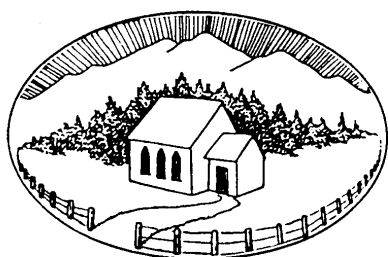


Rural Network News



No. 47

June 2013

Heaven is under our feet as
well as over our heads.

Henry David Thoreau, 19th century
poet/philosopher

*Te kaitiakitanga, te manaakitanga, te
whakawhanaungatanga.* Sharing
ideas for ministry in neighbourhood
and land-based communities.

Free to copy and share.

Responses to items always welcome.

A THEOLOGY OF WATER

The Rural Ministry Unit in Hawke's Bay met in March to view the site of a proposed large irrigation dam for Central Hawke's Bay, then gathered at the Tikokino pub to share lunch and hear talks from Bill Bennett and Jim McAloon on a theology of water and an historic overview of water utilisation for farming in New Zealand since settler times. Here is Bill's contribution.

It is a given that 70% of the cosmos, and ourselves, consists of water – H₂O. Dave Dobbyn's song suggests

that water availability continues to be a contentious issue:

How you're gonna feel
when the water wars come?
Where you're gonna be
when the river don't run at all?
When the water runs out
there can be no doubt.
Brothers, sisters,
when the well runs dry.

The access to and use of water can be controversial – note the debates regarding dairying and water availability in the South Island, and the Horizon Regional Council's 'One Plan' in the Manawatu River catchment to clean up the river pollution. We are a country that normally has plenty of water, though the drought many regions have recently experienced this last summer has shown how vulnerable the farming community can be to extended dry spells.

The whole Biblical story is mainly set in a dry desert region of the world, with important rivers providing the means of life and livelihood to millions – e.g. Nile, Jordan, Tigris, Euphrates. With over 700 references in the Bible water is a key life-giving ingredient.

The Jews conceived of a world with three tiers – the waters above the earth, the surface/ocean waters and dry land of earth, and the waters under the earth. Both creation stories

(Genesis 1 & 2) show water as central to life. The Garden of Eden is sustained by a river with four tributaries. Humankind tends and nourishes the earth to provide food for all including animals. The narrative shows the people of God called to pursue an agricultural economy which, in Deuteronomy, is characterised as the land 'flowing with milk and honey'.

There are many references to the importance of wells and oases – for replenishing stock; places to socialise, share news and make contracts (note that Rebekah's marriage to Isaac was negotiated at a well); provide a water supply to a community – hence David (and later Hezekiah making an aqueduct tunnel) making Jerusalem his base because of a guaranteed water supply; also, places to isolate irritating people – both Jacob and Jeremiah were thrown into wells!

The themes of salvation and destruction, punishment and redemption, cleansing and purification, abound in the Old Testament in terms of water. The Flood narrative (common to most Middle Eastern cultures of the time) portrays water as Yahweh's judgement on humanity's sin in rejecting the ways and worship of Yahweh/Lord. The Exodus event concerns an enslaved people finding freedom, hope and salvation through the obedient waters of the Sea of

Reeds, and the destruction of the pursuing Egyptian army as the waters return. That story is a staple narrative of Easter Eve paschal candle liturgies. Ps. 107:33-38 reflects the psalmist's observation about the benefits of water for the economy and community but that in times of drought its lack is also a sign of God's judgement. Droughts still encourage some to mistakenly see these climatic events as a divine judgement.

The New Testament spiritualises the importance of water. The water-turned-wine miracle at the Cana wedding (John 2:1-11) becomes a story about God's overwhelming generosity. The fear-stricken disciples crossing Lake Galilee in a fierce storm reveal that water can also be destructive and unknown. Yet in the midst of that squally turmoil, Jesus brings hope and peace. The account of Jesus and the woman at the well (John 4:1-16) reveals how the early church saw Jesus as the divine fountain, the well, the spring, the water of life that sustains all: 'Everyone who drinks this water [from the well] will be thirsty again. The water that I give them will become in them a spring of water gushing up to eternal life' (John 4:14). Jesus found his own local Nazareth congregation took strong exception when he referred to God's healing through washing in the Jordan of Naaman, a non-Jew, an Assyrian army commander, who was suffering

a form of leprosy. Water symbolises a cleansing and renewal.

This is expressed sacramentally in the rite of Baptism, involving confession of faith, renewal of commitment, and incorporation into the church, which means there are spiritual, social and political implications to living the baptised life. The Anglican service of Baptism includes these words: 'In the waters of Jordan your Son was baptised by John and anointed with the Holy Spirit. Through the deep waters of death Jesus fulfilled his baptism'. We are cleansed, renewed and raised to a new life-style. It points us to a way of living where we are called to give life and hope to all – humanity, and flora and fauna. And the great vision of the cosmos given in Revelation 22 speaks of the river of the water of life now flowing through the urbanised world, the city of God.

The fifth mark of mission of the churches is: *to strive to safeguard the integrity of creation and sustain and renew the life of the earth*. The care of water resources is a key ingredient in this task. The responsible sharing of this life-giving resource for all humanity and created life means that we share it equably, and this means making just decisions at the social, economic and political level so that all people and things may have a chance to live and grow. It is summed up in a petition from Sext, the midday office or prayers, as such: *Realising we are*

all nourished from the same source of life, may we so live that others be not deprived of air, food, water, shelter, or the chance to live.

A recent Maori TV programme revealed how the tensions between Israeli and Palestinian have been exacerbated by the building of a dividing wall between the two communities. A graphic map shows how this wall includes all the key water sources for the benefit of the Israelis, while Palestinian communities are effectively excluded. Given the call to share justly this precious water resource one wonders what the future will bring for that land of Christ's birth.

Bill Bennett, Hawkes Bay

RNN FROM THE WEB

Every edition of *Rural Network News* is uploaded on the web and can be easily accessed there.

www.presbyterian.org.nz/national-ministries/rural-ministry

If you would prefer to download your own copy and save on the expense of copying and posting, send an email to robyn@chirmac.co.nz and you will be added to an email list and advised when each new edition is published.

The newsletter is uploaded as a pdf file and can be printed, using your printer menu, as a A5 booklet or A4 for larger print.

RURAL LIFE IN CANTERBURY

In February, a group of 28 lay and clerical leaders from Anglican, Presbyterian and Methodist rural parishes in Canterbury and Westland met at St Columba's Hornby for a day long consultation. What precipitated the gathering was a visit from Canon Dr Jill Hopkinson, National Rural Officer for the Church of England working out of the Arthur Rank Centre, which supports rural communities as well as churches.

Dr Garth Cant and The Rev Canon Susan Baldwin organized the day around conversations, reflections, and sharing experiences and resources in rural ministry. Small churches are not churches that haven't grown up yet, they are a key component of rural life, "the oldest form of Christian witness, and the most numerous expression of the Christian Church" (Carl Dudley). Susan encouraged participants to listen to one another during the morning in order to hear the kernel of a new idea; the seed of something that you want to plant in your own parish, in order for participants to chose someone they'd like to talk with further over the breaks and lunch to learn more from one another.

A great deal of resource sharing took place over lunch as participants mingled, shared ideas and questioned each other further.

Jill introduced herself to the assembled and spoke briefly about her background and work with rural communities, but confessed that she was there because she was keen to hear from us. Each parish talked about their ministries by completing the phrase: "being Church in...." and we learned from one another in an open exchange of ideas and experiences.

The common theme for the morning: We came together because we work together, because we worship together, and we heard from Co-operating parishes, Local Shared Ministry Units, Café Church, Joint Use churches. Our ministry units are located in rural areas represented by cropping/livestock while others represented the rapidly changing small towns on the outskirts of Christchurch and parishes where tourism features in their communities (Westland).

The prevailing questions that arose in discussion between Jill and the participants: What skills do you need to do what you do? What additional training and support would be helpful? How do you change attitudes?

Jill came equipped with copies of the resources provided by the Arthur Rank Centre and these were distributed amongst the participants. These resources can also be found at <http://www.arthurrankcentre.org.uk/>

Susan Baldwin, Darfield, Canterbury

RURAL CHURCHES SWAP IDEAS

Canterbury's rural churches made an impression on a visiting English church lay Canon recently.



Jill Hopkinson with Rural Network member Garth Cant (Photo: David Hill)

Church of England national rural officer Canon Dr Jill Hopkinson has spent two months working with rural churches in Taranaki. She says there is much her country's churches can learn from their New Zealand counterparts.

This is an opportunity for me to learn about New Zealand rural ministry and enabling lay ministry. We are in a much earlier stage of development in lay ministry, some parishes do well but others are just learning. New Zealand parishes have been doing it for a lot longer.

Jill says that while rural England has a larger population and more churches, communities face the same challenges as those in rural New Zealand. There are around 14,000 churches in rural

communities in England, including 9,600 Anglican churches and 3,000 Methodist.

She says the English rural population is growing rapidly, creating issues like a lack of affordable housing and job shortages. Sustainable economic development, including agriculture, is also becoming increasingly important.

Jill was in New Zealand for two months to work with the Bishop's Action Foundation in Taranaki "to see how we can expand research capacity" between English and New Zealand rural churches. The trip was funded by the Arthur Rank Centre, an ecumenical organisation working with Church of England, Methodist and United Reform rural parishes. Lord Rank was a Methodist, a flour miller and also worked in the film industry.

Jill also took time out to visit Canterbury, spending a weekend with one of the Glenmark-Waikari Anglican Parish's four congregations before leading a workshop in Christchurch with representatives of 25 different rural churches from throughout Canterbury and the West Coast.

"Everybody is dealing with the same issues. There is enormous strength out there and there are some good news stories," she says.

The congregation Dr Hopkinson spent time with is made up of 20 people out of a community of 200.

I am really enthused by people's enthusiasm and commitment. Even though it is tough work, it is incredibly humbling to see people who are prepared to make a difference for others.

Jill was particularly impressed with the Akaroa Presbyterian Church, which has opened up its grounds for a craft market to sell to cruise ships, and the Hinds Co-operating Parish, which is linking with families with new born babies.

The craft market is offering a source of income to the arts community in Christchurch, which has lost some of its potential markets because of the earthquakes. It is providing an income and hope for people who have gone through a difficult time.

The Hinds congregation has an 81-year-old lady who keeps tabs on every baby born in the area.

They visit the family and take a birth card and a pair of booties. Then they send birthday cards for the next few years and invite them to an annual gathering. It is such a great way of reaching out to people.

David Hill in *Touchstone*

Joy is the echo of God's life in us.

Columba of Iona

THE COST OF LIVING

Jill Hopkinson shared these perspectives, with an English readership, on her return from New Zealand.

One of the first things you notice about New Zealand, apart from the small population, absence of traffic jams and clarity of the sky (no pollution), is how much things cost: and they cost a lot.

The cheap food culture of the UK and indeed the EU, lulls you into a false sense of security in some ways, but New Zealand prices are a shock.

A small shop of 32 items came to \$139.66. Take off \$28 for two bottles of wine (at the cheap end of the spectrum I can assure you) and it is still over \$110 (£59.45 at today's exchange rate) for 30 items. Here are a few snapshots and remember that all the fruit and veg I bought was New Zealand grown and it is the height of the production season (drought permitting). Prices are in £ equivalents based on the current exchange rate of \$1.85 to £1 (the NZ dollar is strong currently so exchange rates are poor).

- small Lettuce – £1.70
- Tomatoes 250g, – £2.00
- 200g hummus – £1.50
- milk, 1L – £1.60
- red pepper – £1 each
- ordinary tights, one pair – £3.90
- small loaf ciabatta bread – £2.30
- six bread roles – £1.70
- plain yoghurt, 1kg – £3.80

Why?

A very good and clearly well researched article in the excellent NZ magazine 'North and South' did not offer many conclusions. De-regulation, the absence of competition and the inability of consumers to complain is blamed for high costs of water, energy and broadband. Milk, butter, meat, veg and fruit are above world market prices as is wine in NZ.

The article also quoted one apple grower from Otago (South Island) who said apples were sold in the supermarket at 800% more than the price he received. A familiar tale from the UK/EU supermarket approach, and we all know the impact of unrealistically priced milk on UK dairy farmers. The article concluded that the prices are inflated at some point in the supply chain but no one is sure where. At least the UK now has the Groceries Code Adjudicator in place [ombudsman] to tackle abuses, even if she won't be able to ensure a fair market price is paid.

Now I am not advocating for unrealistically low food prices but merely commenting that in some parts of the developed world feeding yourself and your family is hard, and getting harder, particularly for those on low, or fixed incomes. There is another lesson here too for those who think the UK will do much better out of the EU. One small independent

country is much more likely to see prices rise than fall, as it tries to trade individually on the international market.

One of the few benefits of expensive food and goods – you don't waste anything and you only buy it if you really need it... maybe there are some benefits after all.

WHAT IS A SUCCESSFUL CHURCH?

Conversations with clergy and lay people alike have produced different understandings of a 'successful church' – if it is ever appropriate to define such a thing, after all where one or two are gathered together...

See what you think of these points – amalgamated from several sources and in no particular order:

- one where the members relate more to those on the outside than those on the inside
- loving and just
- there for the benefit of those who are not its members (a la William Temple)
- Christ centered
- church and community are one and the same thing
- a healthy and functional community that allows movement in and out and doesn't jump on new people to do things on their first visit

- faithfully passing on the Gospel to the next generation(s).

One person made a point very strongly: “you earn your right to speak by being part of the community – so they learn to trust you and are then prepared to listen to anything you might say”.

Jill Hopkinson



THE BISHOP'S ACTION FOUNDATION

The Bishop's Action Foundation was created to contribute to the social, cultural, economic, and environmental well-being of the Taranaki region. It is best described as a catalyst working for the common good by supporting communities and organisations to develop projects and partnerships that address as yet unmet needs. We are best defined by the metaphors of salt and yeast.

The Foundation is a community development organisation that provides a wide range of responses. An example of our work is our capacity building programme through which we help local groups and organisations to do a great job. Working with a number of partners, we are developing a region-wide capacity building approach including an annual training programme, collaborative training calendar,

mentoring, and a best-practice sharing programme. We offer organisations one-on-one support, where our specialist knowledge is appropriate, including outcome reporting, capacity self-assessment, ICT, and governance in the community sector.

A key focus for the Foundation remains supporting and facilitating collaboration, using our experience to explore the characteristics of successful collaborative initiatives. These are being brought together in a new report called *Reflections on Collaboration*. This report is a living document that will grow over time.

During 2013 the research unit of the Foundation has been scoping a Centre for Rural Development. This Taranaki-based Centre would focus on rural communities, rural life, and would inform, support and resource initiatives that sought to respond to rural needs. Embedded within the centre would be a stream of work focused on the potential of the Church to respond and make a difference in those communities. We welcomed Jill Hopkinson, National Rural Officer for the Church of England, seconded to us from mid-February through to early April. Jill has supported us as we work to take the Centre for Rural Development from concept to reality. Jill is also supporting us to develop international partners for the Centre.

Overview provided by the Bishop's Action Foundation

BREAKING THE GROUND CEREMONY FOR MARSDEN CROSS CENTRE

On Tuesday 22 January about 80 people gathered at the head of the Marsden Cross Valley for a 'Breaking of the Ground Ceremony', before the earth work and the building of the Centre began, to commemorate the Bicentennial in 2014.

Hugh Rihari and his whanau, along with residents in the Marsden Cross area, were the 'home people' who called us onto the site. Those welcomed were Marsden Cross Trust Board members; architect Pip Cheshire; Department of Conservation; Historic Places Trust; local clergy along with the editors of *Taonga*, the Anglican National magazine, and the *Anglican*, the Auckland Diocesan paper.

This was not a public event yet, rather a gathering of those who had been part of the journey as the project unfolded over the years. A Maori minister opened the proceedings with prayer, before Hugh Rihari, a descendant of Chief Ruatara spoke. He has worked closely with the Marsden Cross Trust Board now for a number of years. The Manager of the Mountain Landing Estate spoke, as did the Farm Manager for Mataka, both areas that are neighbours to the 20 hectare block for the Centre.

Chairman of the Marsden Cross Trust Board John King, a direct descendent of a first missionary led the reply. Like their forebears, he and Hugh have worked closely together. Others included Bishop Richard Randerson and Archdeacon Moses Cherrington, along with David Mules who spoke for DOC. I spoke briefly based on the hymn that Marsden used at Christmas 1814, "ALL people that on earth do dwell..." Not just the Maori and Europeans present at that first service, but the many nationalities who will visit this place in the years to come, a place that will become a LIGHT to the Nations. This is God's land, 'May God bless all involved now and throughout the years to come.'

Each with a spade, Hugh Rihari and John King together broke the ground for the Centre.

Hugh's wife Raewyn and her people had prepared a wonderful lunch at the nearby shearers' quarters, where a model of the buildings was on display. It was a day of great joy and harmony. God had built up close unity between Maori and Pakeha over the years of preparation.

In early May, Diane Paterson and I took a couple from the Auckland Writers' Guild out to the Marsden Cross Valley. It was too wet to take a vehicle down, but we could see the Cross in the distance. I knew that the earth work at the head of the Valley

had begun, with great piles of soil. The car park had been enlarged and sealed and, to our great joy, building had begun. Two men were standing on a platform at about what will be roof level of the Information building. We had a time of prayers of praise and blessing on the project, with buildings to be finished by Christmas 2014. To God be ALL the Glory!

HILLSIDE ARCHAEOLOGICAL DIG

Present also at the Breaking of the Ground Ceremony in January was Angela Middleton, who with her husband Professor Ian Smith is doing a second dig on the hillside. Last year with the team from Otago University, they dug the base of the August 1816 school building. Returning this year they have worked on the house site next to the school, possibly the home of James Shepherd's family. A second site, behind the Marsden Cross is thought to be John King's house. Archaeology is exciting, adding depth and clarity to history. The Bay of Islands is a very significant area in our nation's history.. the "Cradle of our Nation". We are so fortunate to live at a time when our knowledge of the past can be brought alive in such a way.

Patricia Bawden, Kerikeri, Northland

We do not inherit the earth
from our ancestors, we
borrow it from our children.

First Nations America Proverb

PROBLEMS MAY BECOME OPPORTUNITIES

**Recognizing how insights into creative
change can be gifts from God ...**

This article is by Joyce Sasse, a retired minister in Pincher Creek, Alberta, who is a leading light in the International Rural Churches Association.

The Book of Genesis opens with "in the beginning God created" – and goes on to talk about how each human is infused with God's Spirit (which includes the Spirit of Creativity). Why, then, are so many individuals and institutions reluctant to accept creative changes as gifts from God?

When the land shows deterioration, or Main Street is reminiscent of a ghost-town, or churches bleed members, do we look on these situations as signs of gloom? Or do we turn to the creative among us and seek after the opportunities they might suggest?

I recall the derision heaped on a local farmer fifty years ago when he stopped using chemicals on his grain fields. That may have been a beginning for organic farming, but that wasn't how his neighbours saw it.

I've watched small communities fight regional solutions for schools, recreational and health-care facilities. But when educators and medical folks, working on a regional base, began to advocate for the unique gifts and needs their rural communities offered, fresh ways of thinking and doing took root.

Once church members begin to expect changes, it is as if new blood is poured into their veins. One young woman, whose congregation is trying to find alternative ways to do ministry, said “it’s not the destination but the journey that is important”.

Matthew Fox has written “I don’t know of any area of human potential that is more important than creativity if we are to be a sustainable species again.”

When we move ahead with courage, with trust in the not-yet-proven, when we move forward with discipline and hard work – this is an important point of intersection between the human and divine. In so doing, we become fruitful.

For affirmation, listen to the stories of Jesus. Through the centuries each story confronts our imagination and brings about transformation.

<http://www.circle-m.ca/crcn/newsletter.htm>

JOIN IRCA-OCEANIA

The International Rural Churches leadership group, working closely with the IRCA-OCEANIA team, are finalising a protocol for membership of IRCA.

Congregations and individuals will be able to register as a member with a subscription that will related to the numbers of people involved and following a formula for the country of residence like the GDP related one

used by the World Council of Churches. This will mean we in New Zealand will not be required to pay an amount which the exchange rate (and on-farm weather conditions) might sometimes make difficult to include in tight budgets.

IRCA-OCEANIA is very keen to engage congregations or groups of rural Christians in the organisation, not just individuals. This will be an important step forward in the development of the rural ministry movement and be important for maintaining rural church life. Belonging to IRCA can also be a means to strengthen rural voices in the wider community and wider church.

“Voice of the Voiceless” remains IRCA's theme and mission.

Keep an eye on www.irca.net.nz for the membership process to be launched. Those who are in this region will join IRCA-OCEANIA. IRCA will collect the funds in the international account (the simplicity of one payment system) earmarked for our region.

TRANS-TASMAN REPORT

A working version of the 2012 Atherton Rural Ministry Conference is complete and copies are available from Garth Cant gandecant@xtra.co.nz. It is also being uploaded to the IRCA website. Further contributions are sought from participants in the form of photos and reflections.

IRCA CONFERENCE 2014



Lilongwe, Malawi, Africa

16-22 July 2014

Expressions of interest are invited for the 5th quadrennial IRCA conference. The International Rural Churches Association meets every four years to encourage networking to develop among those involved in Christian mission in rural areas of the world. Since 1988, IRCA has met in Durham England, Chennai India, Brandon Canada, and Altenkirchen Germany.

Each conference concentrates on a specific issue within the rural context as well as giving space to share the diverse experience of the rural church across the world. By encouraging networking, the vision is to support, encourage and enliven one another in the work God has called each of us to.

The theme of 2014 “Holding on to Hope” (“Kugwiritsa Chiyembekezdo Chathu Mwa Khristu” in the local Chichewa language) captures the spirit of the rural community that hope is the surprising discovery in the midst of struggle.

Go to www.irca.net.nz and click on the link at the right for more information about the conference centre, keynote speakers, Bible study leaders, and things you need to know to get to the conference. The cost for the conference, inclusive of accommodation and meals, is USD300.



Love recognizes no barriers. It jumps hurdles, leaps fences, penetrates walls to arrive at its destination full of hope.

Maya Angelou



This occasional newsletter is printed by Anglican Diocese of Waiapu and distributed by a Hawke's Bay team.

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

Editor: Robyn McPhail, 17 Campbell Lane, Kerikeri 0230, phone 09 4017554, email: robyn@chirmac.co.nz, fax: 09 4017555.

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