

OCTOBER 78

# Servant

- The Acts for Today.
- Loving One Another.
- Conference Reports.



Vol. 2 no. 4

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# editorial

*"By this shall all men know you are my disciples - if you have love one for another.....I do not pray for these only but also for those who believe in me through their word that they may all be one even as thou Father art in me, and I in thee that they also may be in us so that the world may believe that thou hast sent me."*

These would have to be some of the most challenging words ever spoken by the Lord. How easily we begin to erect walls around ourselves and our ministries and fight to the bitter end in order to protect them. Our Father sent his Son Jesus into the world in order to break down these walls and to free us from their bondage in order that we might live in fellowship with him and with one another.

Rev. Charles Ringma the director of Teen Challenge in Australia relates some reasons why people he has reached out to in his ministry have not believed. This is the first of a series of three articles drawn from a programme which was aired on National Radio entitled 'The Acts for Today' John Carroll shares some of his experiences in sorting out relationships between Christians desiring to respond to the call of Jesus to love one another. Geoff Strelan lists several helpful ways in which we can learn to search the Scriptures in this second article of the current series on prayer.

Also in this issue we feature reports of two conferences held recently in Australia. The first of these was a conference on Christian Commitment sponsored by the Emmanuel Covenant Community in Brisbane during early July. Then at the end of August an ecumenical conference was held in Adelaide under the theme - 'Jesus is our King'. About 1,000 delegates attended each conference.

KARL BRETTIG

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# THE ACTS FOR TODAY

REV. CHARLES RINGMA

The way the individual sees himself has a lot to do with the way he functions. A person with a strong sense of identity and an integrated personality is usually able to act creatively and purposefully into life.

This is equally true of any grouping of people.

Unity, direction, purpose, identity are essential elements to effective group life.

Yet it is interesting to note that the modern church, far from having come to terms with these factors, is grappling with the question of its own identity and consequently with the way it should function in the world.

That the church's identity is under question stems partly from an increasing critique of the developmental view of church history, which assumes that growth plus time equals right growth. That the way the church has developed over the centuries to this point in time is the way God means it to be.

This view, which effectively removes the church from the reality of correction and judgement, is being countermanded by a restitutionist view.

That is, the Christian church must constantly seek to break loose from its present mind set and its cultural captivity and seek to re-establish itself on the radical roots from which it sprang. This is not a frightened reactionary response to the modern world. Nor the unhealthy pining for "the good old days". But the recapturing of a vision of the radical

Jesus and the desire to live out in today's alienated society the common life of the early church as portrayed in the Book of Acts.

Inherent in the restitutionist view lies first of all the strong sense that the way the early church practically outworked its response to the Lordship of Jesus is normative for today, and secondly there lies the fear that historical development rather than leading to healthy evolutionary progression leads in fact to devolution.

The church as a community based on a common life and deep interpersonal relationships de-evolves into "a society" bound together by exchange of goods and service. The pastor serves the members and in turn receives his living. The members give, and in turn receive the services of the organisation and of the pastor. This leads to a growing organisational reality and increasing efforts to maintain it. Status is assigned by position in the organisation and effectiveness evaluated in terms of organisational health, namely numerical growth and financial prosperity.

It is generally felt that the church is too much an institution and too little a community of people.

This is what evoked the response from the German theologian and martyr, Dietrich Bonhoeffer in his "Letters and Papers from Prison." "The church", he writes, "is the church only when it exists for others. To make a start it should give away all its property to those in need. The clergy (should) possibly engage in some secular calling", p.211. And elsewhere he writes, "the believer feels no shame, as though he were still living too much in the flesh, when he yearns for the physical presence of other Christians." And again, "Communal life is again being recognised by Christians



# "Church for TODAY..."

today as the grace that it is."  
("Life Together" p.9,10).

Interestingly enough it is not only the theologians who have come to these realisations.

Eight years of contact with the streets, various counter-culture groups, and particularly the drug scene has brought me into contact with some incredibly bizarre, unconventional and radical people but also some of the most sensitive, seeking and questioning people I have ever met.

They had many things to say about present day society, but also about the church. And some of the things they said made a lot of sense.

1. While they saw Jesus as being a radical who ran counter to the system, who identified with the "little people" and who took a prophetic stance against injustice and evil, they saw the church as being far too conservative, the preserver of the status quo and the uncritical supporter of so much of what is bad in our highly technological society.

2. They complained that the modern church's spirituality was too formalized, intellectual and predictable. Having experienced the mysticism of the East, the psychic spirituality of the occult and the chemical 'spirituality' of hallucinogenic drugs they felt that the moralistic pep-talks intoned from pulpit and rostrum fortified by 18th Century hymns were hardly comparable to their own mind-blowing experiences.

3. Lastly, they felt the church was too much like other modern institutions, large and impersonal: the evangelical empire with its multi-faceted corporations each promoting their particular specialty. They believed the church lacked warmth,

humanity, personalism and a sense of genuine community.

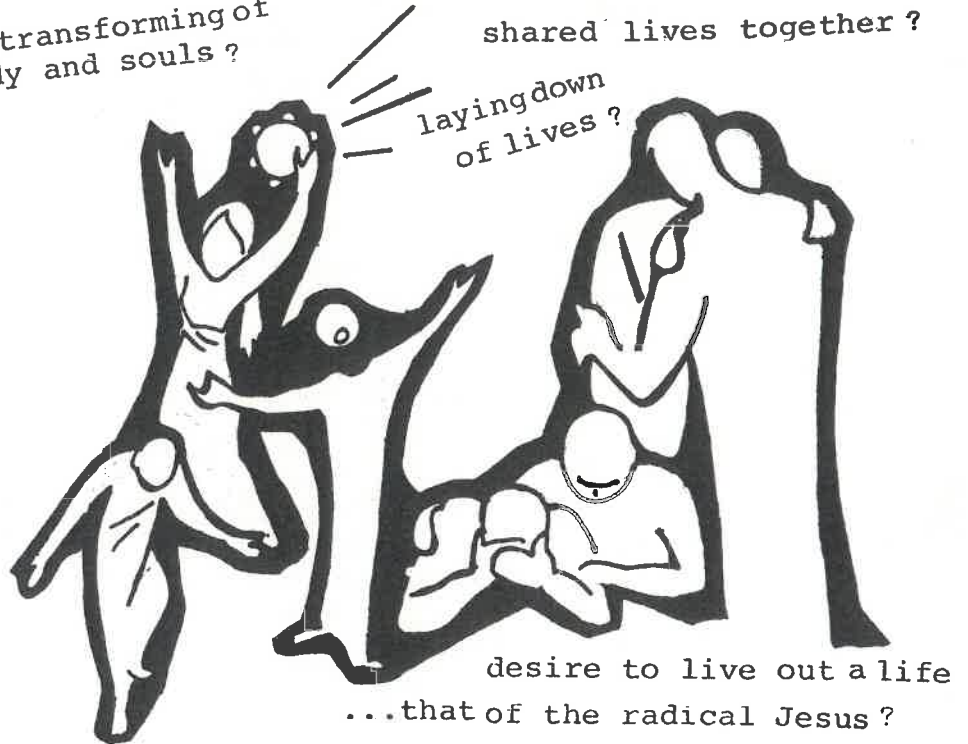
Under the pressure of these observations and my own growing disquiet about much of institutional Christianity, there came the need to grapple afresh with the whole question of what we are meant to be as God's people in our world. Compounding the need to come to terms with these matters, was our attempt to meaningfully care for drug users needing rehabilitation, street people needing a home, young people looking for a cause and a place to be, prisoners needing care as well as the urgency to meet our own spiritual, emotional and social needs as staff workers and families of the Teen Challenge Drug Referral Centre.

In the traumatic years that followed as we sought to care for the needy as well as keep our body and souls together there came the increasing realisation that transformation is not primarily a transaction between two persons - especially not when they are cast in the role of counsellor and counsellee. But that transformation more readily takes place in a community. The second realisation that came with this was that the church of the New Testament was in fact such a transforming community.

Luke, the writer of the Acts of the Apostles paints a moving picture of how the early Christians shared their lives together:

*"Now the company of those who believed were of one heart and soul, and no one said that any of the things which he possessed was his own, but they had everything in common. And with great power the Apostles gave their testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus and great grace was upon them all. There was not a needy person among them (for) they sold*

too much an institution ?  
 too formalized,  
 intellectual  
 and predictable ?  
 self giving ?  
 it exists for others ?  
 each other ?  
 real love ?  
 brotherly love ?  
 increasing institutionalism ?  
 transforming of  
 body and souls ?  
 mutually edifying body ?  
 encouraging each other  
 bearing each other's burdens ?  
 shared lives together ?  
 laying down  
 of lives ?



*their possessions and goods and distributed them to all as any had need." (Acts 4:32-24, 2:45)*

Many Christian scholars in the past have criticised this voluntary communitarianism of the early church. They called it an "exaggerated and therefore unrealistic" expression of self-giving brotherly love; "a too direct translation of agape"; "a too eager anticipation of the age to come paying insufficient heed to the form and realities of this world". They further pointed out that the Jerusalem community got into serious difficulty, eventually disintegrated, and that none of the early churches elsewhere in the Asian world followed the Jerusalem pattern.

"The critics always like to think that God began the early church by

making a mistake", commented Graham Pulkingham, a leader in the development of Protestant communities. If that is so then the mistake was perpetuated.

For the Pauline epistles really express the same realities as the Book of Acts. Paul likens the church to an organism, a mutually edifying body. He speaks of love that involves laying down our lives for each other. He emphasises sharing our world's goods, practising hospitality, bearing each other's burdens, encouraging each other, and argues for a practical voluntarism. He writes in 2 Corinthians: "As a matter of equality your abundance at the present time should supply their want ... that there may be equality" (v.13).

The roots from which the church sprang are clear. REV. CHARLES RINGMA.



# LOVING ONE ANOTHER (in God's House)

God is building a spiritual house; several spiritual houses in different places. St. Peter in his first letter says: "Come to Him, to that living stone, rejected by men, but in God's sight chosen and precious, and like living stones, be yourselves built into a spiritual house, to be a holy



priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God, through Jesus Christ." The Lord requires us to come together and to be united, so that He might build an edifice that will give Him glory, a living temple. In coming together we come as we are, we come with our warts and wrinkles, we come with our rebelliousness and our sinfulness, we come with our strength and our weaknesses but we come together to give God glory. It isn't always easy. God doesn't always choose the people that we would choose to build His community. He often chooses people with whom we have great difficulty in relating to. He even chooses people that we don't necessarily like, but He chooses them and our responsibility is to respond to Him.

Often in coming together in a Christian community, we experience what we call "sandpaper treatment". We tend to rub against one another - things about me a brother doesn't like, things about a brother or sister I don't like. But in coming together as we are the Lord uses us as tools of holiness for one another, as instruments of purification, for bringing forth within us the fruit of the Holy Spirit, fruits of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. (Galatians 5:22-23) We learn to love one another, and the reality of 1 Corinthians 13, that love is patient and kind and not jealous. Love isn't just a theory. It is the living reality of day to day life and of learning what it means to repent of our sins and ask forgiveness for our actions. In relating together, we take St. Paul's words from Colossians 3:-  
*"Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassion, kindness, lowliness, meekness and patience, forbearing one another, and if one has a complaint against another,*

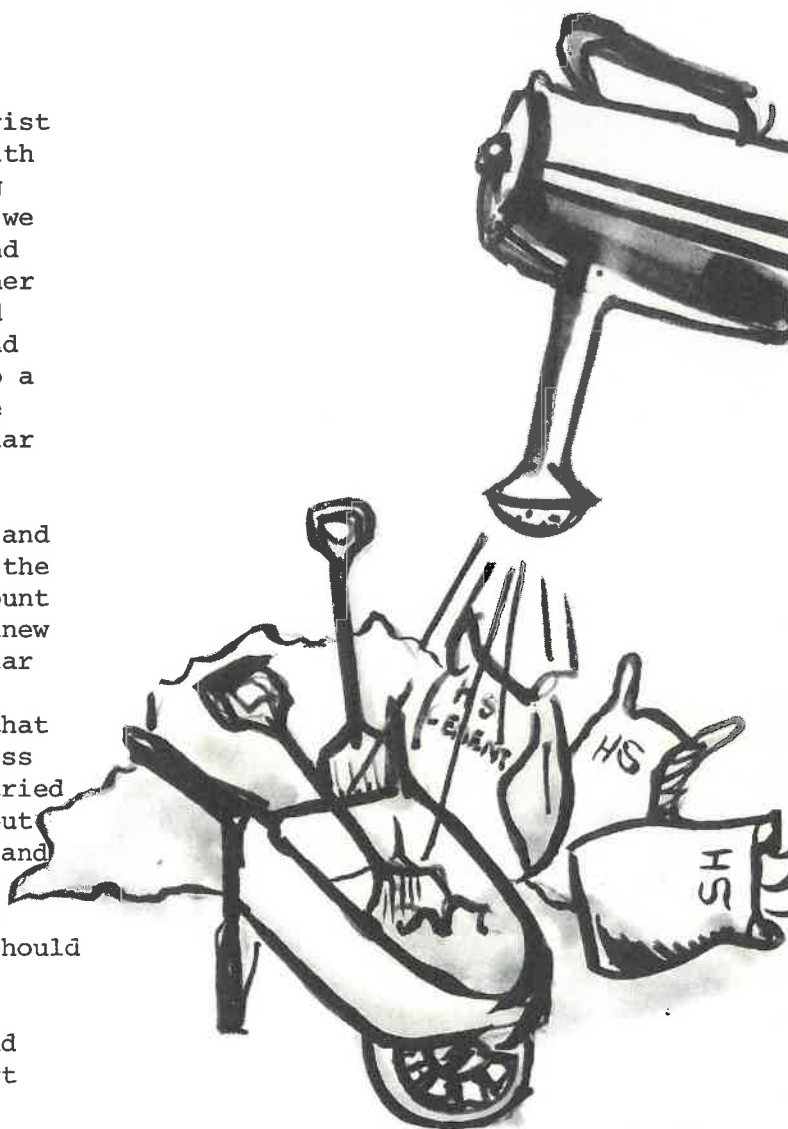
*forgiving each other as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. And above all these, put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony."*

Love is not a 'gooey' emotional feeling. Love is all and more of what St. Paul says it is. Love is doing the will of our Father. It is doing what Jesus said for us to do. In Matthew 7, the Lord spoke these words to us: "Not everyone who says to me, Lord, Lord, shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. On that day many will say to me, Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name. And then I would declare to them: I never knew you. Depart from me you evil doers." We need to do the will of the Father who is in heaven. We need to love Him, to serve Him, to love our brothers and sisters and to serve them.

One of the most difficult areas in relating together in a community, is in learning the lesson of repentance and forgiveness. In Matthew 5, Jesus spoke these words: "So if you are offering your gift at the altar, and there remember your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar, and go, first be reconciled to your brother and then come and offer your gift." I used to think that the responsibility of repentance and bringing about reconciliation, rested with the person who was in the wrong, the person who was in error. It seems from those words that this is not the case. It seems as if it doesn't matter who was right and who was wrong, but rather that if you realise that your brother has something against you, you go and be reconciled. I can remember a night, soon after experiencing

a new relationship with Jesus Christ as my Lord, having an argument with my wife. Our pattern of relating in our marriage was such that if we did have an argument, I would tend to go off and sulk and wait for her to come and apologise or we would just sweep it under the carpet and ignore it, never really coming to a point of admitting guilt and take responsibility. On this particular night however, we'd had a fairly traumatic argument, and my wife, untypically went off to her room and began to weep. I was sitting in the lounge room feeling a certain amount of self-righteousness because I knew that I was right in this particular situation. But after a time the Holy Spirit began to convict me that I should go and ask for forgiveness for my part in the argument. I tried to excuse myself and I tried to put up arguments why she should come and apologise to me. But in spite of all my well thought-out arguments the Holy Spirit insisted that I should go and be reconciled to her. I walked down the hallway to our bedroom, knelt down beside her and I asked for forgiveness for my part in the argument. She began to weep even more than before and I said: "What's wrong?" She said: "Do you realise that that's the first time in our married life that you've ever asked me to forgive you?" She was right. I think that men have a certain amount of difficulty in asking forgiveness of others. There is some fallacy that in admitting that we are wrong, we are indicating weakness. I believe that the Lord would want us to be reconciled to one another, to have strong relationships together rather than have us live in a fantasy of how strong we really are.

In asking forgiveness, in saying: "I am wrong", "I am sorry", the door is opened for the Holy Spirit to



bring about the reconciliation that He wants to bring about between brothers and sisters and between us and the Father. Hearing those words "I forgive you" brings a freedom from bondage, a freedom from fear and anxiety which is unparalleled in our spiritual life. To hear the words that we have been freed from our sins and to have forgiveness transmitted to us through a brother or sister is a gift from God. In his second letter to the Corinthians chapter 5, St. Paul writes these words: "Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation, the old has passed away, behold a new has come. All this is from God who through Christ reconciled us to Himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation. That is, God was



*in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting the trespasses against them and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation."* We have the responsibility to carry to the world, to those who we live with, to those we work with and to those we worship with, the message that Christ has died, is risen and is at the right hand of the Father. That He has done all that for them, that there is no reason for them to remain condemned and that there is no reason for them to experience fear and anxiety because of their sins. We need to take to them the words *"there is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus."* (Romans 8:1) For Jesus has set them free and we set them free by our words and actions.

One of the saddest experiences I've ever had was in talking to a woman who had been married some 20 years.

In the first year of their marriage her husband had been unfaithful to her. She was unable to forgive him for those actions and she had in her heart unforgiveness which in turn became bitterness, and in time even manifested itself in hatred. This woman was desperately wanting to experience the love of God. And God seemed to want to use her as a powerful instrument of His love but she was unable to respond to God's love because of the unforgiveness that still reigned in her heart. She was unable to say to her husband: *"I forgive you"*. The bitterness was eating away inside her like a cancer and destroying her. Yet all that was needed to free her, to release her from her bondage was for her to cry out to her Father to forgive her sin and to say to her husband: *"I forgive you, will you forgive me for my unforgiveness?"*

We have seen in Christian communities the effects of people coming into

a community while in similar situations and in experiencing the love and forgiveness of God, they have been able to say: *"I am sorry. Will you forgive me?"* It is hard work. It takes courage, it takes humility, it takes death to self, but in that death there is always a resurrection and new life. In that death there is a creativity which takes place, a creativity which will eventually transform the world. It is like a seed which having been planted in the ground ceases to be a seed so that many more seeds can be formed. In a community, we don't live for ourselves alone, for God has knitted us together. In Chapter 12 of Paul's letter to the Romans, he says: *"For as in one body we have many members and all members do not have the same function, so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another."* We are part of one another and what happens to an individual within a community affects others. We have a responsibility to strengthen each other, to encourage one another and to support one another. The result of such actions is the transformation of individual lives, the transformation of families, and eventually, the transformation of whole groups of people.

God is wanting to do a work in our midst which will be a light to the nations. He is looking to raise up people who will be a witness to His life on this earth, who will demonstrate the power of His Holy Spirit to transform wrong into right, unrighteousness into righteousness and darkness into light. He is calling for us to make a decision. He is calling us to stand for Him and display His goodness, mercy and love to all men, by the way we speak, by the way we declare His love and by the way we live out that life and that love with one another.

JOHN CARROLL



"Bible Study" is not yet using, the Word of God. In study we seek to understand in our limited way what God is saying in a certain Scripture. This understanding should be both intellectual and emotional - in other words God wants to speak to the whole man.

Such understanding is always meant to lead to a practical outcome. His "*word is a lamp unto my feet*," not just to my head or heart. We are to walk by the light of that word of God. That is what I mean by "study", and it can be private study or group study. Here I want to look at something else, namely "using" the Word of God in groups such as prayer groups.

### 1) Use the Word against Satan

At those times when Satan would seek to disrupt the meeting by preventing people from arriving, placing heaviness, weariness, irritability, distraction, sickness etc., on people, use the Word of God to rebuke him and to claim Jesus' complete victory over him. In this spiritual battle, "*one little word can fell him*." Do this quickly! We need to learn to recognise the enemy at work and use this sword of the Spirit early, before he is able to do any damage.

### 2) Use the Word to encourage one another

In those times when brothers and sisters are experiencing testing,

# Using the Word of C

"dry" times, or becoming disheartened etc., speak the Word of God to each other. Remind one another of God's promises, of His past deeds and His promise of present strength and His constant "*working together for good*." One of my favourite times in prayer meetings comes when we simply spend 10-15 minutes directly speaking the Word to each other as the Lord brings it to our minds.

### 3) Use the Word for prayer and praise

Apart from directly praying Scripture, have someone read, for example, a Psalm one or two verses at a time, allowing the group time to digest it and then respond immediately with prayer, praise, confession, silence, questions (keep the discussing till later - simply express response to the Word!) Another way is to read a whole section of Scripture and ask the group to respond immediately.

One of the great blessings God has given His people in these days is the setting of the Word to music. These simple Scriptural choruses are a good way of praising and praying and using the Word in worship. An added blessing is that often Scripture is memorized through such singing without the effort of deliberate memorization.

### 4) Use the Word of God for guidance

There are times when we are seeking guidance from God on some matter when He will lead us to some Scripture which seems to give specific direction.

A few observations on such guidance:-

- a) It should be tested and confirmed by the body.
- b) The Spirit should lead us to this kind of guidance. Scripture is not a magic book for shutting

# f God During Prayer Meetings

your eyes and taking a stab every time you want an answer to some problem.

- c) We should not underestimate God's power and willingness to guide in this way.
- d) God can use a Scripture to guide us specifically even if it is used out of context!

(Once I was considerably bothered by that last point. Three things happened to ease my mind. First when I was married, the Bible was very much the living Word of God for my wife. As I began to point out the fact that her understanding at times was "out of context - not quite what the Greek means", (even though the understanding was consistent with other Scripture!) I realised that I had begun to destroy that vital relationship she had with the Word. Secondly, I have come to see that the Son of God is Lord even of Scripture. It is His Word and He can use it however He wishes. Watchman Nee says he used to think people should come to Jesus only through passages like John 3:16; instead he found God calling people through all kinds of obscure and untheological passages. So God can speak to us "out of context" if He wishes. Thirdly, if anyone used Scripture out of context it was the apostles themselves!

## 5) Use the Word for instruction

This is perhaps the most difficult use of the Word in prayer groups because it is necessary to have people who are ready to be instructed by God, ready to submit their lives both to God and to the Body of Christ for formation. Here again I refer not so much to study or just "learning what the Word says", but rather to the practical working out of the Word in the lives of people in the group.

Juan Ortiz in his book "Disciple" speaks of only having six or seven

such instruction times a year - the group does not move on to the next instruction until the principles of the previous one have been absorbed and become part of the daily life of the group.

There is a heavy responsibility here on the leader of the group to ensure that he leads according to the Spirit and not simply as he sees the need in the group. God's timing and purposes are often not what we would plan.

Instruction in this sense could sometimes mean (painful) rebuke and correction - hence we have the need for a group who are committed to the Lord and each other and ready to accept such correction. The Word must be used here with great love and tenderness so that people are drawn to follow the Lord rather than compelled to obey.

## 6) Jesus is the Word

Above all, let's remember that Jesus Himself is the Word of God. It is a measure of His humility and willingness to serve His Father that we can even dare to talk about "using Him, the Word of God." He wants us to take hold of His life and power, to recognise our place as His Body and so to serve Him and one another by using Him, using the Word of God, to build up His Body. As Paul says in 2 Timothy 3:15-17. *"Remember that ever since you were a child you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching the truth, rebuking error, correcting faults, and giving instruction for right living so that the man who serves God may be fully qualified and equipped to do every kind of good work."* GEOFF STRELAN





Charismatic Conference! What's new? You could be excused for saying that once you've been to one conference there is very little new about the next one. Not so! The Ecumenical Charismatic Conference held recently in Adelaide was a conference with some new and exciting features.

The Conference was organised by the Charismatic fellowships within the Catholic, Anglican, Uniting and Lutheran Churches in Adelaide. This in itself was probably the most significant part of the weekend. Praying, planning and working together with Christian brothers and sisters from other branches of the vine was a really rewarding experience. Sure we have differences - and we shouldn't play these down - yet our oneness in so many areas is also important and requires us to recognise that we each worship the same Lord.

The teaching, significantly, was all through Charismatic leaders within Australia. Fr. Roman Carter opened the Conference with an absorbing 90 minute talk entitled "Jesus is King". Fr. Roman pointed out forcibly that to have Jesus as King of our life means that we are His subjects. There



is only one way to become a subject of Jesus and that is through repentance and faith. On the Saturday night Rev. Charles Widdowson an Anglican minister and evangelist associated with a Melbourne parish brought a message of faith. "God said it - I believe it - and that settles it!" At the closing session of the Conference Rev. Harry Wescott from the Uniting Church, Canberra called the delegates to a life of holiness using Matthew 5:21. Rev. Harry emphatically pointed out the difference between the world's voice and the clear and sure words of Jesus. The 'King' has the final word on personal holiness. Many tears flowed during the time of ministry that followed.

Local leaders were the prominent speakers in the four workshop streams.



Here a comprehensive range of subjects were available to the 800 delegates ranging from Introduction to Charismatic Renewal through Healing, Spiritual Growth and the important area of Witnessing. Some 2,000 attended the evening rallies. No-one could help recognising that the Lord was bringing into being a new era in enabling His body to function as one.

GLEN HEIDENREICH





# Growing Together in Christ

This was the theme of a conference held in Brisbane in July. The conference was sponsored by the Emmanuel Covenant Community - an ecumenical community with some 700 members.

The various workshops covered a large range of areas including leadership, family life, childrens ministry, introduction to life in the Spirit and youth outreach in cities. Speakers at the general sessions included Clem and Julie Walters from the People of Praise Community in South Bend, Indiana. Julie spoke on the subject of being a woman and shared some real insights into what Scripture has to say about being a fulfilled woman rather than trying to be 'liberated' from the role of being a woman in order to take on the role of a man. This aspect regarding the roles of men and women was also discussed in the workshop on family life. It seems that the Lord is drawing people closer to Himself, sorting out our lives into various areas of responsibility and generally ordering our lives and the group life of Christians according to the ways of the Kingdom. (Romans 12:2) One of the results of this re-ordering or renewing process is a closer and more committed working relationship



between groups within different denominations. The God-given emphasis of each denomination is then able to be used in a powerful way. As an example of this during the conference a Pentecostal brother often led in the times of praise while much of the teaching in relation to authority, family etc., came from the Catholics and the call to the spreading of the Gospel came from the Lutherans.

On the final day of the conference Brian Smith chaired a panel of representatives from various Christian bodies on the subject of "What the Spirit is saying to the churches."

In his closing address to the conference he called the delegates on to a deeper commitment to the mission of Jesus. Several prophecies echoing that call were received.

The whole conference including the teaching, the way everyone worked together and the prophecies all spoke of an demonstrated what the Lord God is saying to His body today. "Love one another as I have loved you ... by this shall all men know that you are my disciples." MARTY ROSENBERG



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I-8	Finding new life in the Spirit - Rev. Ron Hoffmann & Rev. Bill Bennetts	
H-9	Healing and Wholeness - Rev. Doug Kuhl	
H-10	Types of Healing etc. - Rev. Noel O'Brien & Sr. Pat Kenny	
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H-12	Healing through Christian Community G.R.O.W.- Michael McGrath	
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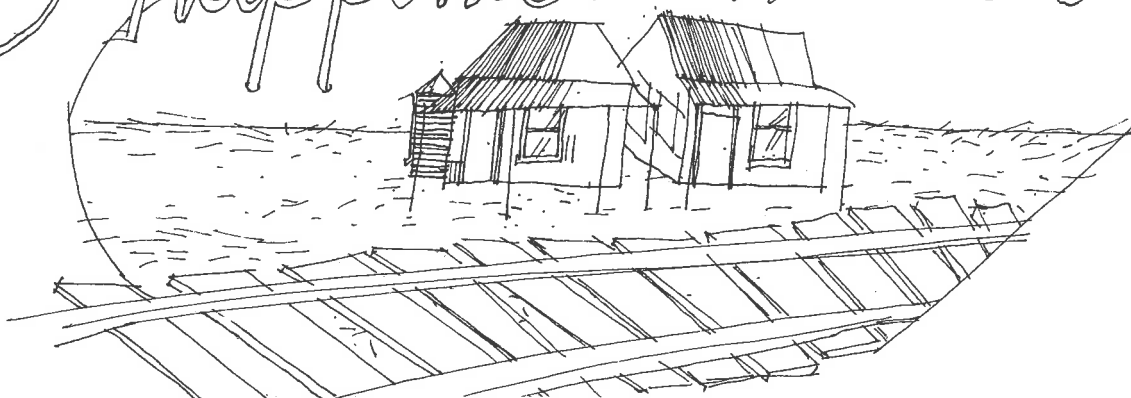
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The fear of the Lord  
is the beginning of wisdom.

Ps. 111:10

# It happened on the line



I have recently completed 20 years of ministry on the Eastwest and Central A.N. Railways ... three annual visits to all camps. As I peruse mu diaries there are many incidents that I find pleasure in recalling, and which, through a series of leaflets

I have recently completed 20 years of ministry on the Eastwest and Central A.N. Railways.... three annual visits to all camps. As I peruse my diaries there are many incidents that I find pleasure in recalling.

When speaking with the many folk I meet as a minister of the Gospel, I make my message as clear as possible. This I like to do by referring to circumstances touching on their daily life. I may be standing at one of the camp houses on the great expanse of the Nullarbor. Just over the rails are the telegraph wires which span the long distance from Kalgoorlie to Port Augusta (over 1100 miles). I draw the attention of my listeners to the sag in the wires, which, however, always rise again when approaching the next post. Without these, the wires would be lying on the ground where they could not fulfil their function of keeping the train crews and fettler gangs in communication with controls.

Now I make my point: .."That is why I pay my visits from camp to camp. Your life as you carry on day by day always tends to sag down to the earth. But when I come to speak with you and give you my leaflets and Gospel booklets, my purpose is to draw you upwards, or rather, to give the Lord above the chance to do it." I know that many good folk catch on to my meaning. I hope that, as a result, they also feel themselves functioning a little better during the next weeks or months. The downward direction is so easy and natural with all of us, isn't it? We all ever and again need the upward draw.

It is a pleasure to come across acts of kindness in a world which can be hard. Back in 1961, I was with a "special Gang" at Rawlinna, W.A., on a re-sleeping job. At that time there were many migrants in the gangs. The men were quite respectful, and appreciative of what I was telling them as they sat around the breakfast table. They then pointed to one of their number and said, "He is a Spaniard, and can't speak a word of English. Can you do something for him?" I could not accomplish very much beyond using my pictures of the Saviour to attract his interest and giving him a card or two of Scripture incidents probably well-known to him. I also had with me a selection of Gospel booklets in the languages I could expect to meet. The young man was delighted when I gave him one in Spanish, but could only smile his thanks.

Six months later I ran into him again as he stood between the rails while at work; and he at once recognized me. The men must have been kind and helpful to him with language. "He makes the dumb to speak", it says of the Saviour. That is how I felt when my Spaniard began to speak to me - it seemed to give him much pleasure. I made sure that our talk, which could not be very long, was a profitable to him as possible.

The same year I met a man of a different type, at least for the start .. a young Hungarian. He was travelling in the carriage next to mine on the slow goods. My own personal carriage on which I live for a couple of weeks or so the Community Service Car as it is called, is supplied by the Railways free for social or medical workers, and is attached to the slow goods that brings the supplies to the camps.

This lad was travelling from Tarcoola to his gang at Malbooma. I sat down to have a friendly chat with him. In due course I offered him a Hungarian St John. "No, I'm a Catholic" So I offered him a little card of Jesus on the cross, which is a favourite among Catholics. Again - "No, I'm a Catholic". - "But Catholics believe in this". - "I don't believe in any of these things", he replied. He said he was through with the church and wanted to be left to himself. The church was only for the rich. I explained to him that Christ spent His life among the poor and helping them, and even dying to save us all. He finally took the St John and opened it hesitatingly here and there.

The weather was hot, so I took my chance, "Would you like a nice cool drink of water from my fridge?" Indeed he would. So I left him with the booklet in his hand; nor did I hurry back either, giving him a chance to peruse it. If I remember correctly, I returned also with a piece of cake. And I didn't say another word either about the book or about our faith. I could now safely leave it to the Lord to speak to my friend out of His Book. And He must have done so. For this is by no means the end of the story as I expected that it might be when I bade him farewell.

About ten days later I was on my return trip from the west. Once more my friend boarded the train, together with a Hungarian mate from the gang. I can still hear his excited greeting, and then: "Have you got a little book for this man?" Yes, I found him something. Then: "Have you got one for another man?" In the corridor was a Spaniard who now also came forward. I found a few leaflets, but with more Spaniards on the Line than I had bargained for I had no more booklets left. Worse still, he was returning to Sydney. So I copied his Sydney address, and promised to send him one.

The following Sunday I was back with my Cambrai congregation on the Murray Flats, and the honest farmers and their families, who were happy to share their pastor with the outback folk were all keen to hear how my trip had gone this time. So after the last hymn I told them the various stories, including the one about the Hungarian and the Spaniard. Then I said: "I need 7/- for a Spanish New Testament. Whoever puts down the seven shillings first will be the giver." Before any of the Schirmers or Schuberts or Fladrichs etc could get their hands in their pockets, Ben Pietsch had the money down. "Who pays for all your literature?", folk have asked. When both the Lord above and His people are your friends, you don't worry about little things like money.

REV. H J NOACK.





# SEARCH FOR A NEW LIFE

"Now why do you want to go to a far off place like Australia? Why, you are so selfish, you've got a lovely home and a car here, be satisfied." These were sister Eunice's words after the decision to emigrate had been pondered on and made. We had often talked about leaving our home town of coal mines and smoke stacks, terraced houses and the 'rain', for a land of sunshine and opportunity, a home and a garden and space for children to play and grow.

This dream was realised and was fulfilled in about a year. What an achievement, 'we had done well', and we were so proud to be able to correspond with relatives back in Britain, and tell them what a wonderful country Australia is, and that we have a lovely home and garden, all complete!

Now that all our material wants had been gained, the restless periods came, especially for a mother with small children, trapped at home, isolated from many friends and relatives. Stan was a barman at this time and meeting lots of people and spending a lot of time at the pub, drinking a little too much, coming home so late, and then facing the consequences

of a wife and family who weren't happy. Something had gone wrong, the lovely surroundings and our home were empty and futile, relationships were strained and we knew there was something missing.

I particularly hated Sundays. It was a purposeless day, 'go out for a drive or stay home' - big decisions! During this time salesmen and Jehovah Witnesses were most busy knocking at our door always claiming to be able to solve all our problems, "If you purchase this 'gadget your day will go better,'" or the religious people saying "What you need is God."

Both Stan and I have no background of a religious nature, perhaps the odd Sunday school attendance, but all that was for 'show', we thought; only the wealthy went to church and it was true to say, that was what happened. We poor people didn't have the 'new hat' that was a symbol of acceptance in church. More than anything we had been exposed to superstitions, tales of witches and some kind of spiritualism my Grandmother knew of. It was all the same to me, and I would rather not believe in any of those "mumbo jumbo" things. I believed in evolution and Darwin's theory, it made more sense and besides it was taught in school so - it must be true!

After some persistence by the Jehovah Witnesses we consented to have a course of Bible study with them - we were terrible students, we asked so many questions, and they had all the answers! We had the 'fear of God' put in us, especially when they claimed to know the exact year of Jesus Christ's return and a lot of pressure was put on us to join the group and be "the only saved people in the world." We were pestered continually and for this reason I guess we rejected the J.W.'s, and wanted to run away. But this 'fear of God' by this time was securely in our minds. Another important milestone which I recall quite vividly was a film we saw, "Dead men do tell tales" - an archeological film supporting the Old Testament supernatural interventions of God.

We continued to search for meaning to life and how to be fulfilled people, but got deeper and deeper into darkness. As we witnessed friends' marriages breaking up, families splitting apart especially amongst staff at the pub and the mad rat-race we were involved in, our thoughts began to turn to - "Let's get away" - "Maybe into the country" - "Be more self-sufficient. It was wonderful going out following up "Small Properties For Sale" ads, - but they were all either really run-down or too expensive for us and also we didn't seem to be able to sell our home. One weekend however, we took a drive into the Riverland of S.A. How appealing it was to us, and Stan made "only enquiries" about properties, in the Waikerie Real Estate - Employment - J.P. cum T.A.B. office. One of the properties was an old stone home on the river front out of the town about five miles. "It's a bit run-down but not bad inside" said the agent. "It's an old Lutheran manse" he said "and also it's got lots of pig-sties too!" Stan's expression was one I'll always remember - "let's go have a look!" The decision

was made that day, it was an incredibly low price and included 10 acres of scrub land overlooking the river. The deposit was paid, (two shillings!) and within two days our own home was sold.

Our country home was in need of a lot of repair and we knew 'work' would keep us occupied. We didn't have to concern ourselves even with the J.W.'s - yes, we had 'got rid of them!'. Stan was busy deciding which of the three jobs he would take that had been kindly offered to him (this was unbelievable, job opportunities had never presented themselves like this before!)

The people in the community of Lowbank were incredibly kind and we seemed to be inundated with neighbours from everywhere wishing us well and welcoming us to the district. Never before had we experienced such a wonderful feeling of belonging, in fact in a pessimistic way we were expecting something to go wrong any minute! ("it's too good to be true!")

Before long a neighbour invited our children to go to Sunday school and personally called to take them on each Sunday morning, Stan and I took advantage of this and played tennis on the church's tennis court to the background sounds of hymns.

Now and again we went to church as a thank you gesture to our community, they cared for us and we so wanted to fit in. We didn't understand any part of the liturgy that everyone knew off by heart, and the sermons seemed to be addressed to 'angels' - not to people. Sometimes I would attend a ladies' fellowship meeting, but I always felt afraid to move - I only relaxed when afternoon tea was served. I recall feeling very much like a second class citizen, dominated by the men. I noted that the ladies

didn't have much to say in meetings and it was very much a man's affair. Our youngest daughter wasn't baptised and an attempt by pastor to "educate us" by attending a study course - "What Lutherans believe" began. Four other people were in the class receiving instruction, but often some of them were so tired and they could hardly stay awake, while at times I irritated the pastor with my unbelief and questioning. Stan sat through in a rather complacent fashion, he later complained that it was above his head. At the end of the course it was assumed that we were now ready to receive membership into the church. We were happy to be members and also our little girl Laura was baptised.

This should seem to be the end of a lovely story except there was still something missing! To maintain this position we were in now became a real struggle - church on Sunday became a real battle for me, we were always out of bed late, and I complained that the car wasn't as clean as the other parishioners, my clothes weren't good enough, my hair, the kids, oh! we argued, and fought driving to church about anything and everything. This Christian life left much to be desired, and I still hated Sundays!

This was a pattern of how things went for two years in our church life, although each evening's family time was a happy time reading childrens' Bible stories, but all these stories were historical, they didn't affect us today, and God was so far away.

My parents during all of this time I guess had been observing what was going on in our lives and decided to find out what they could about this Christian business. They needed social contacts as they were lonely. Soon after it was amazing for us to hear them talking about a baptism in the Holy Spirit. We endeavoured to correct them, "There's only one baptism, the

one in church, when they dribble a bit of water on your head!" "No" mum said, "there's more!" "Okay" I said "We'd better come to your church and have a look at this." During the service we were confronted by the closeness of God, and that people had a joy that we had never seen before and they also seemed to love each other. A minister layed hands on our heads and in the next few days to follow for the first time I met Jesus, and I knew that missing something, was the Lord Jesus, no-one had told us about Him that we could know Him, that we must be 'born again' and we both had Jesus in our lives in a living real way. Oh! how eager we were to share this in our congregation and how our Lord had showed us through His word how to begin living this abundant life - we even began to understand the Liturgy!

Oh! what happy days. We were assured of Jesus' presence in our lives, it overflowed as we freely expressed these things in our congregation - we couldn't understand why some looked rather shocked, we thought that they would rejoice with us, we were a very much misunderstood family and yet with some we were led into deeper relationships and sharing - those who had like-minds and convictions. We had a deep longing for Bible study with others and prayer.

It was exciting to attend the first Lutheran Spiritual Renewal meeting early in 1976 and be with others who had heard the Lord call their names to be disciples for Him in the Kingdom. Praise God we no longer have to rely on self but on Jesus who strengthens us!

Praise Him who led us heathens into a home and congregation in which we have been blessed so much. Praise Him for those who have shown us the ongoing Christian life! Incidentally we LOVE Sundays!

SHEILA WHITTAM





# A TIME FOR INTERCESSION

Erwin Prange

A book which is very timely and about a subject which the church needs to know a lot more about in these days is "A TIME FOR INTERCESSION" by Erwin Prange, associate pastor of Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church in Joppa, Maryland, U.S.A. He has written this book from first-hand experience as he felt the need to stir and encourage God's people to take hold of the weapon of prayer given to us by our Lord, and to use it aright.

The book's first chapters bring out clearly the need for intercession. In chapter one it shows the way the world is heading and says, "If we are to survive, now is the time for intercession." The author goes on to show that intercession is the answer to the problems of mankind such as disease, economic, family, social, religious etc. In the second chapter "THE DOCTRINE OF MAN" he presents the gospel as the good news that Jesus has come to heal the whole man, spirit, soul and body. I quote, "Jesus came to heal the whole man, body, soul and spirit so that the life of Christ will flow through every part of our lives." In the next chapter he discusses the problem of pain and its mystery. "Man is the principal author of his own pain and tragedy" states Erwin Prange. He explains how we are to seek the Lord so that we may intercede according to His plan and desire. As a result wonderful things happen to lives caught up in illness, pain and misery. "The intercession is the medicine and the scalpel for the Great Physician who alone can heal, the intercessor on his knees is the channel for God's healing love to a broken world."

There are other chapters which deal with our enemy and the necessity to be delivered from his clutches. Throughout the book Erwin Prange ably illustrates with personal anecdotes of both successes and failures in his

growing ministry of intercession. One cannot but be amazed and excited at the possibilities and the power of God available to those who would truly seek to serve God as an intercessor. However, we are shown very clearly, by the author, that there is a price to pay, the price of sharing in Christ's sufferings and the crucifixion of self. In the last half of the book we find out what intercession really means and the part that faith plays. In chapter six we read, "True prayer and real intercession are guided. They are given by God. Through the Spirit, His will is seeking a concrete channel for expression and fulfilment," also "the intercessor is a channel for the blessings of the ascended Lord. The intercessor must be like Christ, willing to take the other's place and even to give his life." The next chapter gives us some patterns and examples of intercession from the Bible taken from some of the great Bible heroes of faith and from Christ Himself.

The final chapter points out how intercession belongs to the very heart of the Church. To those who can see the world today groping and struggling in darkness and being swallowed up by evil forces and who feel the burden for suffering humanity and all its needs, this book will be very valuable. It gives us a rare insight into the place the intercessor must take in the life of the body of Christ. Erwin Prange sends out a warning and a plea in the last chapter with these words. "The golden key to the present and the future lies in the power of intercession. Now is the time for intercession. Very soon it may be too late!"

A TIME FOR INTERCESSION is a very worthwhile book, with much valuable teaching and advice for Christians living in this day and age. I thoroughly recommend it for those desiring to go on in service to their Lord.

DAVID TRUDINGER

# notes

## VICTORIAN NEWS

At the end of July a small gathering of Lutheran Charismatics met for a time of sharing and prayer. Discussion centred around the importance of maintaining proper relationships with pastors of the district and how this could best occur in the context of the renewal. Representatives from several areas in Victoria attended the meeting.

## SERVANTS OF CHRIST MOVE

For some time Servants of Christ Community have contemplated the possibility of moving the 102 Gawler Place centre out into the suburbs. It seems the time has arrived and negotiations are currently taking place for the lease of a former Salvation Army premises at Torrens Road, Renown Park. Further news soon.....

## SPIRIT IN LIFE SEMINARS

The next series of Spirit in Life Seminars are commencing in Adelaide in October. For further information contact Dave Trudinger, 24 Gilbert Road, Somerton Park, S.A. 5044 or Phone 46 3398.

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Teacher, United Methodist Church Pastor. from U.S.A.

#### ACCOMMODATION

Accommodation has been arranged for over 3,000 delegates. Further arrangements have been made with a number of hotels and motels in the area. Because of the size of this Conference, a good deal of accommodation is some distance from the Conference venue, thus necessitating some travelling.

A flexible system of accommodation has been arranged, catering for different budgets, needs and tastes.

#### PROGRAMME

Sunday, January 14

2.30-4.00 p.m.

Evening

**OPENING RALLY.** On the forecourt of The Sydney Opera House.

**RALLIES.** The various Denominations supporting this Ecumenical Conference will be holding rallies in and around Sydney, in conjunction with local churches and communities.

Monday, January 15, Tuesday, January 16

Thursday, January 18, Friday, January 19

Morning and Afternoon

Afternoon

Evening

**TEACHING SESSIONS AND WORKSHOPS,** at The R.A.S. Sydney Showground.

Featuring the various Conference Speakers. **RALLIES** will be held each evening at The R.A.S. Sydney Showground, to bring ALL Delegates together in a time of worship and celebration.

Wednesday, January 17

Morning and Afternoon

Evening

**DENOMINATIONAL WORKSHOPS AND SERVICES.**

**DENOMINATIONAL RALLIES.** In and around Sydney.

**PLEASE NOTE** that the rallies are open to the public. ALL are welcome to attend.

#### REGISTRATION

- **ADMISSION TO THE DAILY WORKSHOPS AND CHILDREN'S MINISTRY IS OPEN TO REGISTERED DELEGATES ONLY.**

- **Registrations will close on Monday, 4th December.**

People who cannot attend the whole Conference may register for the days on which they can attend.

**Special Note:** This offer is not available with accommodation. Accommodation must be booked for the full week, and booked before the 4th December, 1978.

#### REGISTRATION FEE

	DAILY RATE	FULL RATE
Single person	\$6.00	\$30.00
Married Couples	\$11.00	\$55.00
Families (school children only)	\$15.00	\$75.00
Pensioners, Students and Children	\$3.00	\$15.00

(NOTE: These figures are Registration Fee only and do NOT include accommodation.)

#### FURTHER INFORMATION

Additional information, posters and brochures may be obtained by writing to:  
The Conference Secretary,  
P.O. Box 63,  
WAVERLEY, N.S.W. 2024.  
Or Telephone: (02) 387 3433.



