

# *fellow workers*

News from around the Presbyterian Church of Victoria

a publication of the PCV **State News Committee**

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## from the state news committee

Because of the significant progress that has been made in the production of the *fellow workers* publication over the last two editions, we are pleased to invite submission of advertisements, graphics and photos on a selective basis from the next edition. This is in advance of our plans mentioned in our previous edition and reflects the Committee's confidence in the publication's place and purpose in our denomination and its desire to see this asset maximize its effectiveness. Charges for advertisements can be given on application and please note that inclusion of advertisements, graphics and photos will be subject to normal editorial constraints. We hope members of our denomination will catch the vision for the role *fellow workers* can fulfil and send material for inclusion in the May edition that will keep Presbyterians across the State well informed and encouraged about our part of the Church's witness to the work of our mighty and faithful Lord God. *Ed.*

## food for thought

**W**e, along with the rest of the world, were overwhelmed with despair at the magnitude of human suffering in the wake of the recent earthquake and the tsunami that was to follow. But at Christmas, God intervened in human history and ushered in a new era, "the Last Days", and we in the Church were told to expect this kind of event as we wait our Lord's return. This expectation does not remove the problem at hand – dealing with the dead and injured, suppling food, water and shelter for the living.

In John 6:1-15, we read of a great crowd of people who needed to be fed. Mark tells us that Jesus took compassion on the crowd seeing them as "sheep without a shepherd". From a Christian perspective, this is how we would view almost all those effected by the tsunami, in fact, all those outside of the Kingdom of God, including some of our own families and friends.

In Palestine it was late in the day and it was an isolated area, so how could food be supplied for all these people? There was no aid available, no helicopters, so Jesus put it to His disciples. Philip's response was, "Where shall we buy bread for these people to eat?" Philip, although not the treasurer, was concerned about the cost of such a venture, eight month's wages worth of bread and each would only get a bite!

"If only!" A common enough statement. "If only" our problem was dealing with such a multitude; our churches cramped and over crowded! Not a com-

mon problem within the Presbyterian denomination today and even less a problem for those who live and minister in rural Victoria. We are small in number, aging, with few or no young people, and perhaps of greatest concern is that the cultural gap between Bible-believing Christians and our community is widening rapidly.

But this is only stating the obvious. What are the potential remedies for the problems at hand? For the tsunami victims it was the need for humanitarian aid like never seen before. For the disciples of Jesus this was to be a test for them, as Jesus "already had in mind what He was going to do" [John 6:6]. Andrew presents a boy with five loaves and two fish, perhaps more accurately, five biscuits and two sardines! All a bit pie-in-the-sky, but it illustrates the magnitude of the problem. This is a test for us also. What does Jesus have in mind to do in our time? What does the future hold? Will the Church end here? This is not a claim to fame any of us want, but unless we widen our desire beyond the physical to the spiritual needs of the Church, the spiritual needs of our families and our community, here it does end! For many, this will require a change of mind-set from "this is the Church and there is a welcome sign outside" to "we are the Church, please come in and join us." We all need to be growing spiritually, praying, reading our Bibles, attending Bible studies, regularly attending worship, inviting others to do the same and being involved in outreach programs.

There are solutions for all our prob-

*Continued next page*

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lems. The rebuilding of people's lives after the tsunami will take years, but it will happen. Jesus dealt with His problem at hand by praying, then breaking and sharing out this small amount until all were filled and with bulk left over. When it comes to the Church, what does Jesus

have in mind to do? It is true to say that this is His Church and He will maintain it. But it is to us He has given the great commission [Matt 28:18-20] and the great privilege of being born of God and of knowing the truth and freedom of our salvation. He will equip us abundantly for the

tasks before us (remember the twelve full baskets left over), so stretch the boundaries and step out in faith, trust with expectation for He will bless our faithfulness!

*Ian Leach  
Koroit-Port Fairy*

## *from the moderator*

**T**he three months since the General Assembly in October have been busy ones. Mairi and I have been able to visit congregations in Flinders and Melbourne East Presbyteries and I have had the opportunity to be at the Scotch College for the prize giving for the Year 12 boys and also at the PLC prize giving in the Concert Hall on 7 December. Both these occasions were very encouraging, with the Christian position of both schools clearly emphasized. In addition to these, I have taken part in inductions of Rev Marvin Hagans to Colac, and Rev Michael Wishart to Dromana/Mornington, at which there have been excellent attendances. It is always good to see friends from near and far gather for these occasions as it helps foster the family spirit within the denomination. The one licensing of an exit student at the end of last year was that of Andrew Gall at his home congregation of Geelong West, and our prayers follow Andrew and Kareen as they move to Narracorte in South Australia to commence ministry there.

The carol evening organized by the PYV at South Yarra on 11 December was well attended, with a large number of young people present. This type of gathering gives us all a good opportunity to come together for an encouraging time of fellowship, song, and Bible teaching. Put it down on your calendar to come this year!

On the wider front, the decision of the judge in the 'Catch the Fire' case was disturbing, though the penalty has yet to be announced and an appeal will take place. For the moment we can make contact with others of the same mind as ourselves, and plan for future action. We were opposed to the Anti-Vilification laws when they were introduced, and this case has highlighted the significant problems that may well be faced by evangelical Christians like ourselves. As recent as last November, group of denominational

leaders – the Heads of Churches – had arranged a meeting with the Premier, but unfortunately this did not eventuate. However, Mr. Bracks had promised to have a meeting in February. I was asked to nominate the most pressing issue I thought should be taken up with him, and drew attention to the anti-vilification issues. Now that the verdict has been announced in the 'Catch the Fire' case this matter becomes all the more pressing.

As I write Mairi and I are getting ready to leave for India. We look forward to being with John and Lynette Ellis and participating in their work at Dehra Dun. Mairi's brother, Dr Murdoch Murchison and his wife Maurine, are joining us for this visit, as they did two years ago when we visited the MERF headquarters in Cyprus. We found then that the presence of two couples from different countries were able to share together with the Christians we met, and also provided a wider base to whom we could tell about the work when we returned home.

Thanks to Peter Orchard and Ian Brown we now have a schedule of visits

for all the other congregations in Flinders and Melbourne East Presbyteries that we haven't yet visited. These will start early in February and continue through till the end of September.

### *The Tsunami Disaster*

**W**e have all been overwhelmed at the extent of the disaster caused by the earthquake off Sumatra. This is not the first time this has happened, though modern communications and visual images have brought it into every home. The eruption of Krakatoa in Sumatra in 1883 caused massive destruction, with boats being found several kilometres inland in Java.

How do we as Christians react to what has happened? We live in a world where the forces of nature are often unleashed and damage takes place to property and lives are lost. Last year four tornados hit Florida in the one year. Nearer home we have had tragic loss of life in the Grampians and at Warrnambool over the holiday period, though only on a minute

### *The content of an email sent 28.12.2004 From the Presbyterian Church of Australia*

**O**ur hearts have been touched by the stories from the areas affected by the tsunamis following the earthquake off Indonesia on Boxing Day. The prayers of God's faithful people are with all those struggling with loss of loved ones, homes, possessions and jobs and those who are trying to assess the situation and give whatever help they can for relief.

We suggest that congregations might hold retiring offerings over the next month or so with the money being directed to an overseas aid agency of

their choice to assist in the relief of those affected. After consultation with the Assistant National Director of APWM and until more is known from areas where we might have work it is better to help the immediate general situation.

Please encourage your congregations to give generously in Christ's Name to those so much in need in this situation.

*Very Rev. Jack Knapp  
Acting Moderator-General,  
Rev. Dr Paul Logan  
Clerk of Assembly*



scale to what has happened as a consequence of the tsunami.

Our first practical reaction must be to show our compassion for those in need and give to the relief efforts. The Bible tells us that ‘as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who

are of the household of faith’ [Gal. 6:10]. This means that while we support the general efforts to help, yet we have a particular interest in meeting the needs of fellow Christians who have lost so much. Very quickly MERF (Middle East Reformed Fellowship) sent funds to help the believers in Sri Lanka and it has opened specific accounts for all the other major disaster areas. It and other evangelical agencies such as the TEAR Fund (The Evangelical Alliance Relief Fund) can direct our giving to worthy causes with the confidence that the money will be used wisely and appropriately as an expression of Christian compassion.

But there are deeper lessons for us all. Everyday life and the fun of holidays were the major concerns of many who died. We need to be reminded that life can swiftly be taken from us, and a living faith in the

Lord Jesus is the most important thing to have. None of us knows what may happen tomorrow, and rather than plotting the future as though it is absolutely certain, we should say: ‘If the Lord wills, we shall live and do this or that’ [James 4:15]. In my boyhood days, many Christians would add to a comment about a planned event: “It will take place D.V.” (an abbreviation for the Latin words, Deo volente, that mean, “God willing”).

This earth on which we live is not the final dwelling place of God’s people. We look for a new heaven and a new earth. We look for an abiding city, whose builder is God himself [Heb. 11:16]. Let’s encourage ourselves with the Christian certainties and tell others of our hope in Christ.

*Allan Harman  
State Moderator*

## *pyv summer camp 2004-2005 – celebrating 10 years of God’s works*



**F**ew would appreciate just what an enormous task it is to run a PYV Summer Camp. Accommodating, feeding, entertaining and teaching up to 120 people is a task for which only the brave will volunteer, yet the eternal rewards keep us coming back year after year. This year was a milestone for PYV as we celebrated our tenth Summer Camp, since a leap of faith was taken to move the camp to the Christmas – New Year period and to rename PFA, PYV. So it was a great opportunity for the leadership and campers of PYV to look back on the mighty works God has achieved through the annual PYV Summer Camp. I know from my own personal experience that the eight consecutive Summer Camps I have attended have been the most intense periods of learning from God’s word and sharing in the wonderful camaraderie of PYV’ers.

Marking the occasion we made the theme of the camp “Rewind: celebrating the best of the past ten years.” It was fitting then, that we headed to Shiloh Ranch which is now managed by PYV’s first President; Marton Murany. Camp Convenor Kirsty Watson was baptised in her new role with some of the worst weather camp has seen in its history, speaker John Diacos fought bravely with the sound of the tin roof to be heard. However, the weather turned and John’s

talks on the book of Deuteronomy just kept getting better. John helped us understand how the Old Testament was relevant to our lives and how Jesus fulfilled everything in the book of Deuteronomy. Of special interest was his explanation of how we are to apply the laws found in the book in this day and age. John’s dedication to his role as this year’s speaker was demonstrated in him taking extra work shifts in the weeks prior to ensure he could attend and then staying up late perfecting his talks. This was greatly appreciated.

As the sun shone the excitement of camp peaked as we went horse riding, played soccer, flew along the flying fox and tried our hand at archery. However, much of our time and creative flare was consumed by the now-traditional movie competition. This year’s group task was to create music film clips and the competition between leaders for the coveted prize continues to rise. PYV’s resident director of artistic expression, Boyd Owen came out with a well-choreographed exposition of Aretha Franklin’s ‘Respect’ while campers will never forget Andrew Burns’s role as a



*PYV Summer Camp 2004-2005*

not-so-synchronised-swimmer in his group's rendition of Ben Harper's 'Steal my kisses.' The prize however went to David Gillard's tightly rehearsed black and white epic portrayal of U2's 'Beautiful Day.' The quality of the movies continues to rise every year!

New Year's Eve on Summer Camp just continues to get better each year. Perfect weather enabled us to have an outdoor event this year which set a relaxed atmosphere. The standard of costumes was exceptional, as always, and Boyd's all-singing-all-dancing program for the night left everyone entertained. Having watched our videos on the big screen, Reuben Owen mixed things up on the dance floor as we counted down the New Year before praying in the New Year around a bonfire.

With some much fun it would be easy to define one of those events as the highlight of the camp, however this is not the case. Throughout the talks the groundsman of Shiloh campsite stood inconspicuously up the back listening to John's talks. After striking up conversations with many of the leaders and actually joining a study group, the groundsman's heart found the end of his long journey close by. So it was with amazing rejoicing that on the second last night of camp the groundsman prayed for forgiveness and gave his life to Christ. It was this event that put everything else about the camp into perspective.

Finally a HUGE thank you to Kirsty Watson for an amazing job as first-time convenor, to Nick and Alex Venn for giving her amazing support, to the whole leadership team for showing Christ-like service, to Matt and Kathy James for being such a great example to the leaders and to John and Elisabeth Diacos for their sacrifice. Make sure to log on to [www.pyv.org.au](http://www.pyv.org.au) to see camp photos and group videos, to buy a copy of the talks or camp t-shirt, (we now accept credit cards!!!) and to discuss the camp in the forums. See you next year!

*Russell Graham (PYV Councillor)*

### Other events to note:

AGM - 9:30am, Saturday 12 February, check [www.pyv.org.au](http://www.pyv.org.au) for more details. (as we are switching from a financial year to calendar year)

Senior Camp (Year 11 to 20 years of age) Friday 11 – Monday 14 March (Labor Day Weekend, @ Kangarooie Campsite?)

Outlook Camp (21 to 35 years of age) Friday 22 – Monday 25 April (@ Shiloh Ranch)

## religious tolerance?

**T**he long running case being heard by the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal against Pastors Daniel Nalliah and Daniel Scot of the Catch the Fire Ministries by three Australian-born converts to the Muslim faith was completed on Friday, 17th December 2004, when Judge Higgins found in favour of the complainants. His decision and supporting comments (140 pages) have excited much discussion in the daily press from Christians of all persuasions, some clearly approving of the result and others deploring it. There is much to consider in what Judge Higgins has said and the possible legal and spiritual ramifications of his determination for all evangelical Christians. Those gifted in interpreting the law have their work cut out for them. Judge Higgins will soon hand down any penalties he regards as appropriate and, almost certainly, the two defendants will appeal.

What is certain is that now this legislation has been tested it has been found wanting in its prime purpose, which is to maintain religious harmony, and may instead be seen, by its very existence, to have encouraged and fostered the very thing it purported to prevent – religious intolerance. It should not be a surprise; ill-conceived legislation can only produce bad outcomes. Christians should not be doormats in the face of such setbacks and must use every legitimate and God-honouring means to seek the repeal of this law. Meanwhile, do we follow Christ only as long as He keeps life comfortable for us? He tells us that being chosen by Him makes us enemies of the world [Jn.15:18-25] – not a popular part of His gospel but a vital aspect of the truth we revere.

*Ed.*

## breaking the silence – the big noise in accountability

**I**n recent times (perhaps the last year or so), all of our ministers and elders together with selected other office bearers within our congregations have become more familiar with the document Breaking the Silence. This document was approved by our General Assembly as a blueprint for accountability in our relationships with those within our congregations, those who might come for counselling, or those who, for whatever reason, come into contact with our church leaders in the process of their teaching, pastoral, disciplinary or organizational roles. It is now mandatory under our Assembly regulations for all elders and ministers to have read, discussed and formally adopted (as a session record) this document and to have notified our Church Office to that end. This is a pre-requisite for every session and board if your minister, elders and congregation in general are to come under the protection of the denomination's current insurance arrangements. If this has not been done, then you should contact the Church Office immediately and check your situation.

If you haven't heard of Breaking the Silence, then you are behind the eight ball (so to speak) because the document, which has its origin in the PCNSW, is already at version III and is several hundred pages in length, containing legal information, situational directions, and information about handling any potentially compromising situation that could prompt litigation. Sadly, instances of this kind, whether based on truth or vexatious, are already a fact within our denomination and we must take every care to ensure that opportunity for litigation is minimized by educating our leaders and members about their need to exercise wisdom and propriety in all our dealings with those who form part of our church lives. Breaking the Silence is one means by which such care can be taken. This year, the Christian Education and Nurture Committee hopes to hold two information seminars to help members of the PCV to familiarize themselves with this document. Stay tuned.

*Ed.*

# news & new initiatives from the ptc

## appointment of new lecturer in missiology and asian outreach

**A** special general assembly in mid-December approved the appointment of Dr Felix Chung as a part-time lecturer at the Presbyterian College for the next four years. Felix, a Hong Kong born Chinese Australian, has been serving as pastor, missionary, and Bible College lecturer in different cultural settings for more than 10 years. He is also involved in different missionary ministries, publishing articles in mission magazines and visiting overseas Bible colleges and churches to lecture mission-related courses. He is married to Mei, who has also been serving with him as a missionary and church worker for over 10 years. They have one child named Joseph.

Felix will lecture in his field of missiology, teaching such subjects as cultural anthropology, cross-cultural ministry and issues in missiology. He is also being appointed as coordinator in an Asian programme to reach out to the growing number of evangelical Christians from Asian countries arriving in Australia and some of our churches. There are already 70–80 Chinese churches alone in Melbourne and more students from mainland China studying in Australia than the United States. It is hoped that over the next few years Dr Chung will be able to attract a number of those Christian younger and older people to study at the PTC. In this way our college can have a share in helping train tomorrow's leaders in Australia and elsewhere in Asia.

## summer school of theology

**F**or a week in February (7th – 11th) the college is running a popular school of theology comprising "A biblical theology survey of the Bible" with Douglas Milne from 9.00am-11.00am and "The church in the postmodern context" with Felix Chung, from 11.00am to 1.00pm.

The last time this happened was 1991 when a good number of people from many churches attended the sessions. The school is open to all Christian people and is not intended for specialists in Bible knowledge or theology. There is no charge for the sessions in order to encourage people to attend and benefit from

these times of fellowship and learning. Plan to be there and bring someone with you!

## CCES training days

**T**he college is hosting two training days for anyone interested in being accredited as a teacher of religious education in the state schools. Participation in these training days is required for accreditation. Teaching RE in the schools is one great way of expressing our mission as followers of Jesus Christ who set the example and tone of mission by his own mission to the world. The sessions run from 10.00am – 3.00pm on Tuesdays, February 22nd and 1st of March.

## ministers' conference

**T**he Minister's conference in 2005 is being held on Wednesday and Thursday not Tuesday and Wednesday as before. The key-note speaker will be Bishop Peter Brain from North Sydney who will speak on issues confronting and troubling Christian ministers in Christian leadership work today. If you are planning to come the best preparation would be a read through Peter Brain's book *Going the Distance* (Matthias Media, 2004). There will be other speakers taking single sessions. Conference registration forms giving all the information on the conference will be sent out in the new year.

## friends of the PTC

**'F**riends of the PTC' has been running since February 2004 providing volunteer support to the functions of the Theological College. There are four meetings held per year with a view of conducting two "Friends" events to raise awareness of the College and/or raise additional funds.

The main aims of "Friends" are:

- Praying for the needs of the College and the College community;
- Raising the profile of the College through the distribution of information to congregations;
- Attending, supporting and participating in the public meetings of the College;
- Encouraging staff and students as opportunities arise;
- Investigating means of and assisting in raising funds for the College.

Membership is open to anyone willing to assist in the work of the College.

"Friends" welcomes new members and we are currently looking for people to assist in the following ways: artistic/graphic design; catering co-ordinator (e.g. for Graduation Service); catering in general; audio-visual assistance (video taping, audio, recording); landscape design; gardening in general; assisting with transport (e.g. for visiting lecturers), providing billets (for visiting lecturers country people). If you can help in one of these ways or in some other way not listed, please contact us.

We are looking for this additional help to give scope for expanding the work of the College. The College is a valuable resource, not just for Presbyterians but other denominations as well. Different ideas and assistance will not go astray in building a better and wider reputation as the College seeks to prepare men & women for future ministry and missionary service.

Friends assisted the students of the College in a working bee as well as co-ordinating the catering for the annual Commencement and Graduation services at the College. These functions have eased the workload on the faculty. An information evening was also held during the Assembly week to give opportunity for Friends from the country to be involved and hear more of the work of the College.

Our annual general meeting will be held on Thursday evening 10 February 2005 at the Presbyterian Theological College commencing at 7:30pm. A light supper will be served afterwards. New office bearers (Convenor, Deputy Convenor, Secretary & Treasurer) will be elected for the forth-coming year at this meeting. A short planning meeting will also be held to confirm a timetable of events for the coming year.

'Striving together for the faith of the Gospel' — Philippians 1:27

For a brochure containing more information or to sign up as a Friend of PTC, please write to The Secretary, Friends of PTC, 684 Elgar Road Box Hill North 3129 or e-mail [friendsofptc@presbyterian-college.org](mailto:friendsofptc@presbyterian-college.org).

Mark Smith

# around the presbyteries & churches

## presbytery of bendigo

### He's in the Army now – but as a Chaplain

**R**ev Martin de Pyle, formerly the Pastor at Swan Hill, reflects on his recent decision to enter the Army as a full time Chaplain.

I have a confession to make. I left the 2003 General Assembly early. By mid Thursday afternoon of Assembly week I was back in Swan Hill and seated at my desk making a half-hearted attempt to catch up on the mail. Then came the phone call I had least expected. The Principal Chaplain of the Australian Army rang to offer me a posting with the 2nd Cavalry Regiment (Reconnaissance) in Darwin.

As he spoke of the work that was to be done and of the gospel opportunities that continue to present themselves to the chaplains of the Australian Defence Forces, I was challenged to discuss the posting further with Kaylene and give the matter serious prayerful consideration. Having worked as a Reserve Army Chaplain since 1998, we both had an appreciation of the challenges and the family cost involved but also some appreciation of the work that I will be involved in and the many opportunities for the Kingdom of God that military Chaplaincy provides.

On the 24th of January we drove north to Darwin experiencing something of the bitter-sweet. As a family we were sad to leave the congregations of Swan Hill and Kerang that we had become so very close to. We were also looking forward to working with the 450 men who are a part of 2nd Cavalry Regiment (Reconnaissance) and beginning to engage in the opportunities that God has prepared for us.

The Regiment is operationally very active as they deploy some of the most capable and technologically advanced equipment within the Australian Army. The primary vehicle of the Australian Cavalry today is the ASLAV which is designed to conduct reconnaissance and engage in offensive, defensive and delaying actions. It is capable of firing two types of ammunition - high explosive and armour piercing. It is also capable of engaging targets out to a distance of 2000m and has an effective night fighting capability.

2nd Cavalry is a Regiment that always has significant numbers of their soldiers deployed overseas. There are unique issues faced and problems encountered and it is only the gospel that can provide the answers. So to be employed by the Australian Army to work as a Presbyterian minister among soldiers and their families as they face these issues is a unique opportunity. While the normal model of ministry is through a local parish, Army Chaplaincy is a specialist extension of that work.

As the Army promotes and defends the interests of Australia, so also the church goes out through its chaplains, to promote and defend the name of Christ within the Army. It is a great privilege to be given the opportunity to minister to many people who would never otherwise come into contact with a Church congregation. Please pray that God will give me the grace to faithfully defend His name and effectively communicate His love.

*Martin de Pyle*

*Martin will remain a member of the Presbytery of Bendigo and is happy to keep the members of the Presbyterian Church of Victoria informed of what is happening in the world of military chaplaincy by providing the occasional article. Ed.*

## using first gifts for Christ

**M**y initial training was as a medical scientist and I worked in a pathology laboratory for 11 years. Then I trained for the ministry and in a sense all that previous knowledge and training was wasted – I haven't worked in a laboratory since 1979. Among my colleagues are optometrists, audiologists, medical doctors, school teachers, pilots, plumbers, electricians, social workers, nurses, and a whole range of other occupations.

For many years, my thinking has been that the Church should be using the same sorts of methods in Australia as missionaries use overseas i.e., using primary qualifications as the means to establish a ministry in a town. By this I mean using say a school teacher to establish a congregation where there is no Presbyterian work.

I contemplated doing this in about 1985. A private pathology company advertised they wanted to establish a new laboratory in central Queensland. After looking at a map, I determined they would set up in either Longreach or Charleville. A phone call to their personnel manager informed me they were considering Charleville. A pity – because a Presbyterian congregation was established there.

Early in 2004, Prof Harman (Chairman of the Trusts Corporation) informed the Presbytery of Kilnoorat a trust was available for work in Casterton. There is no Presbyterian work in this beautiful, prosperous country town of almost 2,000 people.

This trust could fund a church planter for about 3 years – not long enough to build up a self-sustaining congregation. The Presbytery does not want to go down the path of using up the funds and then having to prop up a struggling congregation. Rather, the Presbytery has opted to seek a church planter who can use his primary training to support him and his family while establishing a new work.

We are asking a lot. For the PCV it is a whole new ball game though in the US bi-vocational ministry has been functioning quite successfully for more than 20 years. We are seeking someone who will commit to the Casterton community and become a part of it. He will work in the community to provide for himself and will be asked to establish a new congregation. This will be a long-term project as is not for the faint-hearted. From the PCV, comes support, encouragement, a manse, and funding for the necessary start up equipment.

The Presbytery seeks your prayers that God will provide the right person for this new work.

*Keith Bell  
Hamilton*

## hume: a church on a mission

**W**hen Scott Kroeger took over the position of minister at the Hume in October this year, elders told him that there were a few issues that had been put off awaiting the arrival of a new minister. Specifically, the weak attendance of the evening service and whether the two congregations at Craigieburn and Greenvale should combine or alter times of meeting.

A church survey was conducted and two decisions came out of that. The elders decided to cease the evening worship as the survey clearly indicated that future attendance by the majority of

congregation was not likely in the current format. It was agreed that occasional events be scheduled surrounding special interests and teaching topics. These include film nights and critique, contemporary Issues discussion, surveys of the Bible, doctrine classes, evangelism training, and music classes. The congregation then voted on whether to combine or meet separately at different times. The vote was overwhelmingly in favour of combining into one larger congregation with a view to planting another church in the Craigieburn area in the next 3-4 years. During the congregational meeting and AGM which brought about this decision, they also voted to sell the manse which needed extensive repairs and renovation. This has now been approved by presbytery and the sale underway.

Elder Rob Myers with his wife Heather have announced that they are seeking a call to Seymour to do permanent supply preaching in the new year. They will be doing at least three days a week in this new work and will be living in the manse in Seymour during those times. The Session granted Rob six months leave from his eldership duties in order to pursue this call. As a church we are delighted that God has raised up workers from our midst to preach the Gospel in the ripe fields of harvest in the Seymour area. We wish every blessing for Rob and Heather and pray God will use them mightily. We will have a commissioning service before they leave us for that field of ministry.

In the new year, Church Officer training will begin as we seek to fill the void left by Elder Rob Myers, but also to develop the Diaconate. New members classes are in progress now at year's end.

The congregational services on Sunday mornings will be taking on a whole new look with the purchase of a data projector and laptop computer. All music will be seen from it on overheads as well as the service components and sermon outlines, readings and other relevant things. Plans are also being set for the formation of a contemporary music group and choir as we have some very talented people in the congregation. A focus on and exposure to the arts and music as they integrate our with our Christian heritage will be emphasised in services.

We look forward to God's blessing in an exciting New Year.

*Scott Kroeger*

## *a day in the market place at rochester*

Jesus told His disciples that the gates of hell would not prevail against them and His Kingdom. In the month of November Rochester had a "Well Being Day". There was a host of different groups selling their wares and religions. It was held on Sunday and none of the Churches were invited (perhaps an oversight).

I went along anyway (after Church) with my colleague the local AOG pastor. He set up a stall offering to pray for people, giving out tracts and New Testaments. Towards the end of the day we had a prayer time together. I had several opportunities to speak with those running stalls, a Mormon selling healthy food, a Reflexologist, a women selling gems stones and other items and women selling New Ways products (all stalls were run by women).

My approach was similar with each one. I asked them about how their personal spiritual journey had got them to this point in their lives. Basically, each one responded by saying that their product or religion had improved their lives. Then I asked them what they believed about eternity, after all you may improve your life but you still die. At this point their confidence seemed to

diminish. I had several opportunities of sharing that I believed in a personal God who loved, who was Just, not a force to tap into and use. You can use the power of a river but a river does not love you, a river has no sense of justice. Christ is the one who brings connection where there is disconnection but in a relational and personal way. I was able to give each a tract for being a good sport. One of these people confronted me before I got started. She asked, "What was I doing here" I responded that as a Pastor I am concerned for people's spiritual journey and most importantly their eternity.

It was invigorating to talk openly about spiritual issues to people who are at least interested in the topic even though they have chosen the broad path. I found that they were the ones who were challenged and perhaps intimidated. Not many really understood what they believed was in fact a religion. Some thought that what they were doing was scientific (that was scary).

There is no well being without Christ, and no matter how happy or prosperous a life may be it counts for nothing if it is Christless. So lets get out there in the market place and offer Christ who is the priceless gift who is given and received by faith not peddled for money or for profit, and who is definitely not earned by works. The gates of Hell will not prevail against us.

*Chris Perona*

## *mildura and the PIM ministry*

Just after Christmas it will be 12 months since we moved to Mildura. It has been an eventful year and we have much to praise and thank our Lord for. Calum and Bethany have finally settled in to life in the country. They did not like leaving Melbourne at all. Bethany was the first to settle and make friends at the school across the road. She also started country music singing lessons and that helped. She sang once or twice at the Country Music Festival here in Mildura back in September. Calum was asked to join the school football team, which he enjoyed as he is over 6 foot and so always won the ruck contests. He has also joined the local Nichols Point U16 cricket team that started up this year. That was the turning point for him.

Yvonne and I are making some good friends and getting to know the locals in the area. It's a slow job building friendships from scratch and also looking for opportunities to gently share the gospel. For most of this year Yvonne has been having some mums from the school and one or two from church come to the house on a Friday morning for craft. We have also started a Youth Group that meets at the local hall down the road and this has been a good contact point for meeting local families.

We have been greatly encouraged by the support we have received from the people in the congregation. As a congregation we have faced a few challenges this year and to their credit they have responded beyond our expectation to every one. We rejoice in the Lord over this. We are thankful to God for the few new faces that have been seen in the congregation since we arrived. Most of them are "out of towners" who have moved into the district for work or personal reasons. At the start of July we began an evening service to offer people an alternative to the morning service if they could not make it for some reason and also to allow us to be more modern and contemporary with our choice of music in an effort to reach the younger generations. It is slow going but God is bringing about the increase gradually.

From the PIM side of my work it has taken us all time to adjust to my new work regime. Being away every second week

on patrol for PIM makes the weeks pass very quickly. I find that I have to complete two to four sermons in the week I am home as well as fit in visits and other church related business. So far God has enabled me to manage this. I have yet to completely cover my patrol area for the first time. Although it is the smallest of all the patrols (about one and a half to two times the size of Tasmania) it is far bigger than it looks on a map. We have managed to call back on some folk more than once and it is encouraging to find a warm greeting when we do. One young mum even wanted to know if I would still be around in 10 to 15 years time so I could officiate at her daughter's wedding. Occasionally we come across Christians living on properties and it is a great source of encouragement to them and us to spend some quality time in Christian fellowship.

Yvonne and I would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone from the wider Church, both in Victoria and other states, for their prayer support and interest in our work. We thank every one who has donated items for the gift packs we hand out. The drought continues to affect much of NSW and people are still doing it very tough. We look forward to what the Lord has in store for us over the new year.

*Michael Willsmore*

### *appointment of a part time pastoral worker at SEMPA*

**T**he South East Mallee Patrol Area has been blessed to have Jared Keath preaching every Sunday and running the Bible study for that last two years. He is a young guy who was discipled by Darren Middleton. Over the last few years it has been my pleasure to continue Darren's work. This year the Parish have asked Jared to be their pastor 4 days a week. It is our hope that Jared will grow in his gifts and that the Parish will prosper under the preaching and ministry of the gospel. Jared is happily married to Jasmine and has one daughter; Esther and another child on the way. Please pray that God will bless this family as they seek to prosper the Kingdom of Christ in SEMPA.

### *new ministry begins at colac*

**O**n 21st November 2004, the Reverend Marvin Hagans was inducted at Scots Presbyterian Church, Colac after an eighteen month vacancy. The Moderator of the Geelong presbytery, Reverend Alan Harman led the proceedings.

Invitations were sent to many people and a large crowd turned out for the occasion. We had to put out extra seats and the ushers had a busy time in the lead up to the service. Bob Thomas, Moderator General of the Presbyterian Church of Australia was present, as were members of the Geelong Presbytery, our own congregation and quite a lot of visitors including local councillors and funeral directors. Together with members of his own family, a number of people from Reverend Hagans' former Geelong congregation came along and some from a church he formerly pastored in Melbourne.

Professor Harman welcomed everyone and I was glad to notice that he made a point of saying he was especially pleased to welcome the local councillors because of the desire of Presbyterian churches to have a warm and close relationship with local government. This was one of the things that attracted me to the denomination some years ago having read about the history of the Scottish reformation and the struggles of our forefathers in the faith with the civil authorities.

Rev. Hagans said it was unusual to preach at your own induction but it was his honour on this occasion. I confess I pay special attention when a man is preaching to a large crowd of people that includes dignitaries for the opportunity to gain insight into a man's character that may not be apparent when preaching to the regular congregation. His text was "I am not ashamed of the gospel" and Marvin demonstrated that he was able to be true to his own mission statement which he outlined prior to dealing with the text; commitment to Christ, openness to what God is doing in our day, loyalty to Presbyterian principles, acceptance of people and compassion for people.

Following the late afternoon service there was a supper in the hall during which a number of speeches were made. It was impressive to hear Marvin's former parishioners tell of the affection and esteem they had for him and Margaret and we felt that we have only just begun to get to know them. We thank God that we will have the benefit of Marvin's ministry here in Colac.

*Arnold Rowntree*

### *michael wishart ordained and inducted into dromana/mornington parish*

**D**romana Presbyterian Church was the setting on a pleasant Friday evening, 17th December for the ordination and induction of Dr Michael Wishart into the charge of Dromana Mornington. The Church was filled to overflowing for the happy occasion, with rousing praise of all within the congregation and the whole-hearted participation of various members of the parish. Ably directed by the Flinders moderator, John Rickard, and supported by the clerk, Ian Brown, this long anticipated occasion was amply celebrated. That very Presbyterian part of any ordination and/or induction, the giving of the right hand of fellowship, was especially impressive as a large number of local ministers from other Christian denominations also took part along with the Presbyterian ministers and elders present. We were blessed with the very best of expositional preaching from the Rev David Schulz (Michael's parish minister and mentor) preaching from Isaiah 52 on the grand theme of God's covenant relationship with his people, whilst Dr Allan Harman, our current State Moderator, gave a short, pithy and practical charge to minister and congregation. Afterwards, at the usual lavish supper, Elder John Nicholson warmly welcomed Michael and Jenny Wishart with their four children, Jessica, Peter, Thea and Jonathon. It did one good to be in the presence of godly company for a significant occasion, especially with a parish in good and confident heart. The service and supper afterward were full of warmth and praise to God and great expectation for the future.

*David Palmer*

## *contribute*

**Y**our contributions to *fellow workers* are welcome! The deadline for contributions to the next issue is 8th April 2005. Photographs should be digital and sent by email if possible.

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