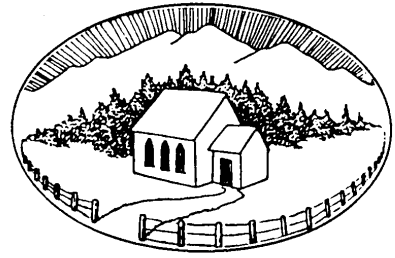


Rural Network News



No. 50 July 2015

If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go with others.

African Proverb

Hei whakawhanaungatanga, hei manaakitanga, hei kaitiakitanga. Sharing news and ideas for ministry among churches serving in rural communities in Aotearoa New Zealand.

Prints out as A5 booklet.

Available as an e-newsletter: email editor if you can change to the e-version.



DEVELOPING POTENTIAL IN CONGREGATIONS

An ecumenical gathering to share stories and resources for the ongoing journey of the church in your community.

St Mark's Church, Woburn Road Lower
Hutt

15-18 October 2015

Organised by [Uniting Congregations of
Aotearoa New Zealand](#)

**The Biennial Forum will be begin on
Thursday night** where annual reports
are presented, a new Standing

Committee is elected, and issues related to Cooperative Ventures are discussed. Anyone is welcome to attend this evening, but only one person from each Cooperative Venture may have a formal vote.

Friday and Saturday is an opportunity for smaller churches of any denomination to be encouraged in their life and work. UCANZ has a commitment to being ecumenical and people are welcome from any church.

There will be a variety of speakers and workshops to suit everyone. Workshop leaders include Andrew Norton, Tovia Aumua, Justin Duckworth, Lisa Wells, Marilyn Welch, Prince Devanandan, Robyn McPhail, Mary Petersen, and Peter MacKenzie.

Worship on Sunday will be shared with St Marks Uniting Church – we realise that some people will want to head home for their own service.

In this edition:

- Ecumenical Gathering in October: Big Ideas for Smaller Churches
- Trans-Tasman 2016
- Partnerships Supporting Rural People
- Small Churches: Impact not Intake
- ANZAC Commemorations
- A Tractor Trek
- Lay Preachers' Association
- Book Review
- Lloyd Vidler: Called to Higher Service
- International Resources

TRANS-TASMAN 2016
Keep these dates free
16-20 May 2016

The Ninth Trans-Tasman Ecumenical Rural Ministry Consultation will be held in the Wairarapa at the Copthorne Hotel Solway Park Masterton.

Theme: "Life, death and resurrection: the future of the rural church, for the whole community".

More information available soon.



The Trans-Tasman group in North Queensland in 2012

PARTNERSHIPS SUPPORTING RURAL PEOPLE

At the same time as we were beginning to plan the first meeting of the organising group for the next Trans-Tasman Rural Ministry Consultation to be held in 2016, I heard about an evening hosted by Supporting Families in Mental Illness to be held on March 26 in Palmerston North.

The advertising was headed with the theme "There's No Stress Down on the Farm – yeah, right!"

So I went along, and was fascinated to see the partnerships between the SF organising group, the Mental Health Foundation, and Federation Farmers, along with some wise local people including from the Rural Support Trust.

This kind of encounter is similar to the T-T Consultation story, as church people from all over NZ and Australia gather to listen to local rural residents around whatever community is hosting. Rich experiences are shared, as on this evening.

At the same time I was disappointed with the interest from church leaders or farming people: admittedly I didn't know who everybody was, but with only about 20 attendees it was clear that either the advertising could have been better. Or somehow there has to be a more enticing accessible way of attracting those on whom this event seemed to be focussed.

SMALL CHURCHES

HEALTH AND STRENGTH MEASURED BY IMPACT NOT INTAKE

There were four speakers: Hugh Norris, Director of Policy and Development for the Mental Health Foundation, who focussed on what is needed to be mentally healthy; Kristy McGregor, a Regional Policy Advisor with Federated Farmers who spoke of the importance of goals and plans – and flexibility; Steve Thomson, Priest and farmer and survivor of depression with a moving story of connecting in his community; and Trevor Shailor, CEO Sports Manawatu, who concluded the evening entertainingly with his personal story this time about mentoring and youth health initiatives.

I was left with two powerful emotions: wondering how healthy ways of dealing with stress and depression can be communicated well with rural people and feeling deeply grateful for the many people who are working on the ground with the vulnerable in rural areas.

There is more to be done.

Jenny Dawson

Jenny lives in Pukerua Bay and works in Spiritual Direction, Supervision, and Workshop Facilitation

They tried to bury us.
They didn't know we were seeds.

Mexican Proverb

Rural churches are generally small simply because they are part of small communities but often have strength and significance far beyond their size. Indeed many rural congregations are integral, and vital, to the functioning of their community. Yet with emphasis on church growth, the message small churches get is they are somehow deficient and need to be larger – or be closed down.

One New Zealand denomination has chosen a key number which identifies a 'small church' that needs investigation and decisions made about it – fewer than 40 regular attenders at Sunday services. Yet small is actually a matter of perception: a church of 250 is very small alongside a church of 3000.

The health and strength of small churches is measured by their impact and influence, not their intake.

Small churches have many advantages over larger ones, with superb strengths of relationships larger churches work hard to develop. Small churches operate like a family, with all the blessings and challenges that includes; larger churches tend to be run like a business.

Smaller churches can be strategic about what they do, based on the strengths and resources (people not just money) and value depth over volume.

The many different perspectives about church health and strength include our various denominational statements such as five faces or aspects of mission.

Kennon Callahan identifies eight strengths of small churches and encourages acceptance that five of the eight makes a strong church.

Tom Bandy defines the adaptable mission of the future as “to become, to create and to go” rather than “to be, to preserve, to endure”. He describes changes in understanding what the church is as six “Godquakes”.

Stephen Macchia identifies nine common indicators of church health whereas Robert Warren describes seven marks of a healthy church.

Natural Church Development identifies eight signs of a healthy church.

None of these ways of identifying health and strength, however, include being a large church or having paid professional clergy.

Churches used to be identified as a community gathered round a minister. A strong and healthy church, regardless of size, is a ministering community.

The principles and practices for becoming a strong healthy small church include: knowing the uniqueness of who you are as a congregation, through listening to God and the local community; identifying gifts, skills and energy you have to reach out with God’s love; building on strengths not

bemoaning weaknesses; focusing on a few things from strengths and doing them really well.

In other words, moving from a theology of survival to a theology of service.

These principles and practices will be enhanced by seeing the grace of God at work in your congregation and the community; being open to the continuing leading of the Spirit; being the church in a way that demonstrates the love of God; and being at peace about what you cannot achieve.

Mary Petersen

Mary is currently supporting ministry in small churches in Waikato and Canterbury.

If you want to explore this topic further:

- plan to attend the “Small Churches, Big Ideas” (see page 1); or

- invite Mary to provide a workshop for your church or group of churches; and/or

- ask Mary for a copy (email attachment) of her Scholar in Theology Thesis “The Now and Future Church: small yet vibrant churches deserve inspiring leadership too.” Text/phone 027 244 8396. mjpetersen@xtra.co.nz

But do not ignore this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like one day. 2 Peter 3:8

Time is how you spend your love. Zadie Smith



Opening Pōwhiri Wesleydale Memorial Church Sunday 19 April

ANZAC CENTENNIAL COMMEMORATIONS

The Whangaroa community in Northland held a week of commemorations prior to ANZAC day. A little church, known better for being flooded, was a centre piece, with pennants in place to remember the fallen of World War 1 and displays of photos and taonga. Lorelei Hayes sums up the week and a number of people who assisted as Kaitiaki/Sitters in the church during the week reflect on the experience.

It was great to see such a well supported community event held in Kaeo over the week leading up to Anzac Day. It was also good to see the Wesleydale Union Church and grounds used as a venue for several of the activities and the forethought and care taken by those involved about how things were handled on site. All credit must go to the Whangaroa Armed Services Commemoration Committee and their helpers for the organisation they put into this well run series of events.

Volunteers felt privileged to see the number of family descendants and friends who walked through the church pausing along the way to reflect on what they saw. Thirty seven pennants hung from specially made rails, one pennant for each of the soldiers from the Whangaroa area who never made it home from WW1, several of these men so young that it brought home yet again the tragedy of war.

A locally produced video ran throughout each day. It included interviews from local kaumatua and information and photographs of the soldiers with songs of the era sung by children from the local schools and the hospital singers.

The interest shown by the number of people who visited the church made it very worthwhile for those involved. Many people brought in treasured photographs of a family member who served in war.

The Sunday service that started the week was also special as family descendants, several who had travelled some distance to be present, unfurled the pennants. The singing of the hymn Abide with Me by the Bay of Islands Singers was especially moving.

Even the weather co-operated changing a stormy Friday morning into a calm April evening for the family picnic on the grass. Poppies in front of the church made a colourful backdrop but were also a poignant reminder of the occasion. The banks on the lawns outside provided a natural amphitheatre for the local performers on the stage in a marquee.

As darkness fell the audio-visual of the soldiers was played. The evening closed with the playing of the Last Post resonating around the stillness of the night air.

It was a time and a place where a crowd of people from all walks of the community were united together in love and respect for those from the Whangaroa area who had lost their lives in WW1.

REFLECTIONS

Throughout the United Kingdom, in churches large and small, it is common to see “Colours” hanging in prominent positions within the Nave. These are Regimental Colours that carry the Battle Honours of the respective

regiment, and being “laid up” in a church indicates that the regiments are no longer part of any formed Armed Forces... their memory however lives on.

During the week preceding ANZAC Day, Kaeo’s “Colours”, in the form of 37 banners for the region’s men lost during WW1, were “laid up” in the Wesleydale Union Church. Their memory lives on in Kaeo, and it was amazing and humbling to see the respect and reverence paid by a stream of locals and visitors who were attracted to reflect and remember the contributions of these men and their community.

The atmosphere in the church was one of reverence and sadness. As folk viewed the banners and watched the video there were frequent comments of: “How sad.” “What a waste of young lives.” Many women had tears in their eyes as they viewed the video.

The ghastliness and futility of war was all-pervading. “I thought of my paternal grandfather who was mustard gassed on the Somme and, although he came home, was a physical wreck and died prematurely.

“I was also reminded of my childhood growing up in the south of England, 15 miles from London, during the Second World War; a world torn apart by a madman and his friends, in whose country I served in the British

Occupation Army for two years post-war.”

It was a privilege to be present and walking into the church and seeing the banners was really impressive. To have these banners in place felt so inclusive of the community.

It brought the whole gamut of society in Kaeo inside the church.

Being a caring, nurturing community is something that comes down the generations to us. To get to a place where people are in our church and not feeling they're being judged. Rather they feel comfortable to come in, with nothing in the background saying they shouldn't be there.

Quite a number had never been in the church before. Local people who had never been in the doors and all who came thought it was beautiful.

People looked around in awe.

And also something else: the ambiance, the feeling of being there in a church and feeling good about it. Many came in and stopped and just stood there. Groups of children who came were captivated.

And everyone was so proud of Kaeo, with the town looking so pretty. As one traveller said, “it was the prettiest decorated town we came through.”

Thanks to Lorelei Hayes, Harry Cockburn, Michael Tearle, Stella and John Leather, and Olive and Tony Shepherd.

A TRACTOR TREK

INVERCARGILL-KARAMEA RETURN

From 12 to 28 March, 2015, 25 tractors plus support vehicles, a total of 40 people, travelled from Invercargill, via Queenstown, Crown Range, Haast Pass, Hokitika, Greymouth, Westport, Karamea, and return via Westport, Reefton, Lewis Pass, Hanmer Springs, Oxford, Geraldine, Twizel, Clyde, Gore, and back to Invercargill.

The trip was organised to raise funds for Westpac Rescue Helicopters in three different areas that we travelled through – plus to have fun travelling by tractor. We raised approximately \$35,000.

The stats: approximately 2,500kms travelled, 130 hours of tractor driving time, with tractors all 1965-1975 vintage.

The community of travellers: Vintage Machinery Club members, farmers, machinery salesmen, mechanic, tractor driving “nuts”. Tractors towed caravans, pop-tops, trailer campers, as we stayed at Camping Grounds, and cooked our own meals.

The trip was not without mechanical problems, as one tractor's crankshaft broke. The driver and tractor were left behind as he had to take the motor out of his tractor, and fit a new crankshaft when it arrived three days later. He was able to meet us again at Reefton.

All in all, an enjoyable trip and perfect weather pattern – sunshine.

George Morrison, Eastern Southland

GREETINGS FROM THE NEW ZEALAND LAY PREACHERS ASSOCIATION!

NZLPA is in the process of giving itself a “makeover”. We are aware that there are many more lay preachers and lay worship leaders out there as our church structures struggle to meet the needs of people worshipping in small churches, sometimes a bit off the beaten track. Our goal is to provide support and resources for lay people of all denominations who are called on to lead worship each week.

How can we help?

- We produce a publication, Word and Worship, that can be posted out to you each quarter. This costs \$20 pa and you can obtain a subscription by emailing Garth and Elizabeth Cant, gandecant@xtra.co.nz
- We distribute an occasional email newsletter of resources which we are happy to send to you. The one to go out early in July has resources for Peace Sunday and for the month of August. Garth and Elizabeth also distribute this and you can email them to be added to the newsletter. There is no charge for this.
- We have a very new website. It is very kindly being hosted by the Methodist Church and the address is www.laypreachers.methodist.org.nz It isn't glossy but if you look on the resources page, you will find prayers, dramas, and helpful websites, all of which have been recommended (and

in some cases written) by lay worship leaders. We would be delighted if you had material you were willing to share on the website. Please email lindacowan@xtra.co.nz if you have material to share.

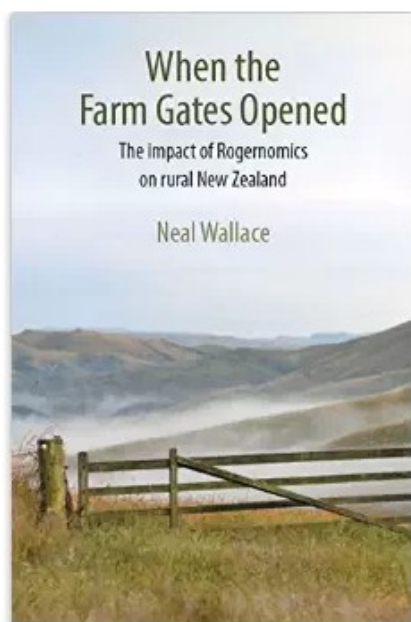
- We are happy to help people who are seeking to be accredited as lay preachers. We have an outline of the requirements of our denominational churches for accreditation and are willing to support people as they progress towards accreditation. Linda Cowan would be the first point of contact within NZLPA although this must be discussed with and endorsed by your parish minister or enabler first.

If there are things we could be doing that might support those of you involved as lay worship leaders in rural areas, please do contact either Garth and Elizabeth, or Linda. We would be delighted to hear from you.

I think gardening is nearer to godliness than theology. True gardeners are both iconographers and theologians insofar as these activities are the fruit of prayer 'without ceasing.' Likewise, true gardeners never cease to garden, not even in their sleep, because gardening is not just something they do. It is how they live.

Vigen Guroian

BOOK REVIEW



people and specific places, some of whom readers will know, economic analysis, social history, tales of power brokers and little people, information about marketing and manufacturing, and photographs of people and protests and productivity, amidst the pain.

These years saw the creation of the Rural Support Trust, which still offers wise and compassionate care to people in the countryside in times of crisis. It is interesting to me that both the regional ecumenical rural ministry groups (Canterbury and Hawkes Bay) began in response to these changes as church people sought ways to listen and respond appropriately to the pain of rural communities.

We can never go back, but I benefitted greatly from the insights in this book, and from the perspective of reflecting back all these years later. As Wallace concludes "...economics will continue to modify the shape of farms and related industry. Farmers have resisted the tribulations thrown at them by nature and governments and there seems little doubt they will continue to do so. Ultimately this book gives the kind of hope that we all need in times of massive change.

Jenny Dawson

"When the Farm Gates Opened – the impact of Rogernomics on rural New Zealand" by Neal Wallace, Otago University Press 2014. paperback, 160 pp, ISBN 978-1-877578-72-4, \$30

Battering, bruising, crisis, stress, and amazing creativity blew relentlessly through the paddocks in the period between 1984 and 1990. The sweeping economic reforms that were begun by the Lange government from 1984 changed this country forever, especially catching out the farming community. It is impossible to understand rural ministry today without an understanding of what began thirty years ago. Things have changed forever but so much of what we see in the rural scene now was shaped by the reforms of these years.

Neal Wallace is a journalist who has worked on The New Zealand Farmer magazine and more recently as regional chief reporter for the Otago Daily Times. He includes an appendix on "Key Schemes and Subsidies" and a full index, both of which are helpful for those who don't know the details of agricultural economics in this period. There are also many stories of real

LLOYD VIDLER: CALLED TO HIGHER SERVICE

Una Vidler wrote to IRCA friends, “It is with a very heavy heart I send this to you. On Wednesday morning 22nd [April], Lloyd suffered a fatal heart attack.... We had no idea that he might suddenly depart from us. He seemed fit and as healthy as one expect in the 80s.”

IRCA mourns the loss of a very dear friend, another of those who were there at the beginning. Lloyd has been a guiding hand to IRCA and especially those who followed him in leadership.

In retirement these same gifts found expression in his garden. A green thumb that tilled and tended soil and rural church alike. As Dave Ruesink puts it, “I bet that God's flowers are already being cared for by Lloyd as his green thumb is at work in Heaven.”

Joyce Sasse speaks of “Lloyd’s prayers – they connected us so closely with what we were about while in the presence of the Spirit.”

One of Lloyd’s rural Church friends reflects

Lloyd Vidler has died. We have been together in many rural ministry places: Kyogle and Motuti, Ushaw College and Brandon,.... We have enjoyed the warmth and kindness of Una and Lloyd’s homes in Warrnambol and Bowral.

Remembering Lloyd is memory of understanding, steadiness, wisdom, quietness, enthusiasm, encouragement..



And there is a puzzle. Why do I have such a strong sense of Lloyd’s special qualities, of his presence, but such a meagre pool of cameos and anecdotes?

That puzzles me and I went back to things Lloyd wrote. His 1997 book

Presbytery Minister: a journey of

discovery gave me some insights. He wrote it ten years after Lloyd and Una moved from parish ministry in New South Wales, for Lloyd to take up the post of Presbytery Minister to the Parishes in a vast sweep of Mitchell Presbytery in western Victoria. The job was new, and they had no network of familiar friends.

Lloyd tells us about the work strategies he devised in this new place, and this new culture:

- listen carefully, encourage others to give voice to their opinions
- affirm the good things that they are doing now
- allow ministers (and lay people) to make mistakes, and be beside them to reflect on the experience

- discern when to comfort, and when to confront, and
- encourage the spiritual life, and engage in continuing education.

These things were part of Lloyd's skill set, and his make up, when we got to know him. He applied them at every level, from the smallest of rural congregations to the most diverse of international church gatherings. Lloyd's leadership was outstanding, not because he moved into the limelight, but because he was listening, encouraging, enabling.

Lloyd was always in solidarity with others. We did great things because Lloyd was with us, holding us together, being part of us finding our vision, new pathways ahead.

Lloyd gave us an enthusiasm and an excitement about being Christ's people "down under" and "across the globe".

IRCA E-NEWSLETTER

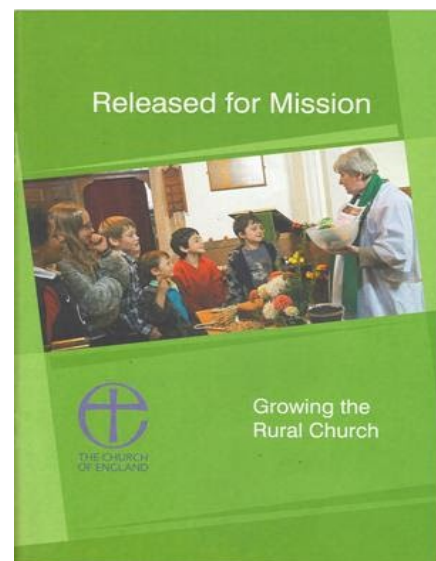
If you use the internet, are you on the emailing list for the International Rural Churches Association e-newsletter?

Some of the items from the May newsletter have been included here, but there are a number of other interesting bits of news and links from the international rural church family.

Email robyn@chirmac.co.nz if you'd like to be added to the list. Or find the link on the homepage of www.irca.net.nz (underneath the circling globe) and subscribe yourself.

RESEARCH AND RESOURCES FROM THE UK

- Do download the UK research report and recommendations "[Released for Mission: Growing the Rural Church](#)".¹ Despite challenges this gives much encouragement and shows how rural churches are leading the way on new ways of being church.

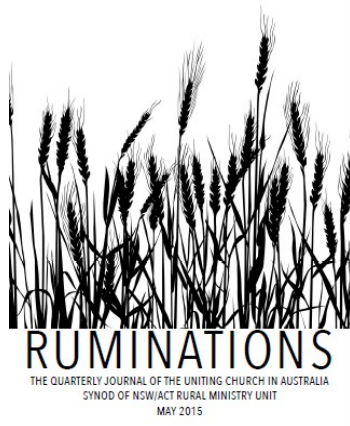


- The website holds a number of rural church resources², many would be of benefit to churches in other countries.
- In particular, [Equipping Rural Churches for Mission](#)³ is an excellent four session toolkit to help churches understand themselves, their community and develop a mission action plan.

¹<http://arthurrankcentre.org.uk/mission-and-ministry/improving-training-and-resources>

²<http://www.arthurrankcentre.org.uk/are-you-involved-in-a-rural-church>

³<http://www.arthurrankcentre.org.uk/publications-and-resources/profiling-tools>



RUMINATIONS

The journal of the Uniting Church in Australia's Rural Ministry Unit

The Easter/May edition, as always, contains a variety of interesting articles. The pdf file is available at <http://ume.nsw.uca.org.au/resource/ruminations-may-2015/>. An archive of editions of Ruminations is kept on the [Riverina Presbytery website](#).

FARM CHURCH

Check out this story from PCUSA: Dreaming of a church with no steeples, buildings, the pastor who follows this vision wonders "Where will Farm Church end up?"

<http://www.pcusa.org/news/2015/3/23/dreaming-church-no-steeples-buildings/>

THE BAPTISM

He never came to church,
He didn't feel he should,
Until one day he called us
To ask us if he could.

The problem was quite clear –
It all concerned his son,
It seemed the time was right
To have his small boy "done".

Well, the meeting soon was over
And the preacher learned his fate,
When the council all agreed
This was a time to celebrate!

So, the ladies baked a cake –
It was planned as a surprise,
And as the son was baptized
Tears filled his father's eyes.

The church sang "Happy Birthday",
There was no condemnation,
Just words of warmth and welcome,
And joyous celebration.

Now that man seems strangely
different

In the silence of his heart,
For this company of strangers
Gave the best gift from the start.

Carol Carley, April 2015 newsletter,
www.canadianruralchurch.net



This intermittent 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.

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