



The ACC Newsletter

Confessing the Lord Jesus Christ, Proclaiming the truth, Renewing the church

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No. 11 February 2009

The ACC Newsletter is an occasional publication. Next issue: May 2009

1. ACC National

1.1 Bushfire update - Support for Victorian area around Whittlesea

As members on e-mail know, Revd Rod James was able to travel to Whittlesea and help with the ministry support for the community and area. After preliminary comments, Rod provided the following report on 12th February 2009.

I arrived in the Whittlesea area on Monday 9th, and am staying with Malcolm and Margaret McMillan at Arthurs Creek. The Presbytery has arranged for an interim minister to come to Whittlesea for the next 5 weeks until their new minister arrives in March. This interim minister is Rev. David Howie who is just back from a year in Zambia working with Fiona Dixon-Thompson from Port Lincoln. On Wednesday leaders met at the UC at Whittlesea. At the meeting it was agreed that David Howie will work in the Whittlesea/ Kinglake communities and I will work in the Arthurs Creek/Strathewen area. These are two separate areas of the one fire zone and have relief centres at Whittlesea and Arthurs Creek respectively. Whittlesea and Arthurs Creek have not been burnt but are adjacent to the fire areas of Kinglake and Strathewen.

I am based in Arthurs Creek and working out of the Fire Station and the local hall which has been set up as a relief centre. Yesterday I was able to join a CFA vehicle and enter the fire area which is a restricted zone with police road blocks. The devastation is almost absolute in the 'hot fire' area. Almost all buildings have been destroyed, many animals killed, and many of the tall trees destroyed because the ground at their base has burned in the heat. Reports are that 30 to 35 people have lost their lives in Strathewen out of a population of about 200. Many of the properties are no-go areas as police investigation continues. On Tuesday night a public meeting was held at the Arthurs Creek hall and 500 people came. Information was given from police, Department of Human Services and local government about relief assistance, etc.

It seems there are two categories of fire victims:

- those whose houses were not destroyed who have remained or returned to the fire area and are living without power and other facilities. We visited many of these people yesterday and relief supplies and human support is being brought into them.
- those whose houses were destroyed who have had to leave the area and are scattered about in temporary accommodation. These people have the greater needs, having lost not only home and property, but also neighbours and in some cases family. These people will be harder to bring assistance to and many will need personal support and counselling.

I have been registered with the CFA as a Personal Support person to operate in the Arthurs Creek/Strathewen area, and am developing a good working relationship with the local people and the CFA folk operating out of Arthurs Creek. They have a magnificent community spirit but need lots of encouragement, and some of the firefighting volunteers have seen things that will take a lot of coping with. Each day the response agenda changes and develops, and will unfold over quite a long period of time.

Many folk with whom I have contact have asked if there is a means by which they can make donations specific to the Whittlesea/Arthur's Creek relief work and to those in the Kinglake/Strathewen.

At this time gifts of money are more practical than goods, of which much has already been donated. I therefore offer the following ways of contributing to the relief work:

1. General donations to bushfire relief in Victoria can be made

(a) through the Red Cross. This can be done quickly and easily through the Red Cross website www.redcross.org.au or phone donations 1800 811 700.

(b) through the National Uniting Church Bushfire Appeal, online at www.nat.uca.org.au or by phoning 03 9251 5251.

2. Donations specific to the Kinglake/Strathewen area can be made by making cheques out to the 'Whittlesea Ministry Inc, Bushfire Appeal', c/o of C.M. McMillan, 780 Arthurs Creek Rd, Arthurs Creek 3099, Vic. For electronic transfers, the account number is:

Commonwealth Bank BSB : 063 855; Acc. number : 10121128

Acc. name : WMI Emergency Relief Fund (The WMI is the important part - Whittlesea Ministries Incorporated)

3. Donations specific to my work at Arthurs Creek can be directed to my ' Rod James Ministry' Account. For electronic transfers, the account is:

BSB 805001, A/C 1168299. Send ordinary mail to my home address, 4 Rajah St, Morphett Vale, SA, 5162

Most of all we value your prayers, that God will be present with both victims and relief workers, bringing that wisdom, consolation, grace and healing that only God Himself can bring. Yours in the love of Christ, Rod James

1.2 WEB CHAT - The web chat for the first few months in 2009 will be held on a Sunday night – Next March 1: at 7: 30 p.m. (EDST). Join us in our live Chat Forum to come and 'chat' about the designated ACC topic, **The topic is – Billy Graham Crusades – 50 Years of Influence.** Did you attend a crusade in 1959, or in later years? Share your memories and comments. To access the Chat Forum simply go to the Forum section on the ACC website, and click on 'Chat Forum' at www.confessingcongregations.com, and obtain an ACC ID.

1.3 2009 ACC AGM and National Conference: Put these dates in your diary now: **3 – 5 September:** Alexandra Park Conference Centre, Sunshine Coast, Qld.

1.4 PRAYER: The Sacred Season of Prayer material for the 12th Assembly of the Uniting Church (to be held in July 2009) is now available on the website. You can simply follow the ACC home page links. Due to the size of the resource (forty pages) a printed copy cannot be sent to every member. As it can be used as a devotional, the web version can be downloaded and simply used from your computer. A printed copy will be sent to all congregations and groups. If any member desires to undertake the 40 days of prayer that will be held in June and July and needs a printed copy please contact the ACC office.

The ACC Prayer Network will gather in Sydney on 25-26 March for a retreat together at the Healing Centre in Newtown.

2. State and Region Reports

NEW SOUTH WALES: ACC NSW will hold their AGM at Sutherland on Saturday April 18. Information will be sent out closer to the date.

Wesley Institute will hold a Training Day on Saturday 28th March at Kotara UC in the Hunter region. (Information will be provided locally)

SOUTH AUSTRALIA: SA ACC had a planning meeting in February and have come up with a range of ideas and a programme for 2009 and 2010. Local members will be advised. Contact the SA ACC secretary: Ian Croft: i_scroft@chariot.net; (08) 8289 2627.

3. Opportunity to use ACC papers and resources: Culture Connections

Are you looking for a place to find reviews and material you can use in your local church or include in your newsletter? The material on the ACC website in **Culture Connections** – in three further sections: **Books, Contemporary Issues and Film and Media** can be further distributed, provided acknowledgement is given. (Note: these details will be included on the website link, or contact the office). **A listing of the present resources on the website, including material from ACCatalyst is provided below. To download follow the link:**

<http://www.confessingcongregations.com/resources/c/culture-connections/>

BOOK REVIEWS

The Theology of John Wesley, Holy Love and the Shape of Grace: Paul Langkamp, ACC member in South Korea reviews Kenneth Collins new book *The Theology of John Wesley, Holy Love and the Shape of Grace*. Collins is a long-time professor of Wesley's theology at Asbury Theological Seminary in Kentucky, USA. Paul says "It's wonderful title proclaims what it is: a scholarly work about John Wesley's sermons and commentaries and other material that lays out the two great Christian themes weaving their way through all Christian thought."

Thinking Things Through: Christian Reflections on some Contemporary Ethical Issues: A review of *Thinking Things Through: Christian Reflections on some Contemporary Ethical Issues*, by Michael Cassidy. If you are looking for a good summary of a Christian understanding of the major social issues before the Western world today, then here is an excellent reference. It is a book which lends itself to personal study as well as group study. Michael Cassidy would be well-known to many evangelical Australians. He has been to Australia many times in his deputation work for African Enterprise. (Peter Bentley)

The Integrity of Anglicanism: by Stephen W. Sykes, a book published one year after the union of the Uniting Church, and about a different denomination, but illuminating when one considers the present state of the Anglican Communion and the Western Church. (Peter Bentley)

Trophy of Grace: Find out how Bronwen Healy, Queensland 'ordinary student and now Mum', became a 'Trophy of Grace'. You will find the book challenging and moving as Bronwen relates her story of relatively ordinary childhood, descent into drugs and then prostitution to pay for her habit. She comes out of this not through her own efforts, but through the grace of Jesus Christ. (Peter Bentley)

The Plumb Trilogy and the Modern World: Read Peter Sellick's latest review – a reflection on *The Plumb Trilogy and the Modern World* by Maurice Gee.

Emily Maguire Princesses and Pornstars: Read a review of Emily Maguire's influential 2008 book *Princesses and Pornstars: Sex, Power and Identity*. (Peter Bentley)

CONTEMPORARY ISSUES

The Impossibility of Atheism: Peter Sellick considers the problems raised by the 'new' Atheism, a popular cultural phenomenon that has been made prominent lately by academics and a prominent journalist. He argues that "The solution to this lies in the definition of atheism, or rather, the definition of the God that atheists do not believe in."

Gethsemane: Gethsemane is a band trying to approach the 'Christian' music scene in a different way in Sydney and beyond. Read this profile of their ministry. (Peter Bentley)

Just Celebrity?: A reflection on the cult of celebrity in society, with questions for the church. (Peter Bentley)

The Search for Community: Why is there such interest in the idea of community today in the church? What are the implications for Christians? Read a reflection on the nature of community and a critique of some ideas in the contemporary church. (Peter Bentley)

Living in a Sexualised Culture: This article, while primarily for men, provides a comment on the increasingly sexualised culture that Christians find themselves immersed in today. (Peter Bentley)

Bill Henson and humble children: A critical examination of the issues raised by Bill Henson and photographing naked children. (Peter Bentley)

FILM and MEDIA

Amazing Grace - the story of William Wilberforce and John Newton in the 2006 film made for a general public. (Peter Bentley)

Bonanza: Do you remember the TV show *Bonanza*? Read about one Christian connection in this influential series from the 1960s, and early 1970s. (Peter Bentley)

God on My Side: An analysis of the Andrew Denton documentary about the 2006 US Religious Broadcasters Convention. (Peter Bentley)

License to Wed: Robin Williams in full flight as Father Frank who has a different approach to the pre-marital courses. (Peter Bentley)

Salute - the Movie and The Peter Norman Story. Read about this salute to the Australian sprinter who became part of sporting history at the 1968 Mexico Olympic Games. (Peter Bentley)

The Eternity Opera: A review of the film version of the opera about the Eternity Man, Arthur Stace. (Peter Bentley)

The History Boys: a brief discussion about why this is not a family film. (Peter Bentley)

The Making of The Christ Files: Read about the making of this landmark Australian documentary series, which premiered on TV during Easter 2008. (Peter Bentley)

The Nativity Story: a review of this good example of a helpful 'Hollywood' film suitable for church events at Christmas. (Peter Bentley)

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