

fellow workers

News from around the Presbyterian Church of Victoria

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

fellow workers 39 ford street, ringwood vic. 3134 editor rev. andrew venn phone (03) 9870 5182
fax (03) 9870 7452 email fellowworkers@pcvic.org.au website www.fellowworkers.pcvic.org.au

index

Great prophet, great depression	1
From the moderator's diary	2
Around the Presbyteries & Churches	3
Same country, different world	5
From Embers to a Flame	6
PYV	6
A personal odyssey	7
Good news for the busy	8
Malawi mission	8

great prophet, great depression

1 Kings 19

In spite of the fact that Elijah had won a great victory on Mt Carmel, with an indisputable demonstration of God's power in calling down fire from heaven, Jezebel remained a 'true believer' in Baal and threatened to kill Elijah immediately. Elijah had the track record of a prophet who was not easily intimidated, yet, "Elijah was afraid, and ran for his life".

As the story unfolds, we see that not only does Elijah run away from Jezebel in fright, but he also hides in the desert; tries to resign from the ministry; declares that he is as worthless bag of bones and feels so bad that he wants to die (and prays to that effect). Then, to make matters worse, Elijah goes 'absent without leave' for at least six weeks and is fearful, self pitying, and irrational as he hides in the desert.

What is the matter with Elijah? He is

suffering from a reactive depression, which has been caused by the classic formula of constantly battling against impossible odds, physical exhaustion, poor diet (flour and oil!) and an un-resolvable personal conflict (with Jezebel). Elijah was after all, just a man, and he had reached the limits of his endurance, physical, emotional and spiritual.

What was God's reaction to Elijah's crash into depression? Firstly, the Lord does something completely out of 'left field'. The sleeping Elijah is awakened by the sound of an angelic voice and the smell of something irresistible to a hungry man – the fragrance of freshly baked bread. This 'appeal to the senses' is an inspired touch (no pun intended) for it really says to Elijah: "So you want to die do you Elijah? Well, just take a whiff of this freshly baked bread before you die,

Continued page 2

contribute

Your contributions to *fellow workers* are welcome! *fellow workers* is now published every quarter (March, June, September & December). The deadline for contributions to the next issue is **May 19th**. Photographs should be digital and sent by email if possible.

SEE FOR YOURSELF

Have you seen the exciting new curriculum of bible teaching being prepared for our secondary level young people? If not, ask your minister to show it to you. Year A is complete and being used in congregations around the State. **Year B Term 1 (How the Lord Jesus saves his people)** is soon available. With the assistance of the Allan Bequest, CENC is able to offer you a great deal – on purchase of the teacher's book for \$19.80 you can have as many student books as you need – **FREE**. This offer cannot last! Make sure you order your copies now for the benefit of the rising generation in the church.



**Year B
Term 1
available
soon!**

For further information contact:
Joan Milne - 03 9886 7670
email - jmilne@netspace.net.au
fax - 9886 3007
or check out the website
www.seeforyourself.com.au

From page 1

just in case you might want to eat and live instead."

Elijah decides to "eat and live" – and there is not a hint of rebuke or reprimand from the Lord. Indeed, Elijah is left to sleep for an unspecified time, before the angel returns with more food and drink as he sets off on his forty day march to Mt. Horeb.

Elijah has been on the run-away trail for seven weeks before the Lord finally asks him: "What are you doing here Elijah?" This is a very gentle reminder that there is 'kingdom work' still to be done. The Lord asks the question twice, and twice Elijah displays his ignorance, and yet, the Lord does not correct him at this point. The Lord listens to Elijah without judgment or rebuke. But what is even more surprising is the Lord's response to Elijah's seven

week sojourn: He commissions Elijah for some new prophetic tasks.

Only when Elijah has been given his new commission, does the Lord say – almost as an afterthought – "Oh, and by the way Elijah, you're not nearly as alone as you thought you were. There are SEVEN THOUSAND others who have not bowed the knee to Baal!"

The gentle and gracious way that God deals with the depressed prophet is a beautiful demonstration of God's fatherly care and non-judgmental treatment of the depressed believer. It ought to be our model of treatment too.

Many of us believers have shared Elijah's depression, because many of us struggle with loneliness, unresolvable conflict, and physical and emotional exhaustion. For some, like the great 19th century preacher, Charles Spurgeon and the hymn-writer and poet, William

Cowper, it is a life-long affliction which returns again and again.

You will be blessed indeed if you have friends who will do for you what the Lord did for Elijah during his depression. Friends who will let you sleep and rest as long as is necessary (12 weeks in the wilderness!); make an appeal to your senses (sight, smell, sound, touch) that re-awakens your joie de vivre; listen without judgment or rebuke, encourage you to believe that God still has a "commission" for such "vessels of clay", and assure you that you are not alone in your affliction – there are "...thousands..." of others.

Rev Theo Fishwick

Theo was, until recently, the Presbyterian Chaplain to the Royal Children's Hospital but found it necessary to resign due to ill health brought on by the burden of his work there.

from the moderator's diary

During the ministry of the Rev. Ken Brown, the St. David's Church was purchased back from the Uniting Church. Sunday November 6th, marked the twentieth anniversary of the recommencement of Services in St. David's Presbyterian Church, Kyabram as, along with visitors who joined with the local congregation, we recalled the last twenty years of concerted efforts to reinstate the congregation. Please pray for the present minister, Rev. Kyung Ee and his wife Sarah and their family. Particularly pray for Sarah's recovery from serious illness. It was very encouraging to see the congregation in such good heart.

On Thursday, November 10th, Marilyn and I worshipped with a small but dedicated group of Home Mission Workers. Conducted by the Rev. Graham Nicholson of Hawthorn, the Annual Thanksgiving Service in the Scots Church, Melbourne, was followed by a luncheon in Scots Hall. The commitment to the support of the H.M.W.A. remains strong, even though many members are beyond retiring age.

While other Theological Colleges are experiencing a drop in numbers, six students graduated from the Presbyterian Theological College last year at the Colleges' end of year service held at Canterbury Presbyterian Church on

Friday, November 25th. Parishes from Bairnsdale in the east to Ararat in the west now have full time ministries headed up by these most recent graduates. The high standard of scholarship attained was expressed in the long prize list. Please pray that God will provide the manpower to meet every position vacant across our Presbyteries.

Christmas involves coming together for Carols. Thanks to the Rev. Bruce Riding, minister at Williamstown, for hosting the PYV Carols Service on Saturday, December 10th. The large church was filled and the orchestra was superb. In an increasingly secular world, praise God for the young people of our Church and please support them in every possible way.

Presbyterian Ladies College Speech Night held on Monday, December 12th, was both special and spectacular. Special, in that recognition was made of the service given by the retiring Principal, Mrs. Elizabeth Ward, and her role in developing the school as a school of excellence with an obvious Christian ethos. Spectacular, in the student presentation which seemed to involve every student in the school. If the standard of scholarship matches the standard of music (as I am sure it does) then it is first rate. The backing of the Board, under the Chairmanship of the Rev. Douglas Robertson, is obvious. This is

surely a school doing great things for God.

As Christmas came close, a highlight for me was being invited to give a brief Christmas message on Christian FM radio station, Light FM 89. Melbourne people can regularly tune in provided Light FM are able to secure a renewal of their licence. The competition for airwaves is keen so, on behalf of our Church, I have sent a letter of support. Our Assembly made a grant of \$75,000 to help set Light FM some years back. Please pray for this special mission in Mont Albert.

Finally, and fittingly for me, there was a Christmas card from the Governor of Victoria, Mr. John Landy and his wife, depicting the Australian Youth Ambassadors at the Archi World Expo 2005 in Nagoya, Japan. I say, fittingly for me, as along with parish visitation in the presbyteries of Kilnoorat and Geelong, plans are in hand for May this year when Marilyn and I are looking forward to expressing personally the greetings of the General Assembly to Sue Poynter, a member of the O.M.F. team in Sapporo, (Hokkaido) and, if possible, to the Presbyterian Church of Japan.

*Rev. Graeme Weber
Moderator of the Presbyterian Church
of Victoria*

around the presbyteries & churches

new work in sunbury

Hi, we attend the Hume Presbyterian Church at Greenvale but live in Sunbury, so you can understand that we find it hard to attend the other weekday small groups that Hume runs due to constraints of distance and time and our work commitments. So, we thought it would be a good idea to start something in this area (actually, it was Scott Kroeger who suggested it). We envisage this new work would be one where people can come who might not be attending any Christian fellowship but would like to meet other people and study God's word. At this stage, the plan is that we would meet once a month or, if there is more interest, perhaps fortnightly. We already have one family who has committed. Our goal is to have a fun time getting to know and encourage one another as we pray and learn from Him and grow in God's grace and love.

If you are "between" churches and like the idea of being part of a church plant, please call us. Our contact number is ph. 9740 5810 or e-mail us at zacann@net-space.net.au.

In Christ.

Zac and Ann Capari

pastoral visitation on the bowling green

When Mike Wharton arrived at Mordialloc to take up an appointment in the parish he soon discovered that a number of his congregation were involved in the local bowls club. Mike's mother had been a lawn bowler for many years and he had always had a fascination with the game. It was not too long before he accepted an invitation from one of his elders to come and try his hand at the game.

While parish and other commitments restrict his involvement in many pennant games, he does get opportunity to join in the occasional competition game. Recently



Left to right: Carl Vorrath, Mike Wharton, John Dickenson, Mary Casley, Glad Myles, Ray Martin and Edna Martin

he played a pennant game as 'skip' while John Dickenson (elder) played 'third' and Glad Myles (another member from the congregation) played 'lead'. It was suggested that they had an unfair advantage as 'a higher power' was on their side.

Mike has found that his involvement in the bowls club has been a great opportunity to get to know members of his congregation better. It has also given him opportunity to get to know people in the community. His prayer is that God will use this involvement to open doors into the lives of people to share the gospel.

Mordialloc Presbyterian Church is enjoying God's blessing. We have had to say goodbye to several people over the past months due to members moving away from Mordialloc. However, God has been good and given us new people to fill in the gaps. We pray that God will continue to bless us and use us to share his wonderful message of hope in the community.

flinders presbytery news in (very) brief

David Palmer is the new Moderator for 2006;

Bill Medley, a candidate who exited from College last year, has taken up his position at Frankston;

Edwin Hale, for many years in his retirement a dependable source of supply and contributor to the life of the Presbytery, has died recently;

Sorrento/Rye is in the process of selling the old manse and purchasing a new manse;

The Samoan Congregation has moved to Lyndhurst Church building.

good news for belgrave heights

The Belgrave Heights congregation is extremely grateful to the recent Assembly for the donation of the manse block to the church, and would like to use this forum to express their heartfelt thanks.

For the last two years, the congregation has advertised various functions via letter-box drop, covering an area of 3 kms. radius from the church, or about 4000 leaflets. While it is very strenuous walking up and down hills, and up and down driveways, it has been worth the effort.

The Bringing Up Boys seminar, conducted by Bob Carner, attracted about 20 people, as did the seminar on Budgeting for Everyday Living, which was written



and conducted by one of our members, Jim.

We have conducted the last three Easter Sunday Sunrise services at Bird's Land, a local park, followed by a BBQ breakfast. Last year 90 people attended, including 50 who do not come to our church. We always have a special Christmas service a week or two before Christmas Day, but last year, because of the success of the Easter programme, we held the service at Bird's Land: about 50 non-church people attended and seemed to enjoy the atmosphere and the BBQ.

This year we plan to conduct the Budgeting for Everyday Living course again, and one of our members, Murray, will offer a seminar on the da Vinci Code. (Oh no, not more walking!)

We have not had any people come to church as a result of our endeavours, but we push on, because we want to let the community know that we not only exist, but we can offer them practical help in everyday living.

Three people have commenced a Simply Christianity course. The married couple come from an atheistic background and approached me to do a course on Christianity. What impresses them most, in their words, is Jesus! The other person is showing a great deal of interest in spiritual matters.

We are greatly encouraged by the happenings at Belgrave Heights. Since Assembly, the attendance at church has increased, as has the giving and, during the last year, several new families joined

us. There is great unity within the congregation and a sense of wanting to work together in the outreach events. Many people are helping in various ways in the services, while several of the young men are willing to try their hand at preaching for the first time, including an 18 year old.

Mark Tonkin
Minister

Belgrave Heights Presbyterian Church

answered prayers in the anakie fires

It was on a total fire ban day, Sunday 22nd January, that fire razed the Brisbane Ranges and touched adjoining rural towns including Staughton-Vale, Steiglitz and Anakie. Whilst Anakie township was in the path of the fire, a change of wind direction saw that catastrophe averted.

Three homes were lost to the fire with a further three homes significantly damaged. Stock, shedding, hay and kilometres of fencing have been lost, not to mention the loss of fauna and flora to the area. Thankfully there was no loss of life.

We have a small worshipping congregation at Anakie with three of the families being significantly affected with loss of stock, fencing, shedding and pasture. The worship service the following Sunday, to which the State Moderator the Rt. Rev. Graeme Weber was to visit, proved to be a wonderful time of worship and sharing with thankfulness the evidence of God's protecting and preserving hand in the midst of the devastation. The testimonies of the people to answered prayer is a great encouragement.

Andrew Bray
Minister

Batesford, Bannockburn and Anakie

wyndham: our 10th anniversary!

As some may know, the old Werribee Presbyterian Church was built in 1866 (now called Crossroads Uniting Church in the main part of town), so the actual history of the congregation goes all the way back then, which makes our Presbyterian witness in this area just on 140 years this year. In our more recent history, we have now had 10 years of worshipping here in the church building on Blackforest Road. In that time, the congregation has grown to average of 40-50 persons each Sunday and much work has been completed to make the grounds and the building generally more attractive.

To mark this decade of ministry in our

current location, we are having a special afternoon service on Sunday 30 April at 3pm and the Rev. Bob Thomas is our guest speaker. All are welcome to come and join with us in our celebrations of all that the Lord us has done for us out here at Wyndham. The Presbytery of Melbourne West has been asked to attend and the State Moderator will also be participating. More details will be available nearer to the time.

Shane Cassidy
Home Missionary

maroondah presbytery

The Presbytery of Maroondah is experiencing positive growth throughout the parishes.

The members at Belgrave Heights are rejoicing in the decision of the Assembly to give them the property on which the Manse is located and they are negotiating with the Trust Corporation to obtain land for a Church. The Presbytery is investigating the situation at Blackburn (which is at present an appointment parish) with the intention of appointing a full time minister to this vacant parish that, through a recent major bequest, is now in a very sound financial position. We pray that the Lord will show us the correct way forward. Presbytery are grateful to retired minister, Rev Peter Locke, for his untiring work as interim moderator and supply.

The Donvale congregation is continuing to grow and has, for some time, been taking steps to extend their buildings. The planning stage is complete and, with the necessary finances in place, approval to proceed has been given by Presbytery. Donvale is now waiting on Council approval to begin building this new stage of their development.

The Woori Yallock congregation has built and recently formally opened a new manse at the rear of the church property. Together with other parishes in the Presbytery, Woori Yallock has had financial assistance from the money raised from the sale of the Glen Waverley Knoxfield manse which has paid outstanding debt on this manse. From the same funds, the Croydon Hills parish now owns its own manse, Belgrave Heights has received assistance to help relocate and modify their present worship centre, and other congregations have received varying amounts for specified projects of various sizes. Hence, good has come from the unfortunate closure of the Glen Waverley Knoxfield work.

The Warburton congregation (now simply called Warburton Presbyterian Church) continues to consolidate numerically and

spiritually under their recently ordained minister, Rev Tony Archer, and has been reaching out effectively for Christ within their community.

Croydon Hills and Mt Evelyn congregations are both enthusiastically working with their pastors (Matt James and Mark Crabb, respectively) to continue the work within their communities.

Heathmont, under the ministry of Rev Andrew Venn, is experiencing encouraging growth, with a number of people, both older and younger, individuals and families, joining the work. With the help of SFE student Mark Smith, they are embarking on various outreach programs over the course of 2006.

As a Presbytery, we are fortunate to have many young men keen and eager to train for the ministry of the Gospel at the Theological College and at this stage we have two candidates and two further applicants for candidature. We praise the Lord for this blessing and know that these men will go out into the field as committed Christian workers.

We give thanks to God for the blessings we see within our churches and for the genuine spirit of unity and co-operation that exists between the members of our Presbytery.

HMWA - still busy at home missions

HMWA Annual General Meeting Tuesday 11th April at 10.30am in Scot's Church Lower Hall, Russell St. Melbourne Speaker. Mr. Willem Vandenberg, 4th year theological student and candidate at our Presbyterian Theological College. Please do join us there.

The HMWA works with students by providing book grants, Christmas cheques and re-location grants. While it also provides for Home Missionaries in this way, the HMWA also makes funds available for the maintenance of manses and church buildings and debt reduction at Home Mission stations. The HMWA operates through links, who are people appointed from within any congregation by the session. Their role is to receive information from the HMWA and to pass it on to their respective congregation (hence the term "link") which then raises funds for the work of the HMWA. The funds are dedicated at the annual HMWA thanksgiving service each November. As ever, our purpose is "caring and sharing" in God's work.

Barbara Firth

same country, different world

New Year's Day, 2006. A day that will be remembered for its stifling heat, sleepless night and the beginning of a journey not to be forgotten.

The day Daniel and I left Melbourne for an adventure in Australia's "top end" – Arnhem Land. Our destination? Ramingining, a community of about 800 Yolngu people where Daniel's brother, Paul, lives and works with his wife Janae and little daughter Abigail.

Just getting to Ramingining was an experience in itself. With three separate flights, several hours trying to get some sleep on the floor at Darwin airport, a flight cancellation due to a bird hitting the windscreen of the plane, and some turbulence in the small planes, we spent about 20 hours in transit and arrived a little the worse for wear! Ramingining airport, although only slightly larger than a Melbourne bus stop, was a most welcome sight. Though the landscape looked beautiful from above, I was glad to have my feet on solid ground and be able to appreciate the full spectrum of colours around me – bright blue sky, lush green trees and bushes, and deep red dirt roads perfect for four-wheel-driving.

Once in the town itself, I realised just how different this was to anything I had previously experienced, or even imagined! Living and working in Melbourne has exposed me to a whole range of different cultures and languages, but suddenly here I had moved from the majority to the minority. My conversational ability was greatly inhibited (though some of the Yolngu people can communicate in English), and I found myself wishing for a mega suntan so that I would not stand out quite so much!

Since it was January, school was out and the entire town had a holiday feel. Everyone slept in – even the store didn't open until late in the morning, and then was closed for a couple of hours in the middle of the day. Any activity was conducted at a relaxed pace, and there were limited opportunities for exercise because the dogs in the community were suspicious of anyone walking too fast! It meant we could enjoy a truly relaxing holiday!

But best of all was the privilege we had to observe first hand what it is like for a missionary family working in northern Australia. Paul is a Missionary Aviation Fellowship pilot and does lots of charter flying in and out of Ramingining. He and Janae have worked hard on learning the

Yolngu language and making friends in the community. It was exciting to see some Yolngu people drop in at the office or visit at home to ask questions about the Bible or about Jesus, and a couple of Yolngu Christians are keen to meet together for Bible study. At the same time, there was still active opposition, and we could sense we were standing on a spiritual battlefield. This was especially apparent when a member of the community died, and we witnessed the fear of the people as they carried out their funeral rituals.

By the end of our stay in Ramingining, I didn't want to come home. Yes, the weather was hot and humid, there was limited access to fresh food and other groceries, and I could only communicate fully with a handful of people there. But the experience of visiting this community had made an impact.

After two weeks away, Daniel and I arrived back in Melbourne to a freezing cold, rainy day. It was good to be relaxed,



Janae and Paul

rejuvenated, and above all re-challenged to serve God fully in 2006. It may have been the end of our physical journey, but the experiences and lessons will go on. There are hundreds of people, right in our own country, who may have housing and health care provided for them, but who are missing out on the most important thing of all! Many people either don't have the Bible in their own language or don't have the ability to read it. Thankfully, Paul and Janae and some others like them have followed God's call to reach these people with the Gospel. Please pray that the Yolngu people will come to know Jesus!

*Daniel and Courtney Denness
Heathmont*

position vacant... (just about)

The State News Committee has worked hard to re-establish a State wide newsletter that brought news items of interest to our denomination.

Prior to Assembly 2003, I was approached to take over the vacant position of Convenor of the SNC and help restart the newsletter after the demise of Epistle. *fellow workers* was the result, and the Committee has now fulfilled its mandate to provide a print medium to keep the Presbyterians of Victoria informed. Thrust into the role of editor of *fellow workers*, somewhat by default, I have had the challenge of being on a very steep learning curve with which, only in more recent issues, have I become comfortable. With *fellow workers* now going strong, I now feel it is time for me to turn this task over to

someone else who has the time and who senses God's call to make this project their ministry to the denomination. The June issue will be my last as editor. I hope by that time to announce who will be taking over the "editor's desk" to continue what I believe is a valuable tool in maintaining our identity and unity as Christians within the Presbyterian Church of Victoria. There is plenty of scope for creativity and expansion of the work, so do take time to consider whether you may be suited to this ministry.

If you are interested and would like to know more about what is entailed in being the editor, please contact Mike Wharton, Convenor of the State News Committee on ph. 8580 5940 or email, mwharton@pcvic.org.au.

Andrew Venn

Ask, is your church W.E.L.L.?

Are you **Worshiping** Authentically?
Are you **Evangelising** Intentionally?
Are you **Loving** Purposefully?
Are you **Learning** Consistently?

Find out how to improve your church's vitality through the biblical paradigm of church revitalization – Remember, Repent and Recover.

From Embers to a Flame, a conference on nurturing the church vitality, stems from the ministry of Dr. Harry Reeder and a great need in his own life to discover God's heart for the church. His first pastorate was at a church that had shrunk dramatically from 900 members to 65. In searching the Scriptures, he read about the Shepherd leaving the 99 sheep and going after the one lost sheep. He knew that the Great Shepherd would also want to go after entire congregations of sheep who had strayed because the

Scripture was not silent as to the Shepherd's heart for his flock.

This is not a "Church Growth Program" but a check up call for "Church Health"! This is not a "how to" conference on church growth, but the strategic application of a ministry philosophy rooted in a biblical theology of church revitalization. This conference will help you identify the symptoms of spiritual disease in your church as well as the signs of life and vitality. It will also increase productive dialogue among your leaders.

Bring your wives and other concerned women of the church for a time of fellowship with the Embers team on Friday night the 28th at Scots Church Melbourne for a meal (\$9) followed by the "Biblical Womanhood" conference. Attendees do not have to be registered at the Embers conference to attend the "Biblical Womanhood" session. However, we do ask that you book in advance for the meal. Booking for this can be lodged with Ben Palmer, ph. 9655 1406. The "Biblical Womanhood" conference will also be held at the Shepparton Presbyterian Church on Saturday the 29th.

The Embers to a Flame conference is to be held July 27-29th at Rydges Hotel. If you haven't yet lodged your registration, time is running out!

The Embers to a Flame book by Harry Reeder is available through PTC Media for \$29.95

Also, if readers want more information they can listen to a radio interview on Embers by going to the following address: <http://www.briarwoodmedia.com>

Registrations for this conference must be lodged with Rev. Bruce Meller: PO Box 2196, Strawberry Hills NSW 2012, tele (02) 9690 9318 email bmeller@pcnsw.org.au

Pray for the Gold Coast Qld conference: 20-22 July, the Melbourne conference 27-29 July, the Melbourne and Shepparton "Biblical Womanhood" conferences and safe travel for the Embers team.

Bob Carner
(Home Missions Director – PCV)
ph. 9655 1406

Please contact Rev. Bruce Meller or Rev Dr R.L. Carner for additional information.

PYV summer camp

(27th dec 2005 –
1st jan 2006)

What an awesome camp it was. Summer Camp just gets better every year! It was held at Shiloh Ranch in Grantville this year and everyone was very grateful for the pool facilities and the water slide in the extremely hot weather! The New Years Eve theme of "Vikings" saw plenty of horned helmets and shields at the Banquet.

Our camp speaker, Bruce Christian from NSW, brought us some very challenging talks based on the Five Points of Calvinism. Presenting clear ideas supported by Scripture, Bruce was not interested in forcing these concepts upon anyone but simply encouraged us to engage with the ideas, look into the Bible and test everything. As is understandable, the discussion groups on camp were loaded with questions from the kids, some very difficult and some a little easier. This series of talks will not be forgotten quickly but will continue to stimulate everyone to find out what the Bible has to say on tricky issues.

PYV entered new territory this camp by running an intensive stream as an alternative to the regular talks. This could be done purely for learning however it also formed part of a Bachelor of Theology, run in conjunction with the Presbyterian Theological

College. Kingsley Davidson was among those who took up the challenge this year. Here's what he had to say....

"4 guys and 1 girl spent Summer Camp studying "New Testament" with Ken Brown (our tutor) and Dave Assender (our number one fan). We learnt about the "who's who" of the 700 years leading up to the NT period, looked at the culture and context into which Jesus came to earth, and studied the books of Mark, Acts & 1 Corinthians, ever so briefly. There was lots to learn in just 5 days, and I think we all found the exam pretty tough, but it gave us a greater appreciation of the Scriptures and should help us in teaching the Bible to others. Although it was draining, we had plenty of laughs and good times together.

For more information on the Intensive Stream, please contact Andrew Vines via his email address, president@pyv.org.au.

A big thanks goes out to the camp convenors, leaders, musicians, cooks, activities coordinator, and everyone else who helped make Summer Camp the success it was. Praise be to God who worked in so many hearts on camp and kept us all safe and healthy.

PYV AGM – 18 feb 2006

It's that time of year where PYV looks back on the year that's been with thanks and looks to the future with hope and

excitement. So much has happened over the last year and 2006 is set to be another busy one, with perhaps the most exciting prospect being (we hope) the employment of a new Youth Worker! Please continue to pray that God will prepare and bring forward a suitable person to fill this position.

It's a treat hearing about the vision and reports on the practical progress the PYV has made over the last year. PYV is essentially about saving souls through its camping ministry (though that's not all the PYV does, by any means). The organisation, care, attention to detail and obvious commitment to Christ through it all is great to see. Be assured that the PYV is constantly honing its skills and expanding its programs to meet its vision.

Attendance at this year's meeting was poor, with only three in addition to those who are on the State Council (sixteen in all). Please remember that the work of the PYV is a denominational work, not the province or plaything of a small exclusive group, and therefore it depends upon not only the good will of congregations but direct, spiritual and practical support through sending delegates who may, in their turn, take office on the Council and, under God's hand, labour for this great work amongst the youth of our denomination. The AGM is an open meeting, and anyone of whatever age is welcome to

attend, ask questions and encourage (and be encouraged by) the work. It's a worthy work and the potential for seeing young people brought to Christ is huge. It deserves your support.

The elected Council for 2006 is as follows: Andrew Vines (President); Michelle Davidson (Secretary - and thanks to Rachel Stasse for her hard work as past secretary); Kingsley Davidson (Treasurer); with Alex Venn, Kirsty Watson, Rene Jabor, Russ Graham and Sarah Weber being re-elected to serve on the Council.

Please pray for these young and devoted people in their responsibilities.

PYV senior camp (10th-13th march, 2006)

The countdown is running for the Senior Camp which is to be held at Rutherford Park in Blampied, near Daylesford. This is a great venue which we've used before, with lots of sporting activities available as well as some stunning scenery. Andrew Venn, the minister of Heathmont

Presbyterian Church, will be bringing us some great talks entitled "Signs of Life", designed to challenge the flawed understanding some young people have of what being a Christian really means. (This is a different topic from that published in the camp forms). Registration is due February 18, so don't miss out! Get ready to be challenged, meet new people and worship our great God together.

Please see website www.pyv.org.au for details on the above.

Michelle Davidson

a personal odyssey

getting involved politically on religious and social issues

'Odysey" is perhaps a trifle pretentious but I would like to share with readers of ***fellow workers*** something of my own recent journey.

In 2001 the Government proposed legislation covering human embryo and cloning research. This impressed itself on my heart and mind as an issue that needed a Christian response. I began researching the issue and fairly quickly filled a lever arch file with articles and newspaper cuttings. This eventually led me to calling a public meeting attended by 70 or so people and various politicians at which I asked Dr Matt Piercy and Bill Muehlenberg to give the medical and ethical reasons why research should be limited to adult stem cells. Of course one thing leads to another: focussing on homosexuality, abortion, and the relationship of men and women. Again lever arch files began to fill up.

Sometime early 2004, the vilification issue involving the Islamic Council of Victoria (ICV) and Catch the Fire Ministries (CTFM) and Pastors Nalliah and Scot took my attention, and I ploughed through the material surrounding the trial. I met Nalliah, became friends with Dr Mark Durie, a linguistics expert, Anglican vicar and the Pastors' expert witness, whose testimony concerning Islamic teaching was disallowed by Judge Higgins. It is worth asking in the light of Judge Higgins' decision; are judges now required to make theological judgements under the Act and just how qualified are they to do so? Making decisions about which version of Islam is truly authentic as Judge Higgins did, is a big call for a judge in a secular court to have to make, and certainly a decision open to question. A particularly

noxious aspect of the Judge's decision was that speaking the truth is no longer an acceptable defence. To date there have been four other complaints against Christians under the legislation, one of which remains unresolved.

In late 2004, early 2005, there was a coalescing of various parties, Jim Wallace and David Barton of the Australian Christian Lobby, Dr Durie, Dr Allan Harman Presbyterian Church of Victoria Moderator and myself being the principal players, all convinced that the law needed substantial amendment.

Accordingly, there was considerable work undertaken in defining exactly what amendments would satisfy our concerns, discussions within Heads of Churches and various meetings with the political and bureaucratic arms of Government.

While the Government has resolutely asserted that the religious vilification aspects will not be deleted from the Act, for our part, we concluded that our interests as evangelical Christians would best be safeguarded by the removal of the civil provisions from the Act and the incorporation of freedom of religion safeguards. This position was endorsed by the October 2005 meeting of the General Assembly. The removal of the civil provisions would mean that no longer could individuals of one religion square off against those of another religion in VCAT, with both sides having to prove their respective cases. This would still leave the criminal provisions in the Act and would allow both the distinction between a person and their religious beliefs to be made and the apologetic task of the Church (or any other religion) to go ahead without the law threatening such activity. By the end of 2005 it became evident that neither the

Government nor the Heads of Churches were likely to budge on the issue. This led to a decision by Dr Harman to call together those Church leaders that it was felt would support a call for these amendments to the Act. A meeting was arranged and attended by a number of Heads of Churches, pastors of some of the very large churches as well as leaders of various Orthodox Church bodies. Nineteen Church Leaders signed a Statement of Concern. It remains to be seen whether the Heads of Churches or the Government will support these proposed amendments.

How can a Parish minister become so extended in such a campaign? The simple answer is that he can't. I have trespassed upon my congregation's rights to a full allocation of my time to them and the witness of the congregation in the local community. Pioneers, Cheltenham, has been excessively generous. It is no coincidence that I am "retiring" in order to devote my time more fully to these kinds of issues. The Church and Nation Committee of our denomination is dedicated to these issues and, as a denomination we are generally united, interested and skilled to address social issues in a way that few other denominations are and advocacy on social issues is very definitely a part of our reformation heritage. As the great Dutch Calvinist, Abraham Kuyper said, "there is not a small millimetre of human existence that Christ does not claim as his own". It is part of our apologetic task in submission to our Lord Jesus who once wept over Jerusalem to oppose the great social evils of our day. Do we not weep over our city?

Having said all that, it is important we carefully choose the issues to engage in.

David Palmer

good news for the bush

The recent PIM Committee meetings were valuable opportunities for reflection upon God's goodness on the ministry of the PIM. Specifically, there was a time of contemplation on what the Lord had done over the previous year coupled with a sense of excitement as to what He is doing and will do in the future. The main highlights of the meetings were:

- Appointment of Cameron and Carmel McKenzie to the South Australian patrol. It is hoped that Cameron and Carmel will be able to take up this work by the middle of this year.
- Approval to undertake exploratory patrols in QLD with a view of developing a third full-time patrol in Western QLD (yes, it is a very big place).
- Approval to commence exploratory patrols in the northern western and south eastern parts of the Northern Territory. Due to climate, these will be part-time patrols after this initial work has been completed.
- Upgrade the north western NSW patrol to full-time.

The Committee expresses its gratitude to our workers in the front line, that is, our patrol padres. They are faced with all sorts of conditions and situations as they take the gospel beyond the furthest fences. Please continue to pray for them and, if you are able support them in a practical way, please do so. Our padres are thankful for the many who have sent items to



Carmel and Cameron McKenzie

include in gift packs. Items such as hand creams and shampoos, that we often take for granted, are something that many people in remote areas do not even contemplate to buy because they are doing it tough.

As a Committee, we too, are grateful for the many supporters of the PIM. Without your financial assistance, we would not be able to keep our padres on the road (read "beaten track"). Please be on the lookout for information concerning

a "Good News for the Bush" evening, which we are hoping congregations will participate in. It is hoped that this evening will raise the profile of PIM and also be our major fund raiser for the year. As you can see, the work is expanding and we pray that by God's grace these new patrols will be established in the very near future and that the work of taking the gospel to the outback will continue until the Lord comes again.

Mark Smith (for PIM)

malawi mission

two urgent requests for your church and mission committee

1. malawi mission publicity officer

The responsibility for receiving news from Malawi and relating it to the churches here in Australia has fallen, by default, to me. The opportunities are expanding and the interest by Australian Presbyterians in our partner church (CCAP, Blantyre Synod) is always deepening. I need help in producing regular updates and sending it out to the supporting churches. All you need is computer & internet access and a little time each month.

2. funding of the next container of resource and relief goods

Will your church and mission committee help with designated gifts for the costs of sending goods to Africa? We're finding that churches are responding magnificently to the collection of goods and very generously to the famine relief appeal, BUT the real need now is to raise the \$8,000 per container to send the goods. We realise that it sounds more involved for your church to send grain or to send wool or books BUT what is most helpful for the

gospel at this time is to sponsor the cost of postage. Doesn't sound as spiritual ... but it is the urgent need of the hour.

Again, cheques to "Presbyterian Church of Victoria" but with a cover note explaining that your gift is to cover the costs of the container. We will send pictures back to your church of all the smiling faces and joyful people as they open the container of "treasure".

Every blessing to you all in Christ,

*John P Wilson
(Australian Board member of the TRC,
Blantyre, Malawi)*