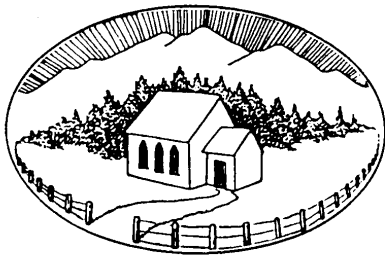


# Rural Network

## News



No. 31

November 2005

It is in the shelter of each other that  
the people live.

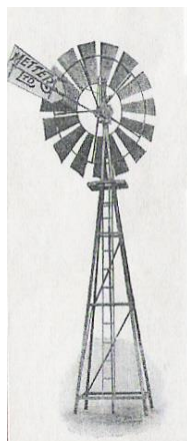
Old Irish Saying

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.*

### South Australia Revisited

A return trip to South Australia, nearly a year after the memorable 2004 Trans Tasman Rural Ministry Conference at Clare, bought home to us the significance of the windmill as a symbol of rural Australia. Our farming friends of long standing, were on the Trans Tasman Conference organising committee and invited us back to visit their outback station and also spend a week relaxing on a houseboat cruising the Murray River.



Experiencing the 'fair dinkum Aussie Outback' was awesome, particularly as we witnessed a flush of growth after a rain storm that broke a 3 year drought. Our friends' enthusiasm for facing the challenges of running a farming business in such marginal conditions was difficult to wrap our minds around, especially given the stock water issues and the size of the property, 1012 sq kilometres.

Travelling from Blanchtown to Wakerie and return on a Houseboat with four other couples was a fantastic holiday, and it also served to highlight an issue I hadn't fully grasped before - **water**.

Water is an important resource, especially as South Australia is the driest state in the driest continent in the world. The section of the Murray River we navigated was 250-350 km from the mouth, yet only 2-4 metres above sea level and very slow moving. In one place I threw a stick in and measured that it flowed about a metre a minute, so in my opinion the Murray River could be described as a very long reservoir.

I heard it said: "when all the pumps start up, the river flows backwards". This may be true when pumping for irrigation is at its peak. Cruising 130km along the river we saw hundreds of pumps set up to draw irrigation water, plus the big pumping stations for Adelaide city and other community water requirements. I became interested to know how much water was actually in the Murray River, and asked the lockmaster at No 2 lock near Morgan. He informed me that 3950 mega litres per day flowed over the weir. This equates to approximately 40% of the average flow in the Rakaia River in Canterbury. The Murray is a river with a catchment of approximately one-third of Australia, whereas the Rakaia's catchment is probably only 1% of this.

'Is the water from the Murray River over-allocated or is the Rakaia River water wasted?' is the question that came to my mind.

The other environmental issue I have not experienced before is soil salinity. Living and farming in Canterbury, any excess rain or irrigation water drains through the soil profile and eventually out to sea carrying any dissolved salts with it. In the Australian situation, because of the terrain, any excess water has to come back out the soil surface via evaporation or transpiration, leaving any dissolved salts behind on the surface. These salt deposits eventually build up enough concentration to cause toxicity to the plants. Salinity happens slowly, is difficult to detect and is sometimes almost impossible to correct. Poorly managed irrigation can therefore irreversibly sterilise otherwise productive soils.

These two environmental issues, water utilisation and salinity, have given me much to think about. Throughout recorded history, wars have been fought over territory, oil and religion, and I predict that water may become the next big issue, especially when you consider some rivers flow though many countries from their catchments to the sea. Who or which country will have the right to utilise this water?

Colin Lill, Methven, Mid-Canterbury

## Teapot Valley Rural Forum 2005

This was a warm, friendly and creative event hosted by the Diocese of Nelson. Rural parishes from Collingwood to Kaikoura to Kumara gathered near Nelson for a three day event and were joined by guests from Southland, Canterbury, Bay of Plenty, Waikato and Taranaki. In all there were 56 of us working and worshipping together.

There were two sorts of programme highlights: plenary presentations and conversation groups. The Revd Sue Burns, Ministry Educator for Waikato Diocese, and Bishop Philip Richardson, Waikato Diocese's Bishop in Taranaki, were each asked to share their life and faith journeys. The way they did this resonated with those present: they affirmed our own faith journeys, deepened our insights into personal growth, stretched our theological boundaries and added to our excitement about being Church. Alongside them Bishop Derek Eaton, from the host Diocese of Nelson, unfolded Paul's second letter to Timothy in ways that consolidated our personal faith and deepened our sense of being ministers (lay or ordained) to Christ's people.

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Each parish shared its own story, and its contemporary mission, with the whole gathering. Miriam Taylor from the Awatere told us about creating community worship at key points of the farming year and community year, in particular worship in the outdoors. She used the example of a Cape Campbell lighthouse service with the theme "I am the light of the World". John and Dawn Stringer from Reefton talked of being between town, forests, mines, dairy farms and tourists and taking new initiatives with "divorce courses" and "men's groups". The Lutherans from Upper Moutere shared, through their Pastor Steve Wockner, the challenges of being a traditional congregation in an area of new farms and lifestyle blocks.

These larger sessions, with all participants together, were nicely balanced by "conversation groups" or working electives. Each of us joined in smaller groups, of eight to 20 people, on *five* occasions during the three-day event. Each had its own topic and its own dynamic and we enjoyed the mix. Chris Whyte told the stories of running a rural parish without clergy; Martin Harrison presented a very practical session on delivering resources by internet, video clip and power point; Bishop Philip shared the vision of the Bishops Action Forum in Taranaki linking church, community and local government for the well-being of all who live there.

Martin Harrison, Peter Carrell, Miriam Taylor and Mark Chamberlain, did an outstanding job of planning,

organising and animating a rural ministry event. The Diocese of Nelson has made an outstanding contribution to rural ministry. We look forward with anticipation to 2008 in the knowledge that the Nelson Marlborough churches are preparing to host the next Trans-Tasman Rural Ministry Conference in their region.

### CELEBRATION AND INSPIRATION

Midwinter was given a lift this year, with the arrival of rural people from all parts of the Nelson region and beyond.

Along with the idyllic setting of prime farmland, we were treated to inspirational teaching. We needed a reminder to remain faithful in hard times, with 'the spirit of love, power and self-discipline' and Bishop Derek is a wonderful biblical teacher, always realistic, always encouraging.

As we listened to Sue and Philip, our guest speakers, we recognised that hardship and happiness come to us all sooner or later. Theoretically, we know this, but when people tell their stories the message is brought home in a deeper way. We can feel their pain. We can celebrate their joy.

Imagine yourself in one of the small, rural communities dotted around the Marlborough Sounds, relying on water transport or difficult roads. Think of the logistics of 'doing church' in these places – sharing the gospel in home groups, building community, breaking down isolation, meeting new friends. Distance is always a challenge. Ask the clergy in Reefton how many kilometers they clock up each week, with their scattered congregations. Musicians are not always located where they're desperately needed either. Whereas some big city churches have a surplus of guitarists or keyboardists, many rural churches have no such luxury. Country musicians are usually quite scarce on the ground and if illness strikes or holidays are due, the small rural church faces a big challenge to provide musical accompaniment. At such times the human voice is literally 'out on its own.' It can also be tricky when a clergy person needs a break, especially over an extended period. Rural communities manage of course, but not without huge effort in many cases.

Most dramatic was the announcement of Takaka's Fonterra dairy factory fire

Such issues were discussed at the forum, in conversation workshops, at meal tables or on the walking tracks. Most dramatic was the announcement of Takaka's Fonterra dairy factory fire with its inevitable flow-on effects. Rev Andy Thomas gave us some local background, explaining how vital the dairy factory is to the community, and led us all in a heartfelt outpouring of prayer for the people and their district.

Andy and seven of his parishioners were in shock at the unwelcome news, but they knew the closeness of the Lord's presence.

A lovely atmosphere pervaded the whole conference. Old friends were great; new friends were a bonus. Plenty of humour, an excellent and varied programme, the relaxed manner of the organizers – all filtered down to the troops. The food was yummy too. Now, back in the parishes, things are easier because we've communicated with others facing similar hurdles. This forum was inspirational. We loved it.

Mary Worsley, Kaikoura

## BLESSED WITH ENCOURAGEMENT

What did I gain from attending the Rural Forum at Teapot Valley from 20-22 June? In one word—encouragement.

That encouragement came in so many ways. Sue Burns provided visual items from her life that illustrated different stages. We saw an RSV Bible falling to bits from regular use, her deacon and priestly robes, a baby shawl, hula hoops, and a pair of bright pink gumboots. Bishop Philip suggested that when we celebrate the Eucharist we should re-present Christ in it every time. And Sue's encouragement for when we have no words ourselves is that we allow the Liturgy to carry us.

"hold each other as if we are special."

Both speakers are aware that the church can be a place where people are hurt, and Bishop Philip urged us to "hold each other as if we are special." He quoted a Tamil proverb to reinforce his point—"Beware of whom you look down upon, for God reaches up from below."

In his Conversation Group Bishop Philip spoke enthusiastically of the Bishop's Foundation in Taranaki, a Foundation that is rooted in the gospel as it seeks wholeness for all people, and works for a just and fair community. He spoke of the need to research needs in communities so that appropriate resources can be defined. I agree that we in the church are uniquely positioned to make a difference, and that we must encourage each other to explore opportunities for unconditional love and service instead of remaining locked in our own ideas.

Sue Burns' Conversation Group had something of this flavour too. She spoke of the critical voice of the Prodigal Son's brother—a voice that insists on conformity, pulls others down, and undermines attempts to bring about change in the way that Jesus did. Instead, she said that all Christians must be God's hands of love and acceptance, gathering people in, welcoming them, and including them in our hospitality.

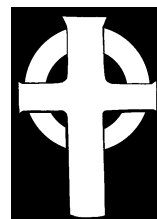
Mark Chamberlain's Conversation Group was about vision. "What is your image of your preferred future?" he asked. He encouraged us "to make church a better place, and to create opportunities for growth." The rural church should be the focus for activities in the community with the church family creating an environment where everyone from the community can feel comfortable. Ask: "What haven't we tried yet?" and be prepared to let go of our security.

Bishop Derek through his Bible Study encouraged us to hold on to God's gifts, to keep going, and not give up. Now that's encouraging when it's cold and frosty, and not always easy to get up in the morning!

More encouragement came with the sharing of skills and resources. Some were helped to gain skills with their data projectors, others found out about new sources of funding, or Sunday School programmes. And the Upper Moutere Lutheran pastor provided all of us with a copy of his Community Reconciliation Service. Finally, each parish received a disk containing all kinds of resources, gathered together for us by Martin Harrison.

And the most encouraging thing of all? For me it was the affirmation that the size of a rural congregation is primarily determined by demography, and my role as a priest is to be faithful to God.

Helen Stephen-Smith, Wakefield, Nelson



A retired farming couple went to breakfast at a restaurant where the 'seniors' special' was two eggs, bacon, hash browns and toast for \$1.95.

"Sounds good," the woman said. "But I don't want the eggs."

"Then I'll have to charge you \$2.45 because you're ordering A La Carte," the waitress warned her.

"You mean I'd have to pay for not taking the eggs?" the woman asked incredulously. "I'll take the special."

"How do you want your eggs?"

"Raw and in the shell," she said. She took the two eggs home.

**DON'T MESS WITH SENIORS**

## Community Builders

What is it that brings together farmers, outdoor instructors, shop assistants, moteliers, electricians, doctors and physiotherapists, among others? What inspires them to meet together twice a week for three months, at the local hall in Hanmer Springs, some travelling up to 70kms each way each time?

From July to September this year, it was the production of *Love Off the Shelf*, a musical comedy written by New Zealanders Roger Hall, A.K Grant and Philip Norman.

And for the last 26 years people from all over the Amuri district (Hanmer Springs, Culverden, Rotherham and Waiiau) have gathered to put together pantomimes, musicals, dramas and one act plays to entertain the locals and visitors for four days during the September holidays.

While the cast this year numbered 16, there have been times when up to 50 have been on stage, especially those musicals involving children. Add in the music makers, back stage crew, wardrobe and makeup helpers and the numbers involved can be substantial indeed.

This year two of our cast were new to Amuri Players but brought incredible talent to the stage. They are both relative newcomers to the area and, for one of them, this was the first opportunity she had taken since coming to Hanmer three years ago to get involved in something local. She met people and shared a wonderful talent which would have remained hidden had she not been encouraged to come to rehearsals.

The other had become involved in other local activities, but fitted the play in as well after some cajoling. This was a real love for him, but his life had become so busy that his music had to take a back seat and be fitted in as he found time. At the Amuri Players he was allowed to express his absolute enjoyment in the theatre, but was not expected to have as much time as other cast members to do extras such as set building.

So what has all this to do with rural ministry?

As I reflected on the time we'd had with Amuri Players this year, I couldn't help thinking that it was a wonderful example of a way that communities gather around a common cause. Those who have been locals forever, and those who are just new, work together in a way that gives me pause for thought.

This gave me particular pause as I thought about the way church happens in our small communities and wondered whether the church can be a gatherer in the same way as our production was.

The average age of worshippers in the rural church I am a member of is well over 60. Yet there are a large number of families who are keen to live according to

Christian values and are willing for their children to attend after school Kids Clubs or weekly Bible in Schools lessons. As a wise older woman said to me recently: "they want to live according to God's ways without the worship bit".

I've begun to wonder if, in our desire for people to know Jesus Christ and his saving grace, the church has become rather demanding, expecting attendance at services each Sunday, small group participation weekly or fortnightly, and a time commitment that some in our communities find a little off putting.

Could my recent experience of the Amuri Players help as we try to find ways of linking these families with Jesus and the church, which has within it the resources for encouragement and growth? It has given me some 'what ifs' – see what you think.

- **What if we were enthusiastic about our faith and excited about life lived with God?** (Just like the Amuri Players were as they began rehearsals.)
- **What if we invited friends and neighbours along whenever there was a special occasion to celebrate in the life of the church and community?** (Harvest festival, Christmas, Easter, spring-time.) People PAID to see our show, imagine a great event for FREE!
- **What if we didn't worry that they didn't come again until they had time, or the occasion appealed to them?** (Actors and backstage helpers are welcome whenever they are available.)
- **What if we just kept on being enthusiastic encouragers, loving others, telling them what we'd been up to at church, praying for them?** (We advertised the show so people had plenty of time to get their tickets, they knew how we were getting on with rehearsals etc.)
- **What if we had fun, no matter what we were doing, who we were with, where we were?**
- **What if we gave people space to make a commitment the best way they could and then left the cajoling to the Holy Spirit?** (The stage analogies have run out I'm afraid.)

What do you think?

Sarah Gardiner, Waiiau, North Canterbury

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

## Moerewa Church Wedding

### Just one reason for the church being there “God working His purposes out”

The Bay of Islands Uniting Parish have not held services in their Moerewa Church for some years. About 1997 we were approached by the founder of a day service for those with a range of disabilities who was looking for a home. This group has gone from strength to strength with huge improvements to the property including some wasteland now a garden run as part of a Polytech Horticulture course. The parish see this as part of our outreach and some are very involved as Trustees and helpers. The church has served as sewing room, meeting room and latterly as horticulture tutorial room but always with the understanding that it be available for services, weddings or funerals. As the following story shows, there are those in the community for whom the church is an important part of their spiritual journey.

#### THE STORY

Through MINDS (Midway in Northland Day Services for the differently-abled) came a request to use the Moerewa Church for a wedding. MINDS would make the hall available for the reception and we were delighted to have the church used for such a memorable occasion. So who and why? Therein lies a heart-rending story of the manifestation of the love of God. R is 10 years old. The hospital sent her home because they could do no more for her malignant tumour. R has an older brother and sister. When the family asked what wish she had the reply was, “For Mum and Dad to get married so I can dress up as a fairy and throw fairy dust on them”.

There followed a flurry of preparation leading up to an amazing Saturday. The church was transformed from horticulture tutorial room back to a beautiful place of worship and celebration. Our floral artist offered, without hesitation, to do some arrangements. Meantime, further transformation was taking place next door as family and friends prepared for the banquet, complete with two beautiful cakes.

The officiating minister was a relative of the bridegroom, a retired Maori Pastor. He had baptised R as an infant in this church, so there were spiritual links that added meaning to the day. R arrived, radiant and resplendent in tiara, complete with wand and her teddy in a basket. The vibrant pink of Mum’s long stole over her white dress was in keeping with the happiness of the celebration. MINDS colleague, Lil, ensured balloons added to that!

Following a sacred ceremony R had her magical moment of throwing ‘fairy dust’ from her wheelchair.

God was right there in the midst of this joyous gathering of whanau and friends; a time to be treasured and remembered through whatever lies ahead for this beautiful family.



Let Lil have the last say: “What a pity so many people ask ‘Why get married?’ It **does** make a difference, it is special. This day was something really great for everyone there.”

#### POSTSCRIPT

*R is now attending MINDS sessions and the staff are extending help, where needed, to the family.*

Beverley Deverell, Kawakawa, Northland

## Life-Giving Agriculture is Possible!

Inserted with this newsletter is the single-sheet Message from the Life-Giving Agriculture Global Forum held in Wonju, South Korea in April this year. It attempts to express the shared passion and concern of 70 people from 20 countries for sustainable rural livelihoods and efficient, healthy food production for the world’s people.

The invitation to us in New Zealand is to read it, not so much as a political agenda that might try to force us to do things differently, but as an opportunity for solidarity in relation to the farming and environmental concerns we already recognise as important issues for us.

When you bring together people from diverse cultures, with only a minority having English as their first language, words will be used in ways that are not automatically the words New Zealanders would use. But the shared language of spirituality and Christian faith is a potential point of connection for New Zealand farmers who seek to farm with spiritual integrity as well as scientific skill.

A five-page report of the Forum is also available from the editor of this newsletter.

## Harvest Conference in Canada

The Province of Saskatchewan turned 100 this year, and last month the rural town of Muenster hosted a Canadian Rural Church Network Conference.

Participants from across Canada, and from Texas, North Dakota and New Zealand, met at St Peter's Abbey for three days in October. This was a "harvest conference" and the main meeting room was decked out to match. The gathering was a creative mix of keynote addresses, worship, plenary forums and time in the outdoors, on the Abbey farm.

Joyce Sasse, United Church Minister from Pincher Creek in Alberta, underscored the fact that being rural Church is being something bigger than ourselves. "We care about rural people, rural towns and rural faith communities", said Joyce. "We work in affiliation with other rural folk who share common values".

James Miller, theologian and Lecturer at Queen's University in Ontario, is part of the Canadian Forum on Religion and Ecology. He highlighted the problems faced by rural communities in the global economy. "You are asked to supply more and more food at lower and lower prices", he said, "and absorb all of the environmental costs of industrial farming. Everyone is trying to pass the pollution buck and you sit on the end of the supply chain."

Each of us enjoyed the conference as a whole and each had their own highlights. Two remain vividly in my mind. One is the panel on "The Pull of the Land" (reported below) and the other was a workshop on coping with the shame which surrounds farm bankruptcy. Cam Harder, from the Lutheran Seminary in Saskatoon, helped us to understand the culture of "honour and shame" that too often prevents rural families from getting the support they need. "We are good at giving help and receiving help when there are droughts or fires", said Cam, "we find it much harder to give and receive help when bankruptcy threatens".

The conference was practical, addressing nitty gritty issues, and the fun and the fellowship lifted all our spirits. The Canadians have now formed a Canadian Rural Church Network and are preparing to host an international rural Church Conference in 2007.

Garth Cant, Christchurch

### "THE PULL OF THE LAND"

Darfield and Amuri in New Zealand have told us the stories of rural musical productions. Harris, Saskatchewan has gone one step further. *The Pull of the Land* is home grown, home written, and home produced. And it has gone on the road.

Beth Robertson (farmer, teacher, widow, mother of 4 and grandmother of 13) and Elaine Kowpak (30 years teaching in Harris) told the story to the Canadian Conference: "We taught together, we worshipped together, and we talked. We decided to put the struggles and the joys of rural Saskatchewan into a musical, to provide an after dinner play."

So it was that a congregation of 50 and a community of 220 launched a musical with a production team of 30. "We began with two scheduled performances in Harris. 'You provide the dinner, we said to the catering group, 'and we'll do the musical.'"

*The Pull of the Land* struck a chord. Two Harris productions stretched to three, four and five. Other Saskatchewan communities were captivated. "Come to us as well", they said.

The cast caught their collective breathe and talked through the implications of the challenge/opportunity.

"You need to raise funds", they said to the other communities. "We will come in support: you cover our costs, including any lost wages. You do the dinner and the publicity and we will bring *The Pull of the Land*."

Along the way CBC caught up with the excitement and did a television documentary. The five performances became 60, all in small towns, all in Saskatchewan. Over 30 months some \$500,000 has been raised for rural projects in small towns.

The plot is clear, simple and straight from the heart. It tells of the hopes and struggles of being rural, being farm, in a nation that is becoming more urban, more industrial. It has fun and tears and political clout. It tackles the global economy head on.

The words and the plot are fine tuned and adapted to meet the needs of the cast and the community. Liza Gareau Tosh fell into the cast as a new city bride. "I married, came to Harris, and took a chance", said Liza, "I joined the production and it became family". Liza became pregnant and the pregnancy added to the excitement of the performances. Liza's son was born and travelled with the cast.

Beth and Elaine shared the next challenge/opportunity with the Canadian Rural Church Network. "We have a point of entry to take *The Pull of the Land* to Ottawa", they told us with quiet excitement. "To share our passion for rural living with the parliamentarians". On the practicalities of sponsorship and timing:

"We will avoid harvest. We will make sure that parliament is in session and the media are there. We will talk to our budget airline, Westjet, about sponsorship and publicity. And, yes, Liza is pregnant again! We will pick the month so that Liza will be part of the cast."



## RURAL STORY SEEN IN BROADER CONTEXT

Faith Communities can be catalysts for rural renewal. Examples of their effectiveness became apparent to the 75 participants from across Canada who attended the *Harvest Conference* at Muenster, Saskatchewan.

Workshop leaders from throughout Saskatchewan told stories of how they sought renewal in their small communities. Craik has become an eco-centred model community. Some Earl Grey grain farmers have formed a research and marketing club that strengthens both their personal enterprises and the local economy. An *Asset Mapping Project* at Preeceville has helped this region name and develop its strengths ...

It was a venture in faith for most of the participants to take the time in a wet harvest season to go to Muenster. Harvest had been delayed, fuels prices were soaring and grain quality, in a year of bountiful production, was rapidly deteriorating. But it soon became apparent the Conference would be a nurturing experience.

St. Peter's Abbey, in the midst of rich farmland, governed by bells calling the monks to prayer every few hours, set a sacred context for exploring rural ministry.

The ecumenical mix of participants added rich diversity. A Pentecostal minister told how the formation of a *Ministerial Association* brought healing to his community. The Mennonites explained how their *Vibrant Rural Churches Project* has helped tiny congregations find new roles in the communities where they exist. Earthcare Connections helped participants have a deeper appreciation for stewardship of the earth. From the Lutheran perspective, a thoughtful presentation was made linking Biblical stories with the rural economy ... and another on *De-shaming Rural Bankruptcy*. United Church delegates to previous International Rural Ministry Conferences filled in details of how *The Rural Church Movement* has reached around the world in the past twenty years.

Participants brought with them their love of the land, their commitment to build and maintain viable communities, and their feelings of helplessness in the face of incredible odds. In prayer and song and conversation, they tried to give voice to how they experienced God's presence in their daily lives, and how they found hope in the midst of the challenges.

With passion and compassion, participants in the panel discussions, one on *The Arts*, the other on *The Media*, told how committed they are to giving voice to the rural story.

Visitors from Texas, North Dakota and New Zealand came to stand in solidarity with us as we constituted a *Canadian Rural Church Network* association and

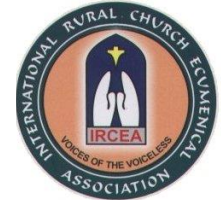
resolved to establish an informative web site where our discussions and dialogue can continue.

We were reaffirmed in our belief that we are part of something much bigger than ourselves. We are not alone. There is much for which we can be thankful as we move ahead together into the future.

Joyce Sasse, Canada  
[www.agri-ville.com/spiritualvignettes](http://www.agri-ville.com/spiritualvignettes)

## 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.



### CHANGE IN PLANS FOR NEXT IRCA CONFERENCE

The next Conference of the International Rural Church Association was to be held in South Korea in June 2006, but has now been postponed.

The postponement was made because the time was ticking on in the preparation schedule and it was not felt that the international side of things could do justice to the hard work done by the Koreans. It is important that we advertise widely with plenty of time to ensure that as many rural church people around the world who want to attend are able to make arrangements to do so. We regret the upset of making this change and the impact it has. We do hope that the Korean team will be willing to host a conference at a later date.

The Canadian team, who also put in a bid to host the 3<sup>rd</sup> IRCA Conference, has been invited to host a conference in 2007 and we await confirmation and details. For up-to-date information at any time check the web: either [www.cvforum.org.nz](http://www.cvforum.org.nz), Links, Rural Ministry or [www.presbyterian.org.nz/2949.0.html#8678](http://www.presbyterian.org.nz/2949.0.html#8678).

It is hoped that the IRCA-Korea organising committee will hold a Korean conference in June next year, with overseas participants invited to attend.

Their theme of local churches as centres for community well-being and development would be retained and Garry Goreham, a rural sociologist and theologian from the United States, has offered to participate as originally planned for the international conference.

Contact the Secretary of IRCA, Dave Ruesink, [druesink@ag.tamu.edu](mailto:druesink@ag.tamu.edu) if you think you might be interested in attending the Korean conference and would like information as soon as it comes to hand.

Robyn McPhail, IRCA Chairperson

## RURAL DEVELOPMENT IN TORAJA

The story of the links between New Zealand and Tana Toraja started when William Sabander came to Canterbury University to study for a PhD in rural development. William's family are from beautiful and remote Tana Toraja, a farming region in the highlands of the Indonesian island of Sulawesi. During their time in New Zealand, William, his wife Valentina and their three children made many friends including Robyn McPhail who was then minister at St John's Church, Methven. When as Chairperson of IRCA Robyn was visiting Sulawesi in 2003, William encouraged her to visit Torajaland and meet with those in the Christian Church who were seeking contact with New Zealand. As a result of Robyn's visit, I too travelled there last year to explore the possibility of linkages that might help the rural people of Tana Toraja.

As a result of those visits and a further visit I made there earlier this year with another farmer, Dick Davison of Culverden, an organisation called the Toraja Rural Development Society (TRDS) has been established. This fledgling society is exploring ways to assist the farming families of Toraja to develop their farms through improved production and marketing practices.

Williams father in law, Ishak Bitticacca, is the chairman of the agricultural co-operative bank in Toraja and is a dynamic leader with a strong commitment to rural development. He has assembled a consortium formed by the Christian Church, the University of Toraja, the Department of Agriculture and his bank to act as the local conduit for our joint activities.

Initially we will be helping with two crops, coffee and passion fruit. Due to the high altitude they can produce excellent coffee (one of the varieties is arabica which will be a name familiar to coffee aficionados). But both post harvest management and the route to market could be improved to secure better and more consistent prices. In the case of passion fruit, valuable fruit is often left lying on the ground due to a lack of processing and marketing facilities.

Although the crops are not those that New Zealand farmers are familiar with, many of the issues surrounding the harvest and marketing are generic and similar to those we all face as farmers wherever we farm.

We are hoping to pass on some of the techniques that have worked well in spreading knowledge within the New Zealand farming industry. These include travel awards for farmers, especially young farmers, to study the management practices of successful farmers elsewhere in Indonesia or abroad. Farming contests might have a useful role in focussing attention on the

best farmers in each village and district through field days on the winner's farm.

The board of the TRDS includes several people who have had development experience in Thailand, Indonesia and the Solomon Islands. What is envisaged is a private sector development project that will be based on a farmer-to-farmer approach, bypassing, wherever possible, the overheads associated with government-sponsored development. Although it is still early days, we are confident we can make a difference. Already, it has been immensely encouraging to have New Zealanders volunteering to help get the project underway.

And while the object is to help the farming families of Toraja, it also has much to offer New Zealanders. Contact with the wonderful Torajan people, their culture and their beautiful land is a great experience for any of us.

Graham Robertson, Methven, Mid-Canterbury

### KEY PRINCIPLES IN PLANNING WORSHIP

1. Images grounded in everyday life.
2. Opportunity to participate, interacting with the message.
3. The value of a story in the message – easy to remember.
4. "Unchurched" language.
5. Not just listening! The need for a visual focus, variety, some action, energy with reverence.
6. A Biblical basis.
7. Well-chosen music.

*From 'Worship' by Rosie Staite and the Worship Team in Challenge and Opportunity: Being Church in Rural New Zealand, Studies in Rural Change Number 21*



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