
Proceedings of the 7th Trans Tasman Rural Conference



7th - 11th April 2008

**Beginning in Marlborough and ending in
Nelson, in the South Island of Aotearoa
New Zealand**

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With grateful acknowledgement to all contributors

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CONTENTS

1. Introduction	5
2. The Bonding Begins: Omaka Marae	8
3. The Power of Stories: Morning Devotions with Father Phil	10
4. Marlborough	12
4A. Role Model and Whirlwind. <i>Jo Grigg.</i>	12
4B Field Trip to Havelock and the Marlborough Sounds. <i>Chris and Sue Bedford.</i>	14
4C Awatere Valley Field Trip. <i>Michael and Beverley Deverall</i>	18
4D Wednesday Travel. <i>Hugh Williams (Darfield, NZ) and Sandra Harper (Temora, NSW)</i>	21
4E Panel Discussion at Teapot Valley. <i>Jeff and Kath Gray.</i>	24
5. Keynotes	25
5A Outlook for Thursday: A Theological Reflection in Living in the Era of Global Climate Change. <i>Mark Gibson</i>	25
5B A World of Hope: When Creation Begs, “Your Kingdom Come”. <i>Dr Andrew Wells.</i>	29
6. Workshops	32
6A The “Focus Church” A new tool for rural church development. <i>Mark Chamberlain</i>	32
6B Developing Sustainable Models of Rural Ministry. <i>Rob Stoner</i>	33
6C Planting a non clergy church : every member ministry. <i>Bruce Fraser</i>	33
6D Hills Community Church - Can Dry Bones Live? (Ezekiel 37.1-14) <i>Marilyn Loken</i>	34
6E Making a Joyful Noise on a Budget. <i>Alison Fields</i>	35
6F Pastoral Care in Local Shared Ministry Parishes. <i>Tim Parker</i>	36
6G Involving Families And Children In The Life Of The Church. <i>Miriam Taylor</i>	37
6H Evangelism in the Rural Setting. <i>Richard Dyer</i>	38
6I How Many Lord? What Statistics Can Tell Us About our Faith Communities. <i>Ian Duncan and Alison Fields</i>	39
6J Christian Perspective On Sustainability In Rural Areas. <i>Robyn McPhail</i>	40
6K Wilderness and Spirituality for Christian living in Aotearoa New Zealand in the 21 st century . <i>Andrew Shepherd</i>	41
7. Closing Worship	42
8. Endings: Moved and Challenged. <i>Robyn McPhail</i>	46



7th Trans-Tasman Rural Conference: beginning and end

Above in the Pelorus Sound, Marlborough Sounds.
Below at Teapot Valley, Nelson, New Zealand.



1. Introduction

Tradition is an important part of church life which in some quarters receives shrift shift where 'tradition' is perceived to rival Scripture or to quench the work of the Spirit. Often overlooked in deprecatory approaches to tradition are the creative and flexible dimensions to church tradition. New traditions, for example, are being created all the time. We readily forget, or if young enough simply have no awareness of the fact that a cuppa after a service is a late twentieth century tradition. One new tradition in Australasia is the four yearly Trans Tasman Rural Conference (TTRC). We think this event can be properly described as a tradition – its past defined in terms of 1984 Darfield, Canterbury, 1984 (Theme: *Rural Church Perplexed*); Kyogle, NSW, 1988 (*Bearers of hope*), Waipawa, 1992 (*Rural realities Creation or chaos*); Myrtleford, Vic, 1996 (*An Ecological Vision for the Rural Church*); Northland, 2000 (*Country Conversations*); Clare, SA, 2004 (*Recapturing Passion for the local church*); Marlborough/Nelson, 2008 (*Changing seasons, Changing times*) – its future directed towards Atherton Tablelands, Queensland, 2012.

In this publication we both record and report on the events and expositions of the seventh Trans Tasman Rural Conference held 7th - 11th April 2008, beginning in Marlborough and ending in Nelson, in the South Island of Aotearoa New Zealand.

Nothing comes from nothing and this has certainly been true of TTRC 2008. If one source for this conference was the tradition developed through the six previous conferences, another source lay in the decision of the (Anglican) Diocese of Nelson to sponsor the participation of two of its clergy in the TTRC 2004 in Clare, South Australia. Rev Martin Harrison (Waimea, Nelson) and Rev Miriam Taylor (Awatere, Marlborough) came away from that conference having expressed their confidence to fellow conferees that the next occasion could happen somewhere in the upper part of the South Island. But behind the decision of the Diocese to send Martin and Miriam lay a local tradition of Diocese of Nelson Rural Forums, held approximately every two years through the 1990s and into the early 2000s. The Diocese of Nelson has 26 parishes, 18 of which readily perceive themselves to be 'rural' in either a significant degree or in their whole. Initially under the leadership of Archdeacons Bob Barrett and David Hastings, and more recently under the leadership of Rev Martin Harrison and Rev Dr Peter Carrell, these Forums have been opportunities for clergy and lay leaders to gather for equipping and inspiration for rural mission and ministry.

The Trans Tasman Rural Conferences are ecumenical events and this character determined that the organisation of TTRC 2008 needed to include a wider group than Anglicans. The initial working group consisted of Martin Harrison, Peter Carrell, Miriam Taylor (Anglican ministers, with Miriam being Minister of the Awatere Joint Christian Venture – a Presbyterian/Anglican parish), Rev Elizabeth Clark (United Church, Motueka), Deborah Paton, Doug and Browyn Thorneycroft (Chapel of the Lake, St Arnaud, Lake Rotoiti (inter-denominational)), and Féy Cotter, PA to Bishop Richard Ellena, representing the Anglican Centre of the Diocese of Nelson. If this group, and its additions, to be noted below, was top heavy with Anglicans, this partly reflected the commitment of Martin, Miriam and Peter to ensure that TTRC 2008 happened, and partly represented the strength of Anglican ministry in the countryside of Marlborough and Nelson.

(1) The Anglican Diocese of Nelson encompasses all the upper part of the South Island from Kaikoura on the East Coast and Greymouth on the West Coast northwards.

Planning started in earnest in 2006 and never varied significantly from a vision for the event developed by Martin Harrison following a suggestion from Garth Cant. In this vision TTRC 2008 would encompass as wide a range of rural landscapes and mission contexts as practicable. It would begin in Marlborough with its mix of vineyards, mussel farms, olives, and traditional farms, move through the region of Lake Rotoiti with its high country farms and National Park conservationism working side by side, and conclude in the hinterland of Nelson. Marlborough was the domain, so to speak, of Miriam Taylor. Along the way a Marlborough working group led by Miriam grew, involving Laura Murray (Wharenuī, on the East Coast of Marlborough between Ward and Kekerengu), Janis Holland (Waikakaho Valley, between Blenheim and Picton), and Viv Grigg (Wairau Valley). Their planning encompassed the welcome to TTRC 2008, a day of tours (Awatere, Havelock and the Sounds), and departure to the Lake. Deborah Paton, then resident at St Arnaud, Lake Rotoiti, on the main working group, co-ordinated the plans for a day at St Arnaud.

The main working group, led by Martin Harrison, grew with the addition of Rev Stephen Neale (Kaikoura, later Greymouth), Dawn Daunauda (Pigeon Valley, Wakefield), Rev Paul Tregurtha (Minister of Richmond and Wakefield Methodist Churches), and Paul Shutte (Manager of the Teapot Valley Christian Camp, Brightwater, Nelson). Unfortunately in late 2007 Elizabeth Clark withdrew from the committee in order to support her husband through a serious illness.

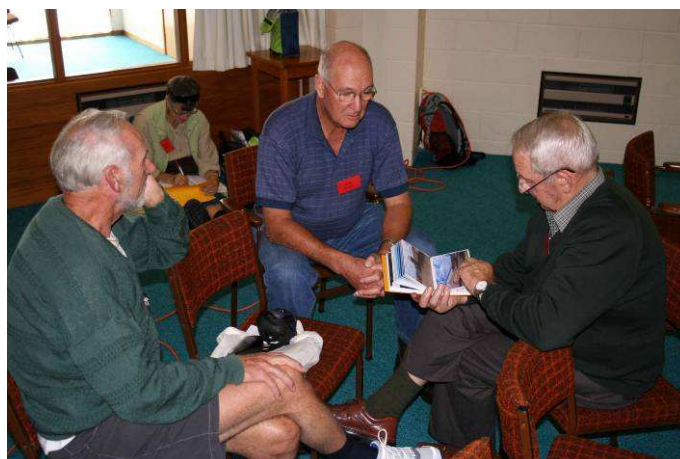
Typically a conference of this kind requires decisions in four major areas: theme, plenary speakers, workshops, and accommodation. TTRC 2008 also required decision-making re 'tours' of rural areas. As outlined above the vision for TTRC 2008 drove the main working group towards the following decisions. First, on the matter of a theme, the group reflected on the mix of concerns about global warming, world climate change, particular droughts in parts of Australia and the east coast of the North Island, alongside the reality of changes occurring in land use in Marlborough, transformation of the conservation estate around Lake Rotoiti, and the variety of ways in which mission and ministry has changed in our part of the world (and elsewhere in the rural landscapes of Australasia). *Changing seasons, changing times* was (in hindsight, at least!) a fairly straightforward theme to emerge from that reflection.

Secondly, that theme, and a particular sense of urgency for the health of the planet itself, led us to seek out plenary speakers who would address us from the perspective of *ecology* or, more precisely, *eco-theology*. We were also conscious as a group of the considerable Anglican involvement in the organisation of the conference, and set out if at all possible to find non-Anglican plenary speakers. In this matter we were successful. A recommendation from Paul Tregurtha led us to Mark Gibson, Minister of Christchurch South Methodist Parish [terminology], and a recommendation from Steve Neale led us to Andrew Wells, a scientist researching the interface between forestry and geology, almost literally on the Alpine faultline, and a member of an independent Christian fellowship in the small rural settlement of Hawea Flat in Central Otago. We also took up a suggestion from Miriam Taylor and secured the services of Fr Philip King-Turner, Priest of the Reefton Catholic Parish as leader of our morning devotions. This choice proved to be most inspired as all received significant inspiration through his talks.

Thirdly, with respect to workshops we decided to simply open the doors to offers from participants in the conference itself. As can be seen later in this publication our strategy here yielded a variety of workshop topics presented by a balanced array of Australian and New Zealand practitioners.

Fourthly, regarding accommodation, we decided to use two different types – with the visit to St Arnaud, Lake Rotoiti being a passing through journey from Marlborough to Nelson. For the first two nights in Marlborough we would stay at the Omaka Marae, and for the remaining two nights we would stay at Teapot Valley Christian Camp on the outskirts of Brightwater, a small rural/lifestyle/commuter town about 20km from the centre of Nelson city. Omaka Marae is about 5 km from the centre of Blenheim, the chief town of Marlborough. We knew that a stay at a Marae was not new for the TTRCs, as the Northland conference in 2000 had involved sleeping on a marae. This plan for accommodation would, we knew, be a challenge to participants, since it is always easier to settle into one residential pattern of sleeping, washing, and eating rather than two, to say nothing of the challenges of marae accommodation with everyone sleeping and snoring in the same large room. But we felt our plan would be worth doing, both as a means to keep the conference moving across the top of the South Island and within a reasonable budget.

Finally, the vision included opportunity to explore different parts of Marlborough, which is a province full of variety – plain and hills, two major river valleys, the Marlborough Sounds, vineyards and olive groves, sheep farms and cattle stations. After toying with the possibility of arranging three different tours we settled on two bus tours occurring simultaneously, meaning participants would need to choose one over the other. The tours we offered were ‘the Awatere’ and ‘Havelock and Sounds’. Reports of these tours form a significant part of the publication below. Suffice to say here that from an organisational perspective the tours went wonderfully well – special thanks to Rev Dale Pomeroy and his team from the Parish of Havelock and the Sounds, and to Rev Miriam Taylor and her team from the Awatere Joint Christian Venture – and from a participants’ perspective the tours connected visitors and locals while engaging all in the significant questions which *Changing Seasons Changing Times* are raising in Marlborough.



2. The bonding begins: Omaka Marae

**Ko Tapua-o-Uenuku te maunga
Ko Wairau te awa
Ko Rangitane te iwi
Ko Omaka to marae
Ko te kawa he paeke
Ko Te Waipounamu te moutere**

Our conference opened when we were called on to Omaka marae, at Blenheim. All marae are sacred to the living and a memorial to the ancestors. The weather was wet so we were called directly into the wharenuī (the large meeting house). We were welcomed with korero (speeches) and with waiata (song). We responded with speeches and song. We greeted each other, we were lead into the whare kai (dining room) to share food together. The tapu had been lifted and for the next two days the wharenuī became our meeting place and our sleeping place.

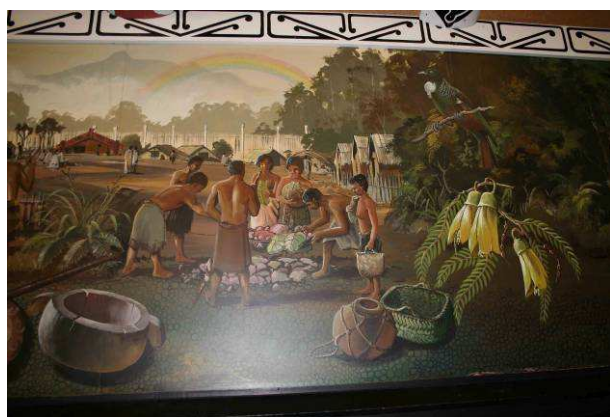
The first evening we settled in and we slept (75 of us together in one large, warm space.) On the second evening Kiley Nepia, the young kaikorero from the powhiri (opening welcome) and an eager student of things Maori, told us about his marae at Omaka and its place in the larger community. As he spoke about the place, the marae and the meeting house he drew on the knowledge of his Aunty, Kath Hemi, and we could sense that he was surrounded by the ancestors. It was a story that spanned from pre-European times, to air force base, to urban marae.



In the 1960s and 1970s, Maori were migrating to the town in Blenheim and the nearby air force base at Woodbourne. They came from many tribes and they needed a place to gather, for tangi in times of death and for community building. Rangitane welcomed the formation of the Marlborough Maori Community Group and together they raised funds, negotiated with the Crown for part of the Omaka air force complex, and began building the wharenuī (large meeting house) which is the whare-tupuna (house of the ancestors).

Omaka marae is a pan tribal marae, under the mana of the local Rangitane tribe. This is a place where Maori of all tribes come together, and Maori and non Maori are welcomed. This inclusiveness is reflected in the name of the whare-tupuna “Te Aroha o Te Waipounamu” – it is firmly grounded in Te Waipounamu (South Island) and the love of those who created it is extended to all who come as manuhiri (guests). When we enter the wharenuī, Kiley told us, we are inside the body of the ancestors, our feet massage the floor, and our breathe mingles with the breathe of all who have been here before.

The artwork reflects the ethos of inclusiveness and the diversity of ancestors and heritage. Kiley explained to us the different parts of the whare-tupuna, the house within which we met and slept. The stories and the knowledge of the old people is carved into wood, woven into panels and painted into one large mural. The poupou or carved poles come from the different tribes; the tuku-tuku panels and the kowhaiwhai rafters tell the tribal stories and carry messages of sustainability. The mural which runs the full length of one wall is unusual in a meeting house and combines the knowledge of Kath Hemi with the artistic skill of Brian Baxter. It is the story of the place from the creation, through the arrival of the Polynesian ancestors, colonisation and Treaty claims to the new partnerships opening up ahead. At the end of the meeting house are photos of those who have lived here, have died, and been brought to this place in preparation for the journey to the Atua and the ancestors: “haere, haere, haere; haere ki te wa kainga”.



Kiley told us the stories and he answered our questions. Peter Carrell told us about the “Hikoi of Hope” which walked from the four corners of Maoridon to Parliament in Wellington and the manner in which it was hosted here on its journey to Wellington. Others of us shared the emotions of being here as guests – Mark Gibson and Hugh Williams from Canterbury, Sue Bedford from Dargaville, and Hohaia and Dawn Matthews who are Maori with the Uniting Church of Australia in Port Augusta.

Matua Ben Morunga from Motuti in the Hokianga completed the affirmation. He acknowledged Kiley as a young man who spoke with strength and with humility. He had been gifted so much knowledge and he shared things with warmth, with clarity and with generosity. Martin Harrison and Peter Carrell completed our stay with a tangible reminder of our visit: the gift of a small punga tree to be added to the plant nursery, our carbon footprint which reconnects with the whenua (the land/the placenta). Kia ora tatou: we belong together in Christ and with all of creation.



3. The power of stories: morning devotions with Father Phil

Stories are told and retold, sculptured to each place and each audience. Father Phil King-Turner, Irish and Ngati Koata and Parish Priest at Reefton, deepened our devotional life with stories of his upbringing on Rangitoto/D'Urville Island and his ministry in the islands of Tonga. His three themes of "change", "compassion" and "accompanying" remain with us back in our own places.

Change

Father Phil's theme on the first morning was change. "Things change", said Father Phil, "we either grow with change or we are destroyed by change". He continued:

My father was a giant of a man. When we were growing up on D'Urville Island, he divided his time between fishing and farming. One day, when I was five and a half, he said to us as he went fishing: "Don't play in the wool". That warning caught my imagination. When he went off in his boat, I went into the woolshed, pulled out the fleeces, bounced and bounced, jumped, playing and tangling the wool. Next day he came home from fishing and found the dirty, tangled wool. "Have you played in the wool?", he asked. I knew then the damage I had done but I didn't own it. "No never, not me". No more words were said, Dad readied the boat and went out fishing again.

That night there was a huge storm, and next day Dad didn't come in. Mum was positive: "He always comes home". Second day he didn't come home. Third day he didn't come home. That night, as I went to bed, I looked through Mum's door and she was weeping.

I knew things were bad, and around that I knew I had played in the wool. I slept but it was a troubled sleep. In the night, in the moonlight, a long shadow fell, it was my father. He went first to my brother's bed and checked that he was fine. He came to my bed, sat on the edge, and ruffled my hair: "Dad", I said, "I played in the wool, and I am sorry". I took hold of his hand in my hand. He looked at my heart and he understood. He ruffled my hair again, and without a word he was gone. One of our greatest changes happens when we say we are sorry – to God and to people. Don't leave reconciliation until it is too late.

Compassion

The five and a half year old is now seven. At seven, everything is my fault. Each "Phil", "Phil", "Phil" has a different intonation and catches up with a different misdeed. Every morning my Mum is up early, lighting the stove, cooking the meal. My job was to feed the six chooks. I was sorry for Mum, I wanted to help her, encourage her, lighten her load. My spirituality was growing, I knew that the Holy Spirit is a warming up inside. I had an idea that the Holy Spirit was real, and the Holy Spirit told me how to help Mum and lighten her early morning load.

That evening, after the hens were asleep, I went down to the beach with a bucket, got some water and gathered some sticks. I started a fire and boiled the water. That done, I took the bucket to the hen house and gently poured the water over the chooks. I knew that next morning the eggs would come out boiled, one less job for my Mum. Next morning, when I went to the hen house, my heart fell with shock. The six chooks were cold, stiff, legs all up in the air.

I went into Mum silently, stood beside her at the end of the bench. She could read the silence: "What is it you want to tell me?" she asked. "The chooks are crook", I said. We went together and looked: the six chooks were cold, stiff, legs all up in the air. Mum was the model of compassion and gentleness. We went back into the warm room and she said: "Tell me about it". My

story was a long one: the Holy Spirit giving me ideas, hard work, helping Mum, boiled eggs, and I loved her very much. Eventually I stopped and waited. Mum's compassion came through. "That is the loveliest story I have heard", said Mum. "But wait, if the Holy Spirit comes to you again, check with me first and I will talk to the Holy Spirit too!"

A few days later we went out together, looking in the toitoi for wild hens and wild eggs. We found some eggs, we tested, we incubated, and the new chicks hatched.

Accompanying

Half a lifetime later, in the 1970s, I was ministering in the outer islands of Tonga, Haapai and Vavau. I went from island to island in my 12 metre mission boat, 7 to 8 km per hour max. The old diesel engine had only one voice and one speed "Tiddly-pom, tiddly-pom, tiddly pom". One night there was a storm, rough, dark and poor visibility. I could not head into shore because of rocks and reefs, so I headed for open sea, rougher, darker, stormier. My little boat was stressed, I was rolling and pitching in big broadside seas. And then coming up alongside me, out of the night, was a great wall of steel. It was the Bank Line copra ship that traded around the Pacific. The Captain knew me and knew my boat, he came abeam of me, stayed 200 metres away, and slowed right down. For the next three to four hours I travelled in the shelter of his huge ship. My old engine kept the same note: "Tiddly-pom, tiddly-pom, tiddly pom". The storm abated, the copra boat went on, I went home to safety. Jesus walks beside us in the storms of our lives.

Not so long after, I came for "renewal" to Pimble in New South Wales. Part of that was a silent month of prayer. Week 1 I reached rock bottom. "Nice day for a journey", said the Spiritual Director as I went into a large silent prayer room, alone. And then the video started in my head. We were sitting at a plank table in Nazareth, Mary and Jesus and I, and my sun hat was hanging on a nail on the wall. I was listening to the mother/son conversation. Then someone burst in with the news: John was baptising in the river. "Tell me about my cousin John?" said Jesus, and I listened as Mary explained. Jesus got up and went out. Mary gently said to me "Follow him now" so I put on my sun hat and followed.

Later in the day, I found Jesus sitting on a large rock, looking down on the valley. He asked me: "Why did you follow me here?". I said, "Your mother told me to". And as the sun went down, we talked. This was real and we talked all night. With the dawn, Jesus took me down to the river. He was my companion, and I was baptised. Jesus said: "If you come with me I'll always be at your side." I ended the prayer time and there were tears on my cheeks.



4. Marlborough

4A. Role model and whirlwind.

Jo Grigg

Joanna Grigg mother of three, agricultural writer, farmer and consultant for Meat and Wool NZ, gave us a whirlwind introduction to Marlborough on the eve of our fieldtrips.

“I’m a relative newcomer to the district”, said Joanna, “ten years ago I was lured to the district by my husband David with promises of warm weather, fun sailing trips in the Marlborough Sounds, and breakfast in bed every morning. Two of these have come true!”



Joanna and David have three children: Penny 6, Emma 5 and Hamish 3. “Farms are great places to bring up children and we have the best of both worlds. We are close enough to Blenheim to enjoy its library, pool and cafes yet we are able to walk up a gully and not look at houses”. Joanna paused and added: “The children are still at the age where a dead sheep is far more entertaining than a play station”.

David and Joanna run 9000 sheep and cattle stock units on their hill country farm Tempello. Corriedale and crossbred ewes are combined with Angus/Hereford cattle and merino ewes. Three years ago the arrival of irrigation via a piped community scheme allowed them to add grapes - 13 ha of sauvignon blanc. “We have a foot in both the food and wine camps” added Joanna, “When it rains in autumn we are happy for the farm. When it doesn’t rain we are pleased for the vineyard”.

Joanna compared the 2008 returns for livestock and grapes. “Prime lamb returns barely cover the cost of producing the lamb. Grapes this year return a net figure of around 58% on capital invested”.

Joanna calculated that they would need 650 ewes to the hectare to get the same return. “With this number of sheep crammed in the paddock” she reflected, “we would look like down-town Tokyo at rush hour”.

Marlborough with its sounds and mountains is the second least populated district in New Zealand. Only 1.1% of New Zealand’s population live in Marlborough. The population is around 40,000 with 21,000 people in Blenheim.

Marlborough is known for its aquaculture like mussels and for sauvignon blanc, and latterly pinot noir, but sheep and beef farms have the longest track record. This year it is expected that wine sales from New Zealand will reach the \$1 billion mark. Wine exports will pass those for wool for the first time. There are 11,000 hectares of vines in Marlborough and we produce 62% of New Zealand wine.

Like many rural people these days, the Griggs’ income also comes from off-farm. Joanna works two to three days a week as an agricultural writer for *Country-Wide*. “I interview a lot of scientists and consultants over the phone so don’t have to travel too much”, says Joanne and adds “The fun bit is doing an on-farm profile, trying to write notes while bouncing around in the truck”.

Joanne also prepares research briefs that go out to farmers, for an organisation called Meat & Wool NZ. “This organisation is funded through farmer levies”, explains Joanna “No slacking in that job, otherwise David tells me off for wasting his money”!

Joanne described a trip to her cousin’s wedding in Adelaide (and discovered one of the guests was in the conference audience.) “I’m actually half Aussie, and crikey the southern states are dry. I really feel for rural people in South Australia.” Joanne went on to describe the positive side: because of the severe water restrictions in Adelaide, the urbanites can sympathise with country people. Adelaide gardens are as decimated as the farms.

This urban-rural gap in understanding and sympathy is widening in New Zealand. There is a lack of understanding about farming. For example, “my dear sister in law from Auckland was led to believe sheep roosted in trees”.

“Humour is a good way to get through bad times, I find”, added Joanne. “They say a person without a sense of humour is like a wagon without springs: they get jolted by every pebble on the road”.

Wherever Joanne travels, she is on the look out for ways in which the church community can support rural people in times of trouble. Her uncle, Dean Brown, is the liaison person between the South Australian drought committee and the government. Joanne believes that rural people, and church people in rural areas, should use all the services and expert help possible. She adds that training rural church people in farming systems would also help.

Home in Marlborough, Joanne was impressed to see the Vicar at Monitor Farm field days. These are field days focused on helping develop a local farm to its potential. “He was the first to jump out and open gates or fix a flat tyre. He was on the volunteer fire brigade. Farmers respect people who are ‘doers’, not just ‘tellers’”.

Joanna takes pride in the outreach of the Wairau Valley church parish. Mainly Music sees about 40 preschoolers and their parents meet for a fun half hour each week. Lynda Moses, the Vicar’s wife, runs this with parishioners and they take casseroles to new mums. This creates an interest in church life. Girls Brigade, affiliated with the church, gets across basic values and skills.

Every year a very popular church garden tour is run and a service held in a garden. And we could go further - for example a church service out in the vineyard to give thanks for the harvest can be quite a big community event.

Joanne added that fundraising through farms is a good way to make money for the church: “Last year we fattened four church cattle at Tempello. Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, as they were known, brought in \$3000 at the freezing works”.

One year a local parishioner let the church hand pick some grapes that were out of reach of the machine harvester. This was a great fundraiser. As the old rattly Bedford loaded down with fruit drove into the winery premises, the winemaker was heard to say – “Here come the ‘grapes from God’.”

“You have to have a lot of faith to be in farming. To hang in there when times are tough, or to have the faith to make changes”.

Joanne invited us to enjoy Marlborough and to ponder these issues, in between the farm tours and wine-tasting. “Have a fantastic few days.”

4B. Field Trip to Havelock and the Marlborough Sounds Chris and Sue Bedford

A coach load of 38 eager conference participants set out for the Marlborough Sounds settlement of Havelock. Across the Wairau Plains, with many vineyards with famous names that many of us recognised – but could not afford to buy their wines.

Our quest – to get a glimpse of life and faith in the far flung reaches of the Marlborough Sounds. As our bus approached Havelock we noticed the sign “Welcome to Havelock – greenlip mussel capital of the world.”

So it was no accident that our first stop was the Sanford’s mussel factory on the shorefront at Havelock. We were met by our guide for the day, the effervescent local vicar, Revd Dale Pomeroy. We were put into two groups and given strict instructions not to take photos – commercially sensitive and privacy issues of course.



Through big windows we watched an amazing group of people – about 40 people standing at 90 conveyer belts furiously opening mussels – at the rate of about one every two seconds. Not the job for everyone – the openers stand in one place for two hours at a time dealing with a steady supply of mussels to keep them out of mischief, and a good opener can open 10,000 in a day!! And earn \$700 to 800 a week.

From there to watch the bags of mussels being packed and crated up for export around the world, principally to Asia, Canada, USA and Australia.

About 50 tonnes of mussels are harvested every day, by a very international team of workers, with lots of Brazilians and people from various African nations.

Our appetites for morning tea being whetted, we walked to the church for a delicious morning tea – including hot steamed mussels in the shell, a taste of the local product. Yum!

From morning tea we gathered in the church, and local minister Dale Pomeroy inspired and challenged us as he told us of his far flung Marlborough Sounds Anglican Parish. It extends right out to D’Urville Island on the edge of Cook Strait. There are nine different centres that have church services, although Dale says that will be reduced to three in the next year or so as they move from formal church services to informal gatherings for worship and ministry in peoples’ homes.



Dale is a former boat builder with a passion for taking the gospel to people living around the shores of the Marlborough Sounds. Much of his ministry is done by boat – he owns a four year old launch, big enough to handle most of the weather they encounter,

“If it is too rough we just find a quiet bay and anchor for a while,” he says. “Our boat has beds and we have food for this sort of eventuality, and can easily wait out a couple of days if necessary,”

Whereas ministers get travelling allowance for their cars on a kilometre basis, Dale also gets travel allowance for his boat. “The parish reimburses me by the hour”, he said. “We’re all happy about that and it works well.”

A real issue for farmers in the Marlborough Sounds is financial viability. Low prices for wool and beef mean that many farmers are selling up and leaving the Sounds. Dale told us of one farmer who said he wouldn’t hand his farm down to his son because he didn’t want to saddle his son with the huge debt that he would inherit.

The parish owns a 14 hectare forestry block which will be ready to harvest in 12 years. The church provides the trees and labour, the landowner provides the land. When the trees are harvested the proceeds will be divided between the two partners.

“Christ is the centre of this parish,” said Dale. “All we do and seek to do is grounded in him”. Dale concluded his talk to the group by praying “that everyone at the Conference would be invigorated to take the gospel out to the world in a real and relevant way.”

Just as we were leaving we discovered that there had been a problem with the timber in one part of the ceiling – and Dale had used his boat building skills to replace the necessary timber. And when they replaced the steel on the roof recently, parishioners were invited to purchase a sheet and their names were written on the back of the sheets of corrugated iron so they would be remembered when the roof was next replaced!

From Havelock we drove alongside Pelorous Sound for about an hour to the Harper family farm. It was a slow winding road and we appreciated the skill and care of Tony, our coach driver. Dale Pomeroy told us that “it is 56 kilometres to the end of this road (30 miles) and it takes stock trucks four and a half hours each way – and you wouldn’t do it much quicker in a car.” No wonder Dale uses his boat a lot!

The Harper family farm is tucked in a quiet bay on Pelorous Sound. They make their own cheese and honey and run a high class hospitality operation. We sure enjoyed their hospitality with a wonderful lunch, all made with produce from their own farm or purchased at the Havelock Farmers Market.



In the Harper family home, they had gathered en masse to meet us: we met Julie – referred to as “Mum” or “the Matriarch” – Lisa, Rob and Sabine, Hamish and Anne and their young child, Fiona.

We were told how they supply their cheese to restaurants around Marlborough and sell it at the Farmers Market. They use old recipes and use only local ingredients. Their honey is very high grade. Rob quietly but proudly explained that: “you have to have a 60% pollen count to get A grade honey, and our last lot was between 87 and 89%.”

Everyone enjoyed the opportunity to stroll down the lawn to the edge of Pelorus Sound, and appreciate the majestic beauty of the place.

No visit to Marlborough would be complete without a visit to a winery, and we were taken to Nautilus Estate Winery on the Wairau Plains. We were shown the juice extraction process, and climbed up to look at the huge vats of red grapes. The skins are stirred up in the vats three times a day during fermentation.



Modern technology has had a huge impact on the local wine industry and much of it is focussed on saving labour. One result is that this large winery is now able to be operated by eight people. There is huge capital involved; the huge stainless steel tanks that we saw full of fermenting wine are used for only between eleven to thirty days each year; the rest of the year they stand idle.

We were taken out into the vineyard to see sauvignon blanc vines. They had recently been machine picked. The vines are trained both up and down the wires. This spreads out the vines and produces a more balanced crop.



The wine is stored in barrels of French oak that cost E650 each – they are used for three years and then are sold off for gardeners to put plants in. Nautilus Estate produces 15,000 cases of red wine each year and 85,000 cases of white wine. Most of this is exported. The biggest problem facing the NZ wine industry at the present time is the high dollar.

The staff of Nautilus Estate is very international. They have a young French woman working for them at present along with a South African man and two Australian men. Many people training in the wine industry get a tertiary qualification, and then travel the world doing vintages, and getting work experience. Eventually they have to get a whole season or several under their belt to gain experience of the whole industry.

Everyone enjoyed some wine tasting after the tour and one or two people splashed out and bought a bottle of the local product. We all agreed that the Pinot Noir was particularly good, if out of the financial reach of most of us.

At the end of the day I spoke with Ian and Jan Trengove of Spalding, South Australia and asked them what had particularly connected with them on the day's tour.

Jan said: "The thing I appreciated the most was hearing the passion that Dale Pomeroy has for ministry in such a disparate place. His passion for the people and place was inspiring and encouraged; it just overflowed from him in everything he said."

Ian added: "As a farmer, I particularly responded to the visit to the Harper's farm. It was wonderful to see three generations working together – a mother, sisters and a brother all with a shared vision and desire to make good things happen together. It's impressive to see them starting new enterprises to make the farm viable; they are a very special family."

Jan was also impressed at the passion our guide at the winery showed for his work, and the positive way he related to the people he worked with. She also returned to an earlier comment about Dale Pomeroy and said, "The way Dale brought his boat building skills to his ministry was great. He's bringing necessary changes for missional reasons. He's not frightened to get things done, but he seems to be keeping his people on board with the changes as he goes."

Our happy busload returned to the marae full of stories, information and photographs, and warm memories of an excellent field trip.

4C. Awatere Valley Fieldtrip

Michael and Beverley Deverell

Our sense of anticipation as we set out was not to be disappointed. From the comfort of our coach, with Cindy our driver (whose negotiating skills were to be tested more than once!) we were in for some panoramic views and wonderfully informative commentary from Miriam Taylor, and Leicester and Laura Murray. We travelled in the Awatere River district in the vicinity of the famous Molesworth Station and Flaxbourne Station (1840).

Burkart Fisheries at Ward

Our guide, Lance, shared from his years of experience, to give us an informed tour through this plant that exports live lobster (crayfish), and also shells paua for the flesh to be sent on elsewhere for processing.



Handling of the lobsters is very critical. They are supplied by a network of local fishermen. Farming of lobster has been thoroughly researched but is not a viable alternative. Avoiding stress of the lobster is paramount, as this could lead to death at any stage. For this reason water temperatures are tightly controlled through every stage as they move through in stacked bins to final packing in wood-fibre 'wool'. Marketing is a huge undertaking. Most go to China where they are finally distributed by the local marketeers. Sadly, there was no opportunity to sample!

Robrian Olive Estate

The hot drink and warm muffins on arrival were very welcome on this somewhat cool day! Brian and Rob Moore went into olives as a retirement hobby and have subsequently grown a very successful business. They undertake the whole process, on site, from planting of different varieties through pruning, harvesting, pressing, blending, bottling and finally marketing to a niche market as 'Flaxbourne Olive Oil'. Here we did enjoy sampling with bread dipped in the oil!

Lake Grassmere solar salt works

This is the only saltworks in New Zealand and was commenced in 1943 through the initiative of George Skellerup. This area of Marlborough has low rainfall, high sunshine hours and strong drying winds during summer – all contributing to the high evaporating rates necessary for the evaporation of water from the ocean brine to the end product. Forty staff are employed with extras over harvesting time.

Their guide boarded the bus, guiding our driver through the narrow access roads to view the ponds. Her explanations of the progressive stages gave meaning to what we saw of the process from seawater to harvesting of the salt. The four to six week harvest was underway. We struck

lunch-break but saw enough of the stationary machinery to understand how they work. Daily harvest can exceed 6,000 tonnes. We did see part of the huge fleet of trucks, from near and far, who come in to shift the salt to the washing plants and onto the salt stacks. The majority of salt goes to the freezing works for treatment of hides and skins. They supply most of New Zealand table salt with free-flowing and iodizing agents being added. Tuna fishermen use salt and some goes to the Pacific Islands. Salt-based stock licks for animals are produced on the site, with other user industries ranging from food processing to dyeworks, sausage skins to butter and cheese, water treatment to paper industry.



Trelawne Farms are owned and operated by Guy and Jane Lissaman. They have 183 ha and are located 5 km inland of Seddon and 30 km south of Blenheim.

We were welcomed by Guy and Jane who gave us a conducted tour of their property and a presentation to fill us in on the details of their operation and an overview of the Awarere Valley. Guy and Jane bought the property from Guy's father in 1994 when they ran sheep and grew 60 ha of wheat. However, as time went by, because of the rapid increase in land values and the fall in commodity prices, they found it necessary to change their farming policy. In the late 1990s they were still farming sheep and growing process crops. In 2001 they planted their first 20ha of grapes. Presently they have 64 ha of grapes and 90 ha of crops. Lucerne is grown and used for seed production and hay as well as grazing. Their intention for the future is to further develop their vineyards.

This increase in vineyard development is consistent with the development of the whole Marlborough region, with an increase of over 4,000ha in 2000 to over 13,000ha in 2007. There is huge capital required for the development of vineyards – the value of irrigated land is \$100,000 a hectare and it costs \$40,000 to plant a hectare. Guy told us that there is large-scale corporate development in their area. Some of us who were at the Rural Churches Conference in Canada heard the key speaker, John Ikerd, saying that corporates are the new colonisers. He is a Professor Emeritus and agricultural economist in USA. He says that corporates are a threat to rural communities, with their emphasis on extracting wealth for their investors. There would seem to be similarities to what he was saying and what we were seeing here.

In Guy's presentation he outlined the changes in the communities with families of long associations leaving. New families arriving bring a broad cultural and social spectrum, impacting on the traditional community. There is also an influx of seasonal workers.

Ian also presented challenges (opportunities) for the church :-

- how to engage with children and youth in the community given there is now no compulsory Bible in Schools ?
- how can the church link up with the changing people?

- pastoral care of seasonal workers?
- making time for leisure and family?
- how can the church cater for societies changing values?.

After our visit to the Awatere Valley there were questions that arose:-

- Concern that so much land was being lost from food production
- Questions regarding the production of so much liquor, given that the abuse of it is our number one drug problem
- Concern that the area is turning into a monolithic industry.

We appreciated Guy and Jane opening their home to us; for the educative tour of their property; for Guy's full presentation; for the tasting of the grapes and the scrumptious lunch.

This farm was typical of what we constantly saw throughout the day. Vast areas being planted in grapevines - a phenomenal growth in converting the traditional farming of sheep and cattle and cropping to vineyards. This has wrought huge changes in lifestyle, farm economy, landscape, employment opportunities, and water use.

Awatere Joint Venture Church At Seddon

A highlight that gave us a strong link with the churches and their communities was the time spent at St Andrew's Church, Seddon with the Awatere minister, Miriam Taylor, and her excellent PowerPoint overview along with meeting some of the people of the "Awatere Christian Joint Venture – Anglicans, Presbyterians and others together". Here again, we saw God in the wonder of creation all around us and His spirit manifesting itself through enabling the love, determination and outreach of Gods' people in that place.

As part of taking the gospel out to their communities in a practical, real and relevant way, the parish holds days that focus on appealing to families of the community, eg picnic/fun activities at Campbell Lighthouse and an eight km bikeathon to the beach. They are a people who love to celebrate – *faith, family and fun*, as was evidenced by the photo displays and work of Kids' Church around the walls of the hall. Their five preaching places include Seddon and Ward as well as house churches. They feel blessed to have so many biblical symbols in the area to draw on – vineyards, a lighthouse, salt, mountains, rivers, the sea, sheep, and grains.

Our Australian friends found lots of similarities to their position. They picked up on the dependence on rainfall and water resources; the shift in population; that retaining Bible in Schools seems to be something rural schools are doing better, thanks to the local church people being on Boards of Trustees.

We returned to the marae weary but wiser, cherishing the opportunity to absorb more of this unique region through the landscape, the industries, the farming and the people.



4D. Wednesday Travel

Hugh Williams (Darfield, NZ) and Sandra Harper (Temora, NSW)

Travelling on: Wednesday 9th April 2008

Wednesday was our “busabout” day, beginning at Omaka Marae, travelling through beautiful countryside with Tony our bus driver, and ending up at Teapot Valley, our home for the rest of the week. After a good night’s rest, Wednesday dawn heralded a nice fine day. It was an early morning start with breakfast, packing and cleaning up the meeting house and the dining room, before Morning Worship at 8 am. Father Phil King-Turner gave us an inspirational meditation on compassion, understanding the whole journey, having compassion for God’s creation and that ‘Salvation belongs to our God’.

The Wairau Valley

Soon after 8:30 we were embarking on the bus or in cars for our journey (102 km) up the Wairau Valley to St Arnaud, an alpine village at the end of Lake Rotoiti. For those on the bus, Martin Harrison gave an informative commentary. Martin is a vicar who really likes and loves this area of New Zealand – the pride came through in his voice on the microphone. Martin has ample rural spirit of community as he pursues a calling as a volunteer fireman.

Under Martin’s guidance we noted the change from the intensive viticulture near Blenheim, to the more rugged landscape, and less disciplined farming of the high country. Water issues are at the fore in the Wairau Valley with the perennial conflicts between recreational users and landscape/amenity values, and development for hydro generation (through a series of canals and power stations), along with more widespread irrigation coverage. The further one moves up the valley the higher the rainfall with annual summer droughts nearer to Blenheim, where one can see a mouse run across a field at 1000 meters in some years.

St Arnaud’s Community Centre

This new complex is a surprising asset in a community with a small population – it provides indoor sports facilities and modern amenities. We were met here with a welcome morning tea provided by the local Church congregation. Later on, they provided us with a wholesome delicious lunch and afternoon tea. We thank them sincerely for their contribution to the Conference.

St Arnaud’s panel presentation

After morning tea we were presented with three different visions and aspects of the local community by Brian Paton who works with the Department of Conservation (DoC), Ian Thorneycroft who is a high country farmer, and Alistair Nichols who is a mechanic and leader of the community congregation. These three worked as a panel to tell us about their work, their community and their congregation.

Firstly, **Brian Paton** elaborated on the role of the Department of Conservation (DoC) in the Lake Rotoiti Conservation Park area. DoC is the main employer in St Arnaud. The township is a holiday/tourist destination with only a small permanent population. Besides its normal conservation activity, DoC and its staff are involved in the community activities such as Civil Defense, Search and Rescue, Volunteer Fire Brigade, as well as being seen as the principle Government contact in the town.

Their great success story is the creation of the first mainland predator free area (rats, stoats, possums etc) of 1000ha. They have achieved this by trapping, e.g. 90 km of trap lines for rats, 75 km for stoats, checked every two weeks. Over recent years the bird life and their songs have increased dramatically. However, during the survey of the endangered kaka (a native parrot) only

male birds were caught leading to the realization that the territory of the kaka was far greater than the 1000 ha being trapped for predators, so the area was expanded to cover 5000 ha. This gave greater protection to the female kaka, their nests and eggs, from the possum, rat and stoats. The kaka numbers both male and female have increased significantly. Thought is being given to introducing the large brown kiwi into this environment. Possums are still a big problem, both for the birds and the forest plant population.

Brian, a committed Christian, sees the hand of God in the creation that surrounds him in everyday life.

Secondly, **Ian Thorneycroft**, the manager of Speargrass Flats, a high country station first developed in 1887 spoke on the management and development of the station during his family's ownership. Ian, in his slim fitting moleskins, reminder Sandra of her elder son as he earnestly shared the details of his sheep and cattle property "Speargrass Flats".



The rainfall is reasonably reliable, between 1700 and 1800 mm per year, contrast that with the lower Wairau of 600 to 750 mm. Because of the semi alpine environment the winter is of 100 to 130 day duration when little or no pasture growth occurs. He mainly farms cattle and sheep making hay and growing brassica crops for the winter period.

Ian had previously studied at Lincoln University gaining a Diploma in Farm Management. He attends the Lake Rotoiti Chapel and believes that his faith in God is strengthened by the locality and community in which he lives and works.

The third speaker, **Alistair Nichols**, is the leader of the Lake Rotoiti Chapel congregation. Alistair, who also is the mechanic for the area, gave us an enthusiastic account of the ministry taking place here.

Lake Rotoiti Chapel is a community church with an interdenominational congregation, which has a dual focus: besides ministering to the regular members, they minister to the tourists and holiday makers. Both are seen as equally important. They work together as the Body of Christ: each having their own role, and honouring each other's role in the Christian Ministry.

The congregation embarks on other activities which are entered on a Community Calendar. These include wedding night videos, bike rides, Four-wheel Drive (4WD) outings, thereby reaching out to the wider community.

Alistair aptly summed the focus of the congregation in the following words:

*‘God is attracted to Movement’
‘Listen to God’
‘Respond to God and Get on with it’
‘Do Something’*

Walking in St Arnaud

After Lunch we walked down to the Chapel where we were given a brief history of its being, and an insight of the congregation’s plans for the future. The Chapel is beautifully crafted with its main focus across the altar to a magnificent view up Lake Rotoiti, a melding of God’s Creation into the fabric of our worship and faith. This Chapel is surely a place for quiet prayer and meditation.



We were also apprised of further outreach into the wider community by the congregation. They have two cottages that are made available to families for a weekend or up to two weeks for rest and recreation at no charge. These families may be recommended and approved by any one of 140 different agencies.

This was followed by two hours free time to wander and explore some of the tracks adjacent to the township, and to visit DoC’s headquarters before returning to the Community Centre for afternoon tea and then embarking for Tea Pot Valley Christian Camp at about 4:15 pm.

Tophouse to Teapot Valley

After leaving St Arnaud we went via Tophouse, through beautiful beech forest and then exotic pine plantations, into the headwaters of the Motueka River. We then traveled on, through the Golden Downs Forest, to Brightwater where the Tea Pot Valley Christian Camp is established.

What a contrast in the landscape, the geological formations, land use, and the farming patterns to that experienced while driving up the Wairau Valley in the morning.

Surely we were shown how people can interact with compassion and rise to the challenges, that Gods creation has given us.

4E. Panel Discussion at Teapot Valley

Jeff and Kath Gray

On Wednesday Evening at 7.30 pm a Panel Discussion took place involving Rob Stoner, Sandra Harper, Robyn McPhail and Martin Harrison. Participants were invited to form small groups of 6 to formulate a group question that they would like to ask a member of the panel. Then each of the panel members gave a short introduction about their rural background/experience, before the process began. This meant that nine (9) questions were subsequently put to panel members.

Jeff and Kathy Gray report:

There was a rich diversity and breadth of questions which enabled all of the participants to grapple with some of the key issues relating to rural ministry. Without listing all of the specific questions asked, some of the key issues raised included:

How do we transcend current denominational structures and differences, including theological training? To which Rob replied “Start from the grass roots and move up to implement”, before elaborating on his initial response.

- Do we lose anything by coming together? To which Martin replied that from his experience, “by honouring the origins of the traditions, nothing is lost and much is gained. ... Often a new way of doing things is found.”
- What can be done to re-centre our Christian Story in the Community? To which Sandra replied, “Go back to basics, ... be flexible, ... honour background.”
- Each of the panel members shared valuable insights from their past experiences, as well as a number of the participants also contributing to the overall discussion. This provided a good ‘pivot point’ between the time in Marlborough and the time in Nelson. Many of the issues raised in the panel were explored further in the workshops conducted on Thursday and Friday.



5. Keynotes

5A. “Outlook for Thursday: A theological reflection on living in the era of global climate change”

Mark Gibson

Exile

My origins are deeply rooted in the soil of Te Wai-pounamu, this southern island. I was born in Darfield, in rural Canterbury, where this Conference was first held, but most of my childhood was lived here on the fertile Waimea Plains. Looking back I can now see how significantly my spirituality and faith was shaped by this rich experience.

As a child growing up in this place my overwhelming sense was that of being surrounded by and connected with beauty, goodness and abundance. I grew in my awareness that it was infused with the divine. I felt like I lived in the land of milk and honey. I loved this place.

But at the tender age of ten I was ripped way from my Eden when the family moved to Palmerston North. My father was a Methodist minister and at the bidding of the church we had to move on. I now consider the church discipline of itinerancy the original sin of my life. It led me into a bleak place. I grieved deeply for the Waimea Plains, but my grief was not recognised. Connection with place was not something valued in the world I now inhabited. The culture of the church was very much focused on people.

Looking back I can see that it has taken the rest of my life to recover from this experience. For many years my green spirituality was suppressed by the anthropocentrism of the church. My call to ministry emerged in my thirties when I lived in the spiritually charged setting of South Brighton Spit. But it wasn't until I had been in parish ministry for eight years that I accepted that the second part of my calling was ecology. This has been an incredibly healing and liberating breakthrough for me as a person and as a minister.

Climate Change & Denial

We live in an age where there has never been a greater need for people to develop an ecological understanding of God's world. Ecology is about relationships within creation. The issue of Climate Change is all about humanity's broken relationship with creation.

Here in New Zealand on this day 40 years ago it was a bad weather day. The day that the inter-island ferry the Wahine was shipwrecked on a reef as it tried to enter Wellington harbour as two intense storms met over the city. Fifty-one people died. The way we dealt with this tragedy as a nation showed our tendency to deny difficult issues. When it comes to the difficult issue of climate change at one level we are talking about it, but we also seem to be in deep denial about the paradigmatic changes that are needed to deal with it.



A Spiritual Issue

As a society I believe we are struggling to face the implications of Climate Change because at root it is a spiritual issue. It is about the relationship that humanity has with God's creation. It is also about our resistance to conversion from Mammon to Jesus, and his pro-creation value-system.

I think the church has also struggled with how to respond because we have hung on to a theological legacy that has not seen the whole of creation as part of the salvation story. Our theology has been shaped by the written word of God in the scriptures, but not the word written into the fabric of creation.

Judgement

At a spiritual level Climate Change can be understood in terms of judgement.

I don't mean that God is punishing us. I think we are ultimately punishing ourselves. If we violate the integrity of the God-given Earth-system that we are part of we will reap what we sow. New Zealand is consuming at the rate of 2.9 planets. The economics of consumerism is ultimately a feast of fools.

The Parable of Two Builders

Jesus told a parable of two-house builders, the story of a wise man and a foolish man. It speaks powerfully to the heart of the unfolding ecological crisis we find ourselves in. The image of a house with poor foundations crumbling into the surging waters of a catastrophic flood seems starkly relevant. One foundation provides a future, the other does not! The houses for me represent not just private dwellings but societies, even whole civilisations.

It is my observation that the unfolding ecological crises of our day are the result of our decision to build on sand rather than rock. We are violating the ecological fabric of the earth. We are living as if we are not subject to any natural laws. I don't think rural people are exempt. From my observation much of the agricultural enterprise has an adversarial relationship with the land. My rural ancestors tried to create the landscape in their own image, much more than working with what was here.

The Earth's Atmosphere

We need to respect and have reverence for the integrity of the Earth's atmosphere. It is a dynamic system and so what happens in one part of it affects all other parts. In a brief period of two hundred years through the emission of greenhouse gasses we have begun to alter its delicate God-given chemical balance that provides the optimal environment for life. It is made up of 78% nitrogen, 20% oxygen and 0.04% carbon dioxide. We need that small amount of carbon dioxide to keep the earth's temperature at an inhabitable level. Without it we would not be cushioned from the deep cold of space, but with too much the temperature at surface level would become stiflingly hot.

Skeptics and "False Prophets"

Climate Change skeptics are the false prophets of our day. They deny that the earth is warming and even that the reverse is happening. But Jesus warns us that "*such prophets look like sheep on the outside, but on the inside they are really wild wolves*" (Matt.7:15) The agenda of false prophets has always been to justify ongoing injustice and idolatry. They are apologists for Mammon and business-as-usual. What we need in these tumultuous times are not more profits *from* the earth, but more prophets *for* the earth.

Those on the front-line: Inuit People

If you are confused by conflicting scientific data presented on Climate Change then pay a visit to an Inuit website. The Inuit peoples have existed for thousands of years within the Arctic Circle and now find themselves on the front lines of Climate Change. Their recent experience of what is happening to their natural world is sobering. They don't need to look at computer generated models or mathematical statistics to know what is happening. They see it in the changing weather patterns and landscape around them.

The next time you are responsible for putting together a budget at home, or work, or for your church factor in the hidden costs of the impact of your activities on the atmosphere, and on the lives of people in the Arctic circle and Pacific. In a very real way our way of doing church, our annual conferences, our regional gatherings, our mission and ministry are all costing the earth.

Changing our means of Transportation

We live in a society which is severely addicted to fossil fuels. Our whole way of life is based on its constant availability and affordability. Over the last few generations we have built up an expectancy that we can go anywhere whenever we want. We have been on a permanent petrol-high. Not walking humbly with our God, but hurtling recklessly with Mammon.

Far and away the most challenging area to make change is in our transport choices, but it is the area in which we can make the most significant difference. A key to resolving this issue is reducing the geographical scope of our daily lives. This means changing a lifetime's habits in how far we go and how often. It might also mean buying locally. The question should not be "can I afford to buy locally?" But rather "can I afford not to?"

Walking Humbly

The word humility comes from the word humus – which of course means "the earth". Literally "humility" means having one's feet firmly on the ground, being close to the earth. Hasn't our wide-ranging, no limits approach to life in the age of oil enabled us to globalize and pretend that we are God? It has created within us the false belief that we have transcended creaturehood. When in reality we were made to walk humbly *with* our God.

Christ came as a humble baby, lived a humble life, and suffered the humiliation (same root as humble) of crucifixion not to transport us somewhere else but to first and foremost help us to take our place with grace as human beings on planet earth. He fully embraced earthly life that we might fully embrace it too.

He said "*Blessed are the meek they shall inherit the earth*". The humble, those who are in right relations with earth will receive abundant life. Those who are arrogant might inherit an inhospitable planet. It is not survival of the fittest but survival of the wisest. Wisdom is living with the earth. Folly is living against it.

In Jesus teaching the aspect of judgement is always there. The builder who built on the rock was saved, but the one who built on sand was not. Our salvation or demise is something we actively contribute to.

Grace & the Gentle Revolution

Jesus gives an even stronger message of grace. God is gracious but it is dangerous to presume upon God's graciousness. When we go on doing what we know is not the will of God in the faith that God will forgive us anyway we are in serious spiritual trouble.

God is graciously always an active healing, reconciling agent seeking to bring creation to wholeness and fulfilment. The question is: are we cooperating with God? We could get caught up in all the hype and hysteria over climate change. Hysteria is not a healthy approach. The kind of change that creates hope in an era of climate change comes from a much deeper place. A prayerful and thoughtful place, that allows the grace of God to bring about transformation. The kind of place that is able to discern true needs from imagined needs; and learn to care tenderly for God's creation, while also allowing God to care for us through creation.

The outlook for Thursday, or next year, or next decade is up to us as much as it is up to God, and I think this is what Dave Dobbyn's song is saying to us. On one level it is true that we get what we are given, but we also get what we create for ourselves, and what we allow God to give us. In his song there is a sense of hopefulness centred in the relationship that is celebrated. *"We'll be together, yeah by design"*.

There is a need for us to be together as Christians, but also to be together with our God, with others looking for a wiser way; and with all in the earth community. It is this togetherness that God has designed into creation.

Ecology as a Core Mission Focus

There is an urgent need for the church to reclaim ecology and care of creation as a core mission focus. We should be on the front-lines of change. God's mission of course always begins with us. Before we can engage in mission we first need to allow God to change us. From this point we are ready to preach good news not just to human beings but to all of creation. We are also able to engage on the front-lines of ecological action. This is best done in community.

Engaging with the Green Movement

Intentionally engaging with the Green Movement is critical to ecological mission. I think it is vital to show Greens that God cares about what they care about. That ecology and community are core to the Gospel. It is also important to build relationships of trust and respect, and to not make the mistake of thinking we are bringing God to the movement. God is already actively at work there. We need each other and God needs us to work together.

Engaging Prayerfully

In my own parish we recognise the need for prayer for creation, and those who are seeking to care for it. It is a crucial element in growing a green church. We are intentional about creating opportunities to do this both inside and in natural settings.

Engaging with Children

If we are going to be serious about enabling children to grow an ecological faith, learning about local ecology will be an essential part of this process.

The church has been traditionally good at teaching children stories of our faith, but how well have we taught them about the wonders of God's creation and how it has been put together? Usually if we don't understand something we are not good at caring for it.

In this era of climate change...

God is calling the Christian community

- to be in right relationship with the earth.
- to passionate prophetic witness for care of creation.
- to act for the healing and transformation of God's precious earth.

5B. A World of Hope: When Creation Begg, “Your Kingdom Come!”

Dr Andrew Wells

In the midst of a world of increasing darkness and ecological breakdown, there is one thing that we must never forget - Heaven is real. The most wonderful experiences on earth cannot compare with the glory we will experience in heaven. We also have a glorious hope for all of creation - the earth itself will be taken over by heaven. The time is near when there will not only be peace among men on earth, but peace among all living creatures, as we read in Isaiah 11:6-9:

The wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the young goat, and the calf and the lion and the fattened calf together; and a little child shall lead them. The cow and the bear shall graze; their young shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. The nursing child shall play over the hole of a cobra, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the adder's den. They shall not hurt or destroy in all my holy mountain; for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea.

Even greater than all of this will be the continuous, unbroken fellowship that mankind will again have with God. He will dwell on the earth among men. He will again walk with His children in the midst of His creation. No human imagination is capable of understanding just how wonderful it is going to be. As we are exhorted in Colossians 3:1-4:

If then you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth. For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in glory.

For us to seize the high ground of hope for the future that is ours, we must take up the message we were commanded to preach—the gospel of the kingdom. Our message should not be the end of this age, but the glorious new beginning that is at hand. The King is coming and will restore His kingdom on earth! The earth will be restored to the paradise it was created to be, and go on functioning, with mankind back in his rightful place of authority.

The difficulty of being in ‘kingdom transition’

Yet our difficulty is obvious: unredeemed creation is in the grip of death, curses, bondage and decay. This is of course our issue in all aspects of the kingdom life at present – we live in a time of kingdom transition, in which the kingdoms of this world are in the process of becoming the kingdoms of our God.

It is therefore important for us to have a clear Biblical understanding that the *root causes* of creation's bondage are indeed spiritual and are restored through the Cross – otherwise we will simply be applying bandages to the wounds. Let's follow this through a little. The Lord gave the earth into the hands of humanity at the outset. God said,

Let Us make mankind in Our image, after Our likeness, and let them have complete authority over the fish of the sea, the birds of the air, the beasts, and over all of the earth, and over everything that creeps upon the earth (Genesis 1:26).

It is very revealing what happened when mankind forfeited this authority through the fall. Immediately there was a manifestation of disorder, corruption and death within the creation itself –

weeds grew, the earth struggled to produce, toilsome labour began, and pain appeared. Note that this all happened without a specific ‘mismanagement’ or poor stewardship of the environment – they were a direct response of creation to man’s spiritual problems. The earth responded to man’s actions in walking away from the Lord. This link between loss of relationship with God and ecological problems is found throughout history (e.g. Deuteronomy 29:22; Jeremiah 12:4).

In effect, creation is struggling under the crippling weight of spiritual death imposed upon it by the rebellion and sins of humanity. Scripture indicates this very clearly, so we cannot afford to underestimate this. Much of the dysfunction and ecological crises may be the result of the manifestation and outworking of spiritual death and decay, deeply rooted in creation. Then we have added on top of this basic dysfunction our own mismanagement and pollution of creation. So even if we attained to wise management in all aspects, we would not set the earth free or cease to be plagued by disease and ecological breakdown.

Yet there is no doubt at all that Christ has already won the complete victory, once and all, for all creation. Everything required to do this has been achieved. As Colossians 1:20 states,

And God purposed that through the intervention of Christ all things should be completely reconciled back to Himself, whether on earth or in heaven, as through Him, the Father made peace by means of the blood of his cross.

So a key issue for us in dealing with ecological breakdown across the earth is in understanding the role of Christ’s finished work of atonement and the implications of this for creation. Jesus said, “Go into all the world and preach the gospel of the kingdom to *all creation*”. Why did He say this? Because His atonement is for all creation, and we as the redeemed are the messengers sent to bring in the harvest and establish His kingdom on earth.

A foundation of love and faithfulness

Scripture teaches us the primary importance of love and faithfulness, which lead to stewardship of what we have been given, including the creation. Our call is to be faithful in the little we have been entrusted with. We must treat everything given to us in creation as a treasure of immense value and worth, and always aim to demonstrate our love and appreciation for this gift through wise stewardship and management. This provides the unshakable foundation for the kingdom of heaven.

But another important thing we must remember is that this in itself is not the kingdom of heaven or the complete call on us as Christ’s body on this earth. If we stop here, we have in effect denied the power of the Cross and the Resurrection, and have misrepresented a key part of Christ’s message and purpose in coming to earth. Obviously we must never neglect our role to do the practical aspects of stewardship of what we have, of loving the creation. As Jesus made clear, our degree of authority is dependent on our love and faithfulness. But we must also have the vision that anticipates and seeks for God’s supernatural intervention into our problems.

Miraculous intervention and restoration of creation is ours to seek

There is a clear scriptural principle of ‘first in the natural, then in the spiritual’- i.e. we have to be trustworthy with earthly treasures before we can be entrusted with the ‘true riches’ of the kingdom of heaven. Jesus showed this in some of his miracles involving the physical realm. For example: 1) Feeding people: He asked around everyone to see what *natural* resources were at hand, and then began to work with these *supernaturally*. 2) Wine making at the wedding – He asked the people to fill the jars up with water (a *natural* resource that was available to them), and then worked with this *supernaturally*. So as we increasingly grow to love and cherish the earth, we can also expect and pray for the miraculous intervention of Christ to bring restoration to the earth.

As a Church, we have already embraced our role in the supernatural realm within many spheres of life. For example, we lay hands on those who believe for the baptism in the Holy Spirit, which is given to us as a pledge of our inheritance. We believe for the miraculous healing of the sick and wounded, and for the salvation and deliverance of people. We now need to add to our understanding and mission that this is also true for the physical earth, for plants, animals, the water cycle, ecosystems. It is now time to expect some miraculous interventions for the ecological world. We have a mandate to pray for this and see it happen.

We also need to consider some words that the Apostle Paul wrote in Romans 8:19-22,

For the whole creation, all nature, waits expectantly and longs earnestly for God's sons to be made known (waits for the revealing, the disclosing of their sonship). For the creation was subjected to frailty (futility, condemned to frustration), not because of some intentional fault on its own part, but by the will of Him who so subjected it – yet with the hope that creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and corruption and gain an entrance into the glorious freedom of God's children. We know that the whole of creation has been groaning together in the pains of labour until now.

This suggests complete restoration of creation will come about only as the church is restored to walking in their full identity as sons and daughters of the king, as the royalty of this earth who truly know that Christ has bought back everything. It is all about the revelation of who Christ actually is.

Daniel's prophecy is also insightful here:

Then the sovereignty, the dominion and the greatness of all the kingdoms under the whole heaven will be given to the people of the saints of the Highest One; His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all the dominions shall serve and obey Him. (Dan 7:27)

The Lord truly has given us back the Kingdom. As Jesus said, 'Do not be seized with alarm and struck with fear, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom!' (Luke 12:32). Some of the kingdoms under the whole heaven we are called to govern are the kingdoms of darkness, the kingdoms of man, the bird kingdom, the animal kingdom, the insect kingdom, and the biological kingdom.

Now consider what happens amongst people when there is no rightful governmental authority – there is always unprecedented corruption, chaos and breakdown. We heard what happened in New Orleans after the storms there – crime and chaos filled the streets and it became a living hell, in the absence of authority. Is it possible that much of creation's corruption is like the lawless streets of New Orleans? Consider for example, sickness and disease. Could it be that much of this is a manifestation of the biological kingdom in increasing disarray because the ones (the saints) who have been called to govern the biological kingdom have been out of line themselves or just do not yet have the wisdom to lead 'all the kingdoms under the whole heaven'? Consider that the blood of Christ saved us and broke the power of sin. Blood is a part of the biological kingdom. Our redemption was initiated in the biological realm, and then is supposed to spread to the rest of creation.

The parable Jesus told in Luke 19:11 is most relevant here. This parable outlines a process for inheriting the kingdom. Notice that the Master gave the servants something to manage, then withdrew to see how faithful they were with that. The basic question the Master was looking to answer was, "Can they carry what they've asked for?" But note the outcome for being faithful –

they were given authority over cities, far out of proportion to the few dollars they were faithful with. This is a model of the Lord's outrageous economy, and of how His kingdom will come through us as we grow in love and faithfulness. This pulls together the seemingly contradictory threads of being faithful in practical management while having an expectation for miraculous intervention.

6. Workshops

6A The "Focus Church" A new tool for rural church development Mark Chamberlain

Rural New Zealand is known for innovative and 'cutting edge' development. After viewing the "Monitor Farm" concept sponsored by Meat New Zealand we began to dream of the possibilities of modeling something similar in the Church.

The purpose of "Focus Church" is to assist an individual rural church to recognise potentials and develop these using the SWOT model (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) supported by a team of facilitators (clergy and lay). The minister of the volunteer parish invites eight to ten lay leaders to participate in a SWOT weekend. Other members of the parish are requested to communicate their thoughts and impressions prior to the nominated weekend so that the sample opinion is representative of the whole.

The selected group meets with the facilitators individually and then together, exploring and identifying possibilities and formulating plans to attain those goals. Initially the facilitators act as 'sounding boards', reflecting and clarifying dreams and options, but ultimately assisting the Focus Church by resourcing and encouraging.

After a period of three to four months an open day is held at the Focus Church. Other members of the rural parish network in the Diocese are invited to come and view the findings, goals and achievements of the Focus Church. Outside specialists provide training in areas of need specific to that Church, but all who attend can learn and benefit. This vulnerability can be scary but more often it has been an opportunity to highlight the many positive aspects of rural ministry and in these changing times, to explore new ways of demonstrating and communicating the Good News of God's love to a needy community.

To date, four churches have participated in this empowering process. It has taken planning, energy and time but the 'fruit' has been evident: well worth the effort. "With courage and support," said Martin Harrison reported for the workshop, "we continue to face the many challenges of a changing rural sector"



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6B Developing Sustainable Models of Rural Ministry

Rob Stoner

The basic premise of the workshop is this: We need to (re) understand what it means for us to be church in our rural communities. Only then will we know what it will take to resource these communities in a sustainable way.

In rural South Australia, we face a number of challenges in developing a sustainable model for resourcing rural ministry. For most rural congregations, being church still centres around a set aside but antiquated building, Sunday worship services, and dependency on ordained ministry. Even where lay ministry teams have replaced ordained leadership, the same model is usually replicated. The workshop asked whether this is an appropriate way to think about being church and explores an alternative way of being church based around the definition that church is “the community which gathers around a developing faith in Jesus Christ and lives out that faith in, and for the sake of, those who live in the surrounding culture”.



The challenge is further heightened by the fact that most of our rural congregations are small and declining because the communities in which they exist are small and declining. The membership of these congregations is aging, and their capacity for effective leadership is diminishing. With a decline in the number of ordained Ministers who are available and/or affordable in rural placements, there needs to be a re-think about how best to use the trained leadership resources that are available. These include: cluster ministries; shared ministries; resource ministries; regional ministries. All of these involve a different mix of elders, carers, lay worship leaders, lay preachers, and resource ministers with enabling skills.

The workshop explored these models and opened up a conversation about discovering the appropriate models for each region, and ensuring clear lines of accountability and good working relationships.

Rob provided workshop members with an overview of Ministry with multiple congregations and insights into the abilities, aptitudes and skills needed by the “Resource Minister”: the person appointed to provide oversight, guidance and empowerment to a cluster of lay led congregations.

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6C Planting a non clergy church : every member ministry

Bruce Fraser

“We Have No Minister - What Can We Do?” The main thrust of this workshop was looking at what the Bible says about ministry and the call of God’s people to be involved in His mission in the world and that all who name Jesus as Lord are in fact ministers of the gospel. Hence there is no shortage of ‘ministers’ in the church. In looking at the Scriptures this call to God’s people is common in both Old and New Testaments. The passages noted were:

- Exodus 19: 5-6 and Isaiah 61:6
- John 14:11-14: Collectively the followers of Jesus will demonstrate the same ministry that we see in the life of Jesus. His Spirit is potentially present wherever His followers are.
- Other passages were: the Great Commission as seen in all four gospels; John 20: 21-23 (receive peace and the Holy Spirit); Matt 28: 18-20 (go make disciples); Mark 16: 15-20 (the work of Jesus accompanies the words of Jesus); Luke 24: 46-49 (power will be given).
- Acts 4:13 shows the result

Other passages of importance were:

- Romans 12:4-6a and 1 Cor. 12:12-13, 27. (Both showing that everyone is included and needed).
- Ephesians 4:1-8, 11-12. (The things we hold together with the differences in leadership ministry for the equipping the followers for ministry).
- 1 Peter 2:9-10. (All are called to be priests).

This leads to the following:

- All followers of Jesus are ministers of the Gospel
- Leaders (including clergy) are affirmed in their role as resource people
- Neither Scripture nor reformed theology makes distinctions between clergy and lay
- So there is no such thing as 'lay ministry' – there is the ministry of the 'laos' the whole people of God.
- The key is the centrality of Jesus Christ and the passion for Him among His people.

Our work is Kingdom building, not church building. The workshop centred around examples of how this has been demonstrated.

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6D Hills Community Church - Can Dry Bones Live? (Ezekiel 37.1-14) **Marilyn Loken**

In the early 1990s the three churches in Mapua: Presbyterian-Methodist, Anglican and Charismatic, were struggling.

Each congregation saw the need for an ongoing viable church in the community so they met and began to sink their differences and form a community church. The local hierarchy of the Anglican and Presbyterian Churches provided assistance and gave their blessing. Hills Community Church held its first service on February 6 1994 with the former Charismatic pastor as Minister assisted by a non-stipendiary Minister appointed by the Anglican Bishop of Nelson. This unique church is possibly the first in NZ to integrate traditional denominations with a Charismatic church. HCC retains loose connections with its former denominations.

The congregation has a new minister, 60+ families, 80-85 in worship and 40+ children and youth.



HCC broke ground in February 2008 for a building project with funds held in trust from the sale of Presbyterian properties, and endowments.

Hills Community Church attributes its revitalization to:

Sustained Leadership – HCC retained one minister for 13 years which provided stability while the congregation coalesced. Such continuity is difficult for small, rural congregations yet studies show longer-term ministries (lay or clergy) provide greater continuity and increase the possibility for re-vitalization.

A Captured Dream – HCC had a vision to provide vital ministry to its area. Its primary identity is as a church looking outward into the community. Congregations must look toward the future. An obsessive focus on current realities inhibits future thinking.

Vital Knowledge – HCC knew the needs of its community, researched and obtained grants and trust funds to do ministry and partnered with others to make their dream possible. Congregations need to look within and outside the church for resources, and discover what is needed in their community.

Valued Mission – HCC has never compromised on being the church, but does so in creative ways. Churches need to think outside the square while retaining the integrity of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Let God be God! HCC was willing to take a risk. Re-vitalization requires risk. Risk requires dependence on God. Churches that thrive (not just survive) take risks. This is biblical, historic and the cornerstone of most congregations. If goals are within reach—reach further!

Participants left hopeful and encouraged that revitalization is possible.

Rev Marilyn Loken, is Minister at HCC in Mapua

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6E Making a Joyful Noise on a Budget

Alison Fields

Make a joyful noise unto the LORD, all the earth: make a loud noise, and rejoice, and sing praise - Psalms 98:4.

Worship needs to be joyful; a chance to praise, rejoice and celebrate. The workshop explored Creative Worship with Limited Musical Resources and covered the practical issue of coping with limited musical resources in rural churches, while still making a joyful noise to the Lord.

The increasing reality for many small and rural churches is the difficulty of finding skilled singers and musicians to lead musical worship. Ministers, lay worship leaders and musicians have found various practical ways to cope with a shortage of musical skills and musical equipment. This formed the basis of the workshop; drawing on and sharing practical ideas that have actually worked.



The interactive workshop covered four main areas - illustrated by stories, examples, and singing of various kinds:

1. Different styles of music - considering which options may be suitable for a range of services and congregations.
2. Practical options to make the most of available instruments and voices; understanding your limitations and playing to your strengths. We considered how to utilize various instruments and voices; providing variety and quality to the music that leads or accompanies a congregation in worship.
3. How to cope without lead instruments or voices - being creative with other forms of music and art.
4. How to put it all together and make it work - from planning a service to leading a congregation with limited musical resources.

Whatever music choices are made for worship, those choices must be in harmony with the overall service. The music cannot dominate; it must serve to gather and lead the congregation in worship in whatever form that worship might take.

If you are interested in further conversations on this topic, please contact Alison Fields of InfoSolutions - alison@infosolutions.co.nz

6F Pastoral Care in Local Shared Ministry Parishes **Tim Parker**

Tim shared the experience of being a layperson in a Parish involved in local shared ministry. Waipawa is a traditional sheep and cropping district which now has large orchards and a seasonal influx of itinerant workers. The parish has seven churches with ministry being provided by a local shared ministry team, supported through the Diocese of Waiapu by means of a Ministry Enabler. Tim used this experience to help us explore the meaning of pastoral care in a rural context.



Kathy Gray summarises the insights which emerged.

Structure is important. Agreement and understanding, both within the local area and in the larger Church are important. The pastoral team, and the individual visitors, need clear terms of reference. Avenues for referral to other providers and specialists need to be identified. Visitors must feel confident and supported.

Training and support. Visitors need to be carefully selected and trained for the task. They need a clear awareness of their roles and the importance of boundaries. All expenses, including training costs should be met. Contact with other pastoral workers, inside and beyond the parish, is important. Technology can help. Regular debriefing and reporting are essential.

Privacy and Confidentiality. These are essential. Records kept should be protected by password and accessible to very few.

Communication. Formal and informal communication methods assist face to face care: e.g. telephone, email, pamphlets, and visitor cards. Networking within the parish and the larger community is important: health services, schools and bush telegraph. Music and art are powerful ways of communicating.

Training. Training can be formal (e.g. Certificate in Pastoral Care) or informal (working alongside others). We need to take advantage of people working in the field and tap into other organisations. Training in listening skills is valuable for congregation members, as well as pastoral visitors.

Change the meaning of Church. Open up our buildings and share our facilities. Removing pews may help us to be multifunctional. Make sure rules and regulations do not prevent us from attracting people to Church. Sell or gift land for new facilities such as childcare.

Migrant workers. We need to find and use culturally appropriate persons to form a bridge between workers and Church. Recognise formal and informal leaders within the migrant groups. Listen to people's stories. Find opportunities for workers to meet informally with farmers and other community groups.

Tim Parker is Peoples Warden and Vestry Chairman for the Waipawa Anglican Parish in Hawkes Bay, N.Z. Email: tim@humus.co.nz

6G Involving Families And Children In The Life Of The Church

Miriam Taylor

The Awatere Christian Joint Venture Parish (Anglicans, Presbyterians and Others) stretches down Marlborough's east coast from Seddon through Ward south to Kekerengu on State Highway 1, and to Molesworth Station at the top of the Awatere Valley in the west – a large area with only 1500 people. There are five worship places, one of which is moveable – held in homes in the Awatere Valley.

The Challenges facing the Awatere Christian Joint Venture

- Busy lifestyle – farm /vineyard work regardless of the day of the week.
- Competing interests on a Sunday, plus the desire for a 'family' day
- Desire for one day off from transporting children to school or activities.
- Small, scattered population and stretched people resources



The Awatere Christian Joint Venture Response

'Celebration' is the key word. We take every opportunity to celebrate - inside and outside Church walls.

We take 'church' into the community rather than expecting the community to come to the church. Twice a year we hold informal church services outdoors. These are promoted as a 'family out-

ing'. Examples include:

- A Service, lunch and a 4 wheel drive Safari at Bluff Station
- A service at the Cape Campbell Lighthouse followed by a picnic and family Scavenger Hunt.
- Harvest Thanksgiving by a vineyard and a Scarecrow competition.
- Service at Molesworth Station - historical focus and cob buildings.

A Celebration of Children – Our own 'Praise Be', was a draw card for families who had not entered the church before. With the exception of a clowning mime, the entire service was taken by the children....children welcomed at the door, led the service, played the instruments and led the singing.

A Celebration of Marriage. Folk came dressed for a wedding. They submitted photos of their own wedding for the power-point display. A young family acted as the 'wedding party' and processed to the Wedding March. Wedding Vows were reaffirmed and the cake was cut. A finger-food Wedding Breakfast followed.

A Celebration of God's Creatures (even soft toy replicas!) a good way to incorporate young families who come for weekly pre-school 'mainly music'. A rural area is wonderful for this...a wide variety of God's creatures have come to church from horses to a hive of honey bees. 'Celebration' is the key word!!

6H Evangelism in the Rural Setting

Richard Dyer

(1) Rural is different: the seasons, the weather, the life cycles

Rural communities respond to the rhythm of planting and harvesting. Church activities follow a similar model. Rural folk know about planting and nurturing young plants. In the same way, we are to sow seeds of love. Jesus calls us to sow seeds everywhere, not only in neat little rows, and to nurture the young seedlings, helping them grow in faith.

We are called not to make everyone just like us but to allow for growth as the Spirit of God moves in and around our lives. Every occasion is a God-guided opportunity for ministry. Ministry happens daily at the post office, the gas station, and the local café and over the back fence as well as at church on Sunday mornings.

(2) Evangelism is about Attitude:

Every relationship and every connection is a God opportunity:

See each person as a friend of Jesus, treat them like one, look for Jesus in them – they are real people.

You have a faith story you already know all that you need to know:

Discover what is best for you – live your own faith story.



You belong to a great Community:

Find the “lost tribes” in that community and do it together.

You belong to a great church

Being a united community of Jesus is God’s plan for evangelism. How we get on together is the true shop front of the church.

(3) Evangelism is

- About going out in humility, love, friendship as servants
- Being a giver of friendship – Jesus friendship
- Jesus came to serve - that is what he wants us to do
- Taking up the challenge of Jesus to “Follow Me” is risky and provocative.
- To demonstrate love, is to plant a seed.
- Being a spokesperson for the love of God
- Demonstrate love through healing words, prophetic words and miracles..

Most of all:

- Be natural, be yourself, be relaxed.
- People must be safe with you

How would Jesus treat his friends?

More information at http://www.elca.org/lutheranpartners/archives/0501_06.html or e mail Richard at richard.dyer@xtra.co.nz

6I How Many Lord? What Statistics Can Tell Us About our Faith Communities

Ian Duncan and Alison Fields

Building a clearer picture of our own faith communities leads to better decisions in our stewardship of resources. Good stewardship requires understanding your own church and its people, and the community context in which that church operates.

The workshop discussed:

- what statistical information is available;
- where it can be obtained, and
- what it might (or might not) tell us.

Many rural churches are uncomfortable using statistics as a tool for strategic planning. Statistics can seem the antithesis of faith; more suited for the secular world. Surely a church should place its faith in God – not in numbers and graphs?

This is the challenge: if we are truly open and listening for God’s voice speaking to his church – should we not also be open to God speaking through statistics?

Our small churches are limited by time, skills and finance when obtaining and analysing information. We can still use statistics to inform our decisions.



We looked at three main types of statistics which measure and report:

- what people say they do;
- what people actually do; and
- what people really believe.

50 years of census data in New Zealand and Australia show trends of decline in most Christian denominations. These trends should not be ignored, but are only part of the story. Census responses are based on what people say that they do.

A more complete picture can be built by including data from other sources (e.g. NCLS, church and para-church organisations) which focuses on people who actually attend church. But this information may still fail to tell us what people actually believe? That often requires specific surveys which can help determine the spiritual growth and development of individuals.

Local demographic information is often free (e.g. from Statistics NZ or Local Councils) and helps build a demographic picture for your region or local church.

The workshop considered practical uses for statistics in strategic planning, using available information to help provide a stronger foundation for good governance and stewardship.

Ian and Alison of InfoSolutions are happy to be contacted for further conversations on this issue - ian@infosolutions.co.nz.

6J Christian Perspective On Sustainability In Rural Areas

Robyn McPhail

Unsustainability has become part of rural life, for communities over the last third of the 20th century and for land and waterways in the last decade and more. When the bottom line is financial, either prove you're viable or else close the church/sell up the farm. A phrase that sums up the pain, shame and powerlessness in relation to the land is: "it's hard to be green when you're in the red."

Mary Grey, editor of *Ecotheology*, suggests that the church has regarded these issues "as peripheral to the *authentic* project of salvation" yet sustainability is profoundly and inherently biblical. Many texts can offer us a window into our situation and point to a faithful way forward.

We were introduced to a Forum method that begins by retelling a biblical story then sets the people to work on key questions relating to the topic of the forum. Examples of this in relation to the Future of Family Farming and Farm Succession can be found on the Presbyterian website at www.presbyterian.org.nz/4771.0.html.

The story in the book of Joel was retold as a window for our context. In short: biological damage, climate events and outside forces shut the people off from God; the joy of a good life with land and community put to shame; withdrawal, depression and self-rejection. Joel tells them to get together and share their sorrows because communal lament takes shame into the public, and turns it into honour. It returns them to God and to hope.



Our workshop task was to categorise our issues threatening rural sustainability in terms of locusts (e.g. verroa mite), drought, flood, or enemy invasion (e.g. exchange rates, multinationals) and rate our response to them. “Who/what is to blame?” “How does blaming affect our emotions, self-perception and decision-making ability?” “How does blaming affect rural people whose livelihood is under challenge?”

We were then able to re-frame the situation, and our experience, in terms of honour and shame and focus on where the shame is being felt, along with withdrawal and disconnection from things spiritual and communal.

We finished by identifying one practical thing that could be done locally - our variation on Joel’s call to return to God.

For more details, or a full telling of the story, contact Robyn at chirmac@xtra.co.nz or go to http://kaeokerikeriunionchurch.org.nz/publications_display.php

6K Wilderness and Spirituality for Christian living in Aotearoa New Zealand in the 21st century

Andrew Shepherd

In our environmentally-aware world there is an increasing emphasis on eco-spirituality and an understanding of the role that land and place plays in the development of spirituality. In this workshop participants reflected on the three typologies which have tended to shape perspectives of, and relationship to, land in Aotearoa New Zealand.

While *tangata whenua* express their relationship with the landscape through the telling of myths (e.g. Maui’s pulling up of Te Ika a Maui), European settlers tended to view the New Zealand landscape (so radically different from that of Britain) as an uncultivated “wilderness”. Their responses to, and understanding of, this new desolate and silent land, tended to fluctuate between what can be broadly categorised as a utilitarian approach, or a romantic approach. These three typologies (mythological, utilitarian, romantic) are not merely historical, but still are the primary ways in which land tends to be understood in our contemporary context.



In the first of the two workshops discussion then moved to how the Biblical narrative contains elements of all three of these typologies and, with attention to the story of Elijah (1 Kings 19) and the temptation narrative of Jesus (Luke 4), considered the significant role that wilderness plays in the development of Christian spirituality. In an age of technological consumerism - where life is fast-paced and full of distractions –we noted the critical importance of wilderness (either internal or a physical location) where one can ‘be still and know God’.

In the second workshop discussion revolved around how the different typologies shape different spiritualities and participants then reflected on the challenge of how these diverse spiritualities could be encouraged and developed within the context of a rural parish.

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7. CLOSING WORSHIP



CALL TO WORSHIP:

Kia ora tatou **Kia ora!**

God be with you **And also with you**

Let us worship the eternal God, the source of love and life, who creates us
Let us worship Jesus Christ, the risen one, who lives among us

Let us worship the Spirit, the holy fire who renews us.
To the one true God be praise in all times and places, through the grace of Jesus Christ.

PRAISE SONGS

RESPONSIVE PRAYER

Creator God, God of surf and creek, of bush and tussock, of mountain plain and valley, we come seeking your presence in our worship this morning

We have seen your presence in your natural world and in the creativity of your people, yet we often still take you for granted and fail to fully appreciate and to acknowledge you

Ever living God we thank you that despite our half- heartedness, our ignorance, our lack of justice you still persevere with us.

You come as a mountain – like Tapuaenuku or Kosciusko - a sign to help us in our search for identity.

You come as a river- like Murray or Wairau – a sign of your power flowing into our lives

You come as a tree of the forest- like beech or gum - majestic and strong, filling us with awe; allowing us to shelter under your branches.

You come as the birds - like kookabura and bellbird singing the song of life and faith to us, calling us into your presence.

You come as a rushing wind - like the nor'wester - to blow away old habits and past mistakes
You come as land - like Aotearoa-New Zealand or Australia, giving us a home, a place where we may live

In the church - your whare karakia - you surround us with your presence, empower us to be your people, and entrust us to care for your creation

We thank you that in the course of time you sent Jesus to live as one of us that through him the poor might find release, the oppressed liberty, the sorrowful joy, and the sick healing and wholeness.

So with all the living and all who have gone before us, we praise your holy name and commit ourselves to your ways. AMEN.

BRINGING SYMBOLS

[Each brings one item to represent some significant learning or memory of the conference and places it on the front table]

REFLECTION ON THE SYMBOLS

OPEN PRAYER OF THANKS FOR CONFERENCE

CONFERENCE HYMN : "Christ with Us."

SCRIPTURE READING

REFLECTIONS : 'Hope in time of Change'

RESPONSIVE PRAYER OF INTERCESSION

Living God as we come to share the richness of your table, we cannot forget the brokenness of the earth.

We cannot take bread and forget those who are hungry. Your world is one world and we are stewards of its nourishment.

Christ put our prosperity at the service of the poor.

Loving Lord we cannot take wine and forget those who are thirsty. The groundless and the uprooted, the earth and its weary people cry for justice.

Christ put our fullness at the service of the empty.

Spirit of God we cannot hear your words of peace and forget the world at war, or if not at war, preparing for it.

Christ show us how to turn weapons into welcome signs, and the lust for power into a desire for peace for all people.

God of unity we cannot celebrate the feast of your family and forget our own painful divisions. We are one in spirit but not in fact. History and hurt still dismember us.

Christ heal your church in every brokenness. Restore us so that we may be a light to your world. Make us once more into your holy people. In the name of our Creator, Redeemer and Sustainer.

LORD'S PRAYER (in the language of our choosing)

COMMUNION HYMN:

'Hands Like a Cradle' (Fred Kaan) (Tune: 'St Columba')
(Opening line: Put peace into each other's hands)

THE MINISTRY OF THE SACRAMENT

The peace of God be with you all

And also with you

God calls us to live in unity

We seek to live in the Spirit of Christ

God of all creation, you bring forth bread from the earth and fruit
from the vine. By your Holy Spirit this bread and wine will be for us
the body and blood of Christ

All you have made is good. Your love endures for ever

THE GREAT THANKSGIVING`

When the risen Christ was at table with his disciples, he took bread, and broke it and gave it to them. Then their eyes were opened and they recognised Christ in their midst. Let us do the same.

The Lord is here

God's spirit is with us

Lift up your hearts

We lift them up to God

Let us give thanks to our Creator God

It is right to give our thanks and praise

Thank you God for the world you have made, for the wonder and mystery of the vast reaches of space, for the beauty and awe of nature in its seen and unseen splendour.

Thank you for your precious gift of life We thank you that you make us human and entrust us to care for the whole of your creation

God we thank you that you are the beginning and the end of all things, and that you sustain our ever-changing life in the rural and urban areas, in which we live and work and continue your ministry.

We thank you for Jesus Christ who suffered death on the cross
and was raised to new life because of your love which can never die

We thank you for the Holy Spirit who breathes life into all living things and continues to renew and to recreate not only human life but life in all its myriad forms.

For this we praise you with the faithful of every time and place joining with the whole creation in the eternal hymn:

**Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might, heaven and earth are full of your glory.
Hosanna in the highest. Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest.**

THE COMMUNION

On the night before he died Jesus of Nazareth took bread; and after giving thanks to God he broke it saying

Take, eat, this is my body which is broken for you

Do this to remember me

After supper he took the cup and blessed it saying
Drink this all of you. This is the blood of the New Covenant

Do this to remember me

In faith we reenact what Jesus did, declaring in this meal the mystery of faith:

Christ has died. Christ is risen. Christ is coming again.

Holy Spirit come upon these gifts of bread and wine that they may be for us the bread of life and the cup of salvation

And nourish our very being with your grace and truth.

(Distribution of the Elements)

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION (Bill Wallace)

God calls us to be stewards of the whole of creation, and we should listen to that call
We commit ourselves to join with you O God to nurture the plants and animals; the elements, the sacred womb of sea and soil.

We offer to you our ability to create and our potential to release people's loving energies for the benefit of creation.

We sing with you the song of the universe! We dance with you the dance of life!

We are yours, and you in us are hope for the renewing of nature through the healing of the nations.

May our countries be bread and wine for us all. AMEN.

HYMN:

“God Who Sets Us On A Journey” (Joy Dine)

(Tune: Love Divine all Loves Excelling.)

DISMISSAL:

Go into the ever changing world in peace

May the blue sky and the deep sea inspire us

May the purity of the mountain stream renew our spirits

And may the rich quiet of the bush grant us rest

In the name of God Creator, Pain-bearer and most Holy Friend.

THE GRACE

Kia tau ki a tatou katoa'

te atawhai o to tatou Ariki o Ihu Karaiti

me te aroha o te Atua,

me te whiwhinaga tahitanga,

ki te Wairua Tapu

(join hands)

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ,

The love of God

And the fellowship of the Holy Spirit

Be with us all. AMEN.

(This service was arranged and led by the Rev. Paul Tregurtha).

8. Endings: Moved and Challenged

Robyn McPhail

Trans-Tasman Rural Ministry Conferences, held every four years since 1984, are a chance for rural Christians to make their faith work in relation to concerns for land and community and to gain ideas, as well as courage, to sustain their church life. Many a key leader in small churches in New Zealand and Australia has been formed, and many more encouraged, by these events.

For me the ‘Trans-Tasman’ is rural church. We are people who immediately connect to each other because we are family *in Christ* and because we share the edge experience that is part of rural life in our social, economic and political scene nowadays. We are people who belong to communities that continue to work on the basis of neighbourhood relationships, getting on with one another and being there for/relying on one another in times of need. And we are people who belong in particular places: our context of land and water (and lack thereof) matters to us and we know we need to be a good neighbour in our relations with the environment that gives us our livelihood and feeds our cities.

Our context in Aotearoa New Zealand is increasingly recognised as infused with things Māori. From where I sit now in Northland, tikanga Māori (Maori ways of working) are a natural part of life. So it was a true grounding in context to begin our time together formally with pōwhiri at Omaka marae, near Blenheim. As a Ngā Hou e Wha (Four Winds) marae, offering a home-place under Rangitāne protocols for all iwi and hapū in the area, the home people raised our spirits with their hospitality and the glimpse they gave of a budding new world that applies the strengths of the ancestors to the needs of today’s world. This is exactly our task with the Christian faith: we have a treasure handed down to us to hand on to people we live among and thereby give confidence and hope for the future.

In our farewell evening at Omaka the young kaikōrero shared his knowledge through reading the “photographs” of carving, weaving and mural within the whare nui (meeting house) and led us on a journey into relationship between tangata whenua and tauwi (Māori and non Māori). This was a deeply moving evening for Aussie and Kiwi alike and our kaumatua Ben Morunga blessed us with his wise kōrero in response and with his presence and guidance throughout the conference.

Now the first evening I remember vividly also for the after dinner speaker it brought us. Joanne Grigg presented to us today’s ‘energy generation’ on the land and in the rural church: a young mother, farming with her husband, working at her profession and extremely active in the community. With her succinct and perceptive overview of Marlborough we ended the evening with good information and much anticipation for the next day’s tours.

“Changing Seasons Challenging Times” was a theme that remained implicit throughout as we enjoyed the hint of autumn coming on the trees but also talked a lot about the common bond between our two countries – drought. It’s been a great season for wine, which was a delight to taste, and also a delight to hear about local input into engineering innovations. But as we travelled up the Wairau Valley we started to feel unease about a growing trend in monoculture, familiar in various regions that we represented.

The challenge of economic survival seemed to be holding centre stage in our changing climate, this word ‘climate’ indicating the changes wrought by global influences, urbanisation as well as the weather. How do we raise the deeper questions of spiritual survival, along with the ethical and environmental awareness which flows from richness of spirit, but which, as the prophet Ho-

sea expressed so emphatically, go to the pack when spiritual poverty takes hold (Hosea 4:1-3)?

Such questions were stirring us as we settled into Teapot Valley Christian Camp on the Waimea Plains for speakers, workshops and time to talk together. Again we enjoyed superb hospitality from the hosts, but of course rural church is also about food.

Mark Gibson wove his personal story with information about the state of our planet, lessons from past events (he presented his paper on the 40th anniversary of the *Wahine* ferry sinking in Wellington Harbour) and, most of all, a challenge to change and learn to walk humbly with God and earth. Andrew Well's address came from the heart, from his scientist's love of the natural world and from a particular evangelical faith that connected biblical texts with hope for God's direct rescue and redemption. It is heartening that the connection between faith and how we live in this world, including a grave concern for the well-being of the planet, is clearly a cross-theological matter now. Praise God! But the specific nature of the theology became a disturbing challenge for others who see things differently. There were other occasions during the week when speakers presented views of faith and church with a certainty that didn't seem to allow for other perspectives, and some among us heard their words with disturbance and even pain. That can be true whatever theological perspective is speaking. The key seems to be to offer an environment of mutual respect with an openness to hear each other as telling our own story, and speaking of life in faith as we each see it.

For one thing that I have loved about the rural ministry movement is that it doesn't *let theology get in the way*. That is, we start with a shared faith in Jesus Christ, we respect that unconditionally, and get on with the task of being Christ's presence in our local communities. Those who gathered for the Trans-Tasman shared a key understanding that the faithful local church plays a very important role in its community. As we looked, listening and talked together, this understanding was reaffirmed and we were encouraged by new ideas for sharing good news.

In different ways in our varied geographical and cultural contexts, the local church is a *beacon of hope* in the midst of changing seasons and challenging times. Our communities know we are there. We get together as church because it helps put our life in connection with our faith better than we could manage on our own. It also means we can work through together, with insights from our faith, the changes impacting our community.

In alive and active rural churches the local church is also a *cultivator of community*. We are people who know the value of neighbourhood relationships, and we work hard as church and as individuals to keep this neighbourliness strong despite changing times and regardless of the challenges thrown our way by urban and globalising pressures.

At the Trans-Tasman we were also 'rural' in the way we shared our time together. Whanaungatanga (family relationship) set the tone in the welcome and the bonding together of iwi and tauiwi at Omaka. I felt it strongly too in our closing worship with a communion rich in content and experience. The rural sense of getting on together by not rocking the boat did, however, make it harder for us to celebrate the variety of views and perspectives among us, including theological differences. From my experience of rural life there is a temptation to identify a strong community (or church) with one in which no dissenting voices are heard. For me a strong community (or church) is one in which all voices are heard and respected, and unity is found in the way we work together for the kingdom – on earth as in heaven.

We have come a long way in the last twenty years in building up the confidence of rural churches and encouraging ministry that puts context and practical issues of life and livelihood second only

to Christ in our focal awareness. But our challenge as churches, true to the welcoming and including love of Jesus, is for the evangelical passion of locally nurtured ministry to create an atmosphere in congregations that is good news to *all kinds of people*, and that lets Jesus lead us to understand people on their own terms.

Father Phil's devotions each day lead us gently but firmly on that path as his stories opened us up to change to the core. And those who guided us through the four days were in many ways also letting Jesus lead us to open in this kind of way. Thank you, Martin Harrison and your team, for providing us with a variety of contexts in which to meet up with others and learn from them – that in itself is hugely worthwhile. The team led us to places of natural beauty, not just to look but to explore options for sustaining church and community and being true to Christ in those places.

It was a *moving* conference, geographically, personally and in forging relationships as rural Christians that will help us face challenges – and be challenged to follow in the steps of our great rural leader, Jesus of Nazareth.

