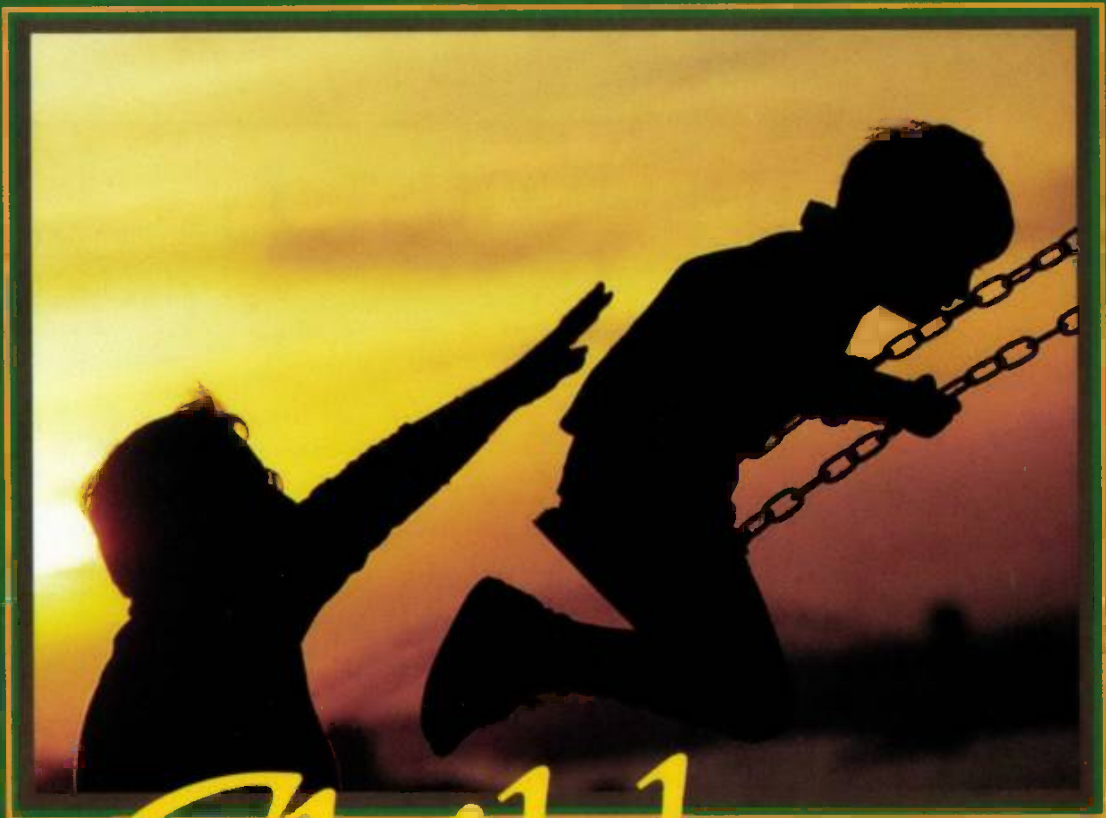


UNITING CHURCH MAGAZINE

Journeys

DECEMBER 1990 \$2.50

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Children

A FAITH
TO LOOK UP TO

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• CONTENTS •



Page 11



Page 16

The editors and staff of Journey wish all our readers Grace and Peace this Christmas.

COVER STORY:

Children. A Faith To Look Up To.

Mark Hillis, Arthur Pearce and Bruce Irvine share their experiences of ministry with children 8

David Busch interviews Peter Combe, whose music your children are probably listening to right now 11

FEATURES:

Canberra 1991, the 7th WCC General Assembly.

Barry Gordon previews the issues and Helen Richmond explains why she's going 13

Crucial time in world Bible work.

Lee Duncan interviews Rev Phillip Oliver 16

A Quiet Revolution in Education.

Lee Duncan reports from Nungalinga College 35

Serving the Community.

Lee Duncan reports on the work of Somerville Community Services in Darwin 38

SECTIONS:

Editorial. The Earth is The Lord's, by Lance Armstrong 4

Synod News 23

Books, Music start on 40

The Guide 47

Issues. Marjorie Lewis-Jones attended the National Conference on Renewal 48

Living By The Word.
By Marjorie Lewis-Jones 50

Journey

Uniting Church
Magazine

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Journey

EDITORIAL

The Earth Is The Lord's

GUEST EDITORIAL
by LANCE ARMSTRONG

"The World and all that is in it belongs to the Lord; the earth and all who live on it are his" (Psalm 24:1).

Here we find the psalmist expressing a conviction that is shared by all Christians — God is the creator and owner of all things. That is why Christians call him "Lord".

A lord is one who rules. However, THE Lord is not a harsh, arbitrary dictator. Rather, he is more like a loving Father, who is passionately concerned for the welfare of all his children.

This is expressed in the Christian conviction that God is one who enters history, offering guidance, hope and salvation — through Abraham, Moses, the prophets and Jesus.

Subjects are supposed to obey their Lord, as children are expected to obey their father. God, however, does not want to MAKE us obey him. Rather, he would prefer us to return his love and, in so doing, CHOOSE to do his bidding.

But what does the Lord require of us?

"... to do what is just, to show constant love, and to live in humble fellowship with (him)" - Micah 6:8.

Living in humble fellowship with God, however, should not be equated with a pietistic attitude. Essentially, this is to do with acknowledging our dependence on God and choosing to do his will.

God's will is embodied in the call for justice, which is so central to the Biblical witness that its establishment cannot be considered as being an optional extra for Christians. Indeed, living and working for justice is integral to the life of faith.

It is no coincidence that the Old Testament prophets invariably link righteousness (living in a right relationship with God) and justice together.

Correspondingly, in the Biblical understanding, love without justice is not love at all.

This call for justice, however, is not limited to the

world of human beings. As the psalmist has said, all things in the earth and living on the earth belong to God. Thus, we are required to treat the whole of Creation with dignity and respect.

We human beings, however, have not done that. Like Adam, we have arrogantly sought to live independently from God, the source of our being and spiritual survival. We have treated the rest of Creation as if we are its owners, and we have trusted in human technology to save us from disaster.

In so doing, we have acted unjustly towards the whole of Creation. As a species, we have feverishly sought to raise our material standard of living, regardless of the degradation this has inflicted on to the natural environment — God's other creatures.

As individuals, and as smaller sub-groups of the human race, our materialism has caused us to treat our brothers and sisters unjustly — with 20% of the world's population consuming 80% of its resources.

It is false, of course, to separate justice and environmental issues, for they are intimately intertwined. Take, for example, the wholesale destruction of the rainforests in Sarawak, Malaysia.

The motive is greed, the utilisation of the product is often trivial and wasteful, and the end result in human terms is tragically unjust.

The greed is to be found in the international forestry companies and the corrupt officials in Malaysia, who simply want to make a "fast buck".

The triviality is to be seen in the way these forests are being turned, among other things, into disposable chopsticks for the Japanese market — now arguably the most wasteful society in the world.

The tragic human dimension is to be seen in the dispossessed tribal Penan people, who are losing the basis for their culture and the source of their livelihood — namely the forests. Having been re-settled as urban fringe dwellers these people are now experiencing lives that are disorientated, poverty stricken and without hope.

Continued page 49►

Actions speak louder than apologies

I write to assure your readers that the Assembly is taking positive action over the needs of the people at Mapoon in North Queensland.

Letters published in your October and November issues declared that the apology of the Church is not enough. The Assembly Standing Committee agrees.

The Assembly is looking to gather funds to provide a four-wheel drive vehicle for families who have shifted back to Mapoon; the nearest store is two-and-a-half hours away. It also aims to help to fund the building of a new church and church flat at Mapoon.

We hope that we can find these funds without having to make a general appeal to church members, but if such an appeal becomes necessary the Assembly has already authorised it. We are also pursuing the possibility of work parties, jointly organised by the Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress and the Joint Board of Christian Education, to help rebuild facilities at Mapoon.

The UAICC is well aware of the needs of Mapoon's people, and within the financial constraints under which it operates it is working to help the people overcome their many problems.

Please be assured that the Assembly will not let the matter rest with a mere apology.

— Rev Gregor Henderson,
General Secretary, UC Assembly.

Take Christ out of Christmas

Many years ago churches promoted the slogan "Put Christ Back Into Xmas".

The time has surely come to "take Christ out of Christmas".

Let us vacate the commercial stable and leave an empty manger.

Let the churches select a new place in the ecclesiastical calendar for the birth of Jesus. If we have Pentecost and Trinity Sundays, why not an Incarnation Sunday?

If Christians would celebrate the Word becoming flesh, let's try some

time other than the crazy commercial season.

Let's take Christ out of Christmas.
— Tim O'Dwyer,
Macgregor, Qld.

Concern over threats to hospital chaplaincy

I am very concerned by the threatened reduction in staff and associated problems with chaplaincy services to hospitals in Queensland.

A number of studies have shown that hospitalisation is often a time of stress as well as a time of re-evaluation of life's achievements and goals. For these reasons, and others, Hospital Chaplaincy deserves a high priority for funding.

There is already a shortage of hospital chaplaincy staff. In Brisbane hospitals, for example, the case-load for many hospital chaplains seems overwhelming compared with other health professionals.

The situation for hospital chaplaincy seems critical. There is an urgent need for a review of the organisation of hospital chaplaincy services in this state and substantial support from the people and officers of the Church.

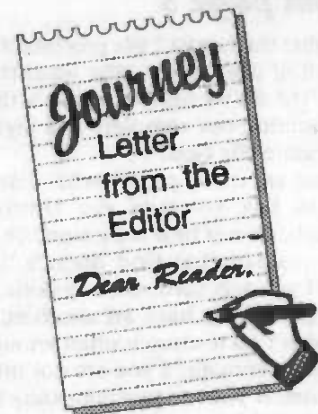
— Peter J. Ravenscroft,
Hawthorne, Qld.

An open letter to Simon Moglia

Dear Simon,

Thank you for your courage and integrity in 'coming out' to the South Australian Synod. We've not read your article but the comments in letters in *Journey* are enough to make it clear that you have struggled to understand and live the gospel. This struggle is similar to our own — members of Cross Section — and to many thousands of others within the Uniting Church.

Cross Section is a support organisation for gay men and lesbians and their friends within the Uniting Church, and each of us has a story to tell of our experience of the grace of God. It saddens us that many people in our situation have been hurt by a 'gospel' which says "our acceptance by God is dependent on obeying every letter of the law (assuming we can all agree *Continued page 6* ▶



It's that time of year again. That is, when editors pretend its actually three weeks from today and wish their readership a happy and meaningful Christmas.

It's also the time when we finish the December edition and realise, with a huge sigh of relief, that the next deadline is two months away, instead of one. You've no idea what a difference that makes to our state of mind over Christmas!

It's also traditionally a time of looking forward to good things that will happen next year. There's no shortage of excitement when we look at the events Australian Christians have planned in 1991. The National Christian Youth Convention in January, the World Council of Churches 7th Assembly in February, the triennial Uniting Church Assembly in July. The journalists are licking their lips with anticipation.

But for Journey, the future is uncertain. Decisions made at the NSW Synod in October will mean a change in format over the next year for Journey. That's all we can tell you at this stage — it will be early next year before things are clear. The staff of Journey has valued your support throughout 1990. Thanks, see you in 1991.

— Andrew Demack

• LETTERS •

From page 5

on what the law is." We proclaim the gospel of liberation — the word that says "the sin we need to repent is that of doubting our complete and joyful acceptance by God."

There are many people who, listening to the voice of the Uniting Church, do not hear the gospel. They hear instead that God doesn't like you if you are: divorced, alcoholic, if you gamble, or have an abortion, if you don't go to church often enough or neatly enough, if you are not middle class, if you are psychiatrically ill, if you are homosexual, if you are female, if you have the wrong job, the wrong skin colour, wrong language or culture, or if you use drugs.

We have been encouraged by your act of breaking the silence, and look forward to more open and searching exploration of the renewing activity of God in the lives of people of all sorts. This activity has never and will never be fully understood.

— Elizabeth Ramage and Des Perry,
on behalf of Cross Section.

Fervour for Christian principles 'admirable'

As I read the letter 'Repent and sin no more' (October *Journey*), I wondered what letters to the editor would have been like at the turn of the century, when "the devil's children" — left handers — were being debated. What do we do when research is showing that homosexuality is an identity given at birth or shortly thereafter?

Such fervour for Christian principles in this October letter is, however, commendable. I trust the same fervour applies when it comes to loving as Christ loved — with the kind of love that attracts sinners. I wonder how many parishes can boast that the homosexuals among them can say they feel loved.

— Elizabeth Teece,
Enmore, NSW.

On tongues

For a long time now it has come to my attention we don't need wars to destroy one another, we don't even need a weapon. We all have a weapon

which when used in the wrong way can completely destroy a person's life. It can be so sharp it can cut a person to pieces in a minute. What is this weapon that is so powerful — it is none other than the tongue.

How often have we said "I'm going to tell him/her exactly what I think of them, who do they think they are" we go ahead and give them a piece of our mind and feel very proud of ourselves for doing it, but what have our words of anger done to that person, how have they hurt.

We have often heard it said "Your know exactly where you stand with that person, they tell you straight off the shoulder, they don't muck around, you know exactly what they think", but at what price to another human being?

Stop and think, can you remember someone saying something to you that has affected your life. How often have we said or heard people say to children or to one another, "You will never amount to anything". "You are just plain lazy and no good". "You're just like your father/mother, stupid". You put on a couple of stone and people say "Gee you're putting on the weight" so you dive for the diet books and pills while your self esteem dives down. "Sit down and be quiet, you don't know what you're saying", so you sit and in the end you find it very hard to talk to people. "You have no talent, you wouldn't know how to do anything if you tried" so you just don't try, the list just goes on and on.

I have a saying that goes "It's better to build children than to repair adults". Does it really hurt us to say "Look, we are proud of you, it doesn't worry us if you never become important so long as you are happy, we love you for you."

Does it take more time to encourage someone than to pull them down, we are so ready to take someone down and so slow to PRAISE them.

So next time before we say something hurtful let us stop and think "how would I feel if that was said to me". We get so angry about the violence in the world and yet every second every day someone is being destroyed by a word of anger or malice.

— Kathy Wallis,
Neranwood, Qld.

Dangers of alcohol

It has come to my attention that the South Australian Synod has recently described alcohol as "a gift of God's creation which may be accepted and enjoyed with thanksgiving."

In Australia, one in every five deaths were estimated to be caused by drugs in 1986. Alcohol is responsible for the majority of drug-caused deaths in young persons (73 per cent in the 15-34 age group).

Alcohol is by far the most socially disruptive drug of all. It is responsible for 54 per cent of separations and lengths of stay for drug-caused conditions in hospitals.

When we consider that government revenue from alcohol is \$2.8 billion, which with tobacco represents about five percent of total revenue, it is clear that the government has become heavily involved with the two 'best selling drugs'. When we also consider that alcohol was a factor in half of all traffic fatalities, a third of homicides, and a fifth of suicides, it is also clear that our society pays an immense price in the costs of alcohol-induced conditions, as well as in human misery and family dislocation.

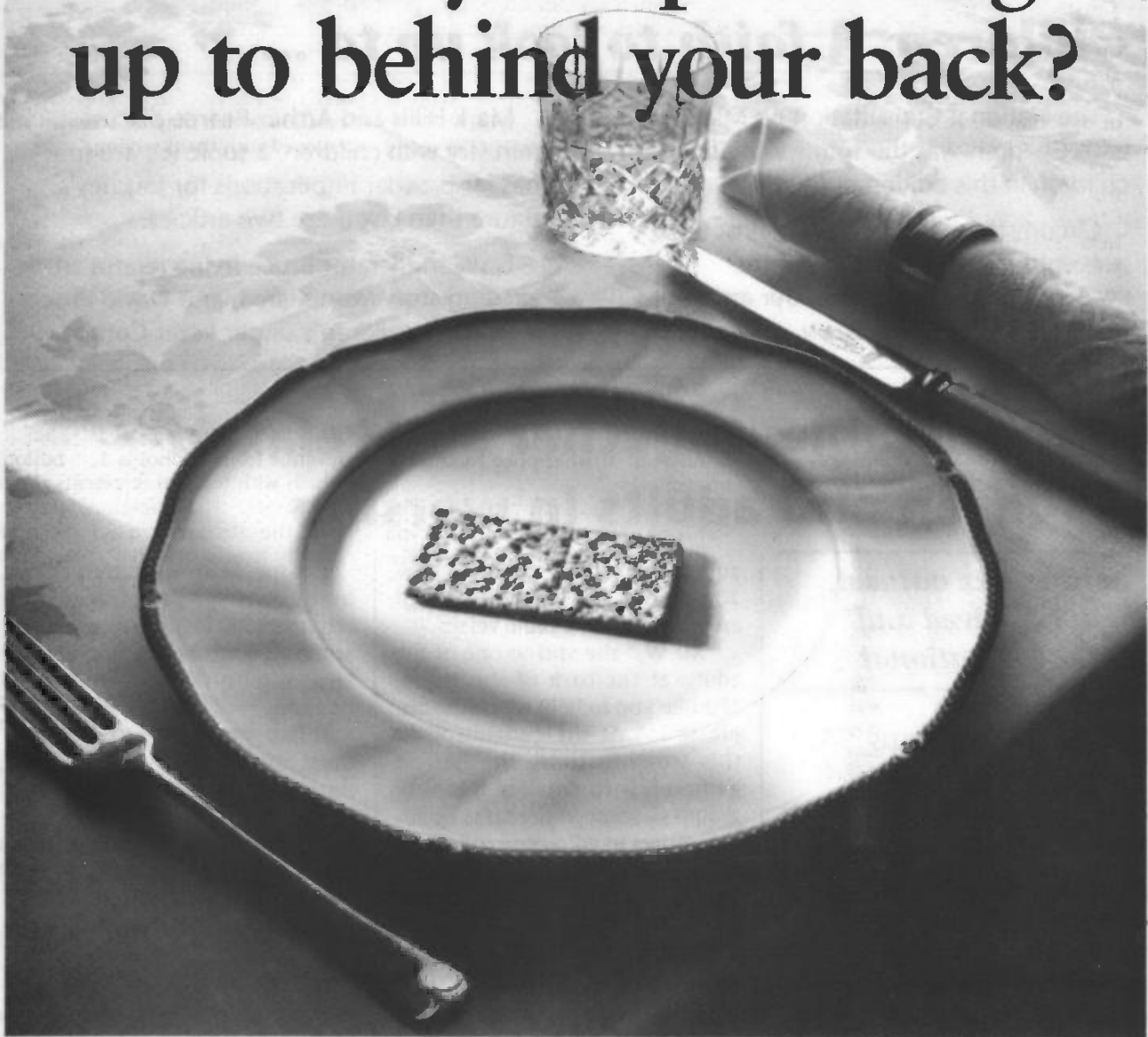
I think we may be forgiven for thinking that the statement of the South Australian UC is most unfortunate. In logic the same statement could be made about heroin, which is derived from the poppy and is also a 'gift of God's creation'.

Instead of granting its imprimatur to the consumption of alcohol, the Church should proclaim its dangers.

It is salutary to realise that it is in the family context that most children are introduced to drug-taking behaviour, particularly with regard to alcohol. Drug use is a learned behaviour. People in the church who favour the consumption of alcohol must realise that they are the role models for their children. On the other hand, the family is also where the Church has a great deal of influence. The community of Christians with a raft of connections in family care groups, schools, political parties, social bodies, business and the civil service can be a powerful influence on the opinion makers in the community.

— John Purches,
Seaforth, NSW

What do your parents get up to behind your back?



Parents, being parents, don't always like to admit they're not coping as well as they have in the past.

So your elderly mother probably won't mention that she rarely prepares a proper meal, because shopping is becoming a burden. Or that she is becoming a little unsteady on her feet.

And you may only find out when it's too late.

Which is why it's worth talking to your parents about "The Gandel Alternatives."

They will discover renewed comfort and security living in a luxurious, fully serviced apartment.

And you'll find peace of mind knowing they're professionally cared for by our friendly, supportive staff.

In addition to meals and domestic chores being taken care of, nursing assistance is also available twenty-four hours a day.

So no matter what your parents get up to,

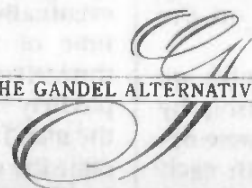
they'll always have someone to fall back on.

Pittwater Palms Retirement Village, 82 Avalon Parade, Avalon 2107. Phone 918 9000. Fernbank Retirement Village, Fernbank St. Ives, 2-8 Kitchener Street, Cnr Mona Vale Road, St. Ives 2057.

Phone 449 8266.

Mosman Grove Retirement Village, Cnr Ourimbah Road and Brady Street, Mosman 2088. Phone 960 3577.

THE GANDEL ALTERNATIVES



Ross Bing Swallow 5448

Children: A faith to look up to ...

The National Consultation on Ministry with Children was the spur for the focus on children in this edition of *Journey*.

Circumstances conspired against us to prevent *Journey's* coverage of the consultation, however, and our article has been delayed until February.

Mark Hillis and Arthur Pearce discuss ministry with children, a topic we are sure has far broader implications for *Journey's* future than just these two articles.

NSW Moderator Bruce Irvine relates an exciting story from Kiama, and David Busch interviews children's singer Peter Combe.

Comfortable, together and relaxed — children and adults in worship

Bellingen is natural, non-contrived and inter-generational

By MARK HILLIS

Walking into the church building I was greeted by a teenage boy. He took my name and introduced me to some people of my own age. The same boy later brought me a card with my name on it and invited me to pin it on if I wished. As I did, others introduced themselves in readiness for the service of worship which was to commence at 9.30am.

There was a choice of seating: individual chairs, or large scatter cushions on the brown-carpeted floor. I chose a chair. There were at least 70 young people and adults together in the building, some on chairs, others on the floor.

For the next 45 minutes we were led in an act of worship by children and adults who were obviously comfortable with each other, relaxed, and yet quietly

authoritative. For example, the 10-year-old girl who introduced an activity with a Bible verse:

"Mr W," she said to one of the adults at the back of the group, "I'd like you to help me with this, please ..." At the conclusion of this worship time, the people gathered into smaller learning groups — some in the same building, others in adjoining rooms, or outside. There were discussion groups and classes formed around Living Faith materials and other study resources. I was invited to join one of the adult learning groups.

One of the adults in this group told me how he came to be there. For some time he had been dropping his children off at the 'Sunday school'. After several Sundays he began to wait around for the children instead of driving home, and would spend this time talking with other parents. These parents eventually decided to stay for a time of worship and learning themselves. No one could tell me precisely how it all began, but for the man I was speaking with it became the way to a new-found faith for himself as well as his family.

For me, as an education officer in the NSW synod, it was great to see, there in Bellingen, a natural and non-contrived example of intergenerational worship and learning.

It happens elsewhere, too. Yet, most often, in my experience, during special events through which we discover the richness of each other's gifts and insight across the age groups. Special events, however, don't necessarily change regular patterns of worship.

I have worked with parishes and congregations who have proved to themselves year after year that the gifts of leadership and the fruits of learning are available to all. The children and adults who together lead prayers and singing, or who prepare a dramatic illustration, are relieved to discover that their involvement does not have to be a 'performance' or a cute display. This is the pathway to change: getting used to being together more often, and encouraging the genuine acts of worship which arise from these times. ■

Working alongside kids

Rev Arthur Pearce has been working on programs for children's ministry over the past four years. Queensland will lose him to NSW in January so *Journey* asked him to share some of his reflections on working with kids.

"How did I get involved in children's ministry?"

I guess it all began when I was a kid in the church. I didn't think much of it ... having to wear uncomfortable clothes, a tie, lace up shoes in summer and listening to long sermons, and what seemed like longer prayers. I took more notice of what Sunday School teachers were, rather than what they taught.

As a Sunday School teacher:

When I was 17 the Sunday School Superintendent said: "We want you to be a Sunday School teacher, Arthur," as I arrive late to the senior Sunday School class. "Here are your books and there is your class," he said as he steered me towards a group of wild-eyed 10-year-old boys. I was ready neither personally or emotionally, but I hung in there for several years. I



don't think I taught them much as far as book learning went, but some relationships were formed.

I never attended a teacher training event until I was in my mid-twenties. It was a case of "teaching as you were taught" which sometimes worked and sometimes didn't. During this time I came to the conclusion that teaching children about the Christian faith is not just about feeding ideas into their minds. Some of the best lessons I taught were when we got to talk about real life rather than just the theoretical side of Christianity.

Understanding Children:

All this began to make much more sense when I began studies towards the ordained ministry. I learned and was excited by theories of child development. I believe the Joint Board of Christian Education's "Christian Life Curriculum" was the best we've ever had.

It took child development seriously and sought to teach Christianity in creative ways which addressed the whole person. But many people in the church couldn't handle it. "I gave it away," said one disgruntled teacher of a senior youth class in a church where I was minister, "because it wanted me to talk about sex with the young people."

Continued page 10►



Children in Worship:

I have always tried to make at least some of Sunday worship meaningful for the children who attend. I became dissatisfied early in my ministry with the kind of "children's address" which moralises Christianity and which the kids often don't understand. It is so easy to get laughs out of children in worship, but I don't think that's what Jesus meant when he said "Let the children come to me and do not hinder them".

One of the biggest milestones came for me when Stan Stewart's report on "The Child in the Church" was released in the early 70's. I can remember working on the implications of the report with a group of people in the parish where I was minister. We decided it wasn't good enough just to have children in worship ... the nitty-gritty was including those kids in what went on there.

Will Our Children Have Faith?

I guess the greatest single stimulus to my thinking and development in the area of ministry with children was the visit of John Westerhoff to Australia in 1980. Westerhoff, described by some as a "pesky prophet" really helped me to focus upon the total influence of the faith community in helping children grow into faith. For Westerhoff, the big issue is giving children meaningful involvement in the total life of the "community of faith".

This is something I have strongly promoted, (and I hope modelled), during my eleven years as a Christian Education Officer. It is something I will continue to advocate as I move on into another aspect of ministry.

One of the rewarding and exciting ways I have participated in

Kiama kids cause of excitement

By NSW Moderator,
BRUCE IRVINE

Already, in my first month of office, I have discovered exciting things God is doing in the church. One of these is the Kiama Kids' Club.

Five years ago, Kiama's Sunday School was in the doldrums. Only a handful of children turned up each Sunday. Teachers were frustrated.

The elders consulted with a children's crusade organisation who gave them a lot of good ideas. This group emphasised to the elders the importance of regularly challenging children to "make a decision for Christ" in order to bring about the required change in their lives.

In a painful but deliberate decision, the elders decided to close the Sunday School and begin a weekday Kids' Club, with quite a different emphasis. The decision was painful because the elders had to choose between an approach of

'pressure for decisions' or 'compassion and community', with an occasional challenge.

Four years down the track, 100 children of all denominations (and none) arrive at the Kiama UC at four o'clock each Thursday afternoon. They have half an hour of games, then some afternoon tea. Music and story time based on Living Faith material follows. An evening meal is served, and the children then participate in all sorts of craft activities.

Each school term, some 50 adults are involved in various ways. Each adult knows his or her contribution is vitally important, be it leading worship, setting up tables, or showing a child how to hold a hammer.

The children have fun — and discover that these adults are real people, who love them. They are still challenged to think about faith issues, but this is not the dominant agenda.

What is dominant is love. ■

the advocacy of children's involvement in worship is through working with a dedicated team at national level in producing publications such as "Living Faith and the National Policy on Children's Ministry."

There is still much to do, but I believe "the best is still to come."

The Action Today:

Camping, the inclusion of children in worship, and Kid's Clubs are three areas where great things are being done. There is the potential for more to be done — for a tremendous increase in ministry with children. Sunday schools are going through a difficult patch, but again there is

great potential for outreach and nurture.

I believe children's ministry like no other ministry has the potential to reach out into the community. But leaders and teachers have to be prepared to grow. The issues of child abuse, family breakdown, poverty and AIDS cannot be ignored. Our ministry with children must seek to address these issues and the needs they create in the lives of people of all ages.

Ministry with children is not just doing nice things with cute kids. It's about being there with them and about letting them minister to us ... if only we will let them. ■

Calypso rhythms replacing Rudolph in Combe's carols

By DAVID BUSCH

Listen carefully to what your children are singing this Christmas. Rudolph, herald angels, bells that jingle, and first noels could be replaced with a calypso song about the inn-keeper's lament ("sorry, we're chock-a-block")... an action song where everybody says "ping" ... catchy tunes conveying seasonal greetings ... or nativity ballads to swing, rock and an assortment of other rhythms.

The new arrivals come from the pen of Adelaide's Peter Combe — star of ABC Radio's "Ticklepot" and of numerous ABC-TV video clips, who, with five top-selling albums in eight years, is arguably Australia's most popular children's song-writer.

Combe shuns the patronising pattern of simple tunes and nursery rhyme lyrics that traditionally has passed as children's music. His songs are as carefully crafted and skilfully engineered as those targeted at more mature audiences, and the recipe has paid off with over 200,000 records sold.

His sixth release, "Christmas Album", contains 16 new songs for the festive season. They're all Combe originals, stamped with his inimitable combination of talent and exuberance.

The album has been released by ABC Records to coincide with Peter Combe's National Christmas Tour, involving over fifty concerts in all states over Novem-



Peter Combe ... "Christmas speaks to my own optimistic nature."

ber-December.

The first reaction of those who know of Combe's zany bent through albums (and video clips) of the likes of "Toffee Apple", "Spaghetti Bolognese", "Newspaper Mama" and "Chopsticks", could be to fear for the safety of something as sacred as Christmas in the hands of such an artist.

Will the birth of Christ emerge

unscathed, or will it join Humpty-Dumpty, computer games, wobbly front teeth and grass-munching sheep as a subject of musical frivolity or engaging parody?

The truth is, Combe professes a deep love and respect for Christmas and to that extent, he says, this album represents a serious side to him that has not

Continued page 12▶

Combe's carol
From page 11

emerged previously.

"Christmas is a very special time of year for me," he says. "It's a time to take stock of things, to look at what's important in my life, review what I'm doing.

"Almost all people — even those who say they're not religious — are affected by Christmas in some way, through the way they celebrate it or what it represents.

"I love all the traditions associated with Christmas, but it's also the optimism and hope that speaks to my own optimistic nature."

That optimism and hope arise from the story of Jesus' birth, a story which Combe regards with reverence. Eight songs on the "Christmas Album" substantially recount the nativity narratives.

"The birth of Jesus and what it represents gives rise to the season of hope and optimism for the world which Christmas is," he says — but he shies away from expounding further on his theology of Christmas.

"I don't believe it's totally explainable — there's a sense of mystery and awe at the heart of Christmas which I think ought to be left to speak for itself."

Combe was raised in an active Methodist family — his parents are now involved at Beaumont UC in Adelaide — and says while he no longer attends church "it doesn't stop me having strong feelings about God."

"I strongly believe in something else apart from what we can see around us — it can be found



'I suppose I'm more agnostic in my feelings about Easter — you can really only look at Easter through fairly religious eyes.'

in nature, in beauty, in people. People can call it what they like; I'm happy to call it God."

He acknowledges that having released a Christmas album, and having appeared in the nationally-televised Carols by Candlelight in Sydney last year, there is the danger that people will see him as something he is not — "either a fundamentalist Christian or a secular person who regards Christmas as merely a time of fun, neither of which is true".

He has two hopes for the album — "that it be seen as expressing the tremendous optimism I feel about Christmas, and that children and families allow some of these songs to take their place among the more traditional Christmas music."

There is little doubt that the latter will happen.

The catchy opening song, "Happy Christmas To You", is receiving airplay on ABC-TV as a

video-clip and can be heard in schoolyards. At least three others are outstanding — "Rejoice, Rejoice", "Tell Me The Story" and "Christmas Eve" — as are two which have appeared on earlier records and are repeated here — "Fear Not For I" and "O Little One".

The overall variety of styles and themes — and the excellent presentation involving 14 musicians, six children's choirs and other back-up vocalists — places this album firmly in the pattern of his earlier successes.

Combe's future plans include a televised concert, a children's musical, a live album, a tour of the USA, and overseas releases of his material.

He will also be represented in the new book of children's songs being compiled for the Joint Board of Christian Education, to be called "God Gives 3".

But the future is unlikely to include any follow-up to the Christmas theme with, say, an Easter album — even though theologians might argue that the one only makes sense because of the other.

"I suppose I'm more agnostic in my feelings about Easter — you can really only look at Easter through fairly religious eyes," he says.

"You couldn't do it without pigeon holing yourself. I would be labelled as a religious children's song-writer.

"There isn't much at Easter to be funny or light about, and I couldn't manufacture the same depth of feeling for Easter that I have for Christmas." ■

What are they all going to do in Canberra, anyway?

A group of Christians sits down together in Canberra, Australia. It's as close as you'll get to a delegation from the world Church. While they meet — God forbid — war rages in the Persian Gulf.

What do they do?

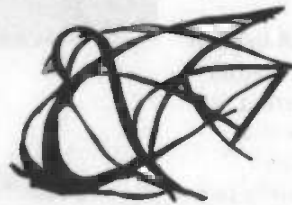
World Council of Churches Assemblies happen in particular places at particular times. And though the principles of the ecumenical movement may appear substantially unchanged since the first shebang in Amsterdam, 1948, that Assembly is remembered for chilly exchanges which accompanied the escalating 'cold' war between east and west. Times do change.

It's also worth noting the exclusive theme of that gathering: 'Man's Disorder and God's Design' — something a sociologically sounder WCC might wish it could rephrase.

But if world affairs come February are guesswork, some of the key questions for the Assembly are not so hard to predict. Symbolised by the souveniring of the Berlin Wall, the substantial changes in Eastern Europe will offer the meeting plenty to grapple with.

Does the gospel's 'freedom' translate into 'free market'? Do we welcome our comrades into the oppressions of greed, materialism and inequity?

Along with its first self-made millionaires, Eastern Europe will now accommodate sharp jumps in job loss and cost of living. It is the churches who will largely



soak up the social fall-out. Yet the same churches will want to affirm, with the rest of the world, the victory of hope that produced new democracy.

A guide for Assembly participants, the WCC publication *Resources for Sections* puts the churches' consideration this way: "We cannot run away from the reality of poverty, yet the churches are fast becoming part of the culture of consumerism."

Once voices of independence and catalysts for change, will Eastern Europe's churches now buy into the system, and enjoy the comforts of compromise?

Many in Australia seem troubled by their churches' apparent self interest in the use and accumulation of resources. They are not alone. Under the sub-theme 'Giver of Life — Sustain Your Creation', the WCC will challenge its member churches to review the use of money, property, etc, "in order to adopt life-sustaining practices." That may mean investments which require steps in faith, rather than cold-blooded

analysis of security and guaranteed returns.

This self analysis will overlap into a second sub-theme: 'Spirit of Truth — Set us Free'. How can the church announce liberation in Christ unless it presents the "necessary credentials"?

Sustenance of creation will naturally lead the Assembly to consider pollution, land degradation, the greenhouse effect, and so on. But to these another issue must be added which places this meeting firmly in the '90s — genetic engineering. "The capacity to manipulate directly the very building blocks of life" presents an ethical double edge — the promise of benefits to agriculture and disease prevention, as against a frightening potential for manipulation and control. What should the Church be saying to governments and the scientific community?

As it listens to the 'spirit of truth', the WCC — itself replete with electronic communications whiz-bangery — will consider the effects of a new 'cultural environment', largely established through mass media. Controlled by monopolies, the media industry has largely ignored the 'cultural rights' of many nations and regions, such as the Arab world. Should the Church support alternative media, push for restrictive legislation, buy its own network?

Two historically oppressed groups — women and indigenous people — will warrant special focus. Sponsors of a decade of

Continued page 14▶

A moment of suspense at WCC opening

There'll be a moment of suspense for World Council of Churches representatives who approach the worship tent where the WCC Assembly begins in February: will they be allowed in?

The answer to that question will be made from the front stage of the tent, where, already seated, Aboriginal elders and clergy will consider the request, carried to them on a message stick.

Should it seem like a fair thing, an elder will beckon to the waiting WCC procession, who may then enter.

In this act, as throughout the 15-day gathering, it will be abundantly clear to all who participate that they are on Aboriginal land. Caretakers and custodians, it is the aboriginal people who will finally permit the event, and purify it according to custom.

All who enter for the opening worship will pass through a shroud of smoke — believed to cleanse the mind, body and spirit. On each succeeding morning, it will be a didgeridoo which summons faithful travellers from across the planet to worship.

The work of Aboriginal artists will have continual prominence, but especially so during a plenary session devoted to the telling of the Aboriginal story. Played in chronological scenes, the story will be accompanied by vivid images of dreamtime, invasion, genocide, alienation, lost identity, heroism, deaths in custody, and the pride and dignity of the 1988 Australia Day march. Significantly, the narrative will conclude with a plea for the future in which other indigenous peoples will be called on to the stage.

The effects of invasion on today's Aboriginal women and youth will be explored at special pre-Assembly gatherings. During the course of the Assembly proper, Aboriginal Australia will retain a high profile, with an art exhibition, gift shop, meeting tent, participatory ceremony and cultural concert.



Organiser Anne Pattel-Gray (*above*), who is head of the Australian Council of Churches' Aboriginal and Islander Commission, believes the world church will meet a formerly faceless people of deep and abiding faith.

She says the Assembly theme — 'Come, Holy Spirit: Renew the Whole Creation' — is uniquely understood by a people who implicitly connect the earth and its creator.

She prays that February 1991 will be the time that Australia's renewal begins, through the people who have carried its spirit since before memory.

"This is a time of possibility," she says. "Is God waiting for this moment to heal, renew, and set us free?" ■

From page 13

churches in solidarity with women, the WCC will reflect on the "discriminatory practices and oppressive church teachings" which continue to limit women's participation and value.

Australia's Aborigines are likely to inform discussions to a greater extent than any other group. Their struggle for justice will pro-

vide a focal point from which the claims of all indigenous peoples can be considered. It will be the following year, 1992, that marks the 500th anniversary of the conquest of the Americas. As the Assembly explores its third sub-theme, 'Spirit of Unity — Reconcile Your People', Christians will need to acknowledge that it is not enough to say "let's be friends" if they continue to enjoy the fruits of a stolen land, while their poor

'friends' look on from the sidelines.

The desire for reconciliation should bring challenge and controversy in other areas, notably in the encounter with peoples of other faiths. For the Assembly, the question is this: if the spirit goes where it wills, what function does it have in places where the name of Jesus is not acknowledged?

Continued page 15▶

From page 14



WCC secretary Emilio Castro

While it kicks that one around, another bridge, much closer to the family home, will also need to be crossed. It is a time of growth and vitality within the Pentecostal and charismatic streams, which place particular emphasis on the spirit's activity. Yet many of these churches are absent from the ecumenical fellowship — itself understood as a movement of the spirit.

The last of the sub-themes will call on the world's Christian community to examine its heart: 'Holy Spirit — Transform and Sanctify Us'. It is here that the world's poor are expected to challenge and enrich. What can be learned from the deep and unbreakable spirituality which so often accompanies poverty and oppression? And from base Christian communities which have arisen in these circumstances? How does an affluent church respond if its bounty is clearly not reward for its depth of faith?

With such a complexity of questions, this last from the WCC's guide-book may be the hardest of all: how do Christians deal with "the multitude of competing claims"?

— Barry Gordon ■

Canberra? I'll be there

By HELEN RICHMOND



The seventh Assembly of the World Council of Churches is only two months away — and I'll be going! We speak of belonging to the one universal Church but it is not every day that one actually has the opportunity to taste something of the real thing.

It is a privilege to represent the Uniting Church, but being a participant at a large ecumenical gathering can also be a little daunting. There will be a women's meeting prior to the Assembly. In part this will provide an opportunity to brief female delegates on the structure and dynamics of an Assembly to enable their increased participation. In other words, learning the ropes of how a WCC Assembly runs!

Many people who have attended ecumenical gatherings, ever since that great World Missionary Conference in Edinburgh in 1910, have found the experience life changing. God has a funny way of using the experiences and opportunities that come our way to call us to take new and risky steps of faith.

The agreement of churches in 1948 in Amsterdam to covenant together to form the WCC was one such risky step. We still do not know where this journey will lead us. Certainly the nature of 'covenant' is life giving but it also requires a costly surrender of autonomy.

In Australia, we have discussed

a treaty or covenant between the newcomers to this land and its original inhabitants. There is still a long way to go because of widespread indifference and ignorance.

One of my hopes for the Canberra Assembly is that this event will witness to the Australian community that there is a way towards healing of deep divisions and mistrust, although it is a costly road. Many Australians do not believe that the Church has anything to offer. At the same time many have lost hope and are cynical and despairing.

The Assembly, with its vibrant Christian witness, may, I hope, help Australians to realise that the Church is more surprising than they had imagined. I hope that what the Australian community 'overhears' about the Assembly will encourage people to re-evaluate the Christian message.

I also hope that the Canberra Assembly will add impetus to cooperation between the Australian churches. Often we are so busy with our own denominational agenda that working together is very low on the list of priorities. My experience as a parish minister at St Marys, NSW, has made me realise how difficult it is to get out of a denominational frame of reference.

And, of course, I look forward to new friendships, rich worship experiences and stimulating discussion. My hope is that all those who share in this Assembly will experience the gift of the spirit bringing fresh ways of seeing things and a new energy to take up the tasks ahead. Like a refreshing wind sweeping through a dusty land, 'Holy Spirit — Transform and Sanctify Us' ■

World bible officer: crucial action time

As one of the United Bible Societies four world officers, Rev Phillip Oliver spends 25 percent of his time on the move.

He is undoubtedly in the hot seat and says he certainly finds his role as a liaison person across the global scene a challenging one ... "I am in this job with history in the making" ... he acknowledges this with a relaxed and affable demeanour which goes a long way in explaining his success in senior liaison positions.

He elaborated: "We are all caught up with history in the making and we must all be aware of what role we are playing in this." Mr Oliver is highly conscious of how the church is seen to be responding and of the right action being taken as the "floodgate" widens ...

The complete lifting of restrictions on the importation of Bibles to Eastern Europe and the USSR has resulted in an overwhelming demand for the Scriptures.

Journey spoke to Mr Oliver following his address at the Queensland Bible Society's 135th annual general meeting held in Brisbane in late October.

In his address Mr Oliver highlighted the many opportunities we have at this point of history "...never before have we had an opportunity to help Eastern Europe and the USSR at such a crucial moral/spiritual turning point. Each individual can help," he said.

Mr Oliver explained that through the Bible Society's "Operation Family" scheme

anyone can help provide two families per month with a Bible, a children's Bible and/or a New Testament for outreach by pledging \$15 a month for four years.

"Operation Family" is part of one of the largest projects ever undertaken by the United Bible Societies in a campaign to raise more than \$80 million to finance the production, shipment and distribution subsidies on more than 30 million Scriptures to Eastern Europe and the USSR.

At the time of the interview Mr Oliver was planning his second visit to Russia on November 10 with his main objective of encouraging the formation of national bible society bodies. To this aim he will be talking to a cross-section of church leaders which he finds "a privilege and an exciting part of his job."

This "cross-section" includes the Pentecostal and Catholic Church. The UBS office in England reported an unexpected confirmation of the rapid pace of change from a Bulgarian Pentecostal mission representative, Tihomir Tanev. "I believe we are witnessing the start of a revival in Bulgaria, a turning to Christ that is going to mean millions of Bibles, not just thousands ... people are hungry for God and desperate to know more about the Bible," he said.

The deputy general secretary of the World Council of Churches, Todor Sabev, visited Bulgaria ear-



Rev Phillip Oliver: much we can do

lier this year. He noted plans for printing of the Bible in Bulgarian, a child's edition of the Bible, a new ecumenical Bible translation, and the setting up of a Bible Society.

Mr Oliver confirmed the Pentecostal church was growing at a much faster rate than mainstream churches. He elaborated: "They place a certain emphasis on being warm and personal in an impersonal age ... this is very attractive to many people."

He also believes most churches can learn from Pentecostal churches and have some adapting to do.

In mid-October representatives of the Romanian Eastern Orthodox Reformed and Lutheran Church met in Sibiu, Romania. They agreed to set up a Bible Society, and considered a proposal for an ecumenical translation of the Bible into Romanian. Also on the agenda was religious

From page 16

education in state-run schools, the return of church property 'arbitrarily seized by the (former) communist totalitarian regime', and an end to restrictions on the use of church funds deposited in various banks.

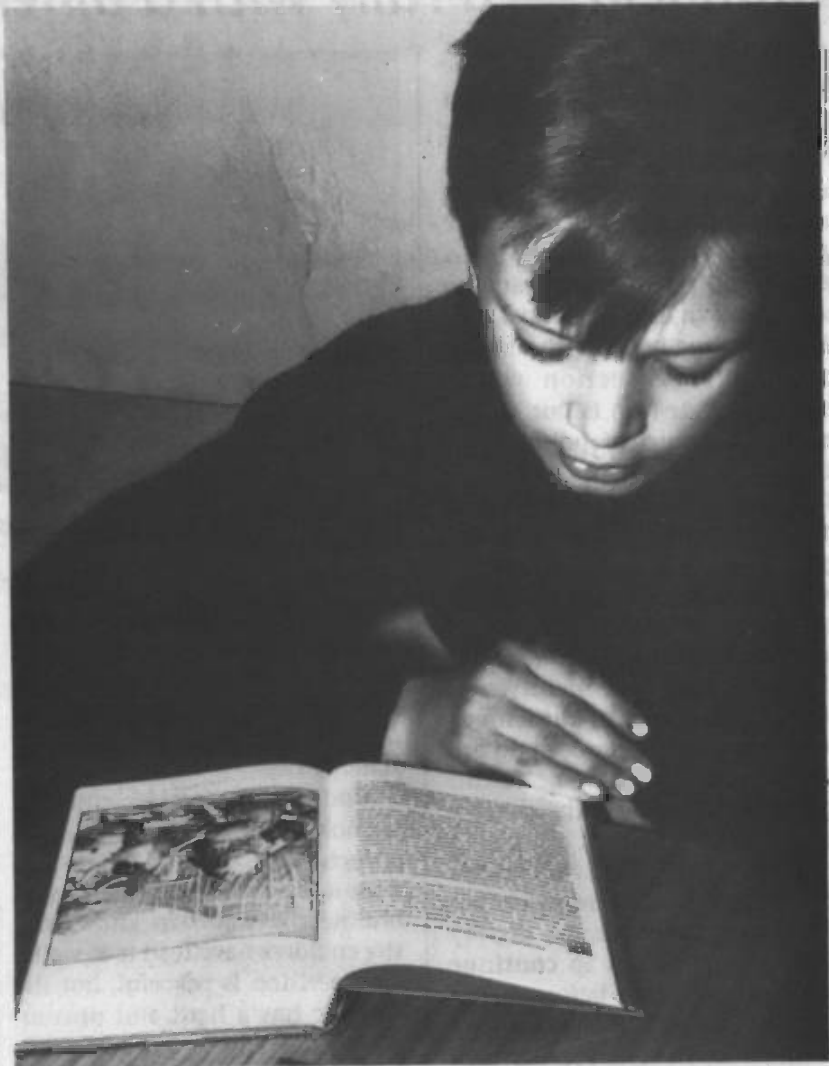
When *Journey* asked Mr Oliver what motivated him most he referred to the ongoing challenge of providing the scriptures to all people as the demand arises. One of his most moving moments on the job was seeing a whole busload of Russians being given Bibles and seeing some of them weep over their gift ... "It's hard to believe how hungry they are ... sometimes we have to keep pinching ourselves to believe it's for real ... they are so open and receptive."

"The irony is we live in a society where the Gospel is there for the taking but it is so lightly discarded ... what people in other countries have been imprisoned for, we don't want. We haven't had it tough."

Mr Oliver feels a great sadness for our "hardened, secular society." Part of his mission is for other countries to see God in our personal and national life ... "we must take the opportunity to show the world we are not so hardened and secular that we won't respond to needs about us as well as those overseas."

He said the most pressing present need for bibles came from Russia, for children's bibles in particular.

After USSR and Eastern Europe the greatest demand for bibles is coming from Tanzania in East Africa... "the people can't get enough spiritual food." Rev Oliver said current statistics predict Africa will be the most Christian country in the world by the year 2000.



A Russian boy engrossed in his Childrens' edition Bible.

When asked if he'd like to comment on Nelson Mandela's visit (who was in Sydney when *Journey* spoke to Rev Oliver) he said he saw a parallel between what Mandela had gone through and what some Christians are prepared to go through for the Gospel's sake. There is the same will to take a firm stand by our faith. Like Mandela we come out more liberated if we do not deny our faith but are prepared to suffer for it.

He said one of the most moving examples of an in-

dividual taking a stand as a Christian was that of a Chinese Roman Catholic Bishop. He spent 15 years in solitary confinement. So strict was the watch over him he wasn't allowed to move his lips in prayer. He kept his sanity by reciting the psalms in his mind. Today he harbours not a trace of bitterness in his heart and is committed to translation work.

"It all comes down to God, us and God's Word," said Mr Oliver.

— Lee Duncan ■

Mandela — a rally with a difference

It is strange to walk past all the hawkers of left-wing newsprint on the way to the Opera House forecourt to hear Nelson Mandela. Strange, because despite it being an obviously political rally, the gathering seems no more interested in Direct Action than the sunbakers in the botanical gardens. Strange because the multicultural cross-section which comes to hear him is not, in the main, made up of political activists.

Young they are — there is a notable absence of grey suits, and grey hair. Still, most would be welcome to dinner at your parents', and pick up the correct fork. To be honest — and this is the water-mark of inoffensiveness — most could even turn up at your church next Sunday and not rate a second look. Some of this can be explained by the evacuation of the UC's Pitt St offices.

So why do 30,000 Sydneysiders go? Perhaps because Mandela has shown such composure, dignity and determination to continue the cause he served before spending 27 years in jail. He shows no public resentment for his captivity. Not a bitter old man seeking retribution, Mandela instead shows up his oppressors by simply picking up the baggage he left, as if momentarily deflected into the wrong customs queue.

He has become a symbol of patience, knowing his enemies still maintain statutory control but no longer have anything near the power his name now commands.

On this occasion he points repeatedly to the focus of his people's struggle: "one person, one vote" — not, as is later reported through some media, "one man, one vote."



Faces from a distance, clenched fist salutes from the crowd ... Nelson Mandela in Australia.

The ANC's demand for equal voting rights for all South Africans is, he says, "the only way to establish a non-racial, democratic and united non-sexist state." Cheers.

Underscoring gender equality, he holds aloft the papers of his speech and acknowledges its author, a woman. Cheers. Someone nearby wants to know why she couldn't have read it as well.

The vision is peaceful, but the rhetoric has a hard and uncompromising edge. Mandela indicates that if the government is not prepared to honour its agreement to move towards equal voting rights, the ANC will revoke its suspension of the armed struggle and South Africa will be "on fire again." Loud cheers.

Were we there for the theatre, or to show solidarity with a righteous struggle? Perhaps a bit of both.

Although Nelson Mandela is the acceptable face of revolution, the throng is peppered with killjoys — Aborigines — who prick the comfort of the long-distance cause: What about our third-world living conditions?

What about our deaths in custody? These are poorly chosen party guests, and their impoliteness is met with shuffling feet and averted eyes.

Australia's indigenous people have liberties that South Africans do not. But while the ANC's guiding principle — one person, one vote — presents a world of possibilities to the people of South Africa, it is an academic freedom for Australia's Aborigines. As Anne Pattel-Gray, head of the Australian Council of Churches' Aboriginal and Islander Commission, would later point out, it was not a gratuitous public criticism, or a wave of the Aboriginal flag, that her people asked, it was an expression of solidarity. Here, as elsewhere, Mandela had agrieved the indigenous people by failing to connect his own people's struggle with the one he walked into. We can simply consider how it feels when you look from the pit of your own poverty while the champion comes, conquers, and carries away the cash jackpot.

— Ray Farley and Barry Gordon ■

Scene set for Toowoomba

2600 expected, are you one of them?

The scene has been set for the 2600 expected delegates to the 1991 National Christian Youth Convention. Delegates will be treated with enough entertainment and challenge to take them firing well into 1991.

The organisers have been working hard for the past two years to pull together the packed program of music, drama, displays, workshops, evening rallies led by US evangelist and social campaigner Tony Campolo, bible studies, simulation games ... you name it, they'll find it.

It will all be happening January 6-12 at Toowoomba Showgrounds with delegates being accommodated at various conference centres and sites around Toowoomba.

There is something for everyone to get excited about. For explorers of the creative there is the creative arts pavilion offering music, drama, dance, visual arts, craft and video activities and displays. Watch out for mime artist Dennis Clare.

There's "The Jungle" (Youth Ministry pavilion) which will offer the opportunity to deal with issues ranging from humour in working with youth to street-work and suicide. Fuzz Kitto will be prowling the premises.

The Aboriginal pavilion will be a centre for culture sharing with Aboriginal people sharing stories of their history and faith. There will be time to discuss issues of

ministry, the land and justice.

Then there's the Global Village for cross-cultural interchange from around the world. Approximately 300 delegates from overseas will be attending.

"The Shed" has been established to explore Christian responses to social justice and human needs issues.

"The Lighthouse" beckons all who want to go deeper into worship and prayer, and learn how to express their gifts more fully in worship.

Blow the mindset at the Church and Ministries pavilion where participants will have their present attitudes and concepts about the church and its ministries challenged. Assembly General Secretary, Gregor Henderson, will be

leading discussions.

Finally, there's "Lifesavers" — the pavilion of Mission & Evangelism ... here you'll meet up with professor Wrex Woolnought who is billed to expand your ideas on ministry and the church.

As you can gather, there will be plenty of action and choices.

And there will be plenty of nightlife rocking through to midnight including a beach party at "Lifesavers", coffee shops, bands and heaps more.

NCYC '91 T-shirts, sweatshirts, mugs and other merchandise can be ordered through the NCYC office, GPO Box 674, Brisbane, 4001. To make a late registration, hurry to the phone now, and dial (07) 870 8444. ■



CHRYSALIS:

A learning experience they won't forget

The young people who've been to Chrysalis rave about it - so much so it sounds more exciting than any rock concert, rugged football game, party and good night out - how could this be?

What could be more exciting than living it up as a young person?

Living it up at Chrysalis? Living it up with other young people who are discovering the incredible extent (no boundaries!) of the love and reality of God?

"You can't be serious," I can almost hear some young people say. Yet the young people who went to Chrysalis in August reported:

"What an example of Agape love from everyone! I hope I can help start Chrysalis in Queensland."

"A totally awesome experience. I will keep praying for Chrysalis. I need, and will give 12 hugs a day!"

"I was stunned by the unconditional love - and resulting acceptance by all the people of everyone present. I want to stay stunned and be a total servant of the God who loves without conditions."

"What an uplifting and incredible experience. I intend to fly in the Spirit!"

"In the three days I got to know and love everyone there more than I know other people I've seen for three years! I let go of all my bitterness and I now have a better relationship with our Father because the barrier is now down. I've been so blessed and I think all youth should go to Chrysalis. I'll never forget it."

Okay, okay ... so what is Chrysalis exactly?

Chrysalis is the youth version of Emmaus, a three-day fellowship retreat to learn more of the love of God and our own personal walk with Him.

Why call it Chrysalis? Chrysalis is the cocoon stage of the butterfly

and is used to represent the death, resurrection and new life found in Christ.

The Chrysalis weekends have been designed to encourage the young person to seek a dynamic friendship with God through Christ.

Day one centres on our reconciliation with God and letting go of all that stands between ourselves and God.

Day two focuses on our new life (resurrection) with Christ. The goal is to build a community of love and worship.

Day three is centred on the love of God which empowers each person to love and serve others in the name of Christ.

Rev Roy Cowin of Alstonville, NSW, has been giving half his ministry time to the program in 1990. He explained Chrysalis was an offshoot of the Emmaus Walks organised for adults.

It was the Emmaus Community of the Far North Coast (NSW) and the Presbytery which gave him the support to go ahead with the planning of a pilot weekend for youth at the UC centre at Ballina.

Like those who have participated in the Emmaus and Chrysalis weekends, Rev Cowin is keen to see the program adopted long term around Australia.

Emmaus has its origins in Spain as a Christian discipleship program. Known as Cursillo de Cristiandad (Spanish for "short course in Christianity") it was established in the 1940's and was primarily a Roman Catholic movement until the 1970's. As Catholic **21**▶



Celebrating the emergence of a butterfly cake at Chrysalis. Cutting the cake are spiritual helpers, Maggie Peereboom and Sue Banks.

centres started accepting applications from Protestants, efforts began among groups to make the Cursillo experience available to all Protestants.

In 1984 a team of 32 Americans came to Sydney, Australia to commence the Emmaus movement here. An ecumenical program, it is sponsored by the Uniting Church Board of Mission, NSW and Qld synods.

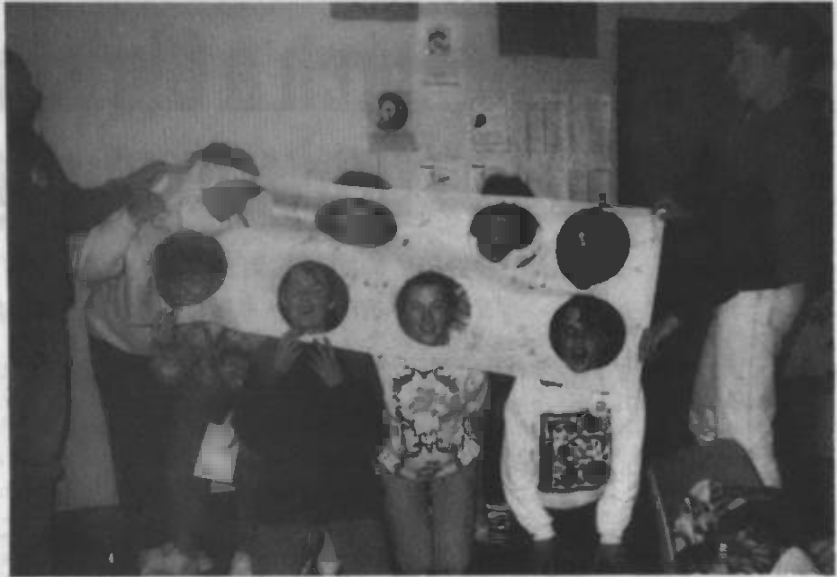
Why Emmaus? The Gospel of St. Luke records the risen Christ appearing to two friends who were journeying along the road from Jerusalem to Emmaus. The two friends were sharing their hearts' deepest concerns when Christ joined them. He explained the scriptures as they walked ... how it was ordained He should suffer for our sakes, be crucified and rise from the dead. When the two friends realised who they were talking to they rushed back to Jerusalem to tell the others.

And as one participant in Chrysalis said after the "walk" at Ballina: "The full realisation of who Christ is and the power of the Holy Spirit really hit me. I intend to spread the Word of Christ now."

For the first Chrysalis, leaders from each existing Emmaus community were invited to join the ministry team so they could see the potential of these weekends for young people. There were two leaders from Sydney, three from the mid-north coast community, two from Queensland and the others from parishes in the far north coast presbytery.

The maximum recommended number of participants is 37 and 37 young people gathered at Ballina from around NSW and Queensland.

Small group discussions, worship, recreation (with emphasis on group fun) and of course, fine food and fellowship were enjoyed



Just one of the many group activities you can expect at Chrysalis as this group of girls discovered at Ballina in August.



The whole mob of them line up for a group shot, recognise anyone?

by all. At two stages over the three days parents and sponsors were able to visit. Visitors came from as far as Orange, Sydney, Port Macquarie and Brisbane.

As Rev Cowin summed up: "The presence and leading of God in every detail of the weekend was awe-inspiring. No-one could doubt the reality of our Leader who arranged and blessed

everyone present, reminding us who was really in charge of this special gift to Australian youth."

Perhaps we should let Geoff Thomas (assistant lay director) have the last say: "The effect of Chrysalis is like attaching a spiritual turbo charger on each person. It is world changing stuff ... I'm going for it!" ■

Give your church a Christmas present - a chance to grow young again in 1991

Dynamic new video series shows you how to bring young families back into your church

Perhaps your church is growing old and grey. You haven't had a baptism for years. Your once-flourishing Sunday School has shrunk to a tiny remnant. The youth group died out long ago. And you're deeply concerned that your church could just wither away and die.

If so, you're not alone. Hundreds of churches in Australia and New Zealand are in the same position. But the situation is far from hopeless. Indeed, many of these older churches are growing younger again now - by attracting young families and children back into their worshipping life.

There's no magic formula. But it can be done. And *"The Greening of the Church"* - three 45-minute VHS videotapes, plus study books - shows how it can happen in your church.

This remarkable new video/study programme gives exciting examples of older churches growing younger again, through simple, achievable ideas. A 12-week study course helps you apply their experiences and insights to your own situation, and discover your own solutions.

If you're worried about your church's future, send for *"The Greening of the Church"* now. It is greatly helping many other greying churches. It could well provide the answers for you.



What Church leaders say

"Every local church should obtain a copy and study it."

REV DR SIR ALAN WALKER, *Principal*,
The Pacific College of Evangelism

"...many examples which will help any parish.. a tool.. a refreshing challenge.. will open windows of hope."

Rt REV NEIL CHURCHER, *Past Moderator*,
Presbyterian Church of New Zealand

"For congregations facing change, this video series is essential viewing."

REV DR. DEAN DRAYTON,
Board of Mission, Uniting Church in NSW



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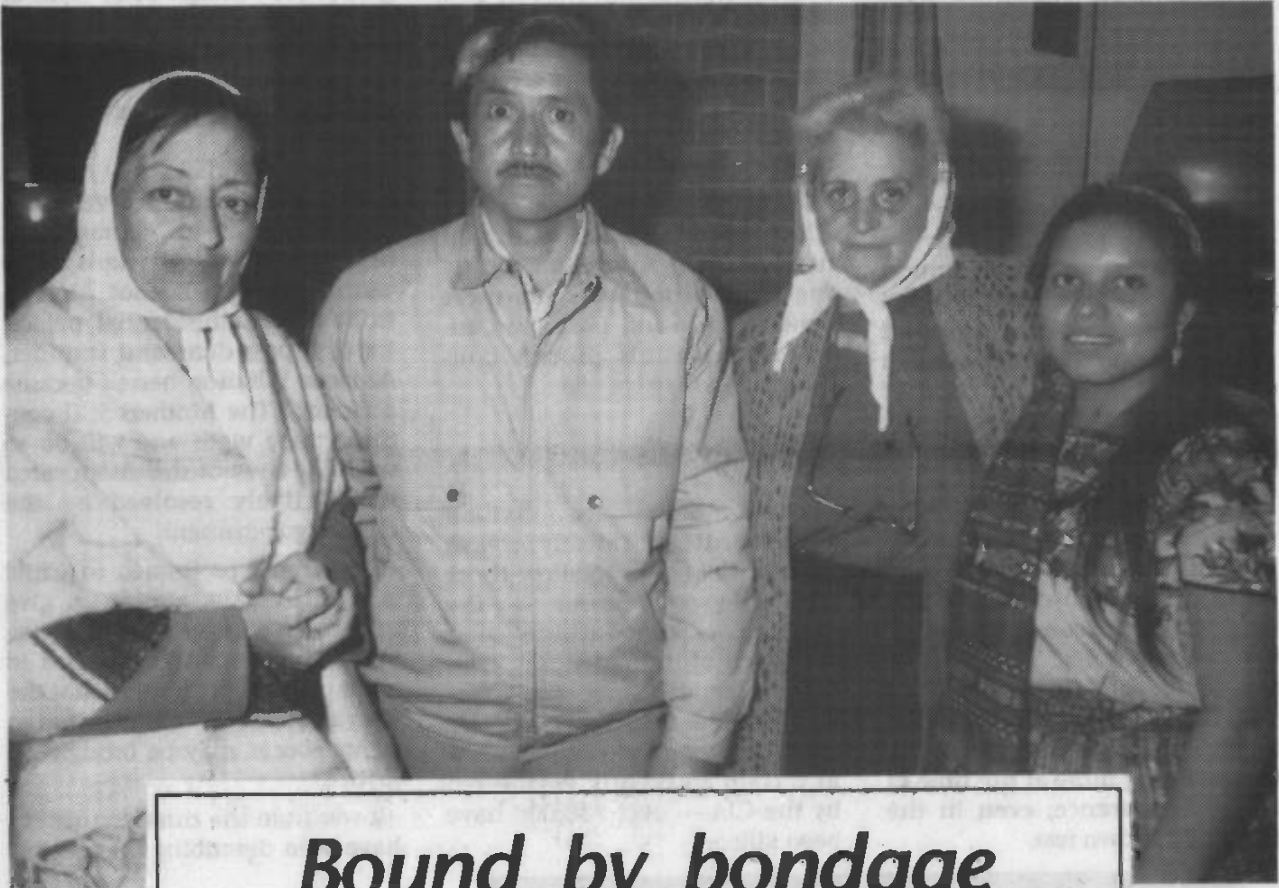
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• NSW NEWS •



Bound by bondage

During August representatives from human rights organisations in Latin America visited Australia. The visitors — from Guatemala, Chile, and Argentina — visited most of the major centres in Australia. The visit was partially sponsored by the Uniting Church through its 7% for Development Fund. One of the organisers, the Rev JOHN QUERIPEL from the community-based ministry in Newcastle, gave this report.

It was broad daylight, central Santiago, at the university.

A group of hooded men hustled a young student into a car. Bystanders turned their faces and scurried away. Such was the all-pervasive fear that had settled upon Chile, a fear that continued from 1973 to 1989 under the military dictatorship of General Augusto Pinochet.

That disappearance was only one of 35,000 which occurred during those bloody years but it is one which I know of, because I was privileged to stay with the

student's family during my recent visit to Latin America.

From the '70s onward, one word summed up the terror exercised by governments on their people. That word, 'desaparecido' (disappeared), became the most infamous of all words in the Spanish language. The passive form of the verb is used to indicate the passive role of the victims and the active role of the terror state in disappearing them.

These disappeared were taken from their homes, places of work

continued over



Bound by bondage (cont.)

or were picked up on the street by the death squads — thinly disguised elements of the military — placed in clandestine detention centres where they were detained incommunicado, tortured and usually executed. Their families would have no confirmation of what had happened and any attempts to follow up the disappearance would involve danger.

In nearly all cases such efforts were in vain, anyway. The very forces that would normally investigate such occurrences were a part of the process. Thus families are never able to resolve their grief by at least knowing what happened. Many also feel guilty for not doing more at the time of the disappearance, even in the face of their own fear.

What were the crimes of the disappeared? Usually they were the victims of having the wrong thoughts or being in an undesirable organisation, e.g a union, or farmers' organisation, or mixing with the wrong people. However, as the official report of the succeeding civilian government in Argentina said, one could be disappeared for anything.

While 35,000 disappeared in Chile, so did 35,000 vanish in neighbouring Argentina during the years of military rule there between 1976 and 1983. In Central America this process continues on a massive scale.

Cloak

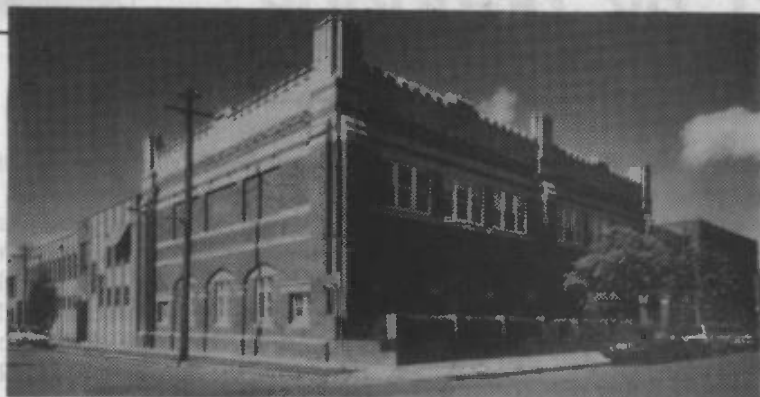
Where there are civilian governments they merely serve as a cloak, the better to allow those with the real power — the military — to continue their campaign of intimidation. Thus in Guatemala, since the overthrow of the democratic government of Jacobo Arbenz in 1954 — in a coup apparently engineered by the CIA — over 130,000 have been killed.

As the terror in these lands continued, the victims bound themselves together. In Argentina probably the most famous group, the 'Madres de la Plaza de Mayo' (Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo) formed, as those knocking on closed doors in vain searches gradually came to meet each other.

This at first small group, with its trademark of white scarves worn on members' heads, courageously began to hold weekly vigils in the central plaza in Buenos Aires in front of the presidential palace. Its first president and founder, Azucena Villaflor, herself became a victim. The Mothers still continue these vigils and will do so until the issue of the disappeared is effectively resolved by the civilian government.

Similar groups formed in Chile and Guatemala, aiming to give and receive support, to receive professional counselling, and to exert political pressure so that the perpetrators of these human rights abuses may be brought to justice.

It was from the three countries I have been describing that repres-



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entatives recently visited Australia to speak of the human rights situation. Telling their stories and appealing for support were Maria del Rosario Toj (Guatemala), Maria del Rosario Cerruti and Maria de las Mercedes Merono (Argentina), and Augusto Nahuel Pan (Chile).

The Uniting Church was able to assist this visit through its 2% for Development Fund. It also had further input — the Sydney meeting being chaired by the Rev Geoff Dorman, recently returned from five years in Chile, and the meeting in Newcastle being chaired by myself.

Delegates were able to meet with church and union leaders, and in Canberra with a group of parliamentarians and also the Depart-

ment of Foreign Affairs. Augusto Nahuel Pan, as a leader of the Mapuche indigenous people of Chile, was also able to meet with Aboriginal people in Sydney, Newcastle and central Australia.

Noticeable in each of the visitors was courage, which though considerable, could not completely mask the pain they each felt. Also noticeable was their clear-headed analysis of their respective situations. They spoke of the national security state which permitted no dissent within its order — an order imposed by the powerful oligarchies within those countries who themselves have access to the military.

U.S support

Because they are fiercely anti-communist, these oppressive powers are able to count on U.S support. This support is applied to the training of the military elite in counter-insurgency tactics, even including the use of torture. Those who do dissent within the state, including many in the church, are labelled 'communist'.

Thus labelled, they are open to be disappeared, detained, tortured and killed.

Since the order is one which benefits the rich of those lands it is usually the poor who dissent, and therefore suffer, from this state-directed apparatus of terror. Conditions continue to rapidly deteriorate, with widespread starvation even in Argentina — so recently an economic power. This has largely come about with increasing interest rates forcing higher repayments on debts which are very often built up by the military government in buying expensive armaments, building useless prestige structures, or for money simply salted away in overseas banks by corrupt officials.

Though the debt can never be met, international banks are still demanding repayment. Because of steepening interest rates, debts continue to grow, despite massive repayments. In order to expedite repayment governments, often under the directions of the

continued over

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Bound by bondage (cont.)

International Monetary Fund, cut social services like health, education and housing programmes.

Thus having paid for the weapons that oppressed them, the poor are forced to pay again. It was remarkable that our visitors could still remain hopeful for the future.

Perhaps their hope is best summed up in part of a human rights liturgy from Chile:

I believe that behind the mist the sun waits,

I believe that beyond the dark night it is raining stars,

I believe in secret volcanoes in the world below.

I believe that this lost ship will reach port,

They will not rob me of hope, it will not be broken.

(From *Confessing our Faith Around the World IV*, South America, WCC.) ■

Exiles share the strangeness

Lucia Salinas Briones (writer/director), *Canto a la Vida*, educational video

If you're a refugee, the world can be a bent place.

In the new film *Canto a la Vida* (Song to Life), that oblique alienation takes a literal form, with images of a new homeland presenting themselves to the newcomer as an angular blur.

This distortion of the familiar allows us a powerful empathy, acting as a visual cue towards a share of the exile experience.

Women, who are the subject of this short documentary, are further estranged, as complacent locals trade on the vulnerability exposed by the absence of place, identity, language.

It is against this frightening beleaguerment that the need forms to mask oneself from hostilities, real and imagined. This is another key image in the film, suggesting that it is impossible to plant the same person into a different place. There are a host of inner changes and adaptations,



as individuals face a crisis of being.

Against this background *Carito a la Vida* reveals the crucial role of memory. Here the only root, or thing of solidity, is, paradoxically, impalpable — the treasure of the mind.

Chile, the land of belonging for the women of this film, might well be anywhere in Latin America — or Vietnam, or Cambodia, for that matter. This is not to say the film is apolitical. But what it points to is the irreparable human cost — and resilience — produced by systems of fear and oppression.

For those who believe that creative art has no role in social change, or that women are not in the vanguard of this process, *Canto a la Vida* is the film for you, your church or social group.

— Barry Gordon ■

Links urged at home and abroad

The benefits of links with overseas churches would apply less to our partners than our own congregations, according to John Queripel.

Presenting a motion encouraging congregations to establish partnership with others overseas, Mr Queripel said strength and sustenance was offered in the often harrowing stories of Christian discipleship abroad.

While the motion received unanimous support, Simone Ell noted that the ethnic groups already within Australia represented "a very good place to start."

"Come to the local congregations, sit down with the ethnic groups, and from there you will know the reality," he recommended.

Rally's benefits roll on

Ashfield UC's free meal service, 'Rob's Kitchen', is one of a range of caring services to receive support as a result of Sydney's mass Easter rally.

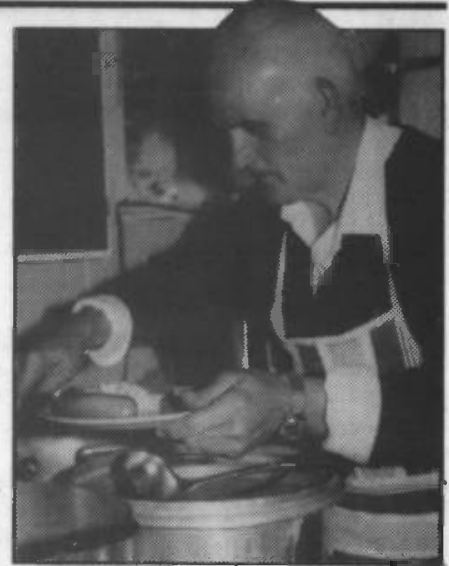
Attended by thousands of Christians, the Easter rally — which formed a 'human cross' in the

More funds: a volunteer prepares meals at the anniversary of Rob's Kitchen.

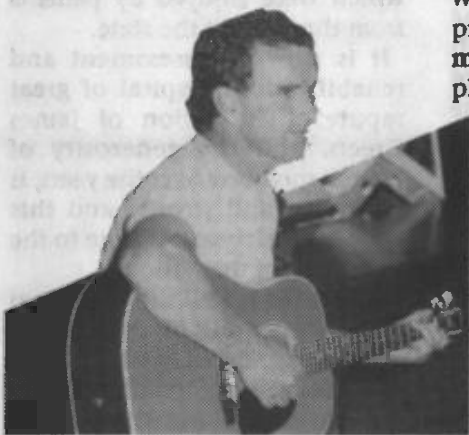
heart of Sydney — raised \$37,000 for distribution among hard-pressed church and welfare agencies.

Plans are afoot for Easter events to occur in nine other centres around Australia next year.

"It's encouraging to see the way the 'Reclaiming Easter' project is becoming a national movement of concerned people who are realising it's high time to lay aside boundary protection and self interest and to discover the meaning of Easter," said Mal Garvin, who co-ordinated Easter '90.



Rob's Kitchen celebrated a year of service — and 40,000 hot meals — in September, at a gathering attended by two of its key supporters, Dick Smith and John Singleton. ■



Bush balladeer: 'Heartland' performer Greg O'Brien.

Show speaks of our spirituality

by ELAINE BALDESTON

Co-sponsored by the Helensburgh UC, a three-piece programme, *Heartland of the Bush*, is soon to be performed at the parish's Bushland Chapel.

Through its link with the Generic Theatre artists' co-operative, the church will host a programme of theatre, poetry and song, unified by the themes and images of Australian spirituality.

Apart from offering the performance venue, the church has supplied technical and publicity support, through liaison with local minister Lyn Collins.

The programme's title derives from the text of its first piece, *Daisy Bates: a Lifetime Spent Amongst the Aboriginals of Australia*. This 50-minute theatrical work features actor Deborah Foster in the role of Daisy Bates. Based in Wollongong, Deborah is a member of St Michael's Cathedral Anglican Church.

The programme's two following pieces are interwoven — the bushman's ballad *Christ of the Never Never* being threaded with folk songs by Banjo Patterson, Henry Lawson, Eric Bogle and John Williamson. These works will be narrated and sung by Greg O'Brien.

The poem's author, Geoffrey Sykes, believes the programme's title thematically summarises its different pieces.

"Perhaps it is saying that we cannot approach aspects of the Australian landscape without going within ourselves."

Half way between Sydney and Wollongong, the Helensburgh chapel is located on the town's main street, Parkes St.

Performances will be held on December 14, 15, 21 and 22, commencing at 8pm. Tickets are \$10 (\$8 conc.). Call (042) 941695 for bookings. ■

Used with the permission of *Talents*.

I don't enjoy reading most history books, so I approached this with reservations. Was it going to be as arid as some histories I have read?

I can answer with a resounding No.

Betty Green began her training at War Memorial Hospital in 1941, serving there in various roles until 1981, when she retired after 17 years' service as matron. Those years gave her a loyalty to, knowledge of, and love for the hospital, which shows through in all her writing.

This book is a delightful combination of history and information about the many people whose personalities, service and dedica-

Hospital drama rates highly

Betty Green, *To Minister: a Story of the War Memorial Hospital, Waverley*, \$30.

tion turned a medical facility into a caring, compassionate and concerned service to the people whose ill-health brought them within its ambit.

A concept of the President of the NSW Methodist Conference in 1918, Rev James Green, the hospital began to take form with the Vickery family's donation of buildings and grounds from the family home, in Waverley, with

an option to purchase more of the grounds should the church decide to do so.

From that time, the War Memorial Hospital, Waverley, became an integral part of the outreach of the Methodist Church. It grew from a 19-bed general hospital in February, 1921, to become a training hospital with surgical, general and maternity services which were enjoyed by patients from throughout the state.

It is now an assessment and rehabilitation hospital of great repute. The vision of James Green, and the generosity of church members over the years, is still alive and strong, and this book is an eloquent tribute to the fulfilment of that vision.

To Minister is well supplemented with pictures of staff, doctors and events associated with its life. The colour photographs on the dustcover and frontispiece are magnificent reproductions. The personal anecdotes of the author, combined with the details of the struggles and triumphs of the hospital's development, make this a very readable book.

To Minister can be purchased from the War Memorial Hospital, Birrell Street, Waverley, 2024.

— Bill McLeod ■

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- May 1 BRIGHT & TUMUT FESTIVAL - visit Canberra & Beechworth - 6 days \$560.
- June 1 CAIRNS & GREAT BARRIER REEF- 4 cruises, visit the Daintree, Pt Douglas, Kuranda Train to Atherton T'lands. Stay Cairns, Airlie Beach. 19 days \$2020
- June 21 DARWIN -Top End -Kakadu Nat. Park, Obiri Rock, Kununurra -Ord River Scheme, Katherine Gorge, Alice Springs, Ayers Rock - Safari- 24 days \$990
- July 21 DARWIN & CENTRAL AUSTRALIA- Visit Darwin, Kakadu Nat. Park, Katherine Gorge, Kununurra, Ord River, Central Australia, Motels -24 days \$2798

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Ada receives church tribute

Ada May Andrews, who died at Port Kembla last July, had continued to work untiringly for the church, exercising a gracious influence among many people.

She was 80.

Married to Ken Andrews in 1950, Ada offered a valuable personal ministry in Ken's home missionary settlements at The Rock, Tenterfield, South Grafton, Hawkesbury, Morpeth, Portland, Norfolk Island, Dunoon, Bonalbo and Robertson.

With Ken she retired to Berry in 1973 where they remained until 1989 when they went into village residence at the Mayflower Village, Gerringong.

The tribute to her life was paid by the chairman of the Illawarra presbytery, Rev Brian Harvey. A warm touch was felt in the fact that Brian had known both Ken and Ada in the early days before Brian entered ministry. The Church assures Ken of loving care and support and Ada has already been missed by that large group of friends and relatives to which she endeared herself.

Jiggi's cup overflows



Hundreds at the hundredth: worshippers gather at Jiggi.

by BETTY MOONEY

Nearly 200 people came back to Jiggi Church to celebrate 100 years of worship in the Jiggi Valley — Methodism in the early days and now Uniting.

The service was led by the Rev Lindsay Doust of Lismore, with long-time friend, the Rev Harry Graves, as guest preacher. Over 46 years ago Harry preached his first service at Jiggi when he was a home missionary attached to Nimbin parish.

Harry and his wife Gwen came from Bowral for the great day.

When the church filled, over 100 sat outside to listen to the service. Mayor Harold Fredericks brought greetings. Presbytery chairperson Russell Playford, member for Lismore Bill Rixon, and member of the congregation Alice Haynes, took part in the service.

People came from as far away as Sydney and Brisbane — many hadn't seen each other for over 50 years.

A centenary booklet was sold on the day and further copies can be obtained from B. Mooney, Goolmangar, 2480; \$4 posted. ■

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UCA chaplain likely at Lithgow

The NSW Department of Corrective Services will open a new maximum security prison at Marrangaroo, on the outskirts of Lithgow, this month.

The United Church has been offered the opportunity of appointing the first prison chaplain and dialogue has begun between the Central West presbytery, the Lithgow parish, the Board for Social Responsibility and the NSW Synod concerning a proposal that the Lithgow parish call a minister to be the chaplain.

The Lithgow prison will be a maximum security centre accommodating a minimum of 300. A complement of about 200 staff will be employed.

Prisoners will be given opportunities to work within the prison in industries based on textiles and wood products.

The role of chaplain will be to proclaim the love of Jesus Christ

by maintaining pastoral care to prisoners and warders, by offering counselling help to the families of prisoners and warders and ensuring that worship services and the sacrament of holy communion are conducted at the prison on a regular basis.

It is expected that the chaplain will recruit local people from various churches to assist in this work.

If Lithgow parish's application is approved a new venture in faith will begin, as the parish, chaplain and the department work together to serve the 500 persons in the correctional centre and their respective families.

Appeal will 'boost Christian values'

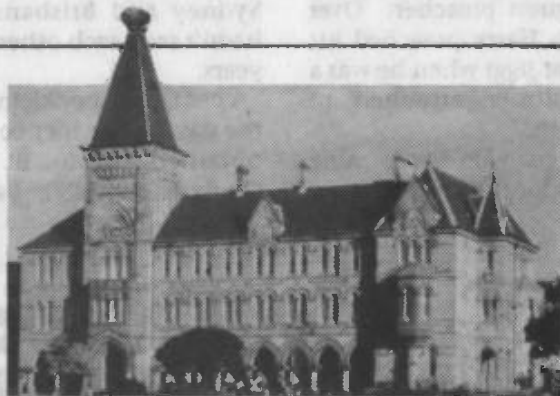
Recruit training is a demanding business.

Seventeen-year-olds are expected to be responsible for themselves. Twenty-seven-year-olds can get just as homesick for their families as anyone else. Living in a room with four others provides little privacy and the physical exercise involved in training is exhausting.

The chaplain's role is to stand with those involved in training — helping, listening, encouraging and bringing the light of Christ into their lives. But we need your continued help.

About 4000 young people pass through Kapooka annually. The chapels, we worship in are the

The Lithgow prison will be a maximum security centre accommodating at least 300.



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Corrective fund

► only remaining World War II buildings on the base. It severely hampers the perceived importance of Christian values in the army. The Australian Soldiers' Chapel Appeal has been established to build a new chapel with three denominational wings. It is to be a memorial for all soldiers who have served their country, particularly those who served in

Korea, Borneo, Malaya and Vietnam.

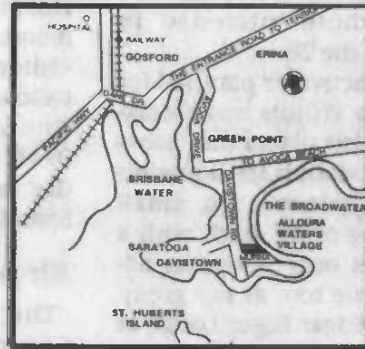
The appeal's committee would like to express its appreciation for the support shown by the Church. The appeal to churches throughout Australia last November contributed \$80,000 to the project. We would like to thank the 350 churches that contributed.

Though it may appear to be reverse discrimination, it is hoped the establishment of a Post-Graduate Theological Education Fund for Women is not that at all.

Rather, it is seeking an appropriate gender balance in UTC faculty, currently 30 to 4 in favour of men throughout Australia. The motion was passed in the last Synod without discussion. ■

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WATERS



HERE & THERE

with HELEN RICHARDSON

Hihs and lows

Have you ever spent a long time planning for something like a wedding, or Christmas? The important day comes and in no time it is all over. You feel a bit let down.

The visit of 28 American women last month was a bit like that. For over a year we have been looking forward to their arrival, planning what we would show them and wondering what they would like to experience in our country. Then they came, and now they have gone. And it's all over. Well it's not, really. Now we can begin to think and plan and prepare for the return visit of 28 Australian women to the United States next year. I still have nomination forms for those interested in being one of the 28.

One of the activities planned for our American visitors was a walking tour to visit places that provide accommodation for homeless people in Sydney. In small groups of five or six, each with a leader, we set out. It was an adventure for me too, as my group was to visit Edgar Eager Lodge at Darlinghurst, which I knew about, but had never seen. We were met by the Rev Noreen Towers

who showed us around from the basement to the 8th floor and we saw the different levels of accommodation they are able to provide. We met some of the residents who invited us to see their rooms and we had morning tea with members of the staff. Doreen told us of the way the work has grown, about achievements such as Serenity Farm and the independent units to which some of the residents have moved.

Fellowship groups who would be interested in seeing at first hand just what the Uniting Church is doing in this area of work might like to arrange a visit to Edgar Eager Lodge sometime instead of a regular meeting. The Lodge is right opposite St Margaret's Hospital. Noreen and other members of the staff love having visitors and would make you very welcome. To arrange a suitable date ring Doreen Towers on 33 0981. You might like to make a day of it and visit the units and Serenity Farm as well.

Kit promotes care

The Australian Council of Churches is a fellowship of 13 member churches including the Anglican and Uniting Churches, Churches of Christ, The Salvation

Army, Society of Friends, and Orthodox Churches. The ACC exists to promote unity and enable joint action by the churches; to support churches in mission and evangelism; to serve people in need, and promote justice and peace; and to link Australian churches to other ecumenical bodies such as the Christian Conference of Asia.

One World Week is jointly sponsored by the Australian Council of Churches and Australian Catholic Relief. It is part of a shared commitment to enable the whole church community to understand and respond to important issues confronting the world today.

The theme for One World Week, which was held in August, was 'Restoring the Earth — Justice, Peace, and the Integrity of Creation'. Since 1983 churches around the world have been working toward a mutual commitment, or covenant, for justice, peace, and the integrity of creation. At every level of church life, and in every local area, people are beginning to respond to the forces that threaten life on the earth: to challenge unjust economic structures that create poverty, to actively work for peace

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The Video Bible

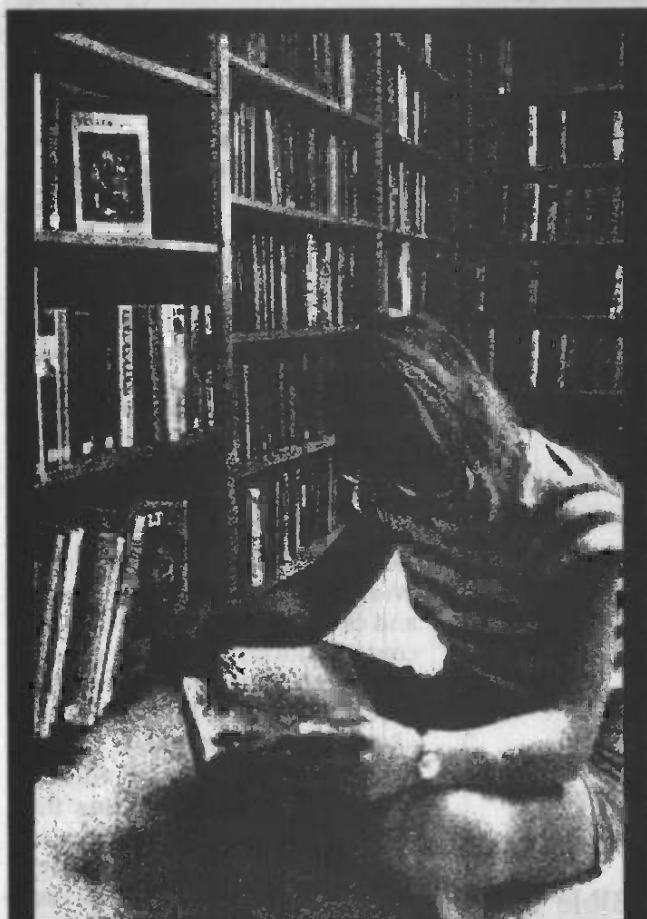
WE TOLD YOU IT WAS UNIQUE!

and disarmament, to promote the responsible and sustainable use of the earth's resources.

The interdependence of justice and peace to restoring the integrity of creation is represented in the One World Week poster as three streams of colour flowing to the earth — reminder of the hope seen in the colours of the rainbow. The rainbow was the sign of the promise made between God and Noah after the great flood, a covenant between God and all of creation. It is often in the midst of a dark storm that these colours of hope and promise can be most clearly seen.

A kit was produced for One World Week, but it is very topical and could be used at any time. It contains ideas, plans and resources which could be very simply used, beginning at home.

Every year Australians throw away more than two million tonnes of packaging costing the country about \$100 million in disposal costs alone. These figures are based on an average disposal of 130 kilograms of packaging per person year, and average collection and disposal costs of \$50 per tonne of garbage. This does not include the cost of litter clean-up campaigns and the environmental and social costs of creating more and more garbage dumps. It also represents a huge waste of resources including glass, metal, plastics, paper and cardboard. Most of these materials could be re-used or recycled. My garbage bin has been half empty since I have been putting my fruit and vegetable peelings on the compost heap. And the garden is benefiting as well. Copies of the kit are available from the Australian Council of Churches, P.O. Box C199 Clarence Street, Sydney, 2000; or call in to 379 Kent Street, Sydney, or phone (02) 29 2215 at a cost of \$1 if you want to know more about what you can do to help restore the earth. ■



There is more to ministry than meets the eye

Ministry in today's church places high demands on its leaders.

The courses undertaken by women and men preparing for the ministries of the Word or Diaconess, involves more than bible study and theology.

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Through the Mission & Service Fund, parishes work together to train the ministers and deaconesses who, in the future, may minister in your parish.



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Support can open prison doors

As an alternative to imprisonment, fine defaulters and convicted offenders worked on various aspects of a manse project at Kincumber last year.

Members of the parish developed relationships with the working party, such that one worker was offered use of the redundant residence. He and his family now attend the congregation.

Ian Diamond made use of Open Access at Synod to draw our attention to this Community Service Order offered by the Probation and Parole section of the Department of Corrective Services.

Church potential

Having worked for ten years within this section, he was able to advise, first hand, that the churches are regarded very highly as potential agencies for the CSO programme.

It was, he said, "a low-key, unheralded opportunity for mutual support and compassionate hands-on supervision of people often targeted, yet rarely communicated with, in our theories of mission."

People outnumber places

He also said that the DCS has far more people scheduled for community service than opportunities for them to work.

In cases where churches have ground work to be done, they would do well to enlist the aid of the CSO programme, even once a month.

It is not only a chance to have the job done, but in supervising the work, a church member may find it possible to open up Christian dialogue.

Family, whatever that may be

The focus of Synod 1991 will not be notices of motion but the family. A minimum of two sessions will be devoted to telling stories about what is happening in the bodies of the Synod and to enlarge mission planning to bring healing and wholeness to family relationships.

Harry Herbert observed that after seeing how exciting it is to have a chance to find out what the Uniting Church is doing, we will want to do this again on different issues in future years.

Noting that single adults are an important and growing aspect of Australian community, one speaker said that "to some of us, the word family can feel exclusive."

It was the hope of Synod that they may not feel that way after next year's presentations.

A quiet revolution in education at Nungalinya

By LEE DUNCAN

Thanks to the pioneering work being done at Nungalinya College in Darwin the students are breaking ground in ministry. Liyapidiny Marika will complete her four year diploma in Easter, 1991, to be the first Aboriginal woman inducted into the ministry.

I met Liyapidiny at the Northern Synod early in October. Liyapidiny struck me as a very warm, humble and highly committed-to-her-task woman who thinks nothing of the hubbub of this historical landmark except for her concern her ministry will be a good one.

From Yirrkala in north eastern Arnhem Land, Liyapidiny has had opportunity over the four years of study and field education with Nungalinya, to return to her own community to minister there. The four year theological course consisted of one year full-time study, 2 years of working in community situations (with block studies at Nungalinya), this final year of full-time study and a further three months of field education in 1991.

Congress decision

The Congress will make a decision on her first full-time post next year.

College principal, Les Brockway said Liyapidiny was a very strong student who is adept at ex-



Liyapidiny with Heather Vincent (left) and Lorna Stevenson after a session at the 14th Northern Synod.

pressing Christianity through her own culture. "She is a deeply spiritual person and has had to struggle with male dominance in leadership positions within her Aboriginal culture."

Liyapidiny is particularly well-equipped in health and spiritual matters Les said.

When Journey asked Liyapidiny what her hopes and dreams were in the ministry she talked about her two years of field work at Yirrkala, how God had called her to take up his ministry and how she had to respond to this call as there was no other trained minister who could do the work in that parish.

"I hope to find a way to help those people who are in physical,

social and spiritual need and whose lives are suffering and are being destroyed. There are too many deaths. So my aim is to help those who need deliverance and to free them by God's help.

"Somewhere in the near future I will have my ordination service so I can be fully recognised by the people whom I serve. I am looking forward to seeing it happen ... it will not be for my own benefit, but for all people.

"This is the first time in Aboriginal history to have a female minister within the Uniting Aboriginal church to achieve something for the whole community. In this I have helped open up the way for other 36▶

From page 35

Aboriginal women to take up this task for the Lord in the near future."

Ian Breward, professor of church history with the United Faculty of Theology in Melbourne attended the 14th Northern Synod where he commended Nungalingya College as the most exciting development in theological education in 200 years. He praised the college for breaking out of the traditional mould of learning and "doing a tremendous job with very slender resources."

Professor Breward outlined the history of Nungalingya College and why it was breaking new ground.

Nungalingya's educational model was partly adapted from a Latin American model designed to provide education for those who couldn't afford available education and for whom English was a second and third language.

Nungalingya has designed its courses and teaching structure for people who speak English as a second or third language and to meet them where they're at.

'It is meeting educational needs previously unmet.'

To this end teachers have travelled to Aboriginal settlements throughout the Territory ... taking its courses to the people in



Namanatz, mother of three and part of the Women's Studies course at Nungalingya, weaves one of the baskets she is well-known for.

their own communities.

Professor Breward said the initiative to establish Nungalingya College in the climate of the '70s came from the church's recognition of the need for further educating mature community leaders in a format appropriate to their lifestyle and culture; and to raise the level of skills, insight and confidence in ministry ... with emphasis on not taking students away from their own community for too long hence the shorter courses than the government designed ones.

He said the college had established credibility across the Aboriginal community. The government has also recognised the uniqueness of Nungalingya College, that it is meeting educational needs previously unmet and have provided some funding. (but nowhere near enough!)

Professor Breward also noted Nungalingya College had been able to be much bolder in experimentation because of its freedom from the government

system.

The first principal of Nungalingya was Keith Cole, a widely respected community leader in the Territory. Professor Breward said he had played a vital founding role in the credibility and innovation he brought to the job.

Recognition

Professor Breward also commended the work of the present principal, Les Brockway, who presented the college's report of Synod. Les headed his report with "the exciting news is we are the first college in the Northern Territory to be recognised as a private provider of post-school training courses. We have interim approval for six months pending legislation. Among other things, this means we can maintain our independence while pursuing the accreditation process for some of our courses."

Les highlighted the recent appointment of Rev John Kadiba as co-ordinator of the theology program who as such

From page 36

is the most senior full-time indigenous theology teacher at the college.

Empowering women

By 1977 such was the acceptance and appreciation of Nungalina education the students wanted more and the certificate in theology became a diploma and Women's Studies was introduced to empower women and help them apply their own individual talents to community life.

The Women's Studies course is full-time for the full school year and is taught in a bicultural/bilingual context for Aboriginal and Islander women.

The Women's Studies objectives are to affirm traditional and emerging Aboriginal and Islander cultures and to open new doors by teaching literacy, numeracy and other skills needed to cope in modern Australia; to teach subjects that will lead to further education and economic independence.

Teaching methods are based on indigenous approaches to learn-

ing. Practical demonstrations are given rather than theoretical lectures.

The courses success as it has evolved over the past six years has been attributed to the college's flexible, meaningful programming which can be adapted to suit each students' individual needs, talents and interests.

The founder of Women's Studies, Dr Joy Kinslow-Harris, became very ill in 1989 and had to resign her position. At Synod her outstanding service to the college over a decade was commended.

A recent Open Day at the college attracted hundreds of curious locals. Many of them stayed for hours taking in the many craft displays and demonstrations, fashion parades, and dancing and singing following the exhibition opening.

Innovative enterprise

A prime example of the kind of innovative enterprise being employed at Nungalina is marbler art items such as fashion garments and tea towels. Jillian Thompson, part-time arts and craft teacher at the college, has

devoted 12 months to developing the marbling technique which is a centuries old technique of dyeing paint on cloth.

Its finished effect relies on the artist's ability to work with colour and free moving inks. It is this freedom of movement, like a "whim of the Spirit" which mixes creativity and materials which appeals to Aboriginal artists ... thus bringing together an ancient artform with traditional Australian design. Each piece is unique; no two patterns can ever be the same.

Jillian headed up the Women's Studies team which developed the technique into the simplest but most effective form possible for the students at Nungalina. Having to be enterprising as well as creative, Jillian was conscious of "developing something a little different as a good sales point."

She is also keeping realistic tabs on the wider recognition of the college's innovative education as well as further funding support. She believes some of the work that is being done now will only have visible results in the community some 20 to 30 years down the track. ■



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Serving a vast territory

Lee Duncan reports from a visit to Somerville Community Services when in Darwin for the 14th Northern Synod.

Somerville Community Services commanded attention at the October Northern Synod for its grass root commitment to a vast number of Territorians.

Somerville's services are organised under four service divisions: the division of child care operates four day care centres for 250 children; the division of residential care provides accommodation for severely disabled children, adolescents and adults in six group homes (aged between 3 and 65 years); the division of training and employment seeks to prepare long term unemployed young people for employment in commercial offices or government offices; the division of youth and family services provides support for families who have personal, social and economic needs.

Extending from 15 staff in

1981 to 200 staff in 1990, the Somerville team acknowledge they have been extremely lucky to have Graeme Bull at the helm for the past 11 years.

Graeme would be the last person to highlight his contribution but such is his commitment to the work of Somerville he is prepared to make no bones about the agencies constant struggle for recognition and support from the church before the 14th annual Northern Synod.

In presenting the Somerville report he said 1990 had brought the future of the agency sharply into focus. "Over the past year many concerns and problems arose which together illustrated advantages and consequences of Somerville's growth and increased visibility in the community."

He said for the first time in nearly a decade the agency has been forced to strike a deficit

budget for administering the agency.

"In stark terms unless Somerville can re-capitalise by up to \$500,000, the agency cannot survive longer than a further 36 months and must be wound up," stated Graeme.

He said the proposed \$15,000 cut in budget by the Assembly would break the camel's back.

He stressed it wasn't a question of bad management but of income growth in a community service which the newly appointed public relations manager, Dick Hosking, says is "touching the lives of vast numbers of Territorians."

Professional fund-raiser in the Territory for 12 years, Dick can't emphasize strongly enough he only takes on causes he strongly believes in ... also a well-travelled journalist, he always does his homework thoroughly before speaking out.

He believes with the right planning Somerville should raise \$150,000 within months but acknowledges the obstacles of past fund-raising efforts.

Hosking outlined why the Northern Territory situation is unique. He said it was a constant battle for Territorians to achieve equal recognition status in an area regarded by other states as a "colony", that the voluntary corp most charity/community service bodies receive help from doesn't at present exist and the Territory government controls are of concern with threats of funding cuts and bureaucratic in- 39>



Somerville Intern in Mission, Stacey Delarber (centre) with Paul Tolliday (left) and Leslie Williams (right) at the 14th Northern Synod.

From page 38

trusion.

Somerville very much appreciated the contribution made by Stacey Delarber, an Intern in Mission from Atlanta, Georgia in the United States. A communications graduate, she spent the last three months of her stay organising marketing and promotions, drawing up a 1500 name mailing list and putting a television advertisement to air.

In the consultation review to Synod it was noted the work of Somerville needed to be promoted further. "As a public benevolent institution delivering badly needed services in the north it should be expected that people in the Church and wider community would respond to this avenue of meeting the needs of others. For those within the Church this would be an act of discipleship."

The impression I left Darwin with was Somerville's constant struggle to win the support it deserves. I was shown around a child care centre and two homes for intellectually handicapped children. No-one could help but be moved by the obvious love and commitment by the Somerville staff to the young people they care for.

The centre and homes were bright and open in design with much attention to detail. Graeme Bull explained it was very important to the staff and the children that their rooms had individual touches such as the Aboriginal designed wall hanging for the Aboriginal child.

I met up with one young teenager who only two years beforehand had been bedded in a geriatric ward with a drip. No-one had tried to teach her to walk. Thanks to the Somerville staff she

is now walking and attending a nearby special school.

This is the sort of situation and profound need the Somerville team meet.

Administration manager, Robyn Young, explained the first home was established 11 years ago as a pilot program to provide a "proper home" for whose only other alternative is hospital.

To give close, personal care they employ 48 home carers on a permanent basis, have casual relief workers and seven other full-time positions within the residential care division.

The history of Somerville can be traced back to 1940 when the Commonwealth Government expressed concern over the lack of care provided for part-aboriginal children in the Northern Territory.

The Anglican, Roman Catholic and Methodist churches were approached to meet this need.

In 1966 Somerville Homes inherited the Methodist Overseas Mission's responsibility through establishing six group homes in Darwin, becoming the "child and family service agency" of the Uniting church in NT.

Dr Phil Carr of Adelaide Central Mission was a Synod guest who also found time to share with Somerville staff at an exchange luncheon.

Dr Carr has served Adelaide Central Mission for 12 years. He outlined the various growth stages he'd seen the Mission progress through and reported this year it had made a profit for the first year in its history.

He began with its first stage of expansion to 160 full-time staff and 400 volunteers. It then went through a stage of disillusionment which he said was a "very valuable exercise which has held us in good stead ever since." During this stage a statement of

purpose was established: "The Mission works with people in need, particularly those who are in some way disadvantaged, to improve their situation in ways which enhance their lives. It is committed to work for a just and caring society which respects the rights, values and dignity of all people."

It then went through a process of devolution. This was partly inspired by financial difficulties. It was necessary to further build a model of community development.

The fourth stage outlined by Dr Carr was one of revolution ... reorganising existing programs and establishing new programs. The Mission now operates on a budget of \$17 million employing 560 full-time staff with 1,000 volunteers helping per week. Dr Carr said a third of revenue came from the government, a third from its own supporting businesses and a third from clients.

He said the Mission was now concentrating on moving to the harder edge of community problems - to acute situations rather than chronic. "We want to do what other services aren't doing."

Graeme Bull concluded his report to Synod with ... "As my chaplain would explain ... in brokenness, diversity and adversity ... there at the centre of hurting ... must be the body of Christ."

"If our ministry falls short of meeting the needs of the disadvantaged or the quality of service and caring is seriously in question, then both the ministry and our aspirations should be exposed.

"On the other hand, if we hold true to a frontier ministry and are indeed present in the name of Christ, what price the future of Somerville's ministry?" ■

• BOOKS •

G & C Stowell, *My Advent Story and Activity Book*, Word Books.

A season to cut, paste, draw — and talk

Christmas! How to make the old, old story interesting and alive to children? Even to ourselves?

This book is an excellent tool to promote excitement and stimulation about Christmas because it acts as a springboard to draw other elements of this season together. The daily activities seem aimed at early primary, but this is the perfect book for the whole family to be involved in.

The activities include:

- the re-creation of the Bethlehem scene with stickers and windows to open;
- mazes, spot the difference, join the dots, finding hidden

images, making a star and a lantern, colouring in, etc;

- looking up and reading Bible verses.

The book is well set out; creatively put together; drawings and activities are simple and not cliched; it is fun.

Yet it seems to lend itself to natural discussion about Christmas, including other activities as part of this exploration, e.g Christmas plays, carols, Church activities, gift giving, the rise of other traditions around Christmas.

The possibilities to extend this book are governed by the adults' imaginations.

Perhaps we have lost the ability to, as a family, do a project and then use it to forward other discussion and activities. This may be a chance to redress that situation. This book is highly recommended — even for families without children — as it may spark something lost, something of wonder, that we often lose in modern-day Christmas celebrations.

— Kaydee Araluen ■

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Hull shares the darkness

'The reader is drawn into the life of a blind person with shattering impact.'

John M. Hull, *Touching the Rock*, David Lovell Publishing, 1990.

The book's subtitle is *An Experience of Blindness* and the author offers just that for the reader. With a sensitive, reflective invitation the reader is drawn into the life of a blind person with shattering impact.

In 1983, some months after he had registered as a blind person, John Hull began describing his experiences onto tape. Using selective diary entries he introduces the reader into life as he experiences it over a period of three years. Thus instead of offering a statement about being blind, he inducts the reader into

the dynamic process of adapting to being a fully blind person.

A University lecturer, Hull had to cope with giving his lectures without the aid of notes. As a sighted person he had connections with the world around him but with the loss of his sight he felt he lived in his body, cut off from the outside world. Then he describes how he began to understand the world through sounds, smell and the wind.

John Hull is the son of a Victorian Methodist minister who went to England to study theology and has remained there. His book has a theological dimension that is quite rich.

— Keith Little ■



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Lismore Uniting Church Youth & Children's Worker

Lismore Uniting Church is seeking to appoint a part-time (20 - 25 hours per week) Youth & Children's Worker from 1st February 1991. A job description is available by phoning (066) 21 5801. Conditions will be according to those recommended by the NSW Synod.



Overseas Programs Co-Ordinator

The Australian Council of Churches is seeking a person with a commitment to the mission of the church in an ecumenical context to assist the Director of its Commission for World Christian Action in the administration and co-ordination of its overseas programs in development, justice & human rights.

The person to be appointed will be able to work as a member of a small team with limited secretarial support, be prepared to travel from time to time, be able to represent the Council in its relationships with government departments, overseas churches and non-government organisations.

Experience in a Third World situation would be an advantage.

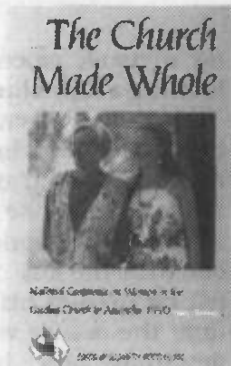
Applications should be made in writing to:

The Director, World Christian Action
Australian Council of Churches
P.O. Box C199, Sydney NSW Phone: (02) 299 2215

from whom further details may be obtained. Names & addresses of referees should be included. Remuneration and starting date are negotiable.

Applications close - Monday 10th December 1990

Walking forward on paper



Elizabeth Wood Ellem ed, *The Church Made Whole*, David Lovell Publishing, 1990.

This is a very comprehensive book, faithful to the national conference held in Melbourne, January 1990. It covers most aspects. The texts of the six plenary speakers — Dorothy McMahon, Janet Wood, Dorothy Lee-Pollard, Hilary Christie-Johnston, E. Anne Amos and Gwen Ince — are in themselves as diverse as the women presenting them.

The prayers and the three Bible studies offer a wealth of material for reflection and discussion and I would be very surprised if Margaret Tyrer's poetry did not raise awareness perhaps unaddressed before by the reader.

I wondered how biased my reading of this book would be

having been empowered by the conference myself, but to 'attend' the variety of workshops through this book was a kaleidoscope of experiences, as, too, was entering the experiences of women named in 'A Celebration of Australian Women'. These were women well-known and deeply loved; women not named but who still speak powerfully of their diverse gifts and unstinting faith in God and in the Church.

Responding to the report *Women in the Uniting Church in Australia*, 12 groups considered its recommendations. This section provides ample material for lively debate and to enable churches to come to grips with the need to be free from racism, sexism and classism.

If you want a clear picture of 'Why the Church Ordains Women' you will read eagerly the extracts from the document as approved by the Standing Committee of the Assembly in March 1990. Hilary Christie-Johnston, as convener of the group that compiled the document, outlines the task. The lively workshop was led at the conference by Gregor Henderson, general secretary of the Assembly. All workshop discussion could not be compiled in a volume of 290 pages but there is enough to stimulate your own thinking, I believe.

The book affirmed for me the long way the Uniting Church has come in seeking mutuality of ministry for all people; the long way the Uniting Church has still to go; and the commitment of so many women and men in all their diversity to 'keep on walking forward' until the Church is Made Whole.

— Shirley Parkin ■



Synod of Victoria
Commission for Mission

Refugee and Ethnic Ministry Field Worker

The Commission invites applications from lay or ordained persons to continue and extend the refugee and ethnic ministries developed by Mr. Alan Pugh during the past five years.

The person appointed to this challenging and creative ministry will act as a liaison between parishes and the Synod.

The tasks include:

- encouraging and assisting parishes to share with ecumenical and community organisations in the settlement and care of refugees.
- advising and supporting the increasing migrant ethnic and non-English speaking parishes, congregations and fellowship groups who share in the ministry and mission of the Uniting Church.

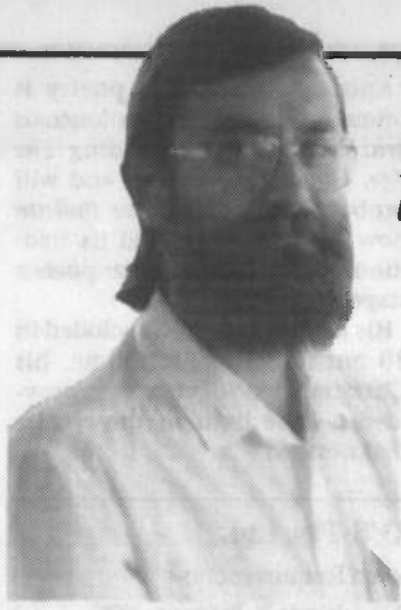
Applicants should have some cross-cultural experience; an understanding of the needs of refugees, migrants and ethnic congregations, and a commitment to the multicultural ministry of the Uniting Church.

Enquiries and applications should be directed to:

Rev. Malcolm Campbell, Division of Ecumenical Mission,
130 Little Collins Street, Melbourne Vic. 3000.
Phone (03) 654 2488

Applications close - Friday 14th December, 1990

Lansdown's lightness proves the weight of words



Poetry balances life: Andrew Lansdown.

As a poet, Andrew Lansdown has been awarded Senior Writer's Fellowships from the Literary Arts Board in 1987 and 1988. But, like most writers, he has also needed to work in other areas.

He has tutored in English and Creative Writing at various technical colleges and, for four years, was education officer for the W.A Prisons Department, where he was staggered at the poetry hardened inmates would bring him. For seven years he edited the W.A Baptist monthly magazine which led to his invitation to pastor the congregation at Boyup Brook, south of Perth.

His poetry has been compiled into five volumes (including one for children) and a sixth, *The Grasshopper Heart*, is due early next year. He spoke recently to RAY FARLEY, who — until meeting Lansdown at an arts conference earlier this year — believed that poetry was as irrelevant as Latin. Somehow, the poet changed the critic's mind.

Many people neither understand, nor like, poetry. It is one of those things we were all forced to study at school and avoided ever since. But there is a paradox — even those who express the greatest dislike for it are often closet poets. The sad part is that such people write doggerel because they never read good verse.

Andrew Lansdown observes that "people turn to poetry in moments of crisis and stress or in moments of great joy." In the birth and death notices and always in the Valentine's Day classifieds, people resort to rhyme for their special messages. You may well question the quality, but nonetheless they have turned to poetry in order to express the depths of their emotions. It shows there is a profound place for poetry in the human psyche.

By the use of image and metaphor, by finding 'correspondences' or parallels, poets can give emphatic meaning to everyday occurrences. In this way poetry can be the most spiritual of the written arts. No surprise then that it is used to such great effect in the Bible.

"I think it is remarkable," says Lansdown, "that you can, through the written word, communicate things of the heart and the mind and the eye to another person. It gives me great pleasure to be able to discover certain correspondences and then set them down with some degree of power and integrity."

By writing poetry he has trained himself to see and think in ways he would not have normally. He finds it is also a valuable balance to a life which can get involved in fairly serious and weighty issues.

An early poem, *Counterpoise*, was about families picnicking and enjoying themselves down at a riverside park.

"I'd got caught up in a whole lot of serious things and here was lightness and joy. So the poem concludes: *The large, deep things are all/in their own ways dark and hard/Small things are a counter-*

poise/to lighten and soften the heart'."

Poetry's value, in both reading and writing, Lansdown finds, is its ability to lighten and soften his heart. And, understandably, it has great significance in his life. But not as much as one ABC interviewer presumed.

"The fellow asked: 'What is the most important thing in your life?' expecting me to say poetry. But I said, 'the Lord Jesus Christ'. He was a bit flummoxed by that: 'Oh, so all of your poetry is religious, is it?' 'Well', I answered, 'in the way you're using the term 'religious', no, it's not'.

"In fact, very few of my poems are openly Christian in terms of referring to God or Christ or specifically Christian things. But I would like to think that underlying all of my poetry is a Christian world view."

He believes this is not a problem for people who don't share that world view when he writes about a shared perception. If as a Christian he writes about his children, he is aware that Muslims and Marxists love their children too, so there should be no difficulty in them liking his poetry. "As a Christian, I see God's hand in nature and so that's something I have in mind in my nature poetry. There are many other people who love nature too, for different reasons."

continued over

Lansdown's lightness — from previous page

Technological diversions such as radio and television may have prevented contemporary greats such as Les A. Murray and Bruce Dawe from earning deserved status but poetry nevertheless maintains a treasured place in the arts.

Andrew Lansdown's poetry is often found in literary journals and newspapers including *The Age*, *Quadrant*, *Southerly* and will probably appear in *The Bulletin* now that it has revived its tradition of giving 'Australian poets a stage they deserve'.

His art has also been included in 30 anthologies. Each time, his Christian world view has provided a little light in the secular darkness. ■

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Please mark it confidential and include a resume of your personal information and references.

A definitive description of a Real Time performance is somewhat elusive. What this seven-piece Kiwi rock group presents at one venue is not what can be expected at another.

This is not due to inconsistency, or even a mischievous desire to avoid pigeon-holing. The reason is a little more pragmatic: the intention to play music appropriate to the audience.

During their recent month-long tour of Australia, Real Time played at a quiet Friday night church men's meeting; a Sunday morning worship service followed eight hours later by a gig in front of noisy 'hoons' at Blackstump; a week before they were part of a series of Pentecostal outreach concerts. And back home in New Zealand they also do pubs.

Contagious celebration

The constant throughout is the delighted reaction of the audience. At Blackstump, the band's vitality ignited an (admittedly excitable) audience who, for the most part, had never heard them before. Real Time were so full of joyous celebration in their performance, it was contagious. Yet they also managed to make a few pertinent comments.

Mark de Jong says "it's easier to learn a set and just do that, but we try hard to be capable of playing wherever. We want the audience to enjoy our performance, and we want them to be challenged in some way. That means we have to be adaptable."

Unlike the laid-back approach of most bands, Real Time has a defined structure. De Jong had experienced the instability of previous bands and brought to this one the suggestion of a written outline of principles. Though admitting it can be restricting, he says "It gives us a clear direction and helps us move ahead quickly."

Principled band plays within the rules

"As we've talked through different issues, we try to reach a conclusion on a point and have it down in written form, so we're aware of what's been decided in the past. If a new member joins, they can see that we've decided to spend, say, 10 hours a week practising, we're going to take this much time off work, we're going to put this much money into the band."

Not wanting to sound too obsessive, he adds "we're all committed to it, but in the context of the rest of our lives."

Their album 'Cold World' was released earlier this year in New Zealand and Word has recently picked up Australian distribution. A fairly serious selection of songs, it is a result of the group's discussions about a Christian's response or responsibility to the poor and needy of the world.

"We feel a real sense that God has a heart for the poor and the oppressed," says de Jong. "There's a movement in the Church at the moment to get involved on a social level which is encouraging."

However, he is sadly aware that the Church (of which he is a guilty part) has tended to give people the message without any useful assistance. He thinks "it is clearly Jesus' teaching to get down and do something practical for people and through that to share the gospel."

"Salvation of the soul is of primary importance, but our message doesn't have credibility if all we're looking for is souls we can win."



This statement is pivotal to a group who bear no relationship to the mostly bland CCM emanating out of Nashville. Real Time live in the real world and offer no trite Christian platitudes. Their faith is strongly evident in the lyrics but instead of blatant, evangelistic babble, their concern for the unfortunate in this 'cold world' is pre-eminent.

Hero is a response to the television images of the African drought and the ensuing dilemma: what can an individual do to help? *Victims* observes this same problem with the phrase "one of me, one billion of you" and asks "are we victims of the system / or agents of change?"

A word portrait of youth homelessness is deftly drawn in the mournful *On the Street*. Closer to home, *One More Day* was written after lead singer Karel Van Helden realised his responsibility for the breakdown of a relationship.

It's not all heavy, though. The band's lighter side is evident on *Jump Up* and the cover of a Timbuk 3 song *Future's So Bright (I Gotta Wear Shades)*.

Deceptively easy to listen to, 'Cold World' is quite 'nice' until you scan the lyrics and realise the challenge it sends out to comfortable middle-class Christianity. There can be no better reason for giving it a listen.

— Ray Farley ■



Minister of the Word

With the retirement of Rev. Dave Robinson the Nedlands Parish, Western Australia, will be vacant by the middle of 1991. Information about this parish (which is adjacent to the University of W.A.) can be obtained from the Parish Office, 38 Kingsway, Nedlands W.A. 6009



The Call, *Red Moon* (WEA)

Michael Been, singer/songwriter for The Call, says they try to play to a musical tradition that "is not a fad or a trend. It isn't theatre or a beauty contest or a fashion show. Music can be used to serve those things because music can't defend itself, but musicians can.

"I think the members of The Call feel a responsibility to preserve that tradition, especially in these times where music is so

Callers bypass the fashion fraud

exploited and cheapened for strictly commercial purposes."

Despite having managed radio airplay for at least four of their singles in the past seven years, The Call has never been a commercial band. There is a token, shallow love song on this album but most have a depth revealed only with repeated listening.

Often about the inner battles, their songs are a way of coming to terms with our inadequacies and lovelessness for our neighbour. Yet, with the exception of the biting *You Were There*, these are not guilt trips. There is a surprising positiveness, a belief that we can do better once we admit the fault. These songs are healthy self-examination.

And there are great rhythms, an exciting, earthy feel that builds through quiet musical understatement. Hailed by critics and peers as a major force in contemporary music they are yet to achieve the recognition predicted for them.

And they probably don't care. An album for the discerning collector.

— Ray Farley ■

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Radio

Encounter

ABC Radio National — Sundays 8-8.45am & Wednesdays 7.15-8pm. ABC Regional Radio — Sundays 9.15-10.00pm.

Dec 2 — The Way, The Truth and the Whitegoods. A look at the appeal of a new form of Christian faith in Eastern Europe — Christian Fundamentalism.

Dec 9 — Kev Carmody. The religious and social issues which feature in the music of Aboriginal musician, Kev Carmody.

Dec 16 — Incarnation. The theology of incarnation from the Antiochian and other Orthodox Christian traditions.

Dec 23 — Renewal — The Coming of Light. An episode of the widely-acclaimed soundscape program, The Rites of Passage, which gained a bronze medal at the 1990 International Radio Festival of New York. It traces stages of Advent in the Christian calendar.

Dec 30 — Act of God. One year after the event, Encounter visits the earthquake city of Newcastle to speak to its people about the effects the disaster has had in their lives.

Sunday Night Live

with Rev Gordon Moyes. A top rating Christian talkback program on Sydney radio 2GB between 9.00pm and Midnight. Features contemporary comment on topical and social issues.

Insights

ABC Radio National — Sundays 5.10-6.00pm & Mondays 10.30-11.20am. Insights into belief, spirituality and theology with Paul Collins.

Kronos

ABC Radio National — Fridays 8.30-8.57am & 5.30-5.57pm. Religious Current affairs in Australia and around the world.

2CH

Sundays on 2CH, Sydney. 7.35am Morning Service. 8.20am, 4.50pm Mal Garvin. 9am, 2pm, 5pm, Bernard Judd on social issues. 9.50am The Counsellor. 12.50pm, 6.15pm Book reviews.

8.00pm Evening Service. 8.30pm Nightsong. 9pm Open line with Jay Bacik.

Christmas Eve

Solemn Midnight Mass. ABC Radio National 11.45pm-1.00am. Direct from Christ Church Anglican Cathedral, Newcastle, NSW.

Christmas Day — Encounter

ABC Radio National 8.15-9.00am Christmas — The Difference. A devotional feature for the Christian Festival of the Birth of Christ — from the Baptist City Tabernacle in Brisbane.

Insights

ABC Radio National 5.10-6.00pm. A special Insights program for Christmas Day.

Creation theme for ABC Christmas service

A bush setting helps to convey the link between creation and Christmas, in ABC-TV's worship service to be telecast nationally on Christmas Day at 11 am. The service, recorded in Hobart last month, focuses on the theme for this year's Christmas Bowl, "The Earth is the Lord's".

It looks at the Word of Creation becoming flesh within His world, and the implications of this for our appreciation of nature and concern for the environ-

Best Sellers

Books

1. Twelve Keys to an Effective Church — Kennon Callahan.
2. 40 More Devotions That Work With Youth — edited by Geraldine Anderson.
3. Leading a Kids Club in Your Church — Vernon Cracknell. (Courtesy Uniting Church Bookshop, Brisbane).

Music

1. Beyond Belief — Petra (Word).
2. Children of the Western World — Steve Grace (Word).
3. Another Friday Night — Kenny Marks (Word). (Courtesy Koorong Books)

ment. Participants include the acclaimed Rosny Children's Choir, UC minister and "Green Independent" politician Rev Lance Armstrong, singer John Coleman, children from various churches, Rev Dr Frank Rees of Hobart City Baptist Tabernacle as preacher, and a congregation gathered specially for the event. The service was co-produced by the ABC's Richard Reisz and *Journey* contributing editor David Busch. ■

CHOOK — 'The Pluckiest Featherweight In Chicken History!'



National Conference on Renewal in the Life of the Church,
November 2-5, 1990, Laboure, Sydney

Renewal ... breaking things open in the UC

Renewal. It's a funny old word, isn't it?

At *worst* it reminds me of that yearly trek to the motor registry to get my driver's licence stamped.

At *best* it reminds me of skin. The miraculous capacity of the epidermis to heal over a wound. The skin's ever-newness. (I believe we shed dead skin continually and each day our 'casing' is reborn!)

Renewal. Take the new out of it and you get real. Take the real out of it and you get new. They are two of the characteristics any renewal must surely exhibit.

My dictionary has nine definitions for it. That's lots of connotations and layers. Lots of room for misuse ... and for misunderstanding other people's use of it.

Like Pentecost, the UCA's National Conference on Renewal in the Life of the Church, held over the weekend of November 2-5 in Sydney, drew a disparate crowd from all over Australia. In a sense, each part of that crowd had their own 'renewal' language. Each, too, their own definition of what the word renewal *could* or *should* mean to the church.

To be fair, I wasn't there for the whole conference. (And I admit renewal is such an unpredictable business it may well have occurred during my absences!)

But while I was there a few things surprised and concerned me.

In the UCA's search for the real and the new I'd have thought a few more youth and women might have come in handy. (For

example, out of the 100 or so participants, only 24 were women.)

It also disturbed me that the 'talkfest-cum-talking heads' mode of conferencing was such a feature.

Yes, the banners made by Tony Floyd from Launceston were superb. And at least some of the music was fresh and inspiring (though some songs were offputtingly sexist!).

But where was the dance, the poetry, the drama — the full force of the UCA's creativity? Our *celebratory* and not just our *cerebratory* potential?

Loosen, make free

Far from offering a formula for instant renewal, as the Rev Dorothy McMahon, one of the conference organisers, said, the conference was meant to start breaking things open. To loosen and free the church for movement 'forward together'.

Perhaps if I'd stayed for the case studies I'd have heard more about the way God is bringing, or can bring, new life to our parishes and people.

Perhaps (and I hope this is so) the closing sessions drew together the disparate crowds so that a new language of renewal, a language cutting through our theological sectarianism, was spoken.

During Sunday evening's time of worship, Mark 2:22 came into my mind: "You cannot put new wine in old wineskins. If you do the skins will burst and the wine will run out and the wineskins will be ruined."

This connected with a talk

given by the Rev John Brown, Director of Mission for the UCA's Commission for Mission, later that night.

"The Holy Spirit," he said, "always places before us a choice, and it is in making that choice that we either grow or atrophy — shrivel up; become greater or smaller."

Renewal, his talk reinforced, is not about the repetitive or the predictable (like my trips to the motor registry!).

It is about risk. And openness.

It is about Moses obeying God's voice, striking the rock with his staff and seeing water gush forth as streams in the desert.

It is about God putting skin on old bones.

It is about God getting under our skin and growing faith in us that's more than skin deep.

It is about God making us so much bigger and broader in our beings and our visions that our old, and far too narrow and constricting, skins burst. Sinews and muscles and integuments are recreated so that new wine can flow in and out of us.

As the Rev Gregor Henderson, General Secretary of the Assembly, said, renewal is about a God who opens us up continually — "and opens and opens us" so that we are an inclusive church.

A people free to fail, intimated Professor James Haire, who led the Bible studies and believes the picture we get of the church from Acts is "pretty weird". That it's better to look at passion week for

Continued page 49▶

a realistic, but no less powerful, view of what it means to be the church and the disciples of Christ.

Yes, our God is a God of skin. (Think Jewish circumcision and God asking us to remove the foreskin of our hearts. Think Word made Flesh. Think Jesus choosing fragile humans as witnesses. Think Jesus tacked to the cross by his skin. Think you and me ... our skin holding us together and keeping our interiors unexposed.)

Perhaps renewal is a word or concept that can never really be pinned down. Something we believe in by faith, sight unseen, like the renewing of our skin.

Perhaps renewal is God's job, but we need to be able to recognise where God is breaking open the casings and carefully, lovingly, creatively, attaching the next sinew.

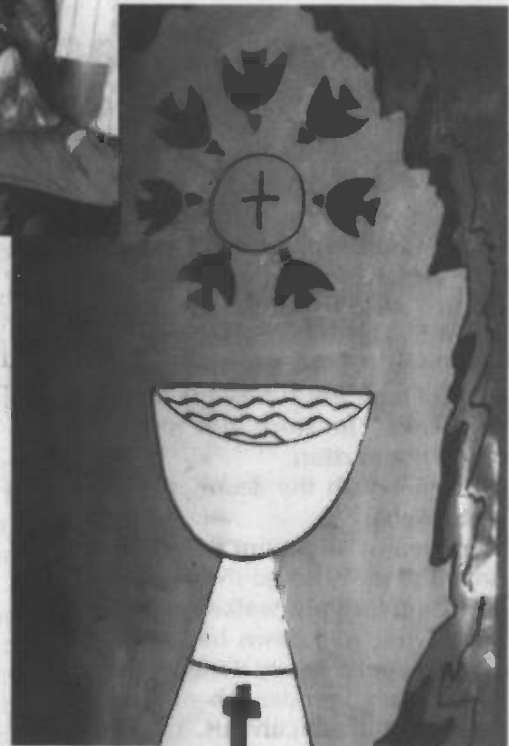
Renewal. Perhaps it's happening, or needs to, in a person, a parish or a community near you.

The word I hear from the conference is to keep your hearts open and your eyes — your skin? — peeled.

— Marjorie Lewis-Jones



ABOVE: Group discussion of renewal.



RIGHT: Detail from a Tony Floyd banner.

The Earth is the Lord's

Editorial from page 4

When God created the world, he did not do so in an ad hoc way. Modern science has shown that the world of nature is comprised of finely tuned ecological systems.

Many thousands of years ago, the ancient Hebrews intuitively knew that the whole of life is comprised of a vast network of inter-connecting and interdependent relations. Thus, they knew that when one part of Creation is diminished all parts are diminished.

Herein lies their concern for the

establishment of shalom. This Biblical word for peace, however, is much more profound than what we in the West normally understand peace to mean.

Shalom comes from a Hebrew verb meaning "wholeness". Thus, this greeting does not merely wish an absence of conflict or war, but is saying "be a whole person".

Human wholeness, however, depends on the recognition that we are enmeshed in the web of life that has been created by God — that we do depend on the natural environment, and vice versa.

Shalom is to be found in those people who are truly whole because they are at peace with their brothers and sisters, with the

natural environment, and with the Creator God who stands at the nexus of this web of life.

Shalom for the whole of Creation is the Divine promise. But its fulfillment is also dependent upon the appropriate human response to God. And that includes the acknowledgement that we too depend upon God and that "The Earth is the Lord's" — the theme for this year's Christmas Bowl Appeal.

When we do this, then we will truly know that we do have a responsibility to look after each other and the natural environment.

Uniting Church minister Rev Lance Armstrong is a Member of the House of Assembly, Tasmanian Parliament.

Journey

Living by the Word

A Tale of a Phoenix

The English writer Virginia Woolf once wrote of the fire of London coursing through St Paul's Cathedral yet leaving the monument to the poet John Donne perfectly intact and unblemished by the flames.

The story I tell here is also the story of a phoenix. New life from the ashes. The story of a death and a resurrection.

It begins with the death of Virginia Woolf.

Plagued by incessant voices in her mind she believed she'd never be rid of, Virginia walked to the River Ouse, laid down her walking stick, put a heavy stone in her pocket and surrendered her life to the water's fluent currents.

Down into the hushed silences of the underworld I imagine her sinking; yielding to the 'non-being' she'd always found so difficult to express.

Death, as she said to her friend Vita, is "the one experience I shall never describe."

A few weeks ago on a Sunday afternoon I sat reading some letters from friends. The setting was idyllic. I leaned against a tree in an open and grassy paddock. Cows grazed. The sun touched the surface of a nearby lake.

The first few letters buoyed me up. I felt positive. Lifted.

The next letter dashed me to the ground. And while I realise this sounds dramatic, I felt the author of that letter thrust a stake deep into my heart and pin me to the

earth. The stake was that person's hatred for me. Their desire to hurt me. Their power to hurt me. Certainly it represented the way they'd commanded a voice in my mind for years — often without me realising. I'd let them become a yardstick for acceptability. And when I'd failed I'd let them condemn me.

The letters now felt like millstones in my lap. If I was quick, I could transfer them to my pockets and walk swiftly to the lake without anyone noticing. I could do as Virginia did and sink down — down into the cool fluidity of death and the cessation of voices.

It was a momentarily tempting solution. But a phrase flashed into my mind that stopped me: "If you don't choose your own priority somebody else will." (It wasn't a particularly religious phrase, and certainly not a Bible verse ...)

But it got me asking questions.

Would I let that other person's voice command my soul, my priority, even to the point of determining the time and place of my death? Should any other person wield such power in my life? Had I not elevated that person to the point of being a god — and worse, a god before my God, something the first commandment forbids?

Still floored, but with a racing mind, I could suddenly see another option. I could tell someone else about my hurt. Ask someone else to help me smash the idol

to smithereens. I could choose to live.

And so, as I stood up and stepped towards life, something curious appeared in my mind's eye.

I looked back to where I'd been reading and saw myself pinned to the ground. At the same time I saw a phantom of myself walking away from the dead carcass.

Virginia Woolf would perhaps name that kind of intensity of vision "a moment of being." James Joyce might call it an "epiphany."

I have no such fancy epithet for it.

But I knew then I had been crucified with Christ and that Christ truly is the resurrection and the life.

I knew then that it was for freedom Christ had set me free — not for submission to a yoke of human slavery (a yoke I realise now may even have been imaginary — but no less burdensome because my imagination had created it!).

I knew then that I should no longer bow down to, or serve, the other voices that can be so oppressive they might, however momentarily, make you want to drown yourself — or compel you to live life as a dead person.

A week or so after this experience I read of an El Salvadorean woman who said: "Our dead are very stubborn. They never die when they are killed. They rise again in the faithful remnant of women and men who keep up the fight."

I live now because I'm stubborn; because I wanted to keep fighting the voices. Because I wanted desperately (and still want desperately) to fight the good fight.

This then is the story of a death and resurrection. The story of a phoenix purified by fire.

This then is my own true story.

AND STILL I RISE.

— Marjorie Lewis-Jones ■

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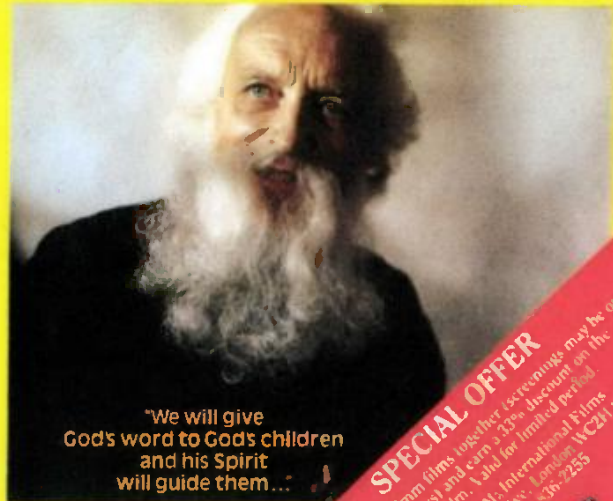
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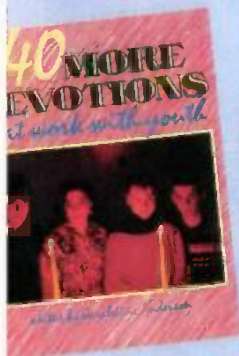
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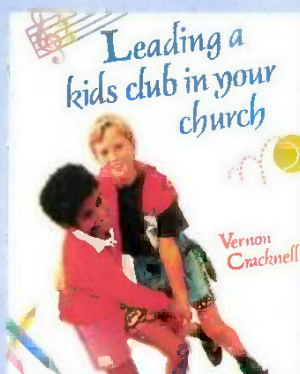
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