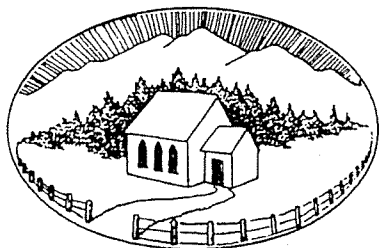


Rural Network

News



No. 25

November 2003

If you want to walk fast, walk alone.
But if you want to go far, walk
together with others.

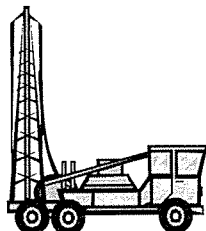
Samuel Kobia
(General Secretary-Elect
World Council of Churches)

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.

Well Blessing

Water is the stuff of life in all rural communities in New Zealand. Some districts are blessed with a more than adequate supply from the skies (and can have the problem of too much). Other districts rely on finding good water sources to enable animal and plant life, and human life, to flourish.



In recent times Canterbury has seen a proliferation of rigs drilling for groundwater. There have been mixed results, but when water is found with sufficient flows for ongoing use, it is something to celebrate. It is a time for thanksgiving and blessing.

Mary Giles, the minister in Malvern Anglican Parish, Central Canterbury, reports on a well blessing that she led recently.

The well blessing I did was based on a variety of material in *A New Zealand Prayer Book*. In the midst of it I asked the owner to talk a bit about the well and what it meant. The driller was also there and added some words. The really good part was the impromptu stuff that happened in the midst of proceedings.

We had a small bowl with well water already in it rigged in position so that we could hoist it up at the appropriate time.

I used a small branch of a native tree to sprinkle the well, with some words about its significance.

It was very simple but also a lot of fun and had a power and significance that people could feel.

Invitations sent out to people were also noteworthy: guests were invited to a "got well" party and asked to bring along their "wellies" to wear, etc. Several people brought along "get well" cards to give the owners... and we all had lots of laughs. This was the liturgy:

APPROACH

Grace to you and peace from God our Creator, the love at our beginning and without end, in our midst and with us. God is with us. Here we find new life.

E te whanau,

we come to this well in the name of God.

The earth is God's and all that is in it, the world and all those who dwell there. The Lord your God cares for the land. God watches over it season by season.

O God of earth and sky, you visit the land and bless it, you greatly enrich it, you water it abundantly and bless its growth with your goodness.

Blessed are you God of the rain, the rivers, and the lakes, you give water for life and health to refresh and cleanse all creatures.

SONG OF SONGS 4:12-16

*A garden locked is my sister, my bride,
a garden locked, a fountain sealed.*

*Your channel is an orchard of pomegranates
with all choicest fruits, henna with nard,
nard and saffron, calamus and cinnamon,
with all trees of frankincense,
myrrh and aloes, with all chief spices –
a garden fountain, a well of living water,
and flowing streams from Lebanon.*

*Awake, O north wind, and come, O south wind!
Blow upon my garden
that its fragrance may be wafted abroad.
Let my beloved come to his garden,
and eat its choicest fruits.*

As the earth brings forth its blossom,
or bushes in a garden burst into flower,
so shall the Lord God make righteousness and
praise blossom before all the people.

The earth brought forth vegetation,
plants yielding seed,
and fruit trees bearing fruit in which is their seed,
each according to its kind.
And God saw that it was good.

DESCRIPTION OF THE WELL

The well-owners speak about the well and then
uplift some water from it.



BLESSING OF THE WATER

God of home, garden and farm,
may the things that live and grow here
bring strength and health and prosperity.
Bless the hands that work in this place and give us
grateful hearts for the many gifts you give.

Bless the water from this well.
May it continue to flow pure and strong,
nourishing life, nurturing hope,
for many years to come. Amen

BLESSING OF THE WELL

We bless this well in the name of God,
Creator, Redeemer, and Giver of Life. Amen
Go now to love and serve the Lord. Go in peace.

Central Otago Landscape 'Icons' and Spiritual Values

Alexandra's population is among the highest in median age in New Zealand and the lowest in the 'under 5' cohort, with significant out-migration from the 20-39 cohort - seeking education and employment elsewhere.

Increasing numbers are coming to settle from the Auckland metropolitan district, at the time of their "retirement" from formal full-time work, to enjoy their "freedom years" in and around Central Otago and the Queenstown-Lakes districts. For many it is a spiritual 'home-coming' to link up with childhood memories.

Our new settlers will be looking for good hospital and specialist care facilities, as a pre-requisite to their move south, in much the same way as younger families closely study schooling amenities in a prospective new place of residence and employment.

The Parliamentary Commissioner for the Environment, Dr Morgan Williams, has issued two very timely reports – "Managing Change in Paradise - sustainable development in peri-urban areas", and "Superb or Suburb? - international case studies in management of icon landscapes." In the Dunstan and the Upper Clutha and Wakatipu basins we are inheritors of unique "icon landscapes" that deserve special care as key elements of our heritage. Unfortunately we have taken some of these spiritual assets for granted.

For our folk at Dunstan Hospital, and the large Rest Home facilities in Alexandra, what you see out the window from the bedside is an important element in solace and quiet reflection. Patients have more time to enjoy the vistas of the distant hills and the local landscape values. New planning should give greater attention to this aspect. After all these settlers have come here to live, they love Central Otago for its special countryside values and it is important that we plan our geriatric facilities in such a manner as to embrace these cherished values.

For our new settlers we need to offer a sincere, friendly welcome. Older folk sometimes find it more difficult to make new neighbourhood friendships, unlike young family settlers who quickly establish new relationships through schooling centres. We have become accustomed to the outflow of younger people as they enter tertiary education and big city life. Our family linkages are more widely dispersed than ever before. Readily accessible air travel and the marvellous aid of the Internet provides great assistance to keep in touch with our families abroad or scattered up and down the country.

The new "lifestylers" are still physically and mentally fit. Accustomed to higher incomes than we have in our own communities, usually with more advanced education and periodical upgrades, they are worldwide travel-wise, their better quality health enables them to pursue such activities as wine growing, and they can bring fresh insights and renewed confidence into our community circles.

Many, coming from the post-war "baby boom" generation, have had little or no connection with mainline churches. Yet in their pursuit of our "icon landscapes" they are likely seeking new spiritual values – something we may be able to share with mutual profit and understanding. We need to explore new bridges of neighbourly contact with our new settlers.

And we need to examine carefully the impact of major new subdivisions on heritage landscapes to ensure we do not lose irreplaceable vistas.

"For you shall go out in joy, and be led back in peace; the mountains and the hills before you shall burst into song, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands." (Isaiah 55:12)

These are exciting times for the people of Central Otago. Our landscapes are undergoing the most dramatic transition in more than a century of settlement. We need to be opportunity-oriented rather than problem-focused in the face of such change. Their "home coming" can be part of our rebirth.

Jolyon Manning, Alexandra

First published in the Dunstan Anglican Parish newsletter

Coping with Change

THOUGHTS FROM A DAIRY FARMER IN NORTH CANTERBURY

They say there are only three things that are certain in life: *death, taxes and change*.

I sometimes think we have developed good systems to cope with the first two, but constant change still manages at times to throw even the most resilient of us.

FARMING CHANGES

We came to an area already undergoing major change - installing two new schemes to irrigate 20,000 hectares of what was, in a normal summer, a dustbowl. The area was changing from dryland to irrigated land and we arrived to develop a dairy farm in the middle of Corriedale country. Not only that, it was one of the bigger dairy farms in the country at that time.

Of course there were the people who said it wouldn't work - from the locals who said that it was too cold in Culverden to milk cows, to the banker who said no way would we do reasonable production in this climate to the other banker who said no way could a team of young single people live and work together milking that many cows.

But it has worked, and worked well, to the extent that our original project is now only an average size farm doing high production in an area where over half the irrigated land is in dairying and a good part of the other irrigated land, and much dryland, is integrated with the dairy industry. The local businesses are stronger, the school roll has increased 50% and last year the gross income from irrigated farms was in the vicinity of \$70m compared to an estimated gross income of \$5m had it stayed dryland.

SOCIAL CHANGE

Before irrigation the area was very stable in terms of farm ownership. It was a well-regarded area to farm, despite the dryness, and properties were held tightly. Since irrigation began at least 75% of properties have changed hands, some more than once. The reasons for this are many: some decided that they did not want to be irrigation farmers and sold early in the piece; some came under financial pressure during the late 80s restructuring; high prices for dairy conversion land enticed others to sell and relocate to other areas; and some who bought farms and converted them decided to take advantage of the latest high prices and exit.

Farmers have had to adapt to the fact that their neighbours may change and local businesses have had to adapt to the fact that their customer base is constantly changing.

Another social change is the type of people in the community. Dairying has brought a large number of sharemilkers to the area. These people are typically young, full of energy and drive, have high business borrowings, are totally focussed on their own goals and, as such, give a "George Bush on Steroids" approach to getting things done. This can be disconcerting to established people in the area.

Coupled with this is the large number of young, single people employed on dairy farms. We estimate that an additional 150 jobs are available in our area due to dairying. Increased numbers have not meant that local clubs and organisations are thriving, for two main reasons. Sharemilkers are usually on short term contracts and don't see their long-term future in the area. Dairy work hours also can be quite anti-social and not fit the timetable of many team sports. On the other hand, individual sports such as squash get good support.

Another interesting social change has been in where the wealth of the district lies. Before irrigation, wealth was in the hills with higher rainfall, big holdings and established families. With irrigation and dairying in particular, the wealth of the district is firmly on the flats and much of it is new wealth. This has led to a change in perceptions: it was "wealthy sheep farmers" who sent their children away to school and took overseas trips, now it is "wealthy dairy farmers" who do that. Mostly this is a perception only and in reality both groups are governed in what they are able to do by the fortunes of their individual industries.

CONCLUSIONS

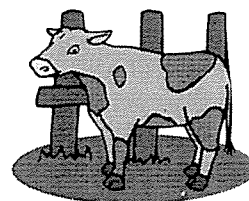
Overall the effects of change in our district have been good. Because of change we now have:

- a dynamic society which is always changing
- an integrated farming system, each farm type benefiting the other
- a robust, supporting business community
- a stable or even growing school.

Change is inevitable. You are either going forwards or going backwards. You can never stand still. We just have to develop better systems of dealing with change.

Norm Williamson, Culverden

This article was supplied by the Amuri Co-operating Parish who have been working to integrate newcomers, including dairy people, within the life of their parish.



Revitalised through Change

Some community groups and congregations have been re-energised by the changes in their communities. The Ellesmere Historical Society is an interesting mix of farming families old and new, townspeople, lifestyle block people and former residents now retired in the city. It is one of those community groups which could have become older and older, with a smaller and smaller membership. Instead it has become revitalised – the long established members give it continuity and the newcomers lift its energy level and its vitality.

In March the Ellesmere Historical Society went to Rakaia Island. We gathered at 5.30pm, after the roads were clear of dairy cows. Regrouped into a smaller number of cars, we drove over the riverbed dairy farm landscape and listened to the story of the Turner's dairy conversion.

A generation back Rakaia Island was scrub, sheep and lots of rabbits, one family making a sheep-farming livelihood.

Meanwhile, Dave, Doug and their Dad were on a 35 cow dairy farm at Sefton. Their story unfolds over the last 15 years: the two brothers share-milking and contracting and getting married; then the four of them, husbands and wives buying their first dairy farm in the 1980s; a little later a second dairy farm. Then the four of them did their sums, sold both their farms and bought Rakaia Island.

The dairy conversion went ahead: two lots of water rights, one from river, one from wells; 350 cows in the first season. Eight years later, 3500 cows, three milking sheds, four owner operators, an operations manager and an office manager, three farm managers (one for each shed and herd, and each team of six dairy workers). In all 23 employed, with good substantial homes, a community hall and their own bus to local schools.

We looked over the farm, the natural habitat areas set aside, the river banks carefully fenced and the community buildings. As we listened to the stories, and joined in a question and answer session, we heard about farm and environment, hopes and plans, challenges and visions. As the Turner brothers talked, their confidence grew. There is a new level of bonding and togetherness between them and their neighbours in this community they are part of. The community takes pride in what has been and continues, and it takes pride in what is new. The two merge and belong together.

My task was to transport two historical society members who now live in Christchurch. One a former farm owner, the other a lady resident in a retirement complex. I dropped the farm owner first and in the next part of the journey my other friend told me about her

grand-daughter. She was a country girl from a traditional farming family, determined to be a vet and she wanted to study without a student debt. For a year she worked as part of the dairy team in one of the sheds we had just visited – eight days on and three days off, one of those so-called “itinerant workers”. Two years on, savings and work experience supporting her, she is well on her way through Vet School. There was a quiet pride in the achievement of her granddaughter and an affirmation of the young people who work on dairy farms.

Garth Cant, Christchurch

This story was told at the Rural Ministry Forum in Kurow, North Otago, earlier this year. The Canterbury Rural Ministry Unit has been reflecting on the impact of dairy conversions and lifestyle block development on existing rural communities and is working with the Joint Regional Committees in North and South Canterbury to hold another Forum to explore these issues further.

Even if you're on the right track, you'll get run over if you just sit there.

Will Rogers



Training for Rural Outreach

NORTHLAND CHURCHES LEARNING AND GROWING TOGETHER

The Northland Uniting Church Council put its responsibility for a number of small rural parishes to work recently by arranging for a two-day event of visits and workshops to assist parishes in their ministry and mission in their communities. With the initiative of Judith Herbert, of Dargaville Methodist Church, NUCC invited Robyn McPhail from Mid-Canterbury to provide a programme in “Training for Rural Outreach” on 19-20 September with churches in Ruawai, Paparoa and Maungaturoto, Kaiwaka and Mangawhai.

On Friday 19th Robyn held four meetings with the individual parishes, fitting into each situation as if she had been there all her life. The questions were:

- What is your dream/hope for your church?
- What is blocking that from happening?
- What are you doing together that you are happy about?
- What gifts and resources help that happen?
- What is happening in your community – events, changes, needs?

Responses were written on colour-coded pieces of paper and placed on a poster ready for the next day. On the Saturday all parishes met together and got into

mixed groups to study the posters of each parish and add more coloured messages of:

- the things they wanted to encourage the parishes in and
- where they saw gifts and needs could be matched up, as a way forward in identifying each community's mission.

The advantage of the mixed groups studying all the parish's posters was that they are now aware of each other's hopes and problems and it may lead to further co-operation.

Judith Herbert observes: "My impression was that it was wonderful for the parishes to be able to share their story – the good things, the resources, the worries, the possibilities. To have to articulate this helped them look at their own situation realistically and positively. To know that it is OK only to do what you can do. To know that, if all you can do is to match up some of your resources with some of the needs around you, then you are fulfilling your mission for the Lord. This encouraged the people.

"It was helpful to hear that many of their experiences and problems were shared by other parishes. Also sharing some of the things that were already happening in the way of training courses opened up the opportunity for co-operation in the future.

"Another benefit was for the rural ministers themselves – to be able to take an impartial look at their parish in a non-threatening atmosphere. To have someone interested enough to listen was a major boost."

Bruce Millar (Otamatea Parish) notes "it was a very gentle process, in which we discovered there are good things about us and what we do, and there were opportunities to do better which we were overlooking. The seminar has refreshed us and encouraged us to resume our journey with fresh hope.

Homebuilders

A number of members of the Otamatea Co-operating Parish (Maungaturoto and Papanui) are applying their Christian witness to the community programme "Homebuilders Community Services".

Homebuilders began in the district 12 years ago to bridge the gap between Government social services and the community. *It takes a community to raise a child* is their slogan with a focus on offering support, encouragement, education and practical help for families where children are at risk.

Homebuilders recognise the role that Christian faith and practice can play in this. A partnership is being developed with a specifically Christian group, Christian Community Link to bring the strength of Christian

guidance to issues of mental health, behavioural attitudes, social misadventure, violence and support for parenting. "An open door... an open heart... an open mind" is the motto.

When funding is found this creative partnership promises to work well towards its goal of empowering people to find hope.



Our Special Lady - Grace Judd

In our congregation at St Paul's Church Kaiwaka we have just celebrated the 80th birthday of a special member of our congregation, Grace Judd.

'Grace by name and Grace by nature' is a very fitting description of this lovely and much cherished member of our congregation.

Grace is always there at our services, and as we are few in number, this is wonderful encouragement for others. Grace leads intercessions at our services on a regular basis, an inspiration indeed! She attends a regular Cover to Cover Bible study, and hosts a prayer meeting at her home every Tuesday morning.

As well as this Grace has always been our "cup of tea lady" making thousands of cups of tea over the years, and also looks after the hiring of our local church hall.

She has been a Bible in Schools Teacher at our local Primary School for 26 years and assisted with the local Rock Solid Group for 11 years, beginning at age 67 and kept up with our local young teens until she was 78.

Not only is Grace a treasure in our church, but also she is a great community worker, on the local Community Hall Committee for many years and currently helps out as a volunteer in our local Information Centre.

Grace walks everywhere. She is a true ecumenical person as she attends several other churches in our community as well, so her witness is shared with many.

Grace has a huge and lovely garden, which she tends herself, and a large family of grandchildren, as well as great-grandchildren, two of whom share her name Grace as their second names.

Grace is very special. Her faith and love shine through her life in the way she lives it and the way she shares it with those around her. We thank you, Lord, for Grace.

Christine Bygrave, Kaiwaka

The really happy person is one who can enjoy the scenery when on a detour.

Anon

Encouraging Each Other

This year's annual Study Day for the Northland Uniting Women's Fellowship brought together 30 members of Methodist, Presbyterian, and Uniting Church Women's Fellowships from Kaitaia to Wellsford.

The group struggles to maintain leadership, numbers are dwindling, and enthusiasm is waning, so the Dargaville organising group decided a day of celebration and encouragement was in order for late October this year.

It began with "Thank you God for giving me the morning" then devotions took the theme of "Two Way Bridges":

- The In and Out Bridge – nourishing our inward faith so that it can be expressed outwardly
- The Backwards and Forwards Bridge – celebrating the achievements of the past to refresh the faith for the future
- The There and Back Bridge – in giving we receive (focusing on the the Special Project 'Bridging the Gap')

Two speakers from Kaipara Abuse Prevention spoke on the activities of this community group. The Methodist Church has acted as an initiator, umbrella group, and solid core group of the committee but encourages as much community involvement as possible.

The need for support groups already working in this field and for agencies to be co-ordinated was emphasised. Many practical events to foster family values and spread the No Abuse message have been organised.

Workshops completed the morning, with 3 options to focus on:

1. The **In and Out Group** learned new songs to nurture and express faith.
2. The **Backwards and Forwards Group** played the CCNZ Game produced for the Decade to Overcome Violence "The Incredible Journey" adapted to allow members to recall successful Special Projects of the past and refresh their faith for present needs
3. The **There and Back Group** performed a simple drama about a Flower Seller in Southern India where the Special Project is based.

After lunch an outing was arranged to the Dargaville Anglican Church to view the wonderful tapestry pew cushions recently completed as a 125th anniversary project.

The day was one of encouragement and refreshment with plenty of new songs, fresh ideas and happy thoughts to take home.

Judith Herbert, Dargaville



A View from a Country Christian

Few will be unaware of the diminishing of country churches. We hear about the resources (including paid staff) and programme variety of city churches with a sense of wonderment.

Being a country Christian is becoming an isolating experience. It seems to me country churches have two choices: close and join a bigger church or sort out some form of limited local ministry.

Each has disadvantages. We already spend many hours travelling each week for business, medical and educational purposes. Limited local ministry is just that: it works well in some areas, in others it does not.

It cannot embrace or encourage the variety of people who live in country areas. Often the local priest has lived in the area for a long time and may have difficulty relating to new people in the district or encouraging parishioners from established families to do so. They are sometimes required to make judgment calls beyond their training and experience. And this form of ministry is expected of people who have participated voluntarily in church life all their adult lives and may really like to sit back and enjoy something new.

May I suggest a third way: city parishes looking towards country areas in terms of Paul's advice to encourage and share with those who are struggling.

1. Look for a country parish that would value a 1-3 day visit from clergy every 2 to 3 months, accompanied by people with particular talents. Country Christians provide accommodation, food, local information, etc. as well as a preaching and meeting place. City parishes provide challenging preaching, music/drama, café church etc with the necessary technology.
2. Establish some sort of user pays country membership scheme for each Christian family to receive the city church newsletter, making them welcome there whenever commitments allow.
3. Have an arrangement for Christian funerals, led by local 'registered' people or by clergy if held in a city venue.

None of these suggestions are new. Indeed they happened 100-150 years ago in most country areas. Please, city churches, embrace your country cousins and you will be the richer for it.

Lynette Fowler, Otautau

What do you think? Responses most welcome.

Rural Ministry in India

International Conference Leads to Exchange Opportunity

For one participant at last year's International Rural Ministry Conference in Chennai, South India, that event was just the beginning. Catherine Christie has undertaken an exchange through the Council for World Mission with a minister in North India. This is her story.

From the coastal plains of Orissa State, India, the Kond Hills rise abruptly 2-3000ft in green, thickly-forested and cloud-enshrouded beauty. These hills are 'Kui dina', the ancestral home of the Kond or Kui people. They are Adivasis, tribal people, not part of the Indian mainstream. For thousands of years they followed their traditional life, isolated from the world.

Their isolation was broken into during the British occupation of India but they continue their agricultural traditions. Their paddies are ploughed by cow-pulled ploughs (one hears very ancient melodies as ploughmen encourage the cows to pull the plough through the muddy fields). They grow both hill rice and paddy rice. Turmeric is their main cash crop, a spice which grows exceptionally well in that soil.

Most of the agricultural labourers are tenant farmers. Houses are mostly mud-walled, thatched-roofed, with no plumbing. They carry in water and cook over wood fires.

The people live a fragile life with frequent hunger, ill health and a high illiteracy rate, but they are a Christian community of great power. The first Europeans (except for military and bureaucrats) were British Baptist missionaries. The first converts became baptized Christian in 1914. This is one of the few areas of India in which Christians are the majority of the population.

Presently the church in the Kond Hills is growing rapidly, with new congregations being established and membership increasing. With a shortage of clergy lay leadership carries major responsibility. My clergy exchange partner, the Rev. Bijay Nayak, has administrative responsibility for 276 congregations, with only 40 clergy within his Pastorate Union. Week by week these 40, along with a very large team of lay preachers, go out to lead worship. There is a great need for training of clergy, and, as in many places of the developing world, also the need for bursary/scholarship assistance to make possible such training. Enthusiasm and commitment is strong, but financial ability to leave home and attend school is lacking. Salaries are 600 rupees per month for pastors and 1000 rupees for presbyters, who are more highly educated or senior. As I estimate 40 rupees to a US dollar, these servants of God are not wealthy, even by Indian standards.

While in the Pastorate Union, I had four key tasks:

- participating in the dedication of one newly constructed church building and the inauguration of the Chandrapur Pastorate Union.
- taking Lay Classes through which the lay preachers are assisted in sermon preparation each month.
- visiting to preach at and encourage local churches, which were all filled to overflowing.
- absorbing the life of the people: I watched and listened as only a few spoke English and all I was told had to be translated.

There are a number of major concerns for the Kui:

1. Government discrimination against Christians. There is a quota system, a 'schedule', for voting, hiring and educational opportunities for Dalits and Adivasis, but Christians do not qualify for them, which means they are hampered in their efforts to climb out of poverty.
2. The reality of sectarian violence. In 1999 Australian missionary Graham Staines and his two sons were killed by Hindu radicals in Orissa. During the time I was there, the ringleader, Dara Singh was sentenced to the death penalty. Some were concerned his sympathizers' anger might focus on me, a white Christian in their midst.
3. Atrocities aimed at the Christian community by a terrorist group called Naxalites or Peoples' War Group. For Kui Christians being Christian is a continually renewed decision.
4. Education: illiteracy at 70% in the Kui communities makes them vulnerable to exploitation from government as well as from the market place. The modern world is coming to Kui dina and the people need the tools to cope and live in dignity and health.

One of the chief aims of the Christian congregations of my exchange partner's Pastorate Union is the establishment of a hostel so that their children can attend schools in Daringbadi. They have dug deep into their meagre resources to construct a building on church property to provide a 'home away from home' for children from small, isolated villages where there are no schools and are too far from a school to walk daily.

The leaders of the Pastorate Union hope that after a few years, this programme will be self-sustaining, but for now, they need outside financial assistance to complete it to living standards, to equip and staff it to get it operating. Contributions to help them in this very important work can go directly to Daringbadi Pastorate Union Hostel, c/o Area Superintendent, Sonamaha Mission Compound, Daringbadi, Kandhamal Dist., Orissa, India 762104.

Catherine Christie, Canada

Trans-Tasman 2004

A reminder that the next Trans-Tasman Rural Ministry Conference will be held in the Clare Valley, South Australia, from 27 September to 1 October 2004.

These Conferences are held every four years alternating between New Zealand and Australia, with the last one in Northland in April 2000.

The theme for the South Australia Conference is "Recapturing Passion for the Local Church".

Check www.missionresourcing.net.au/index.cgi?tid=67 for more details, or contact:

Peter Gill
Hill River Road
Spalding SA 5454

THE BOTTOM OF THE BARREL

Hilda, the church gossip and self-appointed arbiter of the church's morals, kept sticking her nose into other people's business. Several residents were unappreciative of her activities, but feared her enough to maintain their silence.

Hilda made a mistake, however, when she accused George, a new member, of being an alcoholic after she saw his pickup truck parked in front of the town's only bar one afternoon. She commented to George and others that everyone seeing it there would know what he was doing.

George, a man of few words, stared at her for a moment and just walked away. He didn't explain, defend, or deny. He said nothing.

Later that evening, George quietly parked his pickup truck in front of Hilda's house and left it there all night.

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Book Review

Playing God by Glenn Colquhoun

Steele Roberts, Aotearoa New Zealand: 2002.

Reviewed by Sarah Gardiner, Amuri

This collection of poetry is written by a doctor practising in Northland. Glenn Colquhoun's first book of poetry "The Art of Walking Upright" won the 2000 Montana NZ best first book award for poetry and "Playing God" won the 2003 Montana NZ book award for poetry and the Reader's Choice award.

Based on his experiences as a doctor it has 5 sections – Patients I Have Known; Diseases I Have Known; Spells; A Portrait of the Doctor as a Young Man; and

Playing God. It is interspersed with pictures from 15th and 16th century medical journals, making me pleased I live in the 21st century.

His writing takes the ordinary and fills it with humour, sadness, tragedy, quirky insight and an appreciation of the wonder of each of his patients and the things they have taught him.

I almost succumbed to the temptation to read this 94 page volume in one sitting. However, I decided only 3 poems per cuppa, with a chance to inwardly digest, or to recover from an out-loud chuckle (most unlike me!). This collection of poetry is for all of us, especially those who don't usually go for the stuff and think it might be a bit tricky to understand. Here is one to sample:

When I am in doubt

When I am in doubt
I talk to surgeons.
I know they will know what to do.
They seem so sure.
Once I talked to a surgeon.
He said that when he is in doubt
He talks to priests.
Priests will know what to do.
Priests seem so sure.
Once I talked to a priest
He said that when he is in doubt
He talks to God.
God will know what to do.
God seems so sure.
Once I talked to God
He said that when he is in doubt
He thinks of me.
He says I will know what to do.
I seem so sure.

Web Link for RNN

Rural Network News can be accessed through the web. Go to: www.schoolofministry.ac.nz/RuralMinistry/ and scroll down to find the particular edition you seek.



This occasional newsletter is printed and distributed by Anglican Diocese of Christchurch, PO Box 4438, Christchurch, ph 03 379 5950, fax 03 379 5954. Editor: Robyn McPhail, 9 Jackson Street, Methven 8353, ph/fax 03 302 8151, email: chirmac@xtra.co.nz Thanks to all contributors and to Garth Cant for editorial assistance. Contributions of news, views, insights on anything to do with the rural church, its ministry and gospel mission gratefully received.