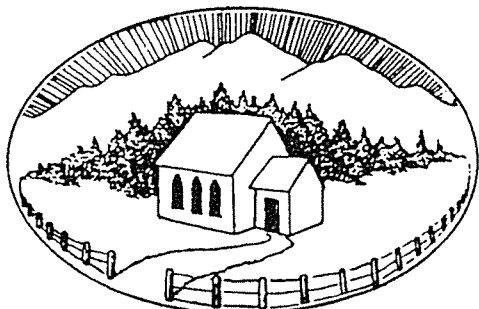


# Rural Network News



Organised by the International Rural Church Ecumenical Association in partnership with the Church of South India the Conference brought together people from Australia, Bangladesh, Canada, England, Germany, Indonesia, Korea, New Zealand, Romania, Solomon Islands, Sri Lanka, United States and Wales, as well as leaders within the Church of South India closely involved with Rural Mission. India is an ideal place to reflect on rural church life and mission, given that 80% of India's population live in rural villages (contrast 15% of New Zealand's population).

80% of India's population live in rural villages

Church of South India input to the conference introduced participants to major aspects of their mission work particularly in relation to the most disadvantaged people of that land, Dalits (formerly called 'untouchables') and tribal groups and in raising awareness of the plight of the girl-child (male to female ratio as low as 1000:927 in some areas, compared with 100:103 in other parts of the world). A Buddhist monk addressed the conference on Pluralism, the issue of Globalisation and Poverty was presented from an Indian perspective and a series of Bible studies engaged us in some profound conversations between Bible texts and pressing contemporary issues. The keynote speaker, Korean Kim Yong-Bok argued the case for *Life* to be the focus and reference point for all human endeavours. In particular he views traditional rural communities and their close interaction with the land and with one another as the clue to future life on this planet, as opposed to the death that he sees coming from excessive modernisation and industrialisation. He says: "This is not to idealize or romanticize rural life, but to give primary and basic place to the rural, for the rural community has provided a basic paradigm of life. Rural community is really the base of the political economy of life."

How is one to describe the impact of this conference? One word likely says it all – *transforming*. Transformed through the experience of meeting *India* and, in India, meeting many different people with a passion for Christian faith and mission.

Robyn McPhail, Methven

No.22

November 2002

When one is concerned with one's own stomach, it is materialism, but when one is concerned with other people's stomachs it is spirituality.

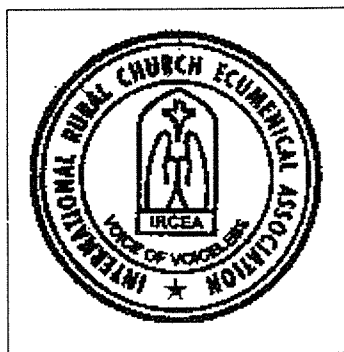
Gustavo Guitierrez

Rural Network News aims to share ideas for good rural ministry, create a sense of belonging to a unique group and encourage one another.

*Te kaitiakitanga, te manaakitanga, te kotahitanga.*

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

*Responses to items always welcome.*



**Voices  
of the  
Voiceless**

Chennai, India  
November 2002

The two New Zealand representatives, Judith Milmine from North Otago and Robyn McPhail from Mid-Canterbury, have just returned from the International Conference on Rural Ministry in Chennai (Madras), India, thoroughly invigorated by the experience of meeting with participants and contributors from diverse parts of the rural world.



A bird does not sing because it has an answer. It sings because it has a song.

Chinese Proverb

## Who was Absent?

When the International Rural Church Ecumenical Association met in Chennai, India for its recent conference there were some notable absences.



Although an invitation had been sent to the Governor of Tamil Nadu to be present at the Inauguration he was absent. That was not his own doing. It was because the Church of South India had withdrawn the invitation.

On October 30 the Assembly of Tamil Nadu had passed an Ordinance forbidding conversion by any religious movement. The Ordinance required that any person converted would have to report to the Government. The person who was the agent of conversion would also have to report. A memorandum presented to the Governor by Dalit, Muslim and Christian leaders pointed out that people carrying out well meaning acts of benevolence and charity in the fields of education, health care and social services could be construed as trouble makers.

It was in protest to this Ordinance that the invitation was withdrawn.

There were also others not present. Rev Dr Lai Thilma of Myanmar was not allowed out the country. Dr Thirpa Tharpa felt it necessary to stay in Nepal during a period of severe political upheaval. The coming to power of the Communist Party made the future of the Church in its present form uncertain. His people needed his leadership.

But other people from around the world were present. Some knew the dangers of living in countries hostile to Christianity while for others the practice of their faith was relatively easy. I wondered whether they will ever take their faith lightly again and whether their understanding of those who are under threat would cause them to value their freedom more highly.

Lloyd Vidler, Bowral, NSW, Australia



## Stories from Around

*Interspersed through the "Voices of the Voiceless" Conference in India, participants gave voice to struggles and achievements in their own rural communities, presenting a wide variety of stories of faith and life. The following is adapted from the Conference Report, delivered to participants during the closing session.*

In **Australia** there are three significant voiceless groups that the church is trying to represent, advocate for and support. They are Aboriginal community, the

declining numbers of the farm families, and the struggling rural communities.

**Bangladesh** is a developing and agricultural country. In 19 Bangladesh achieved its sovereign independence from Pakistan. The Christian community is a very small minority, 0.3% of the population. The Church of Bangladesh has a great involvement in the multicultural community, with one Synod, two Dioceses, four Deaneries, two city Pastorates and 71 Congregations. The motto is "Spiritual and social ministry for Christians and their neighbours and sharing with global communities".

The rural area of **Canada** is changing radically due to depopulation – the number of farmers is decreasing. Farming is affected by globalisation issues, city people are moving to rural areas to live but work in the cities and rural communities are disappearing.

The church is trying to face the challenges of rural areas by: new models for ministry; support for the family farm; finding ways to be in solidarity with First Nations; ecumenical shared ministry; and reorganising Canada's multi-cultural and multi-faith mosaic in all its approaches to mission and ministry.

In relation to the **United Kingdom**, Roger Green is an agricultural chaplain and he outlined the effects of Foot and Mouth disease on local farmers and the support offered in the name of Christ's church. Andrew Bowden talked about keeping in touch, particularly through the magazine "Country Way" and the Rural Theology Association which shares a theological perspective on rural concerns ([www.rural-theology.org.uk](http://www.rural-theology.org.uk)). Michael Cruchley, as Rural Officer in Wales, reiterated the impact of Foot and Mouth disease and also spoke about issues of gender and tradition still inhibiting rural mission.

The Evangelical Farmers Organisation in Wurttemberg, **Germany**, has a well-developed education and social-diaconal programme. The education programme covers faith and agricultural concerns and other groups are working on agriculture, politics, genetic engineering and Third World issues. The diaconal programmes provide support labour for farmers and families in sickness and other needs. The town-country group is committed to improving communication between town people and farmers. (More below in a separate article.)

**Kerala, India:** In 1985 new small congregations started the Bethel Evangelism Fellowship to motivate and equip congregations to do evangelism. To train the laity to start house churches the BEF set up the Bethel Theological Institute. It printed a booklet "Training for Evangelism" with five courses and fifty lessons and, to train people for research, set up in 1996 the Huebener Research Centre. Research has included a comprehensive study of villages and towns; socio-religious transformation 1800-2000:

contemporary socio-religious phenomenology; problems, conflicts, bondages, quests; dimensions of the Gospel that meet the problems and quest; and a new day of Church and Mission.

The context for the **New Zealand** rural churches is an historically Christian culture (but not an overly religious approach to life), a sense of being in change overload, and decline in church attendance. There are stories of hope: for example, a church reopened by the enthusiasm of young parents leading worship as a team, and new models for leadership where traditional clergy "butter" has become too thinly spread.

The **Romanian** representative saw the most important subject of the Conference to be enriched understanding of Matthew 28:19 "Go ye therefore and teach all nations". "All nations" means the whole world from a social, cultural and a political point of view. This will be the way to bring peace on earth.

**Solomon Islands:** A small country with a population of some 400,000 and 85% in the rural area. Christianity is the major religion practised in the Solomon Islands. 95% of the population are Christians and attend church activities regularly. Religious instruction is taught in schools as part of the curriculum and also programmes are organised for women, youth and children.

The rural population depend on agriculture for their subsistence and to generate cash. Women take pride in these activities as their capacity and ability is measured in these terms. In addition to cultural concerns women also play a large role in the growth and advancement of the rural church through implementation of policies. As such, women in the Solomon Islands have been strong supporters of the church.

**Sri Lanka** is a small island south of the Indian peninsula with four religious groups – Hindu, Buddhist, Christian and Moslem. 7% of the population are Christians, 7% Moslem, 32% Hindu and the remaining Buddhist. Ethnic problems have troubled Sri Lanka. Now that the government and LTTE (Liberation Tigers for Tamil Elaam) are in peace talks the people hope for the best. Churches are working in rural areas, especially the Church of South India in the Jaffna region, with 90% of the church being rural and all Tamil speaking. They are now getting more conversions in all the churches in Sri Lanka.

**USA:** The Rural Church Network provides necessary and essential links for church leaders, pastors, and congregations to eliminate the feeling of isolation and powerlessness ([www.rural-church.org](http://www.rural-church.org)). An emphasis on seminary education both before and after graduation is one of the major foci today.

Small churches are joining together in parish systems to support one another and provide presence in their communities and at higher judicatory levels.

## Rethinking Ministry Today

*An excerpt from one of the Bible Studies*



### Is Our Church Structure Ecclesiastical 'Baggage' and Our Theology Scaring the Wits Out of those Whom We Seek To Serve?

The greatest strength of Yahweh is in not having to vie with the colossal 'baggage' of the adversary Pharaoh. It is this element of 'self-emptying' that enables Yahweh to stand in solidarity with the powerless and the groaning. The operating pre-requisite here is to share the victims' vulnerability and their pain. The singular goal is not to demonstrate how powerful one is but to empower those who groan that they may become subjects of their own destiny. Thus, slaves are turned into honourable partners in the Lord's redeeming acts.

Who said victims do not have resources, both human and material? Look around: you shall surely find a Moses, a Joshua, a Miriam etc. In my 16 years ministry as a rural pastor the greatest realisation I have received is to look at my Dalit congregations with new eyes – to see them not only as those discriminated but also as a resource – an inexhaustible resource. It is God of Exodus who enables us to see Adivasis of India, Aborigines of Australia, Maoris of New Zealand etc. not merely as broken peoples abut as precious resource. Remember the saying of Jesus: "The stone which builders have rejected has now become the chief corner stone."

see those discriminated ... as a resource  
– an inexhaustible resource

It is for this reason that, in most cases, those who seek to serve the victims find their 'baggage' excess. Generally speaking, all accrued 'baggage' either in spiritual or material realms reflects the values and ethos of the dominant. Without this realisation on the part of those who seek to serve the victims, they find that their good intentions have only proved counter-productive and may be even with negative results. The church, especially the rural church, may need to embark on a spiritual pilgrimage all over again, marking a fresh start with those who sigh. It is then that the church experiences the "dying and rising" of Jesus as she 'self-empties' all that does not matter or 'excess' in sharing the vulnerability and helplessness of victims. The church needs to re-embark on her pilgrimage amidst those who sigh, again and again, for the simple reason that the God of Exodus is abundantly and surely manifest amidst those who sigh.

Daniel Premkumar, Church of South India Synod  
Department of Dalit and Adivasi Concerns

## Future Directions for Agriculture

### Some Reflections from Germany on the Responsibility of Rural Churches Services



1. It is good to see that the churches are incorporating agriculture as a topic into socio-political discussions. Often one gets the impression that a strong "city-church" perspective dominates:
  - a. The seats of church government are in cities
  - b. Throughout Germany the offices of rural church services are located in cities and this does not make a practical and personal connection to the rural area any easier.
  - c. A career in the church often requires service in urban parishes.A danger exists to regard concerns of agriculture and rural areas with an urban view. For example, the first draft of the "Social Word of the Churches" in 1997 did not mention agriculture and rural issues and they were only added during the review process.
2. If there is any interest within the church in agriculture and rural areas then it is primarily in the topic of Creation Theology – the protection of the environment and animals ranks first. Rural support services, however, are also concerned with people living in rural areas, thus taking on a social-service task. Quite often this creates conflicts in setting priorities, especially when evaluating agricultural policies.
3. The church must acknowledge, accept and incorporate in discussions the social part of agriculture, the people's economic, living and working conditions.
4. The problems of agriculture and the rural areas are often seen as factional and special interests in social terms. Church Statements must emphasise the interconnection of nutrition, ecology, energy, climate control and environmental protection.
5. The strong paradigm that churches use for guidance in creation theology should actually incorporate ecological, agricultural and social aspects. Not only should ecological variants and economic habits (e.g. the Protestant work ethic) be looked at but, above all, attention should be paid to the people who rely on agriculture for their livelihood.
6. The churches' discourse on Creation Theology is sometimes 'eco-missionary'. Social sensibility should give special consideration to economic working conditions and social living conditions as farming families cannot address only creation

theological interests (environmental protection, animal protection, food product protection, consumer protection) but must also consider economic factors. They also have a right to adequate quality of work, time off, and income.

7. Visions for agriculture should always be visions for society as a whole. It is important from a prophetic point of view that agriculture not miss out on its connection to overall society.
8. The general social feeling in agriculture in Germany shows a high level of insecurity and unhappiness. One feels marginalized by society. A statement by the church should first of all show solidarity with this 'part' of the body of Christ and an understanding for its difficult social position. It should recognise the contributions of agriculture to society as a whole. Not only should farmers be asked to change farming paradigms, but also to be shapers of the agricultural reality in agronomy, agricultural research, journalism, politics, industry and trade. Changes implemented in these will bring changes in agricultural practice. Demands on the farming community are unsuccessful if one-sided and not incorporated into the total complex of agrarian society.

Clemens Dirscherl, Evangelical Farmers' Organisation, Wurttemberg, Germany

## Field Trip to Agricultural Institute

From our arrival at Kasam Agricultural Institute, at Katpadi some 100 kms west of Chennai, we were treated as honoured guests, complete with garlands of flowers and a banner of welcome.



Dr Samuel Shankar gave us an introduction in the coolness of the chapel and we learnt some of the history of the centre. It was established by American missionaries early in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, at first teaching traditional agriculture to the local people many of whom are tradition's underdogs – Dalits ('untouchables') and Adivasi (tribal groups). With the Government's "green" revolution following Independence established to increase production, the Institute was forced to be involved in encouraging large scale fertiliser and chemical use. In recent years the unsustainability of such methods – in terms of both the well-being of the soil and the financial capabilities of small farmers – Kasam has reclaimed traditional methods alongside up to date developments in holistic, integrated farming systems and in biological enhancement and control. The result is a viable farming system for even the very poor small farmers to improve their health and livelihoods.

Kasam Institute comprises 330 acres, of which 180 acres is in a large variety of crops. Hills denuded of forest are being replanted and Dr Shankar introduced us to their special project – rain water harvesting. We were able to inspect the ground works and see for ourselves how “water must be made to walk not run”, so that instead of more than half the rains rushing down to the sea more can be allowed to soak into the ground. Feeding the water table is crucial especially in recent years with only one monsoon occurring instead of two.

“water must be made to walk not run”

The Demonstration Farm on the flat land showed us good practice in integrated farming methods with fruit trees and coconuts alongside rice, and also poultry and fish farming. Rice is cropped in a rotation system with one year including a legume, usually millet. Village people are first approached by visiting during community festivals and giving out seeds to people who are interested. Two women also make visits to villages to help introduce the idea of learning better farming methods. To avoid dislocation villagers come to Kasam for training courses that are usually only three or five days duration.

Among the new ideas put alongside traditional methods are using a sweet enzyme to promote germination and introducing to the paddy (rice) crop a variety of snails that will eat weeds without damaging the paddy. Both stem from Korean research brought to Kasam by Professor Chung Ho-Jiw, a theologian turned farmer and agricultural researcher.

The principles behind the Kasam Institute were clearly displayed in the education centre, through charts used to teach visiting farmers and also to seek support for the project throughout the Church of South India. Theology of respect for God’s creation is closely linked with good ecological practice, the result being a sound economic base for small farmers.

*Adapted from the Conference Report*



## Conference Statement

We the delegates to this the 2<sup>nd</sup> International Rural Church Ecumenical Association meeting at Chennai, India urge the churches of the world to pray, work for and stand in solidarity with rural communities and congregations.

We acknowledge the good things that have improved rural communities in our day. We recognise and regret many negative actions taken in the past through colonialism and exploitation.

We stand with the marginalised rural people of the world. We want to challenge the total acceptance of globalisation which can result in rural deprivation and economic hardship, as well as increased terrorism and conflict throughout this world.

### **We ask Christians all over the world specifically for prayers and action:**

- For peace and peaceful coexistence that people may work and trade without conflict and the threat of war.
- For economic justice that producers and labourers will be paid a fair price for their products and labours.
- For the environment that exploitation of the land, forests and oceans will give way to an ecological balance.
- For minority groups that their voices will be heard and their concerns met by those in power.
- For rural communities that governments, health, educational and financial institutions will work toward the development of sustainable rural communities.
- For viable rural communities for future generations.
- For rural congregations that their mission and worship will be enriching and their witness significant.
- For national church and funding bodies that they may treasure rural congregations and work wholeheartedly for their development.

We as delegates commit ourselves to praying and working for fulfilment of the above list of issues and we ask the officers of this association to forward this statement to the appropriate church bodies.



**How many dogs does it take  
to change a light bulb?**

*The Dog-replies were as follows:*

**Golden Retriever:** "The sun is out, the day is young, and you're worrying about a stupid light bulb?"

**Border Collie:** "Just one, and then I'll replace any wiring that is not up to code!"

**Lab:** "Oh me! Pleeease let me change the bulb!!!! Can I? Can I?????"

**Old English Sheepdog:** "Light bulb? I don't see any light bulb?"

*But the Cat's reply was...*

"Dogs do not change light bulbs! People change light bulbs!!! So the question is, how long will it be before I can expect some light around here?"

## IRCEA Leadership: Selection by Discernment



One of the tasks to be completed by the participants in the International Rural Church Ecumenical Association at its meeting in Chennai was the installation of a new Chairperson.

A process of discernment rather than election was used. Participants who were invited to spend time in prayer seeking the guidance of the Holy Spirit. At the end of the period prayer they were to write the name to which they were guided on a piece of paper.

Subsequently a small group of senior members of the association viewed the responses which affirmed that Robyn McPhail, of New Zealand, was discerned as having the gifts for the task.

The Installation Liturgy said in part: "Robyn ... the participants in this conference have discerned in you gifts and graces for leadership. Through prayer and by the guidance of the Holy Spirit they have been led to invite you to be the Chairperson of this movement. Do you believe that you are guided by the Holy Spirit to recognise the appropriateness of this discernment and accept this responsibility?" Robyn replied, "Yes, that is my conviction and I seek your prayers and God's help to carry out the tasks involved."

Robyn will lead the Association for the next four years. As opportunity arises she will represent the Association in overseas countries. She will assist in the preparation of the next International conference and chair its proceedings.

A similar process of discernment was followed for the election of the Secretary to take office in 2004. In response to the invitation David Reusink from US replied, "I do with the help of God".

Lloyd Vidler, Chairperson 1998-2002

*The next edition of Rural Network News will contain more about the International Rural Church Ecumenical Association, the purpose shared by those at the Chennai Conference and its goals for developing the international network in the coming years.*

## Touched by the Winds of God

"Listen! The wind is back" someone whispered, and smiles of relief touched every face. What a year of paradoxes we've faced. In the spring and summer, too much drought, too much heat! In the time of harvest, too much cold and wet! Wind now will help to ripen the grain, dry the swaths, and move the clouds. An apt metaphor for life!

The first image that comes is the Prophet's vision of the Valley of dried, parched bones - bleached by

depravation and despair. But God wanted Ezekiel to reassure the people this was not the end. "Prophecy to the wind. Tell it the Sovereign Lord commands it to breathe into these dead bodies, to bring them back to life." Ezekiel prophesied and the once dis-spirited people again stood up as "an exceeding great army".

Then there was Jessie Adams, who lived along the English seaside and watched boats come to life as their sails filled with wind. But she was frustrated. In spite of her best efforts, she experienced a series of failures in her work. Humbled "past the point of helplessness", she recognized some unseen force breathing hope into her "sails" and wrote - "I feel the winds of God today, / today my sail I lift. / Though heavy oft with drenching spray / and torn with many a rift ..."

Even when life seems hopeless, if we keep our sails at the ready, the winds of the Spirit will fill them. "It is the wind of God that dries / my vain regretful tears, / until with bravest thoughts shall rise / the purer, brighter years".

Those winds often come as we recognize the smile of a child, the hug of a friend, or the call of another person in need.

An unknown wise person wrote, "You cannot change the direction of the winds of life, but you can learn to adjust your sails."

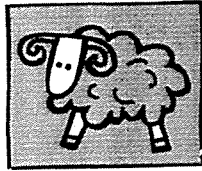
Lord of compassion, it is not so hard to feel a sense of uselessness, to be unable to find escape from difficulties, to be once again dependant on the will of others, to have no sense of control over that which is happening miles away or on my doorstep. When there is nothing I can do to decide or alter the future, give me the power and courage to wait: to wait without self destructing anger, to wait without tiring of my calling to farm with integrity and skill. Amen

Creator God, in times of uncertainty and fear, help us to be aware of those who really care for us as people: our families and friends and many others! As we search for answers to our dilemmas, grant a spirit of co-operation and trust. To the officials and administrators give genuine sensitivity and wisdom to act swiftly and with compassion to those most need ... Above all, as we seek to support each other through this time, may we simply rediscover how precious is our dependence on each other. Amen

Joyce Sasse, Pincher Creek, Canada  
From [www.agri-ville.com/spiritualvignettes](http://www.agri-ville.com/spiritualvignettes)

*A primary child stood proudly to say the Bible verse. His voice was clear, his words were plain, his message powerful: "Jesus said, 'Glow, I am with you always.'"*

"Meh"



Two of life's great characters are in residence at our place. Larry the Lamb is on the bottle and his rehabilitation will take as long as these things usually do. Four times a day we mix his formula and he swigs it down. His eagerly butting nose and ecstatically wriggling tail tell of a pleasure that his gentle, foolish Romney face just hasn't the equipment to reveal. At nine weeks Gem the heading dog pup is a much more sophisticated communicator and always will be.

Gem loves Larry, but Larry isn't really sure that being loved is all that great a deal. Even before poor Larry has finished his bottle Gem wants to play. She crouches down with her forelegs out in front and her backside in the air, tail waving wildly. Her eyes sparkle with happiness and she gives a series of encouraging little barks. Generally Larry just sucks harder and whoever is holding the bottle says, "Get out of it Gem!"

So she tries rolling over and waving her legs in the air. "Look! Look! You could pounce on me and we could wrestle!" Larry finishes his bottle and like all who drink too much too quickly he staggers about. Gem leaps up, wraps her forelegs round Larry's neck and licks his face enthusiastically. Is this love or is there some spilt milk to laugh over? She backs off and does the backside in the air routine again. Larry just stands there, looks at her in a dazed way and says, "Meh".

It's his only word and he's in no danger of wearing it out .... or learning another one. If they do happen to run around together it's not long before Larry finds himself being headed back to me. He finds this exasperating and worrying and I have to rescue him. I'm pleased that Gem has all that stuff built into her, but Larry sees it from a more herbivorous point of view.

Now it may not be the done thing to carve little homilies out of such events, but watching their efforts at communication I thought about our dealings with God. We too receive messages in a variety of media, from sunsets to pups to carefully chosen words. I suspect, however, that most of the times God speaks to us we stand there looking foolish and just say, "Meh". God's so in love with us that even "Meh" or its equivalent will do, but what if we freed up and explored the message more? It couldn't possibly be that God is clowning around in front of us while we just stuff our faces like Larry. We know that God has all the power of a Roman emperor and all the stifling

respectability of an Edwardian bank manager. Don't we?

But what if ... but what if ... but what if there are times when God is simply saying, "Come and play! Play with me!" and we, trying to locate the imperial bank manager, can't see what is right in front of us, look dazed, and just say, "Meh."

Rob List, RD Masterton

#### Great truths about life learned by little children

No matter how hard you try, you can't baptize cats.  
When your Mom is mad at your Dad, don't let her brush your hair.  
If your sister hits you, don't hit her back. They always catch the second person.  
Never ask your 3-year old brother to hold a tomato.  
You can't trust dogs to watch your food.  
Don't sneeze when someone is cutting your hair.  
Never hold a Dust-Buster and a cat at the same time.  
You can't hide a piece of broccoli in a glass of milk.  
The best place to be when you're sad is Grandpa's lap.

From Ralph Milton's RUMORS, a free Internet "e-zine" for active Christians with a sense of humour. To subscribe, send an e-mail to: rumors-subscribe@joinhands.com. Don't put anything else in that e-mail.

#### Joke Book from Buller

"God has brought laughter for me; everyone who hears will laugh with me." (Genesis 21:6)

Buller Union Parish is publishing a joke book that they are offering for sale. The book is a collection of funny stories and sayings for people to share - especially those who have to make a public speech now and then. The book is called *And Sarah Said...* and will be available before Christmas.

Cost of the book will be \$8 plus \$1 postage and packaging and it can be ordered from Mrs I Garvey, 23 Brougham Street, Westport.

From *Bush Telegraph*. PCANZ

#### <http://www.earth youth.net>

Two young Canadians have been praised by global environmentalists for creating earthyouth.net - a site that links young people and provides access to key resources such as mentors and project funding.

"It's a one-stop shop that really raises the profile of people who are doing innovative environmental projects and allows companies looking to donate to something to interact directly," Michael Furdyk (aged 20) said. He and Jennifer Corriero (age 22), both from Toronto, got the site going in time to showcase the UN's Summit on Sustainable development in South Africa. Their Internet company "Taking IT Global" wrote a winning proposal for this work which gives them funds to keep the site going for the next 3 years.

From [www.agri-ville.com/spiritualvignettes](http://www.agri-ville.com/spiritualvignettes)

## The Kids Club - Kurow

Kurow no longer has a Sunday School. But what we do have is the Kids Club.

The children are in the 7-12 years of age and we average about 26 each week. Some have church connections, most do not.

The weekly programme begins as kids arrive around 3.20 p.m. when, if waiting, they can play volleyball, then wash their hands and have afternoon tea, which is provided by different folk. This is followed by mixing games, a quiet game and their group activities. Sometimes we have a special speaker as well. Four groups, led by one adult and one junior leader take part in activities or various crafts etc. Parents, including fathers, help with activities. So far, we have learned to play petanque, make stilts, cards, toffee apples, do clay modelling, cooking, baking and first aid etc.

We have a time for music; learning new songs and revising old ones accompanied by Glenis' guitar. We conclude with a 20 minute Christian Education slot using various programmes, usually Media Com interactive videos, e.g. "The Easter Story" and "Family Ties - the Stories of our Faith Ancestors". The parish has had a TV and video machine donated (not new!).

We had big setting up costs since there was nothing here to start with. We also felt it was difficult to have a weekly or term charge because the very children who would benefit most would likely be excluded. There are some very needy children in the area. Children who come from further a-field are longing to come but some would need help with transport home.

We could not have achieved anything without the generous help of The Presbyterian Foundation.

Libby Smith, Kurow  
From *Bush Telegraph*, PCANZ

## Book Review

### Being the Local Church: The Mutual Ministry of the Baptized by Boyd Wilson

82pp \$10 (cheque with order) posted in NZ to Boyd Wilson, 239 Scotland St, Roxburgh 9156. Inquiries: <wisboy@es.co.nz>

Reviewed by Helen Ensor, Cheviot

This book is short, easy to read, with logical development of ideas.

A subtitle "An offering into Grassroots Communities of Faith" gives a hint to Boyd Wilson's background as an agricultural journalist and editor of a leading farming publication. A real commitment to God and the church lead to ordination as a non-stipendary priest and his comments on that role in the

parish and wider community, together with his journalism were very interesting. Obviously critical of a lot that was happening around him in the church at that time, he finally abandoned his journalism and became a rural vicar, with full theological training. This progression has given him a different perspective to those who have gone from traditional ministry into a mutual ministry role, or those of us who have experienced only one or the other.

At the end of the preface, Boyd Wilson writes "This material is offered to local groups of the baptised in the hope that it may provide a little encouragement, stimulation and guidance without clouding their vision or compromising the unique integrity of each community process." For me, he has achieved this. While not laying down "do's" and "don'ts", there are plenty of suggestions and ideas to toss around. He emphasises that each community will have its own individual needs, and within it enough gifts to satisfy them, provided the whole process is completely immersed in prayer; he does however acknowledge the continual struggle it is to be a community of all the baptised and not a parish with a team replacing the vicar. All those who are involved in Mutual or Local Shared Ministry know this struggle and it is reassuring, and encouraging, to have it openly discussed.

Anyone involved in this type of ministry will find this book well worth reading - you may not agree with it all, but it will certainly give you something to chew on. In fact, for anyone, ordained or not, reading this book can only increase their understanding of this relatively new way of being church. I found it one of those "ah ha" books and will enjoy going back to it.

God of all time, walk with us as we  
revisit the stable and find the Christ-  
child who restores humanity and reality  
to our lives.

Bill Bennett, *Seasons of our Lives*.



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