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## *From Paul, Conference Executive Officer*

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### **Another New Year**

I trust that the year is starting off well for you, possibly for some after a refreshing break, and for others after something of a summer slowdown. Mandy and I had the opportunity to have two week's break at home this year. After the busy but relaxing 'every-family-member-present' Christmas Day we pottered around the house and garden, finally unpacked some boxes of books from three moves ago, caught up with friends, went to the Melbourne Aquarium and completed books and crosswords. And now, we are back to it!

As we are all aware, this year will be a challenging one for our world, and also for the worlds in which we find ourselves [even more so in the face of the bushfire tragedies]. This is a year to work together; a year to find imaginative ways to express our interdependence with each other as people and communities of people who are working out what it means to follow Jesus, and discovering ways to help others do that too.

### **Conference AGM in Ballarat**

As you may already know, Conference AGM is on the move in 2009. This year it will be held at the York St Church of Christ in Ballarat on Saturday May 2. The AGM will be a great opportunity for people participating in city life and metropolitan churches to meet with and encourage people who are part of regional and rural communities and churches. It will be a time of mutual encouragement and inspiration.

A planning group has already met to construct an AGM that will be a great event for everybody. The program will include music and worship from our Ballarat churches, Commissioning of Mission and Ministry staff, Ordination of Ministers, storytelling from country and city, as well as space to complete the necessary business of Conference. The keynote speaker will be Billy Williams, a dynamic young Indigenous leader currently ministering in Brisbane. A Ministers Gathering will precede the AGM on Friday May 1.

We are working towards providing coach travel from Melbourne for the Saturday, and also a range of weekend accommodation options close to York St. Ballarat is a great place to spend the weekend. There's lot to see and do in the region, as well as healthy and growing churches to visit on Sunday.

Can I therefore ask you to begin now to 'talk up' the AGM in your church, and among your fellow leaders? It will be wonderful for Conference, and for our Ballarat and regional churches, if there is large gathering of people over the two days. Please put it in your diaries now!

### **Conference President**

Conference Council requests your prayerful consideration regarding a person to provide leadership through the role of

Conference President for the term 2009 to 2010 or 2011. Given the current President Merryll Blair is a Minister, in keeping with the rotation principle, we are seeking a non-Ministry person to be nominated. Nominations need to be received by Friday March 20, 2009. More details, including a Nomination Form are available from Church Secretaries or Administrators or from the Conference Office or website.

### **Conference Council**

Under the Constitution affiliated churches are also invited to submit nominations for election to the two vacant positions on the Conference Council. An outline of the role of Council, the qualities expected of council members, and the process of nomination (including a Nomination Form) are available from church Secretaries or Administrators or from the Conference Office or website. Nominations need to be received by Friday March 20, 2009.

### **Notices of Motion**

Any member in good standing of an affiliated church may propose a resolution for consideration at the Conference AGM. Advance notice of such a motion must be given, in writing, to the Conference Executive Officer. In 2009, the closing date for Notices of Motion, in writing, on the appropriate form, (available from church Secretaries or Administrators or from the Conference Office or website), is Friday, March 20, 2009.

### **From Council**

The Federal Coordinator of Churches of Christ in Australia, Craig Brown, attended the January meeting of Council. Craig was able to update Council on his communications and resourcing role, one that is committed to positively contributing to local churches. Craig is currently working on national Social Justice Network and Youth Vision/youth ministry projects, as well as representing Churches of Christ at National Council of Churches of Australia meetings, and co-ordinating our participation in a range of events including national indigenous conversations. The national website continues to grow in impact and he has also put us on Facebook (*do a Facebook search for 'Churches of Christ Australia'*).

Craig also briefed Council on plans for the celebration of the bicentenary of Thomas Campbell's Declaration and Address on October 4, 2009.

Council also received an update on the review into the internal relationships between Partner Departments and Council. A full report will be available to churches in advance of the AGM.

*Paul Cameron*

*Conference Executive Officer*

*pcameron@churchesofchrist.org.au*

Here we all are in 2009, and the world feels somehow... different. Partly, I guess, it's that post-shipwreck feeling of all having survived the heat. But mainly, it's the wave of hope that has washed out around the world in the wake of the inauguration of the new US President. Whatever we might think of his politics, the simple fact of a man with Barak Obama's social and racial background sitting in the White House has made a difference to how the world thinks in terms of possibilities.

Over the last few weeks I've attended several events that have had a curious synchronicity. First was the Ecumenical Prayer Service at St Paul's Cathedral, for Israel and Palestine. The point was made clearly that peace is God's will for both sides of the conflict. The Dean of the Cathedral preached on Luke 4:16-21 (the so-called 'Nazareth Manifesto'), and pointed out that when Jesus quoted from Isaiah 61: 1-2, he left out the final words: 'to proclaim... the day of vengeance of our God'. The challenge was presented to us as followers of Jesus, to proclaim good news for both oppressed *and* oppressors, to the poor *and* the rich, to the captives *and* to the captors. Some deep soul-searching is called for when we are confronted by the words and deeds of Jesus!

I spent last weekend at the Ecumenical Summer School, in Queen's College, Parkville. The theme of this year's Summer School was 'The Hospitality of God: Food for Thought'. During the weekend, we encountered several of the 'food' stories from Luke's Gospel. The keynote speaker, Dr Simon Holt from Whitley College, used to be a chef before studying theology. He now lectures in spirituality and ministry studies. Simon explained the social and religious backgrounds to the wedding parable of Luke 14:16-24, in which the divides between lower and higher caste (Greco-Roman) and more or less pure (Jewish) systems are broken down, as Jesus broke through such systems by eating and drinking with 'tax collectors and sinners'. We thought about the implications of the mission of God, which Luke shows to be inviting all to come and sit and enjoy God's hospitality. Simon suggested that every instance of sharing a meal is holy space, and encouraged us to be more intentional about recognising this.

Finally, on Sunday February 1, I attended the secular service to mark the opening of the legal year. (We were also represented at the Ecumenical Service in St Paul's.) Each of the speakers spoke passionately about the need for a law that is fair: that allows access for every single person, regardless of educational background, perceived 'worth' or language ability. I had no trouble at all translating this into 'Old Testament speak', particularly the prophets and Psalms. It was another salutary reminder

that there are values which stand above and beyond any personal sense of 'fair', because the personal is so often biased. The Psalms remind the king that his main task is to distribute God's justice, which is to 'defend the cause of the poor of the people... deliver the needy when they call, the poor and those who have no helper...' (Ps 72).

President Obama has sent out a call to all Americans to be the best that America stands for, and to reject the confused values that have tarnished this best. It is a good call for all of us to consider into 2009. God's justice is love and peace for all, enough to eat for all, a safe place to live for all. As we continue to consider the church's mission, this is the horizon on which our eyes need to be fixed while we look for the small or large ways we might invite all to the feast of God's rich hospitality.

Merryl Blair  
 Conference President  
 mblair@minerva.com.au

### **For Prayer in the Face of Disaster**

These words come from the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America's Disaster Response liturgy:

**'In the shadow of your wings, I will take refuge, until the destroying storms pass me by.**

For those whose lives are in harm's way, we pray:

**Protect them under the shadow of your wings!**

For those who have been injured or whose loved ones have been killed, we pray:

**Comfort them under the shadow of your wings!**

For those whose losses leave them without safety, refuge, food, or clothing, we pray:

**Shelter them under the shadow of your wings!**

For those who will bring aid and seek to restore order in the midst of chaos, we pray:

**Guard them under the shadow of your wings!**

For those who seek courage to face an uncertain future, we pray:

**Renew their strength under the shadow of your wings!**

For those who will journey together on the long road toward renewal, we pray:

**Bind us as one under the shadow of your wings!**

## Future Directions...towards health and growth

### The Victorian Bushfires:

#### CareWorks 2009 Bushfire Appeal

In one way or another all of us have been greatly affected by the devastating bushfires throughout Victoria. For some of our churches this has been very personal. It has meant the loss of property, in some cases housing, and in one case the loss of life of a leader. For some, it has been the loss of loved ones or friends, or knowing others who are experiencing tragic grief because of death or property loss. For others all this has been real but surreal, from a distance, as we have observed disturbing footage and images via the media. For yet others, it has re-connected them with an earlier grief, sometimes caused by fires, or by other disasters. This impact will go on, in different ways, for a long time. These are indeed tough times. We all want to do something, to make a difference, to offer help and hope to those whose lives have been so suddenly and indiscriminately changed.

I'm sure most of our churches have already been praying for people right around the state who have been impacted by the fires. I know that you will continue to do so. With regards to our churches, at the time of writing, we are aware of the fire's impact on members of the following churches. Please join us in praying for them, their ministers and for their communities.

**Horsham** (senior minister Simon Risson). Property losses, including sheds etc.

**Latrobe Regional/Morwell** (no minister currently). Property and housing losses.

**Warragul** (ministers Tracey and David Ware). Property losses.

**Wallan Gateway** (a joint CofC/Baptist church plant, minister: Andrew Adams). Property and housing losses. One death.

**Bendigo** (minister Andrew Colquhoun). Some temporary evacuations, but no losses.

**Upper Yarra** (Yarra Junction, minister Malcolm Clark). Fire surrounded the area, precautions were taken, all are OK.

**Foothills** (Ferntree Gully, minister Steve Barrington). Some temporary evacuations.

**Nillumbik** (Eltham, minister David Buesnel). Members in the affected areas, but no reports of impact.

We have yet to hear back from Churchill **Co-operating Churches** (minister: Bob Brown) and **River Valley** church (minister: Andy Bennett, although we know their community support office has been inundated).

In partnership with the Council of Churches of Christ in Australia (CCCA), and as an immediate, emergency response, the Vic/Tas Conference on 9 February put in place the following actions:

- (a) An immediate donation of \$10,000 from the CCCA National Disaster Fund (NDF) to the current Salvation Army Bushfire Appeal.
- (b) Released a further amount of up to \$10,000 from the NDF to enable local churches impacted by the fires to make small grants/gifts to those in need in their community.
- (c) Invited churches and members nationwide to support the Churches of Christ CareWorks 2009 Bushfire Appeal. All donations to this appeal will be distributed to the current Salvation Army or Red Cross Bushfire Appeals in Victoria or to enable local churches impacted by the fires to make further small grants/gifts to those in need in their community.  
We believe it is realistic to have a target of \$100,000 for this Appeal. Donations over \$2 will be tax deductible, when made on the form included with this Newsletter, by cheques made out to Churches of Christ in Vic/Tas Community Care, or by credit card. Direct deposits can be made to Westpac account: Churches of Christ Community Care, BSB 033172 A/C 3744165. However, no tax receipts can be issued for these electronic donations.
- (d) Invited churches in Victoria to make pastoral skilled people resources available for support of people in the areas affected by the fires through the Victorian Council of Churches Disaster Plan. Support is already being given to people through the VCC Emergencies Ministry. Please notify the VCC office on 03 9650 4511 regarding your church's response capacity.
- (e) Will continue to seek the support of churches nationwide to replenish the NDF as early as possible.

Please be aware that we will continue to bring you updates as the situation becomes clearer, and as the need for community healing and rebuilding continues.

*Paul Cameron—Executive Officer, Vic/Tas Conference*  
*Craig Brown—Federal Co-ordinator, CCCA*

### Conference AGM and Ministers' Gathering, May 1-2

- Happening in Ballarat at the York St Church of Christ on Friday and Saturday May 1-2 2009
- Speakers include Billy Williams, Ange Sawyer, Paul Cameron, Martin Boutros and members of the M&M Team
- We are putting accommodation options together at the moment
- Please register your interest in having a place on a coach to get there and back with Claire at the Conference Centre

**A Missional Story**

Welcome to the Hume Men's Shed! We have just celebrated our first birthday on December 15th 2008. It was a humble beginning, four guys got together to study the recent phenomenon of 'Men's Sheds' sweeping across Australia; we talked and discussed, and decided that this was for us. And so began the Hume Men's Shed.

We have now grown from four to an average of 16 at a meeting in just 12 months. What do we do at our meetings? Every Thursday we meet between 10am and 2pm in a double garage in Roxburgh Park, which also houses the Roxburgh Park Community Church Administration Centre, and Pastor's office. We usually begin with many cups of tea and coffee, and because our members come from so many different backgrounds, there are always many things to talk about. We plan regular outings, and last year we visited the Brimbank Men's Shed, the Shrine of Remembrance, where one of our members is guide, and we finished the year of with a visit to a car restoration factory in Airport West.

We have lots planned for 2009 and to begin the year a huge trailer load of timber and some tools were donated to our Shed. We have made many contacts as we reach out into the community more and more. Our numbers are still growing and we like the theme common to most Sheds about men feeling useful, being able to contribute to their communities, making new friends and sharing their skills etc. Men's Sheds are fast being recognised as a vital and viable ministry to create a relaxed and creative space for men to enjoy.

On the financial side we have been helped along with a grant from the Vic/Tas Conference Expeditions Project, through our Pastor Milton Oliver and the funds we have raised ourselves to pay our way and provide this service to the community.

*Peter Rayner  
 0427 209 388*

***If you want assistance connecting with your community please get in touch with the M&M Team at any time.***



**Asian Ministry Council News**

**From Nathan Nhan, M&M Multicultural Ministry**

200 NATIONS - 1 PEOPLE Conference (March 6-7) and the Melbourne Ethnic Festival (March 7, 4pm to 9pm) are organised by the Melbourne Conferences for Ethnic Evangelism [MCEE], churches in the city and in the Greater Melbourne area.

The purpose of the **Melbourne Ethnic Festival** is to celebrate the Creator of the amazing cultures (over two hundred nations of the world) who have been drawn to make the beautiful City of Melbourne their home. Celebrate by listening to their music, smell and taste their food, look and appreciate their cultures. We envision exalting Jesus through the richness of diverse cultures and introduce Him to those who do not know Him right in the heart of the City. There will be no admission fee charged.

**WE NEED YOUR HELP!** We need to print streamers, handbills, do radio and newspapers advertisements, hire sound, and lights, stall hire, marquees, chairs, port-o-let's and hire a clean-up crew (almost all the work will be done by a large team of volunteers). All this and more comes to well over \$ 8,000. Your gift, of any size, will help us make this event a reality to the glory of God. You or your church could make this a part of your missions giving to reach the nations in 2009.

Please make your Cheque/Money order payable to Melbourne Conferences for Ethnic Evangelism (MCEE) Inc. and designate your gift to the Melbourne Ethnic Festival (goal: \$8,000) or to the 200 NATIONS - 1 PEOPLE Conference (goal: \$2,000). Then send them to:

Melbourne Conferences for Ethnic Evangelism Inc.  
 PO Box 4499, Doncaster Heights VIC 3109

Or you may deposit it direct to Commonwealth Bank  
 Account Name: MCEE, BSB:063254, Account Number:10446422 (ABN: 81 553 430 243)

Any inquiries please contact:

Kumar Abraham, Coordinator MCEE, 9798 6707, 0409 705 715, mcee.ethnos@gmail.com

**Refresh Women's Conference**

Reconnect with that which lights you up inside.

Available workshops:

- Skills for leadership
- Expressing your Creativity
- Your Daughters shall Prophesy
- Connecting with your community
- Art as therapy
- Contemplation, reflection and the spiritual journey

**Date: 14th March 2009, Time: 9.15am—4pm**

**Venue: Ringwood Church of Christ, 11-13 Bedford Road, Ringwood, Cost: \$30 including morning tea and lunch**

**RSVP: 4th March 2009**

## **CCTC—Churches of Christ Theological College**

### **Properties Corp scholarships at CCTC**

Thanks to the sponsorship of the Properties Corporation of Churches of Christ in Victoria and Tasmania, CCTC Alumni and legacies from individuals, the College will award four scholarships in 2009 - two scholarships of \$5,000 and two scholarships of \$2,500 - to students beginning studies at CCTC in 2009.

See [www.cctc.edu.au/scholarships](http://www.cctc.edu.au/scholarships) for details and an application form.

### **Articles**

*Do statistics depict the inevitable? What is the future of Churches of Christ?*

Statistics are generally summoned as a form of adjudication on contested issues, yet statistics are frozen in their purview of a receding state detached from a living reality that is already negotiating the future. See Statistics and Christian gospel [www.cctc.edu.au/statistics.html](http://www.cctc.edu.au/statistics.html) by Stephen Curkpatrick.

Also, an article on *Churches of Christ identity and ethos for the future*:

Christians have an extraordinary story. To live from the fragments of other stories, other than a story focused on Christ and informed by Scripture, is to invoke inevitable conflict over the right pitch of our Christian story and its future relevance within society. The future of Churches of Christ [www.cctc.edu.au/cofc.html](http://www.cctc.edu.au/cofc.html)

### **University places still within reach**

CCTC has over a dozen students in their 20s who are studying the Bachelor of Arts / Bachelor of Theology double degree at the College and Monash University. Some of these students have studied at CCTC and used their results to apply for direct entry to Monash. Consider studying ministry and theology at CCTC and, at the same time, opening the possibility of a university place in another field of study. Call John Williamson at CCTC – phone (03) 97901000.

Timetable for 2009 on the web site [www.cctc.edu.au](http://www.cctc.edu.au)  
 If you already have a degree in theology then only six additional subjects will add a Grad Dip Theol to your name – 10 subjects entitles you to a Master of Theological Studies – What are you waiting for?

### **Commencement Barbeque and Service**

Saturday 21st February

This is a relaxed and informal event. New students are welcomed and current students welcomed back. Proceedings begin with a barbeque at 5.30pm in the College courtyard. Buy food here or BYO picnic. A worship service will be held at 7.00pm where Lynette Leach, minister of the Williamstown Church of Christ, will offer some encouragement for the coming academic year. This is a great opportunity for you to connect with CCTC students and supporters. Please come and bring a friend or two.

## **Following on from Fresh Expressions...**

Two exciting events of interest to those leading missional churches which build on last year's Fresh Expressions Conference are being held in Melbourne on March 4 and 5 with Ian Mobsby.

Ian has been involved in new forms of church, mission and the emerging church for over 15 years. He leads the Moot Community in London (<http://www.moot.uk.net/>) and a core team member and Associate Missioner of the English Fresh Expressions Initiative – set up jointly between the Anglican and Methodist Churches. Working in the heart of London's inner city, Ian is grappling with how to do mission in culture that is deeply post-modern and profoundly post-Christian. He has formed a community that engages openly in mission and asks deep questions of culture where consumption is the only ambition.

He is an Associate Lecturer in London and has published two books, *Emerging & Fresh Expressions of Church: How are they authentically church and Anglican*, and *The becoming of God*, drawing on the experiences of the Emergent & Fresh Expressions of Church.

While he is in Melbourne, Ian will present a public lecture on Wednesday 4 March, *Being Church in a global culture of consumption and information technology*.

On Thursday 5 March, there will be an open conference [\$30] with Ian looking at the topic *Developing Emerging and Fresh Expressions within a Mixed Economy of Church*. This event would be of interest to both local practitioners and denominational leaders who are striving to start new churches while helping existing churches become more shaped for mission.

*Registration forms and program information is available from:*

*Mrs Lyn Whaley, The Anglican Centre, 209 Flinders Lane, Melbourne 3000*

*Ph: 03 9653 4245 Fax: 03 9653 4266*

*Email: [lwhaley@melbourne.anglican.com.au](mailto:lwhaley@melbourne.anglican.com.au)*

**REGISTRATIONS CLOSE FRIDAY**

**20 FEBRUARY 2009**

### GMP Fiji Update

In the second week of January the west coast of Fiji was impacted by two massive floods one after the other. It is Fiji's worst flood disaster in 50 years. Eleven people have died and more than 10,000 have been living in emergency shelters. Many are now returning home to see what they can do with what has been left behind. The worst hit areas include most of the main towns on the western low lying side of the main island of Fiji. Nadi, Sigatoka, Ba & Lautoka have all been affected by flooding due to heavy rains.

The Churches of Christ members living in Lautoka and Ba have not been directly affected. However several families living in the low lying area of Vitogo have had to move out of their homes which have been inundated with water. They are living with friends and relatives.

The impact of the flooding will be ongoing since some of Fiji's best agricultural land has been impacted. Roads have been destroyed and this is affecting the distribution of essential services, particularly to rural areas where people are now in desperate need.

Bhimrao reports that the church at Nakasi has taken up an offering, and supplied groceries and food for the families impacted by the floods in Vitogo. 'We request prayer for those who are flood victims taking shelter at temporary shelters. Pray for people's safety in general.' Donations and gifts to provide relief to the victims of the flooding in Fiji can be sent to Churches of Christ Overseas Aid. Some financial support will be forwarded to those families impacted and donations received in ex-

cess of that need will be forwarded via one of the other church based agencies to assist people struggling with the loss of home, community and income. You can give online at [www.gmp.org.au](http://www.gmp.org.au) or mail your donation to COCOA, 33 Sturt St, Adelaide SA 5000.



Fiji Awash (Photo source: Taonga Anglican)

## MICAH CHALLENGE

### Training Days

These days aim to inspire and share practical ideas. You hear great Bible speakers, get new resources (on maternal and child health issues and the effects of climate change) and meet fantastic people. Don't miss out.

Melbourne: Saturday March 28

More details will be added to the website soon but meanwhile get the date in the your diary.

Tassie— dates TBC

### Micah Ambassadors

A new, simpler and better Micah Ambassadors program is happening this year. If you want to go deeper with regular ideas and support from Micah staff, find out more online or contact Pippa – [ambassadors@micahchallenge.org.au](mailto:ambassadors@micahchallenge.org.au)

### Pray

Pray for politicians as they return to Canberra this week, that wisdom and justice guide their actions.

Pray for Zimbabwe and Fiji – that right will prevail and that God protects those standing up for right.

## Paul's Holiday Reading

Holidays usually mean I read something light, so this year my reading included two biographies: *Parko* and *The Red Fox*. The first is the autobiography of Michael Parkinson (Hodder and Stoughton, 2008) the British (and adopted Australian) media personality. Something of a self-hagiography, it also has its moments of deeper reflection and sensitivity. The second is a biography of the football coaching great Norm Smith (by Ben Collins, Slattery, 2008). This is a big book, about a larger than life leader (who was involved in Northcote church's boys club as a kid). As a childhood Melbourne supporter it is a fascinating read. Both books have the added value of recounting period stories that help us connect with football in another time, and behind the scenes in the media world, as well as the prevailing cultural values of their respective times.

I have also started reading the latest by Michael Frost and Alan Hirsch: *'reJesus'* (Hendrickson/Strand, 2009). Subtitled 'a Wild Messiah for a Missional Church', the book seems (so far) to be an excellent statement about the centrality and primacy of Jesus to the Christian story. Surely this is what we are called to celebrate together, to live in the ways of, and at the same time hold as the core piece of our mission and purpose. This book should be mandatory reading for us all, as in these complex times we maintain a high view of Christ as 'the Way'.

**Opening of our new 'Centre for Urban Mission' in Dandenong**

You're invited to the grand opening of UNOH's new 'Centre for Urban Mission' and 'Minnendanna Quire-nook' in Dandenong

Where: 'Centre for Urban Mission', Factory 2/6-12, Arlie Ave, Dandenong, Victoria.

When: Sunday, 15th February, 2009. From 2pm to 5pm is 'open house' to talk with UNOH workers and check out the 'formal bit' at 3pm, Contact: sarah@unoh.org

**Wanted: More books for the new 'John U'ren Library for Radical Discipleship'**

The new 'John U'ren Library for Radical Discipleship' in Dandenong currently has over 4,000 books as a resource for those serving or preparing to serve the urban poor. We aim to build up the library to have over 8,000 challenging books by the end of 2009. Could you help us? Do you have books that could help inspire, challenge and shape a new generation of Christian workers among the urban poor? If so, why not donate them to the new library to see them make an impact with others?

Where: 'Centre for Urban Mission', Factory 2/6-12, Arlie Ave Dandenong, Victoria.

When: between 9am and 5pm week-days.  
Contact: russell@unoh.org 03 9701 7119.

**Sub-merge now: join our full-time, live-in mission formation course**

There are only a few places left for the full-time, live-in Submerge mission formation course for 2009. If you are ready to go deeper in living, loving and learning with Christ among the urban poor, preparing for a life that matters, please contact Jim Reiher now! Don't put it off, the course starts with the Melbourne Open retreat in February, and you will not regret this stepping out in faith to go deeper for Christ with Sub-merge.

Please note: the new fees for Sub-merge are \$3,500 and not \$4,000 as advertised.

**Ash Barker's book 'Make Poverty Personal' to be launched in US**

It has a new sub-title 'Taking the poor as seriously as the bible does' and a new forward by Shane Claiborne. Here are the endorsements on the new back page blurb:

"Ash Barker and the UNOH revolution invite us to hear, smell, and touch Jesus in his most distressing disguises, in the slums, with the poor, in the most abandoned places of empire in which we find ourselves."- Shane Claiborne, The Simple Way, Philadelphia

"A harrowing, deeply personal manifesto on our responsibility to the poor. Humane, grace-filled, and literally reverberating with prophetic vigor, Make Poverty Personal deserves to be read by a wide and grateful audience." Alan Hirsch, author of The Forgotten Ways

"An invitation to unlearn so much of conventional church faith and to learn afresh about God's good news for the world. There is a clarity that will let many readers come to grips, perhaps for the first time, with the revolutionary, subversive intention of the Bible." Walter Brueggemann, Columbia Theological Seminary.

Could you help generate interest and do a review of the book at amazon.com?

**Devotions based on John's Gospel and Jean Vanier's 'Drawn into the Mystery of Jesus'**

The UNOH community share common devotional readings. Starting in Feb and for the first half of the year we will focus on John's Gospel with help from a book by Jean Vanier, founder of l'Arche communities, as a guide. Each Monday, starting next week, the relevant text from John's Gospel, a weekly 'grace' to seek and the Vanier chapter will be posted on my blog [www.unoh.org/future-hope](http://www.unoh.org/future-hope). Please join us in using this as a stimulus for prayer and if you have something encouraging or challenging from this time please share it with us as a post. You can purchase Vanier's book

'Drawn into the Mystery of Jesus through the Gospel of John' from John Garratt publishers <http://www.johngarratt.com.au/product.php?isbn=1920721096>

**Thank-you!**

Thanks to all for the UNOH Christmas appeal. Over \$22,000 was raised for UNOH workers struggling for faith support and our 7 neighbourhood based 'Urban-Hope Centres'. Not too late if you want to give a late Christmas present.

We would love to see you there and would love you help to spread the invites.

*God bless,  
Ashley Barker  
UNOH Director*

**PS** You can get a pdf edition of our latest newsletter 'Finding Life' with all the news, views and ways to get involved on my new blog <http://unoh.org/future-hope/>

**www.unoh.org**



**2009****March 14**, 9.15am—4pm

Refresh Women's Conference

Held at Ringwood Church of Christ, 11-13

Bedford Road, Ringwood

\$30 including morning tea and lunch

**March 6-7**

200 NATIONS - 1 PEOPLE Conference

**March 7**, 4-9pm

The Melbourne Ethnic Festival

**April 3**

State Youth Games launch event

Held at One Community Church, 184 Surrey Rd, Blackburn

This will give your youth and young adults a taste of SYG before it all happens, and is also a fantastic event to include on your youth ministry calendar. With elements of the Village, evening program, sports, worship and a guest speaker, you are GUARANTEED a fantastic time, whilst generating important momentum towards your SYG campaign.

**May 1-2**

Ministers' Day and Conference AGM

Held at York St Ballarat Church of Christ, more information to come

**Church Life & Health Census**

This is the final call for the Census documents we distributed to churches last year. They need to be in by February 16th at the latest.

Please get in touch with Claire Egan at the Conference Centre if you have any questions or if need another copy of your church's Census sent out.

**Return your church's Census to:****Vic/Tas Conference Centre****1st Floor, 582 Heidelberg Rd,****Fairfield VIC 3078****03 9488 8800****cofcvictas@****churchesofchrist.org.au****Mission and Ministry****Director: Community Mission**

Applications are invited for this full-time position facilitating community mission activities for the Mission and Ministry team of Churches of Christ in Victoria and Tasmania.

There is a pressing need for missional transformation amongst Australian congregations. 'Missional' is not just about innovative evangelistic or social programs [important though these are], but rather an ongoing, profound engagement with the question which the missiologist Lesslie Newbigin asked some thirty years ago: "What would be involved in a missionary encounter between the gospel and this whole way of perceiving, thinking, and living that we call 'modern Western culture'?"

This role is an opportunity to utilise your passion and your gifts alongside a dynamic field team to creatively partner with local church leaders and ministers.

The successful candidate will:

- Have background in local church life
- Want to play a part in developing local church mission
- Have an understanding of the principles of community development
- Have engaged and/or studied the missional church conversation.

The person appointed to this role will:

- Facilitate the cultivation of mission shaped congregations
- Develop new methods and entry points for community-based mission
- Provide leadership, encouragement, and resources to local churches
- Create strategies and resources for churches seeking to be engaged in community-based mission
- Coordinate the benevolent programs of CareWorks and the necessary documentation.

Enquiries can be directed to, and detailed role descriptions are available from, Martin Boutros on 9488 8800 or email [acaldwell@churchesofchrist.org.au](mailto:acaldwell@churchesofchrist.org.au).

Applications are to be submitted by **Friday 27th of February** to Martin Boutros, Executive Director of Mission and Ministry, Churches of Christ Vic/Tas, 1st Floor, 582 Heidelberg Road, Fairfield 3078.



# CareWorks 2009 Bushfire Appeal



We encourage all churches and church members nationwide to support the Churches of Christ CareWorks 2009 Bushfire Appeal. All donations to this appeal will be distributed to the current Red Cross or Salvation Army Bushfire Appeals in Victoria or to enable local churches impacted by the fires to make small grants or gifts to those in need in their community. We believe it is realistic to have a target of \$100,000 for this Appeal. Donations over \$2 will be tax deductible when made via this form.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Church: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

**Donation:** Amount: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Donations over \$2 are tax deductible, tick  for a receipt

Cheque / Money Order

(made out to Churches of Christ Vic/Tas Community Care)

Credit Card:  MasterCard  Visa

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Card Holder's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

**Please send to: CareWorks 2009 Bushfire Appeal**  
**Churches of Christ in Vic/Tas,**  
**1st Floor, 582 Heidelberg Rd, Fairfield Vic 3078**  
**Fax: 03 9481 8543, Email: [cocfvictas@churchesofchrist.org.au](mailto:cocfvictas@churchesofchrist.org.au)**

Direct deposits can be made to Westpac account:  
Churches of Christ Community Care, BSB 033172 A/C 3744165.  
However, no tax receipts can be issued for these electronic donations.



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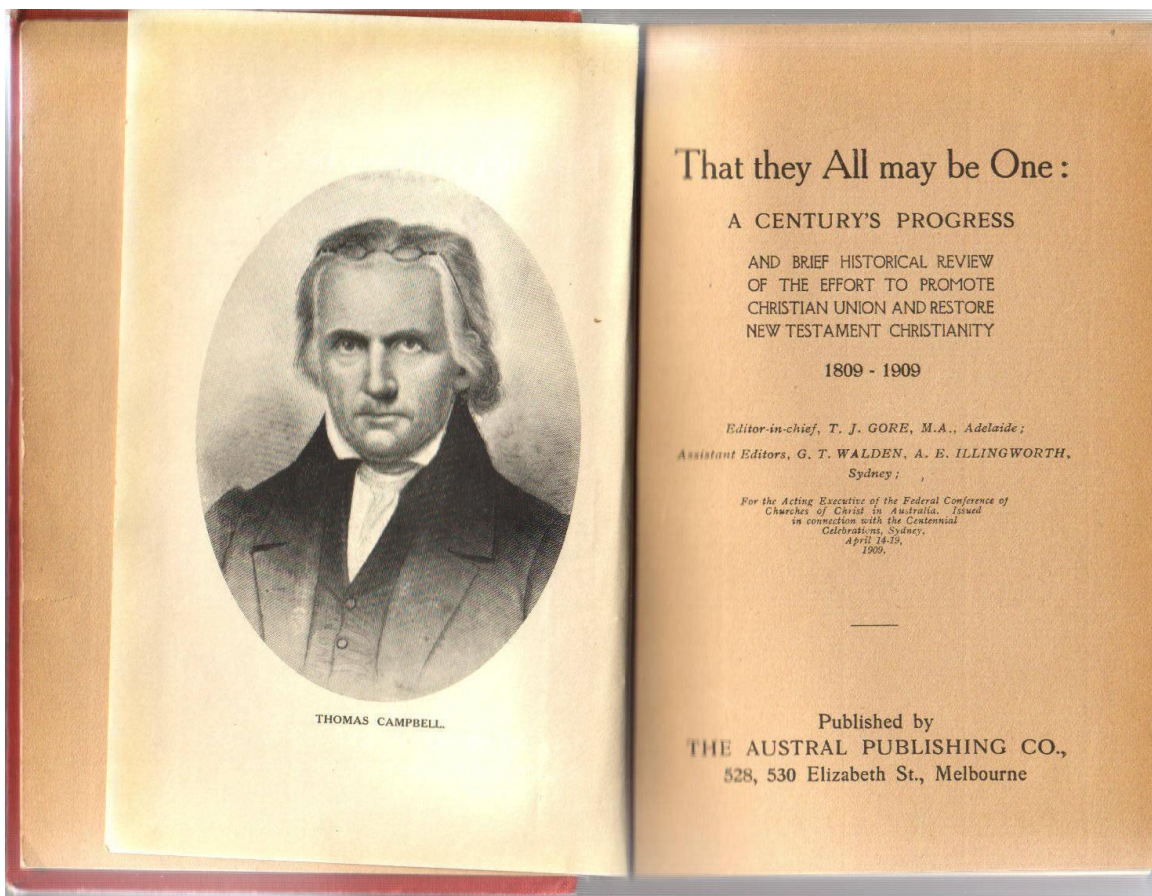
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*Australian Churches of Christ Historical Society's*

# Historical *Digest*



*Issue 162*

*February 2009*

# Value of Links to the Past

## Communion with Alexander Campbell

Ahead of the 2009 Great Communion, Jeff Weston reflects on his experience of celebrating communion in Churches of Christ's pioneer territory

During my time with the World Convention of Churches of Christ I have been afforded many unique and treasured experiences. I have stood in the pulpit at the Cane Ridge Meeting House and at Alexander Campbell's desk in his study at Bethany, I have been privileged to share in communion services using a table which Alexander Campbell and the great evangelist Walter Scott used on the Western frontier. I have felt something of the presence of Barton Warren Stone and the great Cane Ridge Revival as I have stood on the revival grounds at Cane Ridge. But by far the most emotional and moving experience was the privilege to lead the Communion celebration at the closing service of the 17th World Convention. To stand before such a large crowd of people representing members of the church from around the world in itself is a moving experience, but this was added to by the opportunity to handle some of the sacred historical artifacts of our movement. Knowing something of their history of use and what they represented to the early pioneers of our movement added to the emotional experience

The silver chalice used once belonged to Alexander Campbell. This silver cup stands about seven inches high and is decorated with a bas-relief pattern of children playing in the snow and floral motifs. In 1847, the chalice was given to Mr. Campbell for use as a communion cup while he was falsely imprisoned in Glasgow, Scotland, on charges of slavery. Apparently his days in prison were not all that bad. Sisters in the church were allowed to wait on him and to spruce up his cell. And the jailer placed no limitation on the number of visitors, with as many as eleven in his cell at a time when the law allowed but two! One can easily imagine Mr Campbell calling this group of visitors together to celebrate the communion in his cell and the comfort it would bring him in a difficult period of his life.

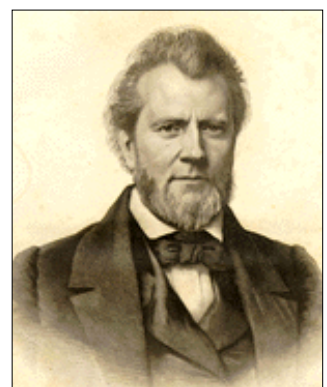
After Mr Campbell's return to America, the cup was regularly used for worship services at the family mansion. As was the custom, all visitors to the home joined in the family worship time. It can be speculated that notable visitors such as Presidents James A Garfield and Jefferson Davis, and early leaders of the American Restoration Movement such as Walter Scott, Thomas Campbell, JW McGarvey, and Robert Milligan may have partaken of the Lord's Supper from this cup.



Above: Selina and Alexander Campbell c. 1860

Below: James Barclay 1807-1874

Source: Restoration Movement website's Portrait Gallery



The cup now resides in the Restoration Movement Archives at Emmanuel School of Religion in East Tennessee. It was given as a personal gift by Decima Campbell Barclay, one of Mr Campbell's daughters, to Dr Dean E Walker, founding President of Emmanuel when he was a young man studying as an undergraduate at Bethany College. After 70 years in the Walker family it was given to Emmanuel School of Religion.

The plate used for the communion bread came from the collection at the Disciples of Christ Historical Society in Nashville, Tennessee. It was given to Alexander and Selina Campbell by Dr James and Julia Barclay who were the first international missionaries of the Stone-Campbell movement. A Presbyterian layman as well as a physician, James Barclay had initially proposed to undertake missionary work for the Presbyterian Board of Mission but was prevented by family concerns. He affiliated with the Disciples and with his wife and family served as a missionary to Jews in Palestine from 1851 to 1854 and from 1858 to 1862. His youngest son John Judson Barclay married Alexander and Selina Campbell's daughter Decima in 1863. The plate is one which the Barclays used for communion in their pioneer mission work in Palestine. The original origins of the plate are unclear it could have been taken to the mission field by the Barclays. As a former missionary it was a wonderful experience to use this plate which has been dedicated to the central act of our faith for all these years.

The table used was the one at what is believed to be possibly the largest communion service observed in America, the communion service of the Centennial Convention of 1909 in Pittsburg Pennsylvania. The Centennial Convention communion service was conducted at Forbes Field, home of the Pittsburg Pirates baseball team. The table is made of oak and is very plain so as to not distract focus from the communion elements. Our use of this table was very deliberate in that the World Convention communion service was the first in a year of celebration marking the bicentennial of the writing of the *Declaration and Address*. It is planned that there will be at least one thousand communion services around the world leading up to October 2009.

While it was a wonderful experience to use these special relics of our movement the most important item was the communion elements themselves and what they represent. It was for this that our pioneers dedicated their lives. To share in an act instituted by our Lord himself is in itself the most wonderful experience. The relics and way they were used by our early pioneers to share the message of salvation only adds to the experience. I am sure Mr Campbell and Dr Barclay would have been excited that as we gathered we used their processions for the purpose to which they had been dedicated, but more importantly they would have rejoiced at the fact that despite our divisions and disunity on this day we gathered as one body from around the world at the table of our Lord.

Jeff Weston is General Secretary/Executive Director of World Convention of Churches of Christ, based in Tennessee, USA. He previously headed the Overseas Mission Board in Australia.

(Essay sources: material by Dr. Leroy Garrett and Clinton Holloway and articles from the *Encyclopedia of the Stone-Campbell Movement*.)

# Declaration and Address

Churches of Christ's 'ever-contemporary'  
foundation document turns 200

At the bicentenary of the Declaration and Address, Stephen Curkpatrick reads Thomas Campbell's 'ever-contemporary' words and considers their importance for today

The overwhelming impetus of Thomas Campbell's *thirteen propositions* in *Declaration and Address* (1809) is toward faithfulness to biblical testimony with its vocative call to be a people of grace in the world. As the author of one family through grace in Jesus Christ, God calls people to distinctive life and witness through the Spirit indwelling the Church of Christ.

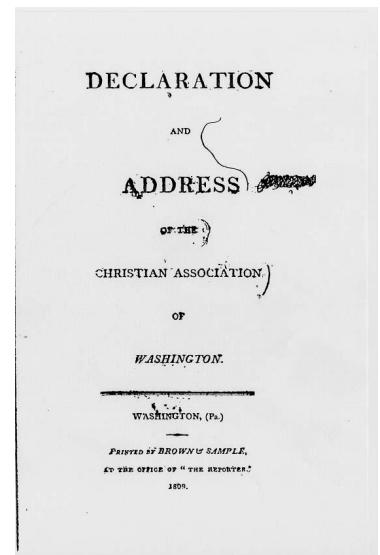
These affirmations are the dynamic source of Christian unity in community and integrity in witness within the world. Scripture is our primary source of testimony to the vocative word by which God *calls to be things that are not* through grace, which is given definitively for human response in Jesus Christ.

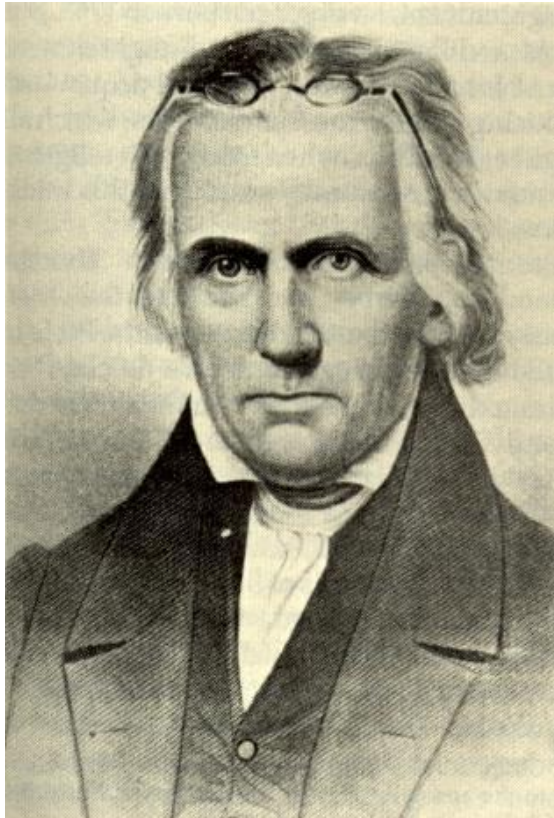
First, the Church of Christ is "one" because God is one. This is the central impetus for Paul's argument that Jew and Gentile are one in Christ. God cannot be divided. In Jesus Christ, the oneness of God is given for all people, for oneness can only be established through mutual relinquishment in grace, which as Scripture testifies, is demonstrated in Christ. This leads to a second proposition.

The central impetus for unity is Christological: "receive each other as Christ Jesus hath also received them" after Paul's response to divisions among Roman Christians. This imperative is pitched in terms of the self-giving passion of Christ for all. The rejection or diminution of another, whatever differences arise through regional or temporal customs, has no validity in Christ.

New Testament witness is the only criterion for faith and practice. This third proposition identifies the specific shape of Christian life for those who "profess their faith in Christ and obedience to him in all things according to the scriptures" (prop. 1).

The vocative textures of Scripture are eventful; they give testimony to God calling a people to distinctive witness by word and deed in the world. The New Testament impetus for faith and practice accords with its central focus of grace, which is given definitively in Jesus





*Above: Thomas Campbell (1763-1854), sketch from a photograph c.1834. Source: That They All May Be One by TJ Gore (Austral, 1909).*

*Opposite: Frontis page from Mrs Decima Campbell Barclay's copy of the Declaration and Address, the only surviving from the original 1809 printing. It features annotations by her father Alexander and grandfather Thomas Campbell. It was copied and reproduced in a facsimile edition in 1909. The original is now kept at Bethany College in USA.*

*Below: Brush Run Church where the Washington Christian Association met and which became the first 'meeting-house of the Disciples' (Christian Standard, Ohio, Dec 18, 1897).*



### What is the Declaration and Address?

The Declaration and Address is a document containing 13 propositions which outline how division might be eradicated from the church and unity proclaimed.

It was written by Thomas Campbell who had been a minister in the Presbyterian church in Ireland and later in Washington, Pennsylvania, USA. But by 1809 he had left the church, dismayed at its disunity. With a group of people who believed in Christian unity despite denominational affiliation, he formed the Washington Christian Association and composed the principles for that group: the thirteen propositions of the Declaration and Address. It was published in December 1809.

Thomas' son Alexander arrived in Washington just before the document's publication. Upon reading he devoted his life to espousing its principles in Christian ministry, resulting in the movement we know in Australia as Churches of Christ. The Declaration and Address was thus foundational in our history. Its bicentenary deserves our recognition and reconsideration of its message.

- Editor

### Recommended further reading:

#### Thirteen Propositions of Address in Declaration and Address

[www.mun.ca/rels/restmov/texts/tcampbell/da/DA-1ST.HTM](http://www.mun.ca/rels/restmov/texts/tcampbell/da/DA-1ST.HTM)

*One Church: A Bicentennial Celebration of Thomas Campbell's Declaration and Address* by Carson, Foster and Holloway (Abilene, 2008).

Christ. This focus, as the word speaking into human existence toward personal transformation, constitutes appropriate Christian response and formation of church life.

The fifth proposition gives the fourth its important context. Although Scripture articulates appropriate Christian response, there is nevertheless the reality of contractual and institutional observances among Christians. Yet contrary to deference being given to either tradition or novelty, New Testament testimony gives the prevailing and adjudicating point of reference for contingent observances and their practice within the spirit of Scripture.

The word that speaks into human existence is paramount. While expressions of tradition may be of value, the critical issue is their misuse as tests of communion in determining the scope of church community. It is not the ability of tradition to edify but its propensity to exclude that is contested in the sixth proposition.

Theology has a role in testing the integrity of Christian life. Theological aptitude is of value but not as a determinative factor for Christian fellowship. A forensic sense of theological truth as the basis for acceptance is elitist in contrast to acceptance of all— after the gospel portrayal of little children being accepted. In the absence of uninhibited openness there are only various forms of elitism. The seventh proposition advocates responsibility in regard to theology and openness to all concerning fellowship and communion in faith.

Theological understanding must be commensurate with people's capacity for engagement not beyond it. Ultimately, it is Scripture that depicts the essential condition of human life and its need of grace. Focused in Christ, confessed and practised according to the vocative word, the basis of call and belonging is as a people of testimony to God's loving-kindness or grace, as it was from the beginning. The eighth proposition also counters elitism according to theological understanding, so that the church may be known for its faithful response to the word of life not for its acumen with knowledge. Christological focus is redemptive as the locale of demonstrative grace, calling forth a response of self-deferential love toward one another. There is no scope for distinctions according to knowledge when all are one as recipients of grace.

The tenth follows this admonition in the ninth by indicating that *division is the root of all evil*. Alternatively, the *body of Christ* as the community of the risen Christ is where the very presence of God for humanity in grace is made evident.

The eleventh proposition reminds us that it is possible to commit sins of omission and commission in theological assertions. Theological responsibility exists inasmuch as "neglect" must be avoided, while reticence to "inventions" is necessary. Both neglect and novelty can generate "divisions" through "corruptions" in the "Church of God." It is not the church of humans to neglect the gospel's vocative word by conniving at conventions or constructing novelties as a substitute for this word.

The church is to be true to its call, expressing the unity of grace and testimony to the reality of God as the source of all life. Appropriate profession of faith is an integral response to the vocative word as “due measure of Scriptural self-knowledge.”

In this, each discovers the life and reality of God and lives in primary allegiance to Christ before all else. First, faith must be expressed in practice not just profession. Second, the life of the community is finally determined by remembrance of the inaugural communities of response to Jesus Christ (New Testament) and their call to faith and testimony in the world through another word that continually ruptures the word of “human opinions” or “inventions.” This is a liberating and redemptive hermeneutic that prevails over all other adjudicating criteria, whether expedient, political or religious.

Thomas Campbell’s twelfth proposition demarcates scriptural profession of faith from opinion. The impetus of Scripture toward hearing and tangible response to the word suggests that volitional response to faith exceeds any impulse of modern reason toward rational speculation and divisive partisan opinions.

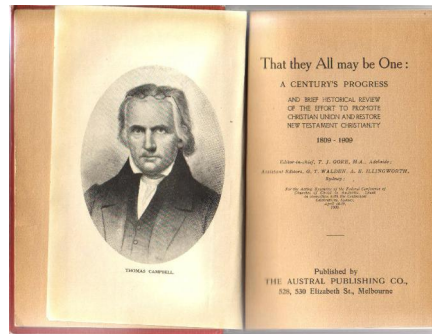
Finally, response to the vocative word of grace that speaks otherwise than human voices remains a hermeneutic that surpasses temporal and regional expressions of human life. In the latter, adaptations and contingent expressions of method, procedure and attitude will be necessary but these are always under critique by the word. Methods and their expressions can never be exalted to equal status with the word of God by its assimilation to the adjudicating word of humans. No claim to correct attitude or procedure can be made incumbent on others— generating factions, hubris and enmity in such incumbency. This final statement has a radical and perennial tone of critique that can be heard from Romans or Galatians in particular.

The thirteen propositions of Thomas Campbell’s *Declaration and Address* contest and reject exclusive, elitist, tradition-bound, partisan-opinionated and novelty-obsessed expressions of Christian church. The propositions retain and affirm a vision of being the Church of Christ. This church gives central focus to Christ as the cohering impetus of New Testament testimony and the community of witness to grace and truth called into being through the gospel.

While the propositions are couched in language that reflects the discursive style of Thomas Campbell’s time, their hermeneutical impetus draws on the intrinsic dynamic of Scripture’s vocative word and call to response in grace and truth— supremely in Jesus Christ. This dynamic remains ever-contemporary.

Dr Stephen Curkpatrick lectures at the Churches of Christ Theological College in Mulgrave and has studied the Campbells’ writings extensively

## From the archives this issue



Frontis page: *That They All May Be One* by Thomas Jefferson Gore (Austral, 1909)

Scanned image

Australian collection, ACCHS Archives

A hundred years ago the centenary of the Declaration and Address was celebrated in Australia with a number of special events and the publication of this book. *That They All May Be One* contains essays on the movement's history in Australia and abroad, an equal number of chapters on 'doctrinal' matters, photographs of American and Australian pioneers and places, statistics from around the world and two poems by Joseph Pittman. The editor, TJ Gore, was an American evangelist who ministered at Grote Street in Adelaide for many years; the Declaration and Address holding more significance among American churches than in Britain and the colonies.

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The Australian Churches of Christ Historical Society collects, preserves, makes available and writes about the history and heritage of Churches of Christ in Australia. The Historical Society has extensive archives which are kept at the Churches of Christ Theological College in Mulgrave. If you have items relating to the social, organisational or religious life of Churches of Christ which you would like to donate to the Archives please contact our archivist.

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Articles for publication are sought. Send submissions, including biographies and church histories, to the editor. Obituaries and anniversary news are also welcome. Contact: [history@handasyde.com](mailto:history@handasyde.com)

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ISSN 1324 9436