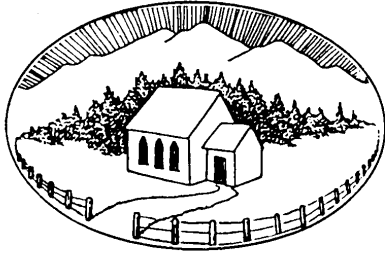


# Rural Network News



No. 43

April 2011

All I have seen teaches me to  
trust the Creator for all I  
have not seen.

Ralph Waldo Emerson

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

*Te manaakitanga, te kaitiakitanga, te  
kotahitanga.*

Please share this newsletter with others you  
think may be interested. Feel free to make  
photocopies.

*Responses to items always welcome.*

## SOUTHERN CONFERENCE

The Southern Presbytery area, south of the  
Waitaki, is planning another Rural Church  
Conference for 23-26 June 2011 to be held  
in the Calvin Community Church, Gore.

The Topic of Conference:

### Fresh Expressions for Rural Parishes

The organising Committee has invited Rob  
Stoner from South Australia to be the Guest  
Speaker for this Conference, which starts  
on Thursday evening with Registrations and

finishes after a Communion Service and  
lunch on Sunday.

The mornings and evenings will be headed  
by Rob discussing issues such as:

- “What are the real issues we are facing  
in Rural life and Ministry”?
- “Patterns of Ministry – are these  
Biblically based”?
- “What makes a good team work” etc.

Twelve optional Workshops will be  
targeted for afternoons.

Rob brings to this Conference a deep  
understanding of rural ministries, having  
first worked in medical microbiology, and  
then called by God to serve as a lay worker,  
followed by study and Ordination as a  
minister of the Word. After serving in two  
parishes Rob has been planner for the  
Uniting Church’s Synod of South Australia  
Mission Resourcing network for 8½ years.  
At the forefront of the International Rural  
Churches Association Rob has gathered a  
wide understanding of issues, not only in  
Australia and NZ but also internationally.

We look forward to having Rob and  
Heather with us for the Conference and  
trust they will find their time in NZ  
spiritually rewarding. We thank their parish  
in releasing them for this journey.

People from outside the Southern  
Presbytery area would be welcome and  
should contact the Secretary, Gwen Grimm,  
email: [ggrimm@woosh.co.nz](mailto:ggrimm@woosh.co.nz)

George Morrison, Eastern Southland

## NORTHLAND WORKSHOP

Rob and Heather Stoner will also be  
visiting Northland. On Saturday 2 July, a  
workshop will be held from 10am (cuppa  
from 9.30) till mid-afternoon at Broadwood  
in the North Hokianga. Enquiries:  
[robbyn@chirmac.co.nz](mailto:robbyn@chirmac.co.nz)

## HARVEST RITES

Our theological bookshelves may be awash with books of services for all sorts of occasions. However, it's worth reflecting on what is useful and relevant for our Kiwi context with regard to 'harvest'.

We know the monks of old, as now, lived a life of prayer, study and work. Much of this work was out in the paddocks – cropping, tending stock, milking cows, gathering grapes and making wine. Their work was an expression of their worship. In rural England the vicar/rector rang the church bell each morning and evening for Matins and Evensong – those out in the fields would hear it tolling, a reminder to them that all their farm work was an offering to God.

Urban and rural New Zealand churches give thanks to God in traditional Harvest Thanksgiving services, usually in March or April, though the austerity of Lent often clashes with the exuberant harvest outburst of praise.

In fact harvest in our land is a year-round activity:

- The commercial crops of summer and autumn (tomatoes, sweet corn, peas, beans, squash etc.)
- The maize harvest of May-July
- The stone fruit picked from December to March
- The pip-fruit from February to April
- The kiwifruit commencing in April/May
- The grapes from March to May
- The citrus crop from May/June onwards
- The harvest of milk – a year-round activity that we see daily in the Fonterra tankers on our roads

- The harvest of hay and silage which begins in spring and continues throughout summer and autumn
- The harvest of wheat and barley from March onwards

For sheep/beef farmers the harvest has a different quality. The stock they raise and fatten is turned into export meat – this is their harvest. And it includes a variety of by-products (e.g. pelts, a host of small goods, blood and bone etc.) – nothing is wasted. The woolshed is an iconic reminder of the harvest of an important natural fibre that is again gaining some value and recognition. This harvest is just as much a salute to God's generosity as the harvest of the land.

We recognise the onset of springtime as the season of hope, the time of planting and germination, of the births of livestock, the dazzling colours of orchard blossom.

When working in Norfolk, UK, a significant service annually was Plough Sunday, sometimes a tractor and plough driven into church (yes – the doors were wide enough!), or a plough dragged in by local farmers up the church aisle.

Rogation Days (in Holy Week and Ascensiontide) once commemorated God's mercy and hope after the crisis of devastating earthquakes in France, but now associated with asking God's blessing for spring plantings. Often associated with Rogation is the 'Beating the Bounds' – the people of the parish would walk in procession around the local district, asking God to bless the crops and fruits of the earth.

Many places give thanks for animals and pets on the Sunday nearest St Francis' Day (4 October).

We often overlook the places where the bounty of the yearly harvest is administered, or collected and processed:

- Local fishing fleets and fish-processing factories
- Packing sheds and coolstores where fruit, vegetables and meat are stored and chilled
- Woolsheds and modern milking sheds
- Dairy factories, local meat works, fish farms, timber mills
- Farm supply and stock and station firms (e.g. RD1, Elders, PGG Wrightson, Farmlands), rural farm contractors and transport companies
- Export shipping ports
- Wine-making centres and vineyards

Celebrating God's bounty in the many types of harvest in our land helps connect people with the gifts of creation, whether church members or not. It is possible to involve a wide cross-section of the community in these occasions. So there is ample opportunity to develop liturgies and appropriate rites that can be real opportunities for mission and outreach.

Juliet Batten in her book, *Celebrating the Southern Seasons: rituals for Aotearoa*, includes a number of Maori seasonal events, the most well-known being 'Matariki'. And Timothy Gorringer's *Harvest: Food, Farming and the Churches* (SPCK 2006) is a salutary reminder of the global forces and multi-nationals that affect all who work the land.

Bill Bennett, Hawkes Bay

God, we affirm that you are still speaking. May we still listen.

## CANTERBURY EARTHQUAKES AND THE FARMY ARMY

### February 22 follows September 4

The September 4<sup>th</sup> earthquake, centred on the Greendale fault, impacted on town and country alike. Help flowed both ways: city helped the country, and the country helped the city.

The February 22<sup>nd</sup> quake, revealed a new fault, was closer to the surface, and impacted most on Christchurch. There was large loss of life, especially in the central city, and there was major damage in the eastern suburbs, the hill suburbs, and Lyttelton. Country areas were relatively unscathed, and this time help flowed from country to town.

Urban rescue teams, from New Zealand, from Australia, and around the Pacific, concentrated on the city centre. A "student army" and a "farmy army", both made up of volunteers, were mobilised to help the clean up in the suburbs most hit by liquefaction. Vast quantities of sand and silt, contaminated by sewage, had welled up from underground.

Students, armed with wheelbarrows and shovels, were the first on the scene to help. The need for equipment quickly became apparent.

Matthew Backhouse described the Federated Farmers response: "On tractors and armed with packed lunches and shovels, volunteers flooded in to Christchurch from around the country".

Don Nicholson, Federated Farmers President, described the way the farmer skills meshed in with the student energies. "Farmers not only bring labour but a set of skills built up over a lifetime, and it's great

that they have banded together to help out fellow kiwis”.

Farmers came from other regions: from Central Otago and Southland in the south to Matamata in the north. A ute full came from the Manawatu, and those from Alexandra arrived complete with a digger.

The Nelson ones came loaded with provisions and petrol enough to get them home without using scarce Christchurch fuel.

Ele Ludemann from “Homepaddock” pointed to the mountains of silt that were moved in the first week. Farmers used diggers and tractors, and shared in the hard physical work in places where machinery could not go. “The Farny Army is returning many past favours by taking people power, tools and machinery to Christchurch”.

The people of Kaiapoi, devastated in September, cooked hot meals which were airlifted by helicopter to New Brighton.

Rural Women played their part with enthusiasm: some joined in the farmy army, some cooked and sent food for rescue workers and for citizens.

An out-of-town welfare centre was set up at Tinwald, Ashburton, and rural women from Mid-Canterbury played a major role in providing meals, bedding and baking for the refugees.

Marae up and down the country provided places of safety and sanctuary; the Canterbury ones immediately, and others further afield offered places for people who needed a respite from the stress and hard work of earthquake recovery.

Rural GPs swung into action, coming to Christchurch to help their counterparts or staying put to meet the needs of people

from Canterbury who sought refuge out of town. When the population of Hanmer Springs swelled from hundreds to thousands, an Ashburton GP arrived to lend a hand.

The people in the eastern suburbs are strong and resilient, and they are greatly heartened by the practical compassion, and the random acts of kindness, that have come from the countryside.

One kind word can warm three winter months.

Japanese saying

Church feuds are not uncommon, especially among cliques in the congregation. But when the pastor and choir director get into it, stand aside.

One week our preacher preached on commitment, and how we should dedicate ourselves to service. The director then led the choir in singing, 'I shall not be moved.'

The next Sunday, the preacher preached on giving and how we should gladly give to the work of the Lord. The choir director then led the song, 'Jesus paid it all.'

The next Sunday, the preacher preached on gossiping and how we should watch our tongues. The hymn was 'I love to tell the story.'

The preacher became disgusted over the situation. He told the congregation he was resigning next Sunday. The choir then sang 'Oh, why not tonight.'

When the preacher resigned the next week, he told the church that Jesus had led him there and Jesus was taking him away. The choir then sang, 'What a friend we have in Jesus.'

From [www.irca.net.nz](http://www.irca.net.nz) - check out the home page for "Daily Christian Jokes"

## COMMUNITY AWARDS DINNER

As is the case in this day and age we find in the Nelson Diocese that, as rural communities struggle, so does the church. Numbers dwindle as people move on and are not replaced and incomes, including that of the church, do likewise.

Therefore it is not unusual for the church like many community groups to look at different ways of fundraising in order to continue providing services, both religious and charitable, to their local communities. We, like so many others, look at existing initiatives as well as brainstorming new ones. It was during one of these sessions that a member of my congregation got an idea: a *community awards dinner*.

The idea was both simple and possible and filled a gap in the community calendar as well as doing something which helped the community feel good about itself. It is not unusual for us to talk of the good deeds and hard work that people have carried out voluntarily to make our communities a better place, yet how often do we celebrate it?

The idea arose initially as a fundraiser. But very quickly we realised that, while other ideas would bring greater gain, this idea was more to do with building up credit in the social bank. It was an opportunity to reach out to the community and show that we share common ground and values. We were able to use our position and experience as the church to organise and create a celebration for the people around us who, through their selfless acts, edify the community as a whole.

It was an opportunity to show the community that we are part of it as opposed to being separate from it as so often the media portrays.

The event is straight forward:

- Appoint three prominent members of the local community and charge them with adjudicating on the names put forward.
- Supply the community with nomination forms and categories that will be judged.
- Create an overarching award.
- Line up local talent to perform.
- Call upon congregation to help with catering.
- Involve the local school and local artists to create awards, decorate venue. In our case this also gave the local schools home economic students the opportunity to wait upon tables for a portion of what was raised.
- Sell tickets at an affordable price so as not to discriminate.
- Advertise the event.
- Encourage by personal invitation those who made nominations to attend and bring those who they had nominated along with them.

In all, make the awards as memorable as possible, have fun, and let the wider community see that Christians are not another species.

You may be amazed as we were as to how much came in which is able to fund other outreach initiatives.

God bless.

Rev Bernard Portman, Vicar Anglican  
Parish of Motupiko-Tapawera

Life is this simple. We are living in a world that is absolutely transparent, and God is shining through it all the time.

Thomas Merton

## HAMPERED COMMUNICATIONS

*Rural Ministry writer Joyce Sasse could have been writing this article for the New Zealand context. If you have experiences to share – things that have worked, challenges you've faced – with IT and being in the "hinterland", get in touch with the Editor.*

"Our internet isn't much use. It takes so long to down-load attachments, and if I want to send information, I have to do it in bits and pieces."

This is the common complaint for farm and ranch users of the internet across Canada. In spite of government promises that everyone would have access to this wonderful tool of communication, it hasn't happened. It looks like most rural areas will remain on "dial up" for the foreseeable future.

Once the urban areas and smaller communities were served, service providers ran out of steam. Extra funding hasn't been made available because Industry Canada doesn't consider rural Canada to be a priority. For shame!

The Alberta Rural Development Network, through its "Return to Rural" initiative, proves what a difference it makes for people in an isolated area to be fully connected. Young people and mid-career families are coming back to the farms in the Hannah-Oyen area of south-central Alberta because they have been given the means to keep up with the market reports, promote what they produce, and know what's happening on the world stage.

It is not good enough! If we are to have future generations of farmers and ranchers who live in what is so casually referred to as "the hinterland", they need to be given the privilege and opportunity to freely use

the communication tools that are available to their urban cousins.

Why should a country preacher raise this issue? Because ignoring a specific group of people seems to me to be a spiritual concern. These are people who have worth alongside other people. This treatment also raises economic, political and social red flags. Surely our parliamentarians are capable of choosing a higher road.

One of Solomon's Proverbs reads: "When justice is done, good people are happy."

Joyce Sasse, Alberta, Canada

## THE TORAJA PROJECT

The project to help farmers in the remote and mountainous region of Toraja, Sulawesi, Indonesia grew from friendships made during the time a young man from Indonesia attended Canterbury University. William Sabander, his wife Valantina (whose family are from Toraja) and their three children lived in New Zealand for several years while William completed his PhD.

The project is supported by a number of rural New Zealanders and is aimed at improving the quality, yield, and market access for the coffee produced in this area of high mountains and hard working farmers. The best coffee is grown at high altitudes and it is the one cash crop that can lift poor farming families out of poverty and provide income to pay for the education they know will help their children build a better future.

It is now six years since the first visit to Toraja and the project that has developed is essentially one where a small local NGO called Jalesa, consisting of a number of trained agronomists and community workers, is supported by New Zealand

money. The staff of Jalesa work with local farming groups, helping them produce better yields by good husbandry and improve quality by better processing. This is already leading to higher market prices.

In the longer term the village farmers will be able to market their own coffee through a co-operative, exporting directly to coffee processors around the world. This will qualify as “fair trade” coffee which will earn additional premiums. The coffee is also grown with organic fertilisers adding to the value of the coffee among affluent western consumers who are looking for organic food.

Even small steps such as the provision of coffee peeling machines have helped. These small hand-operated, low-tech implements can have a big impact on raising quality and already many individual New Zealand supporters have donated the \$150 required to equip a village with one of these machines.

The activities are all conducted within village groups and these groups are helping to build stronger communities. On a recent visit to Toraja it was heartening to see the new found enthusiasm among village farming families as they see the results flowing through into better family incomes and hence better educational opportunities for their kids.

A trust has been formed to channel support to Toraja and anyone wanting to learn more can visit the website [www.toraja.co.nz](http://www.toraja.co.nz). Donations are always welcome and these can be made through the website.

Graham Robertson, Mid-Canterbury

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## RURAL HEARTACHE

### A message from the Chairperson of the International Rural Church Association



Today I was reading the latest reports about the Fukushima nuclear plant. One article is about the plant's dumping 11,500 tons of radioactive water into the sea. Another is about the restrictions that other countries are putting on imports from Japan. I rejoiced to see that the focus of both these articles was the consequences of the nuclear plant disaster to the country's food producers, the farmers and fishers of Japan. My heart was full of anguish at the accounts, but it is good to read the rural perspective in the national media.

One article points out, “the Tohoku region of northeast Japan is renowned for its variety of agriculture. Its coastal villages have long been the source of much of the nation's fish and shellfish, as well as seaweed products, while its pastures produce milk and beef. It is also an important source of rice... and a wide range of vegetables and fruit.” These farmers are losing their crops because of the fears of contamination. And the contamination is none of their doing, but the result of this industrial calamity which has released radioactive poisons into the air.

The other article quotes the local fishermen's federation head, Tetsu Nazaki: “Our prefecture's fishermen have lost their lives, fishing boats, piers and buildings (from the tsunami) and now must suffer the added effects of radioactive runoff from the

plant.” The natural disaster is a huge one, but what makes it unbelievably tragic is, again, the industrial calamity which will affect the land and the sea for many years to come, and lead to destruction of rural communities where people know how to care for the world they have inherited from their ancestors and know how to produce the food that feeds the nation and the world.

The industrial (nuclear) industry has no interest in care of communities or the land, and at the IRCA Conference in Altenkirchen delegates heard many stories from around the world of this kind of destruction happening over and over. Let us stand together, people of the land, and support one another in the face of those who invade our land and waters with their arrogant views of ‘development’. (In the same newspaper there was an article about landmines, another way communities and productive lands are poisoned).

Let us pray for those whose lives are irrefutably altered, if not destroyed, and work for life-giving community, work for connections with the urban world so all people will respect those who produce that others may live. And let us continue to call out “How long, O Lord, how long?” How long will the vineyard of God's beautiful world be overrun by those who do not perceive its wonders, but only its ‘economic potential’. Will this Lenten fast of sorrow and grief result in a coming Easter season of resurrection and new life for communities and land? Let it be, O Lord, let it be.

To all those who love the rural life and rural community and support the church's presence standing among rural people – a blessed Easter season.

Catherine Christie, Chairperson, IRCA

## IRCA DISCUSSION FORUM

[www.irca.net.nz](http://www.irca.net.nz) includes a Forum for topics of interest for rural churches. You need to become a member of IRCA to log in and join in the forum.

Education for Rural/Remote Ministers, Priests, and Pastors is a discussion topic initiated by IRCA secretary Garry Hardingham. Garry, a minister in Cloncurry Queensland, is looking to do post-graduate research on this topic.

Roger Greene in the UK asks about various uses of church premises. In the UK they have cinema, bowls, and lunch clubs, pilates and exercise classes, toddler groups, country markets. Mt Isa School of the Air uses the church there for activity days where children come in from remote properties to have a few days of face to face schooling. Also a few local Indian people, in Mt Isa for the mining, use the church building for Hindu religious gatherings.

It's the little things citizens do.  
That's what will make the  
difference. My little thing is planting  
trees.

Wangari Maathai, the first African woman to  
win the Nobel Peace Prize



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