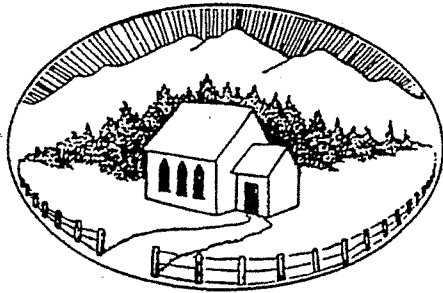


Rural Network News



No. 27

July 2004

We don't have to re-invent the social wheel, we just have to wake it up.

One person's thoughts on rural community.

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.

Winter: a Good Time to Reflect

"In the community we live in, are we listening to God?"

Winter is a good time to reflect on questions like this, and in June last year people gathered from all corners of Nelson Anglican Diocese for a rural Forum. From Golden Bay to South Westland, Picton to Kaikoura and lots of districts townships in between; a valiant man came from Hastings, a Catholic priest and a Lutheran pastor with a well-developed sense of humour. Martin Harrison, from Brightwater, was largely responsible for orchestrating proceedings.

As Aubrey and Felicity Whitcombe of Spring Creek say: "The ice was broken as groups competed to create an engineering feat with 70 straws to support a boiled egg!" The Whitcombes continue:

We heard reports from each parish on the joys and frustrations of ministry in a country settling. One vicar spoke of travelling over an hour each way to visit a parishioner; others described the organisation required to provide five services each Sunday in different locations. Many had found imaginative ways of serving

their communities. Some told of times of discouragement in the face of isolation and almost insurmountable challenges.

The Rev Peter Dunn (no, not the MP) spoke of his 13 years as a Presbyterian minister in the rural parish of Waipu in the Far North. His down-to-earth reflections on the faith journey of his congregation were given with humility, humour and hope in the Lord. Peter shared other messages about the power of the Holy Spirit amongst us, and his thoughts about a 20-day solo wilderness retreat enriched and challenged us all.

Rod Oram, formerly a financial journalist with *The Times* spoke on "Earning a First World Living from our Natural Environment". He concluded that New Zealanders have the capacity to succeed economically on the international stage if we use our natural resources to create marketable commodities of original design and excellent standards. Rod challenged the church to keep pace with cultural changes, and maintain high standards in communicating our faith.

Meal times were a highlight, not just because of the good food, but also the warm friendship and support. We left with a thankfulness to the Lord for new insights and spiritual refreshment.

About Peter Dunn's contribution John and Dawn Stringer from Reefton comment:

In his years in Waipu Peter has seen the people slowly but surely grow in their faith. One of the texts he chose to expand for us was Matthew 23:1-36. He challenged us to put ourselves in the place of the Pharisees. For we are called to be a holy people, becoming more Christ-like, yet as groups of Christians we often display the same negative characteristics Jesus so passionately denounced.

Sandy Topp of Kaikoura identifies a range of issues raised and describes a challenge put to participants:

From how to deal with tourism to the problem of too few people passing through; from combined churches' outreaches to no joint ventures; from too many scattered small buildings to a lack of main facilities.

In small groups we were 'put on the spot' to do a four to five minute sermon on a specified rural topic – things like gumboots, fertiliser, posthole diggers, ATV's, tele-banking and rural mailboxes. What fun!

The task was to relate these subjects to a biblical context and some very enlightened skits and songs emerged. Some managed to come up with a really good biblical point, so good that we had forgotten what the original subject was all about.

If you are in a rural community, take heart. You have the benefits of a small community. You know one another, the church can be a central place where people care and it's not so difficult for God's voice to be heard. It's the community we live in. Be healthy. Listen to God.

Riversdale Rural Retreat

The Hub, a twenty bed former hotel, was the venue for a Rural Retreat held at Riversdale, Southland. Twenty seven Elders, Leaders and Pastors from South Otago and Southland gathered on June 9-10 for a rural retreat.

The devotional and guest speaker was Pastor Joseph Roma, an experienced church planter from Australia. Pastor Roma has had 50 years in ministry in Italy, the United States and in Australia. Having planted churches among the Italian Australian community, Pastor Roma brought a wealth of passion and wisdom to the retreat.

A wide range of topics were discussed at the retreat and those who attended discovered many different areas of common interest. The focus of the conference was on moving beyond survival or palliative care in a parish to building healthy rural congregations.

There was general recognition that many issues facing rural churches are uniquely different from those faced by their urban counterparts.

Helpful discussions on topics ranging from evangelism and understanding the culture to team ministry and worship were introduced by a variety of speakers.

John Ranstead, Trevor Parkinson and Bruce Fraser undertook helpful formal presentations whilst most people attending contributed to the content of the seminars.

What most people came for was encouragement, inspiration and direction in their leading edge rural ministries. What they were seeking was often provided by others attending the same conference and this shows the need for gatherings such as this.

The warm, close-knit community feeling provided by the Hub, as we literally talked, ate and slept Rural ministry, meant that we left encouraged and strengthened in the resolve to make rural ministry work.

Emerging issues were the value that churches in similar situations are to each other. Another major issue was the impact of church levies on small struggling parishes.

Undoubtedly with wider advertising and with longer term planning, the next retreat will build on this one.

The formula of a guest speaker, with short topic introductions, followed by discussions and an opportunity for ministry, would likely be the style of future retreats.

John Gullick, Riversdale, Southland

*When you tug at a single thing in nature,
you find it attached to the rest of the world.*

John Muir

Is Your Worship Good Worship?

Continuing from Winston Baker's article in March RNN

A lot of work and reflection has brought the Lumsden/Balfour/Kingston Presbyterian Church to the place it is in now with the variety of worship experiences it enjoys.

A rural parish with three worship centres - Lumsden, Balfour and Garston - each has its own unique culture, each wants to share good news and build up God's kingdom in their area.

Parish leaders went to seminars and workshops, but they were either too busy or got plain 'seminared' out. The only workshop they wanted to go to was the one on their own farm.

Then, assisted by the Rev Peter Willsman and through a process that emphasised communication within the whole parish, they took steps that have given them a real boost. Worship has been transformed by a "Ministry Team" approach to leadership and parish functioning: the Worship and Prayer Team is one of six teams that get on with doing the mission of the parish.

Three or four people, with skills and gifts in the particular area, form the team. They are not necessarily 'frontline' in worship leading but contribute as administrators and visionaries. The team ensures that services function to meet the needs of each particular congregation. They organise rosters, encourage people to become involved, whether in playing music, worship leading, praying, welcoming at the door, taking up the offering, preaching or making the morning teas. We are blessed that nearly everyone takes a role somewhere.

The congregation at Balfour is leading the way. About 40-45 adults and 25+ children, with half the adult congregation under 45 years, Balfour's worship is led by younger folk. The music uses a range of instruments piano, guitar, drums, trumpet and vocals.

A normal Sunday is something like this:

- A time of prayer at 8.30am;
- A welcoming team, often a family, greets people;
- Opening of the service at 9am by the Pastor;
- Worship time of songs, call to worship and prayer;
- A birthday call and prayer;
- Children's address and song;
- Prayers for others and bible reading;
- Sermon, mostly by the Pastor;
- A song or hymn on the sermon theme if possible;
- The benediction, followed by morning tea (which can go on for an hour or so).

It makes little difference to church attendance whether it's the middle of summer, the middle of lambing or a

frosty morning. Some in the congregation are over 80 and also enjoy the services. A comment has been: "we have had our time at running things, let us now encourage the younger ones."

The Worship and Prayer Team are encouraging more people to extend themselves and move a bit at a time out of their comfort zones.

Key factors in this development are that people:

1. have been willing to let go of the past;
2. are prepared to change and let those who have the drive and the vision run with it;
3. accept any mistakes made along the way; and
4. encourage one another.

John Willis, Balfour, Southland

Methven Rural Ministry Forum

Saturday 22 May 2004

The idea of having the Selwyn, Ashburton and McKenzie district mayors (and deputy mayor) speak on the particularities of their districts, clarified the realities of these districts and the challenges faced at an administrative level, as well as laying a good foundation for the discussion groups.

Discussion groups were of a good size so that all could participate.

These groups, as well as the **Stories of Hope** in the afternoon, provided much food for thought and creative ideas. I felt that the sharing of ideas and challenges, in itself, was helpful and encouraging. It enabled participants to sense that their small ministry unit was in fact part of a much larger and supportive whole, as well as being a source of ideas.

Rosie Staite's list of key thoughts behind the worship service was particularly helpful – again, laying a good foundation for approaching service planning in rural areas. It was good that this was backed up with a list of resources and also by the resources table in the foyer. The latter was obviously well browsed by those present, many of whom may not find it so easy to get to a large centre to find resources or know quite what to look for when they do!

The discipline of keeping to time paid off in the smooth running of the day.

The venue was excellent, the food and fellowship great. I found the forum very useful, well-organised and instructive and a great team effort. I cannot think of a single thing that was negative. Congratulations to all who planned and worked to make it such a successful event!

Margaret Good, Willowby, Mid-Canterbury

Challenge and Opportunity: Being Church in Rural New Zealand, a publication bringing together presentations and discussion at the Methven Forum will be available soon at a cost of \$10 (including p&p within New Zealand).

Send orders to: Canterbury Rural Ministry Unit,
7 Owens Terrace, Christchurch 8004
or garth.cant@canterbury.ac.nz.

Send no money now: orders will be invoiced on despatch.

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.

There will be a number of New Zealanders, from Kaeo-Kerikeri in the north to Southland in the south, crossing the Tasman for the Trans-Tasman Rural Ministry Conference. They are all looking forward to being able to spend time in Clare, just north of Adelaide.

Janet Taege, from the Canterbury Rural Ministry Unit, writes: "There is still time to register, and we would encourage you to think seriously about joining the group going."

Garth Cant has been collecting word pictures about each of the New Zealanders attending. Here are some snippets from those available so far.

Shirley Bennett is vicar of Kaiapoi and Archdeacon of North Canterbury. She and husband Bob grow 800 acres of barley each summer along with small seeds such as white clover and grass seed when the season "is right". Among her interests is the management of a Section B Welsh pony stud – "it is one of the most successful in New Zealand and our latest stallion is an Aussie import! Look us up on www.welshponies.co.nz"

Wendy and Bill Bennett are Anglicans from Napier (Bill is the author of *Listen to the Shepherd: prayers for rural people*) who have worked in several rural parishes in the Diocese of Waiapu and have just moved into retirement mode.

Neil Cowie is a Presbyterian Minister in the Amuri Cooperating Parish. Neil says: "My mission is to be a complete fisherman for God. When not on the job, I am hunting, fishing, riding motorbikes, active in multi-sports or asleep in front of TV."

Laurie Ennor is a Presbyterian minister currently on "supply" at Malvern Co-operating Parish which includes Darfield, Sheffield, Springfield and Greendale.

Jan Fogg is a Methodist Minister in Taranaki, a 'shared' Presbyter, between the rural town Methodist parishes of Stratford and Hawera - about 30 km apart. Before ministry she was a vet in practice in Palmerston North.

Martin Harrison from the Anglican Parish of Brightwater, near Nelson, says: "Eleven years ago I exchanged the urban jungle for the countryside and began a rapid education in life. I learnt that scanners were not just for computers, or pregnant woman but also for pregnant ewes. I learnt that it was important to take notice of the weather pattern each day for it dominated the decisions of tomorrow. I enjoy the community found in rural New Zealand and taking part in it. I think I hear the fire siren so I better go and be the fireman."

Robyn McPhail whose computer still reckons she lives in Methven, Mid-Canterbury, is now a Union parish minister with the Kaeo and Kerikeri districts in the Far North. Sixteen years as a rural minister combined with growing up a rural district where church and community virtually coincided has got rural ministry into her bones.

Janice Purdie has been involved in the life of the church in rural New Zealand for over twenty years. From 1963-1993 Janice was a Secondary School Teacher and is now part of the Ministry team of Paeroa Cooperating (Methodist/Presbyterian) Church. In particular she is involved with work with children, the older person, Women's Fellowship, and parish visiting and she helps out with leading worship.

Miriam Taylor came to live in Ward, on Marlborough's East coast in 1968 when she married Malcolm, a farmer, and has been involved in various ministries in the Awatere Christian Joint Venture since then. She is passionate about rural ministry and finding effective ways of being church in the community. Miriam speaks for all attending when she says: "I am very excited about going to Clare and meeting new people and learning new things."

Janet Taege from Darfield is in the midst of preparations for a production by the Kirwee Players. Janet writes: "Lived most of my life in Rural Canterbury, spent two years living and working in Vanuatu." She is an elder and Lay Preacher in the Malvern Co-operating Parish also active in the wider work of the Church. Janet was involved with the first Trans-Tasman Conference held at Trinity Church Darfield.

Chris and Heather Whyte are retired dairy farmers, rural cartage contractor and school teacher. They write: "We have lived for 36 years at Waikite Valley a rural district 30 kilometres south of Rotorua. We are still

actively involved in our local community as well as being elders in our small rural Community Church at Ngakuru, which has been functioning for nearly nine years with Lay Ministry." Chris attended the "Country Conversations" Trans-Tasman Conference in 2000.

Garth Cant is a Geographer at the University of Canterbury in Christchurch where he teaches a graduate course on Indigenous Land Rights. Garth is a Methodist Lay Preacher at Upper Riccarton, Secretary of the Canterbury Rural Ministry Unit, editor of the series *Studies in Rural Change* and a member of the Presidium of the Conference of Churches in Aotearoa New Zealand.

Also attending: **Colin and Jocelyn Lill** from Methven, **Meg Dawson** from Napier, **Bob Masters and Rose Harding** from Hastings, **Alex Czerwonka** from Southern Hawkes Bay, **Lynette Fowler** from Southland and **Marion Partridge** from North Otago

For more information on the Conference go to:
www.missionresourcing.net.au/index.cgi?tid=67

Rural Parishes Come Under the Microscope

McGregor Simpson, Senior Elder in the Geraldine Co-operating Parish, has carried out a major study of the impact of land-use changes on the life and mission of rural parishes. This work was part of a Bachelor of Theology degree with the University of Otago.

The study looked at ways in which rural churches can maintain and grow congregational life in the face of changes brought about by dairy conversions, vineyard development, lifestyle blocks and tourism.

Questionnaires were sent out to more than 30 people in 24 parishes in Canterbury, Otago and Southland. Some 24 lay people and 15 clergy sent in replies. Among them were ten dairy farmers and ten non-dairy farmers.

"Lifestyles may differ between sheep and dairy farmers", says McGregor, "but their underlying theological perspectives are similar. Both are aware of stewardship of land and how God has entrusted its care to humans."

McGregor reports that patterns of Ministry are changing. "There has been a move away from traditional clergy-led ministry", he reports, "to increased involvement of lay persons in ministry."

This lets clergy take on new challenges. "Some have donned overalls and gumboots to visit dairy farms during the day", he notes and adds that important contacts are made at field days, farming forums and clearing sales.

Many parishes are adapting to families with younger children. Some have play-groups for small children and their parents. Others have school homework groups. Some congregations have changed the starting time for morning services to fit in with dairy farm routines and allow families to come together.

Some parishes struggle with youth work - they see it as a priority but not an opportunity. Several have the opportunity and have redeployed funds to employ a youth worker to organise youth study groups, Youth Alpha and social and outreach activities.

Most of the lay people who replied to McGregor's questionnaire are involved in worship services - as leaders, readers, or members of worship teams.

McGregor underlines the strength of rural congregations which are small enough for each person to know each other person and welcome each newcomer into the district. "Rural parishes must not view 'small' as a disadvantage," he says, "but as a strength as they seek to promote God as an integral part of every aspect of community life".

Copies of this timely and thoughtful report can be obtained, at cost, by writing to McGregor Simpson at 70 Peel Street, Geraldine 8751, or by phoning or faxing him at (03) 693 9696. Congratulations McGregor and congratulations Otago University!

Garth Cant, Christchurch

From the Back Paddock

One of the biggest issues for people running a business is employing staff. Farming is no different. Being an employer can be challenging at times, but often is very rewarding.

Farm staff, in my opinion, are special. They choose to put up with the many disadvantages of living and working at a greater distance from supplies and services than urban dwellers do. Staff are more than just an expense in our budget/cashflow.

We feel we're among the luckiest employers around, with great staff who are responsible, loyal, skilled and work hard. They are also among our best friends.

I like to include staff, when I can, in decision making and I'm constantly seeking ways to reward them well for their efforts.

We must remind ourselves that staff and their families are as reliant as we are on our business for their future security. They have hopes and dreams too and they have particular skills and abilities that need to be recognised and appreciated.

Colin Lill, Methven, Canterbury

Strength On and With the Land

I recently read a book called *This Colonial Earth* by Tim Bonyhady. His research took him back to the early days of Colonial settlement in Australia. He noted the way in which the land was used and abused and the earliest conservation and environmental movements in the new colony.

Some of his writing was in the back of my mind when a journey took me across the Blue Mountains with their residences hanging onto sandstone outcrops. As I made my way down the western slopes into country where sheep and cattle graze there was a different feel.

In the Wellington Valley vegetables and lucerne hay appeared to be thriving. At Narromine cotton growing is apparent and then the land rolled on to broad acre grain growing. Cobar and Broken Hill are largely mining towns. North of Broken Hill graziers carry one sheep to twelve acres.

As I travelled further north I came to country where the carrying capacity was said to be one sheep to every twenty acres. The homeward journey was along the Murray River with its rich areas of viticulture, horticulture and dairying.

Every time I try to define rural something is missing. 'Rural' has such a diverse meaning.

How different are the uses we make of the land. How different are the land-dependent pursuits that people follow. How dependent we are on different soil types and climates. How dependent we are on the vagaries of seasons, late, early; on too much rain, not enough rain; on too much sun, not enough sun; on wind and storm.

Yet these are the conditions in which the people to whom we minister make their livelihoods, these are the communities in which we live, these are the places to which we are called.

We pray for all whose lives are dependent on the land for their livelihood - for croppers, for farmers, for graziers, for miners.

We thank you for the constant reminder of our dependence on soil and seasons, for the reminder of our dependence on a Power greater than ourselves.

Help to treat the earth gently, to live in harmony with nature, and to build affirming communities.

Give us the strength to continue through the difficult and the bad and to rejoice in the good.
Amen

Lloyd Vidler, Australia

Contributed to the IRCEA email Prayer Network

Changing Location - Staying Rural

In last newsletter Andrew Starky told his story of moving from West to East, from Harihari to Temuka in the South Island. This time your editor has a story to tell. In mid-June my husband Neil and I made a shift from our home of nearly 11 years in Mid-Canterbury in the South Island of New Zealand to Kerikeri in the Far North of the North Island.

In some ways the change is enormous - I've finished work with a parish and a people that have become my extended family, moving from a climate with a marked change in seasons of snow at times in the winter and nor'west heat in the summer to a sub-tropical climate with a lot more rain and very few frosts.

In some ways it is another step in the journey. I will still be a RURAL minister. At a recent Rural Ministry Forum I began my contribution with this comment:

"In former days rural meant "country service". Teachers and ministers did their time in the country, then moved on. The expectation has been expressed that, in leaving Methven, I must be going somewhere bigger, because bigger is assumed to be better. That I'm not going urban surprises some, because the city is presumed to be the centre, up to date socially, the leading edge economically and carrying the clout politically."

Rural ministry experience so far has taught me that this is a specialist ministry, not a stepping-stone to something else.

The parish I am going to - Kaeo-Kerikeri - is a Methodist-Presbyterian Union and includes two congregations and communities. Kaeo is a rural town of under 1000, with reasonably hilly farm country surrounding it. Kerikeri is a growing town, currently of 4,500, but 'on the move' with more and more people coming north from Auckland for the easier pace of life and the beautiful landscape and seascape of the Bay of Islands.

That kind of change affects a lot of New Zealand rural communities, as witnessed in the discussion Jolyon Manning has instigated among us on "Landscape Icons and Spiritual Values" (see *Rural Network News*, No. 25 November 2003). With this change comes increases in land value, with the measure of value becoming less its productivity - that is, its ability to produce food and other human requirements - and more what people will pay to own it to build houses on. But the Kerikeri region is also very good land for farming and horticulture. Exactly what happens in that respect I will be learning when I get there and get out on the road visiting. That is the anticipation!

Robyn McPhail, in Transit

International Responses

When this story of "Changing Location - Staying Rural" was told on the International Rural Church Ecumenical Association's Prayer e-mailing, here are some of the responses that came back.

Good comments about Rural Ministry. For years I have said Rural Ministry is a very special ministry and takes a real special calling.

Luckily one of our Seminaries now has a "Rural Ministry" track and is recognizing this fact. Too often the rural was for what I call the 'untried', 'unable' and the 'unfit'. Send your new ministers to start out in a rural parish with pressures and problems, OR if a minister is not well, then send him or her to a rural parish, OR if someone is just not able to function in ministry then send him or her off to some isolated rural area! All of which only makes the problem worse. Thank heaven for all those rural parishes that survived and did their mission in those situations.

Peter McKellar, Saskatchewan, Canada

Beginnings and Endings
part of the cycle
harvest and planting
watching the field
it keeps us alive
and transforming and growing
God is at both
ending and beginning
and even more
wonderful...
in-between.

Bobbie McGarey, Oklahoma, USA

The Book of Genesis is full of stories about people going to a new place rather foreign countries as migrants. Each one of them is a typical experience. I am reading this book so often as I am now passing through such a strange experience in Korea. God shows his light to our path each day. We live each day with his mission. At the end of the day we always will happen to praise his name for his guidance.

My experience is that every new place in the ministry is a better place than the previous. I love my every previous place and that remains a cherishable memory forever.

Prasad Rao (from South India) in Korea

When I moved from Mount Isa to Cloncurry to take up the aerial patrol, many of my colleagues thought I must

have 'stuffed up' in Mount Isa and was being punished by being sent to a much smaller and even more isolated community (I have 6 congregations, 2 of which are 900kms apart and average 5 attendees!!).

On the contrary, I and those who invited me to move saw it as an affirmation of my call to this, as you call it, specialised ministry.

Garry Hardingham, Queensland, Australia

In the responses received from others I can see reflections of the situation I experience here in Clevedon. A rural parish with 6 congregations, two sharing worship with another denomination and some with only 5 or 6 people. The city is slowly encroaching on three fronts, but with lifestyle blocks, which means the community life continues to be eroded in so many ways, the faith community being only one example.

Our sister denomination has centralised to some extent, built a larger building and meets the needs of many folk, especially young people. We are trying to complement this approach by maintaining a number of smaller congregations and buildings and thereby a presence within the various localities. The buildings are but a symbol of the church's presence and provide a "house of prayer" for locals and visitors alike.

It seems to me that rural people are often very connected to the local church building because it is such a part of the community's story that everyone owns and shares. To remove these churches is like removing part of someone's story, and leaves us the poorer in ways difficult to name.

Even within my own parish family there are those who would have us focus ministry on the larger congregations and provide less for the smaller ones.

But my response to date is that I have been called to have a care for ALL their souls, not just some, and so we continue.

This particular parish wanted someone who would come and stay, not use this parish as a stepping stone, either to something "more", or retirement. The local "vicar" needs to become part of the community and be owned by them in ways that just cannot happen in urban situations. Colin and I are doing all we can to build relationships in various ways, he as a vocational deacon serving the wider community and me as a member of the local Volunteer Fire Brigade.

We feel this is where we are meant to be, sharing the concerns over lack of rain and water supplies, weather issues around harvesting grapes, cutting hay, beef and sheep prices etc., as well as the eroding of community life with the changes taking place around us. We also share the inspiring beauty of the creation we dwell

amongst, the sense of connectedness to God's world and the invitation to join in partnership with the one who created us.

How can any of that be second best?

Sandy Neal, Clevedon, 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

* * * * *

The Methven congregations and the Canterbury Rural Ministry Unit have admired Robyn's many contributions to church life. Don McLeod, Principal of Mt Hutt College, has given us this window into Robyn's contributions to community life. The Rural Ministry Unit shares this with readers of Rural Network News.

"THANK YOU ROBYN MCPHAIL"

Somewhere around eleven years ago I came to Methven High School, as it was then known. Somewhere early in my time here I met Robyn, and of course soon came to know Jeremy and Kim because they both became pupils in our school. Somewhere about then I discovered that the McPhail/Chirnside household had something in common with the McLeod/O'Halloran household – a love of cricket, a familiarity with a number of cricket grounds (most notably Molyneux Park in Alexandra) and few other things besides. One was the fact that both families have two boys of very comparable ages, which may also explain the attachment to cricket!

As time went on I grew to know Robyn better. She became a member of our Board of Trustees. She ran and has continued to run an annual orientation session for Year 6 students coming on to Mount Hutt College. She showed a deep and abiding commitment to things Maori, and was crucially instrumental in our gaining the services of Boyd Keepa as our Youth Mentor. She proved to be invaluable in her ability to offer counsel and advice in a range of situations, from staff problems to family bereavements. She provided supervision (in the technical sense of the word) for some of our staff officially, and for some of us – notably me – unofficially. She has been a voice of wisdom in the ear of many of us on many occasions.

Robyn has continued to maintain an active interest in the students and staff as well as the parents of our school, in spite of the fact that her boys left us some time ago. She has regularly liaised with us on a range of issues, and I know her parting gift will be some of the knowledge she has accumulated during her recent research into the values of our community, and the implications thereof for us at the school end of the education spectrum. I look forward to reading what she has to tell us.

This community has been very lucky to have known Robyn, her family and her work. This school and the people in it have likewise benefited from Robyn's presence and skills on occasions too numerous to mention. I count myself fortunate to have met Robyn and her family, and I will miss her visits and her keen observations of human nature – including my own – enormously.

I guess this column is my way of saying “Thank You” to a person who has practised what she preached – a made a difference. Not a bad farewell gift, is it?

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Book Review

The Cavalry Won't be Coming: Strategies for local shared ministry by volunteer teams in small congregations

Dave Mullan
ColCom Press, 20 Tui Gr. Paihia, 0252

What a pity this book wasn't around eight years ago when our Parish was very definitely waiting “for the cavalry to come” and keep us safe! Luckily, we were encouraged not to wait around, but develop a local shared ministry model.

I really liked the practical nature of this book, which is easy to read. It makes strong links with the early Christian Church, how it functioned and why it successfully grew. It has several useful ideas for “getting started” for those congregations thinking of moving to a local shared ministry. A key beginning task is “listening for God”. It is suggested that we need to be very deliberate about our praying – maybe the formal prayer at the beginning of meetings is hardly listening for God?

Some ideas challenged my thinking – after reflecting on the processes our parish has been through in the last eight years:

- How do we know that with the continuous use of lay preachers for Sunday Services, there is general *acceptance* of this practice? (p.26) For those consistently leading worship, it is important to know of this acceptance.
- It is a good idea to put time limits on tasks that individuals agree to undertake – but in all reality, where do the replacements come from in very small congregations? (p.53)
- “Lay Preachers who ‘study carefully’ often develop thorough theological foundations for their preaching” (p. 69) – how can more help be

given in this area by both accessing study material and developing sound study practices?

Some suggestions I found really helpful – these were:

- Using a SWOT analysis to start realising the potential of group members (p.30).
- Allocating hours to jobs that need to be done (p.37) – helpful to those considering undertaking tasks before they make a commitment.
- The Agenda for team meetings outlined on page 60. This includes a Praying time, a Sharing time, a Caring time and a Planning time. How often we go straight into the planning time – wanting to get the tasks done!

I would recommend this book as being a really useful resource for not only those congregations considering moving to a structure of local shared ministry, but also for those who are already working in this way. Helpful, practical ideas will be found in it for all.

As Dave says: “The challenge is to find where God is working and to be there, to find a way of being – faithfully – the people of God”.

Liz Depree, Rakaia, Mid-Canterbury

FLOODING

... 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.



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