

All Ears on Eames

The 'Eames Commission', or more correctly, 'the Lambeth Commission on Communion', will soon deliver its recommendations. The report was called for by the Archbishop of Canterbury in October 2003 in response to (a) the consecration of a practicing homosexual priest as a Bishop in ECUSA; and (b) the decision by the diocese of New Westminster to authorise services for the blessing of same-sex unions.

The Commission was asked to consider the maintenance of communion, in the wake of such actions taken in violation of Lambeth 1998 and, more importantly, historic and biblical Christianity.

The recommendations are expected to deal with two basic issues. Firstly, where will those disaffected by the actions find alternative Episcopal oversight? Such provisions are already in place in various parts of the communion to deal with the problems left in the wake of the ordination of women. There are difficulties, however, about whether all bishops in ECUSA will accept such provisions. Other alternatives are already becoming available, such as the offer of oversight from outside ECUSA, and the establishment of a body that some suspect as a real contender for ECUSA's position in the Anglican Communion, namely, the Network (see Gavin Poole's report, p.6).

Secondly, what can be done regarding disciplinary action? Proposals include the exclusion of provincial representation at the Primates Meeting, the Lambeth Conference, and/or the

Anglican Consultative Council - which some see as the instruments of unity in the communion. Some provinces, such as Uganda and Nigeria, have already unilaterally broken fellowship with the ECUSA and/or New Hampshire.

The question is also being asked whether the recommendations of the commission could be applied in situations other than that arising with respect to homosexuality. The discussions within Sydney Diocese of Lay administration of the Lord's Supper have been mentioned in this connection.

Both the actions of ECUSA and New Westminster, and the potential 'disciplinary action', raise serious questions for churches within the Anglican Communion. The gospel is a grass roots operation, so the most important level of Anglican organization is that of the lay ministries emerging from local congregations. The loose connection of the local churches with some loose worldwide body is historical. But what exactly is the connection? What happens when a couple of members of this loose body depart from Christian tradition, and what happens when some arms of this loose body flex their muscles in response? How much is the gospel mission of Christ at the local congregational level affected?

The report will be published on 18th October, and then discussed by various bodies within the communion.

Check our website after that date for an analysis of the Report. ●

Australian Church Record E-ncarnates

After laying dormant for a couple of years, the *Australian Church Record* has now been re-launched in electronic form only. This move is in the hope that this long-standing 'independent Evangelical voice' might continue to help people to think through current issues in the light of the gospel of Jesus Christ. The electronic form is cheaper for us to publish, but, more importantly, it may enable the readership of the *Record* to expand wherever the e-waves take it. The e-form also enables our editorial team to respond quickly to an issue that requires some immediate comment, should this need arise.

But why have the *Record* at all? The latest figures from the National Church Life Survey paint a devastating portrait of the churches with respect to the wider society. All Christian people everywhere should be concerned about reaching out to those who do not know Jesus Christ. In many parts of Australia, there are some good efforts being made in this direction, but there

are other parts in which Christians are struggling to penetrate beyond their own walls. In some parts, even the walls appear to be crumbling.

The *Record* aims to stimulate gospel centred thought about current issues in an endeavour to assist the people of God to believe the good news, and to proclaim the good news to the lost. Until this task is complete, there will be a place for the *Australian Church Record*. So here we are - e-gain.

Sign up for your e-copy of the *Record*, by visiting the following site:

www.australianchurchrecord.net

you can also sign up others, who can, should they so wish, unsign in due course. ●

Watch for updates on the website:

- reports on General Synod (ends 9th October)
- Evaluation of Eames report (published 18th October)
- report on Sydney Synod (ends 27th October)

The Australian CHURCH RECORD

Oct 4, 2004 Issue 1884

"The Old Record had begun in Sydney in 1880, and had concerned itself in its first years with the cause of religious education, the cause of temperance, and the cause of foreign missions."

Donald Robinson, *ACR* July 1972

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A heart like God's

John Chapman

What would the truly godly person would look like!

They would be like the Lord Jesus. Romans 8:29 tell us that this was the very purpose for which we were called back to Christ- 'to be conformed to the likeness of his Son'. This is a life-time work.

There are some attributes of God which we cannot copy - like knowing everything. Others, however, we must never neglect. God's love for the world is such a one.

God loves the world

You may think that this is so obvious that it doesn't need to be said. But the bible reminds us of it over and over again.

'God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life' (John 3:16).

God's love is to be marvelled at, not because the object of his love, the world, is so vast but because it is so wicked (see 1 John 2: 15-17). Psalm 2 tells us that the world is in rebellion to God's rule. We have exercised our

will and pitted them against Him. We are under his judgement because of this! But still He loves us!

The goal of God's love for the world is its salvation. He sent the Son so that we might believe in Him and not perish.

God's love for people is an attitude we should be fostering.

This same truth is stated negatively in verse 17. 'God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world but that the world through Him might be saved.' Perhaps the idea 'of not perishing' in verse 16 prompted verse 17. It is important. God's purpose in sending the Lord Jesus was our salvation.

God longs for people to repent and to be forgiven. 'As surely as I live, declares the Sovereign Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that they turn from their ways and live.' (Ezekiel 33:11).



John Chapman has brought the love of God to many through many years of ministry as an evangelist.

God's love for people is an attribute which we should be fostering. We should be praying that God's Holy Spirit will nourish this love in our hearts and minds. We, like Him, should be longing for people to be saved.

How would this longing find expression? One way to do this is by praying for people's salvation. May I ask you do this?

Telling people the gospel as we get an opportunity is another good way.

Giving our money to people and groups who we know preach the gospel to others.

One thing is perfect clear. If I do nothing I cannot love the world as God does. His love found expression. So should mine! ●

It's a long way, for the love of God!

Liz Cox



Liz Cox, is the Family & Children's Worker at St. Giles' Normanton-by-Derby.

How far is a "long way"?

The UK is a long way from Australia, and Derby is a long way from London.

Now, we travelled a long way from Australia to live in England but I'd been led to believe that "Poms" don't travel far within the UK. I heard stories of people who never ventured out of their village. Maybe this is an "urban myth" because evangelicals travel a LOT. They travel a long way to find others who love and teach the Bible.

Take the recent London "Evangelical Ministry Assembly" run by Proclamation Trust. St Helen's Bishopsgate was packed with "those in full time Word ministry" hearing how to do it better from the best. We came from far and wide: from Derby, from Scotland and from overseas. It was a long way, but it was worth it.

Apart from the usual suspects (Dick Lucas and

David Jackman) we heard from two Americans:

First was Tim Keller from Redeemer Presbyterian Church in New York. He encouraged us to allow the gospel to be the motivator for all our preaching to Christians. Rather than, "Give more money", speak of the generosity of the One who gave up the riches of heaven to make us rich. Rather than saying: "Love your spouse", like Paul, talk about Him who loved his spouse the church and died for her. Then, as we preach the gospel in different contexts to the saved, the not-yet-Christians will "overhear" the gospel every week. I could almost hear next Sunday's sermons being rewritten in people's minds!

D Ralph Davis passionately spoke about Jonah, making us laugh and cry. He asked, "Why does God persevere with the prophet and not only with those to whom he spoke?" God is at work *in* us while he is at work *through* us.

It made me think about the church under pressure. Here, where Evangelicals feel the push of liberalism all around them, they're more convinced that growth comes by preaching the gospel. In some parts of England, you could go a long way to hear the gospel. But the gospel ministers are willing to go a long way to learn how to preach it! ●

EMA filled St Helen's Bishopsgate to hear the word of God

PHOTOS COURTESY LIZ COX



(For EMA information and tapes contact Proclamation Trust www.proctrust.org.uk)

Editorial

What brings life where there is death?

What is the future of Christianity in Australia?

In many ways, Australian society still lives on the capital of its Christian past, and we should thank God for that. But there are also clear signs that secularism is advancing and also that explicitly anti-Christian forces are at work in some quarters. This is not paranoia, it is simply observation. But is this cause for depression or despair? Is it cause for the Christian churches to begin a campaign of denouncing the evil in the midst of our land?

The results of the National Church Life survey has brought good news for no-one really. Australia is expanding, but the churches are finding it difficult to keep pace even with national growth, let alone to make real advances. One of the misguided responses to such statistics is to work out what the declining churches are doing wrong, and what the advancing churches are doing right. The error in this calculation would be to assume that growth (whether in numbers or, more importantly, in true knowledge of God) comes from some human action. This is only true in a very specific and limited sense.

It is the gospel of Christ that is the power of God for salvation (Rom. 1.16-17). It is the word of God that runs across the nations of the world and brings life where there is death (cf. 2 Thess. 3.1). This is because God is in his word; God makes himself known in Jesus Christ, and in the preaching of the good news of what God has done in him. Where the word of God is, there is God himself. The parable of the sower shows the sower (God Himself; see Isaiah 55.10-11)

There are a variety of ways to respond to God's word, but only one of them achieves a harvest.

sowing the word of God. This word produces its harvest, for it will always achieve its purpose (Isa. 55.11 again). It is God who causes growth, through his word.

This is where the very specific and limited sense of our human action comes in. There are a variety of ways to respond to God's word, but only one of them achieves a harvest. Australians,

Australia's growth rate,
1991 to 2001: **11.4 %**

Nominal Anglicans decline,
1991 to 2001: **-2.5%**

Number of Anglican
Dioceses showing
declining attendances,
1991 to 2001: **16 out of 20**

Proportion of Australians
attending Church weekly: **8.1%**

(Source: National Church Life Survey)

along with all people everywhere, must hear the word of God and accept it (Mark 4.20). This may be a challenge in contemporary secular Australian society. But it is the only thing that will bring health to ourselves, our churches, and our nation. If the word of God is ignored, or distorted, or denied, the death of Australian churches will be complete. If it is received, honoured and proclaimed, its power for resurrection life will be unleashed. Jesus came to bring life where there was death. The gospel of Jesus will bring the dead to life on the last day. The gospel of Christ begins that process even now. The time of reformation has begun (see Heb. 9.10). ●

The Australian Church Record

The Australian Church Record is an evangelical newspaper in the Reformed Anglican tradition of the historic creeds and the 39 Articles of Faith, and the standard of teaching and practice in the Book of Common Prayer. We accept the Scriptures as God's word written, and as containing all things necessary for salvation and the final authority in all matters of faith and behaviour.

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Hybelleth

Steve Covetz

Haybe that is a word we can coin for the divide created by the plethora of material coming out of US mega-Churches. I am of course playing on Shibbleth of Judges 12 and picking on Bill Hybell, the chief pastor at Willow Creek, one of the better known mega-churches (Warreneth doesn't roll off the tongue as easily!).

Much of the division in the past surrounding the concept of a 'Seeker Service' has settled down. Instead of opting for a gathering solely designed for the outsider many evangelicals simply raise the question, 'How would the outsider react to our Christian gathering?'. In light of 1 Corinthians 14:23 this is a godly concern.

Perhaps a better question would be, 'How would a believer react to our gathering?' Are they growing in godliness? Are their minds being transformed? Are their good deeds

attracting others to our Heavenly Father? Are their conversations salty with the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ?

It is also worth asking, 'Under God, can any of this be directly attributed to their experience of church?' Is our preaching and teach-

A better question: How would a believer react to our gathering?

ing helping people grow in their love of God and people? We must show God's people how to read His word and apply it. That is, they need to understand what we are saying. No, this is not 'dumbing down' our meetings. It is the reformation principle of presenting the Word of God to His people in a language they understand. Do our meetings show God's peo-



Steve Covetz is involved in church planting in Sydney's west.

ple that they *are* God's people or do they give the impression we need to keep *becoming* God's people?

Does a focus on the believer's experience of church mean we don't care about the outsider? When I envisage a Christian gathering that that is edifying and enjoyable for the Christian, it seems it would be a gathering that I would be excited to bring my non-Christian neighbour to. As a matter of fact that is what I see in the New Testament... a contagious church. ●

Let me tell you about Jack and Dianne

Collette Read



Collette Read makes her home-cooked meals in Lindfield

John and Dianne looked lost. Three weeks ago this couple had visited our church for the first time. We greeted them at the door. We all welcomed them after the service. We spoke to them about the weather, about what they do, about where they live, all over a friendly cup of tea. We even sent them a welcome letter.

They came the next week. "Hello again", we said, "How was your week? Good to see you." We spoke about the weather, were reminded about what they do and where they live and talked about the news over morning tea.

They came a third week. Some of us said hello.

By the fourth week John and Dianne were on they're own. They helped themselves to tea, lingered for a few minutes more then left and

didn't return.

What happened? We are a friendly church. We welcome people.

As it turns out, only one of these statements is true. We know how to welcome. We are good at putting newcomers at their ease and finding out the fundamentals of who they are. But we struggle to move beyond that. We find ourselves having the same introductory conversation each week to the point of embarrassment.

We are welcoming but we are not friendly. By this I mean that we are unwilling to befriend these new people.

It is difficult to see them sticking with any church unless someone takes that extra step.

In a society where most of our relationships are transactional and our acquaintances far, far outnumber our friends, we have become masters of small talk. We are adept at keeping most people at arms length so that we can limit our number of close relationships to a manageable quantity. This makes sense. It

sounds healthy, even Biblical (for even Jesus had only twelve disciples).

Unfortunately this reasoning leaves John and Dianne out in the cold, out of fellowship. It is difficult to see them sticking with any church unless someone takes that extra step and turns that acquaintance into a friendship.

So how do we move forward?

It has been said that the difference between an acquaintance and a friend is a home-cooked meal. As a general rule we do not invite our bus driver, dentist or newsagent into our home. But friends see us in our natural habitat. They get to know our families and participate in our lives. The first step to turning an acquaintance into a friend is an invitation to lunch or dinner at our house.

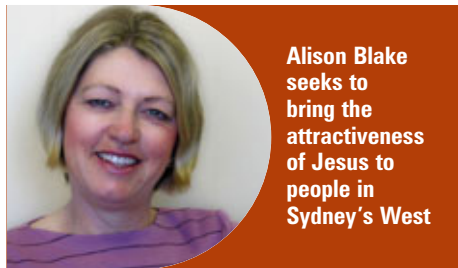
These newcomers do not necessarily have to become our best friends, though they may. Nor does it follow that we must know and have close fellowship with every person who comes to church.

But perhaps each of us can, out of love, befriend one new person.

Ultimately, a welcoming church is great but a friendly church enables newcomers to belong. ●

Nice – But Not So Easy

Alision Blake



Alision Blake seeks to bring the attractiveness of Jesus to people in Sydney's West

How would you describe your unsaved friends and family? “Filled with every kind of wickedness” (Romans 1:29)? “Living in malice and envy, being hated and hating one another” (Titus 3:3)? Sound rather severe, almost slanderous?

Earlier this year I received great kindness and generosity from the women with whom I play tennis. Not just on one occasion, but over several months. Such an experience can be unsettling. Why? I was receiving genuine and sincere kindness from the hand of unbelievers! Aren't good deeds the domain of Christians? It was time for some reflecting and praying about my friendship with these “nice” women!

Why was I unsettled? Possibly I was confronted with the truth that these women's righteous acts are like ‘filthy rags’ before our righteous God (Isaiah 64:6). If I was to share with them God's message of salvation in Christ, then perhaps I'd need also to share

God's assessment of them—“All have sinned and fall short of God's glory” (Romans 3:23)—not a ‘nice’ message for such ‘nice’ people to hear! Would I risk my growing friendship with these women if I shared the gospel with them?

Why were these unbelievers willing to live a believer's lifestyle? Because godly living is attractive and ungodliness is ugly! — even if the underlying gospel truths of sin and judgement are a turn-off. Life and relationships tend to be healthier, longer, happier and more peaceful, for those who are self-controlled, patient, selfless and forgiving!

It is so sad that our friends showing us a glimpse of God's goodness are neglecting their Creator.

Believers and unbelievers alike are all created in the image of the Creator who is “compassionate and gracious ... slow to anger and abounding in love and faithfulness ... maintaining love to thousands and forgiving wickedness ... not leaving the guilty unpunished” (Exodus 34:6). Occasionally we catch a glimpse of the Creator in his creatures, and it's very attractive.

But it is so sad that our friends showing us a glimpse of God's goodness are neglecting their Creator. Jesus makes it clear that the work God requires of us is not to be nice people, but ‘to believe in him, the one he has sent’ (John 6:29).

On outward appearances we have so much in common with these lovely people. But the matter that really matters, according to Jesus, is “Who do you say I am?”. Jesus sees it as a life and death matter for them (John 3:36). That's confronting! But as their friends, we have the privilege of showing them the greatest kindness and love—the salvation and mercy of God, in Christ.

How to begin? Perhaps by acknowledging and thanking them for their kindness and generosity to us. Comment that such thoughtfulness is rare today, when many feel too fragile and stressed to think of others.

Perhaps some questions will lead into a gospel conversation. What inspires them to be kind to others? How do they manage to be caring of those who are “difficult”? You could mention that your attempts to be kind and loving are miniscule beside the kindness and love shown to you by Jesus. Who knows? You might be on the way to explaining the gospel, along the lines of Paul in Titus 3:3-8. Check out how Paul finishes up his gospel message—by encouraging those who have trusted in God to be devoted to being nice people! ●

The Rhetoric of Paternalistic Enlightenment

Peter Bolt

If the person that you disagree with believes *that*, you can always take the higher ground and assume ‘they must be ignorant, poor fool!’. How could anyone believe *that*! They obviously don't know enough; aren't educated enough; don't read enough. Or, perhaps, they are just too stupid to understand the more enlightened way?

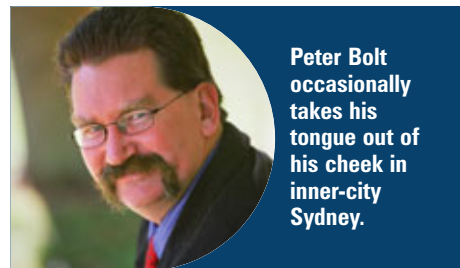
With this assumption, your rhetoric becomes straightforward. Adopt a paternalistic tone, pity their ignorance, and offer (oh so politely, keeping your sneers to yourself as far as you can) to enlighten them with your superior understanding. Ensure that you keep (with great subtlety, of course) dropping names of books they *ought* to have read, courses they *ought* to have studied, institutions the *ought* to

have studied them in. Make it (casually) clear that you yourself *have* read, studied and attended these, and so, of course, *you* know what *they* do not.

Oh, and it also helps to rally a bit of support for your own position. Imply that this

Poor fool! How could anyone believe that?

is the only one that *anyone worth listening to* believes. Imply *their* position is aberrant, isolated from the mainstream (don't define ‘mainstream’; it is such a problematic term), and that if they continue to hold to that position, then they should not expect too



Peter Bolt occasionally takes his tongue out of his cheek in inner-city Sydney.

many Christmas cards.

That should do it. Oh, and it is most important to speak *about* them, but never *to* them (for that would lead to a genuine encounter). And, above all, certainly never countenance for a moment that the truth may be on the side of your opponent. How could that be? What kind of a fool would believe *that* nonsense? ●

“The Network”: Re-alignment or just politics?

Gav Poole

“The Network” – It sounds like the title of Hollywood’s latest science fiction movie but conservative Episcopalians are hoping it will become synonymous with re-alignment in the U.S. The “Network of Anglican Communion Dioceses and Parishes” was formed this year by thirteen Episcopal dioceses. This was in response to the decisions made by the Episcopal General Convention, in Minneapolis last year, to consecrate Canon Gene Robinson, a practicing homosexual, to the office of Bishop Co-adjutor for New Hampshire and to develop liturgies for the blessing of same sex unions.

The Anglican primates warned last year that if the Episcopal Church proceeded with this decision it would “tear the fabric of our Communion at its deepest level”. In what was considered an act of American arrogance, the General Convention went ahead and made these decisions despite pleas from the Anglican Communion around the world.

Conservative Episcopalians now have a relationship problem. On the one hand, many Bishops from the Global South, such as Bishop Akinola from Nigeria, have declared themselves in a “state of impaired communion” with the Episcopal Church. To be consistent they have refused to accept money from the U.S. that was traditionally used to finance their dioceses. On the other hand, to be Episcopalian is to be associated with a denomination that has largely rejected the authority of Scripture. How can conservatives distance themselves from the decisions of General Convention and maintain their relationship with the bulk of Anglicans around the world?

The Network explicitly states that it holds



The 11 bishops that were present at the Network organising convocation. Reproduced with permission from the American Anglican Council.

to the canons and constitution of the Episcopal Church. Many question why conservatives should leave the assets, documentation and infrastructure of the Episcopal Church when those responsible for the decisions at the last General Convention have themselves parted with such canons, constitution and traditions.

The success of the Network largely depends on the conclusions of the [Eames] commission.

The Network’s charter also states that its purpose is to “constitute a true and legitimate expression of the world-wide Anglican

Communion”. The Rt. Rev. James Stanton, Bishop of Dallas, said, “The Network is an identifiable connection with historic Anglican faith during a time when their local leaders are defying it.” The Network intends to explore Adequate Episcopal Oversight for parishes that are under persecution by revisionist bishops.

The success of the Network largely depends on the conclusions of the Lambeth commission, headed by The Rt. Rev. Robin Eames, to be handed down later this year. If Lambeth shirks from taking action then the effectiveness of the Network will be weakened.

Some would argue that the Network has not gone far enough. The majority of Bishops who form the Network still met with the Episcopal House of Bishops (including Gene Robinson) in Texas, during March this year. We await to see if the Network dioceses will send representatives to the next General Convention. The Network needs to decide the practical implications of distancing itself from the recent actions of the Episcopal Church.

The significance of the Network is still to be seen. It may yet turn out to be a collection of paperwork in someone’s files, or it may become the future true and legitimate expression of Anglicanism in the U.S. ●

With permission from the American Anglican Council.



Bishop Robert Duncan (Pittsburgh) signing the NACDP Charter. Reproduced with permission from the American Anglican Council.



Gav Poole presently serves Christ in Dallas, Texas.

Why plant a church here?

Simon Gillham

The population around the Maitland area had grown rapidly. New areas of housing had been opened up. Existing churches were inadequate to meet the growing need for Christian witness and ministry in the area. A number of lay people approached church leaders about planting a new evangelical church in the area. They were travelling a considerable distance to church, and were looking for a new local alternative.

Dhe situation I have been describing came to a head in 1837, and led to the planting of St Mary's Anglican Church in Maitland.¹ In 2002 the same factors and the same gospel concern led to the planting of Maitland Evangelical Church. Ours is a new church and, as an independent evangelical church, a relatively new type of church on the Australian scene... but the reality is that we're not actually doing much 'new' at all! We are preaching the same gospel and seeking to serve the same Lord as our brothers and sisters who were here 165 years before us.

Maitland is now one of the fastest growing residential areas in Australia, with no sign of slowing down yet! The five families who were originally involved in this church plant were all, after years of trying various churches in the

area, travelling long distances to churches in other places or not going to church at all. They were looking for a church where they could comfortably invite friends to join them. They wanted to be systematically taught, by working through whole books of the Bible, rather than

God's love for people is an attitude we should be fostering.

being driven by 'topics', sticking to favourite passages, or taking texts out of their contexts.

After two years together, these are still the things that drive us in seeking to win the lost in Maitland for Christ. We want our church to be one where members are happy to bring along their friends, and visitors feel welcome. We want our church to be one where the systematic teaching of the Bible sets the agenda for everything else. Again there is nothing new or revolutionary in any of that, but God continues to work miracles in the lives and men and women through the proclamation of his word.

At the present time about 70 - 80 adults gather each Sunday morning and about 40 in the evening. Most have not been regularly attending another church in the area before coming to us. Some are new to the area, but



many are new to the gospel or are returning to church after a period away.

Since we began, a new Presbyterian church has also been planted in the area. The needs and the opportunities for ministry far outstrip the capacity of existing churches to meet them. God is not calling us to do something new to be involved in planting churches. This is the way Christians have always done it. ●

1. The planting of St Mary's Anglican Church in Maitland is detailed in Proclaiming Unsearchable Riches, (Gracewing Fowler Wright: Leominster, 1996) P S Roberston, pg 34.



Simon Gillham is pastor of the Maitland Evangelical Church.

'If we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another ...' 1 JOHN 1:6

Peter Collier

Dhe opening of John's first letter reminds us of a wonderful reality: true fellowship is based on truth. In the same way that deception destroys relationship, so too does truth build relationship between those who walk in its light. This wonderful reality has been becoming increasingly evident amongst evangelicals in the Diocese of Christchurch here in New Zealand, and also throughout the country.

There are many small but exciting examples of this. In our Diocese (and across New Zealand), a new group has formed called 'Anglican Mainstream' which is aimed at advocating for orthodox Christianity. This has brought evangelicals together as they have realised that we must put first things (i.e. the gospel of Christ!) first. The local Evangelical Anglican Fellowship (The Latimer Fellowship) is undergoing something of a renewal, with members working more closely together.

Preaching conferences run by an Anglican church have been attended by evangelicals from several churches as well as by University workers. A Youth Leadership Conference has commenced which has seen co-operation between evangelical Anglicans, Presbyterians and several university student groups. Letters protesting about unbiblical statements by church leaders have received broad support from Bible believing Christians from beyond Anglican churches and beyond the Diocese. Added to this is the growing friendships from outside of New Zealand that are strengthening and encouraging us as Evangelicals in Christchurch. All of this deepening fellowship has been made possible by an increasing emphasis on the truth of the gospel and a denial of error.

While this type of fellowship may be familiar to many, its resurgence here in Christchurch has been as welcome as it has been encourag-



Left to right: Philip Lyes (St Augustine's Cashmere); Wally Behan (St John's Latimer Square) and Dale Oldham (St Stephen's Shirley). At rear: Simon Johnson (trainee, St John's Latimer Square).

Photo courtesy P. Collier.

ing. When I first came to Christchurch four years ago, I sensed that there was a certain unease about discussing 'doctrine' because it was felt that this divides. Thankfully the reverse is being shown to be the case: sound doctrine, which 'conforms to the glorious gospel of Christ', builds true fellowship. ●

Peter Collier serves Christ in Christchurch, New Zealand.



Jane Tooher trains women for ministry at Gladesville, NSW.

You Are a Bible Teacher

Jane Tooher

One of the wisest pieces of advice I have ever been given in life and ministry, is to remember that I am a bible teacher.

This may sound obvious, so why would someone need to say this?

Because we can too easily give mindless assent to the doctrine of God's word, but our practice shows that our belief is actually quite different. The presenting problems may vary, such as focussing primarily on people's felt needs, or thinking that others are teachers of the bible, but the real issue comes because of our view of Scripture. If we truly believe that Scripture is God's word, His breath, through which we have life, (Dt 32:47; 2 Tim 3:15), then we will trust in its total sufficiency and power for our lives, and for the lives of all we are in relationship with. We will seek to spend time in it, and we will be driven to pray so that we will understand God's will. Teaching God's word, will allow God to set the agenda, rather than ourselves, and will help all people, no exceptions, with their greatest needs, as God's Spirit is at work within them, pointing them to Jesus Christ.

Whatever our thinking is of women's ministry roles, whatever a woman's life situation is, most Christian women, (apart from some who are suffering some illnesses and some disabilities), are teachers of God's word. And this wonderful privilege will take shape in various forms within a woman's own life, and may be quite different to the various shapes it takes in her neighbours' life. Eg. Teaching her husband, her children, other women, a 1.2.1 situation, a small group, a large gathering, one off situations like visiting, and evangelism.

Idea for a training topic:

1. Reflect on your week. How comfortable are you to open God's word with others, or to refer to it? Why do you think this is?
2. How often do you carry your Bible with you?
3. Thank God for His word. Pray for courage to initiate reading God's word with others.

'The Bible creates the church'

Peter Blowes

There's not much you need to know to be a Missionary.

What you need to know to be a Missionary can be summed up in five words from a former ACR editor. 'The bible creates the church'.

That's certainly important information for an evangelical working in an environment where most people are Roman Catholic, Pentecostal or have never read the bible. For example in a couple of weeks the Argentine National Eucharistic Congress will be held in our city and their adver-

There is no replacing thorough preparation and flexible creativity in learning.

tising proclaims: 'The church creates the Eucharist, and the Eucharist creates the church'. The authority of scriptures speaks plainly above tradition, moving experience and common superstition. I'm sure that's the case on most mission fields, not just where I work.

Maybe all you need to 'know' is that 'the Bible creates the church', but that still leaves a lot to be learned. To start with - 'The Bible' itself!

Secondly, as a Sydney pastor once said to me, what you need is the 'Bible in one hand, and the Sydney Morning Herald (or whatever

is the local, culture-reflecting newspaper) in the other'. If you've grown up with it that's not so hard, but when you move into another culture, there is a lot of catching with the culture, language, and other innuendos of local history. While you need to know only one small fact to start with, that leads into a big learning agenda.

Those in the arts know that the best improvisation comes from the highest discipline. As well as being quick to pick up useful snippets from their own experience, a missionary can prepare by learning from the experience of others: by sieving the media; by listening to those who have gone before.

So there's still no replacing thorough disciplined preparation and flexible creativity in learning, for future missionaries. And for those on the field, local knowledge enables the truth to be related to local understanding. Then, the Bible creates the church.



Peter Blowes has served as a CMS missionary in Argentina for almost twenty years.



Peter at the Alan Gardiner memorial. He was the first SAMS missionary to Sth America.