

# *fellow workers* **fellow workers**

News from around the Presbyterian Church of Victoria

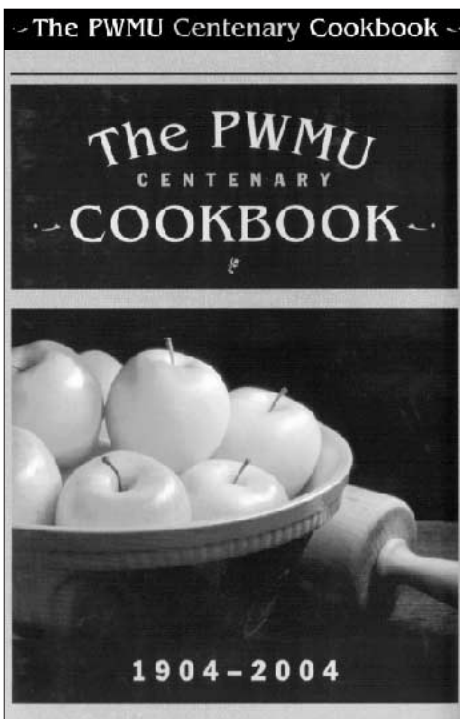
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*Please Note: All items of news and articles of interest can be send to: 'fellow workers' PO Box 375, Kilsyth, 3137, Fax: (03) 9723 9685, Email: austpres@bigpond.net.au.*

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To order, phone:  
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## “God is nice and He likes you.”

I came by this delightfully comic understatement about God's loving character while reading one of my daughter's Adrian Plass books. I reflected later on whether many Christians actually do believe that God does love them, and by this I mean personally, not just as seeing themselves as a mere cell within the grand but amorphous global body of Christ throughout of all the ages.

Intellectually, I'm sure few Christians would disagree with the concept of a loving God – even some unbelievers entertain a grossly underdone ideal about a God of love whom they don't worship but who, they confidently believe, will accept them into His heaven anyway. But I ask, “Do you, as one who claims to be a child of God, have a sense of Him loving you?” – a working, day-to-day, subjective certainty that God watches over you jealously, that you are the apple of His eye (that He only has eyes for you), a “touch me and you'll have my Dad to answer to” kind of understanding of His love, that it is as if there is no-one else who can even get His attention.

Now, I wouldn't like you to think that I've necessarily got that grasp of God's love for me, but I'm working on getting it, because it's a fact and God has tried so very hard to convey it to all His children. Question is, do we take Him at His word? If so, then there'll be a marvellous sense of God's overriding presence with us and that will enable us to exercise a robust trust in Him, no matter what might come our way. This is the kind of security of mind and body we earthly parents try to wrap our children in so they might remain untouched by any of this world's unpleasantness and grow up unscarred or even bruised by its lurking evils. Of

course, no parents can ever protect their children from everything of this kind but we nevertheless strive to do so and then help them through the times when we can't manage it. Our understanding and experience of love has been largely shaped by the relationship we had with our own parents and, it's all too true that even the most loving parents are flawed though even the worst get some things right. Can it possibly be true that a relationship with our heavenly Father could be different? Stick with me for a moment.

‘For God so loved the world that He gave His only Son, that everyone who believes in Him will not perish but have eternal life.’ [Jn.3:16-NLT] Did you just switch off? As good as it is, the great, one verse evangelistic throwaway can do that to you. For me, the words “world” and “everyone” that make the picture a little less than personal. Of course, God wants you to hear, “for I love you so much...”. Jesus, as that only Son whom God gave, makes it clearer that the Father's love for you brought Him - the Son of His love - to search for you, find you, and bring you back to God [Lu.15:3-7]. Now life is tough and getting tougher, but we shouldn't regard that God leaves His children at the mercy of sin, the world and the devil between the entering of faith and the “welcome” we will hear when we arrive home to our loving God's embrace. The Father's love is now more a part of us than each breath we take [Rm.8:38 & 39] and He's got every one of your life's situations covered. “God is nice and He likes you” only fails in its understatement of the Love that has left nothing to chance where your present and eternal life is concerned.

*In His love,  
Andrew Venn*

# APWM's growing team *By Rev. Philip Burns*

It's often said that statistics alone don't tell the whole story and that's true. I'm constantly amazed at the amount of data that statisticians collect these days from AFL matches, and while the statistics themselves don't lie about a player (like how many times he actually touched the ball), the statistics alone cannot measure how important a player is to a team. When it comes to churches – even in our own denomination – there are statistics galore flying around at this time of year as Sessions and Presbyteries fill in their annual Statistical Returns. When these are completed and everything tabulated, it must be said that the statistics alone cannot measure what God is doing amongst us. Many aspects of spiritual growth are not numerical and cannot be put into a statistic of any kind. Having said all that, I am also aware that sometimes denominational statistics can help us to become aware of something that we may not have seen before – even something that God is doing!

As Convener of APWM Victoria, it is my privilege and pleasure to handle enquiries from people who are considering serving the Lord as missionaries both here in Australia and overseas. And it is also my privilege and pleasure to note – and to tell you via this article – that the number of

enquiries and eventual applications for missionary service is growing (contrary to the trend towards decline in numbers attending and belonging to our churches)! Of particular interest in recent months has been the rise of the 'second generation' group of missionaries – that is, young people who have grown up on the mission field where their parents have been missionaries, who are now wanting to serve as missionaries themselves. In the last year or two, David Pearce (third son of Len and Wendy) was the first to apply, be interviewed, approved and sent out to Africa with Mission Aviation Fellowship. He has since been joined by Paul and Janae Denness (Paul is the son of Ian and Dorcas) also serving with MAF in Ramingining, Northern Territory, and now Paul, Anthea and Jeremy Pearce (Paul is the second son of Len and Wendy) who have also recently been approved to serve in the Middle East with Pioneers. This is exciting stuff! When you consider also that our missionary team has been added to in recent years by Joy Hill, Andrew, Fleur and Mitchell Letcher, and Sue Poynter there is cause for deducing that our missionary team – thanks be to God – is growing numerically with the next generation! In fact, the statistics are that the PCV now has 25 missionary units (includ-

ing singles and marrieds) out on the field – 38 adults and 15 children!! With other applications pending from some others who are seriously considering service and others who are already out of the field but who want to come under the APWM 'umbrella' – this is surely a good thing. From my contact with the APWM Federal Office and Conveners in other States, it seems that this growth has not been limited to our State. Numerous applications have also been lodged with APWM Committees in Queensland, New South Wales and Western Australia adding to the overall mission of the PCA in many parts of the world.

No, statistics don't tell the whole story and they don't tell of all that God is doing among us by His Spirit, but they do serve as a reminder that within our church there are those who are not only hearing the call that Isaiah heard, 'Whom shall I send and who will go for us?', but they are also responding as Isaiah did, 'Here am I, send me! (Isaiah 6:8). May there be many more who hear and volunteer the same!

*Information concerning any of our APWM missionaries is available from the Convener on 5561 7899 or [pjburns@dodo.net.au](mailto:pjburns@dodo.net.au)*

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# Hall's Gap 2004 *By Roslyn Brown*

*Our huge expectations of Ministers' Family Camp 2004 were amply fulfilled.*

It rained every day, sometimes gently, sometimes wildly, and scarcely a complaint was heard. The solidarity amongst the young people was strengthened by their discussion of the ten best, and worst, things about being a pastor's kid. Top of the worst list, was "lack of money". Amongst the best things were, "having your questions answered", "always having a church family", and "going to Ministers' Family Camp".

We always look forward to catching up with our friends who are too busy, like us, to communicate with during the year. We hoped to be able to catch up with everyone, but with 216 or so of us, we faced reality. Whether it was over a cuppa, in our prayer groups, doing kitchen duties, walking together or enjoying extended meal-

times, we shared our lives and our Lord. Perhaps it was just the circles I moved in, but there seemed to be fewer heart wrenching stories this year, than there have been some previous years. In fact, we had three cancer survivors with us, who are all doing extremely well. God has certainly answered the prayers for healing in Presbyterian circles.

We looked forward to comfortable accommodation and nourishing meals. The meals were certainly so, and whilst most of us enjoyed warm rooms and satisfying hot showers, despite the breaking down of a pump. A number of older couples without families stayed offsite, and valued the cosy nights and breakfasts together.

We were hoping there may be no sickness, but it was not to be. Stawell hospital saw a steady stream of campers, due to a nasty vomiting bug. Amongst those affected was our youngest camper, little Tom Vines.

Some of us had misgivings about the value of this year's topic, "Surviving as a Family", as many of us have thought and prayed and felt fairly well equipped to do what we could, to keep our families intact, in the midst of modern, stressful manse family life. Yet there was something for each of us to put into practice in our marriages, and wider family life.

Dr Monty Barker, an eminent Scottish psychiatrist, accompanied by his wife Rosemary, was very helpful as he shared his deep, Godly wisdom. He drew on years of successful experience and faced questions from Sudanese, Egyptian and home schooling backgrounds.

He drew out a number of points from biblical stories. Using as the key text Ephesians Chapter 5 showing that the role of church family members is being there to help young people, other than their own. Dr Barker even gave us married couples homework to do before each morning session! It got us talking to our spouses about

things that needed to be talked about. And we had the time to do it! No excuses!

Now, Presbyterians are renowned as traditionalists, and so we had the traditional soccer match in the mud. But it was only youngsters who played! As one young person put it, "The young folk are more traditional than the old folk!" And of course there was the tradition of singing lots of new songs, old songs and kids' songs very enthusiastically, accompanied by rotating

groups of able musicians, and led by two inspiring wives.

Traditions of the concert are changing: the ever-entertaining MC combination of Toni and Peter Orchard told, "What do you get?" jokes this year, rather than knock knock jokes, and the star attraction of Con the Fruiterer has been succeeded by the great "Houdidn't?" or is that "Whodini?" Mention must also be made of "The Visit to the Dentist", superbly presented by

young Daniel Carner.

We were blessed to have a sizeable number of new faces this year, from America, Germany, from interstate and college, and friends to help with the children's program. Xavier the trainee seeing eye dog was extremely popular. Even the shyest of children discovered that they could make friends.

"What is the value of the PCV Ministers' Family Camp?" As has been said before, "Incalculable benefit!"

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## around the presbyteries

### ballarat

**B**allarat North congregation held the latest in a long series of 'Answers in Genesis' outreach events on Sundays in May/June. The latest in along series of outreach meals was held by Ballarat West recently. The speaker was the Rev. Phillip Burns from Warrnambool who delivered a most helpful and enlightening message, 50 people attended with nearly a third coming from a non-Christian background.

### benalla

**T**he Presbytery of Benalla has appointed the Rev. Frank Savage to the Numurkah Regional parish from 1st September. Mr. Savage is from the PCNSW and most recently the Trundle-Tullamore-Tottenham charge.

### bendigo

**T**he Rochester charge recently forwarded \$600 to Colin M'Bawa following a recent missionary focus in the church. Its minister, Rev. Chris Perona was involved in hosting a lunch time B-B-Q for students at Rochester Secondary College. Over 140 students attended the event which formed part of the son-going ministry that Mr. Perona has in the school as part of his work as Chaplain there.

### flinders

**O**n the 11 July the Presbytery organised a new special interest congregation, the members of which are drawn from the local Samoan community. The church will meet at the Cranbourne building and the Moderator is the Rev. Bob Carner. On the 25 July the Presbytery commissioned the Rev. Michael Wharton to serve for three years part-time at Mordialloc. Frankston is moving ahead with a positive outlook. Around currently 25-30 attend worship

services under the leadership of Rev John Rickard, the Interim-Moderator.

### geelong

**S**t. George's congregation in Geelong is hosting a series of elders training events under the guidance of the Rev. Graeme Weber. The sessions have been opened to the other charges of the Presbytery.

### gippsland

**T**he Morewell congregation has been enjoying a period of modest increase in attendance. Its minister, the Rev. Bob Boan is active in Chaplaincy work at the La Trobe Regional Hospital, where he takes every opportunity to distribute the *Challenge* evangelical newspaper, which is seldom refused by those he gives it to. The Presbytery recently appointed the Rev. Geoff Spedding as Moderator of the Leongatha HMS. Mr. Spedding (along with others) regularly supplies the pulpit there as well as at Sale. Prayer is asked for a long-term home for the Bairnsdale congregation.

### kilnoorat

**T**he Camperdown-Terang congregation is rejoicing in a steady stream of visitors who are staying to become part of its life and witness. Much important work has been done to maintain and update congregational properties, to help further potential for future growth.

### maroondah

**A**fter months of prayerful consideration, the congregation at Glen Waverley/Knoxfield has decided to close down, holding its last service on July 25th. Since the start of the year Heathmont has begun to push forward, with 8 new members being added to the roll and two special training days held to

equip the Lord's people to reach others for Jesus Christ.

### melbourne east

**C**aulfield-Elwood along with Burwood Community PC and South Yarra held a Winter Family Camp at Yarra Junction from 5-7 July. The speaker was the Home Missionary of Warburton (and Bob Dylan fan), Mr. Tony Archer, with messages coming from 1 Corinthians.

### melbourne north

**M**embers of the Templestowe (Westminster Community) Home Mission Station are regularly involved in street evangelism at various railway stations around the inner urban area. They use the *Challenge* evangelical newspaper as well as other evangelistic materials they have developed themselves.

### melbourne west

**A**ttendances at Wyndham are steadily rising, with new people regularly visiting and staying. Major efforts are being made by the Home Missionary Mr Shane Cassidy to raise the profile of the church and much earnest prayer is being offered up for God's blessing on the work.

### staff changes

**M**rs Hilary Heron retired on 31 July 2004. She had worked as a book keeper for the Trusts Corporation for over 13 years. On her departure she was thanked for her efforts over the time she worked in the PCV Church Office.

On 21 June Mr John Vandenberg started work in the office as Assistant Accountant. John is a qualified accountant and he has taken over the responsibilities which Hilary held and will be assisting Mr Michael Ellison PCV Office Manager in various accounting and financial matters.

# from the churches

## scots (melbourne)

**M**r Brian Darnton BAYSTON, Camberwell, Vic. Received the O.A.M (MEDAL OF THE ORDER OF AUSTRALIA) for service to the community through a range of religious and educational organisations, particularly the Presbyterian Church of Victoria. Mr Bayston has served as an Elder in the Presbyterian Church of Victoria since 1958 and was Moderator of the General Assembly of Presbyterian Church of Victoria in 1999. He has served as the Law Agent of the Victorian Assembly since 1974. Mr Bayston was a Member of the Board of the Australian Evangelical Alliance, 1957-2003 (serving a term as

Chairman) and as Secretary of the Executive, of the World Evangelical Fellowship, 1974-1986. He has served as a Member of the Bible College of Victoria since 1987.



Brian Bayston

## heathmont

**T**he members of the Heathmont congregation were encouraged on the 4th July when State Moderator Rev. Peter Orchard and his wife Toni attended the morning's service. Peter, in his greetings at the beginning of the service, shared the five characteristics he has observed are true of all successful churches. These were a worshipful church, a praying church (corporately and individually), a Bible reading church, a loving church, and a church that reaches out.

Peter's sermon, titled "Seeing Christ in the Old Testament", was taken from Psalm 24, where he showed us Christ was the center, not only of this Psalm but also of God's purposes throughout history and especially now for each individual believer and congregation.

After the service, during our morning tea, Toni shared with us her experiences of Cambodia earlier this year when they stayed with missionaries David and Lalit Clarke, and Ros Gill. We were excited to hear how God is working in Cambodia and we gained a better understanding of some of the social conditions that exist there.

## malvern, 50 year celebration

**T**he Linda Club of the Malvern Presbyterian Church originated in April 1954 when a small group of the original Presbyterian Girls Fellowship members continued meeting once a month and decided to work for a definite cause. The Presbyterian Babies Home for young children was selected. The home was called Linda, thus the club derived its name.

As the membership grew and a varied syllabus was arranged, i.e. speakers, demonstrations, musical evenings, etc., the club remained united in their desire to help underprivileged children. Some time after the Church union we began working for Sutherland Homes, and later the Berry Street Home of Victoria.

Funds have been raised through a variety of means, and donations have been directed to many organisations, e.g. Dr Kath McKenzie in Korea, Leprosy Mission, South Richmond Kinder, Blind, Legacy, Alfred Hospital to mention some. Christmas gifts are brought to the annual meeting in November and the Salvation Army distributes the gifts to needy families.

A lunch attended by past and present members was held on April 28th to celebrate 50 years of devoted service. Seven original members were present and all enjoyed a happy reunion.

## south yarra turns 150

**O**ver the weekend of the 3/4 July South Yarra marked its 150th anniversary.

On Saturday nearly a hundred members, adherents and friends gathered to reflect on the history of the congregation through consideration of a beautiful memorial quilt worked by 20 women of the church. An historical overview was presented by Rev.

Stuart Bonnington, AS FOR ME AND MY HOUSE, WE WILL SERVE THE LORD, that is being prepared. The first part of which covering the years 1854-1904 was launched by the Moderator, Rev. Peter Orchard.

On Sunday a special communion service at which the Moderator-General, the Rt. Rev Jack Knapp preached. This was followed by a very joyful congregational lunch at which a most impressive cake in the shape of the Church building was cut to the special delight of the many children present! At night, the guest preacher was Rev. Dr. Douglas Milne, who served as Interim-Moderator of South Yarra from 1981 to 1999.

## new manse for woori yallock

**T**he congregation at Woori Yallock has recently built a new manse on the same property as the church, at 1363 Healesville Road, Woori Yallock. Thanks to the generosity and sacrifice of many in the congregation who have helped in numerous ways. Special thanks go to elder Mr Kris Meijer who took on the arduous responsibility of being owner/builder.

The manse has been designed to be energy efficient and well-suited to manse life. It is also situated to take advantage of the wonderful views that many homes in Woori Yallock are also privileged to enjoy.

The present minister, the Rev David Brown, and his family are very much enjoying living and working in the new home and office, which afford good opportunities for hospitality.

When next you drive through the beautiful Upper Yarra Valley, do call in, and share with us for a little while some of the gracious provision our Lord has provided in this part of His world.

*SYPC is hosting*

**INTRODUCING GOD**

*with Dominic Steele.*

**Saturday 14 August 2004**

*Registration from 9:30 am*

*Two sessions with Dominic Steele*

*10:00 am - 12:30 pm - \$10 entry.*

*For further information*

*ring Stuart Bonnington on: 9867 4637;*

*email: melbonn@bigpond.com*