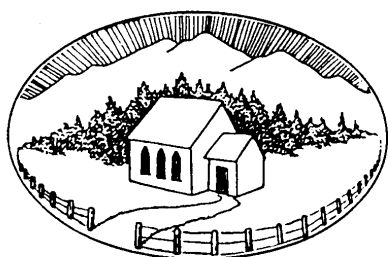


Rural Network News



No. 46 December 2012

I prayed for twenty years but received no answer until I prayed with my legs.

Frederick Douglass
19th century escaped slave

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.

IRCA-OCEANIA

Finding our Feet

The 2012 Trans-Tasman rural ministry conference in Atherton North Queensland launched the regional grouping IRCA-Oceania.

IRCA-Europe was formed the month before and these developments spring from a commitment at the 2010 IRCA conference in Altenkirchen, Germany to strengthen the international rural

churches movement by building regional networks. If you go to <http://www.irca.net.nz/> you can see the secretary/webmaster's moves to assist this vision. Pages are dedicated to Oceania and Europe, with the hope that IRCA-Africa be formed as we prepare for the next IRCA conference in Malawi (July 2014).

The editor of this newsletter has been given access to 'Snippet-Master' for IRCA-Oceania, to add and amend information. So please get in touch if you have an upcoming event, news to share, or interesting links.

At the Atherton conference five people were appointed to form the inaugural Leadership Group of IRCA-Oceania: Peter Harvey a resource minister to small rural congregations in Western Australia, Angela Dutton regional Dean in Eastern Southland, Steve Thomson farmer and local church leader near Castlepoint, Jenny Dawson Bishop's Chaplain in the Hawkes' Bay, and Robyn McPhail parish minister in rural Northland.

The focus at present is on setting up a membership process through the IRCA website and then advertising it as widely as possible. All who were present at Atherton are already members. We plan to establish a membership fee reflective of the value of belonging, which new members will be asked to pay on registration. Atherton participants will be invited

to continue membership by way of payment after the first year. A fee is important for ensuring genuine registrations on-line, and also to indicate that this is something of value.

The other side of our initial work is therefore to identify what makes it worthwhile to belong. For a starting point we envisage the website becoming a base for links to resources from around the region, information about events, and a bulletin board for news and views. This could be a base for an occasional Oceania newsheet.

It may be important to continue this newsletter as distinctively 'New Zealand', alongside publications like *Ruminations* in New South Wales. Exactly where an Oceania newsheet would fit is something we need to explore. Developing the network will be a priority, by linking to current newsletters and other information sources and by using an Oceania-wide communication to encourage good support and information sharing within our own countries and states.

The key to it will be building a broad network of good communicators around the rural outfields of Oceania.

The name "Oceania" reflects the goal expressed at Atherton that this become much more than Australia and New Zealand. Only these two nations were present at Atherton, so it is with them that we begin. The Leadership

Group promised however to take it further by working with Garry Hardingham who, as secretary of IRCA and organiser of the Atherton conference, has built links with a number of rural church communities in various Island nations. Some of Garry's contacts had planned to come to Atherton, but problems with visas or the high Aussie dollar prevented it.

To be an active part in, or at least up to date with, the rural network in this region, these are things you can do:

- Make a regular check for changes on www.irca.net.nz/oceania.
- Send to robyn@chirmac.co.nz details of upcoming events, or your news and views on rural issues.
- Let me know about weblinks to resources you find useful.
- (If a Facebook user) "Like" the [International Rural Churches Association](#) page, and add your news and views.
- Ask the person in charge of your denominational church site if they could alert IRCA-Oceania whenever something rural is uploaded.

And please feel free also to share your thoughts on how IRCA-Oceania can be of value to you and your rural community and church.

Robyn McPhail

WINDING ROADS AND LEARNING CURVES

Rev Dale Pomeroy could have easily retired and lived the “Good Life”. But knowing that God does not call us to retire from life he chose to answer a call he believed was on his life to enter the ministry in the Havelock and the Sounds Parish. So the Boat Builder swapped from crafting wood into boats to crafting a church community.

The Parish of Havelock in the Sounds sits at the top of the South island between Nelson and Marlborough. As the name suggests the Parish covers a large part of the sounds and is best visualized as a crescent, Havelock in the centre, on the northwest tip French pass (2¼ hours by road away) and the Northeast tip Waitaria Bay (another 2¼ hours away). Most of the road travel is on narrow twisting gravel roads and at times when the roads run out the only access is by boat. Interestingly the Diocese does not have a 4 x 4 car allowance or a boat allowance. It is a region which they talk about travelling time rather than km-distance.

Church services are held at churches, homes and hall across the district and not all of these have electric power. Rather challenging with all our modern aids churches use today –data projectors, music instruments etc. In a city people ask what time does church

begin, out here church begins when the people arrive and ends when they leave. During that time there is the gathering of the community, the “service”, a meal and much more. It finishes when the last one leaves. Very different from the Parish which Dale came from where he was used to a 8am service that finished at 9am and a 10am which finished at 11am, all over by lunch time. In the Havelock Parish he found each Sunday involved no less than three services. Most commonly he would be away from home for 12 hours on Sundays.

Some of the gatherings would be best described as House Groups which take on many flavours. Like the blokes group which is often seen out 4-wheel driving or boating. The men's group has also taken on projects like re-roofing a beneficiaries' house and other construction projects in the community.

Another learning curve for him was to begin to understand that though it was called the Havelock and Sounds Parish in reality because of parochialism, distances and isolation each area was like a parish in itself, each requiring respect, time and communication. And he began to understand and learn to work with the matriarchs and patriarchs of each community. By honouring and acknowledging each district he was then able to build a sense of the gathered areas being the Havelock

and the Sounds Parish. This over time had the effect of the Parish beginning to understand their place in the wider church community.

An example of the individual church groupings and the collective Parish finding their place in the wider church community is the participation in Overseas Mission. Along with raising money they have taken on innovative projects like collecting underwear for a girls home in Argentina. Individuals have been sent off to be part of Diocesan Mission Teams which have visited and worked at re-roofing a church on the remote Gaua island in northern Vanuatu.

This has also had the benefit of people reflecting on mission in terms of their local settings. Examples of this have been the church partnering with other community groups to provide for the needs of the community. In one project they have partnered with the Pelorus Area Health Trust and set up community vegetable gardens to provide produce which is distributed to the elderly and the needy in the community. The Church employs a person to work one day a week with a particular focus on the older people in the community.

When Dale was asked what he had learnt in his 6½ years in the Havelock and the Sounds Parish he replied; rural communities move at a different pace. Time has to be invested in building

relationships and trust. Once this is done then there are great opportunities as rural folk don't need to be taught community. When community is inspired by Christ great things happen. As a leader of the rural church you must have a vision but also be wise enough not to rush things. In time just like "the seasons of the land" things will happen. Anyone going into rural ministry needs to be prepared to invest time and not treat it as a short placement.

Martin Harrison

THE CREATION STORY

(as told by the Cat)

On the first day of creation, God created the cat.

On the second day, God created a human to serve the cat.

On the third, God created all the animals of the earth to serve as potential food for the cat.

On the fourth day, God created honest toil so that humans could labour for the good of the cat.

On the fifth day, God created the sparkle ball so that the cat might or might not play with it.

On the sixth day, God created veterinary science to keep the cat healthy and the human broke.

On the seventh day, God tried to rest, but still had to scoop the litterbox!

LENT AND EASTER IN FIORDLAND 2012

Some may think that what we do in our individual churches could be of no interest to others, but by sharing stories with others possibilities may emerge, hence this report from St Michaels and All Angels in Te Anau on our recent happenings over Lent and Easter.

The season began as it usually does with us joining the Catholics on Ash Wednesday. For our Lenten Studies we used the study on Whale Rider in Carole Hughes book, 'A Time in Lent'. It involved watching Whale Rider and focused on different related topics over three weeks.

The children of the Catechesis of the Good Shepherd experienced Palm Sunday to Easter morning in a one and half hour slot one Thursday afternoon. We began with Palm Sunday in the foyer and after reading the account using Brian Wildsmith's 'Jesus' (wonderful illustrations –as is his book on St Francis), we made flax crosses. From there we moved into the foyer where we revisited the last Supper using the Catechesis of the Good Shepherd material and shared Eucharist with the Rev Adrienne Stewart. We then moved silently to the front of the church where we sat in front of the altar in silence and after the candles had been extinguished and the cross covered with a black cloth,

ate a piece of hot cross bun. We then turned to the Paschal candle which was lit as we shared the story of Easter morning, again using Catechesis material and Wildsmith's book. From there we moved on to decorate dyed eggs before ending our time by changing the purple cloth of our prayer table to white, and singing and closing our time with prayer. It was the first time we have attempted such a journey, and one worth repeating with a few modifications.

On Maundy Thursday we held our second Seder meal which was well attended and much enjoyed.

Good Friday service was taken by Rev Adrienne Stewart and on Easter Morning we were blessed to have John Franklin presiding. The children who attended, and who were all visitors, decorated dyed eggs at the front of the church during the sermon slot, with one young man drawing the complete Easter story. We have much to celebrate –we are indeed an Easter people!

Jenny Tapsell

<http://southlandanglicans.wordpress.com>

THE FOUR THINGS CHILDREN MOST WANT FOR CHRISTMAS

- a realistic and loving time with the family;
- realistic expectations about gifts;
- an evenly paced holiday season; and
- strong family traditions.

From the book "Unplug The Christmas Machine"

HERE FOR A SEASON

When I arrived in Hawkes Bay for a new job early last summer, I immediately noticed groups of Pacific Islanders involved in the harvest and around the local community. Since then, on different occasions I have heard church people raise questions about how to offer hospitality and support for those who come “here for a season”. I am writing this piece to open up discussion.

An estimated 11,000 people are required short-term for the Hawkes Bay harvest. New Zealanders make nearly 70 per cent of that number, with the balance being overseas travellers and workers from Vanuatu, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Samoa and Kiribati, Thailand, Indonesia and the Philippines. In the mid-2000s, Pacific Island countries were expressing their desire for increased migration and employment opportunities in their developed neighbouring countries. At the same time the horticulture and viticulture industries in New Zealand, especially in Hawkes Bay and Nelson, were facing a labour crisis that threatened their viability. This coincidence of interests resulted in the Recognised Seasonal Employer (RSE) policy, started in 2007. Pacific Islands Forum countries (with the current exception of Fiji) have preferential status under the New Zealand RSE Policy, but five Pacific states were selected to have additional facilitation

measures to kick start the policy: Kiribati, Samoa, Tonga, Tuvalu, and Vanuatu.¹ The largest proportion, over a quarter, of the workers spend around 6 months in New Zealand, as part of a process that covers recruiting (which involves reference from their pastor, a medical clearance, police clearance, visa), pre-season briefing, determining work-ready status, accommodation pastoral care while in New Zealand, and employment possibilities for the future.

The relationship is often described as “economically beneficial for us and for you”. Selection processes tended to improve in the second year because workers were better informed about what employers required. Many workers returned in the second season to the same employer: 51 percent of kick-start state workers. However, lack of funding can be a barrier to workers returning. Improvements to pre-departure briefings meant workers have become better prepared for life in New Zealand in the second season than in the first season. Groups that come from the same community seem to be more cohesive and work better together.

Employers are responsible for their RSE workers' wellbeing in New Zealand. Two-thirds of employers surveyed by the Department of

¹Much of this information comes from the Final Evaluation Report of the Recognised Seasonal Employer Policy, NZ Department of Labour.

Labour in 2007 reported problems providing pastoral care for their workers in the first season, but almost two-thirds reported no problems in the second season. Accommodation and living costs continue to be a problem for some workers, especially during down time (particularly during wet weather), although return workers are more aware of these costs than they were in the first season.

As I listen around the Hawkes Bay community, it seems that the workers are generally welcomed, but some have experienced unfavourable, including racist, responses from the locals. Many workers engage with the local community through church, sports, and cultural activities. Local Pacific communities can be a support or distraction for workers, with some Pacific New Zealand residents encouraging workers to stay in New Zealand beyond their visa expiry date or to seek 'better paid' illegal work, or putting pressure on workers for financial help. However the small numbers of i-Kiribati and ni-Vanuatu in New Zealand means minimal community support for i-Kiribati and ni-Vanuatu workers. Not all workers benefited financially from their time in New Zealand, for example not earning sufficient income to enable them to save after repaying airfares and meeting their living expenses. Some workers have returned home with unrealised expectations and

disappointment for their families. Some workers chose to spend their earnings in New Zealand on alcohol, smoking, fast food, entertainment, and other discretionary items. The Department of Labour reports that some employers have expressed concern at the spending choices of their workers and that the workers' families would not benefit from their earnings. There are also concerns about health issues

The Waiapu Anglican Cathedral had a group of parishioners travel in 2011 to visit workers in their home villages in Vanuatu, and other church groups seem to have made connections with people from the different island groups. There has been talk of a chaplain being provided, but the challenge would be the diversity of ethnic and cultural groups involved. It would be great to get some discussion going in *Rural Network News* about how church people can better relate to those who are sojourners in our land “for a season”.

Jenny Dawson

An Ecumenical Rural Ministry Gathering was held in the Hawkes Bay in October which looked at the Trans-Tasman theme “Building Resilient Communities and at continuing as a group to reduce isolation by linking people together ecumenically.

The theme for the next gathering will be “water”. Your own church may be in the network to hear more. Or contact the Diocese of Waiapu.

RURAL MINISTRY STUDIES BY CORRESPONDENCE

In February this year I was encouraged to do an EIDTS² course, and as I live in Rural Hawkes Bay, the Rural Ministry Studies seemed to be the most obvious course to do. The fact, that Rev Bill Bennett, the course Tutor, lives in Napier was a bonus.

Returning to study was quite a challenge as I had not done any studying since I finished my nursing training in 1984. As I progressed through the course and completed the reading required and assignments, I discovered a lot more about my rural district and the people in it. After living here for twenty years, I thought I knew the district very well. I know it even better now.

Researching for assignments, I studied the history of the community, and how and why it had developed; the land and how we depend on it; and how weather and global economies affect the community. Interviewing some of the residents confirmed that our community is a loving and caring one.

The course involved researching our local church history, recognising that change continues and how the church can adapt its ministry and respond to changes. One aspect of that involved investigating how organisations would

respond to a crisis in their rural communities and how they viewed the role of churches in a crisis.

Creative options were also available, such as designing a banner, composing words to a hymn or song, planning a service and reporting on occasions of celebration and change.

I have found this, a rewarding experience, and have a richer appreciation of my community and the spirituality that is inherent in a good community.

Christine Spall

To find out more about EIDTS and doing Theology by Correspondence, go to www.eidts.ac.nz, or phone 03 3433074, fax 03 3433073.

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.

²Ecumenical Institute of Distance Theological Studies, also known as "Theology by Correspondence"

BUILDING ROBUST COMMUNITIES

Trans-Tasman Rural Ministry

Conference 2-6 July 2012

WHO IS MY NEIGHBOUR

Such is the phrase which comes up in the Parable of the Good Samaritan from Luke 10, was one of a number of Biblical pictures that came to mind during the Trans-Tasman Rural Conference.

We were privileged to be treated to an awesome sharing of stories on the Tuesday. Such was the amount of moving material shared, I would like to pick out a few.

I was particularly struck by Glenn a Minister who shared his experiences of pastoral care during the Larry and

Yasi cyclones that hit North Queensland. He received help for post traumatic stress disorder, having given out so much supporting those who lost everything. Here in the Ruahine we are called to be missional out in the world, not least where we perceive God to be already acting.

In that vein I was saddened to hear that Glenn had received an offer of help by a lady outside of the congregation to do his entire phone calling to check all were well, while he concentrated on visiting. That wasn't sad in itself; what was, was the threat of a person to leave his church if she continued that ministry.

We also heard a number of very sacrificially shared stories on that first day, shared from the heart.



Milla Milla Falls: Somehow we managed to get ourselves to stand together at the same time. Not easy when you get a bunch of Australians and New Zealanders together on a bus trip

Another issue which was diplomatically dealt with was the issue of Water. An issue which is polarizing New Zealand at the moment, who owns the water. Several of the delegates at the Conference took water from the Murray River but from different points. One wants to take more, which if allowed in the latest plan would affect those further down the river.

On Tuesday night we heard from Stephen Robinson, who shared from his ministry experience in disaster settings. He also brought copies of his recent book, which awakened in me a desire to restart research in this area. An area I had written on for my dissertation whilst at theological college. Watch this space!

Wednesday and Thursday were mainly taken up with on the ground visiting of ministries and communities, many of whom had to adapt and diversify fast to what nature and the government threw at them. Wednesday we visited a dairy farm which had diversified into cheese making. But what moved all of us; myself especially was visiting James and Sari. Dairy farmers who are struggling with a lot of debt, are not allowed to form a dairy cooperative à la Fonterra.

James and Sari nearly lost everything with Cyclone Larry. Despite that they both consider that they are better off

than many others during those natural disasters. I never actually heard them really complain once. For me supreme example. I intend to keep in contact with letters and prayers.

What struck me about this amazing couple is, when asked what really helped and helps them survive, the answer that rang out was: COMMUNITY. With folk such as James and Sari, hope for the human race is renewed.

I was also encouraged that these folk lived out Hebrews 10:25 (Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another – and all the more as you see the Day approaching) in terms of doing just that not stopping to meet together. They did not stop meeting together, for them the day approaching read Larry and Yasi. They exemplified the importance of community.

Thursday saw field trips to Starbury Coffee plantation, another diversification crop alongside bananas, mangos and few others. It is an example of a plantation started by a family who had left Zimbabwe with very little, and again had refused to give up. They picked themselves up and indeed we saw the fruits of their labours.

Humour also played a part, in that we enjoyed a very profound visit to MAF (Mission Aviation Fellowship) at

Marreba. I say humour as those who know my hobby also enjoyed more than a little leg pulling. Jokes aside, pilots and engineers sacrificially work in dangerous conditions to bring medical care together with the hope of the Gospel. The day finished with a visit to Mt Uncle Distillery: say no more!

Friday was taken up with admin matters, in terms of where Trans-Tasman Rural Conferences and the International Rural Church Association go from here. A constitution and a governing group were discussed and acted on, and then it was time to start the journey home.

Craig Smith
Ruahine Regional Missioner

CHRISTIAN RESOURCES FOR RESILIENCE

This would have to be one of the best things I have attended for years. All the speakers and the whole conference revolved around the theme “Resilience – strength in the face of adversity”.

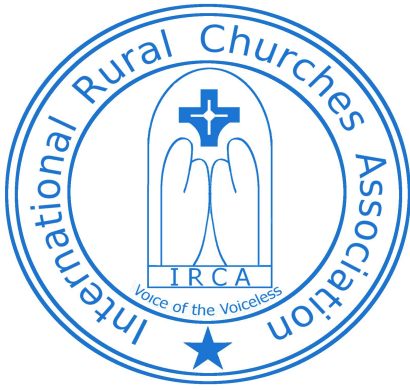
My thanks go to the organisers, especially the Rev Garry Hardingham and the Rev Catherine Christie, Catherine being the Chairperson of IRCA. She is currently in placement in South Korea and gave us some wonderful Bible study times. Catherine told us about some of the difficulties the farming communities

in South Korea are facing; as well as some of her experiences as a minister there.

Christianity should have a lot to contribute and bring to our world regarding resilience. Everybody needs a communicator to help get them through the tough times: we can't do it alone. As church leaders we can help people to be able to talk about their faith. Where do you find God in your life and around you? We need to reassure and nurture relationships, and provide opportunities for sharing. We can take theology from being something which happens in the church out into the wider community to be something of value there.

Regarding resilience in the corporate workplace we heard that no one is in isolation; a list of attributes is important for the corporation. The corporation needs to have a clear and agreed vision; encouragement of diverse ideas and skills is also needed. A resilient system is one in which a failure in one part does not bring down the whole system. There is networking so you don't have to soldier on on your own and a governance that spreads authority and responsibility.

Garry had a wonderful varied group of people to speak to us revolving around the theme for the conference. Firstly we heard from Rev Glenn who was at Innisfail during cyclones Larry and



Yasi. Glenn told us about his own battle with depression which resulted from the stressful situations he found himself in after the cyclones. He also shared with us a DVD which featured a local family and their farming enterprise before and after the cyclone went through. The destruction was unbelievable.

Glenn was amazed about the number of people who routed the system for reimbursement from Government and agencies. He also said that one of the hardest things he has had to do as a minister was to admit that he needed help and timeout.

We also heard from Wayne who was in charge of SES for the Far North Queensland. Wayne gave us some valuable tips on preparing for disasters. He told us that every event is different and unique in its own way. That we have to make sure that our families are in the best possible position to get through a disaster. We have to be prepared. It isn't about the last event; it is getting ready for the next one. Wayne also told us about

some of the situations regarding the hurricane Katrina in the USA.

Another person we heard from was Lex, a counsellor from Atherton. Lex told us that a response to a disaster is "to get the people off the roof" first, and then their recovery starts after that. Resilience is like a rubber band – it can stretch and stretch but then it can eventually snap when over stretched. He feels that "the belief system" of individuals is something which the church can do something about. The "why did this happen to me; bad things happen to bad people; I'm a good person so why did this happen to me?" type of questions. There is no better time for the church to be of use to the community than in the first two weeks after a disaster. To build resiliency we need to build relationships - an informal network – practical love in action. Children cope in the same way as their parents do – the meaning for them comes from their parents.

It wasn't all sitting and hearing from speakers. Garry had organised for us to have time out on a tour of the local area around Atherton which was very enjoyable; especially for someone from the flat plains country of Finley. On one of these excursions we visited a dairy farm which was affected by the cyclones and learned about the difficulties which they faced first hand.

We saw the beautiful Millaa Millaa Falls, enjoyed a visit to a cheese and chocolate dairy farm – due to the downturn in the dairy industry the owners have decided to cut down their milking herd numbers and adding value to the farm income with the cheese and chocolates.

Just as interesting was a visit to a coffee plantation; we had delicious food at both of these places. In fact we had delicious food the whole time we were at the conference.

I will conclude with some excellent advice from Catherine.

“As ministry agents we cannot keep giving out – we need to go back to God to get our strength; don’t let the little things over run us and take us away from God. Keep going back to God to fill ourselves up; that way we can keep going”.

Many, many thanks Garry and Catherine for such a great conference which you organised. Also to the great people who came. My one disappointment was that there weren’t more people attending, they missed out on a great event.

Myra Cowell, Finlay NSW

RESILIENCE IN DISASTER

About 30 ministry agents* and chaplains, including a few farmers, met daily at a church in Atherton to have morning and evening devotions, bible studies, and to exchange stories

of disasters in their patch, such as fires, floods, cyclones, and earthquakes to name a few. Everyone was allowed to think aloud and discussions sometimes went on a bit with the chairman sitting at the back tapping his watch to alert the speaker of time constraints!

I was somewhat out of my depth on all counts but I enjoyed the times when we gathered to study, sing and pray. I wasn’t entirely useless as there were dishes to wash and dry three or four times a day, so I volunteered kitchen duty.

We visited farms, small businesses such as cheese and chocolate making, a coffee plantation where they grew and made their own coffee.

Some people’s businesses were examples of adapting to different circumstances after major disasters of one kind or another, demonstrating resilience, which was the theme of the conference, while others decided to tough it out come hell or high water, because that was the only life they knew.

Some professionals were invited to the evening services as guest speakers. Some spoke of strife following disaster, anger with others' ideas of re-establishment, re-building and recovery plans. And what to do with all the old clothes people sent in response to the call for help. Cash was needed, not old clothes.

Rev Dr Stephen Robinson was one who spoke of the impact disasters have not only on victims but also those who minister to them. He quoted one traumatised minister who could hardly get through the day while members of the congregation were arguing about whether they should have two-ply or three-ply toilet paper! His book *Ministry in Disaster Settings* explores ways victims and ministers can be helped through tough times.

One quote which has stayed with me was “We’re not human beings having a spiritual experience, we’re spiritual beings having a human experience”.

Jenny Phillips

ENCOURAGEMENT AND ADVOCACY: OUR MISSION

* The expression “ministry agents” was used at some point and everyone responded positively. It is a way of describing all of us, whether lay or clergy.

In rural churches it goes without saying that the lay people are the local leaders and, among those gathered in Atherton, only a few of us have a church at home that has a resident clergy leader. Yet they all came from vibrant churches with a strong mission in their local community, and no big questions about viability.

The role of clergy in these situations is to feed and support, to connect with congregations and their leaders, to

visit and lead worship occasionally, and to equip and mentor local leaders.

Over the years that I have been involved in Rural Ministry this pattern has gone from strength to strength. In the cities, and in the mainstream talk of our denominations, the push is for large congregations. Rural communities, and small churches in urban areas which have a strong local mission, are ignored in this 'critical mass', clergy-driven approach. That's why the rural churches movement is so passionate about its mission of encouragement and advocacy.

Robyn McPhail

The proceedings of the Atherton Trans-Tasman conference are currently being compiled, together with photos and participants' reflections. www.irca.net.nz and the [Facebook](#) page will announce publication. It will be available as a pdf which can be downloaded and printed by individuals, local churches and denominations as they wish.



Resilience Personified: Garry looking over familiar territory from Halloran's Hill

FARM AUCTION

Expressions of pain, offerings of support ...

For many people a farm auction is so painful they can't bring themselves to talk about it.

Yet what better way to downsize equipment and house-hold goods and get ready to move from the land?

Equipment that has been carefully maintained has got the farmer through year after year of planting and reaping. Its owner feels a certain connectedness, but outside auction-goers are only interested in grabbing the lowest bid.

Household items that carry memories from relatives long-since gone, or of the table made in the Thirties from the packing crate the stove came in – these associations are of little significance to others.

How wonderful to have neighbours lend their support in the cleaning and organizing. To have the ladies serve their hamburgers and home-made pies, to have the oldsters sit together offering their affirmation that what you are doing is right and good – it all means so much.

Farm auctions can be sacred moments as they mark endings and changes in the community. Hopefully a new family will come, but too often the place is left empty as this piece of land is added to what is already there.

There are memories that make us smile – like the lady who wanted the calendar on the kitchen wall. It was of Christ-The-Good-Shepherd. She didn't know that, but her husband was a sheep-herder and she knew he would like that picture. Of course mom gave it to her.

At the end of the day the retiring family take their helpful neighbours to town for dinner at the restaurant – this by way of saying thanks. What a treasure they have been!

Everyone is exhausted physically and spiritually. But tomorrow will come. And tomorrow we will get on with the rest of our lives.

ADVENT TABLE GRACE

This grace was offered at a dinner where business and professional women were gathered:

O God, help us to approach
this season of the year
with a child's sense of wonder.

Lead us from darkness into light
from war to peace,
from death to life.

Let us be surprised by joy.

In what we say and what we do,
may we show faith, hope and love.

Thanks be to God
for our food and our fellowship.
Amen

Joyce Sasse , Alberta, Canada
<http://www.circle-m.ca/crcn/newsletter.htm>

CONFERENCE CALL FROM IRCA CHAIRPERSON

This is a call for IRCA members and all who have a passion for healthy rural churches and rural communities to join the next quadrennial conference of IRCA in Lilongwe, Malawi, 16-22 July 2014.

The venue will be the Emmanuel Teacher Training College. It is a very beautiful and functional site, which can easily hold all of our delegates. Final conference registration fee will be announced in the near future.

The sleeping accommodations are student residence rooms and we hope that our delegates will share a room with one other person. Depending on the registration numbers, we may be able to provide single rooms for a few.

July is winter in Malawi, and when I was there recently, it was definitely cool, so that I (a Canadian) needed a jacket or sweater much of the time.

Following the conference, there will be a couple of optional Safari trips arranged which will be available to delegates to sign up for.

The IRCA website will begin to have conference information as it becomes available. It will be a wonderful time of spiritual growth, networking with others involved in rural ministry, and learning. Please start thinking about Malawi, July 2014.

In Christ, Catherine Christie

I Got Kin

Plant
So that your own heart
Will grow.

Love
So God will think,
"Ahhhhh,
I got kin in that body!
I should start inviting
that soul over
For coffee and
Rolls."

Sing
Because this is a food
Our starving world
Needs.

Laugh
Because that is the
purest
Sound.

From *The Gift* by Hafiz



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

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