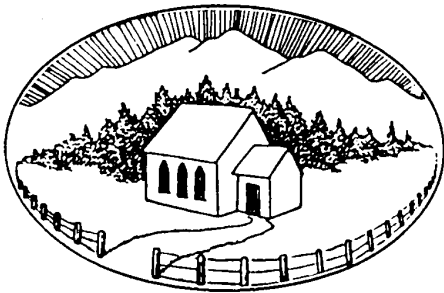


# Rural Network News



No. 30

July 2005

What the caterpillar calls  
the end of the world  
the Master calls a butterfly.

Anon

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.*

## The Darfield Cantata

“Life in Darfield is never dull”, writes Janet Taege from the Malvern Co-operating Parish, “We have many groups involved with acting and musicals, and we have an Art Gallery.”

“We love to combine the skills of town and country”, adds Rev Laurie Ennor, minister of Malvern Cooperating Parish. “We welcome them to our productions and they take delight in joining in.”

On 22 and 23 March 2005 a performance of *Surely He Was the Son*, written by New Zealander Matthew Raymond, took place at Trinity Church, Darfield.

*Surely* is the Easter Story with the narrative taken from the NIV Bible and a modern musical setting. A choir made up from interested and enthusiastic people from the local churches and the community under the leadership of Laurie Ennor, had rehearsed for some weeks prior to the performance. The soloists, small orchestra and pianist were drawn from the local choir and from Christchurch.

The role of Jesus was superbly performed by Jeremy Baker; the Reader, John Kitto; the talented Pianist, John Maasch; Flute, Louise Ennor; Bass, Patsy Hawke; Drums, James Sligo. These came from Christchurch: a mix of doctors, a laboratory technician, a teacher and a secondary school student.

Soloists from the local area were: Roger Dennis, Don Gillanders, Alan Broughton, Ian Ford, Belinda Cullen-Reid and Janet Taege, with the chorus drawn from the local communities. Among them were farmers, teachers, an engineer and artist and a nurse.

Trinity Church was filled both nights. The audience from close by and further afield received it with enthusiasm. One of the local audience commented:

The Cantata was excellently prepared and presented. The saddest, yet most magnificent story ever told was superbly played out for us. It was for me the perfect sermon for this season of the Church year, would that ALL could be audience to it.

Janet Taege adds: “Our thanks go to Creative New Zealand, Selwyn District for approving a grant to help this great production. We are now looking ahead and suggesting that the “New Beginning Group”, which launched this performance, prepare for something at Christmas.”

Janet continues: “Everyone loved the music and have been blessed by it. Being together, and being able to present the story of Easter in this new way to our community, has been a thrill.”



See [www.ccanz.net.nz/rural/](http://www.ccanz.net.nz/rural/) and [www.cvforum.org.nz](http://www.cvforum.org.nz) (click Links, Rural Ministry) for information on Rural Ministry in NZ and overseas

## Chaplaincy and Lambing

As part of the leadership team at this year's school chaplaincy CARE course in Queenstown, a thought struck me. I could see links between chaplaincy and my experience of lambing time on the farm.

As Helen McGie spoke about a child's need for nurture, I remembered armfuls of muddy, cold, nearly dead lambs being dumped on the woolshed floor. I stacked them carefully in two large boxes under heat lamps. Mouths had to be prised open. Warm milk was offered through a teat nearly as good as mum's. Sometimes, as milk trickled down, a lamb began to suck. That nurturing action got him to his feet in minutes. Those who couldn't suck took a revival fluid through a plastic tube threaded down the throat. Two hours later the teat was tried and if he sucked – whoopee! Otherwise, tube again. Lambs unable to respond to the teat could live for some time with the tube, but eventually without the nurturing of sucking they died.

In the eyes of some of my youngsters I see the same lost look as showed in those lambs. Chaplains, wrap your hurting kids in Jesus' warmth and friendship.

As we each shared highlights on the last day of the course, many lamb pictures flooded my mind. Finding the revived lamb's mum after his scent had been almost obscured by mud and contact with other lambs, battling to foster a lost lamb to a ewe whose lamb had died, persuading a belligerent ewe to accept both her twin lambs. Springtime storms brought 50-100 problem sheep families, each needing two to three days care. I enjoyed the success of seeing paddock families where lambs jumped, raced with their mates, and lifted mum's rear end as they dived under for a feed.

The group around me at the Chaplaincy Assessing Resourcing and Equipping (CARE) course were one big happy family and wonderfully fired by God's love. It was a great boost to my work as a Chaplain at school.

Doreen McKenzie, Queenstown, Central Otago

## In the Crisis of an Arson Attack

Isn't it amazing how God prepares the way for his work in a situation?

I commenced as chaplain at Kaitaia Primary School this year with enthusiastic back up of the Principal and a very open accepting staff. The Principal wanted me to concentrate on the six junior classes for the first term of the year, which I really enjoyed and more and more have developed a good relationship with staff and pupils.

This became very important when on the first weekend of the school holidays when an arsonist set light to the

junior school and severely damaged one class, the main corridor and badly smoke damaged another 4 classes. I was able to get alongside the staff during the holidays as they were called together on a couple of occasions, they involved me in the blessing of the building, and then asked that I be at school for the first 2 days just to be around for the students. I have found that I have had significant conversations more with the staff and now feel very much part of the life of the community.

In asking one person if we could add them to a church prayer chain she declared herself an atheist but then went on to agree to there being prayer for the school. A spiritual awareness is strong in this community. My prayer is that, more and more, they will be able to identify what is most fruitful when based in the love of God and the knowledge of Jesus Christ.

Susan Goldsack, Kaitaia, Northland

## State School Chaplaincy

Caring in school communities by providing chaplaincy services is a fast growing area of ministry. Chaplaincy supports the pastoral care networks in New Zealand schools for the whole school community; students, parents, staff and management.

A chaplain is a confidential listening ear and a caring trusted friend who volunteers about four hours a week in their school. A chaplain's tasks come from the school's needs. The gifts and the skills of each chaplain are reflected in an individually negotiated contract.

One Principal writes:

Our school is very fortunate to have a school chaplain. 'R's level of commitment and support is simply outstanding. He supports children on a regular basis in a number of ways, such as being a caring listening ear, someone who takes the time to listen; supporting sporting events during the week and on a Saturday; organising a writing programme between a local retirement home and three senior classes, and coordinating their visits; participation in all school events; providing transport for school trips; assisting teachers with lunchtime supervision; support in the classroom and in the playground. School children are very lucky to have someone like 'R' involved in their education.

The next Chaplaincy Assessment, Resourcing, Equipping (CARE) course will 31 October–4 November at El Rancho on the Kapiti Coast. It is full-time residential, full time and costs \$500.00, plus travel.

Contact National Chaplaincy Coordinator, Helen McGhie, [hmcghie@paradise.net.nz](mailto:hmcghie@paradise.net.nz) or PO Box 9049, Wellington, and she will put you in touch with your Regional Coordinator.

From [www.cec.org.nz/state.asp](http://www.cec.org.nz/state.asp)

## What's Happening to Rural Schools?

The rural scene in New Zealand has seen many changes over the last 60 years. There is now a mix of people in the rural community with many not directly associated with farming or those only marginally involved. The availability of smaller acreage blocks was initiated in part by the withdrawal of farming subsidies in the 1980s which saw a drastic reduction in farm incomes.

Although many of the relatively smaller farms still continue in existence, the scene today is changing. A number of farmers born in the baby-boom era are calling it a day and selling their farms to neighbours or taking advantage of the boom in lifestyle residential properties particularly in coastal regions. Recently a Northland dairy farmer was unperturbed that he could have made an extra NZ\$5 million had he waited a further few days when he recently sold his coastal farm to a developer for NZ\$20 million. A Real Estate Institute spokesperson said it could be the most expensive farmland ever sold in New Zealand although prices have also soared in Marlborough, where farms were being converted into vineyards. Throughout the country farms are also being sold for conversion into many diverse types of cash-crop ventures.

Rural areas face a wide range of problems brought about by economic, social and demographic change. The circumstances vary depending on climate and the specific regional situation, including issues like high levels of unemployment, greater distances to travel to access services, high numbers of small schools and increased pressure on the voluntary sector.

some rural areas in New Zealand are subject to migration issues

In addition some rural areas in New Zealand are subject to migration issues. Economic reasons have brought a considerable exodus of Maori to the urban areas, but these families do not forget their whakapapa and take the opportunity to return to their local iwi whenever the opportunity presents itself. This may result in the so-called 'transition' children in schools, who return temporarily with their families, often to substandard living accommodation, when seasonal work is available. Schools in these areas suffer from large swings in their rolls and often find it difficult to manage curriculum subjects to the benefit of these 'transition' students.

In addition, New Zealand is becoming an older population and the number of children being born, particularly in the rural areas, is falling. Predictions of marked change in rural areas over the next 20 years have prompted the Ministry of Education to introduce School Network reviews resulting in the closure of

smaller schools or the amalgamation of schools. There are obvious financial benefits with reduced maintenance on school buildings and diversion of additional money to the 'continuing school' to improve availability of teaching resources, but the down side is the effect on the community when a school is closed.

With local school closures, children have long days away from home and can spend an inordinate amount of time travelling over rough unsealed roads to schools located in more populated areas. And in some areas there has been a perceived loss of cultural identity, particularly for Maori and their local tribal affiliations. There is an ongoing need to ensure there are programmes that meet the need of Maori in their rural areas and to support the initiatives of tangata whenua.

Although low decile schools receive additional government funding, operational funding never seems to be enough and some rural schools have lost their targeted rural funding. This was to compensate for remoteness and the additional travelling costs, for example, when arranging for tradesmen to visit the school to carry out much needed repair work.

continuing decline in rural school rolls will inevitably lead to further school closures

Area Reviews have been put on hold in response to the view of many that they are an attack on small schools. But the continuing decline in rural school rolls will inevitably lead to further school closures as natural attrition takes place caused by the falling birth rate. Primary school rolls in the lower North Island as a whole may fall by 15-20% over the next twenty years and in some districts the fall may be as much as 40%. In the last ten years about 60 schools closed in New Zealand, but in the next ten years it is anticipated the number is could be 300 closures. Where circumstances permit, young families are likely to take the decision to move away from the area when their local school closes to ensure easier access for their children to a larger school. This will result in a further decline in local services and a further erosion of the community.

Undoubtedly the presence of a rural school is beneficial for businesses in the area. The importance of the school in the lives of rural people has been highlighted in surveys where respondents have overwhelmingly categorised the school as being extremely important. In the past for example, ex-dental nurses and teachers were to be found throughout rural communities. In contrast now, as rural populations dwindle, schools are finding it harder to attract and retain quality staff. In Northland for example, 30 new Principals have been appointed over the past 12 months. One rural school has unsuccessfully advertised for a Principal three times.

Eric Dodd, Kamo, Northland

## Life Giving Agriculture Forum

LGA is the name of a movement, arising especially in countries where growing food has been a way of life for centuries, if not millennia, but dominant global economic forces are now threatening sustainability. The cause was pursued at an international Forum, attended by over 70 participants from 20 countries, in Wonju, South Korea, in April this year.

“Life-Giving Agriculture” is a term that includes key characteristics of organic farming, but is more inclusive and descriptive of an overall approach and purpose. Namely, that farming can and should provide food and livelihoods for people in a long-term sustainable way, using methods that have minimum outflow of damage and minimum inputs of non-replaceable energy. Examples of outflow damage are effluent run-off, soil degradation, and health risks. Methods of reducing non-replaceable energy inputs are by valuing human labour and supporting local markets.

It is a term that also points provocatively to the alternative it challenges – death-dealing agriculture – methods that kill water, soil and communities.

an experience of positive globalisation and life-giving global interaction.

Some international church and Christian farmer groups joined forces for the Forum to be an example of globalisation at its best. In their own sphere a variety of groups from World Council of Churches to World YWCA and YMCA, from Pax Romana to Korean Rural Pastors Association in Korea, are concerned that current trends in economic globalisation are requiring farmers to conform to farming practices that damage the environment and local communities.

At issue is sustainable life on planet earth. Through faith in God people in different parts of the world are finding ways to resist the pressures and go for life-supporting options. The Forum proved to be an experience of positive globalisation and life-giving global interaction.

For it is not globalisation itself that is the culprit, but global systems and institutions that push for a single model of economic interaction and centralised international rules. One way: slot in or dip out. It is a monocultural version of the global village, which rather than celebrating diversity homogenises difference and excludes what doesn't fit. The Forum's call was to encourage multiple interactions for economic exchange and trade, and give room for diversity in relation to different contexts and land and community needs.

The Forum began with field visits to six places where Life-Giving Agriculture is being practised. Contrary to

the argument that there is no alternative to the highly industrialised approach, with continuous fertiliser, chemical and fuel input, we witnessed a number of alternatives already being practised. This was no subsistence farming, but farmers using expertise and innovation, with a standard of living to match New Zealand.

organic agriculture is now mandatory in order to ensure the water is kept clean

In the area I visited, alongside the lake that provides tap water to Seoul, organic agriculture is now mandatory in order to ensure the water is kept clean. The history of that situation is enlightening. The dam to form the lake for Seoul's water supply was built in 1972. At that point the government prohibited any new building in the area nearby, in order to protect the catchment area. At that stage in South Korea's history farming was still subsistence and the ban on construction made life even harder for the farmers around the lake. That meant using whatever means available to try to get a living, including fertiliser and pesticide applications.

They protested to the government as they were losing ground not gaining it, literally and figuratively. Eventually central and regional government made an agreement with the farmers that the area become an organic farming region. The government ensured the supply of organic fertilisers and helped in the initial stages with marketing and the farmers confined their activities to organic farming systems.

That was 15 years ago. The farmers are making a reasonable living (their homes and motor vehicles remind me of New Zealand farmers) and the lake water is completely clean. There are about 1000 families involved in farming in the area.

With this inspiration we gathered at Wonju for plenary presentations, panels and group work. We worked on practical issues like getting a fair deal for trade and on an underlying philosophy of life that regains a sense of sacredness and gratitude for life, as opposed to treating everything as commodities to use and use up.

Agriculture is not merely a matter of food, but of the spirituality of all creation. ...we affirm that the Earth is not our property, but created by God as home and garden for all creatures. Hence all must have their legitimate place and share in the resources of the world. Life-Giving Agriculture means what we produce excludes no-one. None go hungry while others consume excessively. (*draft Forum Report*)

One important aspect of “life-giving agriculture” is limiting the damage done to the wider environment by human ventures and integrating the things we do so that positive results are gained for rural and urban people.

Another aspect is this: imagine all around the world farming systems that are able and allowed to feed the local people and have partnerships for trade beyond the local into the global.

IMF requirements have obliged many developing countries to focus primarily on producing export goods

'Food sovereignty' was a frequently spoken phrase, particularly by people who want the right for their country to feed its people. IMF requirements have obliged many developing countries to focus primarily on producing export goods to a certain value and feed their own people on what is left. Many of these export crops are not staple foods so land gets tied up in crops that are luxury items in relation to the local people (e.g. feed grain for livestock in developed countries) or crops that are in themselves death-dealing (e.g. tobacco).

The draft Report produced at the end of the Forum sums it up this way. Life-Giving Agriculture:

understands that land and water are common good to be shared, nurtured and utilised sustainably by all members of the community.

revitalises local farming knowledge to preserve local seeds, regain if possible lost seeds, care for the soils and promote biodiversity.

collectivises and communities approaches to food sovereignty for the family, community and local market: 'grow what you eat, eat what you grow'.

integrates the production, distribution and processing of organic food.

promotes the use of manures, herbal mixtures to protect from insects and pests, inter-cropping and natural methods of weeding.

promotes respect, trust and cooperation between producers and consumers.

strengthens itself through inbuilt education methods to ensure continuity through generations and to transform the mindsets and attitudes of people at every level.

influences the transformation process to change unjust social, economic, cultural and political systems to more just ways of interacting.

Robyn McPhail, Northland

## Growing for Good

The concerns raised and possibilities explored at the "Life-Giving Agriculture" Forum in South Korea have a lot in common with our Parliamentary Commissioner for the Environment's report on New Zealand farming published last October – "Growing for Good: Intensive Farming, Sustainability and New Zealand's Environment."

According to Dr Morgan Williams we are facing a major wake-up call in relation to food production for an ever-increasing global human population and the sustainability of the natural environment. But as the Forum in Korea showed, sustainability also relates to the lives of people and rural communities. This is something that could be developed further in the New Zealand context. Discussion in the media, and at the "Growing for Good" workshops in different parts of the country, seems to be focussing entirely on environmental sustainability with, at the extreme, the livelihoods of farming people pitted against the 'livelihood' of land and water. "You can't be green if you're in the red" is a saying that brings nods of agreement for rural people, but it continues a sense of separation between the needs of the land and the needs of people. Opposition to the PCE report, and the amount of energy engaging in seeking to counter its evidence is understandable so long as the sustainable future of the people is left out of the frame. Globally the issue is as much about the well-being of people and land-based communities as it is about the well-being of soil and waterways.

If any readers have thoughts to share on the "Growing for Good" CPE report, please get in touch (details on back page). For copies of the report go to [www.pce.govt.nz](http://www.pce.govt.nz)

Life-Giving Agriculture is a term to cover an approach to food production that takes this into account, namely sustainability for the environment and for farmers. It also highlighted the need to establish sustainable relationships between producers and consumers. This too relates to the "Growing for Good" report. The PCE is calling for public forums in which to develop shared objectives. To put responsibility for the future of New Zealand farmland and waterways entirely on the people who currently farm it is too big a burden for a small group to carry. In addition farmers are working with economic and social conditions that in large part determine their decision-making. There are limits to how much farmers can change without the broader system changing too. Consumers need to own their responsibility in terms of their purchasing demands and how these impact upon farming methods.

Long-term food production systems that do not destroy environments, farmers or rural communities are a concern for everyone to grapple with, rural and urban, producers and consumers.

Robyn McPhail, Northland

See [www.schoolofministry.ac.nz/RuralMinistry/](http://www.schoolofministry.ac.nz/RuralMinistry/) for an archive of "Rural Network News"

## A Snapshot of a Reader

*Here's an example of the kind of rural situation that this network is connecting with.*

I do enjoy reading the news. Living in the rural part of the Co-operating Parish of Te Aroha, I am always looking for ideas.

The small town of Waitoa is surrounded by dairy farms with a huge dairy factory complex nearby and a meat works and boiling down works.

The little Waitoa Church has a weekly Rainbow Club for children and Worship for all monthly. There is a weekly Friendship Group on Wednesday. The Waitoa school has about 36 pupils.

In 2004 the school and the church celebrated their centennials on the same weekend. It was great! There are still centennial booklets available for people who are interested.

Dianne Hight, Deacon at Waitoa, Waikato

## Thank You, Prue

A supporter and friend of those in rural ministry has finished her work for the Presbyterian Church Assembly Team. Prue Neild finishes her work as a Co-director of the Mission Resource Team as part of a restructuring of the Presbyterian service team.

For 12 years Prue has proved a great ally of the rural ministry movement in New Zealand and beyond.

She will especially be missed around her region, the lower North Island, as a keen supporter of lay and ordained people in ministry. She has a real affinity with those in the smaller communities.

“We will miss Prue,” says Barbara Curteis of Wairarapa. “She has always had a keen interest in the individual and the frustrations each might face. She treats each case on its merit and is always there as a support. She is a household name rather than ‘someone at head office’.”

Prue has been a mine of information about the workings of the church and has been generous and diligent in making her knowledge available to ordinary people in the church. She has worked with many rural parishes, Presbyterian and Uniting Congregations, helping them plan and develop their life together. As someone based at head office who has close contact with these parishes, Prue has kept the Presbyterian Church up to date with a rural, ecumenical perspective.

Her meticulous and resourceful support was summed up in the letter she wrote to Robyn McPhail early this year in the wake of the decision to end the Co-Director positions. She had drawn up a list of the “gaps we’d

need to fill” based on her awareness of what she had helped happen over the years and her ongoing concern for rural ministry.

As well as keeping the profile of rural ministry high among her colleagues to ensure that urban needs did not dominate to the exclusion of rural, Prue always managed to find funding was to assist people attend Rural Ministry Conferences and keep rural ministry somewhere in the annual budget. Her input will be sorely missed.

‘God bless’ from all of us, Prue. We wish you well for your new future.

*With thanks to Graeme Nicholas for researching this item.*

## New Anglican Ministry Adviser

The Revd Alister G Hendery, Christchurch Diocesan Ministry Adviser introduces himself:

My role is a combination of the former Ministry Educator’s and Bishop’s Chaplain’s positions. Working as part of the Diocesan team I’m here to minister with those who minister. That involves supporting and extending the bishop’s episcopal ministry, and enabling and supporting all those committed to ministry within the Christchurch Diocese – lay and ordained – and that most certainly includes those in rural ministry!

I’m 52, married to Marion with two adult children. Ordained 25 years ago I’ve ministered in rural, suburban, inner city, small town and urban situations. In addition to being a parish priest I’ve had my own practice as a counsellor and funeral celebrant, served as an interim priest, trained lay and ordained ministers, worked as a consultant in ministry matters, been a school chaplain, school governor and proprietor.

My first experience of rural ministry was in Waipawa in Central Hawkes Bay during the mid to late 1980s. This was when rural communities were experiencing profound dislocation and grief as a result of Rogernomics. Rural ministry taught me about community and the value of small and mutually supportive faith communities as they struggled with profound and lasting changes.

Today my priority is to journey with you who are ministering in equally challenging and changing situations. As I look back over 25 years of ordained ministry, I see that my priority has been to journey with people and communities – sharing their questions and doubts, their hopes and celebrations – weeping with those who weep and rejoicing with those who rejoice.

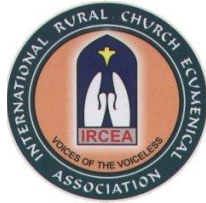
Email: [min.adviser@chch.ang.org.nz](mailto:min.adviser@chch.ang.org.nz)

Phone: (03) 363 0915 Cell: 027 223 8703.

*Please feel free to make contact with me.*

## 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.



*William Sabandar is an Indonesian who has just completed a PhD in Transport Geography at the University of Canterbury and returned home with his family to put his skills to work particularly for the many rural regions of Indonesia. William recently sent this message:*

"We thought that our nomadic life would soon end. The fact is that it is not. We entered our house in Jakarta last weekend. The same day, I accepted a new assignment in the Agency for Rehabilitation and Reconstruction in Aceh and Nias as the director for Nias Office. My task is to coordinate the rehabilitation and reconstruction process in Nias. It requires me to be based in Nias for four years. The decision to take this mission was only taken in a night having discussed it with Valentina.

This spontaneous decision was mainly motivated by our intention to help thousands of Nias people who have been suffering from the tsunami on December last year and the earthquake on March. I got full support from Valentina and the children, as well as from our extended families, to engage in this mission. In the time being, Valentina and the children will be in Jakarta while I will see the possibility to take them to Nias. For this mission, I need your support, please!

I am thinking of using the network that I have in NZ and other parts of the world to support the humanitarian work in Nias. Please, give me information if you know people who are keen to be involved in the work in Nias. This is the region that even before the tsunami and earthquake, 90% of the population lived in poverty."

William can be contacted by  
email [wps17@student.canterbury.ac.nz](mailto:wps17@student.canterbury.ac.nz)  
or cellphone +6481315911014

*Australian Lloyd Vidler, past Chair of IRCA, is currently working in Wales and sent this news:*

"Some readers will know of the Arthur Rank Centre within the Royal Agricultural Society grounds at Stoneleigh, UK. It is a Christian Centre bringing church and farm closer together.

Within Wales the Churches and the Royal Welsh Show Ground have worked together to bring into being a Christian Centre within the Royal Welsh grounds.

An ecumenical group had been working on the idea for some time seeking to gather funds for the establishment of such a centre. Their cause was given great impetus when the Royal Welsh offered them premises for 50 weeks of the year.

The centre was opened on 25 April. A crowd of interested people represented many denominations and community interests.

Initially the centre will be the base from which Rural Chaplains work during events staged at the Royal Welsh. Unlike many showgrounds in Australia the Royal Welsh has a considerable permanent staff and is the venue for many events throughout the year.

The Christian Centre is already being used by church groups and as time goes by it will be able to develop programs which will bring the church and farming community closer together."



## 2006 IRCA Conference

**Jeonju, South Korea**

**25 June to 1 July 2006**

The next Conference of the International Rural Church Association will be held in South Korea from 25 June to 1 July 2006. It will be held at Jeonju University, in Jeonju city, a little north west of the Jiri Mountains. The venue originally planned was on the other side of the mountains but is not as accessible on regular bus routes. Jeonju is a Christian University whose President is very supportive of the IRCA conference.

The conference theme relates to local churches as centres for community well-being and development, with the keynote speaker Garry Goreham, a rural sociologist and theologian from the United States, with responses from speakers to be selected from two other parts of the rural world.

Field visits and workshops will focus on church and community in relation to welfare, education, spirituality and life-giving agriculture.

To register interest in the conference and receive the registration brochure as soon as it is available, contact [druesink@ag.tamu.edu](mailto:druesink@ag.tamu.edu).

Check also on the web either direct to [www.presbyterian.org.nz/2949.0.html#8678](http://www.presbyterian.org.nz/2949.0.html#8678) or go to [www.cvforum.org.nz](http://www.cvforum.org.nz), click on Links, then Rural Ministry.

## Faith Community and Rural Renewal

People across Canada have been invited to a Harvest Conference and Pot-luck Gathering to talk about how rural communities can be revitalized.

“Hungry for Soul Food?” reads the invitation with the advertised menu as follows:

### Mains:

- Stories of the stresses and visions of people whose roots are in land and community
- Visits to places where residents have found unique strength in spite of adversity.
- Workshops to discuss how positive attitude and expectation can be a source of vitality.

### Dessert:

A grand celebration of World Food Day (16 October 2005) *with music, scripture, prayer and thanksgiving.*

It is being held from October 13-16 at St. Peter’s Abbey, Muenster, Saskatchewan, 112 km east of Saskatoon. The theme is “Faith Community as Catalyst for Rural Revitalization”.

The event is sponsored by the Canadian Rural Church Network and details, along with registration can be found at [www.ruralchurchcanada.net](http://www.ruralchurchcanada.net) or contact: Catherine Christie at Abbey, Saskatchewan 306-689-2208.

They would be thrilled to have overseas participants join them for this time of FAITH BUILDING, FELLOWSHIP MAKING and RURAL RENEWAL.

*New Zealand readers of this newsletter: please advise us if you are planning to attend this Conference.*

## Northern Hemisphere Celebration

Rogation Service was on the schedule and I looked forward to it with great interest. I was aware of the term and had always thought that in Australia it was substituted with Harvest Festival.

In England and Wales Rogation refers to coming of spring, the beginning of ploughing and is a celebration of those events by the farming community. It is a time of rejoicing occurring several days before ascension.

The service was held in a barn on the outskirts of Flint on the North Coast of Wales. As the congregation arrived they passed a four furrow reversible plough attached to a 115hp tractor. Cool air from the Irish Sea came through the wide doors and crept through the slated ends of the barn. The congregation, some on seats, others on bails of hay, snuggled into their coats to keep warm. The improvised sanctuary was against the backdrop of five old tractors including a 1928 Austin. The hymns were sung to the accompaniment of a key-

board with additional tonal qualities added by the bleat of several calves and the twittering of swallows as they returned to their nests for the evening.

The lessons expressed joy in the fecundity of creation, raised moral questions about reaping and sowing and emphasised the providential care of God releasing us from anxious care.

The text ‘Whatever you ask the Father in my name he will give you’, provided the opportunity to explore what it is we ask of ourselves, of others and of God. The preacher was Rev Michael Cruchley, the Rural Officer for the United Reformed Church in Wales.

The congregation joined wholeheartedly into the service. Afterwards they enjoyed supper and time to share with each other their hopes for the coming season.

Lloyd Vidler, Wales, on assignment for the United Reformed Church.

### Grace at a Family Reunion

O Lord our God: you are very great!  
You cause the grass to grow for our cattle,  
and plants for us to cultivate,  
to bring forth food from the earth,  
and wine to gladden our hearts  
and bread to give us strength.  
When you open your hand  
we are filled with good things  
and when you take away our breath we die:  
We give thanks for the food we eat today,  
and we remember with gratitude  
our forefathers  
who came to this land  
to establish our families here.  
Thank you God. Amen

Prepared by Brian E. Lill



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