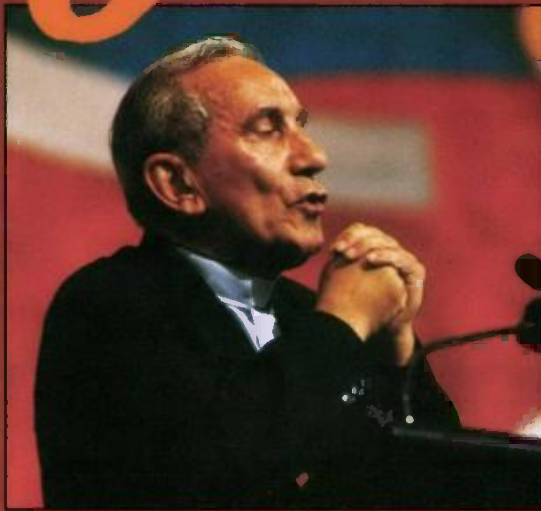


UNITING CHURCH MAGAZINE

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7TH ASSEMBLY, CANBERRA 1991.**

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Special Edition
**World Council of
 Churches**
Seventh Assembly
Canberra, Australia.
February 7-20, 1991.



ON THE COVER

Pictured on our cover are: Djiniyini Gondarra, Chung Kyun-Hyung, Emilio Castro and Milos Kesin. Stories on all these people and more inside.

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Correction

Fred McKay by Maisie McKenzie was incorrectly priced in the Uniting Bookshops ad, *Journey*, February 1991. The book sells for \$29.95, not \$79.95.

Journey

**Uniting Church
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Journey

EDITORIAL

Holy Spirit comes to fragile, flawed humanity

IF A World Council of Churches assembly represents the institutional manifestation of the global ecumenical movement, then the movement is a fragile construction indeed.

There is no doubt that somewhere, deep down, is the bedrock of Jesus Christ and most of us believe that the foundations of the WCC do go down that far.

But after this assembly, one could be forgiven for wondering whether the shifting sands of competing church traditions, theological persuasions, cultural contexts, regional loyalties, age groups and genders which pervaded the proceedings will, sadly, eventually undermine this ecumenical house of churches.

It must be said that the gathering itself was something of a miracle, and there can be no doubt about the presence and blessing of God.

When you bring some 3000 Christians together from across the world — Romanian Orthodox priests next to evangelical Lutherans from Papua New Guinea, German Mennonites alongside Korean Presbyterians, a Coptic pope with Caribbean Methodists — and for two weeks they pray "Come, Holy Spirit ...", then you can expect the Spirit to move.

And move she did.

The Spirit moved through the dynamic and diverse worship, as it drew on the rich cultural and liturgical traditions represented at the Assembly. The Spirit moved through the small groups which discussed the issues arising from the assembly sub-themes. The Spirit moved through special plenary presentations, through Bible studies, through the host of seminars in the visitors' program.

The Spirit even moved through the business sessions — despite all the procedural technicalities, power plays, political manoeuvrings, time constraints and tonnes of (recycled) paper which the assembly wallowed in.

And the Spirit certainly moved in the one-to-one encounters that make an Assembly so memorable for most people. Sharing the life and faith, joys and struggles, of Christians from almost every conceivable nation, culture and circumstance — from Hungarian to South African, Chinese to native American Indian, Fijian to Egyptian —

becomes a rich reminder of the promise of Jesus' presence where two or three are gathered.

But, as the preacher at the closing worship asked, was the Spirit also discernible in those aspects of the Assembly that seemed less holy, less animated, less unifying?

When the keynote presentation by a young feminist theologian was labelled pagan and syncretistic? When women were crying in the restrooms because of intimidation by men over places on the WCC's Central Committee? When Orthodox and Protestant churches from the same country clashed publicly over charges of proselytism? When Christians could not share the same eucharist at the central communion service of the assembly? When youth, enraged by their low representation on the new Central Committee, charged the Assembly with "ecumenical suicide"? When the nomination and election process — hamstrung by a curious obsession with categories of gender, region, age and church confession — degenerates into such heated competition that one WCC president says the Assembly's politics "stink to high heaven"?

When the Holy Spirit was debated as a doctrine in a manner that seemed to deny the Spirit as a presence? When, on the last day, the Orthodox publicly asked whether it is time for them to reconsider their involvement?

To the extent that these, and other moments of pain, become growing points for the WCC, one could say that the Spirit was indeed there — perhaps especially at those times.

For the Spirit does not only leave warm inner-glow in her wake. Renewal, love and unity involves putting to death what is old, fearful and divisive. Canberra revealed just how much is at stake — and therefore how crucial it is to persevere.

For the pain and frustration revealed the fragility, and therefore the preciousness, of that to which all in the WCC are committed. Each of us who was there takes back the hopes, the vision, the scars — and the Spirit — of a unique moment in ecumenical history when thousands prayed, "Come, Holy Spirit".

The faces behind the stories

YOU will notice as you read this special coverage of the WCC Assembly that very few stories bear the name of their writers.

This is because the Uniting Church communicators, supported by two New Zealand journalists, formed a joint editorial and production team to supply the most comprehensive coverage possible.

Team members are pictured here. Also contributing, but not pictured, were Vicki Bradshaw (WA) and David Busch (Tasmania).



Benjamin Hunter
New Times, SA



Lee Duncan
Journey, Qld



Nicholas Kerr
New Times, SA



Julia Stuart
Crosslink, NZ



Barry Gordon
Journey, NSW



Anne Manchester
Crosslink, NZ



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UCA Assembly
Communication



Andrew Demack
Journey, Qld.

All photos of the WCC Assembly by WCC photographer Peter Williams, except where specified.

Thanks to the IRU ...

The Uniting Church communicators would like to thank the staff of the Australian National University's Instructional Resources Unit for their help to produce this issue. We thank in particular Darien Rossiter, Marlene Adams, Roland Aronsen, Simon Palmer, Marion Wirth, Chris Palmer, Ian Matters and Gisela Thomsen.

Letter from the Editor

We're pleased to be able to bring you our most comprehensive coverage of an event yet — the Seventh Assembly of the World Council of Churches.

Already in your parish you've probably heard from someone who was there — as a visitor, guest or even delegate. And they waxed lyrical about their particular highlight ... worship, meeting Christians from around the globe, etc etc. And they probably said the business plenaries were frustrating, the quota system bordering on farcical, the Orthodox could be hard to get along with, etc etc.

Well, that's what the next few pages are all about. We haven't delved deeply into the rich theological content of the Assembly's sub-themes. Other publications will do that. We have concentrated on the people and the issues of the Assembly, to try to get across the flavour of the event. We hope we've done that.

— Andrew Demack

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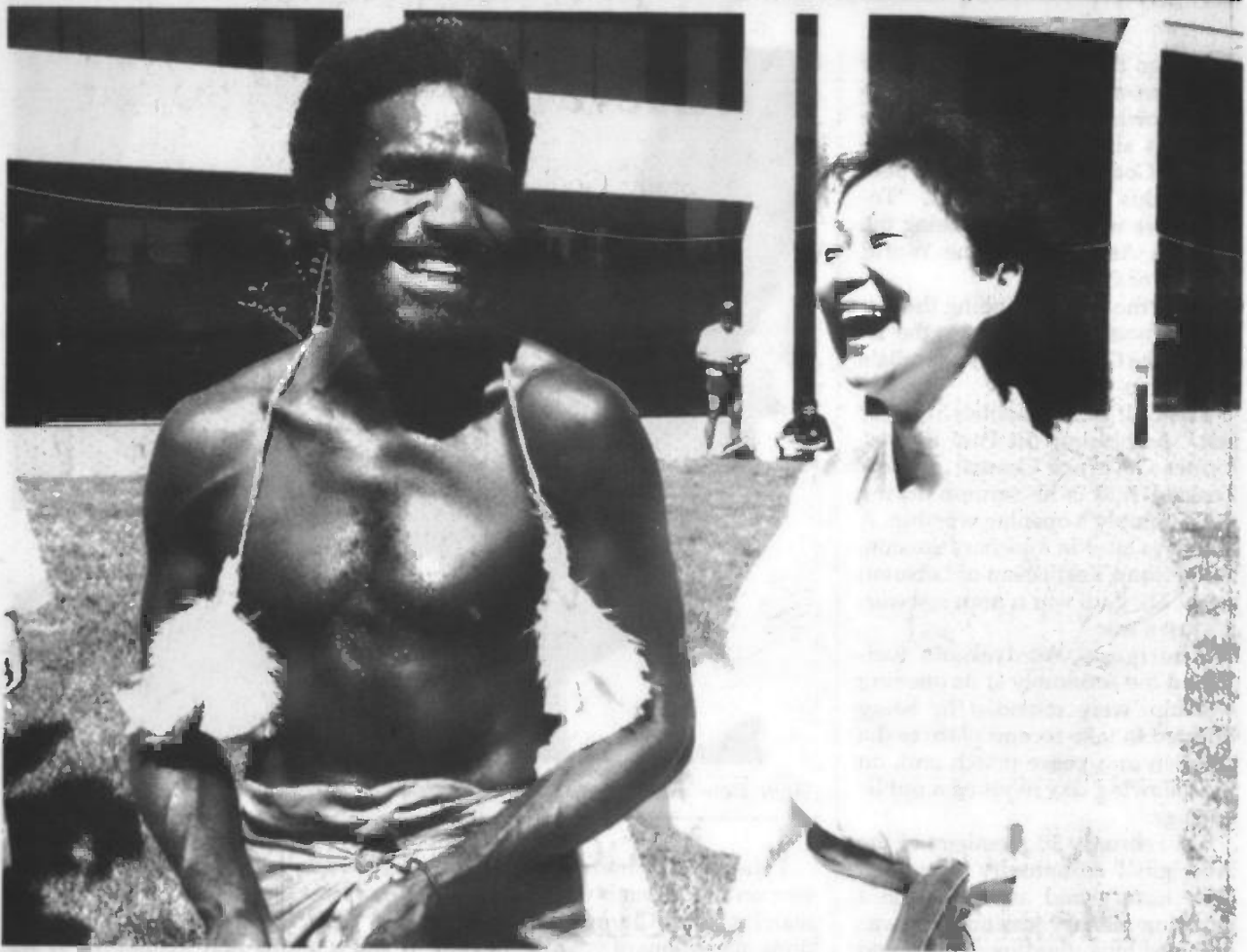
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Aboriginal dancer Malcolm Cole and Korean theologian Chung Kyun-Hyung ... tearing through the things that divide.

They came — and they nearly melted

On the first Thursday in February they came. They gathered in Canberra from the eight regions of the earth — Africa, Asia, the Caribbean, Europe, Latin America, North America, the Middle East and the Pacific.

When they arrived they were greeted with temperatures of up to 39 degrees Celsius. When they met in plenary session on the first afternoon they discovered there was no air-conditioning in the National Convention Centre's Exhibition Hall. Ecumenical meltdown was averted only by a gift of paper fans from Korean churches in the Uniting Church and the National Council of Churches in Korea. As one journalist put it, the entire Assembly looked like a field of butterflies.

Earlier that day the Assembly had been opened in the worship tent. Worship leaders recalled the previous six Assemblies. "By the grace of God we are the pilgrim people of this day," they said. "Together we will bring into being the Seventh Assembly of the World Council of Churches."

From the very beginning the Assembly was confronted by the issues of the Gulf war and Australia's indigenous people.

The Gulf war is "neither holy nor just," Archbishop Sir Paul Reeves, former Governor General of New Zealand, said in his sermon during the Assembly's opening worship. A few days later in a plenary session, Archbishop Keshishian of Lebanon said: "The Gulf war is not a just war; it's just a war."

Aboriginal Australians welcomed the Assembly at its opening worship, were offended by being directed to take second place to the children in a peace march and, on the following day received a public apology.

On February 13 members of the Aboriginal community presented their history and aspirations in a stunning plenary session. This was followed by a standing ovation and an act of reconciliation with white Australian Christians led by Rev Gregor Henderson, General Secretary of the Uniting Church.

The Canberra Assembly was held in two venues. Plenary sessions and news conferences were held at the National Convention Centre. Worship and section meetings were held at the Australian National University, where delegates also ate and slept.

The visitors' program was held at both venues, as well as at City Uniting Church. A chemist mid-way between the venues reported an increase in the sales of sticking plaster as tender northern hemisphere feet developed blisters.

The theme of the Assembly was "Come Holy Spirit — Renew the Whole Creation." This theme infused meaning into plenary sessions.



'Animateur' Fr Milos Kesin leading a song in the opening worship.

Following a dramatic presentation on the Assembly's theme, Korean Professor Chung Hyun-Kyung drew allegations of syncretism from representatives of the Orthodox.

In reply she argued that making decisions on what is and what is not a valid theology is really an exercise of power.

This disagreement, which plagued the Assembly's work, drew attention to the different approaches of the ancient churches of Europe and the Middle East and the more recent churches of Asia.

The Assembly heard that women want more than "timid change", that the problems of women are the problems of the whole community.

Towards the end of the Assembly the China Christian Council was received into WCC membership, ending a 35-year-old split between the WCC and the church in China.

One of the sleeping issues of the Assembly may turn out to be how the WCC raises additional finance in the context of its commitment to

fostering a new international economic order.

The WCC is committed to seeking a more just economic order within the framework of its commitment to justice, freedom and the integrity of creation.

But, as one journalist asked at a news conference on WCC finances: "How will it raise the funds it needs? Will it raise them from the old economic powers?"

Many of the churches in the First World have acquired their money, directly or indirectly, from the prevailing unjust economic order.

It is too early yet to tell what the achievements are for which this Assembly will be remembered. However, now that the praying and talking are done, the analysing, dissecting and evaluation will begin in earnest. For when the benediction was pronounced at the closing worship on February 20, Canberra 1991 became part of ecumenical history.

— Paul Swadling.

WCC: war, unity and Aborigines

The war in the Gulf, church unity, the situation of Australian Aborigines and other indigenous people, and the relationship between faith and culture were among the major issues at the Seventh Assembly of the World Council of Churches in Canberra from February 7 to 20.

WCC Assemblies meet every seven or eight years. This one brought together about 4000 people, including more than 800 delegates from most of the 317 WCC member churches, representing most Christian traditions in almost all countries of the world.

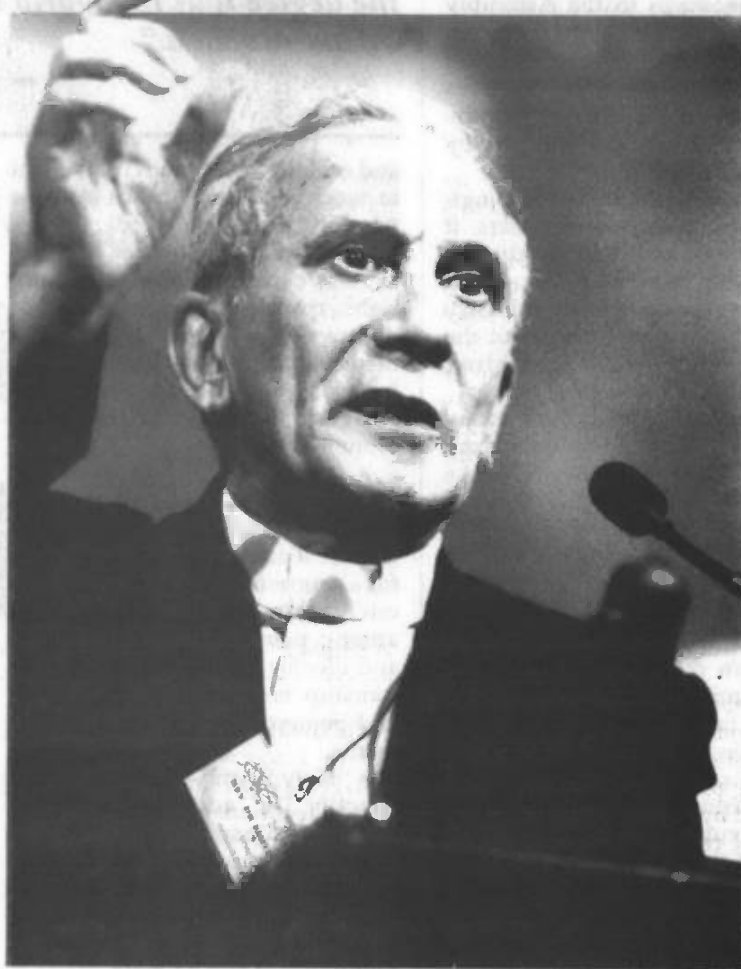
Among other participants were 10 guests from other faiths, about 1500 "full-time" visitors and more than 200 observers from non-member bodies, including 23 appointed by the Vatican.

The Gulf war figured prominently in peace prayers and a procession. On its last day the Assembly called for an immediate cease-fire and a subsequent immediate, complete and unconditional Iraqi withdrawal from Kuwait.

It urged the United Nations to re-assert its role as peace-maker, to convene a Security Council meeting on the Iraq-Kuwait dispute and convene an international "conference on peace, security and cooperation in the Middle East".

The Assembly gave prominence to the concerns of Aboriginal Australians. WCC delegations which visited two remote Aboriginal communities before the Assembly reported that racism in Australia "is not just horrific, but genocidal" and that Aborigines were "demoralised" because of "exclusion from decision-making processes in virtually every area that determines their lives".

Aboriginal art and spirituality were prominent. One plenary treated Aboriginal history and concerns through testimonies and a



WCC General Secretary and familiar face Rev Dr Emilio Castro.

multimedia presentation.

The Assembly endorsed a WCC commitment to support and monitor a "treaty process" between Aboriginal Australians and the Australian Government. It called on the church in Australia to "return land unjustly taken" from Aboriginal people. And it asked WCC members to support struggles of indigenous people everywhere for self-determination, land rights and religious freedom.

Proposed statements on internal conflicts within sovereign states, South Africa, the Pacific and the Bal-

tic States and regions of tension in the USSR — and appeals on Sri Lanka and El Salvador — received general Assembly endorsement but were referred to the WCC Central Committee for final action.

Questions of church unity came into focus in terms of both structural unity and theological diversity. A keynote address by Parthenios, Eastern Orthodox patriarch of Alexandria and All Africa, declared that the struggle for unity has no room for neutrality but must continue unimpeded in obedience to the Holy Spirit.

From page 9

In a message to the Assembly Pope John Paul II said the ecumenical task is urgent because the witness of the church "is less convincing to the degree that the world continues to be confronted by our divisions".

But, despite significant theological convergence in recent years, it was clear — in Assembly discussions and in its worship life — that the Eucharist, ordained ministry and views about the nature of the church remain key stumbling blocks to full communion.

The Assembly asked the Vatican-WCC Joint Working Group to concentrate on remaining obstacles to a fuller relationship between the two bodies. It also called for greater attention to relationships with churches outside WCC membership.

In an open letter, Orthodox participants insisted that the main WCC aim must be restoration of church unity. And it asked that issues of faith and order be given greater prominence.

In a dramatic presentation, Korean feminist theologian Chung Hyun Kyung linked Christian theology of the Holy Spirit with elements of traditional Korean spirituality and culture.

This generated considerable controversy over issues such as the relationship between theology and culture, what is pagan and what is holy, and how emerging Third World theologies relate to traditional forms.

The Assembly theme, "Come Holy Spirit — Renew the Whole Creation", undergirded the two-week program of worship, Bible studies, plenaries, regional gatherings and small groups. The Assembly received reports from sections which addressed issues arising from each of the four sub-themes.

• The report, "Giver of Life — Sustain Your Creation", called for an emphasis on the theology of creation; a new global ethic of economy

The witness of the church "is less convincing to the degree that the world continues to be confronted by our division."

— Pope John Paul II

and ecology; and a church covenant to work for justice, peace and the integrity of creation.

• "Spirit of Truth — Set Us Free" raised concerns about human rights, community among people of different races and ideologies, mass media, international peace, justice for women and sustainable value systems, including international economic structures.

• "Spirit of Unity — Reconcile Your People" pointed to the missional and inclusive nature of the church. It drew attention to the need for a community of sharing; for reconciliation among cultures and among people of different faiths and ideologies; and for closer relationship between the ecumenical and pentecostal-charismatic movements.

• "Holy Spirit — Transform and Sanctify Us" addressed personal and corporate spirituality. And it affirmed the importance of worship, spiritual disciplines, work for unity and justice, inclusiveness, service of the world and Christian lifestyles of non-violence and holiness.

The Assembly reflected recent political developments around the world. It accepted the China Christian Council as a member, after a three-decade estrangement.

The (North) Korean Christians Federation sent observers for the first time. From South Africa the (officially mixed race) Dutch Reformed Mission Church was admitted into membership and (white) Dutch Reformed Church observers attended for the first time in more than 25 years.

Eastern European delegates spoke of new tensions in the wake of the collapse of Communism.

The Assembly was concerned

about the low number of delegates under 27 (11 per cent) and decided one of the seven WCC presidents would be under 30.

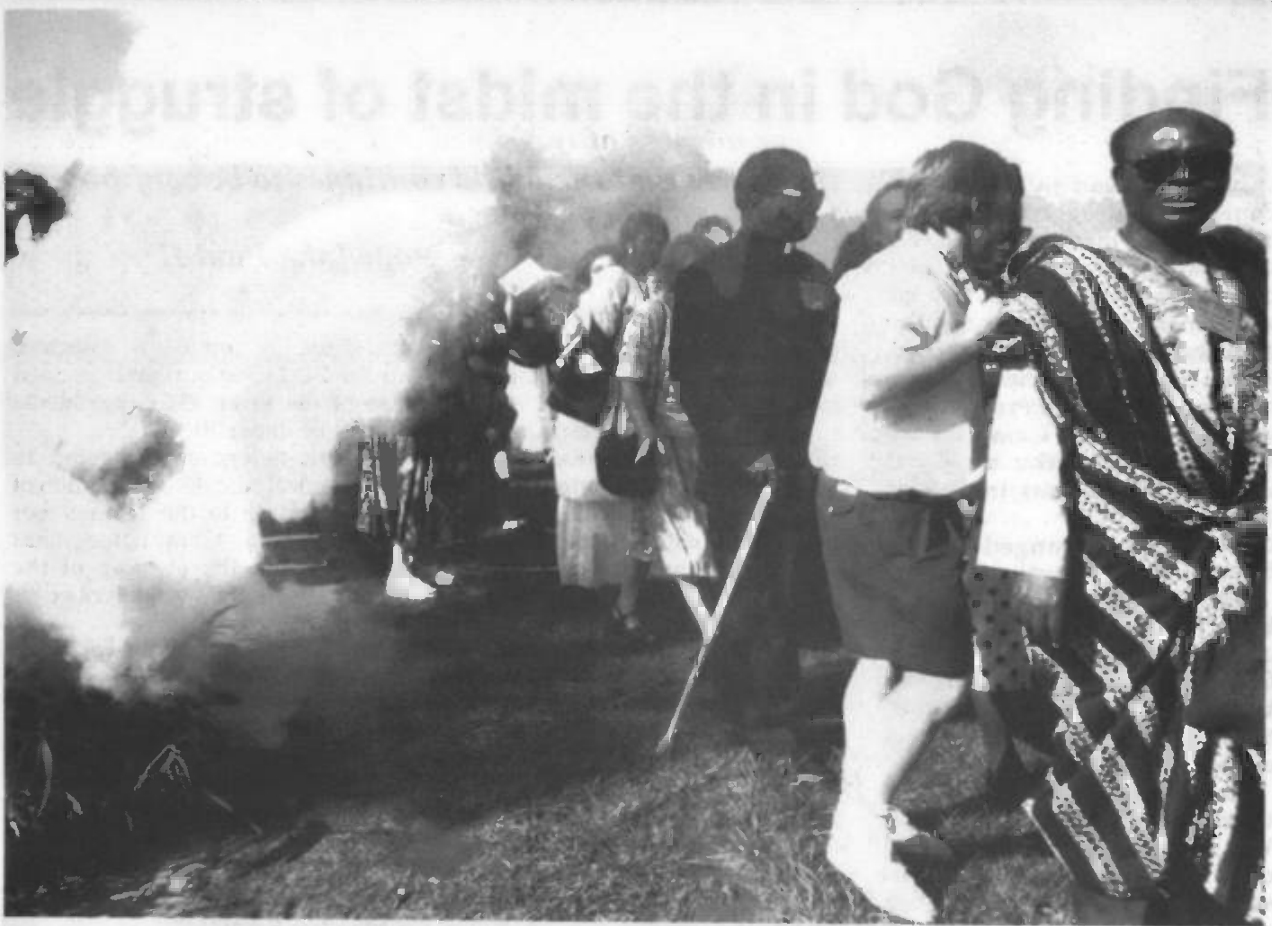
Youth delegates protested as "ecumenical suicide" the election of only 11 youth to the 150-member WCC Central Committee. That process, and the election of the WCC presidents, was described as "painful".

Finally approved were seven presidents: Anne-Marie Aagard (Lutheran, Denmark), Vinton Anderson (Methodist, USA), Leslie Boseto (United, Solomon Islands), Priyanka Mendis (Anglican, Sri Lanka), Parthenios of Alexandria (Eastern Orthodox, Egypt), Eunice Santana (Disciples, Puerto Rico) and Shenouda of Alexandria (Oriental Orthodox, Egypt).

It recommended that Aaron Tolén (Reformed, Cameroon) be added as an eighth president after the Central Committee meeting right after the Assembly voted to change the rules to allow it.

Worship which reflected the diversity of languages, cultures and traditions at the Assembly, was held in a huge tent at the Australian National University.

Among other Assembly highlights were an opening address by Australian Prime Minister Bob Hawke; messages from youth, children and "differently abled" persons; presentations on unity, women's concerns, and what the Spirit is saying to the churches; an open-air "welcome to Australia" presentation, *Gathering Under the Southern Cross*; a focus on Pacific concerns; delegates' visits to parishes across south-eastern Australia; and special pre-Assembly gatherings for women and youth.



WCC worshippers enter the worship tent through a pall of 'cleansing' smoke.

WCC 'cleansed' at opening service

Structured and symbolic worship marked the opening event of the World Council of Churches Assembly, meeting in Canberra and, for the first time, in the East Asian-Pacific region. More than 3,000 delegates representing over 300 member churches in more than 100 countries, accredited visitors, guests and media from all over the world gathered in a huge tent ablaze with banners and colourful costumes.

An Aboriginal ceremony of welcome involved walking through the smoke of cleansing fire and the sending of a 'message stick' by WCC General Secretary Emilio Castro, symbolising a request for permission to enter the land. Gathered on the

stage were aboriginal elders who ritually granted permission, and the WCC leaders entered the tent.

Ecclesiastical ceremony and music from the many expressions of the Christian faith blended into an harmonious whole, as the congregation sang in an assortment of languages and a sacred stillness settled upon the huge gathering during a Taize invocation.

Lighted candles represented previous assemblies, honoured the Word and symbolised the flame of the Holy Spirit. Young people and children were evident throughout, especially at the beginning of the Intercessions, when they entered from four corners of the tent carry-

ing gum branches seared by fire but sprouting from the stem. The Peace was a truly international exchange, as people greeted their neighbours in whatever language seemed most appropriate.

The worship culminated in a spirited rendering of a South African song, "We are marching in the light of God". Encouraged by a music leader who danced and drummed the rhythm, the large choir followed the official party and broke into clapping and dancing as they left the huge tent.

The congregation broke up with a lightness of heart and sense of belonging to a truly international faith in which belief transcended all barriers.

Finding God in the midst of struggle

Finding God in the midst of struggle was the theme of the opening address given by New Zealand's former Governor General, the Rt Rev Sir Paul Reeves, at the World Council of Churches' opening worship. Sir Paul is now Anglican Communion representative at the United Nations in New York.

His sermon ranged from issues of environmental damage, reconciliation between indigenous peoples and their former colonial rulers, and unease felt worldwide concerning war and the rumors of war.

And he called on Assembly representatives to examine who they really were and what they really believed.

"We stand on the ground where we must struggle," he said.

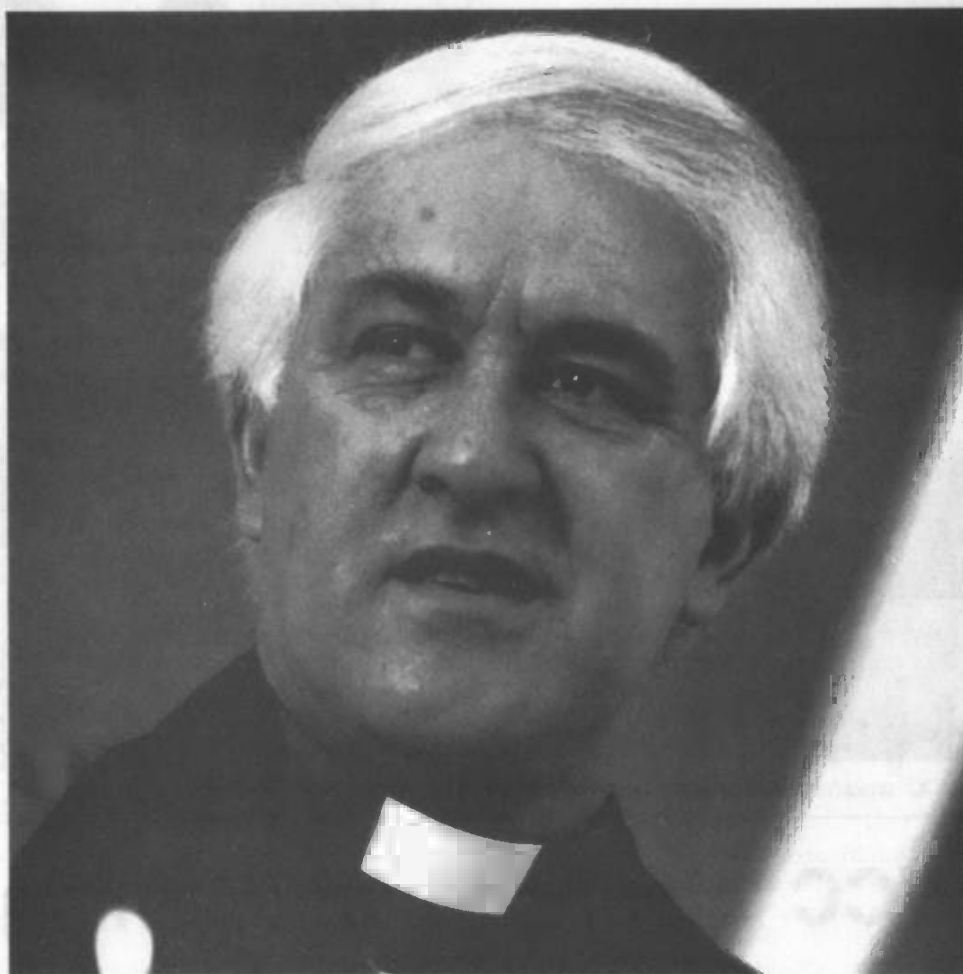
"There is no opportunity to escape to some promised land. If glory belongs to the age to come, suffering may well be our lot here and now.

"Is there a purpose to this suffering? Job never found an answer to that question but as he struggled and suffered he met God. That could be our experience."

Sir Paul described the Gulf War as neither holy nor just. He said it reflected four great evils -- unjust distribution of the world's wealth, social injustice, the rise of militarism, and irreversible damage to the environment.

And he said it was wrong to portray the natural world as beautiful only when it was empty of people.

"Clean air and clean water are vital, but ultimately the earth will be



Archbishop Sir Paul Reeves: "The Gulf War is neither holy or just."

saved only when its creatures are reconciled and healed . . . We are people of hope who are part of God's creation which still contains promise even though it lacks peace."

Sir Paul described his own Maori history of oppression and dislocation.

"In the 19th century the *tangata whenua* of New Zealand, the people of the land, felt the blow torch of colonialism," he said. "And today we wrestle with what sovereignty and government means or does not mean in our country."

"We are trying to free ourselves from historians who would make us into a comment or a footnote to someone else's history.

"We have a life which is independent of contact with the majority group, a life which has expressed itself for centuries in our land.

"We want past wrongs put right and we want the descendants of the more recent European settlers to move beyond guilt and confusion to mature and responsible action.

"We want them to trust us. The fundamental issues are spiritual, not political."



WCC General Secretary Dr Emilio Castro (left) with the Australian Prime Minister, Mr Bob Hawke.

Hawke addresses WCC

Churchgoers who were unhappy about Australia's agnostic Prime Minister addressing the opening session of the WCC Assembly can take some comfort from the fact that Mr Hawke wasn't all that happy about the experience either.

Mr Hawke's rather tense expression as he sat on the dais after giving his address related directly to the oh-so-gentle but effective pummeling he was receiving from Metropolitan Paulos Mar Gregorios of the Malankara Orthodox Church, India.

Mr Hawke's speech touched on three main issues — Australian Aboriginal aspirations, the demise of apartheid in South Africa, and the Gulf war.

He said the Government had provided almost \$1 billion for specific Aboriginal and Islander programs for this financial year — per capita the largest such programs for indigenous people in the world. He

talked about the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC), and described it as "self-determination — not a theoretical concept or fancy slogan".

Mr Hawke said: "There are times when you can't just talk about peace . . . you must do the hard work necessary to protect it . . . Australia is proud of its support for the allied effort in the Gulf." He said the war could still be stopped — "by Iraq's unconditional withdrawal from Kuwait".

In his opening remarks, he acknowledged that WCC statements "may have been uncomfortable at times . . . for many Governments". He was then able to experience that same uncomfortable feeling during Metropolitan Gregorios's response.

His Eminence "was just pointing out a few of the areas in which there is still some substantial disagreement between the Prime Minister

and the WCC".

While complimenting Mr Hawke on the amount of money spent on Aboriginal programs, he said "money is not the answer to this problem, although money is important". What was needed, he said, was education of the dominant [white] culture. Only with a change of attitude in the dominant culture could Aboriginal aspirations for dignity and "space" be ensured.

On South Africa, he also noted the progress made so far, including the release of Nelson Mandela. But, he said, "the necessary elements for democracy are not yet in place."

On the Gulf, Metropolitan Gregorios said that there was complete agreement that Iraq must leave Kuwait. But, he said, wagging his index finger in the air, "we have some differences about the means by which this withdrawal can be achieved."

'Our race would have died out'



Bishop Arthur Malcolm

BELIEVE the church saved my own people from dying out," Bishop Arthur Malcolm told the Assembly. He is an Anglican and chairperson of the Australian Council of Churches' Aboriginal and Islander Commission.

He told the Assembly about his own background as a mission-raised Aboriginal who had lost his language and tribal culture and who encountered his tribal people only by accident a few years ago.

"I have no bitterness but much sadness," he said. Despite the church's negative influences on Aboriginal people and culture generally his race would have died out without the care of the church.

The church was important to Aboriginal people, he said, and spiritual revival had come to many of them.

"The Aboriginal people were chosen by God to be the caretakers of this land. To officially and legally be given back title to our land would heal us. We would be able to share.

"We have to break the ice and extend the hand of fellowship to each other. Many of us lack the courage to do so. But let's try.

"I want to walk with my Aboriginal people. But I want to walk with you, too."

'The Gospel brought theft and genocide'

The Christian Gospel brought to Australia by missionaries was one of theft, murder and cultural genocide, said the Executive Secretary of the Aboriginal and Islander Commission of the Australian Council of Churches, Anne Pattel-Gray.

She explained the history of her people during a special Australian presentation at the World Council of Churches' Assembly Anne described how her race had been praised by the earliest Europeans to visit the land as among the most peace-loving and good-natured in the world — but then came to be seen by the settlers as savage and backward.

"The history of Church mission in Australia is not a pleasant one," she said. "It supported, or at best remained silent, when Aborigines

were shot, poisoned or hunted like animals."

One policy which caused more damage than almost any other, Anne said, was the forcible removal of mixed race children from their parents to mission stations.

"The church said they did it for our good. In fact the policy caused such brokenness that many mothers died mourning for their children.

"The missions told us our spirituality was pagan. In its place they would teach us about God and Christ.

"What the missionaries were unable to recognise — and what most Australians today are still largely unable to comprehend — was the depth of the spirituality already here."

Aboriginal laws paralleled the Bible, she said.

"The people were to share everything equally; they were not to steal;

they were to care for the land, and to respect every living thing. In general they were very spiritual, loving, caring and sharing people.

"Aboriginal people centred their lives in the natural-spiritual world. They were deeply committed to God the Creator and to the earth. They never believed that they owned the land, but rather that the land owned them.

"The Aborigines did not rape their mother earth like white society has. When the Aboriginal people were moved from their lands, they died, spiritually and physically. The church failed to recognise this death of the spirit."

What Aboriginal Christians now sought, Anne said, was an indigenous church. "God gave us the Dreaming. With Christ our stories are completed."

UCA apologises to Aborigines

The liturgy on the first Sunday of the WCC Assembly had a special significance for the Uniting Church in Australia. It began with a public apology by the UCA to Aborigines for the church's many failures to stand with them. And at the time of Communion Aborigines embraced the people who had made the apology.

UCA Assembly President, Sir Ronald Wilson, said at the beginning of the service that the UCA had been granted a few minutes as part of the liturgy "to explain a sad incident" the evening before. It had been just before the procession from the Convention Centre to the Worship Tent for the all-night vigil of prayer and fasting for peace with justice. He then introduced Rev Dorothy McMahon from the Pitt Street UC, Sydney.

Dorothy gave a brief, emotional account of what had happened. She had been one of the organisers of the procession. It was to be led by a group of children. A group of Aborigines had thought they were to lead it.

"I went to the Aboriginal people and asked them to come behind the children," she said. "I explained how the children were expecting that moment. I didn't face how much the Aboriginal people were expecting that moment.

"I used a voice that I didn't recognise in myself — a voice which Aboriginal people and, I guess, black people and indigenous people around the world have come to associate with white people who tell them what to do and who push them aside.

"Because they are Aboriginal people they didn't fight me. They moved aside. They wept. And we lost them at that moment.

"I spent several hours with them later when I realised what I had done. And they forgave me."

In a voice breaking with tears she went on: "Their grace was as great

as the grace of God. It was a very special thing they offered to me. But part of their healing lies in my making this confession."

Dorothy said it was appropriate that she make the confession before the reconciliation of Communion. And it was fitting that she was making the confession "because I think I stand with the Aboriginal people. But that moment taught me I can never do that enough."

This humiliation of Aborigines had been going on for 200 years, she said. "I pray that in this Communion we can start again."

Sir Ron Wilson told the congregation he stood there, as national President of the UCA, with Dorothy "because her confession is our confession. I know that our church, and many others, share her sorrow over the public shame and humiliation inflicted by the failure to accord to our Aboriginal sisters and brothers the love and respect they deserve."



Rev Dorothy McMahon shares communion with Lyapidiny Marika, candidate for the ministry at Nungalinga College.

He said Dorothy had taught him, and many others, more about justice and equal opportunities than any other person.

"On behalf of the Uniting Church I tender our Aboriginal sisters and brothers our humble apology," he said.

ATSIC promises changes

Delegates were welcomed by two Aborigines at the Assembly's first plenary session. They were the chairperson of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission, Miss Lois O'Donoghue, and the chairperson of the Aboriginal & Islander Commission of the ACC, Bishop Arthur Malcolm, gave welcoming addresses.

Miss O'Donoghue said it had taken the churches a long time to come to terms with Aboriginal culture and spirituality. But an understanding had been established and profound changes were taking place within the Christian community. She

said the establishment of ATSIC had resulted in indigenous people for the first time being empowered to make decisions about policies that affect them and had brought about major change in the way Aboriginal affairs were administered.

ATSIC replaced two former Government institutions — the Department of Aboriginal Affairs and the Aboriginal Development Commission in March, 1990. The representative arm is made up entirely of indigenous Australians with 60 regional councils across Australia. Miss O'Donoghue said a new direction is being taken in Aboriginal affairs.

Chung lights up Assembly theme

Dr Chung Hyun-Kyung spoke gently when she addressed the Assembly. But what she said startled many people. And it led to a lot of controversy.

Dr Chung is professor of systematic theology at Ewha University of Seoul, Korea.

Her presentation began with two Aboriginal Australians on centre stage, one playing the didgeridoo, the other slowly dancing. From the back of the theatre came the shock sound of an Asian gong. Two lines of young Korean Australians — and Dr Chung — then processed through the audience to the stage. There the two cultures mingled their dance and their music.

This was the introduction to Dr Chung's presentation on the theme of the Assembly, "Come, Holy Spirit — Renew the Whole Creation". Surprise followed surprise.

"For many Asian and Pacific people," said Dr Chung, "taking off our shoes is the first act of humbling ourselves to encounter the spirit of God." She invited the Assembly to join her in doing that. It obliged. She then knelt and invoked the spirits of people and other living things (the Amazon rainforest, for example) who had died an unjust death.

"In my tradition," she said, "people who were killed or died unjustly became wandering spirits, the *han*-ridden spirits.

"The living people's responsibility is to listen to the voices of the *han*-ridden spirits' work of making the wrong right.

These *han*-ridden spirits in our people's history have been agents through whom the Holy Spirit has



Dr Chung burns a list of names of people who have died tragically.

Dr Chung called on Assembly members to repent of what she called "the unholy spirit of Babel," the "spirit of so-called upward mobility, acquisitiveness and division" which separates us from the Holy Spirit.

Continued page 17

spoken her compassion and wisdom for life. Without hearing the cries of these spirits we cannot hear the voice of the Holy Spirit."

Dr Chung said her spirituality is closely related to Jesus' original interpretation of the Holy Spirit: "I will ask the father, and he will give you another advocate (or comforter), to be with you forever." (Jn 14:16)

Much contemporary theology argues not only that the Holy Spirit is always found with the people of God's love and concern, but that this is especially apparent when the people suffer. The people's suffering therefore becomes a means of recognising God's presence in the world.

"Only when we can hear this cry for life and can see the signs of liberation are we able to recognise the Holy Spirit's activity in the midst of suffering creation," she said.

Dr Chung called on Assembly members to repent of what she called "the unholy spirit of Babel," the "spirit of so-called upward mobility, acquisitiveness and division" which separates us from the Holy Spirit.

"We need to be set free from the spell of Mammon by emptying ourselves," she argued, and she commended the Asian practice of voluntary poverty which "has been the basis of religious life."

Dr Chung issued a strong call for three changes.

- The first was for "our generation

'It's like my mother'

"Asian tradition is like my mother; Christian tradition is like my father," said Dr Chung Hyun-Kyung, a Presbyterian theologian from the Republic of Korea.

Dr Chung made a dramatic impact at the World Council of Churches' Assembly when she presented a paper on the renewal of creation from an Asian feminist viewpoint.

Speaking later to Assembly visitors, Dr Chung defended herself from Orthodox criticism that her theology smacked of syncretism and paganism.

"The spirit of Pentecost brought us the democratisation of spirituality," she said. "This meant that you no longer had to know Greek to understand the gospel. Our understanding today comes from ourselves, through our own language and culture."

"They criticised me, too, for calling on the spirits of the oppressed

of history at the beginning of my presentation to bring me closer to the mystery of God — people like Steve Biko and Mahatma Gandhi.

"For me, and all Asian people, spirits of the ancestors are always with us. This is true also for people in Latin America and Africa."

Dr Chung said she came from a long line of women theologians who had not been heard or recognised by the established churches.

"Women's experience of the divine is very different from men's," she said. "Because the institutional church does not give opportunities for women to grow, they are forced to gather privately to articulate their theology. In this way they have developed their own language for perceiving God. Asian women want to do their own theology — they do not want to be defined by a first world woman or a third world man."

to learn how to live with the earth, promoting harmony, sustainability and diversity."

- The second was a call "to live not with dividing dualism but (with) integrating inter-connectedness of all beings." Among the dual-

isms she challenged were "body and spirit, emotion and mind, our world and God, immanence and transcendence, women and men, black and white, poor and rich."

- The third change she urged was from a culture of death to a culture of life.

"What is happening right now in the Persian Gulf shows the best example of the culture of death," she said. "The way the conflict is solved is through killing the enemy. By abolishing the conflicting part, they think they will achieve peace. Peace achieved by this kind of violence, however, will only lead the world into greater oppression."

Dr Chung concluded her paper with the statement: "Dear sisters and brothers, with the energy of the Holy Spirit, let us tear apart all walls of division and the culture of death which separate us." The audience responded with a standing ovation.

A dangerous idea of mission

The traditional theology of mission is dangerous, Dr Chung Hyun-Kyung, told a news conference.

"Traditionally in mission theology people see the Gospel as a seed and we are the soil," she said. "When the seed falls on the soil a new Christianity grows."

"That kind of image is very dangerous and somewhat imperialistic. In that kind of thinking the seed has every ability to determine the genes."

"The soil is passive. In rich soil you have a bigger tree. In dry soil you have a very small tree."

Dr Chung would like the image of seed falling on soil replaced by one of "making babies". In this thinking local culture and traditional Christianity come together to make a "new baby". And that new baby might be very different from European Christianity.

Delegates plead through tears for a stop to war



Some of those who took to Canberra's streets as part of the WCC peace procession.

The Gulf War has been a continuing undercurrent at this World Council of Churches Assembly. At the beginning it threatened to swamp the whole event, as late cancellations made the organisers consider calling the whole thing off. At intervals during the 14-day event, war currents surged to the surface, breaking in cries of pain and anger during plenaries and press conferences. Then the current ebbed as other issues flowed over. But, like an undertow, the War never went far away.

Prevailing opinion seemed to be against the war, though people were more divided as to whose responsibility it was to end hostilities. "If we call for an unconditional ceasefire, we buy cheap grace that solves nothing," said Bishop Tom

Butler of England during a special hearing on the war. "If we want to do good, we call for a just ceasefire in the context of the UN resolution, and then hold a conference to address all issues including those of the Palestinian people."

The criminal waste of billions of dollars on armaments while nearby Africans starved; prices of food and fuel soaring and markets for primary produce collapsing; religious discrimination and threats against minorities, whether Christian or Muslim — all were highlighted by impassioned speakers in presentations and plenary sessions.

Archbishop Sliwa Gewargis of Baghdad gave an heartfelt description of the plight of his people and then left to return to Iraq. Palestinian Christian Mrs Jean Zaru wept

as she told the Assembly of the suffering of her people. "Can we liberate Kuwait by destroying both Iraq and Kuwait?" she asked. "Can this be acceptable to the UN community that supposedly has advocated non-violent resolutions to conflict?"

"Is this the lesson we want to teach Palestinians how to resolve their conflict?"

The World Council's 'implied stance' towards Israel, as John Bluck so delicately described it, showed more in concern for the Palestinians than in direct comments about Israel's actions. A whole press conference on the final day was devoted to relief action in the war zone and surrounding areas. The WCC agency CICARWS, in conjunction with the Middle East Council of Churches, launched an aid programme for the area, with the main beneficiaries to be the Palestinian people in the Occupied Territories in difficulties because of a rigorous curfew.

In its final Statement on "The Gulf War, the Middle East and the Threat to World Peace", the Assembly emphasised that "the peace we seek is not just the absence of war. Peace requires a new international order based on justice for and within all nations; it is the effect of righteousness."

Debate on the eight-page statement became increasingly complex. An attempt at a major shift in policy by inserting a paragraph urging a limited pacifist position on member churches was ultimately rejected.

The United Nations was urged to reassert its role as peacemaker, and to intervene decisively to stop the war. The Assembly called for a Conference on Peace, Security and Cooperation in the Middle East, commended those nations who have sought a negotiated solution, urged all nations to respect international norms for the protection of non-combatants, appealed to Iraq to withdraw from Kuwait and called upon "all external powers" to withdraw all forces from the Middle East.

Due to hours of debate on the Gulf Crisis, the Assembly gave only cursory time to the other items raised by the Public Issues Committee.

In line with the Assembly's earlier avowed concern for Aboriginal people, a vote was taken to receive the document on indigenous people and land rights, while all other items were referred to the Central Committee for further consideration.

Items referred included internal conflicts, The Baltic States and regions of tension in the Soviet Union, Sri Lanka and El Salvador.

Internal conflicts

Noting with regret the proliferation of internal conflicts in a number of sovereign states throughout the world, the WCC's draft statement calls on member churches to:

- be peacemakers through prayer, education and interfaith dialogue;
- intensify their work in human rights, advocacy, and humanitarian assistance to victims;
- and become self critical about situations where they have impeded conflict resolution.

Baltic states

Expressing its "grave concern" over recent developments in the Baltic states and at conflict in other parts of the Soviet Union the draft statement on the Baltic states calls member churches to:

- support peaceful processes in pursuing democracy, human rights and self determination in the Baltic states;
- pray for Soviet church and Government leaders;
- and to render both material and spiritual assistance to the Baltic churches.

Sri Lanka and El Salvador

Emphasising its "profound sorrow and distress," the WCC's draft appeal on Sri Lanka makes a special plea to the Sri Lankan government and others engaged in the conflict to stop bombing and strafing the Jaffna peninsular.

'The WCC's draft appeal on Sri Lanka makes a special plea to the Sri Lankan government and others engaged in the conflict to stop bombing and strafing the Jaffna peninsular.'

Backstage issues enter the spotlight

It also urges an exploration of "creative ways to heal the wounds of conflict" and to build "true multi-ethnic community based on ethnic equality."

The WCC notes with "great hope" the efforts made by the El Salvadorean government and the Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front to negotiate a cessation of

armed conflict and to establish a political process which could bring lasting peace in its draft appeal on El Salvador.

It also expresses its "unwavering support" to churches persevering in their "courageous witness for justice" in the face of ongoing persecution.

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Left: Ann and Niro Ariarajah take part in the children's worship service on the Assembly's sixth day.

Natural ecumenists leave lessons for adults

Children had not only made a substantial contribution to the WCC Assembly but had "freed up adults and offered something more human," according to David Merritt, who co-ordinated children's activities.

Mr Merritt, director of the Joint Board of Christian Education, contrasted the children's natural ecumenism with the "atrocious" process followed by the full WCC, which was "destructive of people in the divisions we hold."

He compared the specially-arranged children's camp to the 'womenspace', saying that "a depth of feeling and lasting bonds" had

flowed from the creation of a community which "reached across the boundaries of belief and cultural style to affirm the richness of other persons."

Whilst unsure as to how those lessons could apply to the wider WCC, he was enthusiastic about its formalisation of children's place in the life of the Assembly — though this occurred in spite of most Australian churches, who almost uniformly abstained when approached to provide finances and participants.

Though always susceptible to manipulation and tokenism, Mr Merritt was happy with the in-

tegrity of activities involving children from the camp, saying they had contributed "from their sense of what's important for their lives."

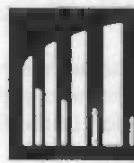
Supporting that observation, a children's message to the Assembly was amended on the last day of that camp when it was discovered that it would be necessary for an ordained person to pronounce the blessings at their presentation.

"The children resented the exclusion," Mr Merritt said.

And they showed it, altering the message to read, in part: "We know we are a part of the church when we are welcome to receive Holy Communion, and participate in the blessings!"

Saying that the estimated 60 per cent of UCs involving children in communion represented "a marvellous revolution," Dr Merritt said the onus was still on the church now that it had been heavily involved in encouraging children to be heard at the international level.

"What's going to happen in our synods and Assembly?" he asked.



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Disgruntled young participants warn the WCC of impending hari-kari.

Winning a Lost Generation

Ecumenical Suicide, proclaimed the banner flourished before the WCC Assembly plenary as young people expressed their frustration at having only eight per cent of the seats on the new Central Committee. They followed it up with a tersely-worded statement: "The nominations process is outmoded and divisive to the point of being anti-ecumenical, and it is not capable of ensuring adequate representation of young people, women and the different abled.

"It inhibits the formation of the future ecumenical generation."

While youth at the Assembly felt excluded from the power elite, they also said that their own churches had not taken them seriously — to the extent of not even including them in delegations. The target of 20 per cent youth representation at the Assembly itself was nowhere near met, they said, and this just showed

up the crisis of youth within the churches as a whole:

"Seventy per cent of young people in North Atlantic churches this Sunday will leave those churches, never to return. The main reason given by those leaving for this exodus is the church's failure to take young people seriously and include them in significant roles."

The youth paper then proceeded to make detailed recommendations about quotas, an enlarged central committee and the need to appoint advisers immediately. Most were later referred to the new central committee.

Asked to comment on this defection by a generation, participants in an evangelical perspectives press conference had a different slant on the situation. David Coffey of the UK endorsed the figures: "only fifteen per cent of young people in the UK have any religious or church

connection." Argentinian pastor Rene Padilla agreed that the statistics applied to the North Atlantic countries, describing them as "a crisis of faith in the West because of the way the gospel has been proclaimed, and the lack of concern to see the Holy Spirit honoured in both the life and witness of the Church."

Youths' tremendous search for spiritual reality after generations of atheistic Communism was emphasised by Pastor Peter Kuzmic of Yugoslavia. "They believe in the power of the Gospel, and I hope that the ecumenical movement will recover the Biblical dimension of mission faith."

"When we pray, said Ghanan Florence Yeboah, "we seek an answer from the invisible God. Our youth flood the places where the Word of God is real, and the message is passed on."

Evangelicals more than window-dressing

Evangelism was not a commonly-heard word at this World Council of Churches Assembly — at least in the plenary and public sessions.

Despite the Vancouver Assembly's making dialogue with evangelicals a priority, and despite the major WCC Conference on Mission and Evangelism only two years ago, there was been no presentation, no plenary and no debate specifically on the evangelistic mission of the Church. When the issue did come up, it was usually linked (positively) with justice or (negatively) with

"conservative fundamentalism" or some other less popular position.

Evangelical perspectives were however present at this Assembly. An identifiable group of over 100 conferred regularly throughout the event.

At this "exhilarating and exhausting ecumenical laboratory," said Rev Dr Peter Kuzmic of Yugoslavia, "the evangel is not receiving the attention it should."

He was concerned about the lack of attention given by the Assembly to events

in Eastern Europe, and noted that it was "those who married the spirit of the age" without a spiritual base who were not surviving. The need for theological dialogue in this context could not be pushed aside, he said. If the ecumenical movement failed to grasp this opportunity, it was "facing a credibility crisis."

Metropolitan Chrysostomos of Myra takes part in the Assembly's opening worship.

Orthodoxy unhappy

Agrowing unease among representatives of the Orthodox churches, who together total more than one-fifth of WCC voting delegates, surfaced on the final day of the Canberra Assembly.

Their objections to some presentations, and especially the focus on relations with other faiths, had been increasingly heard in plenary and private conversations. A major Orthodox caucus during the final weekend, closed to the media, debated extensively whether to withdraw from the Assembly.

"We perceive a growing departure from Biblically-based Christian understandings," said a paper of 'Reflections from Orthodox Participants' tabled on the last day. It saw also an increasing departure from the basis of the WCC as a fellowship of churches which "confess the Lord Jesus Christ as God and Saviour according to the scriptures and therefore seek to fulfill together their common calling to the glory of the one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

"We must guard against a tendency to substitute a 'private' spirit, the spirit of the world or other spirits for the Holy Spirit," the statement said. It tackled the practice of excluding non-Orthodox from taking communion at Eucharists, saying it was "for us, an experience of the cross of Christian division".

The changing process of decision-making in the WCC, and particularly the quota system, was also a concern. "While the system of quotas has benefits, it may also be creating problems," the statement said, referring to the tendency to add new quotas of different groups to central committee and praesidium. "As Orthodox, we see changes that seem to increasingly weaken the possibility of Orthodox witness in an otherwise

Protestant international organisation.

"We must, therefore, ask ourselves 'Has the time come for the Orthodox churches and other member churches to review their relations with the World Council of Churches,'" the statement concluded.

"We pray the Holy Spirit to help all Christians to renew their commitment to visible unity."



• NORTHERN SYNOD NEWS •

Synod update

by HENRY NEWLAND

As a result of the Consultation into the Life and Witness of the Northern Synod conducted last year by an Assembly team led by the Rev Frank Butler our last Synod made a number of decisions which are now being implemented. Here is a progress report:

Presbyteries to refer all powers to the synod

In keeping with the recommendations of Synod the presbyteries of Arafura, the Kimberley and the Centre have agreed to refer their powers to the Synod and to cease to meet for a period of five years as from early October this year.

Task groups are currently working on proposals for presentation to the next Synod detailing which synod committees will handle the referred presbytery powers.

Membership of Synod meeting

With presbyteries not meeting for five years a new procedure will need to be developed to elect people to the annual Synod, the Standing Committee and the Settlements Committee. A task group is currently preparing proposals which will be circulated to all presbyteries for consideration before they are submitted to the next Synod.

Appointment of synod minister

A draft job description for this new position has been prepared and is currently with presbyteries for comment. Plans are that advertisements will be placed in mid-year for a January 1992 start.

Additional funding

The Assembly Finance Committee has received an assessment of the Northern Synod's future financial needs. The summary covers all parishes, synod boards, Somerville, Nungalinga and the Congress. John Hawksley, Chris Thompson and Henry Newland will meet with the Assembly Committee in Sydney in mid March to brief the committee on our financial position.

Reduction of settlements in Darwin area

The consultation suggested that there should be a reduction in the number of ministers in the Darwin Area. The Rev Dr Geoff Cummins will visit Darwin next May to work with all Darwin area parishes. Geoff's task is to assist the parishes in determining how they plan to operate with one or two ministers less than the present five.

Meet Mervyn Brown

Mervyn is the new accountant with the Northern Regional Council of Congress/ARDS.

Mervyn has been working as the accountant at the Angurugu Community on Groote Island for the past three and a half years, and prior to that comes from Melbourne. He is married to Yvonne and they have one child (Tahlia) aged six months.

Mervyn and Yvonne decided some time ago that they wanted to spend their lives serving other people and that they did not have to go overseas to do so. This desire to serve was the reason they originally came to the Territory.

One thing that excites Mervyn about working with Aboriginal people is seeing the gains that have been made over the past few years, particularly in community development.

Mervyn and Yvonne will be living in Darwin but as yet have not established their home base or attached themselves to a worshipping community in town.

National Christian

On January 4, 1991, a bus load of people set their sights for Toowoomba, Queensland.

They were going to attend the National Christian Youth Convention from January 6-12 called *Breaking New Ground*. The bus contingent would rendezvous

with those who had flown to Queensland on the 6th. The trip took us 48 hours. The videos on the bus were very popular especially *Harry & the Hendersons*.

Our bus driver wasn't sure where he was going and we explained that on the Territory side of the border you couldn't go astray.

Just drive straight until you come to a monument with a cross and a roadhouse behind it and then turn left just before the monument. The trip down was a) exciting, b) too long, c) okay or d) all of the above. On the way we had to walk three creeks for depth which were flowing across the road.

When we arrived at Augathella the road was closed. We asked our only Bapa on the bus, Raymond Bandicha, to pray for some divine intervention. We approached the road at dusk to be met by kilometres of very wet, boggy dirt. We took it easy and got through. On the return trip the river at Cloncurry was flowing over the road and the following day the road north closed. Praise be to God for allowing us to arrive and return safely.

Thirty nine adults and nine children attended NCYC from the Northern Synod. These people came from Galiwinku, Milingimbi, Maningrida, Darwin and Pitjantjatjara area. All had a good time being together and meeting new people.

Our days and nights were filled and we all returned home needing a rest. Each day started with breakfast at 7.30am and the programme finished at 10.30pm. After breakfast we had community worship and small groups. We were in four communities: Downlands one and two, Fairholme and Glennie.

After this we were transported by bus to the Toowoomba showgrounds where we were one person in 3,100. A morning bible study was then held from 11am — 12.30. There were eight pavilions and we went to one each morning for the study. Some of



Bus mob, nearly home.



Goodbye to NCYC, Downlands Mob.

Youth Convention

the pavilions had novel names: The Shed-Liberation Location (Social Justice), Blow the Mindset (Church & Ministry), The Lighthouse (Worship & Prayer), Creative Arts, Global Village, The Jungle (Youth Ministry), Aboriginal Pavilion, Lifesavers (Mission & Evangelism).

In the afternoon we attended a pavilion to do electives. After the electives we had free time before tea. Most of the northern synod delegates crashed under trees with exhaustion.

There were other activities like the "Joshua Tree" where there was a guest speaker each day and you could ask them any question you wanted, massage lessons, bands playing and people swimming in the dam. We especially didn't indulge in this last activity as we didn't want to ruin our jumpers which got more use over the week than they probably get for the whole year at home.

Commitment

After tea we went to the Founders Experience. Founders had a different style of worship each night, and then Tony Campolo, the main speaker, preached. He talked about the Christian way of life being a party, and about how you can feel down and have problems during the week but that you can look forward to Sunday coming. One of the main areas he talked about was commitment. His way of keeping his Christian commitment was to have a support group of three other men who help him keep him committed.

The Darwin contingent was so affected by this concept that we have started up two support

groups, and would encourage other people to consider it as an option.

Night-life consisted of a disco, bush dance, coffee shop, etc.

We all had a great time and became as one big group. Those who didn't have Aboriginal family received skin names etc. and this was a special part of the convention for those people.

The next convention will be January 1993 in Canberra called *Love in a Dangerous Time*. Look out for the posters advertising it.

Finally as the coordinator I would like to thank all those who supported me. The delegates were a great lot of people. As the coordinator I was expected to know everything. I was asked numerous questions and answered most of them right.

Someone was very curious as to how I knew so much and my reply was I see all evil, hear of all that is evil and know of all that is evil, and I know everything. Farewell and see you soon.

— Ruth Frick.



Invasion of Queens Park, Toowoomba, for evening rally.



Guess who's missing from the Darwin mob. She can be found in another photo.

NCYC — some personal reflections

I saw NCYC as being an exciting opportunity to be revitalised with enthusiasm for God! I met so many people! NCYC day programmes encouraged people to mingle and socialise. Morning worship at Downlands brought me into a large group of people where I could sing and pray with youth from all over Australia and also from overseas. Morning small groups looked at sharing more personal beliefs and feelings.

Although it was tiring, as the programme for each day stretched to 11pm each night, I recommend anybody to attend NCYC 1993 in Canberra. Being around so many thousands of others who all share the same excitement for God as I did after only the first two days is a worthwhile experience.

Nerida

In the past a very important part of NCYC for me was the feeling of community and friendship among the thousands of people who went. At Toowoomba this community was again a special and rewarding time for me. I was able to share openly with many people, often with people I hadn't met before, feeling as though I belonged.

This year we had a relatively large number (seven) go from Darwin and the support and encouragement within this group throughout NCYC was really good. We all became much closer to each other. For the first time I was able to share with Aboriginal people and become part of a huge family where we were all related. It was a real closing of the gap between myself and Aboriginal people and I hope it will continue.

Through the week I was challenged in my lifestyle and faith and generally exhausted myself with all the things to do. It was a great time and

I've come back with new ideas and enthusiasm. I pray that the church, particularly in Darwin, can use the people returning from NCYC to spread the Good News.

Peter Grear

NCYC 1991 was my first Youth Convention. It was challenging, exciting, uplifting and exhausting all at the same time!

I learnt many new things through the pavilions at NCYC. I also learnt how to meet and relate to new people, which is hard for me as I am a naturally shy person. The main speaker, Tony Campolo, was also excellent value. He had the right mix of humour and challenge in each of his talks.

The best part of NCYC for me was getting to know and grow closer to the other northern synod delegates. Some of us whites were 'adopted' and named by our Aboriginal sisters, which was a new and special experience for me. I look forward to continuing these new friendships here in Darwin.

Debbie Edwards

NCYC was really great and everyone enjoyed it. Community time was a time for sharing and building up each other. I spoke in the Lifesavers Pavilion. I talked about the Cross as a Lifesaver, bringing us together to be one people, and Jesus as the bridge builder. Also when Jesus died he set us free to worship together and be a part of God's family. The cross is a part of reconciliation.

Raymond Bandičha

The best thing about NCYC I found was the feeling of being completely

surrounded by young people who all believe in a God I believe in. When I first arrived at NCYC I found that I had been separated from every other NT candidate.

At first the idea of not staying in the same place as the others did not amuse me. In fact all I wanted to do was go home. I find it very hard to and make new friends by myself and will always try to avoid meeting new people if I am alone. Then I found that some of the people I was staying with were on the bus with me going to Toowoomba. They were from Papua New Guinea and spoke the same language as my mother. I believe God put me in a place where I knew no-one so I would have to learn to make new friends myself but he did put me with a group of girls who I could relate to so I wasn't as alone as I first thought.

Ranu

NCYC was not just another youth camp or convention but it was a life changing experience. It showed me that being a Christian was not something you did but something you lived and that it should be lived as a party. I realised that Jesus would not have said the kingdom of God is like a wedding feast if he hadn't meant it.

NCYC was a gathering of thousands of fun loving Christian young people doing hundreds of different activities and having a ball. Don't miss the next one in Canberra in 1993. See you there.

David

The Tony Campolo video has been bought by the Youth Ministry Team and can be obtained from Peter Grear, phone 81 3830.

The Gulf War

— a commentary by ANDREW WILLIAMS

It is claimed by some commentators that there is huge public support for the government decision to send troops to the Gulf.

Those same commentators should be aware also of huge public resistance to such a decision.

We have been misled about the extent of support for this war both here and abroad. While more than 150 countries supported the sanctions and the blockade, Australia was one of only 28 countries to support the military action of President Bush. It must also be pointed out that almost half of America's senators (47.5 per cent) and members of the Congress (42.3 per cent) did not support the use of force under UN resolution 678. There is concern that sanctions were not given enough time to work.

Power of the minority

Further, the majority does not have a monopoly on morality. The great evil of slavery was abolished because a minority worked for that goal. Similarly there is a minority who are prepared to question the accepted view that war, particularly this war, is an acceptable way to solve conflict.

This is not a war about the removal of a tyrant. We did not go to war with Idi Amin, Somosa, or Pol Pot. It is not about the right of nations to live in peace without being invaded. Many countries have been invaded and occupied — the Baltic States, Tibet, Timor, Grenada, Panama, Afghanistan.

We did not go to war over those invasions.

This is not about enforcing UN resolutions. What happened to the unanimous resolutions of 1975 declaring that Turkey leave Cyprus or, the 1967 resolution that Israel leave the West Bank?

This is a war about oil, because 40% of the world's oil reserves are in this area. The US economy is increasingly dependant on cheap oil, lavishly used.

Greenhouse effect

The US insists that the greenhouse effect is not a serious problem and resists attempts to secure an international target for reducing CO2 emissions. US policy is shaped in part by a determination to increase access to cheap oil rather than working towards a global energy policy in which European consumption patterns could be adopted as normative.

Let us also be honest in admitting that this war did not start on January 17 or on August 2 but that it started years ago through the arms that were sold to Iraq.

The peace movement resents being accused of appeasement when it immediately condemned the attack on Kuwait. It is not the peacemakers who have supported, endorsed and armed Hussein in the years before this.

The West chose to support Saddam in a war against Iran which lasted eight years and cost thousands of lives, mostly civilians. The West connived in selling arms to Iraq, breaking the spirit of the international arms embargo.

We protested only feebly at Saddams' use of chemical weapons and looked away when he applied his own "final solution" to the Kurds.

All we are trying to do is disable a military machine which the West created. Few Australians are aware that until last year Australia was prepared to sell military equipment to the Hussein regime.

The media, who are so enjoying describing the high-tech weapons of this war are strangely silent about who sold them to Iraq.

The US economy is increasingly dependant on cheap oil, lavishly used.

If a huge majority of Australians are so supportive of the war, as some commentators suggest, they would be supporting a full Australian naval, air and ground force commitment — not the token gesture of 884 people, which the US admits has no strategic significance but is there only for political reasons.

On the April 25 last year an emotional Prime Minister stood on the shores of Gallipoli and gave the assurance that Australian troops would not be committed to wars on foreign soil. Presumably he also meant foreign waters and foreign airspace.

We must remind the Prime Minister of this assurance. Let us get out of the Gulf. ■

Northern synod

MARCH

Week beginning March 10

Reflections on the Gulf War: Pastoral care and the search for justice are two inter-connected parts of the church's attempt to live in faithfulness to Jesus Christ. This means that we offer pastoral care to people on all sides of an issue, seek to respond as Christians to the political, social and moral issues that arise, enter public debate, express people's concerns through worship and, in the cause of truthfulness, try to gain as much accurate information as possible. The following prayers may help you focus your Christian faith on the Gulf crisis.

— Pray for those serving in the Gulf, remembering that it is the Government, not the navy or the sailors, who made the decision for our participation

— Pray for families with sons, daughters and spouses deployed in the Gulf who might need special pastoral care

— Pray for those in the peace movement for whom it is often a difficult decision to join peace vigils and demonstrations, when they know the abuse they will receive

Pray for Muslim and Arab people in Australia who are suffering racist attacks, and who are concerned about family and friends in the Gulf

— Pray for those with questions of conscience about armed service

— Pray for Muslim and Arab people in Australia who are suffering racist attacks, and who are concerned about family and friends in the Gulf

— Pray that we will take serious account of the church's role as peacemaker and the priority to be given to care and protect the people and the earth.

Week beginning March 17

Northern Synod placements:

— Pray for Wally and Margaret Johnson as they leave their parish at Pascoe Vale and come to Derby/Mowan-jum congregation

— Pray for Jenny Timms, theological student, who is doing a 12 month placement in the Alice Springs parish, and her husband Frank who is working there in an Aboriginal organisation

— Pray for Humpty Doo parish as they continue their search for a minister

— Pray for ministers who have recently left the northern synod in their new parishes: Bussy and Shanta Arulampalam, Donald and

prayer list

APRIL

Kerin Wilson and Don Neuendorf and family.

Week beginning March 24

Frontier Services staff:

— Pray for Tennant Creek Nursing Home: Sister Gwen Janick (Director of Nursing), staff and residents

— Pray for Old Timers Nursing Home, Alice Springs: Sister Jan Rattigan (Director of Nursing), staff and residents

— Pray for Fred & Donna Vanclay in the Tennant/Barkly Patrol

— Pray for Malcolm & Judy Bottrill at Jabiru Parish Patrol

— Pray that the vacancy in the Centralian Patrol will be filled

— Pray for George & Joan Buckle as they settle into their new parish at Ashburton, Victoria

— Pray for Ruth Whittington the new pre-school teacher at Fitzroy Crossing; Ruth needs our prayers as she develops relationships with the children, parents and the community

— Pray also for Heather Campbell, new teacher for the Fitzroy Crossing Mobile Pre-school as she becomes

familiar with the children, vehicle and the communities

— Pray for Elaine Allen in her second year at Halls Creek Pre-school, as she develops relationships established last year.

Week beginning March 31

Staff in the northern synod Office:

— Pray for Administrative staff: Henry Newland (Synod Secretary), Chris Thompson (Secretary, Board of Property & Finance), Gwen Davies (Bookkeeper), Andrew Williams (Secretary, Board of Church & Community), Anne Wharton (Research Assistant), Paul Tolliday (Schoolsworke)

— Pray for Congress staff: Djiniyini Gondarra (Executive Officer), Rrurrambu Dhurrkay (Assoc. Executive Officer), Margaret Brockway (Secretary), Immy Bir (Consultant), Jim Downing (Training Officer), Graham Herbert (Payroll/Personnel Officer), Mervyn Brown (Accountant), Val Bridle (Finance Clerk), Brenda Day (Secretary/Typist), Denella Beer (Aboriginal Women's Resource Centre), Sue Wright (Co-ordinator Domestic Violence) Gamiritj (Assistant to Sue).

Pray for Congress staff.

Prepare for a new phase

Dr Phil Carr of Adelaide Central Mission was a guest of the 14th Northern Synod. His daily devotions and talks gave everyone plenty to think about and to commit to prayer.

He began, "I can't accept the demise view of the church ... God is preparing us for a new phase and we must look at the present as a 'time out' — time for the church to come to new understandings, time for clarification of goals old and new."

He illustrated this using the apostle Paul's own 'preparing for ministry' period. He reminded Synod that Paul had to wait ten years after his conversion before he was called into action by Barnabas to Antioch.

Dr Carr challenged the Synod that "all the learning and motivation we may have is no good if we don't wait for God's will to unfold ... when God is finished with us at Tarsus he will bring us to Antioch and it will be worth the waiting."

He said it was easy for us today to be trapped into overbusyness, squeezing out our time for prayer and proper preparation.

God is presently stripping away a lot of baggage that has been accumulated by the church through the centuries.

Indifference

Later on in the week he declared the church is at the end of its Cinderella run. "Prayer is no longer a luxury — it's a necessity."

In another session he said "some church leaders are still under the notion we're a Christian country

... times have changed ... we can't just expect people to attend. The reality is people are largely indifferent. We have lost the art of going out into the community. There is so much pressure to stay in the office where life can be less complicated. Life out in the community can be ambiguous and insecure."

Ministers are being deadlocked into meetings, church numbers are declining ... what significant enterprises do we have to reach out into the community?

We must ask ourselves who is being touched with the compassion and resources of the church. It will take more than a series of workshops by visiting clergy, it will take a change of heart.

We/the community need to be seeing a picture of teams of people working together in unusual freedom. We must live among the community with sensitivity, vulnerability, with a strong indomitable spirit to share in one another's learnings.

Dr Carr gave an example of an eye doctor working in a third world country who had to try to stretch his services to thousands needing treatment. His indomitable spirit drove him on despite the suffering all around him. Al-

so, there is joy, a quiet yet firm assurance, when God is in control.

Joy is one of the inner dynamics of faith — of knowing God is with us no matter how tough the going is. This keeps us calm and gives us hope amidst all the superficial and negative things that would drag us down.

He said the church had been involved in its fair share of navel gazing. We must be careful not to get side-tracked, to always remember our primary goal is to love God. When we are caught up in His love we can't help being joy-

*The church has
been involved in
its fair share of
navel gazing.*

ful and want to share this joy and love with others; we won't allow ourselves to sit for long when so many around us are suffering.

The spirit which took Paul to the streets is given to us. The spirit brings an irrepressible joy which takes us into the frontline of the community. The only way forward is to love the community as it has never been loved before.

If we look inward rather than outward we will be in danger of becoming white elephants in community life. With a spirit of anything other than joy we will only become more entangled in bureaucracy. ■

'At such a time as this . . .'

At such a time as this . . . " ran the refrain of one of the most memorable songs of the WCC's Pre-Assembly Women's Meeting (PAWM) held in Canberra on February 3 to 6.

It is a refrain which also echoed through the whole of the meeting for the more than 300 women and a few invited men who took part in it.

It is a refrain which quickly became a question for the women representing the WCC's member churches to grapple with.

"To what am I called in this time and place?" asked Rev Ofelia Ortega in the first Bible study on the book of Esther.

To what are women taking part in the WCC's 7th Assembly called?

And the church — to what is it called?

For the five Aboriginal women who shared their experiences of Aboriginal spirituality and of the effects of the white invasion, the answers to these questions were clear.

"We really cannot go forward in Australia unless the past has been dealt with," said Dorothy Harris of the Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress. "And the Christian church has not really dealt with the past."

There is a great need for spiritual reconciliation, she said.

"At such a time as this" violence was also seen to be a key issue of concern and suffering for women.

One Canadian participant recalled passionately the Montreal Massacre of December 6, 1989. In that massacre, one man entered a university campus and shot and killed 14 women. He then killed himself. He left a note which said he killed the women because they were feminists — and he hated feminists.

"When will the streets be safe?" the Canadian woman asked.

The newly named Director of the WCC's Sub-unit of Women in Church and Society, Aruna Gnan-



"The churches need to be in solidarity with us as women."

adason from India, believes it is time for churches to be in solidarity with women.

While there are many signs of hope about the Ecumenical Decade of the Churches in Solidarity with Women, launched by the WCC in 1988, there is still a long way to go.

"The churches need to be in solidarity with us as women," she said. Quoting UCA member and Australian Decade co-ordinator Janet Wood: "Thank goodness it's a decade."

The statement released by PAWM underscores this point.

"The total church," it says, "has not adequately claimed the Decade ... or responded to the challenge it poses to be in solidarity with women."

The Rev Anne Ryan, Chairperson of the UCA Assembly's Commission on Women and Men, also believes PAWM showed it is time for solidarity.

"Broadly speaking the issues that are important to women across the world are the same. Justice, right relationships, freedom from vio-

lence ... and women's time has come. The impetus for liberation is everywhere and I don't think it can be stopped."

Anne also says it is the age of ecumenism — and an ecumenism free from religious bigotry, racism and sexism.

"In a gathering like this one it becomes clear that solidarity and justice are primary issues and that all cultures can have faith rooted within them.

"It does us all good to see that we don't have to adopt Western ways to be Christian. Nor do you work from the premise that if you make everybody Christian it will solve everyone's problems."

PAWM "clarified, energised and gave women the strength and solidarity to get going with the whole Assembly," according to Rev Coralie Ling of UCA Malvern parish, Victoria.

"There were just a few moments of frustration," she said, "but that's just in preparation for the greater frustration of working with men in the wider Assembly."

Peace march problem for indigenous peoples

We marched for peace ... but among our own ranks there was no peace.

The World Council of Churches 7th Assembly marched from the National Convention Centre to the worship tent on the Fellows Oval, Australian National University, following the well-worn path of blue painted kangaroo tracks through the Canberra "city walk".

The procession was led as planned by children, not by Aboriginal people. After a brief exchange between march organisers and a group of Australian Aboriginal and other indigenous people including Maoris and native Americans, the Aboriginal group stood to one side and allowed the march to pass, joining at the tail of the procession. The Aboriginal banner had a "black deaths in custody" theme, asking "When will the killing stop?" The Aboriginal group sang its way through the streets, with chorus after chorus of "We Shall Not Be Moved", "Oh Freedom", and "We Shall Overcome".

It was an impressive stream of people flowing through Canberra's centre. Most of the casual on-lookers knew who the marchers were — "they're the world churches and they're marching for peace" was a typical response. About 60 percent of those asked supported the efforts for peace. A typical comment was "nobody wants this war". One couple, peacefully watching the peace-marchers, seemed surprised to find themselves on opposite sides of the fence when asked for their opinion on the war.

The marchers carried carnations, some of which were given to people they met on the way to the tent — including the police who were patiently shepherding the marchers.

On arriving at the worship tent, where most of the marchers had already gathered, the Aboriginal and other indigenous peoples group circled the worship tent, singing "We Shall Overcome".



Kids and guns ... a worship drama at the WCC

Other faiths heard over the voices of children

A close philosophical kinship across faiths was revealed in the worship which followed the WCC peace procession.

Jewish and Hindu guests were among those who spoke of the ways in which interfaith co-operation had reduced sometimes explosive religious tensions and lightened the burdens of serving the community.

"Humankind need not be doomed," said Jewish representative Marshall Meyer. "When we open our souls to the spirit of God and translate our prayers into actions of human solidarity, hope is born."

His remarks concluded an evening which disclosed a WCC more open to the views of other faiths than those of children.

Though committed to inclusiveness, WCC's appropriation of children rang falsely in a worship dominated by adult perspectives. When children did speak, it was not with their own voices: "This is it. The earth. So far others have carried it, nurtured it, tended to it, given it what it needed and what was to embellish and reinforce it."

The exercise at least underlined adult responsibility for the perversities children now inherit — one skit dramatised the use of gas masks by kids in polluted areas of Czechoslovakia. It was children who were now learning the lessons of survival from the Gulf War, and being groomed to carry guns in to the next war, and the next.

—Barry Gordon

Bridge-builder Djiniyini for WCC committee

The first indigenous Australian to be elected to the WCC Central Committee is Rev Djiniyini Gondarra from the Uniting Church.

President of the Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress within the Uniting Church, Mr Gondarra said his election to the WCC's governing body would enable him to address Aboriginal issues and indigenous issues in many other parts of the world.

"I regard my election as a privilege," he said. "My role will be as a bridge-builder between the Aboriginal church and the non-Aboriginal church in Australia, helping us come together to understand each other's struggle and the struggle of the whole Australian society."

The other three Australian committee members included Anglican lay woman, Mrs Jan Malpas, from the Diocese of the Murray in South Australia and Rev Ian Allsop of the

Churches of Christ.

Mrs Malpas, a farmer's wife, is currently the Australian President of the Mothers' Union, a worldwide organisation with 13,000 Australian members. She has a strong commitment to the ecumenical movement.

Rev Ian Allsop is the national secretary of the Churches of Christ in Australia as well as the Victorian and Tasmanian conference secretary. He says he hopes to bring to Australian churches some of the wider issues so that policies can be formed within an ecumenical framework. He also aims to contribute to the WCC some of the Australian churches' experience in its mission of unity and renewal.

The fourth Australian member is Mrs Patricia Scoutas from Sydney. She will be representing the Ecumenical Patriarchate of the Eastern Orthodox Church based in Turkey.



Rev Djiniyini Gondarra ... first Aboriginal person on WCC Central Committee.

Youth and Pacific get WCC presidents

For the first time in WCC history its Presidential line-up includes one from the Pacific, one aged under 30, and an increase to eight.

Reaching a consensus on a list that represented confessional, regional and gender requirements proved a painful experience for members of the nominating committee and Assembly delegates. These requirements involve the inclusion of two Orthodox representatives (one Oriental and one Eastern), a youth President, and the need for three out of seven Presidents to be women.

After several hours of somewhat confused and acrimonious debate spread across two days, it was finally agreed that in order for Africa to be represented, WCC regulations should be amended to permit the election of an eighth President. The new Presidents are as follows:

Prof Dr Anne-Marie Aagaard (Evangelical Lutheran, Denmark) is an author of liberation and feminist theologues.

Bishop Vinton Anderson (Methodist, USA) has been active in ecumenical and world Methodist affairs for many years. He has also been involved in work to unite the African Methodist Episcopal Church in the US.

Bishop Leslie Boseto from the United Church in Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands is President of the Pacific Conference of Churches. He has recently been

involved in peace-making roles in Papua New Guinea and in negotiations between the PNG government and the pro-independence Bougainville Revolutionary Army. He is also known for developing a theology based on the experience of Pacific people.

Mrs Priyanka Mendis from the Church of Ceylon in Sri Lanka is a 25-year-old who is the executive secretary of the Committee for Justice and Peace with the National Council of Churches in Sri Lanka.

The two Orthodox Presidents are both from Egypt. His Beatitude Parthenios from the Eastern tradition is Patriarch of Alexandria and All Africa. He is an ecumenical pioneer who has been active in improving Eastern Orthodox-Oriental Orthodox relationships. Pope Shenouda, Patriarch of the Coptic Orthodox Church, has been prominent in efforts to revive Coptic Sunday schools and monastic life.

The seventh President is the Rev Dr Eunice Santana from the Disciples of Christ Church in Puerto Rico. She is the director of the national ecumenical movement there and is active in women's movements and the Puerto Rican liberation movement.

The eighth President, chosen during the closing hour of the debate, is Dr Aaron Tolen from the Presbyterian Church of the Camerouns.

Sanctions are a force for change

Lifting sanctions against South Africa now would remove the black people's only instrument for change.

This was the message given to Assembly visitors by the Deputy General Secretary of the South African Council of Churches, Brigalia Bam, and Fr Simangaliso Mkhathshwa, a Catholic pastor in a large black township.

Brigalia described the surprise the black community felt when Prime Minister De Klerk announced changes to the system of apartheid a year ago. These included the releasing of political prisoners, the returning of exiles, and the legitimising of many outlawed organisations. The motivating force behind these changes, she said, was one of economics.

"South Africa could no longer survive economically with sanctions. The international community is now inclined to invest in South Africa again but we wish to tell them that many promises have not yet been met.

"Few ANC members, for example, have been able to return from exile; many prisoners have not yet been released; there are still ten million people homeless; and many people are still being detained. We want more than the repeal of laws — we want the system of apartheid changed, and we would like the world community to continue sanctions until that system has been dismantled completely."

Brigalia also stressed the importance of psychological as well as economic isolation as an important weapon in the struggle. "Playing sport with South Africa again would undermine this form of isolation," she said.

"Our problem is that De Klerk may not work fast enough to dismantle apartheid. Many insignificant laws are being repealed — for example those regarding separate amenities — but the real issues of land ownership and enfranchisement



Ms Brigalia Bam ... sanctions are only means of change for black people.

'The international community is now inclined to invest in South Africa again but we wish to tell them that many promises have not yet been met.'

ment may be side-stepped."

Fr Simangaliso said the real difficulty lay with the wide gap between the affluent powerful whites and the poor, oppressed blacks.

"There may be freedom at a political level but at the economic level there will be a new era of injustice. Even when the land acts are changed, the majority of black people will not be able to afford to buy the land."

Another problem to be resolved was that of violence, particularly between black people, said Fr Simangaliso. This violence had been bred by the system of apartheid itself, a violent, dehumanising and brutalising system.

There was also the problem of manipulation by outside forces and the lack of protection provided to black people by the police. Poverty and unemployment too served to inflame



South African Council of Churches General Secretary Rev Frank Chikane at a WCC press conference.

the situation. Fr Simangaliso spoke of the importance of governments not supplying South Africa with armaments. "We don't want another Angola or Nicaragua there," he said.

UC delegates, guests and visitors on their WCC Assembly experience

'This is what heaven will be like'

The WCC has been a "foretaste of heaven" says Rev Ronald Reeson, Presbytery Officer of the Canberra Presbytery of the UCA and Chairperson of the WCC Canberra Assembly Executive Committee with oversight for local arrangements.

According to Ron, because of the historical and outstanding contribution of UCA people, both in Canberra and from across the nation, there can't help but be "spinoffs" in local congregations and presbyteries.

"A huge number of the accredited visitors present here are from the UCA and we've all been given a fantastic feeling of what the worldwide church is about," he said.

He said that until now he had worshipped in parishes where only one other dominant culture is represented and worshipping and being involved with people from all around the globe has been an invaluable experience.

Bible studies for follow-up

One way the WCC Assembly will have an ongoing impact on the UCA is through a series of follow up bible studies.

Judi Fisher, Executive Secretary of the Division of Field Services in the Victorian Synod and member of the WCC task group which developed the idea of the studies, says they will

focus on four major themes.

These are ecology and integrity; the global church and the state of union; indigenous people and land rights; and conversations with inter-faith groups.

It is hoped that the parish and ecumenical bible study groups that met before the Assembly will re-form and use these resources to reflect on issues arising from the Assembly.

ongoing influence on the UCA.

"Having experienced the worship in the worship tent," says Jean "many of us will go home asking why this kind of worship does not happen in our own congregations.

"It's not a matter of copying what's gone on here. But somehow each congregation needs to struggle to make its worship more inclusive, to acknowledge our vulnerability



UCA delegates (from left): Rev Djiniyini Gondarra, Ms Kathleen Maltzahn, Rev Helen Richmond, Ms Jill Tabart, Ms Dianne Trenamen and Rev Dr D'Arcy Wood.

When the UCA established its Year of Ecumenical Sharing, says Judy, it was hoped it would give a real "shot in the arm" to ecumenism.

"There are many Victorian people here and while we've had a solid ecumenical movement in our State for a long time -- this movement can always be re-energised, reformed and refined," she said.

The Assembly has gone a long way in helping to achieve this goal, she added.

Womenspace to live on

Jean Gledhill of Epping Parish, NSW and Co-ordinator of the WCC Assembly's Womenspace believes the Assembly worship will have an

and to celebrate our joy together as a community," she said.

Jean is also keen to work with people who'd like to see Womenspace live on.

She believes many people were touched by the beauty of Womenspace and the challenging programs held there.

"I personally experienced a sisterhood with Aboriginal women I have not experienced before. It is a question now of how we carry that into our lives."

Youth network for WA

Dianne Trenaman, WCC youth

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delegate from Perth, WA is excited by the possibility of setting up an ecumenical youth network in WA as a practical follow up to the WCC.

With approximately 50 people here from WA says Dianne, the chances to form such a network are good.

She has never seen songs led so effectively before and hopes to take back some worship resources which will enable worship leaders to be trained.

For Dianne, the processes of the Assembly have been "frustrating" and tended to overshadow the discussion of important matters.

The bible study in her section was also disappointing and stood in contrast to a Pre-Assembly WCC meeting she attended in Bali where the studies were stimulating and thought provoking.

From sorrow to wonderment

While acknowledging it was too soon to be asked for her reactions, Jill Tabart from Launceston South Parish, Tasmania said her feelings about the Assembly were mixed.

Deep sorrow, absolute wonderment, disillusionment and hope are the feelings she noted.

"The deep sorrow", she said, "partly comes from the way we defend our own territory as individuals."

"And we do this instead of being open to hearing and learning and discovering and rejoicing in the fact there is actually more than our own territory."

The hope, said Jill, came from the worship, which united the participants in their diversity, and from individual contact which occurred outside of structured sessions.

It also comes from having seen things, and hoping for things, to happen locally.

"With 40 people who represent perhaps 20 congregations and parishes in Tasmania these people will

now at least be open to talking to people in their own area," said Jill.

"Often its an insurmountable barrier simply to talk to the people who worship in a church over the road — and that's pathetic.

"The bible studies we did ecumenically before coming to Canberra were an exciting introduction to the WCC.

"Then when the war started we also gathered together ecumenically to pray each evening.

"These things happened before the Assembly, locally, right there on the ground.

"It wasn't just bits of paper and recommendations that got sent down for somebody to debate.

"That's not what I see as the fruit of this sort of encounter.

"The fruit is that it's okay to work and pray and study together.

"In Tasmania there are already three regional gatherings planned for just before Easter to hear the reflections from the WCC," she said.

Indigenous people issue for UCA

Kathleen Maltzahn, WCC youth delegate from East Kew parish in Victoria, would like to see indigenous issues more fully examined by the UCA as a result of this Assembly.

"There are a whole lot of recommendations coming from the WCC about indigenous people," she said.

"One statement is entitled *Beyond Words to Action* and it asks questions like 'How was church property obtained? And how is it now used?'"

"In some cases it recommends property be given back to its owners. In some cases it recommends rent be paid.

"It's those practical things I want the church to look at.

"Aboriginal issues have been highlighted at the WCC and highlighted to our shame.

"I want us to respond as a church, and not just here, but also at home," she said.

Worship, 'community' were highlights

For Helen Richmond, a UCA minister and masters student in Missiology through the Sydney College of Divinity, the highlights of the Assembly were the worship and the subsection meetings.

In the subsections, said Helen, the conversations were deeper and there were glimpses of how significant WCC support is in places like Chile and Mozambique.

The image of the WCC as a "community of solidarity and prayer" came through strongly, and Helen is personally encouraged in her own vision of how to work ecumenically.

Being a member of the Australian Council of Churches executive, gives her a vehicle to keep that vision alive.

On the down side, Helen felt the plenaries were not organised in a way to encourage dialogue and when people did get a chance to speak they "barrow pushed".

That the pentecostal movement did not have a chance to offer their insights into the Holy Spirit and dialogue with other Christian streams was also disappointing considering the theme, she said.

Concerted effort on Aboriginal issues

The WCC Assembly will inspire a concerted effort by Australian churches to "act together" on Aboriginal issues according to UCA General Secretary, the Rev Gregor Henderson.

The strong Aboriginal presence at the Assembly, he is certain, will lead to more ecumenical activity in this area — and activity that will last.

He also believes the youth "protest" — in which a banner was unfurled claiming it was "ecumenical suicide" if young people in the churches were ignored — will have significant impact.

This protest, along with their

Continued page 37

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generally "loud voice" at this Assembly is a reminder to us all to be more careful about including youth in decision-making structures, he says.

At parish level he feels two questions need to be asked:

Are we enabling the full participation of young people in this congregation?

Or are our walls already so high that no young people can or would want to get in?

Healthy Impatience with denominationalism

It's Hilary Christie-Johnston's view that the youth are showing a healthy "impatience with denominationalism" at this Assembly.

Hilary, a UCA member and ecumenist, heard a UCA young person explaining to a delegate from the United Reformed Church of the UK that she was confused about the traditions which had joined to form the Uniting Church.

"Surely their tradition is ecumenism," said the UK delegate — a response Christie-Johnston applauded.

Our commitment to dialogue with people of other faiths is also being challenged by this Assembly, says Mr Henderson.

With the UCA beginning its first official national dialogue with the Muslims next week this is of special significance, he said.

Regarding this issue there are also questions to be asked by all parishes.

For example, are there local groups in our community either of different faiths or of varying Christian confessions being persecuted or experiencing intolerance?

And if so, how can the churches work to include these groups more fully into the life of the community and increase understanding between such groups?

There are also questions about participation to be asked about differently abled people, says Christie-

Johnston.

"In the worship here this morning," she said, "the worship leader asked those who are able to stand to stand."

This is an example of the kind of sensitivity needed at all levels, she said.

Australian role important

The incoming President of the Uniting Church, Rev Dr D'Arcy Wood believes Australia has an important role to play in worldwide ecumenical relations. Australia had been isolated geographically but there are now many opportunities to be part of the global Christian community.

He believes it is important for the 400 Uniting Church people attending the Assembly to "transmit the ecumenical experience" to their home parishes and to help develop an international consciousness among Australian Christians.

On the reaction of the WCC to the Aboriginal presentation of their history and call for self-determination he said it was the Australian people who had "a great deal of painstaking hard yakka" to do in addressing the many complex historical problems of the Aboriginal people.

He felt it was important to comment on the Orthodox churches contribution to the Assembly. He has spent a lot of time in dialogue with Orthodox people over the years and hopes the gap of understanding between the Protestant and Orthodox church is bridged. He said we must at first admit our lack of understanding and find ways to get to know one another.

What can we learn from them? D'arcy said the Uniting Church tends to surround itself with words and don't allow the symbolic to speak to us. He explained icons to Orthodox are a constant reminder of being surrounded by the saints ... we don't live isolated as Christians but are powerfully backed up. He said icons were prepared with much prayer and should not be dismissed by Protestant Christians.



Fellowship Tours for 1991

March

4 days - Easter - Qld - Golden West

April

8 days - Cairns Reef adventure

8 days - Sydney - Canberra

May

3 days - Fraser Island long weekend

14 days - New Zealand

12 days - Fiji with Ernie Gerhke

16 days - Darwin - Alice Springs

June

7 days - Roylen Cruise

12 days - Singapore & Bangkok

3 days - Long Weekend - O'Reillys,

Lamington Nat. Park

July

14 days - Cairns - Pt Douglas -

Kuranda

22 days - Honolulu - 3 islands

16 days - Burke & Wills western

NSW

August

6 days - Longreach Hall of Fame

21 days - USA west coast & Canada

24 days - Darwin to Perth

10 days - Pacific cruise

September

3 days - Phantom of the Opera

21 days - New Zealand

10 days - Bowral tulips & Blue Mts

30 days - UK & Europe

3 days - Hervey Bay whale watch

October

18 days - Tasmania

4 days - O'Reillys, Lamington NP

10 days - Norfolk & Lord Howe Is.

November

8 days - Cherry Harvest - Dubbo

7 days - Hong Kong

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The Chinese Church is now back as a member of the World Council of Churches, after its abrupt departure in 1954 following a disagreement with the Council over the Korean War.

Christianity in China is now 'post-denominational' Protestant, Bishop K.H. Ting of the China Christian Council told news reporters. The Cultural Revolution meant that the church must make a new start, with very few ordained ministers — about 1000 for 5-6 million CCC Christians, he said. Since 1981, three churches have opened every two days, and tens of thousands of small groups meet in homes.

'Post denominational' China comes back



Bishop Ting: Chinese Christians are a "struggling minority."

Self hood, not separation

In one of the final business sessions of the Assembly, the China Christian Council was recommended by the Executive Committee and accepted for membership by the full Assembly.

"The Chinese Christian Council understands that, important as it is for Chinese Christians to have a self-hood of their own, there cannot be a full self-hood of a church apart from its being a member of the Universal Church of Jesus Christ," said the recommendation.

Bishop Shen Yi-Fan, from Shanghai, and Mr Han Wen-Zao, the Director of the Amity Foundation, attended the Assembly as observers. This was the first time representatives from the People's Republic of China had attended a WCC Assembly since the Second Assembly at Evanston in 1954.

The three representatives from China spoke to a full house in the

worship tent during the visitors' program. In thanking people for the continuing prayers of Christians around the world, Bishop Ting said, "We are a small struggling minority within the Chinese population. We are struggling to hold a place for the church near the margin."

Protestant Christians in China number 5-10 million in a country of 1000 million people.

'New bishop'

Pauline Webb, moderator of the session, introduced Bishop Shen Yi-Fan as "a new kind of bishop". Most church leaders in China were ordained during the period when separate denominations still existed there. Bishop Shen, however, was ordained bishop recently, in the post-denominational Chinese church.

"He has no diocese," said Webb. "He is not a bishop/manager. His responsibilities are entirely pas-

toral, teaching, preaching and sacramental."

Bishop Shen outlined church life in Shanghai and spoke about his own church, 'Community Church'.

"In the past two years, more than 2000 people have been baptised in this one church alone," he said.

"There are more than 80,000 Protestant Christians in Shanghai and about 65,000 attend church every Sunday. This is an attendance rate of 80 per cent," he said, "which indicates a strong commitment."

Pastors lacking

Despite the rapid growth of the Church in Shanghai, there is a shortage of trained ministers.

"There are less than 50 pastors in Shanghai," said Shen, "each in charge, on average, of more than 1600 people."

"That means that some pastors are still working in their old age. Some are working in their 70s and 80s. There is even one pastor who is still working in his 90s."

Shanghai has one of the 13 Protestant theological seminaries in China. "We hope," said Shen, "that we will soon have some younger ministers."

However, according to Bishop Shen, the number of young trainees is still not adequate to meet the needs of the 23 Protestant churches and more than 50 house church meetings in Shanghai.

"We also need to train lay leaders," he said.

"This is part of the program of the seminary. Maybe some of them will be recommended for ordination as lay ministers. Some may even become full-time ministers."

In the Canvas Cathedral

The "worship tent" was flown from Germany to Australia on two jumbo jets. It stood on Fellows Oval at the Australian National University for two weeks and was filled with wonderful music.

For thousands of people, the most enduring memory of the Seventh Assembly of the world Council of Churches will be the worship that was offered to God day by day under the awning of that great canvas cathedral.

The opening and closing services of the Assembly took place there. The eucharist was celebrated there using the ecumenical rite known as the 'Lima Liturgy'. The Eastern orthodox Liturgy was celebrated there too, using 68 pages of choir. The preacher was Archbishop Stylianos. During the liturgy, one of the priests made the "painful announcement" that only Orthodox Christians may receive the Eucharist.

For the first week and a half, the tent was also the venue for midday prayers with preachers from different Christian traditions. On the second Sunday, a black churches celebration was arranged in the tent by representatives of US denominations. The



Rev Dr Charles Adams ... soaring.



The Ash Wednesday morning worship, February 13.

preacher, Rev Dr Charles Adam, used soaring flights of alliterative oratory to move the hearts and minds of the congregation towards a more inclusive world community.

Nor were the nights forgotten. A variety of local Canberra congregations led the evening prayers.

It was the morning worship, however, among the whole range of services offered to God, which became the spiritual powerhouse of the Assembly.

Officially, morning worship began at 7.45 a.m. In fact, it began much earlier. At 7.15 a.m., the daily worship choir rehearsed their music. At 7.30 a.m., assisted by the choir, the worship animateurs taught the music to the whole congregation. As the days of the Assembly passed, more and more people arrived early to be part of this experience.

There were seven music professionals at the Assembly to act as animateurs. Each taught music from a different part of the world. Their rapport with the choir and the people was superb. Their ability to have congregations singing music from many lands and in many languages in a short space of time was

extraordinary.

During the life of the 7th Assembly, congregations sang hymns and songs from Asia, Latin America, South Africa and the western world, as well as the music of Africa, African America and the Orthodox churches. Much of this music had been specially written for the Assembly by the animateurs themselves: Per Harling, I-To Loh, Simeio Monteiro, George Mxadana, Dinah Reindorf, Christian Tamaela and Milos Vesin.

Singing this music from the four corners of the earth quickly assisted people to see themselves as the *oikoumene*: people gathered together from "the whole inhabited earth". And, gathered together, they lifted up all the earth and its people before God in prayer. The Christian faith was affirmed; chains fell off; water was blessed; ashes were daubed on foreheads; children led the worship; the Word of God ceremoniously entered the tent; and people waited listened for the voice of the Spirit.

It was in the worship tent that the great prayer of the Assembly was daily offered to God: "Come Holy Spirit - Renew the Whole Creation".

— Paul Swadling

Making their point

The very existence of the World Council of Churches offends some people. Others object to what it does or says. Others simply take the opportunity it provides to reach thousands of concerned people. So every time you walk out of a major event at the Assembly, you can be pretty sure that a banner or placard of protest will be in view.

The Assembly was subjected to allegations about the activities of some Romanian Orthodox clergy, picketed by the Free Presbyterian Church, assailed by a group of Orthodox claiming that "the Lima Liturgy is blasphemous" and other less evident messages (in Greek), and had its position on the Gulf War challenged by a group of Adventists.

Aboriginal people have made their point very quietly during Prime Minister Bob Hawke's opening address, and more dramatically in their difficulties with and departure from the Peace liturgical procession.

Many Assembly-goers took the opportunity to interact and debate with the protestors, and some exchanges were quite heated. Others ended up in deep discussions about Biblical interpretation. One group, singing hymns on the steps of the Convention Centre, were quite put out when some Assembly visitors joined them and sang along together. When the protestors remonstrated, the extra singers simply said that it was a nice song, they knew the words and agreed with the message.

The persistence of some was admirable. The Inter-



Dr Carl McIntire greets Dr Emilio Castro on the steps of the National Convention Centre, Canberra.

national Council of Churches representatives were present almost every day. Led by Rev Dr Carl McIntire of the USA, this council proclaims (among other things) that dialogue with other faiths is deeply sinful.

When Dr Emilio Castro was questioned about this during a press conference, he smiled and referred to Dr McIntire as "my old friend".

This was not sarcastic, he added; he had had many discussions with Dr McIntire, and felt friends even while disagreeing.

"I do not think that I can change his opinion, however," Dr Castro added.

"Dr McIntire has been picketing us since the foundation of the WCC in 1948. He was protesting even before we had made any mistakes."

Disabilities group may fold

Disability is not the flavour of the month, said the Rev Mark Anderson, NZ, a member of the Church and People with Disabilities group established by the World Council of Churches in 1983.

"With the WCC now having to cut back on expenditure because of a shortage of funds, this program may well fold. When the program's director, Linda Katsuno from Japan, leaves, her job will not be replaced."

The differently abled — about 30 in all including delegates and committee members — met frequently during

last month's Assembly in Canberra in their own centre for Bible study, support, and reflections on the theology of disability. Topics such as "Differently abled and transforming", and "Giver of life and the differently abled" were discussed.

In a statement delivered near the conclusion of the Assembly, the differently abled called for a much greater inclusion in the life of the WCC and in its decision-making processes.

"Statistics provided by the World Health Organisation a decade ago,"

they said, "indicate that the 500 million people in the world who have a disability are among the most oppressed, marginalised and poverty-stricken in our societies. 98 percent of persons with disabilities live in the developing countries and only two percent of these people receive any support at all."

Such injustice, they said, should be of concern to all aspects of the WCC's work.

The Canberra Assembly was attended by only two disabled delegates.

With the powerful or the powerless?

Where do Australian and New Zealand churches belong?

In the Pacific, at a meeting one sits on a mat on the ground. At the WCC in Canberra, the Pacific Regional Meeting moved from a lecture room to a tent, enabling discussion to proceed in the way that delegates found comfortable. Pacific time prevailed as well, and discussion was wide-ranging.

Six issues had been identified at a preliminary meeting of Pacific churches in Fiji. They were people, land and sea; education and leadership development; the Gospel and culture; ecumenism and mission; communication, materialism, tourism; and the issue of a nuclear-free and independent Pacific.

But before these could be dealt with, the long-standing question about the status of New Zealand and Australia as Pacific nations had to be tackled again.

The WCC places Australia and New Zealand in the Asian Region, but delegates and members of those countries often feel far more at home with Pacific connections.

Bishop Jabez Bryce, from Polynesia, lives with this complication from day to day:

"We are part of the Province of New Zealand, but have asked to affiliate

with the World Council of Churches separately because of our Pacific role. This has been declined."

Some delegates felt that Australians and New Zealanders had to make up their minds where their loyalties lay.

"Those who side with the powerless are welcome in the Pacific. Those who belong with the powerful can go into the Asian region."

For others, it was a matter of being indigenous. They felt Maori and Aboriginal people had more right to be in the Pacific regional gathering and more sympathy for the issues of concern. In the end, however, those present agreed that New Zealanders and Australians of whatever origin were welcome.

"We are right and the structure is wrong," they concluded.

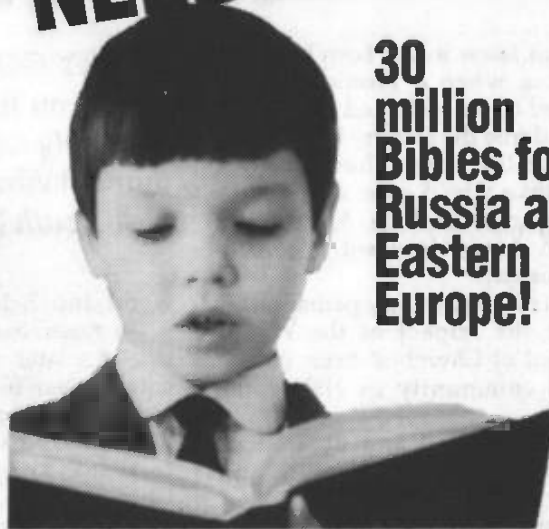
The six issues of concern were agreed upon by the regional meeting, and they added others — militarisation, and ownership of resources. These combined in the situation in Bougainville, but were not restricted to that island. Some tension between Asian and Pacific regions emerged over drift-net and other large scale fishing practices.

Finally, the relationship of the World Council of Churches itself with local Pacific churches emerged as a topic for further consideration.

"Sometimes I feel it is a new form of colonisation," said one delegate.

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23 Liverpool Street Ingleburn NSW 2565



The bishop slipped off his socks

You knew it had been hard going when a Finnish bishop slipped off his socks and slid underpanted into the Darling River.

Like the other church representatives who'd gone with him to Wilcannia, Bishop Ambrosius would depart drowned in sorrow and dismay.

But his gentle ripple perhaps mirrored the impact of the World Council of Churches' team on the small community in NSW's far west.

Unannounced and unfamiliar, the visitors came for exposure, and under the cloudless vertical grill of an Australian sky, that's what they got.

But what of the culture? The heat rash has healed, but six international church delegates are still scratching their heads.

What happens when a Brazilian Methodist seeks solidarity with a laconic Koori? It's much as you'd expect: one, at least, would rather be fishing.

The Church speaks much of solidarity, and is rhetorically given to "standing alongside the marginalised and disenfranchised."

The Wilcannia trip put some flesh on that ethos. But there's a problem when two aliens stand alongside: while one looks at a reptilian monster, another sees dinner.

It's only as they turn to face one another that each is offered the partner's eye. The cultural distance of that face-to-face frontier was rarely crossed.

As in 1981, when on a previous visit the WCC team made a damning report of conditions and politics as they affected Australia's Aborigines, the delegates *did* see plenty.

They saw poverty, unemployment, parlous health and the massive degenerative effects of alcohol.

What could be reasonably expected? At worst, a four-day flit in Wilcannia smacks of a flash and distant paternalism. At best, it is the

BARRY GORDON
reports on the Pre Assembly exposure tour to Wilcannia, New South Wales.

world church doing what it should.

As Australians took their medicine at a later press conference — another team had been to Mornington Island — they may have wanted to assume the worst. Few will rush to thank Kenyan delegate Jose Chipenda for telling them that they'd created a relationship of dependency with their Aboriginal people, "there in Wilcannia simply as consumers, with law and order superimposed from the outside."

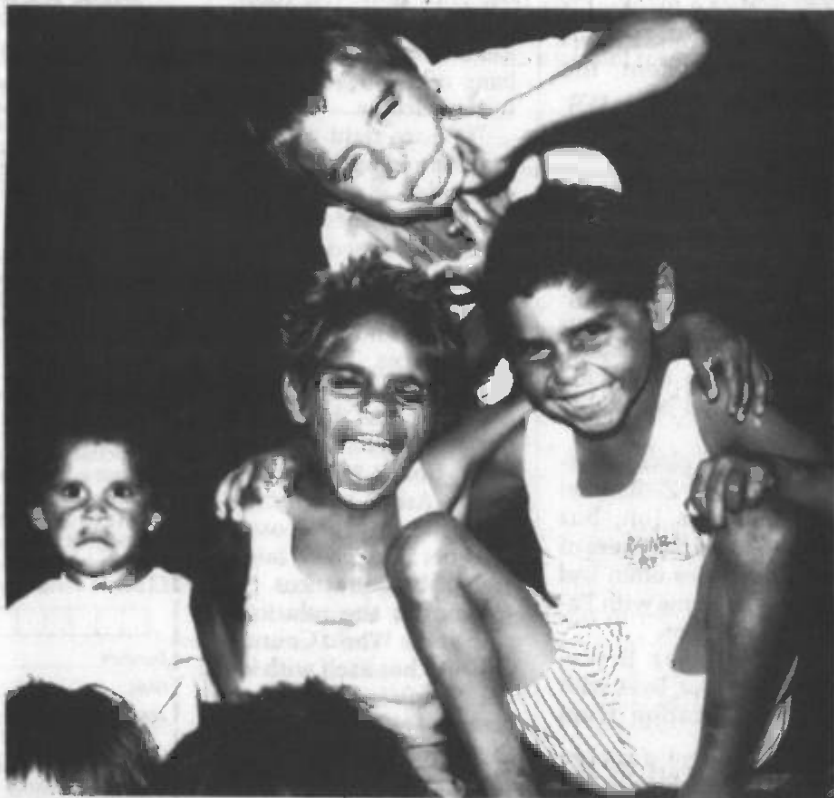
Brazilian bishop Paulos Mattos was similarly disbelieving of a com-

atose community "receiving resources which make death less painful. I think there is a very subtle genocide going on."

But these were noises that might have rung true after four minutes, much less four days. Charges of diletantism can be quickly dismissed by any prepared to take a long bus trip, and with a degree of belief in their own eyes.

In the process, too, the delegates' credentials can hardly be faulted. Waiving the prerogative of a series of recommendations, their report was in essence a question: "What are you going to do about it?" Their authority to put that challenge can hardly be disputed.

Geneva, base of the WCC, is in the home of clocks and the team, already addled by time lag, came to a place where the cuckoo sometimes doesn't front.



Children who "expected you to receive their dirt as part of them."

"Koori time" meant little to a group accustomed to 7:45am briefings, 8am consultations and 9am debriefings.

It all happened when it happened, and Wilcannia found it a little hard to follow, too: no sooner do you quit the pub than you are greeted by Professor Adebisi Sowunmi, a striking Nigerian woman replete with headscarf.

Adebisi and others heard often from those they left behind: "We've seen 'em all here." Fact finders, anthropologists and social scientists, they've all been through Wilcannia. They don't come back. WCC? It might have been a cricket tournament.

For Wilcannia's Aboriginal kids, the oval was a minefield of scrap and shattered glass, the bat a broken fence paling. As the first over was bowled, WCC invitees waited on a roo and an emu — their barbecue dinner — spread out limply on the earth, and attracting the sniffing curiosity of dogs. One said later she'd given dinner a mental miss at that point, but after gutting, skinning and frying, the meat looked a different proposition.

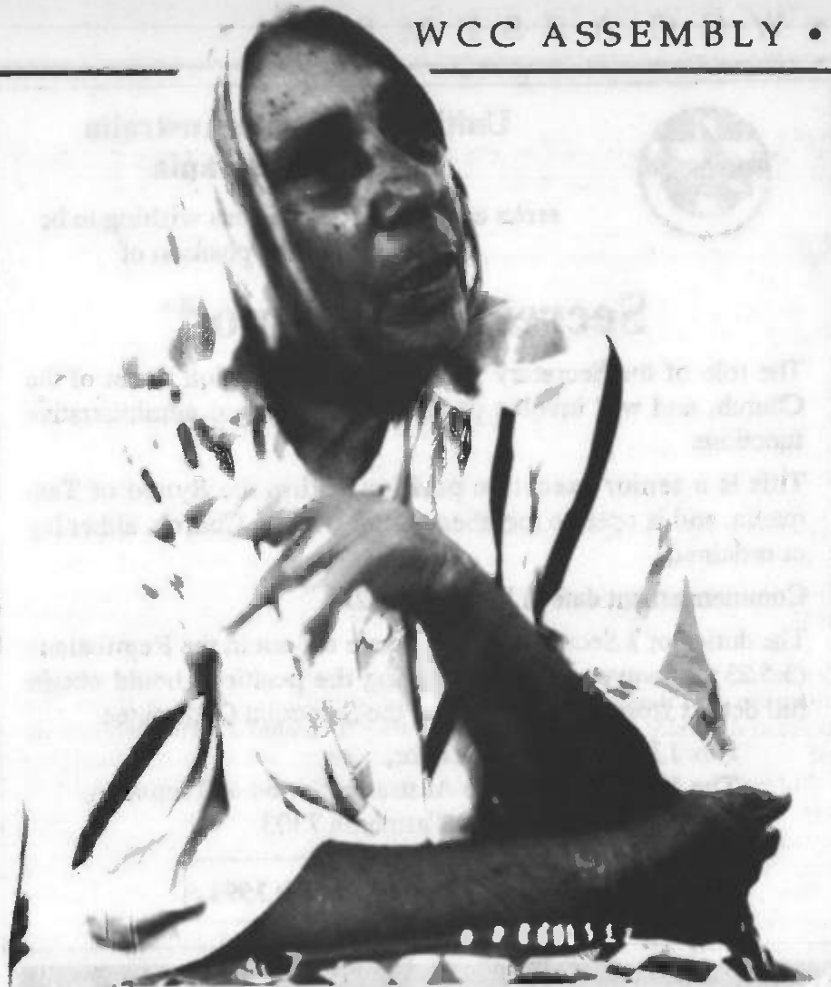
And so it was the whole way, Danes and Germans dealing with unspoken preconceptions and growing into a pattern of life more appealing, perhaps, on in American movies in which Linda Evans and co. put lipstick on the outback.

At least one American has now seen through the style to appreciate the substance. Rev Mac Jones, an African American from Kansas City, will always remember children whose feet seemed to grow out of the earth, and who "expected you to receive their dirt as part of them."

And while all lamented the community's apparent dearth of leadership and its muted political voice, Mac looked deeper to discover the essence of a people's survival.

"It may be," he said, "that going to jail is a strident voice."

And in the awol of one of Wilcannia's oldest survivors, Elsie Jones — "We belong to this river" — Mac heard, as we all might, a deep political statement.



Elsie Jones ... "We belong to this river".

'It's horrific – and it's geonocide'

Two World Council of Churches teams visited Aboriginal communities at Wilcannia and Mornington Island and said they found "the impact of racism by Australians on the Aboriginal people in this nation is not just horrific, but genocidal, and must be addressed."

The teams reported deplorable social conditions among Aboriginal communities.

The communities told them of a sense of frustration and alienation about the lack of meaningful control over their lives.

The team said they understood

their role as one of "listening to the variety of stories and testimonies from Australia's first people."

Rev Barney Pityana, Director of the WCC Program to Combat Racism said "Racism is racism and the reality of racism is that it is deeply felt and it hurts."

He explained that the teams were trying to highlight the problems of the Aborigines.

The team said, "They saw and heard from a people who are demoralised by exclusion and the lack of participation in decision-making processes in virtually every area that determines their lives."



**Uniting Church in Australia
Synod of Tasmania**

seeks enquiries from persons wishing to be considered for the position of

Secretary of Synod

The role of the Secretary is crucial to the mission thrust of the Church, and will involve pastoral, advisory and administrative functions.

This is a senior executive position within the Synod of Tasmania, and is open to members of the Uniting Church, either lay or ordained.

Commencement date is January 1992.

The duties of a Secretary of Synod are set out in the Regulations (3.5.23), however those considering the position should obtain full details from the Chairman of the Selection Committee:

Rev J.L. Pettman, Moderator,
The Uniting Church in Australia, Synod of Tasmania,
P.O. Box 46, Westbury, Tasmania 7303.

Applications close 31 March 1991.

A precious gift to carry

When the Assembly ends, our task has only just begun. Our voyage on the ecumenical boat begins when we leave the safe harbour of Canberra," John Bluck of Christchurch, author of the forthcoming Assembly Report, told the Council's plenary session on the final day. "You have a precious gift to carry, an ecumenical resource to share."

In an address to delegates on reporting back at home, he pointed out that many would meet with indifference and "blissful ignorance".

'Newsworthy' spirit

"It is very hard to make news out of the Holy Spirit. But there are many stories about the work of the Holy Spirit, in liberating oppressed groups, restoring land rights, relieving international debt, building community between women and men.

"Our plea is that you trust the power, even the newsworthiness of the testimony from this Assembly, and connect it clearly and simply to something that excites or angers or confuses people in your church and community back home.

"The yearning of every Assembly is to find words that speak to everyone at the same time. The learning is that we have to speak separately, church by church, culture by culture, place by place, in order to be heard.

"And when you can share that responsibility for interpreting Canberra in each place, by getting others to sing the songs, say the prayers, enter the debates, own the commitments of this Assembly in the name of local and regional ecumenism, then the Assembly will go on assembling for years to come.

"And the actions of the Central Committee as it starts to implement each mandate from Canberra will be followed much more closely."

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For brochures and further information please contact:

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The best laid mice of plans and men

At times Assembly timetabling lacked finesse, even consideration. Following complaints from delegates that the programme contained too many presentations and too little time for response, two extra plenaries were scheduled for the second weekend — when delegates were off on parish visits, many of them interstate.

Local organisers had planned a concert on the evening of Saturday February 16. They checked the date with Geneva, months ahead of the Assembly. All clear. During the Assembly, Geneva staff arranged a sing-along in the worship tent for the same night.

On the whole, the logistical exercise of scheduling plenaries, section meetings, press conferences and additional meetings in at least two venues was amazingly successful. Business sessions ran over time, sometimes by as much as one hour. Yet the work was completed by the final day and delegates did go home.

The WCC may, however, need to reconsider the balance of plenary sessions on the presentation of causes and plenaries devoted to delegates' deliberations.

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For job description and other details of employment write confidentially to: The Secretary, Trinity Methodist Theological College Council, 202 St John's Road, Auckland 5, New Zealand.

Applications close on 31 March 1991.

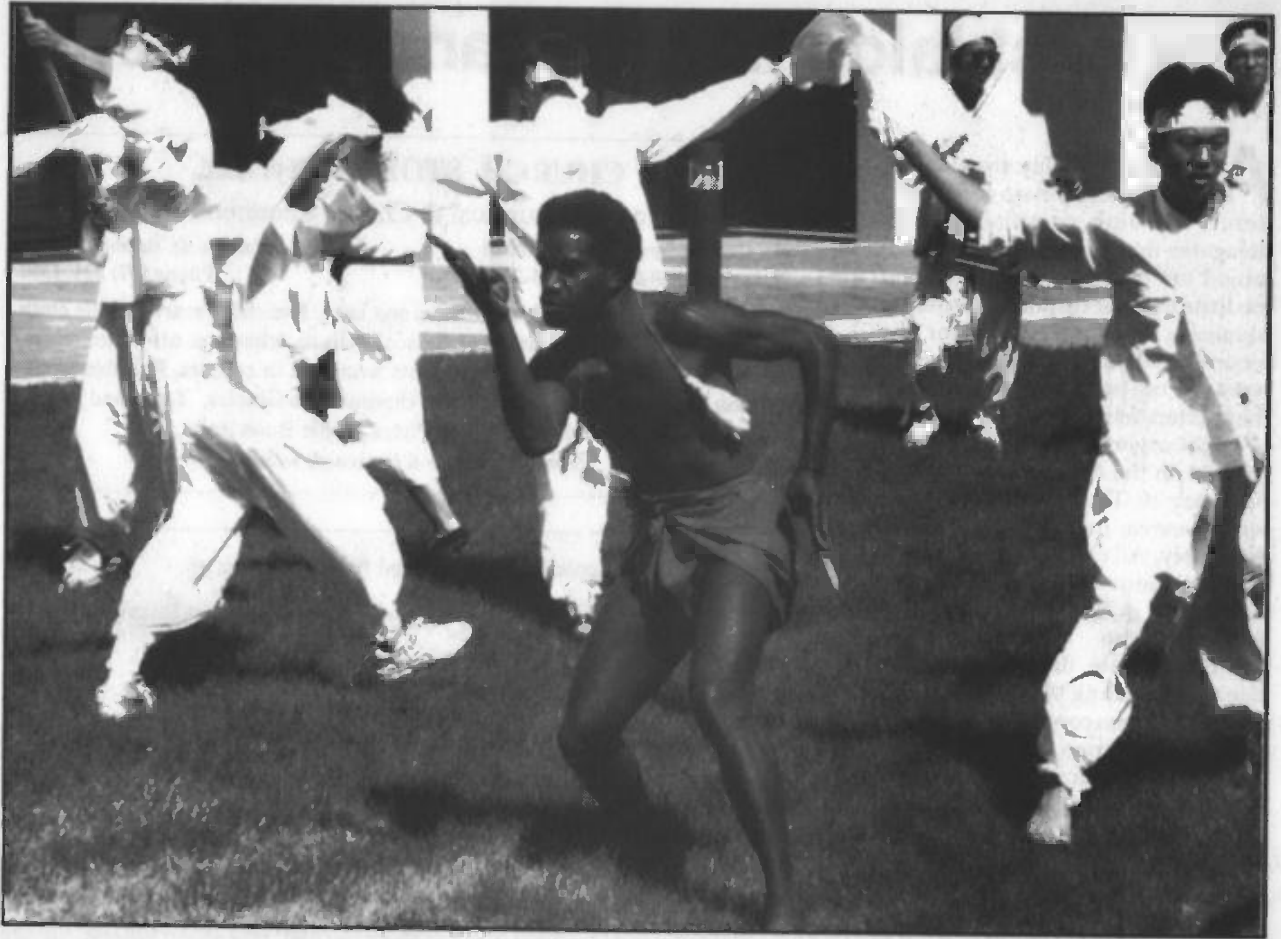


18-25's CHRISTIAN GROUP TOURS

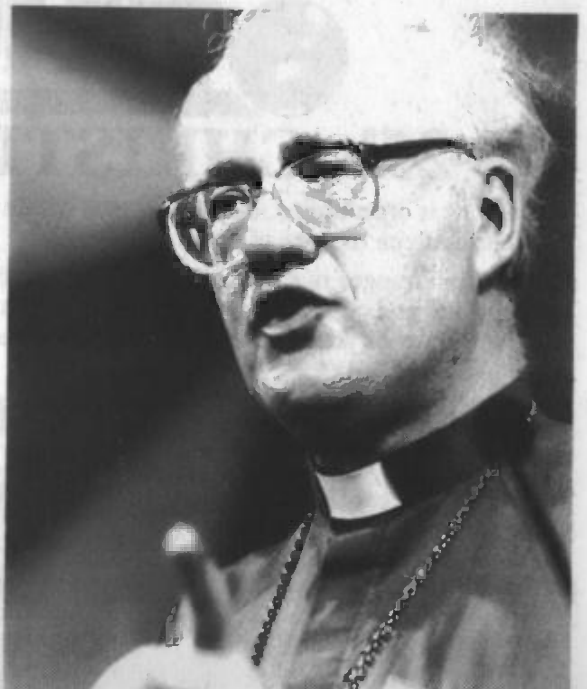
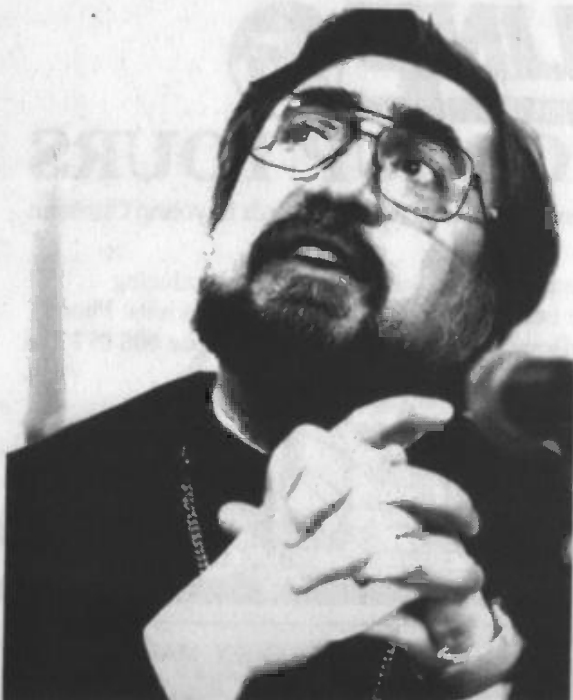
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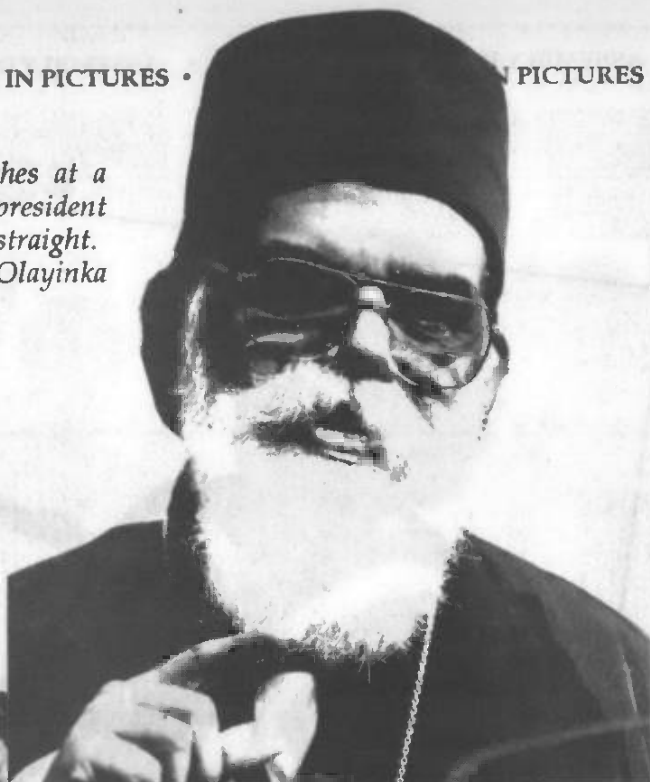




• Above: Korean and Aboriginal dancers rehearse the Assembly theme presentation. Below left: Lebanese archbishop Keshishian – new moderator of the WCC Central Committee – at a press conference. Below right: Archbishop of Canterbury George Carey speaks at the visitors' programme.

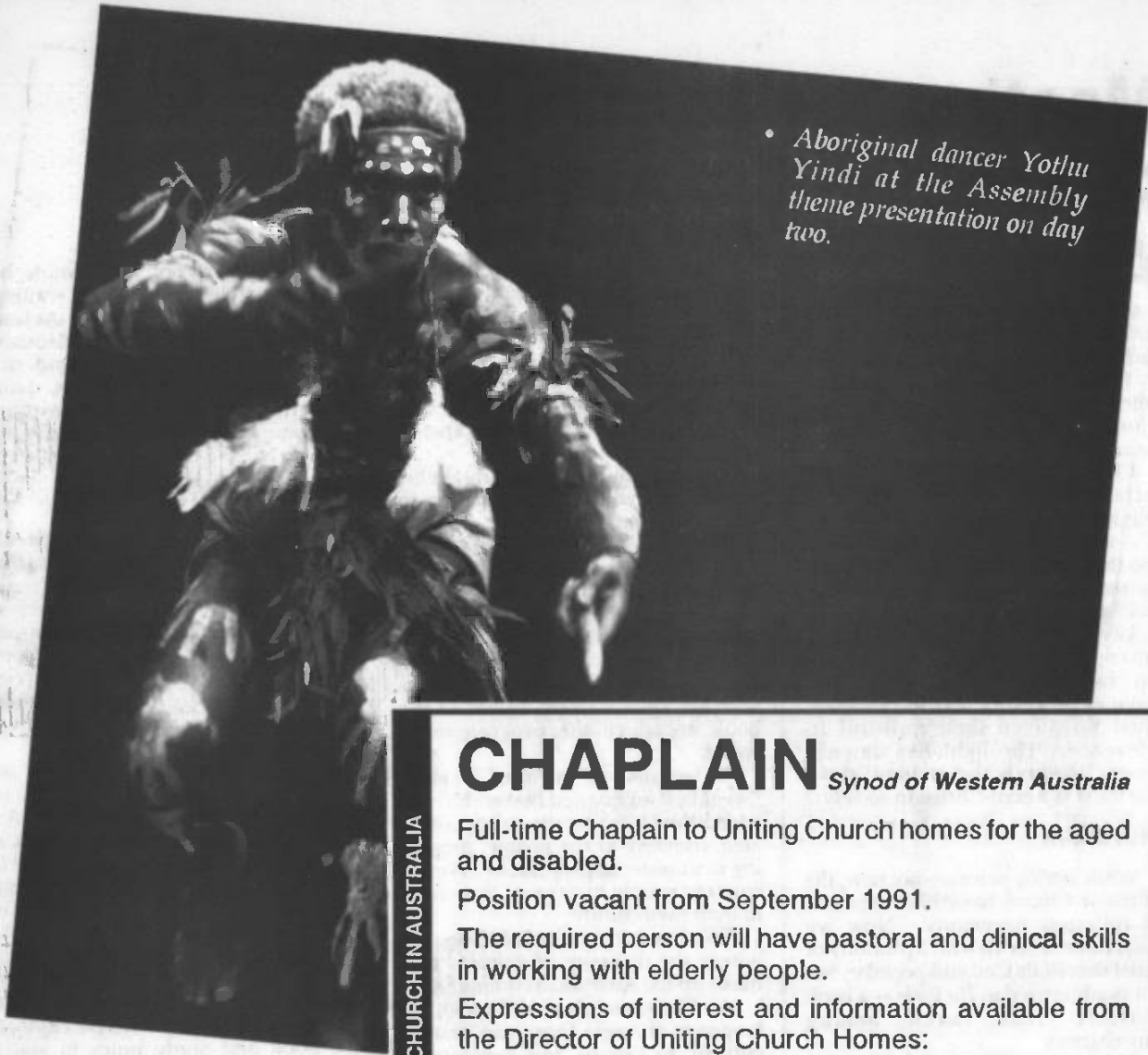


- *Below left: American Jacqueline Grant preaches at a celebration of the Lima Liturgy. Right: WCC president Paulos Mar Gregorios sets the Prime Minister straight. Bottom: American David Schale and Nigerian Olayinka Bolas at the pre-Assembly youth event.*





• Above: Aboriginal ceremonial welcome at opening worship. Left: Muslim guest Mallam Is-Hac Oloyede. Near left: Rev Dr Georges Tssetsis (Switzerland) leads worship.



• Aboriginal dancer Yothu Yindi at the Assembly theme presentation on day two.

UNITING CHURCH IN AUSTRALIA

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Position vacant from September 1991.

The required person will have pastoral and clinical skills in working with elderly people.

Expressions of interest and information available from the Director of Uniting Church Homes:

**Frazer House
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Queensland Council of Churches

Applications are invited from ordained persons for the position of **CHAPLAIN**, Wolston Park Special Hospital, Wacol, Qld.

Residence in ground of hospital. Salary and allowances - as supplied by the Department of Health.

Application forms available from The Secretary, Q.C.C, P.O Box 35, Spring Hill 4004.

C.M.M. Homes, Western Australia

Director of Aged Care

Applications are now invited for the above position. CMM Homes, which incorporates Rowethorpe Village and Hardey Lodge, is part of the Aged Care Services of the Uniting Church in Australia and provides residential caring services for 650 person in independent living units, hostels and nursing homes.

The appointee will be a person with appropriate tertiary qualifications with wide experiences in Aged Care or an allied field and who has the capacity to devise and develop innovative caring services for elderly and disabled people.

Written applications to: The Chairperson, CMM Homes, PO Box 801, Cannington WA 6107. Applications close 31/3/91.

Meeting the challenge in post-Christian Australia

As Easter approaches, we Christians remember a man who took a slow walk up the hill called Golgotha, where he was nailed to a tree and left to die.

This year, perhaps more than any other, we might ask ourselves if our Church can emulate its founder's resurrection.

Church attendances this Easter will reflect Australia's changing religiosity. While around 80 per cent of Australians admit a belief in God, less than a fifth carried their faith into the sanctuary of the Christian church last Sunday.

Levels of basic Christian literacy can no longer be taken for granted and our churches, perplexed by imagined enemies of apathy and indifference, must now face their cultural irrelevance. The light has dawned slowly through the stained glass: Australia is a post-Christian society.

Pluralism

While empty pews are not new, the Christian Church has at least assumed its religious hegemony. Now we must come to terms with a plurality of belief that finds God still popular, but not as advertised in *The Bible* — a book sparsely read, even among churchgoers.

The legitimacy of the Christian doctrine is on the slippery scale of relativity. Last year's Palm Sunday ABC TV documentary *The Riddle of the Dead Sea Scrolls*, thought specious by many theologians, nevertheless further exposed Christianity's now-soft underbelly.

Into that environment comes Auntie's 'follow-up', *Where the River Flows*. A year after the baffling science of Barbara Thiering, it arrives as something of an apologetic.

But this programme responds not in the carbon-dated terms of forensic defence. Rather it offers the Church's *raison d'être*, identifying those within Christendom who straddle the culture chasm between church and community.

Where the River Flows presents the creative frontiers of a Church perhaps rolling back the tombstone. It's an affirmative statement from an essentially timid animal which in fairness has just cause to boast of its massive and irreplaceable role in community life, especially in the unglamorous area of social welfare.

Indispensable though we might be, we are now willing to face failure in our crucial missionary task to offer values and belief which produce hope. *Where the River Flows* begins at that point of self criticism.

Once imperialists, what we have long since discovered in overseas missions has yet to be fully applied in our own back yard, according to researcher Peter Kaldor, author of the book on which the programme is based.

"If we minister in Asia," he says, "we take it for granted that we have to spend time learning the culture of an area, listening to the people, preparing to minister appropriately. We encourage people to express their faith in their own culture.

"We haven't yet learned to do that within the diversity of cultures that make up the Australian community."

We Christians, then, still speak the language of Anglo-European 'church culture' to groups and generations who never learned the vocabulary.

Club

Some of the problem is of our own making: we would rather the insular comfort of the club. Peter believes there is "a certain amount of fear" in our congregations about the changing communities we are part of. While the community grows ethnically diverse, our churches remain predominantly Anglo-Saxon. Where there are young, we continue to grey.

"As a congregation becomes a closed system, not relating to the outside community, the more fearful it becomes," Peter says.

In contrast, the stories of optimism explored by *Where the River Flows* suggest an expanded definition of

'church'. It need not, for example, be the immovable hillside object waiting for mountaineering pilgrims. At last, it seems, we are taking seriously prevailing social networks and circumstances. 'Church' returns, quite properly, to an idea, and a transportable one at that: *you don't have to come to it.*

More than 'freak show'

That, says Peter, is a sincere development which renders the programme "more than a freak show." If it is true that our churches are in measure responding to fears of extinction, it may also be that a more relevant, accessible church evolves which offers space for the religious dimension consistently acknowledged by Australians.

Peter, with the expertise of producers Pilgrim International, is doing his bit to see that happen. As telly viewers are introduced to a surprising side of the Christian church, the churches themselves will be led into further development. To be made available immediately following the screening, a resource kit will contain a cassette in which the documentary is supplemented by a half-hour workshop video, a copy of the book and study notes to assist group discussion. All in aid of taking Christ's gospel out of our shrinking sub-culture and into the world to whom it belongs.

Perhaps our passers-by are not so unreasonable to expect something a little less remote, a little more grounded in life. For just ten dollars in the plate, the comforts of escapism clothe more warmly at the cinema.

— Barry Gordon

* For the video resource kit, send to: *Where the River Flows*, P.O. Box 77, Lidcombe, NSW, 2141. Cost of \$45 includes postage.

Where the River Flows will screen on ABCTV at 10.30pm, Palm Sunday; repeated noon, Good Friday.

WHERE THE RIVER FLOWS

Documentary and Video

A major TV documentary...

Based on the bestselling book, and soon to be broadcast on ABC TV, the video explores church life in Australia and ways people are reaching out to those around them.

'Not to be missed.'

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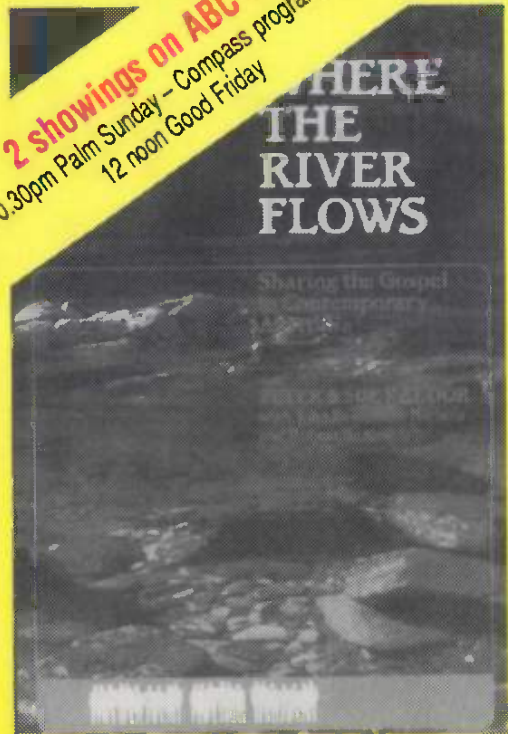
Designed specifically for small discussion groups, the Video Resource Kit* contains:

- Complete documentary as screened on the ABC
- A 25 minute workshop video led by the authors Peter & Sue Kaldor
- The book "Where the River Flows"
- Study notes to assist group discussion

The Kit raises key issues about mission in Australia:
What are our communities like?
How do we reach out to those around us?

Essential viewing for all.

2 showings on ABC TV
10.30pm Palm Sunday – Compass programme
12 noon Good Friday



*Video available after TV screening.

Please send me resource materials as follows:

..... copies of Video Resource Kit @ \$44.95 each (inc post)
..... copies of Where The River Flows book @ \$11.50 each (inc post)

My cheque (payable to Where The River Flows) is enclosed, OR
 Bankcard Mastercard Visa (Please tick appropriate box)

..... Expiry date.....

Signature.....

Name.....

Address.....

.....Postcode.....

Send to: 'Where The River Flows' PO Box 77 Lidcombe NSW 2141

This project has been co-sponsored by agencies of the Anglican Church (Sydney and Melbourne), the Uniting Church (NSW and Queensland), Scripture Union, World Vision, Pilgrim International, ANZEA, and the Lausanne Movement in Australia.

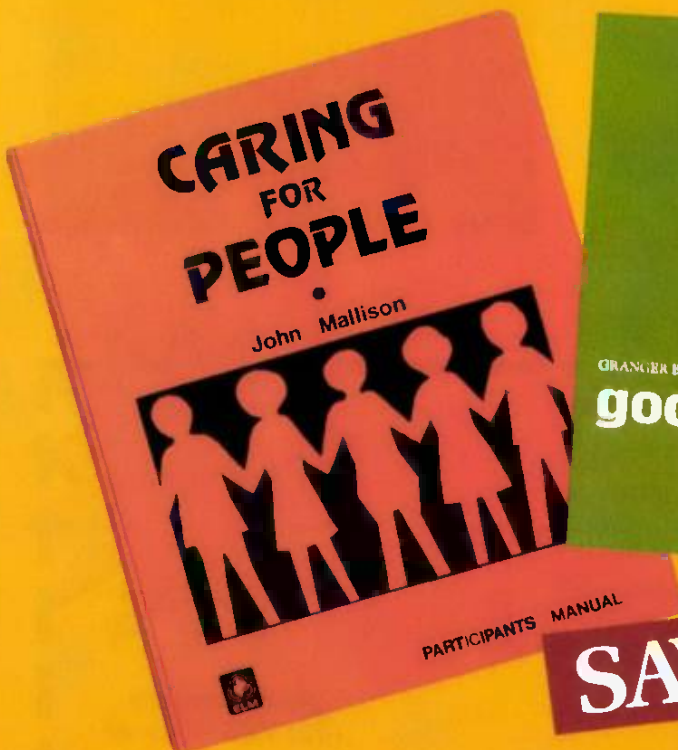


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