, coca-colonisation, if you will.

In exploring spirituality we were aware of the danger of romanticising the past. The group explored a tension between one pole which found "spirituality" in the pre-Christian roots of a people and another which would see authentic spirituality as only possible after conversion to Christianity.

Hugh McCafferty, Dunedin

The International Conference at Durham was quite an opportunity for us, as members of a small rural parish. Participants were asked to prepare beforehand a five minute presentation on the two themes, Rural Culture and Rural Spirituality. We found these hard to define, but fortunately there were no wrong answers, and each presentation was received with enthusiasm and interest in our small groups.

We really appreciated the fact that everyone was treated on the same level, with no titles on name tags. Participants were all there for the same reason, to learn from each other. The small rural community and church is the same the world over and facing the same challenges. It was a privilege to share with those who were present, their hopes and disappointments, concerns for the future of their churches and, in some instances, their countries.

Morning prayers and close of day were led by people from the countries represented. On two occasions during close of day we were asked to participate in the Lord's prayer in our own language. This was very memorable as the dialects of indigenous people who were present, as well as French, Spanish and English, echoed around the room.

On the last evening there was an opportunity to exchange gifts. Our gift was for the Arthur Rank Centre library: a copy of the CD Rom 'A History of Otago and Southland' produced for the 150 years celebrations.

Beth and Bill Strang, Waimatuku

Discussions around the theme of spirituality were thought provoking. One group's offering described the elements of spirituality as: Pilgrimage, Connectedness with the earth, 'Ruach': our spirits co-mingling with God, Rooted in the past, Living in the present, Leading to the future. Discussion around the place of Christian Spirituality in rural life is an area which demands more conversation, particularly when indigenous peoples are involved and the church is part of a colonial history.

The benefit gained from such a conference is not only in the content but also in the informal networks and sharing experience. An international committee has been formed, comprised of representatives from Western countries and will meet via email and teleconference. Its purpose is to provide ongoing liaison and resource sharing in the broad area of rural culture, ministry and spirituality. I am the interim representative for New Zealand.

Prior to the conference I had two days with the Reverends Jonathon Inkpen, an Anglican priest employed to work in the community, and his wife Penny Jones, a vicar based in Stanhope. Jonathon's work includes liaison between community workers, organisations and church in the industrial rural region of Weardale valley, forty minutes from Durham. Mining was once the main

industry in the area and since closures of the collieries, social change has been forced on the towns and small villages.

Being church in rural communities involves a tension between church-facing and community-facing ministry. Church-facing can mean energy is directed to survival of the present institution. Liaison with community organisations extends the church's role in the rural community beyond church buildings.

Lois Warburton, Lincoln

All shall be well

For the greening of trees
and the gentling of friends
we thank you, God.

For the brightness of field
and the warmth of the sun
we thank you, O God.

For work to be done
and laughter to share
we thank you, O God.

We thank you, and know
that through struggle and pain
in the slippery path of new birth
hope will be born
and all shall be well.

The Pattern of our Days, The Iona Community

Family Meetings

Reprinted from "Ruminations", magazine of the New South Wales Rural Ministry Unit, June 1998.

Families sometimes experience communication difficulties. When farm families do so, it impacts on their business.

Issues like inter-generational transfer of the farm, reorganisation of the farm business structure as younger generations mature, purchase or sale of land can create stress in relationships.

Communications Consultant, Lyn Sykes, is well known as a speaker on communication at seminars, and is in demand for her skills in professional supervision by people like Rural Counsellors and Ministers. She has become somewhat of a specialist in facilitating family meetings, and travels all over NSW.

The types of family situations Lyn deals with vary considerably. For example:

- one child wanting to leave the family business;
- parents wishing to hand over;
- brothers wanting to dissolve a partnership;
- a younger couple unsure about their future;
- an in-law unsure about where they fit in.

Bringing new family members into a family business is often difficult. Sometimes, inadvertently, negative impressions and messages are given, and pain can result. These issues are often left unaddressed for many years,

and therefore, for someone without sophisticated communications skills, become very difficult to broach.

As the facilitator, Lyn has the confidence to ask the questions everyone would like to ask - but nobody dares. The difference is that she has no hidden agenda or ulterior motive.

Lyn chooses not to work alone in these meetings. She insists that the family's financial adviser - rural counsellor or accountant - or other professional adviser is also present. The blending of professional skills is crucial to the success of the meeting. Lyn believes that both good "left brain" and "right brain" skills are necessary - and she has only "right brain" skills.

It is not uncommon for gender issues to cloud other issues for daughters. Sometimes those issues date back 30 years or more. Often unintentionally, a message is given in a family that men are treated differently. Therefore, different expectations are created.

Lyn has found that, when given an opportunity, family members are very often extremely generous towards one another. But when that opportunity is denied them (by a dominating father, for example), siblings often become extraordinarily mean and materialistic.

Lyn's first meeting with a family usually takes the whole day. It is important that the meeting provides a safe environment for ALL family members to communicate freely. It is also important to create an opportunity for set patterns to be changed. Lyn concentrates on helping all the members of the family to express their hopes and concerns, so that better understanding develops and better outcomes are created.

Her involvement with the family is usually limited to one or two meetings. The family's financial adviser keeps the notes and continues the ongoing relationships with the family.

Lyn's experience has given her great confidence in the process and optimism for the future. All family members are enabled to plan for the future and are able to see more options.

Some responses ...

In Mid-Canterbury, Presbyterian Support provide counselling services in the area of rural family transitions. Federated Farmers personnel can also help, as well as some professionals - lawyers and accountants - who are very caring with their clients and assist them through such managed changes.

This is a highly specialised area as rural family issues are often very different from those of urban families. The lack of cash flow when such large amounts of capital are at stake contrast to a more usual urban situation when such amounts of capital would denote a life of relative comfort. The determination of the elder members of a family to protect the land, or at least the capital in

the land, frequently cause real rifts between the generations.

The newly structured Federated Farmers has a capacity to assist members in these areas. There could be a place here for the church, if the church is prepared to train and supervise people to help. This is no place for well-intentioned amateurs.

Kevin Geddes, Carew

As a group we recently discussed the article on family meetings and have all expressed our admiration for the work that Communications Consultant, Lyn Sykes, has been engaged in.

This is not an easy scene in which to become part, involving as it does old sibling rivalries, the pecking order and patriarchal family dynamics. One of our group had first hand experience of being part of a family meeting when the future of the family farm was being discussed. In this instance it was the farm adviser who acted as facilitator. It is an experience which can be quite negative and painful, necessary though it might be.

As we spoke about the issues we could see a great advantage in having a skilled facilitator from outside the district to co-ordinate this type of discussion. Should such a family meeting involve more than one facilitator e.g. accountant, bank manager, minister, farm adviser, we could see the picture becoming more of a challenge with the different agendas involved. We could also see the problems connected with confidentiality in a small town when too many professionals became involved in facilitating such a meeting.

On the other hand, for the family meeting to have any chance of progress it would require the assistance of advisers who know the particular field - cropping, beef, sheep, horticulture or dairying.

So, in principle we certainly support the idea of family meetings and suggest that facilitators with experience in the farming world are engaged, along with consultants, but to work in a district outside their own to ensure impartiality and confidentiality for the family involved.

Training courses for such facilitators and consultants in the field of family meetings could be a good starting point. Perhaps funding could be found to bring Lyn Sykes to New Zealand for this training.

Presbyterian Support Services
Counselling and Education, Ashburton

Readers are invited to offer further responses on this important topic.

Digging into Rural Resources

At the recent VisionNZ Congress a group interested in Rural Ministry met and discussed issues relating to rural New Zealand. One area that was addressed was the

availability of resources for ministry in the rural context. Due to the isolation and the specialized nature of rural ministries we often have to write our own material, though there are some good books available, such as Bill Bennett's *Listen to the Shepherd*.

When I put together the Drought service held in the Awatere in February 1998, I found I had to start from scratch. There was little to steer me other than several conversations I had with ministers that had been around for a drought or two.

As we talked at VisionNZ an idea developed of a web site for Rural Ministries resources, to which people could send their material. Others could use and adapt the material and be saved from having to reinvent the wheel.

We would like to know your thoughts on this. Also we'd like to know what you might have in your filing cabinet that could be contributed to such a project. (How did you bless that cow shed, or hold that memorial service on the back of the farm etc?)

In the meantime if you would like a copy of a drought service please contact me: ph/fax 03 575 7108, email <rev.harrison@xtra.co.nz>

Martin Harrison, Seddon

Moral Economy Column

Rural Network News has recently joined the email list for this monthly column published in three newspapers in western Canada.

Sometimes, if we want to solve a problem, we have to make sure we are asking the right questions. Otherwise we end up solving somebody else's problem, not our own.

Through my contacts in rural Saskatchewan, I often hear stories that stand in contrast to official declarations about the state of the agricultural sector. There is an atmosphere of boosterism around that treats a negative opinion like an unwelcome guest at a party.

At a recent conference of farm writers, there was much talk of a class of persons known as the "innovators" or "early adaptors". These people are described as progressive farmers who are showing us the way. They are large producers who have invested in precision farming, or new crops or value added processing.

who are the winners... and how can we be among them?

At meetings like this the question most frequently asked is, who are the winners in the new economy and how can we be among them? Hidden in the first question is the unwelcome guest with no conversation partner. Who will be the losers in the new economy and what will we do about them? This reminded me of a story I heard this spring.

A farmer was describing how much his farming had changed in the last ten years. In 1988, he was a straight grain farmer in his early 50s with just under two sections of land relying on summer fallow to preserve moisture and nutrients. Ten years later his wife has a wage-paying job. He has formed a mini co-op with a younger neighbour. They share equipment and together farm 2,000 acres. They grow almost no grain, relying heavily on lentils, peas and canola in a planned rotation with other crops. They leave no land to summer fallow. Ten years ago, his gross revenue was \$100,000 and his income after expenses but before depreciation and taxes was \$50,000. Now his gross revenue is \$250,000 and his gross income is still about \$50,000.

This farmer had listened to the experts and adapted in many of the ways recommended but was no farther ahead. The scary possibility remains that if he had not changed, he would be even worse off.

This summer the National Farmers Union presented a brief to Canada's Ministers of Agriculture. In that brief, the NFU pointedly compared the growth of Canadian agri-food exports between 1989 and 1997 with changes in realised net farm income. In that period, agri-food exports more than doubled while realised net farm income rose less than 1%. The NFU rightly concluded that the Government's strategy of increased agricultural exports is not a solution to the problem of farm income. It may be a solution to the problem of trade imbalances or corporate profits but its not a solution to the problem of low farm income.

How is it possible that agricultural exports could double and farm incomes could remain flat? One explanation is that the power of corporations in the chain of production has increased relative to the power of farmers. This means the corporations have been better able to capture the increased revenues and efficiencies brought about by changed practices. We have seen a lot of vertical integration in this sector and, according to Saskatchewan Wheat Pool CEO Don Loewen, we are going to see a lot more.

Production increases, exports double...

Here's an example: three years ago Monsanto began marketing a variety of genetically engineered canola that could survive the Monsanto herbicide "Round-up". In 1998, herbicide tolerant varieties account for over 50% of the Canadian acres planted to canola and Monsanto is the largest player. Monsanto requires growers to pay a \$15/acre royalty fee each time they plant the seed. Through this mechanism, although Monsanto may sell less herbicide, they still have the same revenue. Since farmers pay this fee regardless of the weather or the crop price, it is also a more predictable revenue stream.

What has become a more predictable revenue stream for Monsanto has become another fixed cost for the

farmer. Production increases, exports double, Monsanto gets larger and net farm income increases by 1%.

...Monsanto gets larger and net farm income increases by 1%.

Increases in production are poor indicators of the health of family farms or rural communities. Farm debt in Saskatchewan is back over \$5 billion. In order to have the right solutions to our problems we have to be asking the right questions. Let me suggest three:

- 1) What will family farms and rural communities look like in 10 years if we make no changes?
- 2) What will family farms and rural communities look like in 10 years if we react only as individuals, seeking to be the winners and letting the losers look after themselves?
- 3) What will family farms and rural communities look like in 10 years if we decide to respond together? What can we do together that we cannot do apart?

I welcome feedback. You can write to me care of this newsletter, or email me at Lind@sask.usask.ca. Receipt of correspondence implies permission to publish.

Christopher Lind
Christopher Lind serves as Professor of Church & Society and, an Anglican layperson, is President of St. Andrew's United Church Theological College in Saskatoon, western Canada. He has authored two books on the moral economy.

Where two or three are gathered... is surely a favoured text for the rural faithful! How often do we feel we are just the "two or three"? *Rural Network News* has received two articles bearing this same title. They may seem very different, but...

'Where two or three are gathered'

This article first appeared in the weekly newspaper The Mirror in a series commissioned by the Central Otago Presbytery to celebrate Otago/Southland 150th anniversary.

"People should be able to worship where they feel most comfortable" is the catchcry of Maniototo Presbyterian Parish joint ministers Revs Rachel and Alan Judge, a sentiment echoed by the residents of the small communities surrounding Ranfurly.

There used to be three independent parishes in Maniototo. Today there is one vast parish stretching from the Styx Valley to Blackstone Hill past Oturehua up to Dansey's Pass and down to Kokonga on Highway 87.

The previous parish centres of Oturehua, Patearoa and Naseby have been hard hit by rural depopulation and declining congregations. In many Otago/Southland parishes, the solution was to close the little churches, forcing worshippers to drive to the main centre.

However that is not Maniototo's answer. Regular monthly evening services are held in each centre and Naseby's monthly All Age Sunday School is thriving.

But the most innovative step is holding combined parish services on the first Sunday of the month in each preaching place in turn. These services are well attended and affirm that every worshipping congregation in the parish is equally as important as any other.

Maniototo's senior elder and former Oturehua resident, Gerry Gillespie, is a keen supporter of the monthly services. "So many country districts now have disused halls, closed schools and empty shops," he said. "Why should we try to close the local church where country folk have worshipped God, shared the happiness of weddings, the joy of baptisms and the community grief at funerals. We should instead be doing all we can to help the church survive for the folk of each district."

A spring flower service held at the little Kokonga church demonstrated the success of parish services in preaching places. It was standing room only and virtually every family in the district attended as well as parishioners from afar. Kokonga's packed pews and aisles said something about a community's togetherness in the sight of God.

And there is always a rush for the front seats when it is Patearoa's turn. In an innovative move, the local congregation, aware that many were 'getting on a bit', removed a number of pews and replaced them with soft padded armchairs. Who says God has to be worshipped by enduring the discomfort of long, hard wooden benches?

By holding monthly services in each of its churches, Maniototo parish is affirming its role as a community church committed to meeting the spiritual and pastoral needs of the district.

Jack Rutherford, Ranfurly

'...there am I in the midst of them'

Coming from a rural community where church life is no longer as dynamic as it once was, the Fifth National Feminist Theologies Conference in November 1998 sparked my spirit and stimulated my energy for keeping on in spite of dwindling support for doing so. Everything about this Conference spoke to me of the essence of Church: it was non-denominational, women from all walks of life were welcomed and included; it was non territorial. Three Wellington women were the organisers yet we met at the Living Springs Centre, located in the midst of magnificent scenery of Lyttleton Harbour. Locals co-operated in creating a rich liturgical process which supported the work being done. The opening ritual, for example, was titled 'Flourishing' which seemed to me to be the attitude which undergirded all the activities of the Conference.

The mix of women was an interesting one: married and single women, women from the lesbian community and women from religious communities. The age range

was 92 all the way down to 20 year olds. A very diverse group, one could say, yet the attitude was comfortable. There was an underlying spirit of joy and, it seemed to me, a greater maturity, as if we were now at a crossroads and ready to blaze new trails which can only be growth producing for the Church of the future. Some women have either changed their allegiance or let the Church go altogether. Most still have quite a degree of concern for what is occurring within church structures and a willingness to put their shoulders to the wheel to bring about change.

The workshops challenged me in one way or another. It was indeed food for the journey to take with me as I move on into the future.

For me the highlight was an evening with 'Hildegard of Bingen' which somehow pulled the activities into a centre point. Every aspect of this Conference demonstrated clearly that women understand at a deep level the meaning of Christianity and seek to preserve it and the essence of their traditions in a very real way.

The lesbian community who attended added a wonderful depth. Creative, honest and well grounded, they presented issues of justice from the point of their strength gained from struggles to be included and accepted for who they really are. Their sense of fun and the humour which is part of their culture added a hilarious sparkle to the concert held on Sunday evening.

I am sure Jesus was very happily ensconced in our midst taking a well earned rest from the dreary exclusiveness that so often plagues the Church in our times.

June MacMillan, Taihape

Seeds for the future?

This column first appeared in the West Virginia United Methodist newspaper for January 1999.

We garden, and so the seed catalogs are arriving. Our gardening is part of our reverence for the earth. We compost our kitchen scraps and try to avoid using poisons on the earth. My husband has started using "heirloom" seeds - those that have preserved taste and texture although they may not look as pretty as the grocery store produce.

As a child I remember the story of the mustard seed. We were given necklaces in Sunday school that had a mustard seed enclosed in a bubble on a chain. I wore it for a long time. The Bible is full of stories about sowing, growing, reaping, and caring for crops. "The Earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof."

So let me share with you information from the January, 1999, issue of Organic Gardening, one of the oldest and most respected publications of its kind:

On March 3, 1998, a Mississippi-based seed company, Delta and Pine Land, and the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) announced that they had received a

patent on a new genetic technology that renders farm-saved seed sterile. In other words, scientists have developed plants genetically engineered to kill their own seeds. This seed-sterilizing technology - developed with U.S. taxpayer dollars - will prevent farmers from saving seed from their harvest, forcing farmers to return to the commercial seed markets every year. ...The company says it will target the use of its seeds in developing world markets, where more than 1.4 billion people - primarily poor farmers - depend on farm-saved seed as their primary seed source...[this technology] is a threat to biodiversity. Scientists warn that, under certain conditions, the trait for seed sterility will flow via pollen from "terminator" crops to surrounding plants, making the seeds of neighboring plants sterile...[this technology] will bring no benefit to growers or consumers. It is designed to increase seed-industry profits by forcing farmers to return to the commercial seed market every year.

It seems to me that we in the church spend a lot of our resources on "mission" to help feed hungry people. And we openly acknowledge that the best way to end hunger is to help people feed themselves. This technology is the very opposite of what we do in mission. It is also symbolic of the use and control of science for the sole purpose of profit and greed. If this technology is successfully implemented, how many more people may face famine? (I won't ask the question of how much richer the rich will get!)

Science and technology are gifts to be used wisely. Our family has our own "heirloom" seeds - marigolds grown by John's grandfather that have been passed down every year since he died. And now our daughters are growing them. Just as our faith survives because we pass it on, so must the seeds!

Lynda Ann Ewen, West Virginia

Lynda Ann Ewen Ph.D. is Professor of Sociology and Anthropology. She is also Director of the Oral History of Appalachia Program and CoDirector of the Center for the Study of Ethnicity and Gender in Appalachia. Her website is <http://webpages.marshall.edu/~ewen/>

A Day with Andrew Bowden

Canon Andrew Bowden, Local Ministry Officer for the Diocese of Gloucester and Rector of six rural parishes in the Waterford area, will spend a day at Hororata with people from local parishes, resource people from the Anglican Diocese and the Distance Education and Further Training Unit and members of the Rural Ministry Unit.

Andrew is in New Zealand during February to collect and share information about Local Ministry in rural areas. He has a specialist role in resourcing Local Ministry teams and has come to New Zealand to see Total Ministry developments in Canterbury, Hawkes Bay and the Central North Island.

A member of the Archbishop's Commission on Rural Areas, Andrew followed this up by writing a book entitled *Ministry in the Countryside* which was published

in 1994 and provides significant insights into rural ministry. He recommended Local Ministry as the way forward for the rural dioceses in England and is putting his recommendations into action in the Diocese of Gloucester where there are now 28 Local Ministry teams.

The concept of Local Ministry as it is being worked out in the United Kingdom is close to that of Total Ministry which has been implemented in a number of New Zealand Anglican Dioceses. Lay and ordained work together in partnership to enable local congregations to be the Church in their local community. Andrew is adamant "Local ministry is not a body of people helping the Vicar", rather it is "priest and people being partners in Christ's ministry."

Farm Women in Piako County

Margaret Begg carried out a study of women on dairy farms in Piako County. Her research provides vivid insights into the multiple roles of rural women, on and off the farm. Rural Ministry Publications has obtained additional copies of this volume which was first published in 1990. Copies available at \$8.00 each from Garth Cant at 7 Owens Terrace, Christchurch 4. Make cheques payable to the Diocese of Christchurch.

Book Review

Sustainable Living

Presbyterian Synod of Otago and Southland
Dunedin: OUP, 1998 71pp.

Sustainable Living is a creative initiative taken by the Presbyterian Synod of Otago and Southland. It is a very important basepoint for what may well become a significant learning venture.

The Synod Sustainable Living Committee have a concern about "our responsible use of God's creation". They believe that resources must be "nurtured, treasured and kept from degradation to ensure future generations inherit them."

The Committee (no names listed) has invited five people to make substantial contributions to a well presented booklet: two contributors are theologians; three are from the Otago Regional Council - one elected and two employed as resource managers.

Revd Dr Bob Eyles, a minister in Havelock North, draws on a lifetime of experience with the environment to provide a biblical and theological introduction. He lays a strong Old Testament foundation and draws deeply on the insights of the Western Church. His insights into the *oikos*, the household of God metaphor for the ecosystem of land, soil, climate, people and living organisms, are especially powerful and pertinent for rural people.

Case studies from the Otago Regional Council contributors follow. Ian Brown writes about sustainable

living in low rainfall, drought prone North Otago, identifies key issues to do with sustainability and provides a fascinating window into a group known as the North Otago Sustainable Land Management Group. Arthur Budd, Regional Councillor, uncovers the significance of water in a succinct and well crafted article on the lakes and rivers of Otago and Southland.

Mining is an activity that tests the clarity and sharpness of any definition of sustainability. Marion Weaver leaves this challenge aside and provides us with a history of mining at Macraes Flat and a carefully worded overview of the issues to do with the massive mining operations which are being carried out there in the 1980s and 1990s. The cut and thrust of public controversy, the substance of cases for and against mining, the choices between massive scale mining over a short time span or medium scale mining over a longer time span are not brought into the discussion.

Revd Peter Marshall, theologian and ministry educator, now retired at Wanaka, reflects on wilderness areas and their importance for our physical and spiritual health. He writes with a quiet and sincere passion from his own cultural perspective and draws on the resources of the Department of Conservation and on the writings of Pakeha New Zealanders who have strong environmental values. Maori understandings of the relationship of people to the world of nature are recognised only in the past tense. There is no place in Peter's chapter or elsewhere in the volume for Maori environmental values or co-management relationships to be explored in depth. Where has the mantle of Rev Sonny Rimi fallen? Where does dialogue take place between Ngai Tahu and the Presbyterian Synod of Otago and Southland?

The volume is completed and rounded out by the hymn "Byways of North Otago", words by Doug Grierson and music by June and Harry Cameron.

This publication is an interesting and significant first step. As the Sustainable Living Committee continues its life there are wider traditions to be discovered and further dialogues to take place. Let me give two examples of other resources and one suggestion about dialogue.

1. When Bob Eyles wrote *The Greening of Christianity* in 1993 he pointed his readers to the Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation programme of the World Council of Churches. Resources from this programme are now available. Biblical insights and Christological understandings lost to the Western Church are being re-presented by the Eastern Orthodox Churches and the Christian spiritualities of Inuit, Indian, Aboriginal and Maori. Important New Testament resources are being opened up and traditional spiritualities are being recovered and affirmed. Together we discover that the personal Christ is also the cosmic Christ, that we, as co-workers with Christ, are co-workers in creation. Those journeys need to be explored: individuals like Bob

Eyles, Richard Lawrence, Te Rua Winiata, Rachel Judge could be first points of contact. Better still the Sustainable Living Committee of the Presbyterian Synod might sit down and dialogue with the Justice Peace and Integrity of Creation Unit of the Methodist Synod of Otago and Southland.

2. The Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa New Zealand inherits two rich and parallel traditions of Christian spirituality - Maori and Western. As we seek to come to grips with issues to do with sustainability and resource management there is great advantage in drawing on both. Revd Mauri Marsden, Dr Mere Roberts and Mrs Nganeko Minhinnick have all published material more specific to resource management and kaitiakitanga. If the Synod embarks on dialogue with Te Aka Puaho, the Maori Synod, let them be aware that the Otago Regional Council and the Department of Conservation are each engaged in similar dialogues with Ngai Tahu.

3. Sustainable Living is an interesting volume which tells the reader very little about the dynamics and interactions between five very interesting writers. What impact has each writer had on the other four? What new questions and insights emerge out of this interaction? Are there stories told in passing that could be unpacked in more detail? Is there a way in which the process of writing and bringing together material can trigger dialogue and discussion between the contributors? How can the excitement of that be shared with the readers?

Garth Cant, Christchurch

A very limited number of copies are available from The Clerk, Synod of Otago and Southland Box 1131 Dunedin, Phone (03) 477 7365, Fax 477 6736 or <mrtsynod@deepsouth.co.nz> at a cost of \$20 (postage free)

God, give me work
Till my life shall end
And life
Till my work is done.

*On the grave of novelist
Wimfred Holby (1989-1935)*



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