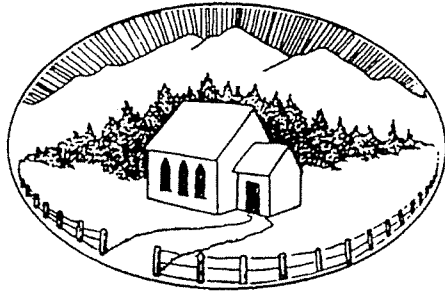


Rural Network News



No. 29

March 2005

The water for which we thirst is God's
grace, but God gives us the job of hauling
it in our own buckets.

Evelyn Underhill

Rural Network News aims to share ideas for ministry in
neighbourhood and land-based communities.
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.

Rural Church: Rural Delivery

Teapot Valley, Nelson
20-22 June 2005

The sixth Rural Ministry Forum organised by the
Anglican Diocese of Nelson will be held from
1 pm Monday 20 June to 2 pm Wednesday 22 June
2005 at the Teapot Valley Christian Camp, Brightwater,
Nelson.

This is an opportunity for lay and ordained people
involved in rural ministry at present, and those who
may be involved in the future, to learn, share, and
develop a better understanding of the particular
characteristics that are unique to the rural environment,
and rural communities in New Zealand.

While this event is primarily focused on the needs and
opportunities for delivery of rural ministry in the Top of
the South up to ten places at the Forum are available for
participants from other parts of Aotearoa New Zealand
or further afield (and from any denomination).

The Forum will consist of a mixture of workshops,
conversations, and plenary sessions. There will be
plenty of opportunity for participants to contribute from
their experience of rural ministry. We plan to confirm
the names of our guest contributors in the registration
forms which will be available in early April.

A sample of topics for the workshop/conversation
sessions:

- Rural delivery: running a church without a paid minister
- Rural vision: looking to the horizon and beyond
- Rural display: PowerPoint, projectors, and possibilities
- Country music: delivering quality music in rural worship services
- Creative delivery: preparing and delivering worship services

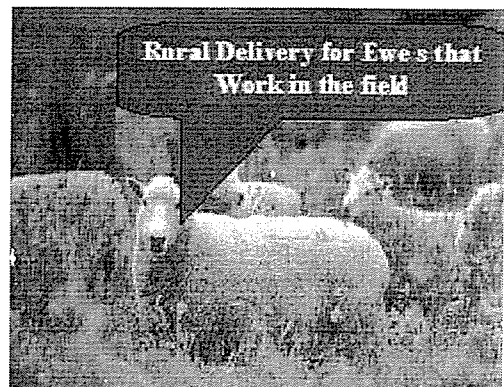
The cost of the event is \$60 (includes all meals)
Cheques to: 'Diocese of Nelson' [Children at a reduced
rate, please enquire.]

Please register your interest by emailing
rev.harrison@xtra.co.nz so we can keep you informed
and send out a registration to you when they are ready.

Registration forms available in early April. Contacts
for further information:

Peter Carrell, P.O Box 100, Nelson ph: 03 5483124
fax: 03 5482125 email: peterc@nelsonanglican.org.nz

Martin Harrison, 68 Waimea West Road, Brightwater
phone/fax: 03 5423694 email: rev.harrison@xtra.co.nz



The Nelson organisers have set aside places for ten
participants from outside the region. The Canterbury
Rural Ministry Unit will provide grants in aid of \$50 for
up to ten participants from Canterbury, Otago and
Southland. Applications for grants to be made on
confirmation of registration and not later than May 10th
to Secretary, Canterbury Rural Ministry Unit, 7 Owens
Terrace, Christchurch 8004.

See www.schoolofministry.ac.nz/RuralMinistry/
for archive of "Rural Network News"

From the Back Paddock

The term 'Peer Pressure' brings to mind teenagers doing less than desirable things that, if they were on their own, their parents like to think they'd choose not to do. It's the influence of 'bad' friends our children associate with - we often think - leading them to make wrong choices with undesirable consequences. But peer pressure can also be positive with peers sometimes preventing individuals from making unwise choices.

Farmers can be influenced by peer pressure, positive or negative, and it's the negative that's my concern here.

Farmers often feel pressured to conform when making decisions about their business. They often endure ridicule from neighbours when they make unusual or different decisions. Bearing in mind that farmers are always looking over the fence to note eagerly the 'mistakes' their neighbours are making! Farmers never like crop failures but these are particularly bad when they are near a road for all to see.

There are two forms of pressure that can have serious consequences.

One is when farmers feel everyone else is more successful than they are. For example an individual farmer feels under severe financial strain for whatever reason, while seeing others spending money on cars, on trips, etc. The reality may be that these others are just less uncomfortable about taking on more debt to fund their spending.

The other potentially damaging peer pressure comes when such things as community irrigation schemes are mooted. Often farmers are told that if they don't agree to join, their neighbours will be disadvantaged by having to pay more than if everyone were involved. The perception is that an individual is letting their community down by not being part of it.

I'm in this position at the moment. Over time I've partially drought-proofed my business by researching markets for crops that are early maturing to avoid drought or are drought tolerant so that irrigation is rarely necessary. This focus means that irrigation is non-viable financially within the current business.

I try to be open about this so that if other farmers in our proposed irrigation scheme area think the same, but feel intimidated by the peer pressure, then hopefully they won't feel alone.

Farming can be a lonely occupation and suicides are too common. I'd do anything I could to make people feel okay with where they are at in their own business, and not feel intimidated by pressure from neighbours or community.

Colin Lill, Methven, Canterbury

Travel Well, Jenny Dawson

Members of the Canterbury Rural Ministry gathered in Janet Taege's home and at The Terrace Restaurant in Darfield to say farewell to Revd Jenny Dawson.

Jenny has been Ministry Educator in the Diocese of Christchurch and moved in January to become Vicar of Pauatahanui in the Wellington Diocese.

We shared memories about the life and work of the Rural Ministry Unit, reflected on the changes in the rural church over the time Jenny has been a member and the role of the rural church in testing out and pioneering new ways of being church. Jenny told us about her new parish and its four congregations on the edge of urban Wellington.

Our tributes to Jenny and her work are warm ones. Jenny has been intensely pastoral to local congregations, and to clergy new to rural ministry. Jenny has been wisely strategic with a strong sense of the mission of God in the life of rural congregations.

Jenny has had a strong awareness of the ministry of the whole congregation to the whole community. She has trained and equipped Total Ministry teams, not to be clergy substitutes but to enable the ministry of the whole people of God. Jenny has been strongly ecumenical in the life of rural Canterbury.

As a member of the North Canterbury JRC, and as Anglican Ministry Educator, she was actively and effectively supportive of Union Parishes, Cooperative Ventures and Uniting Congregations.

At the same time her ecumenism also takes her into the wider world where she exercises leadership as a President of the Christian Conference of Asia.

Most of all Jenny has been a good friend and encourager to all of us, lay and clergy, rural and urban, young and old.

Jenny's move to Pauatahanui is an affirmation of the importance of front line Parish Ministry and the people who make up local congregations. We wish her well in all of the challenges and opportunities opening up ahead of her.

The moves of Jenny Dawson to Pauatahanui and Robyn McPhail to Kaeo and Kerikeri have not created a vacuum in the life of the Canterbury Rural Ministry Unit. Mrs Sarah Gardiner from Amuri and Mr Noel Dalley from Brookside have taken on the role of Co-convenors of the Unit, strengthening its rural parish foundation.

Revd Mary Giles from the Malvern Anglican Parish will bring new theological insights when she joins the Unit in April.



Canterbury Rural Ministry Unit, Darfield 2.11.2004
 [L-R] Rear: Garth Cant, Stanley Barnes, Noel Dalley,
 Nicola Robertson, Colin Lill; Front: Janet Taege, Jenny
 Dawson, Sarah Gardiner, Helen Williams

See www.ccanz.net.nz/rural/ and
www.cvforum.org.nz/Rural_Ministry.html
 for information on Rural Ministry
 in New Zealand and links overseas

Anzac and Cross Country

There's a deepening soul to the country
 Through colours of late autumn days;
 a time and place for family names
 etched deeply tho' far faraway

Beside school and hall – a monument
 or arch with its texted gate
 carefully scrubbed of moss and rust
 as we come where the roads radiate.

Uniforms and ribboned medals;
 wreathlaying of a straggling parade;
 Last Post carrying over farmland stilled,
 "Floo'ers of the Forest" distantly played.

A pause for unashamed prayer
 each name rememberingly read;
 a carpet of poppies... Lest we forget...
 peace overtures from the dead.

There's a hosting side to the country
 food unsought for the after table
 kids a scrambling, olds bent rambling,
 Fences mended, realigned cable –
 a whiff of sacrament
 - next, cross country school event.

Doug Grierson

Kia ora - Welcome to New Zealand

You don't get a second chance to make a first impression – so the saying goes. It should be the guiding principle of everyone with responsibility for greeting and welcoming people arriving at church for a service. When a minister takes sabbatical leave there's the opportunity of testing the welcome in other people's churches. I'm happy to report that during a recent month's stay in New Zealand all the churches we visited passed this test with honours!

One church we visited asked the question in its weekly Pew Sheet "Do you know who has the most important job on a Sunday Morning – The Priest? – wrong, The Preacher? - wrong, the Organist? – wrong - it's the Greeter at the door." How right.

As Anglicans from middle England my wife and I enjoyed visiting churches of other traditions: a Union Parish, Methodists and Presbyterians – with two churches 30+ km apart; a Presbyterian Parish; and a Co-operating Parish, Anglicans, Presbyterians and Methodists. We experienced Local Shared Ministry – which takes seriously 'all people ministry', and we visited churches with ministers trying hard to work themselves out of being 'The Minister', while supporting and enabling the church fellowship to identify individuals for various leadership roles. We met those who were taking responsibility for worship, pastoral care, preaching, presiding at Communion Services, and everywhere the importance of the administrator was stressed, as well as that of the Music Leader.

What was our overall impression? The churches we visited, and the church leaders we spoke to, showed an awareness that 'the times they are a changing'. Old patterns of division between denominations and the idea of one person ministry have to be challenged. We encountered an openness to change and looking forward, which we found challenging and refreshing. Of course our visits and meetings were selective: we're in no position to say this is how the church is in New Zealand, this is what we encountered. The history of Christian Mission in New Zealand is important and still influential in a number of ways.

What I think we witnessed was churches less bound by their past than those with which we are familiar in the UK, and less bound by the legal framework within which the Church of England operates. Change is always a challenge, and is rarely problem free, and we heard of a variety of problems. But, all in all, the churches in England have much to learn from what is going on in the churches of New Zealand. Thank you for your welcome!

Hugh Williams, Chipping Norton, Oxon, UK

Our Changing Landscape

Our forebears took their religion seriously. At most marae and in every little community of new settlers, determined efforts were made to build a church. Maori built magnificent structures with long ridge poles brought in from the bush that could house 1000 or more at once. Pakeha used the materials close at hand to create icons of God's presence, and modelled on the neo-gothic styles of their original homelands.

Christianity among Maori ebbed and flowed with the currents of both tribal warfare and the fallout from the Land Wars. Both communities took refuge in a faith that exhorted peace but was frequently compromised by misunderstanding and conflict. Pakeha settlers saw New Zealand as the promised land, a land waiting to be farmed and exploited, a place of enormous economic potential. The churches carved up their ecclesiastical territory into parishes and districts that have generally remained in place to the present day. Maori knew it was a divinely gifted land, Papatuanuku.

Pakeha settlers brought with them a religion that was personal and private, with an arms-length attitude to the institutional church. Maori spirituality encompassed every part of life, of which land, tribal community and whakapapa ensured identity and meaning.

Rural parishioners assumed that their spiritual professional was the vicar – whose ministry entailed pastoral care and travelling to scattered worship centres. Most parishes, like Maori pastorates, were multi-centered. Pastorates also depended on their vicar assisted by licensed layreaders, whose mana and role was significantly greater in their communities than their Pakeha counterparts.

While population in rural areas has remained much the same over the past 80 years (about half a million), there has been considerable demographic movement. Post World War 2 there was a considerable exodus of Maori to urban areas. In recent times much land near larger urban areas has been transformed into lifestyle or small farm blocks. The number of farms in New Zealand is about 80,000, plus a further 37,700 small block owners.

Rural parishes and pastorates have become the testing ground for new ways of doing ministry

Since the 1970s a rural revolution has been occurring among rural parishes and pastorates. In many ways they have become the testing ground for new ways of doing ministry in the church as a whole. First came the theological upheavals, as the global church grappled with the question of how to express the gospel to a disillusioned and increasingly scientific and technological generation, in which God seemed to be

more and more marginalised – remember Bishop Robinson's *Honest to God?*

Then the liturgical renewal saw the Book of Common Prayer superseded by a host of new experimental and indigenous liturgies, a process still evolving. Tikanga Maori began to train and ordain minita-a-iwi - community, marae-based clergy. Today, this training continues through their ministry schools known as tapaapa. The constitution of the three-tikanga Anglican Church has injected impressive energy and ownership into Tikanga Maori.

Even more significant for Maori and Pakeha rural communities has been the economic impact of the 1980s, when a strong free-market policy adopted by successive governments withdrew farm subsidies from the rural sector. Although generally welcomed, the speed at which this policy was applied saw a drastic reduction in farm income and, for many, a loss of livelihood through mortgagee sales. Rural servicing agencies vanished into the local towns and cities.

Despite hardship rural church communities were determined to remain viable in one way or another

With numerous rural parishes and rohe unable to financially support their vicar, a drastic programme of rationalisation began. It took different forms. Despite hardship most rural church communities were determined to remain viable in one way or another. Parishes combined to create larger units. Others joined ecumenically to develop Co-operating Ventures in official or non-official 'marriages'. Some became rural extensions of town or city parishes, but often found they had much less clout. Clergy felt uneasy about future job security.

However, the most important development out of all this has been the creation of parish communities whose leadership is essentially exercised through a ministry team, comprising both laity and clergy. Anglican churches worldwide looked around for viable models for rural or small town areas. They were inspired by the theological writings of Roland Allen (1912) and the development of Total Ministry in the USA – in Alaska, Nevada and North Michigan. Bishop David Moxon fostered a creative dialogue between Anglicans in Nevada and New Zealand Anglicans.

Numerous rural parishes have now adopted this ministry form, each diocese developing variant forms of the initial concept. It is known as Local Shared or Local Team Ministry, Total, Mutual or Every Member Ministry. It is a world-wide phenomenon, having the generic title of Collaborative Ministry. At its heart is a recovery of the theology of baptism, seen as the affirmation of the ministry gifts of each congregational member, primarily exercised where each person works

and plays. Thus parish worship is not an end in itself, but simply the re-charging of energy to do God's work in the wider community – hence the importance of the Dismissal at the end of the Eucharist.

Pakeha parishes that have stipendiary clergy are also strongly influenced by changing theological and liturgical patterns. Where leadership in the rural parish is no longer focussed exclusively on an ordained professional, the role is increasingly exercised by ministry teams. They comprise a mix of laity, and ordained community priests and deacons. Stipended clergy are increasingly taking on roles that involve the training, support and encouragement of these teams and parishes. Members of the team are called out by the congregation from time to time. I am continually impressed by the determination of rural churches to remain viable, and by the commitment to time and training they make in order to develop their ministry skills.

In both the South and North Islands rural ministry seminars have gathered frequently over the years to encourage all who minister in rural areas, both laity and clergy. Also, every four years a Trans-Tasman event is held.

smallness and vulnerability can still allow God's Spirit to work creatively

The recent Trans-Tasman Rural Ministry Conference at Clare, South Australia, reinforced this new energy and ownership for the rural church. Its theme, 'Recapturing Passion for the Local Church', affirmed that smallness and vulnerability can still allow God's Spirit to work creatively. Earlier in the year a rural church forum was held at Methven and echoed this same commitment and passion.

Meanwhile, the energy for ministry in rural rohe continues unabated. Atuatanga is the creative attempt to bring the whole Maori spiritual tradition within the gambit of theological exploration. Further, rural people, both Maori and Pakeha, are increasingly addressing issues relating to land, ecology, genetics, ecumenism and evangelism. And every community experiences the pull between maintaining the status quo and the need for change.

These developments in rural ministry have become a working laboratory and are being viewed with much interest by the wider church. The No 8 wire Kiwi philosophy remains theologically alive in our country areas.

Bill Bennett, Napier, Hawkes' Bay

Reprinted from www.anglican.org.nz/news with the author's permission

Feeling Lucky to have a Toehold

Tsunami Lessons for Sustainable Living

Beyond the question "where is God in all this?" with responses of solidarity and action to rebuild, the spiritual issue that came into focus after the Boxing Day Tsunami was a profound awareness of our vulnerability as human beings. We are just one species among many on a planet that doesn't need us for its survival but we surely need it.

A January column of "Stevenson's Country", a regular feature in *The New Zealand Herald*, opened with the words: "we need to be jolted about how we treat our precious planet." Pippa Stevenson maintained that the tsunami could be that jolt for us:

When the earth shifted on December 26 so did our perspective.

We were still digesting Christmas dinners when the planet burped and blew away any assumptions that we ant-like characters on its surface are masters of our destiny.

We may be the dominant species but it suddenly seemed just plain lucky to have a toehold anywhere.*

Some weeks before she had alerted me to the report "Growing for Good: Intensive farming, sustainability and New Zealand's environment" by Dr J. Morgan Williams, Parliamentary Commissioner for the Environment. The report identifies the hard issues we must face in our land use in New Zealand if the future is to be sustainable economically and environmentally.

What draws me to these writers is the spiritual issues they are highlighting. Yes, spiritual. They don't mention God or the Holy Spirit, but I'm sure that for a 21st century Jesus this would be God-stuff.

"We may be the dominant species but..." is one of the core discoveries of faith. It is to our peril to think we can control the world or even our lives. We need to see ourselves in perspective.

What is more, the Christian way, as I see it, is a way of life that is integrated, recognising all aspects as important – economics, ethics, technology, ecology, aesthetics, politics... Spirituality is about seeking and finding the connections between the different aspects, finding, for example, integrity between economics and ethics, between technology and ecology. Not narrowing in on one aspect only and saying that approach matters before all else.

Spirituality is about sustainable life, for all. As Jesus put it - "life in all its fullness."

Robyn McPhail, Kerikeri, Northland

* *The New Zealand Herald*, Tuesday 18 January 2005

EASTER CHRIST

People long for peace.
We search for meaning.
Our world is a TV screen,
full of pain, anger, suffering and sadness.
Was it so very different, Lord Jesus,
during your earthly life?

The dance of Easter is the resurrection,
all that defies human expectations.
You meet us as living Lord,
around the table of hospitality –
 breaking bread,
 blessing wine.

You meet us in the stranger and visitor
who comes into our domestic life.
You meet us as we remember dead loved ones
 enriching our own memories,
 and healing the scars of separation.
You meet us in the dawn of each new day,
 melting the darkness of fear,
 and washing creation with the dew of rebirth.

Easter Christ,
rise up in our lives
and in the busy footpaths of the world.

From Seasons of the Land, by Bill Bennett

An Emerging Church

This slightly abridged article by Christopher Carey is reprinted, with permission, from Tui Motu InterIslands, an independent monthly Catholic magazine.

There is a new church emerging. It flows from the primary model of church, the people of God, envisaged at Vatican II. Its birth parent, like a jealous sibling wary of a new family member – especially one who could threaten her control, is often a reluctant midwife in this birthing process. It encompasses much of what is best in its institutional parent to whom it will always be bonded, alongside which it will always sit. Two dimensions, one church.

There was no sign of a priest. He was celebrating Mass 40 miles away.

I realised this most graphically as I attend the Christmas midnight service in the Far North during the holidays. Knowing there were virtually no ordained priests left in the north, I was not quite sure what to expect. I was warmly welcomed at the door by a bloke in gumboots. He slipped them off as he led me to a seat. Around me lots of people were greeting one another with a kiss or a hongi or both. There was no sign of a priest. He was celebrating Mass 40 miles away.

When most expected had arrived, about 80 in all including several visitors, one of the local men gave a mihimihi to the assembly and invited us to join in and

welcome Christ into our hearts and homes in a special way at this time. As the congregation launched into the opening hymn, they hit their notes with gusto, reminding me of the Mormon tabernacle Choir in full flight – vibrant, voices raised, really believing. Who said that Catholics couldn't sing?

Four young people read the lessons. Clear, confident, articulate, reverent, well-prepared. Auntie Beatrice led a reflection. She is not my aunt, but she seemed to be everyone else's. Talking quietly of the Christ born into her home every day, this beautiful elderly kuia reminded us that we were a privileged people able to be present in such numbers when so many of Christ's people lacked the basic necessities of life and faced starvation, or lived in refugee camps or were in prison.

It was as good a homily as one is likely to hear anywhere, Spirit-filled and wise. Her reflection came from the heart, from someone who lives the word she was speaking. She then invited people to share their own insights. About ten others took up the offer and brought some wonderful insights to bear.

There followed 'the prayers of the people' reflecting both local and international concerns – babies to be born, people kept safe on the roads, an end to the Iraq war and a remembrance of victims, hopes for exam results, better health for grandma and Uncle Rangī: prayed with feeling and faith.

The communion service was led by a local man, reverently, barefooted

The communion service was led by a local man, reverently, barefooted (gumboots at the door I presumed). It was interspersed with frequent bouts of singing – wonderful harmonies, obviously practised but blending in with the throaty offering I was attempting. And sung with pride – like a Welsh rural village choir I thought. You can sense the pride and the awareness of the sacred.

The obvious presence of the Spirit in this worshipping community was tangible. People were being nourished, none more so than me. As one who never misses Sunday Mass, I had not been present in a church for many years where the leadership had taken such care to empower people and get to grips with what Christ was asking of them this day.

I came away greatly heartened. A new church is emerging, building on the old, slowly but surely. There in the Far North, as elsewhere where lay folk take the ball in their own hands, prepare themselves well and run with the Spirit at their backs, the new church is emerging – kicking a little, crying sometimes in anguish, centred on Christ, full of hope – and singing three-part harmonies en route.

Life Giving Agriculture Forum

Wonju, South Korea 9-13 April 2005

Agriculture plays a crucial role in addressing the needs of a growing global population, and is inextricably linked to poverty eradication, especially in developing and least developed countries. Sustainable agriculture and rural development are essential to the implementation of an integrated approach to increasing food production and enhancing food security and food safety in an environmentally sustainable way.

These are the words that introduce the motivation behind a gathering in Korea in April this year.

An **Ecumenical Coalition on Alternatives to Globalisation** (ECAG) draws together people from the World Council of Churches, the World Alliance of Reformed Churches, The Lutheran World Federation, The Pax Romana, The World YWCA, The World Alliance of YMCA, World Christian Students Association, Frontier Internship in Mission, and the Association of Rural Pastors and it is this group that has taken the initiative of a global forum on Life Giving Agriculture.

They maintain that:

today, conventional agriculture is the source of hunger and environmental destruction in the world. It has been proved that this type of agriculture is neither sustainable nor is it contributing to a healthy humanity. Corporate globalisation and enhanced trade under the World Trade Organisation is hinged on promoting industrial agriculture that has a devastating effect on the livelihoods of small farmers who practice organic/ecological agriculture in the world.

In our New Zealand context there are farmers who might be put off by the sound of this, because it seems to be condemning us outright with our continuing endeavours to produce efficiently and profitably.

There are aspects of our agricultural systems, particularly in relation to the heart and hopes driving many farmers - including many Christian ones - that could have something to say to a "Life Giving Agriculture" model. But there will be questions asked at this Forum that our agricultural systems need to respond to in order to avoid the trap of "death dealing agriculture".

In the report "Growing for Good: Intensive Farming, Sustainability and New Zealand's Environment", the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Environment puts precisely this challenge:

Existing initiatives are not sufficiently profound or widespread enough to make a real and lasting difference. More and more external inputs are

being used to boost production, while the health of the environment continues to decline. More fundamental change is required. There is a need for much more focus on developing farming systems that deliver environmental sustainability *and* economic wealth – not short-term economic returns at the expense of environmental quality.

The Forum in Korea aims to build up a movement among farmers who are resisting 'death giving' agriculture and has the following objectives:

- To provide a platform where farmers, particularly Christian farmers working for Life Giving Agriculture (LGA), share their thoughts and methodologies of LGA and identify strategies for globalising their ideas.
- To deepen and amplify the faith base and theological reflection on life giving forms of agriculture with a goal of a theology of life from an agricultural perspective.
- To awaken the Christian community and churches to give more attention to this issue and encourage them to a faithful witness to life giving agriculture.
- To create farmers' committee that will create an Ecumenical Life Giving Agriculture Forum.

The Forum is expected to be local and global in nature. It will be divided into two parts as follows:

- The exposure to LGA practice in South Korea
- The discussion on LGA and how to globalise it



Participants have been invited from all continents, including a number of locals. Watch the next edition of *Rural Network News* for a full report, as your editor has been most fortunate in being invited to attend.

Alternatively, contact her at chirmac@xtra.co.nz if you would like to join the IRCA (International Rural Church Association) prayer/news emailing for the latest news as it comes available.

2006 International Conference

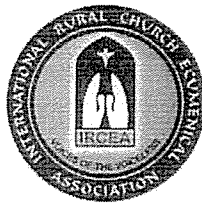
Kyongnam Province, South Korea

The next Conference of the International Rural Church Association will be held in South Korea from 19-23 June 2006 and will have a theme related to local churches as centres for community development. Further information will be available in the next newsletter.

Contact the editor of this newsletter (who is the Chair of IRCA) if you want to know more.

News through the IRCA Network

IRCA - the International Rural Church Association - is a network of rural Christians around the world who seek to support one another in their mission of connecting the gospel and rural life in their own local context.



Dave Ruesink, IRCA Secretary from Texas USA sent a web connection to a publication on rural education.

The Role of Education: Promoting the Economic and Social Vitality of Rural America is the result of more than three years of research and offers insight into the important and often fragile relationship between rural schools and communities in America.

The report has sections on: (1) Education, Human Capital and the Local Economy, (2) Links between Rural Schools and Communities and (3) Creating Successful Rural Schools and Students. This report can be downloaded in Adobe Acrobat at SRDC: <http://srdc.msstate.edu/publications/ruraleducation.pdf>

A New Zealand School Trustee, who followed up this web connection, found food for thought for the New Zealand scene in the rejuvenation of rural areas through community involvement in education and employment projects.

Canadian Harvest Conference

**Faith Community as Catalyst for Rural Renewal
13-16 October 2005, Muenster, Saskatchewan**

Globally rural communities are struggling. In Canada federal and provincial policy makes no secret of its intention to abandon small farms, their families and communities. Where do hope and renewal come from? Renewal has to come from within, from the Spirit at work in community.

The Canadian Rural Church Network is an ecumenical network committed to the vitality of the church at the heart of smaller communities, linked by internet through a website nurtured by Joyce Sasse on www.agri-ville.com. This Harvest Conference will be the Network's inaugural national meeting.

The conference is an ecumenical event open to all people, clergy or lay, who have a passion for rural ministry. The event has a varied program, including

Worship, Bible Study, Exposure Tours to see and hear about rural renewal happening in the local area, opportunity for story telling, time for sharing resources, a cultural event. It will culminate with a dynamic worship celebration of World Food Day.

Joyce Sasse will lead the theme times exploring Faith Communities as Catalyst for Rural Renewal. She says, "As we bring our rural experiences together with those from other backgrounds and together study the Gospel Story, new understandings, new mandates, and new experiences of joy will become apparent, how does the Voice of God speak in our day? What is it saying?"

The organizers' figures are based on 100 participants for the entire event, although there may be more, as rural renewal is a very timely topic.

The site of the event will be St. Peter's Abbey, Muenster, Sask., 118 km. east of Saskatoon. Return transportation will be provided from Saskatoon Airport.

Registration of the Harvest Conference is \$150. Participants are to take care of the cost of their own accommodation. There are three choices for accommodation: St. Peter's has double and single rooms for about 65 people; hotels in the near by city of Humboldt (with transportation provided by the conference); and billeting with local families.

For information, contact:

Catherine Christie, cchristie@sasktel.net
Joyce Sasse, jsasse@telusplanet.net

To New Zealand readers of this newsletter: could you please advise the Editor of Rural Network News if you plan to attend this Conference in Canada.



This occasional newsletter is printed and distributed by Anglican Diocese of Christchurch, PO Box 4438, Christchurch, ph 03 379 5950, fax 03 379 5954.

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

Editor: Robyn McPhail, 48 Cannon Drive, Kerikeri 0470, 09 401 7554, fax: 09 401 7555, chirmac@xtra.co.nz

Thanks to all contributors and to Garth Cant for editorial assistance.

TO: Rural Ministry, Diocese of Christchurch, PO Box 4438, Christchurch

Please find \$ _____ enclosed as a donation for **Rural Network News**

(name and (address [optional])

[N.B cheques to "Diocese of Christchurch"]