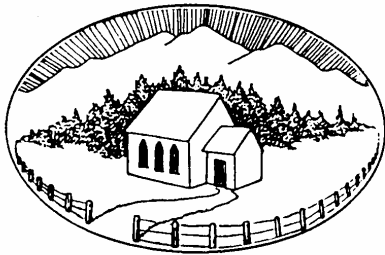


Rural Network News



No. 40

August 2009

**The best sermons are lived
not preached.**

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.

*Special themes in this edition are the visit of the
Webbers from Canada and publication of the 2008
Trans-Tasman Conference Report.*

HOSPITALITY AND HORTICULTURE

Pacific Island seasonal workers have proven to be a
big boost to the Nelson/Tasman and Marlborough
horticulture and viticulture industries.

The scheme, introduced two years ago, is not
necessarily a cheaper staffing option given the
significant investment required in recruitment, air
fares and pastoral care. However costs are being
offset by the security of sufficient workers at peak
harvest time and the investment in training is paid
back by a continuity of experienced workers
(Laura Basham, 'Fruit of whose land?' in *The
Nelson Mail*, June 30, 2009 p. 15).

The changing face of small rural communities has
caused concern for some: "It feels like down-town

Auckland", I have heard people mutter as they see
the workers stream into the local supermarket at
the end of the day. "We don't feel safe anymore."

In an effort to combat this apprehension,
community leaders and churches have banded
together to facilitate an appreciation for the
richness and diversity multi-cultural groups
provide by organising community cross-cultural
music and dance evenings.

The local school children contribute a Kiwi flavour
bringing their mums and dads with them.
Throughout the regions these events have proved a
great success with the most notable being *Rainbow
Praise*, an event organised free to the public in the
Nelson Cathedral which was jam packed and a
delight for all.

In our church communities there was also initially
a 'them' and 'us' divide but good leadership has
used this opportunity to encourage locals to care
for the foreigners in their land which is, in effect,
the mission field in their back yard.

The Awatere Christian Joint Venture
(Anglican/Presbyterian) under the leadership of
Rev Miriam Taylor, has taken the admonition in
Deuteronomy 10:18-19 to "love the alien, giving
him food and clothing" to heart emptying their
wardrobes of excess warm clothing for the men
and women from the tropics.

In some cases, this has been a cathartic exercise,
knowing the clothing previously worn by loved-
ones will be so appreciated. In other cases it has
developed a whole new boldness in hospitality
opening up homes and hearts to care for those who
have no family or support network.

This interaction benefits us all. One of the Ni-Van
workers was a registered FIFA soccer coach and
trained the local primary school teams for the
duration of his stay.

As the numbers in our services swell and we learn
songs from the islands enabling all to worship the
Lord of the Nations in spirit and in truth, we are all
blessed and encouraged in our faith.

Two from our church have joined a mission team
in Vanuatu in an effort to learn more about that
culture. The team is working on a building project
as well as sharing in ministry and have been joined
by several Ni-Vans who have previously worked in
the Marlborough region.



Farewell to Vanuatu Friends

Plans are already afoot to send another short-term mission trip from Marlborough next year – we are learning so much from these men and women from the islands who are passionate for the Lord Jesus. It is a privilege to reciprocate: to serve and share with them in their own land.

The Recognised Seasonal Employer scheme is with us for the foreseeable future. Let’s make the most of it, embracing the opportunities at hand to serve the Lord.

Dawn Daunauda, Seddon, Marlborough

CANADIAN VISITORS AT HOME IN RURAL NEW ZEALAND

We enjoyed very much having David and Linda Webber stay with us overnight in **Reefton** and were heartened when they said they would like to have spent a week here. (Though that might have been just to go out hunting!)

There were ten people at the church for a shared tea and David shared their work in Canada. The message they brought to us was:

They committed themselves to the teaching of the apostles, the life together, the common meal, and the prayers. *Acts 2:42 The Message*

A simple, effective and relevant message well received. One man who heard them speak had been a hunter ‘back in the day’ and had just gone to make up some numbers. He was impressed with David and their ministry and lent David a couple of DVDs of hunting in New Zealand which David enjoyed watching during the visit.

David and Linda quickly fitted into our community. They came and spoke at our RI class at Reefton Area School; they visited the Miners Hut, whose people wanted them to stay all day, and the Visitors’ Centre; and they helped the undertaker carry Charlie Reid, a 95 year old man who had passed away, into the Church. They were able to see how our rural ministry works.

On our way to Greymouth, for them to catch the Trans Alpine Train, David asked me “do I know what they called me at the Miners Hut?”

“Padre”. He was impressed by that. They can always come back to Reefton.

Ian and Karen Davidson

On Saturday 20 June the Webbers were in **South Canterbury**, with up to 30 people from Waimate to the banks of the Rangitata River, from Presbyterian, Anglican, Cooperating and other denominations, attending a very informative and inspirational morning session.

David took us through a journey of House Church mission in a remote and rural area, the size of the North Island, population of 100,000, and with long summer days and winter temperatures down to a dry -40°C. The mountain plateau settled in 1858 consists of subsistence farming with the main industry, logging of natural plantations of Douglas fir, more recently stricken by pine needle disease and now feeling the effects of recession. David took us through the formation of House Church mission born in 1988 and what House Church is today.

Growing up in this remote rural area David was conscious of the absence of church in a depressed rural environment. After a life threatening experience with cancer at 29, David and another minister had a vision for House Church mission. With no initial support from the national church, they sought direct funding from the local area. Today four ministers, two lay preachers and a budget of \$280,000 support 20 house churches with 350 people in this vast area.

House Church is a bottom-up operation and not focused on traditional administrative structures, church buildings or programmes. All ages are included and participate in worship. Most are based at remote ranches with up to 15, 20 or even 50 people meeting in homes on a regular weekly or fortnightly basis with sometimes taking a break for holidays. However, even if numbers have dropped to two or three, they continue.

Another concept is the Galilean coffee house with a focus on music meeting once a month at Williams Lake (pop.10,000), with 80 attending. Another form is in the Nazco reserve where work is being carried out among First Nations people.

In each situation, the church is connecting and networking with the people, sharing the love of Christ.

In the afternoon session, David and Linda led us in House Church music, followed by teaching from Genesis and the story of Abraham. The continuing story – of trials and journeying – and the message: “God – it is not finished yet”. Breaking of the bread and prayer followed this.

Considering what we had heard and exploring the signs of what is God doing in our community, we noted these significant changes occurring in South Canterbury:

- conversions to dairying with significant changes to the dynamics of our community;
- the changes in configuration of parishes;
- change in all churches in the community; change in leadership, focus and vision;
- the strategy and vision from Bishop Victoria in the Diocese of Christchurch.

The demand for resources – time, funding, and administration – has to be balanced with the need to connect with the people and is often at odds with being able to make that connection.

Some of the signs discussed by the group are these:

- Is church dying, with churches closing?
- There are needs in the community but the task is to make a connection with the needs.
- How are we to connect with the young, who are often even without the traditional connections of the church yet have a huge amount of spirituality? How many grandparents gift a Bible to their grandchildren?

I have encountered many messages over the last few years telling me not to think in traditional ways, to untie the shackles of our buildings and our Sunday worship, to look at the pastoral needs and to people in our local community. What do they want church to look like? Within our own Parish the journey continues of focussing on our people, on local pastoral needs and on how to meet and resource this. And to have faith in doing this.

It can be like a piece of artwork, with many colours and contrasts, never finished and part of an ongoing journey. Changes are a great opportunity to focus out to the community and think differently. Keep it to the basics, focus on the key elements of **fellowship – teaching to the apostles – prayer - breaking of the bread.**

In South Canterbury we are all embarking on the journey and “God – it is not finished yet”. Just a new beginning.

To explore the House Church mission more go to <http://www.cariboopresbyterianchurch.bc.ca/>

Barbara Ford

I know God will not give me anything I can't handle. I just wish that God didn't trust me so much.

Mother Teresa

SOUTHERN RURAL CONFERENCE

The Presbyterian Synod of Otago and Southland's Rural Conference 09 was held in St Andrew's Church in Balclutha from the 25–28 June.

It was a near thing: St Andrew's was engaged in a major building project and the tradesmen were leaving as the first of the conference participants arrived. Some tradesmen came back the next day and during the afternoon workshops there was a sound like a demented dentist drilling into the wall!

Over 100 had registered for the conference, from all over the Otago Southland region, to hear the keynote addresses by David Webber from the Cariboo Presbyterian Church in British Columbia.

David's address notes and photos from the conference are available from the Synod website <http://www.synod.org.nz/page/27/Downloads.html>

David presented his talk and then opened up the sessions for comment and response followed by participants sharing stories from their experience. David is a story teller himself and the conference enjoyed some good stories and laughter.

David spoke from his experience of the Cariboo Chilcotin Church which he and his wife Linda planted 20 years ago. They used the model given in the book of Acts for house churches (2:42).

He told us that their parish is the size of the North Island and now has a staff of four. In their early days he and Linda travelled up to four hours to lead a house church which was generally three hours in length before travelling home again. Now, with a staff of four, most house churches are within two and a half hours' drive. David is involved in six per week.

Many at the conference were encouraged to hear of the Webbers' experience and felt that what they shared gave promise of ways in which rural congregations here in the south could adapt.

David was adamant that whatever form a congregation took it was still a group that "attended to the teaching of the Apostles, the breaking of bread, fellowship and prayer."

Music for the conference was provided by the music group from the Waiiau Valley congregation at Tuatapere. The three women, under the leadership of Kelly Pearce, led this part of the conference with great skill and sensitively mixing

more traditional hymns with modern, as well as introducing some new material.

Twenty workshops were offered during the two afternoons of the conference. These dealt with matters related to leadership, music, community connection, youth, financial management, involving all ages, and changing land use and farming practices with implications for rural congregations. It is a measure of the depth of skill in the Synod area that all workshops were led by people from within the Synod.

Alan Kerr started each day with devotions based on the theme of gardens, using the Garden of Eden through to the Garden of Gethsemane. Later in the week following the conference, we were shocked at his tragic death in a road accident.

The conference came to an end with a service of Holy Communion on Sunday morning led by the Synod's Moderator, Christine Hansen. The Moderator of the General Assembly, Graham Redding preached and led the communion.

Local parishes catered for the conference and meals were of a high standard as is expected from country people.

In all, the conference went well with a real 'buzz' among the participants who enjoyed a very stimulating time.

DAVID AND LINDA'S THOUGHTS

Since returning to Canada David has written, in part:

"Our time with you and your Synod and indeed the Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa New Zealand was intense. We had, and still have, much to process. We received far more than we gave, I am sure, at both the personal level as well as at the ministry and mission level. The question now is how we make the best use of all that we did receive for the sake of Jesus Christ and his church here in Canada..."

"Be assured of this however, the experience that Linda and I had in New Zealand was by far the high point for us in Christ's church, both in terms of service and in joy."

Bruce Fraser, Dunedin

Life is simpler when you plough
around the stump

A CELEBRATION OF COMMUNITY

On Sunday 26 April 2009 a wonderful celebration of community occurred in Diamond Harbour, near Christchurch. The new Community church of St Andrew was dedicated. This beautiful, small church is in the middle of the Diamond Harbour township, next to the Fire Station.



Dominating the wall behind the altar is a set of five tapestries showing the *Parable of the Sower* set against the hills and sea of Diamond Harbour. These were designed by a local artist, Fran McFarlane, and woven by her, Sheena Lyne and Alistair Greet, together with 320 members of the community, between 2002 and 2003. The wonderful warm colours are echoed in the rest of the church. It is a marvellous symbol of community, the weaving together of so many different strands.

Diamond Harbour is a small settlement on Lyttelton Harbour across the water from Lyttelton. It has a population of 1389. The first church was the disused Golf Club pavilion, bought in 1951 by the local Anglican Congregation and named St Andrews Church, after the famous golf course in Scotland, so the story goes.

In 1967, a porch was added, and the local Fire Station donated a bell which was hung in the porch. This bell was given by the *Lyttelton Harbour Board* to Diamond Harbour Community as a fire bell in 1949. Made in Sydney at Russell Foundry it was probably originally a ship's bell.

In 1996, St Andrews became a community church, when the Presbyterians and Methodists agreed to work and worship there with the Anglicans. In 1997 Fr Jim Consedine and the Catholic community were invited to use the church and did

so gladly. Prior to that they had used the community hall which was very large and rather cold in the winter.

In 1999, the decision was taken to sell the old church and build a hall, library and church on a much larger site donated by the Presbyterian church. Fund-raising was undertaken by all four church communities – Anglicans, Presbyterians, Catholics and Methodists.

A building committee was set up and there were long discussions about many things. I recall one meeting where those members of the committee who were moved by God in creation, were at loggerheads with those who thought the beautiful views would distract from worship. To my delight the new church has long windows which allow the contemplation both of the harbour and the hills.

The hall opened in 2002 and has been used since as a church and for community activities.

There were then problems raising enough funds to build the church. However, God provided. A sum of money almost exactly fitting the needs became available to finish the church. It was started in November 2008 and finished in time for Easter in April 2009.

The fire brigade had reclaimed the bell when the old church was sold, and rang it at their 50th anniversary in 2005. This bell has been gifted back to the new church and fitted with an electric striking device. It was handed over at the dedication and rung 12 times. The sanctuary furniture, tabernacle and sanctuary lamp were made by Richard Coop, a parishioner. On the right of the Altar is a lovely icon of St Michael made by Fr Michael Elder.

As might be expected after all the community involvement, the Dedication of this new church was also a community affair. People who had been involved at some stage came back from far and wide. There were 200 or more people packed into the church and hall. A number of previous Vicars and Ministers and the present and past Catholic priests were all there.

The church was dedicated by Victoria Matthews, Anglican Bishop of Christchurch; Fr. Rick Loughnan, Catholic Vicar General of Christchurch; Susanne Spindler, Assistant Superintendent of the Methodist Central South Island Synod; and Reverend Paul King, Moderator of the Presbytery. Prayers were led by lay members of all the

congregations, and a delightful drama, of The Wise Man who built on rock and the Foolish Man who built on sand, was given by the Youth Group.

Afterwards we all feasted on a sumptuous afternoon tea provided by families bringing a plate in the time honoured New Zealand rural tradition. What a wonderful celebration it was of a true community which is welcoming and hospitable in the very best Christian tradition. It is a great sign of hope to share.

Anna Holmes, *reprinted by kind permission from Tui Motu InterIslands July 2009*

The Sunday School teacher had spent several sessions teaching the story of Jonah and the whale. They'd read, talked about, and role-played how Jonah tried to run away from God, was swallowed by a big fish, barfed up on the beach and finally went to preach to Nineveh after all.

"What can we learn from this story?" the teacher asked.

From the back row a small voice: "that you can't keep a good man down."

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BOOK REVIEW

Proceedings of the 7th Trans-Tasman Rural Ministry Conference: Marlborough/Nelson 2008

Reviewers: Lloyd Vidler, Janice Purdie, Joyce Sasse

"CHANGING SEASONS, CHANGING TIMES"

This was the theme of the 7th Trans-Tasman Rural Ministry Conference held in the Marlborough/Nelson region of the New Zealand's South Island. On reading the report participants in the conference will be reminded of the experiences they shared and the insights they gained.

But the report has a much wider use. The record of proceedings is an insight into the way in which rural people set about the task of orienting to their context, doing their theology, and learning of ways to help their churches thrive.

The report contains an excellent summary of the 24 year journey from the first conference held in Darfield, New Zealand in 1984 to the present.

The story of Omaka Marae and the building of community, as participants began to learn and live together, is worthy of careful reflection. Father Phil's stories told as part of Morning Devotions are moving episodes from real life. The record of the field trips underlined the changing nature of agriculture. The keynote addresses are most helpfully approached if the reader allows the voices of the presenters to be heard and accept the challenge with which they confront already established positions.

The workshops offered practical advice from hands on people. An encouraging aspect of the reports is the opportunity to continue the conversations using email.

The closing worship is an effective demonstration of the way in which worship can grow out of the context of a conference. It is a reminder of the way in which worship can be structured to reflect the life of the community in which worship is celebrated.

The report is well presented. Coloured photographs tell the story of the conference in images. Some captioning beneath the images may have been helpful.

The number of Maori words in the text is a demonstration of the way in which New Zealanders have embraced some of the culture and words of the original inhabitants. But a few more translations may help people who have not grown up in that context.

I missed a list of participants which on other occasions gave attendees and non-attendees a point of reference.

Lloyd Vidler, Bowral, NSW, Australia

CONFERENCE BOOK

Proceedings of the 7th Trans-Tasman Rural Ministry Conference: From Marlborough to Nelson 2008 is available for NZ\$25 and can be ordered from peterc@nelsonanglican.org.nz.

It can also be accessed at www.irca.net.nz

A PARTICIPANT'S PERSPECTIVE

The 7th Trans-Tasman Rural Conference report is attractively presented and easy to read with its spiral back. It reflects well the ethos, the

challenges, the learnings, and the encouragement that the conference offered.

As one who attended the conference, I was thrilled to be able to read, to “re-hear” Father Phil’s devotional stories – wonderful true life stories that contained great spiritual learnings. As I read them, I added in Father Phil’s sound effects.

The conference covered much in its four days. It was hard to remember everything. So it was great to get this well written full report which jogged the memory and offered afresh encouragement, challenges, and practical ideas for ministry that have been tried and worked in the rural setting.

People went on only one of the two bus trips, and took part in only three of the eleven workshops. I have found it rewarding reading about the bus trip I did not go on; the workshops I did not attend. It is good to have the email addresses as well as the names of the workshop leaders.

Devotionals and spiritual reflection were very much entwined in the conference. Its main thrust was about encouragement; about our being Christ’s presence in our local communities. Speakers naturally spoke from their theological understandings, which at times I found disturbing as they were different from mine. I found Robyn McPhail’s comments in the closing chapter helpful and healing.

People actively engaged in the rural ministry movement don’t let theology get in the way. They start from a shared faith in Jesus Christ, and get on with the task of being Christ’s presence in their local communities... A strong community (or church) is one in which all voices are heard and respected, and unity is found in the way we work together for the kingdom – on earth as in heaven.

This is lived out in Mapua where its three struggling Presbyterian-Methodist, Anglican and Charismatic churches came together in the 1990s.

For the people in Mapua, ministry in their area was more important than any theological differences. Today the church has 80-85 at worship and 40+ children and youth.

The report is well worth a read by anyone who is looking for how to “do church” in their area better. While focussing on the rural setting, the report encompasses ideas and resources for any church that wants to grow and develop whatever its setting.

A VIEW FROM OVERSEAS

For the past quarter century strong leadership in understanding rural ministry has come from Australia and New Zealand. An in-depth report of their 7th Trans-Tasman Conference can now be found at www.irca.net.nz.

The Conference was held in the northern region of New Zealand’s South Island in 2008. The report invites us to travel with the delegates over a varied landscape, hear the stories of community members, and listen in on the discussions of conference participants.

Always these conferences are inter-cultural (Maori and White), inter-denominational, and inclusive of a broad spectrum of theological understandings. Their purpose, since 1984, has been to look at the struggles faced by rural people and better understand how the local church can enhance community life in rapidly changing times. 2008’s theme was *Changing Seasons, Changing Times*.

PROBLEMS FACED BY RURAL PEOPLE

The issues of rural sustainability and the financial viability of people in agriculture is a constant concern. Farmers in these areas have to find value-added ways of supplementing what they produce, or turn their land over to the more lucrative grape/wine industry. The capacity for food production is reduced, and care needs to be taken lest the incoming corporations become the new colonizers and threaten the growth of healthy communities.

The urban-rural gap in understanding and sympathy is widening in New Zealand.

Institutional churches have had little regard for the struggles of local people and see these struggles as being peripheral “to the real work of salvation”.

Indeed, changes impinge on rural people at every turn: changes in land use and land conservation, global warming, the effects of global climate change.

MISSION AND MINISTRY OF THE RURAL CHURCH

How can the local church support rural people in their regions in their times of trouble? How do they become informed about what the issues are?

And how do local church leaders transcend current denominational road-blocks? The suggestion was

to start from where the grass-roots people are, and work up from there in seeking support. When dealing with clashes and theological dissent in the community, start with the shared faith in Christ that believers have, and find ways to get on with the task of being Christ's presence in the community.

Even as we develop an ecotheology, we need to be aware many will deny the difficult issues surrounding climate change, etc. The larger church needs to develop an understanding about Creation being part of the Salvation Story. It means being less anthropocentric.

Meanwhile we have to have compassion for the farmer "who finds it hard to think green when he's in the red."

SOME HELPFUL REFLECTIONS

- *The theme of the Two Builders – the wise man and the foolish man:*

Our society, for the most part, has chosen to build on the sand.

Who are our false prophets? Where can we turn (to the Inuit)?

How do we learn to care tenderly for God's Creation?

- *Joel:*

In a time of damage created by the climate and by outside forces the people shut themselves off from God and a cloud of shame covered the land. It was a time of withdrawal, depression, and self-rejection.

The advice of Joel was for the people to come together and share their sorrow publicly (lament). The action opened the people toward honouring what they had and returned them to God and hope.

How does blaming affect us? We can either disconnect or listen for the call from God.

Joyce Sasse, Pincher Creek, Alberta, Canada

Words that soak into your ears are
whispered, not yelled.

INTERNATIONAL NEWS



20–27 September 2010

4th International Rural Church Association Conference

Landjugendakademie, in Altenkirchen, Germany

Theme: "Hunger – the Global Challenge"

The programme begins with check in prior to dinner at 6pm on Monday 20 September and ends with breakfast on Sunday 26 September and the possibility of attending worship in the region.

The conference will cost 450 Euro – registration, accommodation, meals, and field trips.

Keynote speakers each day will cover the global challenge of hunger, migration and hope for the countryside – the churches' response. A report from the International Assessment of Agricultural Knowledge, Science and Technology for Development, agreed to at an Intergovernmental Plenary Session in Johannesburg, South Africa in April 2008 will be a focus for some of the discussion.

Bible Studies, with presenters from different regions of the world, a field trip, and reports from the regions will feature along with opportunities to converse with others at the conference and working together to form a shared resolution to take away from the conference.

Go to the new IRCA website www.irca.net.nz for links for the programme and for expressions of interest in attending.



This occasional newsletter is printed by Anglican Diocese of Christchurch and distributed by a Canterbury rural ministry team.

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

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