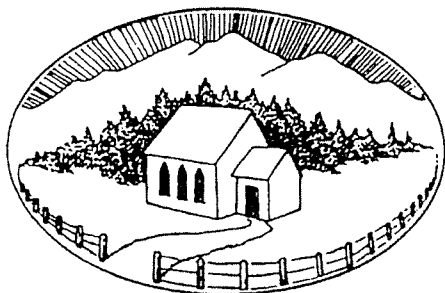


Rural Network News



No. 26

March 2004

Lord, walk beside me with your arm
on my shoulder and your hand over
my mouth.

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.

The Twelve Days of Harvest

On the **first day of harvest**, my true love said to me – “With the kids home from school to help, he wouldn’t need me!”

On the **second day of harvest** the kids all laughed with glee – “Because all the jobs around the house would now be up to me!”

On the **third day of harvest**, my true love said to me – “Could you whip this sample over to the local silo for a moisture test. While you’re there, can you check it for protein content and find out if they’re working on Sunday? Then when you get back could you slip out on the bike to check the ewes. ‘cos we’re too busy!”

On the **fourth day of harvest**, my true love said to me – “At about lunchtime we’re moving to the next paddock. Could you fill up the diesel tanker, hook it behind the ute and bring it out. Oh, and don’t forget to bring the toolbox, grease gun and a box of spare parts, please!”

On the **fifth day of harvest**, my true love called me on the CB – “The field bins are both full and we can’t get the truck unloaded. Can you bring the old tipper out to the top paddock as fast as you can; but do make sure the oil and water are okay!”

On the **sixth day of harvest**, my true love said to me – “We’ve got a bit of damp grain which we’ll have to store in the mesh bins. Could you get some plastic liners from town, then show the kids how to clip it on please darling?!”

On the **seventh day of harvest**, my true love said to me – “This fan belt is frayed, could you dash into town and pick up another one as fast as you can? Oh and we need some more one-inch bearings as well, but could you please bring the lunches out before you go: and this time for goodness sake, don’t forget the thermos of tea!”

On the **eighth day of harvest**, my true love said to me – “Could you slip into town and pick up the pickle, the grader bloke radioed and is coming today so we can’t keep him waiting; don’t stop to talk to anyone, just hurry!”

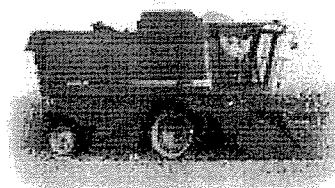
On the **ninth day of harvest**, my true love radioed me – “Just got the truck stuck in the flat gully. Can you get the old front end loader out of the shed, find the bog chain and drive out here as quick as you can, to pull us out please?!”

On the **tenth day of harvest**, my true love snapped at me – while I stood by the header handing tools up to him very nervously.

On the **eleventh day of harvest**, my true love called to me – “Could you auger out the next load of grain while we eat, then fill the tanker with diesel. Hey, and ‘cos its stinking hot out here, while we’re working, could you dash home, refill the water bottles and get two more tarps, please?!”

On the **twelfth day of harvest**, my true love grinned at me – “If it goes well we’ll finish by six; aren’t you glad we didn’t need your help much this year, honey?!”

Reproduced with permission from “Ruminations”, the Journal of the NSW Rural Ministry Unit. Its editor notes that this is frequently published as “author unknown”, but was in fact written by the late Jenny Dugan of Narromine, NSW.



A Parish with Six Churches

It's a challenge to have six churches. It would be so much easier to have only one central church. But the Anglicans planted a church building in every small village and in Peel Forest it is the focus for the community. Often the school closes and the store too but the church is constant and is where people of all denominations and none are welcome to come and think about the deeper things of life and often it is an opportunity to re-acquaint themselves with their religious side which may have lain dormant since childhood until they are once again included in a small country church community.

Thinking of how we could celebrate the heritage of our country churches, the record of which has been recently written up in individual pamphlets for each church by Roy Entwistle, our dedicated lay minister, stained glass window designer/maker and historian, we decided to issue an invitation to the Christchurch branch of the Historic Places Trust.

A busload duly arrived at St Mary's Geraldine and after morning tea, Stephen Belanger Taylor, an internationally renowned stained glass window maker who lives locally, gave a talk about the history of the art.

We then took our visitors to St Thomas', Woodbury, to see the lovely windows and carvings of Frederick Guernsey. On to Pleasant Valley for another enthusiastic talk by a local parishioner and to see one of Veronica Whall's earliest windows.

Then it was time for lunch at Orari Gorge station, hosted by Rosa Peacock, nee Tripp, who with her husband now farms her historic family property.

On the way home we visited St Stephen's Peel Forest to see the recently installed Dennistoun and Martin windows.

It was great to celebrate the treasures of our churches, not only the fabric but also the lives of the parishioners who have worshipped there over the years.

What started as a fund raiser gave us all much more.

As we spoke about the life of our churches, both past and present, we had a sense of how we are part of a moving chain of witnesses in our areas.

Each village has its own life, its own mission, gathering in whoever wants to come. It is truly ecumenical. And then our other life is being part of the parish. Each is important.

We need lots of encouragement and help to keep building up our local church communities which is where our local mission takes place. There is no need

for divisions - the country church is separate but part of the whole parish. As we shared in the heritage tour of the churches it became clearer to me the huge value of these small country churches. In this day of rationalisation should we be closing churches? What does it do to community to take away the school, the store and then the church? What does it say when we keep the church and encourage the local parishioners in all that they do?

I know the Historic Places Trust members from Christchurch really enjoyed their day and we enjoyed a day of celebrating.

In the sharing, we gained a renewed sense of appreciation for their generosity in beautifying our places of worship to the Glory of God. In the preparation and the presentation, we realised that we had gained a heightened awareness of being one parish. As we celebrated the heritage of each church, and listened to each other's local history so proudly given by the present day parishioners, we felt drawn together. We felt no sense of competition between places, but rather an appreciation of the differences and the strengths they give us.

Rosemary Acland, Peel Forest, Canterbury

Autumn is a time when field mice gather in seeds for the winter. For the Celts, autumn is a time of gathering in of food and of stories.

Autumn is a time when trees shed their leaves before facing the demands of winter. For the Celts, autumn is a time of letting go of things we don't need to carry.

John Hunt, *We Well People*, Christchurch 2003

Faithful Symbol for Travellers

Historic Churches are eye-catching to travellers, none more so than St Patrick's in Burkes Pass, in the South Island's McKenzie Country. But it's not just an historic artefact, it's also a functional, active Community Church. Its presence is a reminder of past tradition but even more than that it is a symbol of a continuing spiritual presence.

For the local community this is an important building for past, present and future. The Burkes Pass Heritage Trust have a number of projects on the go including a conservation plan, guide to the cemetery and landscaping to create an entrance and exit to the village for traffic management and restoration of cob cottages. They have just completed a heritage walkway and signed a heritage covenant with the New Zealand Historic Places Trust to give the church building some security. Check www.burkespass.kiwiwebhost.co.nz for news of the latest projects and links to related sites.

Central Otago Landscape 'Icons' and Spiritual Values

A RESPONSE

Jolyon Manning's article "Central Otago Landscape Icons and Spiritual Values", published in the November issue of Rural Network News, prompted me to offer a response from the Upper Clutha district. The Upper Clutha, like the Wakatipu basin and the rest of Central Otago, is experiencing a period of accelerating change.

Last year, the Upper Clutha Presbyterian parish organised two workshops dealing with the theme "Our Heritage and Future Development in the Upper Clutha. Has the Church a Role to Play?" A staff member from the History Department, University of Otago, helped us study Otago's pioneering history with the purpose of identifying the values and practices of the past that are still relevant for us today. Two emphases from the past to emerge were

- the importance of community, and sharing in, and contributing to the life of the community, and
- the role of hospitality in drawing a community together.

To the second workshop, we invited a panel of six members from our district representing tourism, education, development, planning, local body management, and local body elected membership. We were greatly helped in our work by the Community Plans that have been prepared for Wanaka, Hawea, and Luggate. These Plans, stemming from the initiative of the Queenstown Lakes District Council, provide a community vision, strategic goals, and priorities for the Upper Clutha District for the next 10-20 years. They are designed to enable the Council to align its decisions and activities to those of the community.

The Community Plans indicate that our communities want clear enforced zone boundaries to control development.

They want a clear distinction maintained between residential areas and the surrounding rural environment.

There was general agreement at the workshops that the proliferation of lifestyle blocks often led to the inadequate use of valuable soils. The Upper Clutha has unique climatic areas in its river valleys not found anywhere else in New Zealand. It was agreed that the stewardship of the soils and their productivity was a responsibility that all residents of the Upper Clutha must accept. Controls will be necessary in regard to land use; guidelines alone will not be effective.

Responses from younger people, 15-45 years, in regard to tourism and recorded in the Community Plans, indicated that they valued tourism for the employment it

offered and for the cosmopolitan mix it brought. But they wanted tourism balanced against local needs. At the workshop, those involved in tourism and the District planners both indicated a preference for an extension of the time tourists spent in our area, rather than continually growing tourist numbers. Perhaps the district's traditional hospitality has a role in welcoming tourists and helping them understand the lifestyle and values of local residents. If it is the uniqueness and beauty of the Upper Clutha that attracts tourists to our area, then it is recognized that it is in our interests and the tourists' that this uniqueness and beauty is preserved.

There is a real concern in the Upper Clutha over the issue of affordable housing. Escalating land and property values are making it more and more difficult for working families to find accommodation in our area. The workshop revealed that planners, developers, Council staff, and residents alike recognize this problem. Possible solutions proposed were:

- encouraging larger employers to provide some accommodation for their employees.
- making some Council developed sections available at a lower price - recognizing that a lower return to the Council could affect rates levels.
- a developer at the workshop is considering offering some sections at cost, to encourage working families to settle in his area.

It was clear that the communities in the Upper Clutha wish to see key landscapes and views protected, and access to natural recreational amenities provided by walkways and cycle ways. Provision needs to be made for the acquisition of land for walkways and cycle ways when subdivisions are planned. More recent developments in the Upper Clutha indicate that developers are recognizing the importance of recreational areas, beautification, and the provision of walkways and cycle ways

The advocated developments contained in the Community Plans in the Upper Clutha are exciting and offer real hope that the attractiveness of our area can be retained and enhanced for future generations. But the key will be the transition that takes the expressed wishes of the communities and makes them work. That depends on the Council and the regulations of its District Plan.

Peter Marshall, Wanaka. Otago

One Easter Sunday morning the minister was preaching the children's sermon.

"Here's an egg," said the minister. "What do you think is in there?"

"I know!" a child exclaimed. "Pantyhose!"

Flooding

The rain continues to fall
from dull grey clouds,
and there is water everywhere –
swollen creeks,
flooded paddocks,
waterlogged ground,
rivers overflowing their banks,
buildings damaged.
Some people have lost fences and stock,
some have seen crops ruined.
Slips and landslides
are destroying good pasture.

God of all seasons,
we may be resilient and strong outwardly,
but our spirits are dragged down
the longer this goes on.
Help us look forward with hope
that the sun will shine again,
the wind will dry things out,
and Creation itself will be restored.
The scars on the hillsides
are like wounds
we feel in ourselves.

Meet us in our anxiety,
and help us look beyond the water
to the sign of the rainbow,
the fresh green twigs of life,
and the sunshine of hope,
and the renewal of your creation.

Bill Bennett, *Seasons of the Land*, 41, p.49

A Comma, Not a Full Stop

WAIAPU REFLECTION LUKE 24:1-12

As I write this, central New Zealand is coming to terms with one of the worst natural disasters in recent times, if not in the written history of our land. Some of us saw the floods. It was sobering to stand on the Waipukurau Bridge and see the brown muddy waters of the Tukituki pounding below you and realise how helpless you are against such forces of nature. We had the heavy rain and the winds but it is still hard to get your head around what it must be like to have fenced blocks of land just to see \$25,000 worth of posts float out to sea. Hard to know what it would be like to come home to find your family momentos lying face down in the mud on the lounge room floor. Hard to imagine the nausea when having to bury dead cattle. Hard to comprehend what it is like to have put sheep in the woolshed out of the weather only to have them drown because the rivers rose far higher than imagined in your wildest dreams.

But even in the midst of this people are talking about banding together to clean up and they are so grateful when you phone up to say you are thinking of them.

For them it is a set back but not the end. Someone once described it to me as a comma but not a full stop!

As I read the resurrection accounts a sense of realism strikes me. People are devastated: they are grief stricken; they go to the place where it happened; they think about how it happened. All the things we do when some one has died. As they confront their grief, they experience Christ and begin to resolve new ways of living. Luke speaks of the women coming and thinking about how to solve all the difficulties they hadn't thought about before they left home. It ends with Peter leaving the tomb totally amazed. But no more detail.

All the resurrection stories are open-ended stories - they are for us to complete. Many stop when the observers leave the tomb. The encounters with Christ give that sense that it can happen again. A few years ago I attended the Church of the Resurrection in Victoria, Australia, which was built after the Ash Wednesday fires of 1984 had destroyed their churches. One of the features was a stained-glass window, which was designed to have a circle at the top, but the architect and the engineer had made a mistake so there was only room for a semi-circle. I made it a point of my sermon that, like the resurrection, it is for us to complete.

The Resurrection is God's way of telling us that it doesn't stop there. There's new life. It is only a comma not a full stop! Hamilton writer Jocelyn Marshall puts it well in her hymn 'Affirming life'. It is an appropriate one for Easter.

Christ is risen. He is risen indeed!

Robert Bruere, Waipukurau, Hawkes Bay

Affirming Life [tune "St. James": Words by Jocelyn Marshall]

1. Say yes to life with all its hopes,
Its pleasures and its pain;
For those who live a life of faith,
Their loss is turned to gain.
2. Say yes to life with all its joys;
May we by action show
The Spirit's fruits of patience, peace,
Through cultivation grow.
3. Say yes to life; affirm the gift
With confidence reborn,
Remembering the darkest hours
Are prelude to the dawn.
4. Say yes to life; death's power retreats
When God is at our side:
The fears that haunt, the weakness felt
Ebb like the falling tide.
5. Say yes to life; rest in God's strength
To make the darkness light;
Go forth empowered, refreshed, renewed,
Life's morning follows night.

Rural School Closures: in Limbo

We intended having articles in this edition about the Ministry of Education review process in South Canterbury. We wanted to explore the different viewpoints from a local perspective. When the Canterbury Rural Ministry Unit last met, 29 January 2004, Education Minister Trevor Mallard had just announced that half the schools in South Canterbury were to close. Barely a month later, 23 February 2004, the government suddenly reversed the policy of school closures. A five-year moratorium on new school reviews is currently in place. Yet, 70 schools nationwide (both rural and urban) are still due to close at the end of this year, including some in South Canterbury. Mr Mallard's view is now softening.

One South Canterbury resident said, "I gave serious thought to writing a small article for your magazine but it is such a crazy time with Labour backtracking and schools meeting to formulate a survival package... nobody really knows what is happening and I don't know what is happening behind the scenes." *The Timaru Herald*, 9 March 2004, reported that a soon-to-be appointed mediator would take over the network review of Timaru district schools, focusing on the most controversial proposals. One example is the merger of Pleasant Point High School (PPHS) and Mountainview High School (some 20 km away on the edge of Timaru). These rural students will face longer travelling distances to the bigger urban centre for schooling. Closing schools like PPHS means parents lose the rural school option where family backgrounds are known. Neil Wilkinson, acting principal of PPHS, says better "pastoral care" is offered at rural schools (*Rural News*, 2 March 2004). In rural communities the school and the church are often the key social institutions remaining - the loss of a school is more than an educational issue.

If you, as a reader of Rural Network News, are in a region threatened by school closures we would appreciate hearing your stories. Whether you are in Russell, central Northland, East Cape, Wairoa, Taihape, Egmont, or Opunake in the North Island; Grey Valley, South Canterbury or Invercargill in the South Island, your viewpoints are welcome. How is the local school closure/merger affecting your rural community?

Nicola Robertson, Canterbury

A minister and parishioner had just tee-ed off on a round of golf. The parishioner commented:
"You tee off like I hear you preach - long, to the left, and always near a hazard."

Is Your Worship Good Worship?

About the Rev Rockett it is said:

"On Sundays in the parish church
He scans the faithful few.
Complains of those who never come
And shoots at those who do?"

But is this *good worship*?

Good worship has been reckoned as dependent upon the minister being good at preaching, taking great children's talks, choosing hymns you like, getting on well with everyone and everyone feeling good when they leave.

Marva Dawn says that:

Good worship should be our top priority, since it is the only thing the church does that no one else can.
(Reaching out without Dumbing Down, *Eerdmans 1995*)

I recently completed Study Leave looking at worship and learning from people in rural churches. The topic was "Good Worship in Small Non-Growth Rural New Zealand Communities".

Much of my time was spent visiting fifteen rural parishes south of Christchurch. They were chosen because they were already tackling worship in new ways and therefore had interesting stories to tell. There was a questionnaire to respond to and conversations to uncover understandings and attitudes towards worship.

Ministers were the principal worship leaders in less than half the rural parishes interviewed. The best worship in rural contexts invariably happened when a minister was not centre stage.

Despite the diversity of contexts and styles of worship experienced in the parishes visited, two major characteristics linked these southern New Zealand churches:

1. Good Rural Worship is **FAMILY CENTRED**

Worship is nothing if it is not an encounter with our living God: God took the initiative and had his Son born into a human family and a specific community and culture. Worship does not begin so much with individual worshippers and their needs, but with this reality of being God's family.

Two key truths flow from the family nature of worship:

- a. The church exists for those who follow after us: the needs and contributions of families, parents and children, have to be central to our worship. Ministry to children, youth and their families is the way that rural parishes are starting to close the generation gap. It is a ministry that all

members of a rural congregation need to support.

- b. Good worship requires that we focus on those who are not our present members: they live in the same community as we do, and their needs and possible presence must be foremost in our minds and prayers as we plan our worship. They are part of what we return to, in Christ's name, when our formal worship concludes.

2. Good Rural Worship **INVOLVES THE WHOLE LAITY** – that is, every member.

Good worship recognises that it is not the worship leader who is performing for God. It is the entire congregation that God looks to for a response to his call to worship. The most engaging rural worship tended to be where ordained leadership was not even present. Having said that, most lay worship leaders appreciated the resources, coaching and encouragement that a supportive neighbouring minister could provide. And many ministers are glad to draw out the leadership gifts of those who shared church ministry with them.

Nor should the individual worshipper be the focal point in services. Good worship is a community activity where each worshipper feels a responsibility for others and so prays for the whole neighbourhood. In the rural parishes visited, worship was felt to be good if it was directed outwards to supporting the whole community rather than inwards for the primary aim of coaxing the community to support services of the church.

In short, good worship is happening in many rural parishes where the local people join Christ in his mission in the rural world around them.

As Christians live out their vocation in the world, they invite those they meet to come and share the life of the people of God and join in their worship.
(Directory of Public Worship. PCANZ 2nd Edition, 1995)

You think your worship is good? Check it out: ask your neighbour.

Winston Baker, Maheno, Otago

From the Back Paddock

No one made me be a farmer. I had a choice as did everyone else I knew who became a farmer.

This is a statement I have been repeating to myself often over the last season as we have grappled with the challenges of the last four to five months.

At the start of the new season, which is crop planting time for us (during March), every crop that we grow was looking to be a potential record breaker. Then as

we went through the season climatic and other events reduced the yield potential or the dollar return (or both) of our crops. By harvest time we gathered in what was left and, being the optimists that we are, started the cycle over again.

The climatic events that can affect are yields are many: drought, flood, wet harvest (sprouting), wind, unseasonal frost, hail, snow... you know them all. Most years one or more of the above affect our crops to some extent. This last season it was "drought then sprout".

But there is a third event that is financially more devastating than each of these – the high value of our currency.

The drought is over and the sprout only affects this one season, but the currency issue is still here. How many seasons will it hurt us?

Now the markets for the products I produce are 80% in the USA. I've been told that 90% of NZ dollar currency transactions have nothing to do with trade. Just speculators out to gamble on currency. Unfortunately their effect on our exporters is severe.

Now that I have got that off my chest, I must repeat what I said earlier: "No one made me be a farmer." If I had my time over again I would make that same decision to be a farmer, without hesitation. The challenge of growing new crops successfully or growing old crops better than before still excites me.

The challenges of the weather I readily accept. But the "man made challenges" are a little less easy to swallow.

Colin Lill, Methven, Canterbury

The 98 year old Mother Superior was dying. The nuns gathered around her bed trying to make her last journey comfortable. They gave her some warm milk to drink but she refused. Then one of the nuns took the glass back to the kitchen. Remembering a bottle of Irish whiskey received as a gift the previous Christmas, she opened and poured a generous amount into the warm milk.

Back at Mother Superior's bed, she held the glass to her lips. Mother drank a little, then a little more and before they knew it, she had drunk the whole glass down to the last drop.

"Mother," the nuns asked with earnest, "please give us some wisdom before you die."

She raised herself up in bed and with a pious look on her face said, "Don't sell that cow."

From RUMORS email newsletter © Ralph Milton. There's no charge to subscribe to RUMORS. Send an email message to rumors@joinhands.com with SUBSCRIBE in the subject-line

International Prayers

Some excerpts from an e-mail prayer link of the International Rural Church Ecumenical Association

From Canada, there was news via Catherine Christie of a conference with the following outline and invitation:

A group of ministers from Maple Creek recently began to recognize that pastoring in small town Saskatchewan is very unique from church leadership in Canadian cities. We are challenged to give place to Jesus' promise that He will build His church so that the gates of hell will not prevail against it, in settings of limited population, and often beginning with limited budgets.

We often see our co-workers become discouraged and abandon their spiritual callings. Others struggle on for years with little evidence or encouragement of God's promised harvest.

We are aware that small town pastors need to be encouraged in their missions, and it can happen as we lay responsibilities aside and come together to share methods of success, effective resources, interpersonal encouragements, and reports of victory; to take time to be renewed in God's vision, and to recognize that there are brothers and sisters who care enough to reach out in prayer with you.

Andrew Bowden reported from the United Kingdom:

A new National Rural Officer for the Church of England has been appointed.

Her name is Jill Hopkinson, and I know she would appreciate our prayers.

She is someone with a formidable academic background, and is also a committed Christian worshipping in her home village in Warwickshire. She will both be a member of important government bodies and also have to relate to rural parishes which are in major crisis. Perhaps above all she has to 'educate' bishops who have little or no rural experience, and who need lots of help to see the wood for the trees.

A tall order for a thirty something year old!

This is how a South Islander shared the news of the disastrous floods in the Wanganui, Manawatu and surrounding areas:

The lower part of the North Island of New Zealand has been suffering from devastating weather. It's been unseasonable for us all, with more rain than we want during harvest (not too many weeks ago we were fearing drought in the Methven district) and very strong winds. But around Wellington and north of our capital city, in the Manawatu, Rangitikei and Kapiti areas especially, the destruction by flooding has been massive. Whole towns have been underwater - TV footage has shown us marks on the walls just a couple of feet short of the ceiling! And the devastation of farmland, along with large losses of animals and crops has been extensive.

Please pray for those who have suffered not only seeing their homes and farms destroyed, but also those

who went through the worst of it without anyone being able to reach them to help; those who live and farm up the valleys and the isolation that was made worse by strong winds over the weekend wreaking more havoc, cutting power to many areas.

Please pray for the churches in the communities affected - that they can take heart from their faith and that they will let us know how we, from beyond that area, may be able to help.

Following that message, this came from Rajamani Mohanraj in India:

Greetings from the Church of South India!

We can understand the nature of devastating nature since we experience both the extremes here in India. States like Andhra Pradesh will be affected by floods and the southern Deccan region will experience drought.

We pray for the people in North New Zealand for their safety, security and spirituality. May the Good Lord take care of them.

As on now, it seems that the summer is going to be hotter than ever and there will be scarcity of drinking water. Do pray for summer showers.

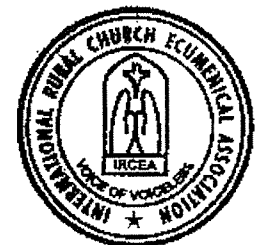
In solidarity with the people in North New Zealand.

If you would like to join the IRCEA prayer email network, send a message to IRCEA Chairperson Robyn McPhail at chirmac@xtra.co.nz

Web Link for Rural Ministry

The Uniting Congregations of Aotearoa New Zealand have given space on their website for information about Rural Ministry. A special report includes information about Rural Ministry Conferences and contact people both within New Zealand and internationally.

Go to cvforum.org.nz and click on "Rural Ministry Report" or the International Rural Church Ecumenical Association symbol.



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.

Material can be used in church and other publications designed to encourage and resource positive rural life: please check with the editor to receive permission of the author of the article you wish to use and acknowledge *Rural Network News* as first point of publication.

Trans-Tasman Conference

CLARE, SOUTH AUSTRALIA

Monday 27 September - Friday 1 October 2004

Trans-Tasman Rural Ministry Conferences began in Darfield, Canterbury, in 1984 and have been held every four years since then, alternating between Australia and New Zealand. The 2004 Conference is being held in Clare, South Australia at the end of September.

www.missionresourcing.net.au/index.cgi?tid=67 - the website related to the Conference - has recently been updated. The registration form downloaded from that site is enclosed in this newsletter.

If you are thinking of attending, it could be helpful to make contact with the Canterbury Rural Ministry Unit:

Garth Cant, 7 Owens Terrace, Christchurch
garth.cant@canterbury.ac.nz

Robyn McPhail, 9 Jackson Street, Methven
chirmac@xtra.co.nz

Some funding assistance is being offered through particular denominations. Applications for Methodist funding are due in by May 1. Other denominations will also have deadlines designed to assist with making the decision to go in time to get lower priced airfares.

Moving from West to East

After five years based in Harihari in South Westland we moved a little over a year ago to South Canterbury. We had come to love the Coast and its people over the five years we were there. The ruggedness was always attractive to me. The recognition, which seems far more obvious than anywhere else I have lived, is that people live there by permission of the natural elements, not the reverse. Dairy farming has become very significant in many districts on the Coast as has tourist development in several others. However it stretches the definition of 'rural' to encompass a daylong tramp up the Wanganui River to the Hunter's Hut and still be well in the parish bounds. It was time to say goodbye to the long and beautiful route from Hokitika to Haast and drive over the pass to a new home in Temuka.

In the last year we have been settling in and getting to know four very different parish communities in South Canterbury. The landscape is softer and wider than the West Coast. Yet the battles over irrigation and water use, which dominate South Canterbury at present, remind me how rural communities are always vulnerable.

There have been a couple of new dimensions for me in ministry. One has been my involvement with a cooperating parish at Waihao, and having the privilege

to share in that unique ecumenical setting. The other has been having the responsibility of vicar in Temuka. All my other ordained positions in the church have been associated with Local Shared Ministry and it has been a natural development to explore the role of vicar from that direction. For two other places, Marchwiell and Te Ngawai, the task is ongoing one of any Anglican Ministry Enabler, namely, accompanying communities that are building on their experience in Local Shared Ministry.

In all the settings I have learned much for which I am extremely grateful. I have found in each place faithful Christian communities striving to live out the gospel with great courage, fortitude and integrity.

Andrew Starky, Temuka, Canterbury

There was a preacher whose wife was expecting a baby.

The preacher went to the congregation and asked for a raise. After much consideration and discussion, they passed a rule that whenever the preacher's family expanded, so would his paycheque. After six children, this started to get expensive and the congregation decided to hold another meeting to discuss the preacher's salary.

There was much yelling and bickering about how much the clergyman's additional children were costing the church.

Finally, the preacher got up and spoke to the crowd. "Having children is an act of God!"

Silence fell upon the congregation. No one dare challenge the thought.

In the back of the room a little old lady stood up and in her frail voice said: "Snow and rain are also acts of God, but when we get too much, we wear rubbers!"

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