

# *fellow workers*

News from around the Presbyterian Church of Victoria

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

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## contribute

Your contributions to *fellow workers* are welcome! The deadline for contributions to the next issue is **July 9th**. Photographs should be digital and sent by email if possible.

## enhancing our heritage for Christ

There is a noticeable change taking place in our church. At the time of Union, the call was predominantly to conserve our rich heritage of Truth and the Presbyterian tradition of worship and practice. The new emphasis is on evangelism. It is this that is changing our church. It is not that we Presbyterians have ever denied the great commission, rather, that we have not made it such an obvious priority.

Outside our denomination, churches we would consider less orthodox have been taking the lead and their vigorous evangelistic activity has contributed to significant growth. While we have traditionally confined our witness to the few walls of the church, one to one personal witnessing in the community has become commonplace, particularly in charismatic churches.

Within our denomination, the stimulus has largely come from the Home Missions Committee (HMC) which, funded by the Scots Church Property Trust, has launched new initiatives in church planting and personal witnessing. While not always considered by some to be in tandem with presbyteries, the programs of the HMC seek to place outreach at the core of the agenda.

Our recent Commission of Assembly received a report that has the potential to reshape the future character of the church and re-arrange our priorities around outreach. The Assembly is being asked to "consider the personal and financial resources throughout the state so that Gospel ministry may be fur-

thered". A key assumption is that the Lord Jesus has commanded us to '**make disciples of all nations**' [Matt 28:19]. The task of the Assembly is to engage with this commission, and the role of the Strategy Committee is to facilitate the whole of the PCV's engagement in "making disciples". Further, the report states "The goal cannot be that the PCV should survive or grow. The goal must be that the gospel of Jesus is preached and people become disciples of Jesus".

If the Assembly commits to a thorough revision of the role of evangelism in the life of our church, significant changes must be considered. Ministers who traditionally have proclaimed the Gospel from pulpits are being challenged to re-think the role of the pulpit as the place of prime proclamation. As congregations are being encouraged to take up ministry in their own right, the role of the Ministry of Word and Sacrament is under critical review. Some ministers are taking courses in evangelism so as not to be left behind when strategies are being discussed and ministerial redundancy is a real issue.

Worship practices are changing. Rather than accommodate the interests of traditional and often older worshippers, services are now designed to appeal to new converts who have had no previous background in worship let alone in traditional Presbyterian worship.

Attitudes towards property are altering, too. Buildings once considered and dedicated "to the Glory of God" are now thought of as obstacles to outreach. Either they are being altered to become "conversationally friendly environments"

*Continued next page*

or sold off to generate new capital for evangelistic enterprises. If expensive preservation is required then it is often done with great reluctance and under duress from heritage groups. Any thought of conservation of property or finances is often accompanied by opposing concerns about conversion of the unconverted.

Such a significant change in our church produces resistance, but without

reason. Surely the closing commission of our Lord must be our priority. If indeed our Presbyterian heritage is Bible-based service for our Saviour, particularly service to the unsaved, then rather than our heritage being lost, it can only be enhanced when we solve the tension and see the dynamic relationship between ministry of Word and Sacrament. The key issue will be our will-

ingness to accept the challenge and submit to the reshaping required.

*Graeme Weber*

*Graeme is the minister of St. George's Geelong and the Moderator Designate of the PCV. Graeme will take up Moderatorial duties from the commencement of the 2005 General Assembly in October which is to meet at Warrnambool. Ed.*

## moderator's visit to Dehra Dun

In case you don't know where Dehra Dun is, it is about 260 km north of New Delhi in India in the foothills of the Himalayas. We were warned that the weather was going to be cool, but the day we went to visit the old hill resort of Mussourie it snowed and we shivered!

In mid-January Mairi and I went to Dehra Dun because John and Lynette Ellis work at the Presbyterian Theological Seminary. It was started in 1969 at Roorkee where there had been a long established Presbyterian mission work. When the Presbyterian Church USA pulled out of direct mission involvement, the seminary was able to buy the property it owned in Dehra Dun. Since then, further buildings have been erected to provide residences, office accommodation, and an academic centre.

About 80 students presently are enrolled in three streams – a pre-theology year, a three year BTh course, and a three year MDiv course for those with a BTh degree or equivalent. I took part in lecturing to the students in courses on the books of Genesis and Deuteronomy, and also in the course on the Hebrew text of the book of Amos. The students come from various parts of India and from neighbouring countries such as Bhutan and Nepal. However, English is the medium used in the seminary, and we were very pleased with the students'

competence in it.

Mairi's brother and sister-in-law, Murdoch and Maurine Murchison, joined us on our visit and they were able to participate in seminary activities as well. Both Mairi and Maurine took part in the womens' meetings and spoke, and also twice visited a Christian craft centre set up to provide skills for Christian women. With Lynette, we were also able to visit a Christian orphanage with almost 400 children. Preparation was underway for the evening meal, with 100 kilos of chicken being cut up! This was a special meal to celebrate with all those who had a birthday during that month.

John and Lynette have numerous roles. John lectures in a variety of courses and is academic dean. He also, at the moment, pastors the English service on Sunday morning called the Good Shepherd Fellowship. Lynette with her nursing background is the "medico", with a stream of students coming with all their winter ailments. Both also have an important counselling role, and students are constantly coming to their flat.

Every morning a chapel service is held at 10 am, at which an exposition of Scripture is given. Four times I preached at chapel. Twice we heard students giving their testimonies. Afterwards everyone goes out the main courtyard and drinks Indian tea (chai). Then announcements are made and a student reads out the main items from the newspaper. On Sundays, in addition to the morning English service and the other English congregation (Covenant Presbyterian Church meeting at 5 pm), various other services are held on the campus in languages such as Hindi and Nepali.

Dehra Dun is a city of about half a million, and the Christian community is small. However, the seminary has a real vision for Gospel outreach, and seeks to prepare men and women for evangelical

ministry. Each Friday afternoon the students go out on evangelistic activities, so that they are not only studying in an academic way but also sharing in ministry training.

We found a warm spirituality among staff and students. The seminary depends on staff from overseas – from the USA, the Netherlands, Germany, and Australia. Dr and Mrs George Kroeze from Grand Rapids, Michigan, were on their third visit (having just been helping in the Ukraine as well!).

Having been at PTS, we know now first hand how John and Lynette's talents and experience are being utilized. It was very clear how all at the seminary regarded their participation so highly. PTS at Dehra Dun is an unique seminary in the Indian scene, for it is both Presbyterian and committed to Reformed theology. It is supported by various churches in India and overseas and we are very pleased that we Presbyterians in Australia have a share in its ministry.

The only other congregation we were able to visit was Faith Presbyterian Church in New Delhi, a Hindi speaking congregation that recently split into four sections in order create greater evangelistic opportunities.

A short visit to a country doesn't allow for a fully balanced assessment. The crowds of people around all the time reminded us of the massive population in India and the need for Christian outreach. This must take place in a variety of different ways, ways that are appropriate in the Indian cultural setting. Thank God for the Ellises and other expatriate Christians who are giving themselves willingly and sacrificially to help Indian Christians prepare nationals for Gospel ministry!

*Allan Harman  
State Moderator*



*Downtown Dehra Dun*

# from the far off himalayas

John and Lynette Ellis

India! Land of kings, untouchables, elephants, tigers, and flea bitten staggering dogs. Always colourful, always smelly, always interesting. John and Lynette Ellis live and work at Presbyterian Theological Seminary. The location is Dehra Dun, a sprawling city of a million people, less polluted than some, nestling at the edge of the foot hills of the Himalayan mountains.

PTS itself is near the center of town on four acres of ground with a wall around and a guard at the gate. There are trees, gardens, and a grassed area that contrasts with the barren dirt of the city. Walking across to classes John can lift up his eyes to the almost vertical blue wall and sharp ridges of hills and enjoy the majesty and beauty. In the winter we are always looking to see whether there is snow along the top.

The seminary exists to train men for pastoral work and men and women for Christian ministry in general. As our name indicates, we are a Presbyterian school, and teach on that basis. Not all our students are of the same persuasion when they come, but along the way almost all become committed to the doctrines of grace. We do not always have the same success in relation to the doctrine of infant baptism and matters of church government.

There are 85 students, five resident teachers, and four administrators. With their families we are about 130 men, women and children in residence. There are three or four men who come in to teach part time. Sometimes, when John and Lynette are weary, they remind themselves of the purpose of the quality of our better graduates. Not all our students do as well as we might like, but its very encouraging to see maturity, knowledge and ministry skills developing in most of our students as the few short years go by. Graduation each year is a very satisfying time. And tearful, as young people whom we have grown to love, go on their way.

John teaches at present 10 classes per week: Greek grammar and translation; patriarch studies (Biblical theology and exegesis on Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob), and counseling. He is also academic dean, which means that he assists the faculty with planning and initiatives on academic matters. He has no formal training in education, and feels the lack of it. None of the teaching staff have a background in education. However, often we all think we know, and debate about policy then becomes vigorous.

John also pastors an English language congregation and this also keeps him and

Lynette busy. Probably too much so, for both find themselves quite weary at times. Most of the readers of this paper will understand something of the routines of sermon preparation (John preaches 2 Sundays out of 3), planning the services, and arranging the visitation and pastoral care program. Lynette shares in church life, guiding the music team, caring for visitors to the services, photocopying and a host of other things. About 60 of the 100 people who come regularly, or from time to time, are college and high school students. Our name is Good Shepherd Fellowship and that conveys something of the feel we want the congregation to have.

Lynette's main task is medical, dealing with minor illnesses of staff and students and their families. Sometimes major problems occur, ulcers, hepatitis A, fevers and the like. Lynette guides and counsels the families concerned in support of the local doctors. This medical ministry seems to lead into counselling, and Lyn has a significant ministry of personal encouragement and guidance to all sorts of people on campus. If you have discussed your bowel movements with someone, all shame is gone, and you are ready to talk about anything! Lyn also works in the library a few hours per week.

## pyv senior camp theme out of this world

Drawing from the James' letter and with illustrations from the theme of Peter Pan in the film *Leaving Neverland*, Tony Bird spoke on how God is calling us to stop living in "Neverland" where children never grow up and, instead, become mature so that we can live our lives God's way. He explained that such maturity included not showing favouritism, persevering through trials, watching what we say with regard to boasting and being **'quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to anger'** [Jas.1:19]. On Sunday Paul Drew gave a mission presentation based on his recent trip overseas. These talks were interspersed with singing, discussion groups and other fun activities, which included trips to the 12 Apostles, Loch Ard Gorge and Port Campbell. Many campers enjoyed endless

games of round-the-world table tennis, an indoor(!) bonfire and a party on the final night. People came from all of Victoria to join in the fun and a great time was had by all. By the time you read this, our newest camp, Outlook, will have come and gone. Aimed at 21-35 year olds who are looking at how they can use their gifts to serve God, whether it be through study, missions, ministry or music etc, talks will be the only set program with the venue – Shiloh Ranch at Grantville – offering plenty to do by way of activities. Also, coming up is PYV's annual Social which is being held in Ballarat this year with the theme of "A Night with the Stars". John Stasse, the minister at Ballarat West, will be delivering a short talk during the night before we put on our dancing shoes to dance the night away. If dancing is not your thing, don't worry, there will be plenty of time to

chat and catch up with friends. Ballarat West Presbyterian are known for their ability to put on a good night so this year's Social should be a big hit and a great night for all. Check out [pyv.org.au](http://pyv.org.au) for more details. See below for details of upcoming events.

Michelle Davidson  
PYV State Council member

### PYV upcoming events

**14 May** – Social – 7:30pm, Ballarat North Presbyterian Church, \$8

**11 June** – Volleyball – 1pm, Ashburton Pool & Rec Centre. Mixed Comp (6 a side) & Men's Competition (4 per side) \$7 players, \$2 spectators, team entry online.

**23 July** – Fuelled Training Day #1 at Heathmont Presbyterian Church. This is for everyone, not just youth!

## drawing christians together

**F**estival Victoria with Franklin Graham, held in Telstra Dome, March 18th-20th, drew an attendance of 90,000 people over the three days and resulted in more than 6,000 enquirers being counselled for salvation or encouraged in recommitment. More than 9,000 people from 820 churches received training in evangelism through the Christian Life and Witness Classes which preceded the main event, while important and ongoing relationships were forged between evangelical Christians from all the churches in Melbourne and beyond. It was a massive undertaking, overseen by Paul Molyneux who, as an associate pastor at Richmond AOG, had previously directed a number of large Christian youth rallies at Rod Laver and Vodaphone Arenas.

Well known Christian bands and artists from Australia and the USA provided the music, with an emphasis on reaching out to youth. Testimonies were given by well known Australians, most notably the Governor General, Major General Michael Jeffery. Both musical items and testimonies, however, were lead-up items to the preaching of the Gospel by evangelist Franklin Graham.

In each of his messages, Mr Graham emphasised the magnitude of human sin and our consequent separation from God, calling for repentance and faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour as the only way to receive God's salvation and His gift of eternal life. Festival Victoria has brought

much blessing and encouragement to the church in Victoria as many have been drawn to faith in Christ while believers have been enriched.

*Bob Thomas*  
*Moderator General*

## another view

**H**aving never participated in such events before, it was with a sense of anticipation that I became involved with Festival Victoria.

Many things could be said about Festival Victoria. My involvement started some months ago with a telephone call. It gradually developed as I participated with many other Christians in various meetings involved with the organizing as I attended pastors' breakfasts and various teaching programs.

Along the way I was able to mix with some wonderful Christians from whom I personally received great blessing and encouragement and with some of these people I have been able to form enduring friendships. Perhaps the person I have come to admire most is John Cass of the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association. His commitment to the Gospel was quite breathtaking, as John and his family moved from the USA to live in Tasmania for some months. John showed in a very real way what commitment was!

The big event arrived and was it big, though certainly not to the extent of earlier crusades, which I believe is a reflection of the secular world we live in today and the hardness of people's hearts. But it was big with over 92,000 people attending four

separate events at the Dome. During these events my involvement certainly took on a bigger role, for I was one of the team that got people into the stadium. It was quite daunting and, at times, very tiring. But my tiredness was overcome by the joy in seeing the many people (over 6200) coming forward as Franklin Graham made his appeal to people to turn back to God and confess their faith in Jesus as their Lord and Saviour. Again, being part of the team that had the responsibility of ensuring those who came forward were brought into contact with trained counsellors, I leave it to you to think about how my heart sang with joy as I saw men and women, boys and girls, people of all nations coming forward to confess Jesus as their Lord and Saviour. A mighty work of the Spirit of God and to God be the glory!

My ongoing involvement will see me working with a team that has the responsibility of making sure all of the 6200 plus people are brought into contact with ministers, pastors and churches. Festival Victoria, as with previous events, wants to ensure that this group of people, consisting of those who have either rededicated/dedicated their lives to Christ are nurtured and made fit for the work of the kingdom.

As we all know, the harvest is great and the workers are few, and I believe all this will lead to some magnificent blessings in our churches. So do not be surprised if your church receives a phone call asking that someone be followed up. Goodness, it could be someone for whom you have been praying for years.

*Trevor Cox*

## news from the general office

**F**rom July this year the General Office is offering to provide a payroll service to parishes. For those parishes who wish to participate, the General Office will make the monthly payments to ministers relating to their remuneration package. This includes payments for stipend, non-cash benefits, housing allowance and superannuation. The General Office will calculate and deduct the relevant tax from stipends and remit to the Tax Office. At the end of the financial year the Payment Summaries and tax reconciliations will be processed in order to meet the requirement of the Australian Tax Office. Provision will be made for ministers to have any car loan repayments paid automatically to the Trusts Corporation. The parish will remit one monthly amount to the General Office by direct debit to cover the total payment.

This service will significantly reduce the administration and compliance burden on local treasurers. It is entirely optional and there is no compulsion to change the current payment proce-

dures if the parish does not wish to. Details of the procedures are being mailed to treasurers in April.

The General Office is currently investigating the possibility of arranging for cost effective financing and fleet management of motor vehicles used by the church. Although there are fewer concessions available in Victoria than some other states, it is anticipated that significant benefits can be achieved by taking advantage of the fleet discounts available to non-profit organizations. Optimising the change over a given period for vehicles can also provide cost benefits. This will require some changes in the way vehicles are purchased and registered and the procedures associated with the fleet management. Participation in the system will be optional. Information will be circulated as soon as the scheme is finalized and approved.

*Michael Ellison*  
*Office Manager*

# around the presbyteries & churches

## *moe congregation celebrates its centennial*

**O**ne hundred years ago, the Presbyterians brought their distinctive form of worship to Moe. To mark the centennial of our denomination's influence in Moe and surrounding districts, the Moe Church will hold a service of thanksgiving to God for His goodness to His people on May 22nd (2005), commencing at 10:00 am, 34 Fowler Street, Moe. The preacher for the occasion will be the State Moderator, the Rev. Prof. Allan Harman. This will be followed by lunch, then reconvening in the Church building for some inspiring singing from the Hill and Dale Choir. Everyone is invited. If you have had any involvement with the various Presbyterian Churches from the Moe district, then we especially encourage you to come along. R.S.V.P. to Mr. Fred Put, Board Secretary, ph. 5127 5278, or P.O. Box 195, Moe, 3825.

(Also, 'FREE TOYS TO GOOD HOME'. The Moe Church has some toys to donate to a Sunday School or Church Playgroup. We have a wooden TOY kitchen set, comprising microwave, cupboard, sink and shelves. VGC. Speak to Jared or Cassie, ph. 5127 1296.)

## *great outcome for warburton*

**O**n Sunday February 27th Rev. Tony Archer was ordained for the ministry of Word and Sacrament and inducted into the pastoral charge of Upper Yarra (Warburton). This took place during a well-attended worship service at the Warburton church led by Rev. Mark Crabb, Moderator of the Presbytery of Maroondah and supported by Rev. Bob Carner, Director of Home Missions in Victoria, who delivered the sermon and charge. Many of those who attended the service remained afterwards for a time of warm fellowship and refreshments.

Tony, with the able support of his wife Shona, have served the Upper Yarra congregation as Home Missionary while studying for the ministry at the Presbyterian Theological College. During that time the work prospered under God as positive preaching from the Word of God was maintained, significant changes to worship services were introduced and more people participated in Bible study and prayer. Thus it became an easy matter for Presbytery to raise the status of the congregation from Home Mission Station to appointment parish in 2003 and then

to a full charge in 2004.

The spiritual leadership and preaching and pastoral ministry of Tony have been much appreciated, and despite some difficulties encountered, there is good reason to be confident of the Lord's continued blessing on Upper Yarra parish as faithfulness to Him is maintained.

*Andrew Slater*

## *wyndham: a church growing!*

**W**hen I first drove past the Presbyterian Church here at Wyndham, it looked very uninviting with its nearly three metre high wire fence all around it and gardens beds full of weeds. I remember saying to Bob Carner: Where's the next church! Well, God has a sense of humour and here I am at Wyndham. To paraphrase Bob Carner's words: "You may have to do some church planting and weeding out." I didn't realize that those words would become so literally true having just planted our fiftieth tree and mulching every garden bed on most Saturdays. I know the Bible says church planting is always hard work but I'm sure the apostle Paul didn't experience the problems I'm facing (weeds still to be pulled out). But all jokes aside, it's been a great joy for my family and to minister amongst God's people here at Wyndham. With all this hard work, both inside and outside the church, we are beginning to see real growth here. Our membership has increased by thirteen, making average attendance each Sunday now at forty people and with four baptisms and a thriving new Sunday School and Youth work on the go. As I write this article I will be meeting with the men's group tomorrow night and most of these guys do not attend church, though their wives do. So, the prayer point is that God will move the hearts of these men and get them into a serious relationship with Him. As a church we are planning to use the video series "Introducing God" to reach not only these men but any contacts we make through the Franklin Graham Festival Victoria.

Apart from visiting my own people, my ministry takes me off to the Werribee Public Hospital and local Police Station, as chaplain to both places. I am also involved in the local ministers' fraternal which endeavours to reach the City of Wyndham through combined joint programs, like an annual Christmas carols event. As if that wasn't enough, in April I will participate again in the local RSL Anzac Day memorial service.

Do I do all these things to make myself popular and appear busy? No. But they do help me to see the bigger picture of what God is doing among other churches in this area and it gives me contacts among community leaders who do not know that there is a Presbyterian church still in this area of Werribee.

I believe that this church has profited from all of these contacts and has made the congregation a little better known to the local community, with the result that we see new people appearing at our doors on a monthly basis. Whether they stay or not is up to them but at least we as a church have tried to be more inviting with our new gardens and with a more user friendly contemporary worship service.

*'...striving together for the faith of the Gospel'* [Phil 1:27].

*Shane Cassidy*

## *farewell to the bonningtons*

**A**fter nearly four years of ministry at Sth. Yarra, the Bonningtons are returning to their roots in Western Australia where Stuart will take up ministry at Fremantle Presbyterian Church (Scots') from the middle of May.

Stuart's time in the PCV was characterised by a wide range of activities as well as a full program of work within the Sth Yarra congregation which has grown and developed in a number of ways. Stuart's extra congregational activities included involvement in the TEC and at the Theological College, where he helped with the Introduction to Church History course during John Wilson's sabbatical year, and being involved with the publishing program of the Church & Nation Committee (especially in the production of *Love Rules: The Ten Commandments for the 21st Century*), and the PCV Archive.

The ministries also work in the GAA, most notably the work of the PIM which Stuart has recently become Superintendent following the retirement of Jack Knapp. Added to this was Stuart's time with the National Journal Committee as the local news (Victorian) editor – which he greatly enjoyed.

The B's would like to thank all who have taken the time to wish them well on their return to WA. They look forward to welcoming friends from the PCV should they be able to visit Perth.

From the 18th April, The Bonningtons can be reached at the manse at 6 Goy Ct. Palmyra, 6157 (08) 9319 2208 – melbonn@bigpond.com

# *painful problem receives more exposure*

## *a report on the launch of Morag Zwartz's book, Fractured Families*

**A** book launching of significance for Presbyterians, held in mid-February, was addressed by author and journalist, Morag Zwartz. Mrs. Zwartz's book, *Fractured Families*; the story of a Melbourne Church Cult, is a piece of investigative journalism that makes for painful but compelling reading.

The book centres on the lives of families and churches who have had involvement with a long-standing, unorthodox, spiritual withdrawal group, known as "The Fellowship". It deals with claims made concerning some secretive 'spiritual' activities of the group. Mrs. Zwartz's book is of special interest to Presbyterians, since leaders and members of this group continue to find house room within some Presbyterian churches. She noted at her launching, that this is in spite of the Victorian Assembly having declared its

opinion that the distinctive beliefs and practices of The Fellowship are, "inimical to the doctrine & practices of the Presbyterian Church of Victoria".

At the launching, congratulations were accorded Mrs.

Zwartz by Dr Tony Bird, lecturer in New Testament at Melbourne's Presbyterian Theological College, and by Rev Peter Corney of St Hilary's Anglican Church, Kew. Both referred to their knowledge of family upheavals resulting from activities of the fellowship group, and commended the author for her courage.

The largely sympathetic audience of over 100, included a number of luminaries of the Presbyterian Church of Victoria, ministers and elders, people whose stories are dealt with in the book, and members and ministers of other denominations. A number present professed to once having been Presbyterian members, but now holding their associations elsewhere, on account of activities outlined in the book.

This launch was a somewhat emotion charged event, partly because a number of people whose stories feature in the book were present. Several of these showed a sense of relief that their side of an unhappy story, as real people with real human feelings, is being publicly heard, warts and all.

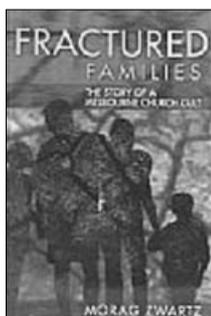
Morag Zwartz's launching remarks, conveyed her total absorption in her work. Research for the book spanned three years, involving wide documentation, and an interview cast of hundreds. The long investigation had clearly become a matter of emotional and spiritual involvement for

her. Her opening line was, "Is the Presbyterian Church too politically correct?" Her following comments centred as much on her view of the Presbyterian Church's responsibilities toward the people she describes as victims of the Fellowship, as on the Fellowship itself. In fact, many of her remarks presented a *crie de couer* on behalf of the people she describes in her book as suffering continuing pain. "Nothing less than a full, public acknowledgement of its errors and a renunciation of the same, and a genuine repentance and apology to those hundreds of Fellowship victims – nothing less than this will constitute grounds for forgiveness".

Reports are that the book is already receiving wide exposure both in the Presbyterian Church and beyond, despite alleged attempts at some levels to hinder its availability! This little book sends a brick through more than one window. Few readers will remain neutral. Yet light should be welcomed for its own sake, irrespective of whatever it may shine on. Full exposure, full light, full candour, open dealings – these are vital hallmarks of true Christian holiness and freedom.

*Neil Benfell*

*Principal, King's College, Warrnambool*



## *pwmu activities*

**T**he Presbyterian Women's Missionary Union is one of the General Assembly's longest serving mission organisations, providing a focus for women from all our Victorian churches.

Its leaders keep in constant touch with our missionaries who, in turn, look to the PWMU for financial and prayer support and encouragement. Through the PWMU, Presbyterian women have opportunity to give expression to their God-given aptitude and gifts for sympathetic, practical and organisational skills through correspondence ministries, promotion of profiles of aspiring or new missionaries, times of prayer and sharing and the collecting and dispersing of money for missions support (over \$80,000 in 2004). The PWMU is about promoting the welfare and raising awareness of our missionaries' needs so that their work is better supported.

If you do not yet have a PWMU group in your congregation, consider starting one, whether on your own or perhaps with

another congregation. Or, if you have another women's group, you could introduce a mission awareness component and utilize the expertise of the women in your congregation or district. And, don't forget to meet at times when the maximum number of women can attend.

### *calling all churches with young people!*

**P**WMU has a specific fund available to be used for, or by, young people to help them grow in their Christian faith. There may be a need for Sunday School materials, for Christian Education resources, or perhaps to help with the cost of a young person to attend a Christian youth camp who otherwise could not go. If you know of a need within your Church family, get in touch with PWMU.

For further information, please contact the PWMU Office, 1st Floor, 156 Collins Street, Melbourne 2000. Tel: (03) 9655 1405; Email: [pwmu@ozemail.com.au](mailto:pwmu@ozemail.com.au)

# looking to do our job better

commission of assembly – tuesday 29th march '05

**T**o most Presbyterians the Commission is a vague, foggy notion that is perhaps announced in parish notices before (during) worship about this time each year as a pretext for their ministers and some of their elders to go “missing” somewhere in Melbourne for a day. That, of course, is only vaguely the truth. Commission is like a kind of “left-overs” basket where everything that commissioners wouldn’t, couldn’t or didn’t want to talk about and decide on at the previous October Assembly gets held over to look at another day. Commission is that day. Like a *deja vu* of every former Commission, representative ministers and elders dribble into Assembly Hall in Collins St. nod to each other and exchange a few civilities while still recovering from the long drive (or train trip) into town and bending their minds to decide on where amongst the many empty horsehair stuffed seats they will hunker down for the next hours and, in the remaining time before the Moderator enters the Hall and the Commission formally begins, they try to reconcile themselves to the agenda before them. Like a call to arms, after singing God’s praise, hearing God’s word read by Trevor Cox, Moderator’s chaplain, and prayer given by the Moderator, Allan Harman, the commissioners become focussed on doing the work of this part of the Church of Jesus Christ.

This Commission was marked by a significant effort to enhance the way this denomination approaches the work of spreading the gospel and winning souls.

It happened, firstly, through the reception of the Strategy Committee’s report that sought approval of its interpretation of the tasks set for it at the previous

Assembly. These aspire to reaffirm our gospel aspirations, give ministers, elders and congregations inspired direction to this end through the provision of a book *Mission Minded* (look for your session’s response to that one, some time soon), re-evaluating the number and purposes of existing Assembly committees, considering the possible economy of scale through amalgamation of presbyteries (including the provision of paid administrators and “intentional moderators” – have your minister explain that one to you), the possible employment of a State Training Officer attached to the College, and two more motions seeking, and being granted, finance to enable planning for church planting through presbyteries and the Home Mission Committee and to advise congregations on how they might go about planning for their future expansion. This Committee will bring final recommendations to the Warrnambool Assembly.

The Home Missions Committee launched its plans to set up two new initiatives: Home Mission Partners – appropriately qualified individuals working as tertiary chaplains with AFES and attached to selected congregations, and its Apprenticeship Scheme – funded trial periods of two years for selected men who are considering candidacy to the PCV ministry. Such “apprentices” will get the feel of parish work prior to engaging in formal theological learning and through controlled evaluation by the host minister/mentor and the HMC, it is hoped to find those potentially best qualified for further ministry training.

Our missions work was enhanced when the APWM received endorsement of its request to appoint a Partnership Development Co-ordinator with the express purpose to facilitate financial and spiritual support for the new missionaries. With financial and human resources at the local parish level ever scarce, this position will help make the mission dollar go further through developing support teams and helping to ensure this denomination continues to send out its missionaries.

The Victorian government’s Racial and Religious Tolerance Act 2001 has made political interference in Christ’s gospel mandate a fact. The Church and Nation Committee continues to refine its approach to this legally complicated and threatening issue and this Commission supports the Committee’s desire to tackle

the problem at its core – which is essentially political. To this end, legal opinion has been sought and strategies put in place to help bring about amendment of this Act in order to enable this denomination, and evangelical Christians everywhere, to continue to freely spread the good news of new life in Christ without threat of legal action, fines or even imprisonment.

As is usual, the Trusts Corporation/Board of Investment and Finance gave a half yearly report and, this year with the applause of those present, received approval to distribute significant amounts of money (received through windfall investment gains) in support of work in Malawi, Vanuatu and Middle Easter Reformed Fellowship and, locally, \$100,000 to both St. Andrews School and Kings College Warrnambool.

The General Mission Program Committee and Maintenance of the Ministry Committee also gave their reports and received approval for the necessary expenditure that facilitates the financial support of the work of our Assembly committees and of our full time ministry members.

Finally, but not least amongst those matters considered at Commission, was the election of the Moderator designate, Rev Graeme Weber – from Geelong. Our congratulations to Graeme and best wishes to him and his wife Marilyn as they prepare for their big year. We’ll bring you more on Graeme in our next edition.

God greatly answered our prayers for the conduct and outcomes for this Commission. We give Him the praise and again put our trust in Him for this denomination’s effective service in the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Ed.

## CWCI MINISTERS’ WIVES FELLOWSHIP LIVE-IN RETREAT

Mon 23–Wed 25 May

“Cranbrook Lodge” Healesville

**THEME:** CPR – Come Prepared to Revive

**GUEST SPEAKER:** Dr Jean Graham on  
Womens Health

**COUNSELLOR:** Available during the Retreat.

**COST:** Early Bird (by Mon 30 April) \$130  
Regular \$135 - inc. all meals, washing up, linen

**ENQUIRIES OR REGISTRATION BROCHURE:**

Lorraine Phillips 9346 8044  
Toni Orchard 9889 6034

## Pews for sale

10 no. **6 seaters** - \$245/ea  
3055mmL x 955mmH x 460mmW

21 no. **4 seaters** - \$195/ea  
1830mmL x 955mmH x 460mmW



hardwood  
fair to v. good  
condition

enq. mob.  
**0422 414 942**

# off to iraq

**F**ifteen days after I moved to Darwin to start work as a full time Army Chaplain the Prime Minister, John Howard, announced that he would send another 450 troops to Iraq. The Second Cavalry Regiment, the unit to which I am posted, was told that they were to form the headquarters of the battlegroup, as well as supply a squadron of ASLAVs (Australian Light Armoured Vehicles). In a way it was no surprise when, that same day, I was tapped on the shoulder, and told that as the Chaplain for the Regiment, I would be deployed with the Regiment.

Since then, the tempo of the battlegroup's training has been at a very high rate. In a limited time-frame a great variety of elements have been brought together to deploy by air and sea. I am impressed by the way it has all come together, and I now appreciate the often quoted phrase "military precision".

This busy lead-up time turned out to be a time during which I could get to know, not only those in the 2nd Cavalry unit, but also an additional 200+ personnel who would make up the battlegroup. Coming

from all over Australia, and representing so many different areas and disciplines, my new parish/mission field fast took on a different make-up to that which I had initially expected.

Throughout the lead-up time prior to deployment, God has been very gracious to my family and me. I am greatly encouraged by the daily rate of gospel opportunities that have presented themselves. Before I commenced full-time chaplaincy, I had certain expectations regarding how often I would speak to someone about Christ and his Kingdom, but my expectations proved to be very minimalist. There are certainly many who are willing to talk about the things of God, especially as they prepare mentally to enter a war zone.

Arrangements fell into place very quickly that allowed Kaylene and the children to return to Swan Hill, our former parish. Here they can be supported by family and friends while I am away. Both accommodation and travel were made available. In addition, someone has volunteered to look after our house in Darwin while we are away. Again, God has answered our prayers beyond our expectations.

Certainly, the rest of the year will carry many challenges for us as a family. Challenges for me as I work with the Australians and the British in the Al Muthanna region of Iraq, and challenges for my family during my absence. Practically, we are ready to be separated until the end of the year, but there is no doubt that it will be a tough time emotionally for us all. We recognise that these are the costs involved with this form of ministry, and we pray that God will use our obedience for his glory.

As a family we understand that we must be a part of the 'coalition of the willing', that is, those who are willing to do all that God calls us to do. Pray with us that the glorious gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ will be made known to all who make up the Al Muthanna Task Group, and for those who are in various ways associated with it. Pray for the safety of all who are deployed, and for Kaylene and the children as they adjust to a change in family life. To God, be the glory.

Rev Martin de Pyle

## from the editor

### just a bit wrong

**F**or those of you who have tried very hard to get your emails through on our dedicated email address, but failed, please accept our apologies. It was because of one missing 's' in our address. The published email address is [fellowworkers@pcvic.org.au](mailto:fellowworkers@pcvic.org.au) – note the plural – while the website was set up to recognize the singular fellowworker. You see the problem. Now all has been set to rights and the published email address – in the plural – is right to receive your emails. It was just a bit wrong, but as far as computers are concerned – miss by an 's', miss by an alphabet.

Send your copy through to *fellow workers* at: [fellowworkers@pcvic.org.au](mailto:fellowworkers@pcvic.org.au)

### editor... who?

**O**ne of our readers (and my wife) have brought to my attention that nowhere in the *fellow workers* do I identify who I am as Editor. I did so in Vol.1 No.3 but omitted to put my name in subsequent editions, so here it is again: Editor: Andrew Venn. I am also the Convenor of the State News Committee and minister of the Heathmont congregation. To save myself a few key-strokes, I just sign myself, "Ed.", after any contribution I make to *fellow workers*. Sorry for any confusion.

### we'll take your ads... for a price

**A**t this stage, advertisements will be taken in three sizes only:

3cms x 6cms (horizontal alignment only); **\$19.95** (incl. GST)

6cms x 6cms; **\$49.90** (incl. GST)

6cms x 12cms (either vertical or horizontal alignment) **\$99.90** (incl. GST)

**And now, the small print...** Advertisers must provide their adverts in finished form in .jpg format, at minimum 600dpi. *fellow workers* take no responsibility for design or accuracy of content and reserves the right to refuse adverts. Prices may be changed at any time. Submission is by deadline date notified in every issue. Adverts may be submitted in conjunction with copy by arrangement with the Editor. Payment must be received with submission of advert or advert will not appear. Cheques made payable to **Presbyterian Church of Victoria Trusts Corporation** and sent to the Editor as conditional on publishing of your advert with return name and address for invoicing. Adverts will be received from any PCV congregation, presbytery or committee or from any outside Christian denomination, group or organization with bona fides acceptable to this denomination. Every effort will be made to publish accepted adverts and a full refund given where publication of advert was not possible. Adverts will not be accepted where insufficient space is available. It is policy that, in most instances, copy takes precedence over advertisements for publication. Subsequent running of same adverts only by arrangement with Editor. Conditions for advertising are subject to change.

We won't be publishing this detail in successive issues, so you might like to put this information somewhere prominent for future reference, or we'll be pleased to email these terms to you on request.

Thanks for your attention. Ed.