

OIKOS

*Reaching Home Churches Across
Australia*

Volume 9 No 3

Winter 2000

\$4

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Stories of Australian Home Churches



as well as some in
India

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OIKOS is the Greek word used in the
Bible for 'household'. See Romans 16:5
for instance, where reference is made to
the church that meets in a home.

OIKOS appears quarterly -
Summer, Autumn, Winter, Spring.

OIKOS publishes articles, information
and book reviews of interest to Home
Churches, news of particular Home
Churches, and their activities.

The Home Church scene is very varied,
and you will read of Home Churches
different from your own - ones within or
independent of the traditional churches.
You will also read of some community
based and grassroots gatherings.

OIKOS would be very interested to hear
of recent events in your Home Church.
Send us any news or ideas of interest to
other Home Churches.
Drawings and children's contributions
are most welcome.

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OIKOS is called to glorify Jesus
Christ, and to be a servant ministry to
the church in our day.

We believe that God is calling individual
Christians -

- to realise His life within them,
- and to come together under His
Lordship
- to be the Church where He has
planted them,
- to reach out as a Kingdom people so
that the world will truly know that
Jesus lives.

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Within Australia\$15
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Overseas\$A20
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Churches across Australia
- wanting to see this ministry reach
out to those interested in Home
Church within denominations as
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You will receive a quarterly report from
the Team meeting (including the points
for Praise and Prayer)
HOW? By using the subscription form
on p.15

MISSION STATEMENT

**OIKOS - Reaching Home Churches
Across Australia**

OIKOS is a servant ministry seeking to
advance God's Kingdom purposes in our
land by supporting and encouraging
Home Churches - both within and
independent of the traditional church.

We do this through the provision of
relevant news and information in a
quarterly newsletter, by personal contact,
pastoral care and speaking engagements.

OIKOS is a means of providing
information and seminars to those
interested in Home Church

Besides the Newsletter -

OIKOS - makes many contacts

by phone

by e-mail

by letter

by personal visits when possible

OIKOS keeps in touch as much as
possible with

- ex-clergy moving to home Church
- clergy making massive shifts in
their understanding of 'church'
- isolated Home Churches and
individual Christians seeking a
Home Church
- Christians finding themselves in
the margins in their traditional
church
- those outside traditional church
- as well as many other Home
Churches and interested folk
across the nation

NEXT EDITION

Spring 2000

Theme -

**"Why are Home Churches
Happening?"**

**Plus - more stories of Australian
Home Churches**

and

**Personal Profiles of some
members of Home Churches**

(This will be the last issue for this
year, so get your stories to me by
the last day of October)

From the Editor

Dear OIKOS friends,
I've been tripping around again - this time through Central NSW. I would love to do this full time I think.

The churches and the folk 'out on a limb' in the Body of Christ tell me they are encouraged by hearing the stories I am able to tell of God's way in other places like their own. And as for me - I get blessed out of my socks!

It was great spending time with Michelle Enright at Albury and Betty Ross at Wellington. We made the most of our time and talked for hours. On the way home I spent time with Clare and Harry Parslow at Hay and Freda Meiers at Shepparton. Everywhere I went I was humbled by the grace and hospitality that was shown me.

I praise God for my time with the gathering of Home Churches at Quirindi. Many of the folk had not met before but it was like being in the New Testament church. We shared, praised, prayed and shared a meal together. We all felt we had known each other for years and will always be friends.

This edition of OIKOS tells stories of Home Churches. Several Aussie ones and also about some in India. It is good to be reminded that there is a world wide move of the Holy Spirit in changing church to be small and relationship based. One of our OIKOS Partners, Dan Beaty, recently made a trip to Indian Home Churches and has sent a report to OIKOS.

OIKOS wishes to congratulate Robert Banks on two counts - his marriage to Linda last week. We wish them God's blessing. And secondly on being chosen as the inaugural recipient of the Zadok Prize for his outstanding contribution to the integration of faith and life in Australia. Robert is Director and Dean of the Macquarie Christian Studies Institute.

I hope you are encouraged by reading the stories on these pages. Please write to me. Love in the Lord, Bessie

No one wins until we all do!

The twentieth century has been labelled the century of 'getting ahead'. We have seen unparalleled advances in technology and economic gain.

The questions we must ask ourselves are "Are we really ahead?" "At what cost?" and "Whom have we left behind?"

Robert Theobald the futurist, says that the planet is at risk and in order to ensure a viable future the twenty-first century must be the century of healing.

We have been climbing the ladder of success and we are only now realising that it has been leaning against the wrong wall.

This story is about a young boy named Danny. Danny had Downs Syndrome and was entered in the 100 yard dash in the Special Olympics in Houston, Texas.

Danny was excited about his race and when the starter gun went off Danny was off in a flash immediately running ahead of the other participants. There was no doubt that Danny was going to win the race hands down.

Unfortunately, about 10 yards from the finish line, he was thinking too much about winning and his feet got tangled and he tripped and fell. He skinned his knees and elbows and was lying on the ground in tears.

The most amazing thing happened. The other runners didn't look at each other or talk to each other but they all stopped at the point where Danny fell.

Two runners picked Danny up while one young woman danced around singing "We're going to win! We're going to win!" She had no concept that for her to win someone else has to

lose.

They brushed Danny off and they all finished the race together.

The crowd spontaneously gave them a standing ovation. The judges went and found eleven other gold medals because they believed they all won that race.

What would the world be like if we played by those rules? No one wins until we all do.

What would our communities be like if we played by the those rules? No one wins until we all do.

What would our families be like if we played by those rules? No one wins until we all do.

When is the last time you stopped your race long enough to pick somebody up?

Jesus once said, "What does it profit you if you gain the whole world but lose your soul?"

The world measures our worth by how much we get. Jesus asked us, "How much are you willing to give?"

The world measures our success by how much we accomplish. Jesus asks us, "How much have you loved?"

The world encourages us to live a successful life. Jesus leads us to a life of significance.

The world encourages us to 'get ahead'. Jesus leads us to a life of HEALING and invites us to lead the way in creating a CENTURY OF HEALING.

Which race are you running?



I will give thanks unto the Lord. Psalm 7:17

Steph
en
Koski
(Medi)

Three Home Churches gather in Central New South Wales....

The Hunter Valley in central NSW is beautiful any time, but it was with added excitement that I recently drove through this great part of Australia.

I had just spent a wonderful time with the Wellington Home Church folk (see story by Betty Ross on p. 6). Now I was heading toward Quirindi and the property of

Des and Meredith Stewart. Many of our readers will remember Des and Meredith and Bill and Jean Castledine at the National Gathering of Home Churches in Sydney a few years ago.

The 25th June was a superb sunny day and the air was electric with excitement as Quirindi, Kootingal and Gunnedah Home Churches started to gather.

The walls of Des and Meredith's lounge room must be made of some elastic material, otherwise I can't imagine how else they fitted us all in.

There were great times of introduction and catch up before Des brought us all to some sort of order and we all raised our voices in heartfelt praise and thanksgiving.

I was asked to share and started with the words "The Church that meets in the home of Geoff and Betty Ross in Wellington send their greetings". Sounds familiar?

It was a joy to tell these groups about similar groups in other parts of the country. They are not the only ones who have been led in the direction in which they find themselves as church.

after this as we prayed for one another. I mentioned the isolation of the Wellington Home Church and it was resolved that these three Home Churches will work out a central point of meeting with Wellington, perhaps for a weekend camp. Now that will be a terrific time.....

We went outside into the glorious sunshine and shared a meal. What a joy to see the three churches mixing together and sharing around that meal. Truly a thanksgiving that 'we are the Body of Christ. His Spirit is with us'.



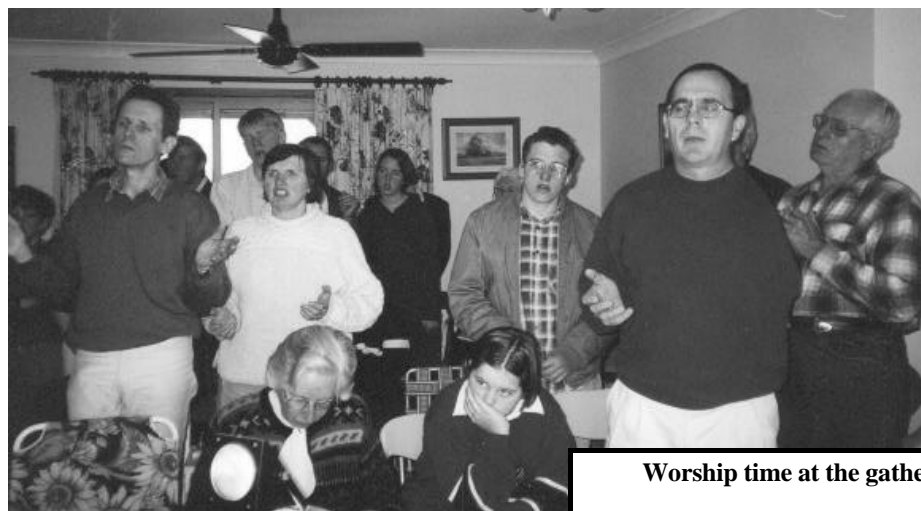
Kootingal meets Gunnedah - with Quirindi's Meredith Stewart at the organ and husband Des in the background on the right.

Gathering for group photos was something to behold. It is in this situation that

The churches are encouraged as the 'pollen' is taken from one group to another. I often feel like a little bee!

we find out where the giftings of the church lie!

There was much hilarity as those with gifts of leadership tried to bring some sort of order. Of course typically, Home Churches aren't very orderly and so we



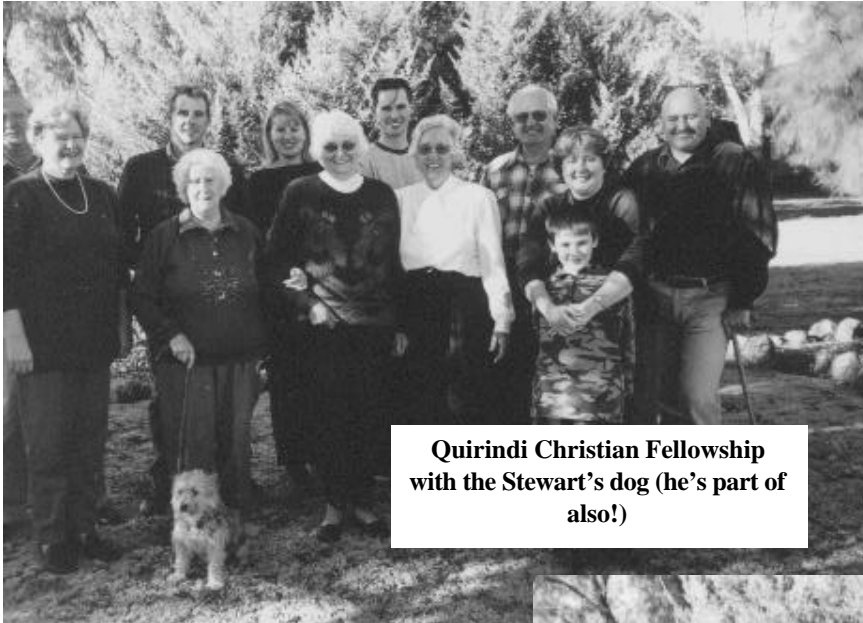
Worship time at the gathering

Each Home Church then told their story. I have all this on video and it is available to OIKOS readers for \$10. It is always amazing to hear these stories as there are similar threads through them. The Holy Spirit is certainly doing a work in the church in our day.

Prayer time became very meaningful

eventually had to opt for some sort of hilarious 'being in one place, sort of' or give up.

Quirindi, of course, maintained they were the 'best looking' but conceded that Gunnedah looked like a gathering of 'great knowledge' and Kootingal well.....



Quirindi Christian Fellowship with the Stewart's dog (he's part of also!)

Whenever I am with Home Church people, I always wish they lived close to me in Melbourne! Wouldn't Melbourne be blessed?

Quirindi Fellowship is joined by members of other churches in town for worship and Bible study on Wednesdays. I often find in country areas in particular, that Home Churches are able to be a bridge of unity amongst Christians.

One of the members of this group has composed several worship songs. I have published one of them with her permission on p. 14.

Des has written a column in the local newspaper for a number of years. These are usually Christian viewpoint of topical issues.

We had some very deep conversations during the day and friendships were made and cemented.

Copies of OIKOS and the Ten Series booklets were made available and questions and discussion about Home Church life were shared.

As we waved out 'goodbyes', I couldn't help but feel that the Lord would have taken great joy over His people that day - probably with singing (Zephaniah 3:17).

Afterwards, there was almost another 'holy war' as some of the Quirindi folk and I played Rummy.



Gunnedah Christian Fellowship (can you see the Stewart's dog?)

I praise God for the privilege of being a part of this wonderful time with a New Testament style gathering.

BELOW The serious side of fellowship that includes great feats of Christian charity - and some not so great!



Kootingal Christian Fellowship (a couple of their members were not able to come)



Wellington NSW

The story of how a Home Church started - a story common to many - differing only in detail.....

From Betty Ross.....

Since my conversion 21 years ago my heart's desire has been to see the lost come to know that there is hope and a future for them.

Not knowing anything of the different denominations, I started attending a church where the gospel was preached, but they believed that signs and wonders of the gospel ended with the apostles.

However my days there were very precious as I received a good grounding in the Scriptures and to a certain extent I was loved and cared for and well involved in "church life".

About 12 months after my conversion I attended a ladies conference dealing with 'spiritual warfare'. Little did I realise that this was to be the beginning of my real education with the Lord. As I talked with the guest speaker, she asked me if I had been involved in the occult.

To me growing up in a family where tea leaves were read and seances and card readings were a part of life, it came as a shock to see the forthcoming drama this was going to cause in my happy Christian world. I thought all I had to do was repent.

I allowed a group to pray with me after which I began to manifest aggressive behaviour. To cut a long story short this was not acceptable to the partici-

pants of the convention. I asked the people who were closest to me what was going on and the answer was to 'please not come to their house as they were afraid for their children'.

I was very hurt, disillusioned and angry. Angry at my sisters in Christ and angry at God.

However, God had it all under control. I received a phone call from a pastor who had just come back from mission work

in Bangladesh. He said he had dealt with people like me and could help me. He had heard about me through a lady at the conference.

There began a relationship with this man and his family that was going to bring healing and restoration into not only my life but a lot of my family's as well.

I learned

that the Lord still heals today and the gifts signs and wonders are still in operation.

Of course when I started to speak in tongues my dear brothers and sisters at the church where I attended wanted me to have my tongue "tested" to see if it was of the devil. I refused and with much heart ache the Lord called me out to fellowship at another church where the gifts were being practiced.

By this time I had been on a few missions with my pastor friend both in Australia and overseas, and my desire to bring people to know the Lord was

growing. I had by now not just a denominational view or a world view but a Kingdom view. My desire was to bring people into the Kingdom not the denomination. Of course this got me into trouble again. Because of my views I was not allowed to "minister" eg sing on the platform, or exercise any kind of leadership. I was told I was unteachable because I would not become "one of them".

A man who came to visit the doctor for whom I was a receptionist, believed he was supposed to be a woman and started to go through all the medical transformations to make this so. I watched him gradually progress through each stage and knew that only the Lord could save him. With this in mind I invited him to my church and he agreed to come.

You can imagine my sadness when everyone gave us a wide berth. I was devastated as he knew he was not accepted and closed the door on all things spiritual from then on.

I do not blame the church, I know they did not know how to relate, but I also knew there had to be a place where people could come for love and acceptance and it just was not happening in the church structure.

In the end the Lord called me out of the structured church all together.

I knew there had to be a place where people could come for love and acceptance and it just was not happening in the church structure.

This was very hard for me as I had so many friends in the body and none of them understood that I was only being obedient to the Lord. I gradually saw less and less of my friends - friends I had known for 20 years and with whom I had shared many experiences.

I was 'cut off' and what had I done



Bessie visited Geoff and Betty Ross and met these members of Wellington Home Church. L-R back - Geoff and Betty, Rebecca, Claire, Marian (Rebecca's mum), Tony and Stuart

that was so wrong? I was still fellowshipping with the Lord and believers from all denominations in a little outreach church out in the bush once a month. By this time I was working with the poor in a frontline Christian organisation and also running a woman's Bible study for new believers.

The idea that the Lord could and would create a Home Church in their town was against all the traditional Christians believed in and as far as they were concerned I was in great error. I had come to believe the Lord wanted such in my town though I did not go out of my way to organise one. The Lord has brought across our path people who have fallen through the cracks in the denominational church and each one has been a divine appointment.

The Lord has brought across our path people who have fallen through the cracks in the denominational church

I was in a church meeting in Sydney and went forward for prayer with a cry in my heart. The lady who prayed for me, not knowing my heart's cry, told me I had God's approval.

Be encouraged all you people who the Lord has called out into Home Church. If you know you have the command and blessing of the Lord to be where you are relax in Him!

Though your brothers and sisters may not understand, do not be bitter and angry with them because love is the key.

We still fellowship with our friends at different times when there are different things happening in the body and I am pleased to say there is more of an acceptance coming. Heart attitude is all important. I know the day is coming when there will be true fellowship and understanding between us. The Lord has called us to love one another no matter what. Make that your second priority after Him (Betty Ross)

Canberra Home Churches

behind them in the Anglican church

The Beginnings

People often connect the words 'Home Church' to Robert Banks and the Canberra experience. We reproduce, with permission, part of an article 'Bringing the Church Back Home' written by Richard Begbie for 'The Canberra Times' published 3 October 1992

In the mid-60s two young Australian clergymen were involved in post-graduate study at Cambridge University, half a world away from their parish churches and all the paraphernalia of Australian Anglicanism.

Geoffrey Moon and Robert Banks, together with Robert's late wife, Julia, began to reflect on what they had left behind.

The perspective of distance underlined a growing conviction that ordinary people had been disempowered and then alienated by a hierarchical, paternalistic church structure. They talked and wrote and argued together and with other people.

They explored patterns of church life and activity from New Testament times onwards, and wondered at the political structures and massive property holdings which absorbed so much of the contemporary church's energy.

The articles and papers they found themselves writing pointed to ever simpler forms, and to an increasingly egalitarian pattern of relationship and responsibility within the church fellowship.

Numbers - often an obsession for denominations with large local and central overheads - were not so important for the new vision as the quality of fellowship and the linking of 'church' with everyday life.

They returned to Australia convinced of the need to put what they saw as time-honoured theology and principle into practice. It was a courageous step, given the storm of controversy they left

and the tenuous beginnings in Geoffrey Moon's rented home. A trickle of people heard of the experiment and began to inquire. Some joined in, and were captured immediately by the easy, relaxed format and the possibility of having a part to play. Others were alarmed and did not return.

The Banks family too had made their way to Canberra by now. Soon the first Home Church, outgrowing its suburban living room, was divided in two, and then a third emerged.

At first, people looked to the founders for guidance and leadership. But as the new values began to be understood and appreciated, the initiators were able to step back and become ordinary members themselves.

In time Geoffrey Moon moved on to Adelaide and the Banks became involved in a growing Home Church movement beyond Canberra.

Robert and Julia have travelled and spoken with people interested in their ideas and experience throughout Australia, Europe and the USA.

In books like **The Church Comes Home, All the business of Life and Paul's Idea Community*, they have narrated, explored and developed the experience of Home Church and its relationship to everyday life.

Robert is now Director and Dean of Macquarie Christian Studies Institute, Macquarie University. Prior to this appointment he served for 10 years as Professor of Lay Ministry and Director of the De Pree Leadership Centre at Fuller Theological Seminary in California

Canberra Home Churches today.....

A number of Home Churches, while each remaining autonomous, have created a network or 'cluster'. Together the churches plan celebrations for mutual enjoyment, or events which support the larger Home Church movement.

Some members of these churches were part of the original groups meeting with Robert Banks.

By consciously and conscientiously making and maintaining the threads of community which bring us together as a 'cluster', Home Churches in Canberra have been able to enjoy the strength and diversity which come with size, yet without any loss of autonomy.

For example, a group member with a particular social justice interest can seek additional support from the wider Home Church community. Some time back a church member was invited to work on the development of a public theology course at a local theological college. She was able to seek gifts, skills, talents and interest to help with this project from the cluster.

Another group member sought financial help with important work being undertaken with divorced, separated and bereaved people.

Collective wisdom and experience are obvious advantages of the cluster. In Canberra, many people have been in Home Churches for well over a decade, some for 27 years. There are even several young adults in their 20s who were raised in Home Churches.

It is not only newly-formed churches which rely on this fund of advice. Established churches facing new challenges or stages in their growth also have recourse to a wealth of experience, support, ideas and prayer.

While each church in the cluster is completely autonomous, the cluster does provide a context with which each church can evaluate itself. Although non-directive, this can be an important balance or even safety net for our autonomy.

(This forms part of an article found within a booklet about Canberra Home Churches which was prepared by Ruth Monty. This booklet is available for \$1 from Canberra Home Churches or through OIKOS.)

Circle Church Network.....

Circle Church Network is a collection of Home Churches based in Melbourne under the banner of the Wesleyan Methodist Church of Australia. The pastor of this network is Rev Dr David Wilson, (part of the OIKOS Team).

Circle Church started in January 1990 when David and his wife, Debbie, felt concerned about the number of young people dropping out of the traditional church.

It started as one small church meeting in a home in Glenroy (a suburb of Melbourne) with a philosophy that when it grew too big for that home it would multiply into two home groups rather than renting or buying something bigger.

Over the past ten years Circle Church has grown to include all age groups from many different walks of life and stages in their spiritual journey. The church now meets in four different locations each week.

Shalom (Jewish word meaning 'peace in its fullness') - Sundays at 4 pm

Narana (Aboriginal word meaning 'to come together to listen, to come to a deeper understanding') Sundays 4 pm

Renovare (a Latin word that means 'to renew') Thursdays 7.30 pm meets in the foyer of a large apartment building/hotel in the CBD.

Goonawarra (Aboriginal word meaning 'Black Swan') Sundays 10 am.

These meetings are primarily for the corporate worship of God through Bible study, caring for one another, prayer, and celebration of the grace of God. It is one model of 'being church' that meets the needs of believers and 'not yet believers' in our society.

All the churches meet together for celebration, study, and fellowship on the first Sunday of each month.

The Network also has men's, women's, children's singles, and young adult's ministries, and situation evangelism, encouraging people to see everyday life as the primary opportunity for mission.

We call this a 'church without walls', meaning that ministry is taken to the people rather than having a ministry dependent on people coming to a particular building for everything. It is a mission-oriented church, seeking to incarnationally represent God with the culture, to express the presence and the character of God in everyday life.

Out on a limb - but doing just fine!



Michelle and eldest son Timothy (he's a gem)

Heading north on my recent central NSW trip, my first stop was Albury and the home of Mark and Michelle Enright. Mark and Michelle have been friends of OIKOS for

years.

Mark happened to be in Melbourne at the time, but Michelle and I had a great catch up talk until 1 am.

They would love to be in a Home Church, but that hasn't happened yet. However they mix with many Christians and have involvement with a Christian Parenting movement.

While there, Brian Kotzur of Jindera came across to meet with us. The Body of Christ is such a blessing. On these trips I am humbled by the hospitality and generosity of Home Church people. (**Bessie**)

Children are Church too....

Brisbane's Chris Richards tells us about a Home Church that is made up of youngsters.

About 50% of the world's population is under 15 years of age. That is a huge harvest and very little is being done to reach them.

The task seems overwhelming. However, even though each of our experiences is different I believe we all have something very unique to offer.

How do you keep a diverse bunch of active youngsters happy, involved and growing spiritually? Especially when most come from unchurched backgrounds and a good portion exhibit behavioural disorders.

I don't have all the answers but past experience as an art teacher, ten years of teaching RE in primary schools and life experiences as a mother of six children are the threads which the Lord has amazingly brought together and used.

As a result we can now offer a program that is both creative and enjoyable.

The vision God gave me early last year was for children to have their very own church and from the beginning it was clear that we could not exclude anyone on the basis of age. This has led to the formation of a multi-age group from 3-11 yrs which has provided us with a real challenge.

I'm very aware that the whole thing is God's idea so I spend a lot of time seeking Him about what he wants to do and from that place the ideas begin to

flow.

The key to our success from the children's point of view has been to provide large doses of fun, food and a great variety of activities. I couldn't do this without the support of a wonderful



team.

A typical Sunday morning would begin with outdoor play on the excellent playground facilities provided. Then we gather round the table for a feast of food and chatter followed by a time of exuberant praise and worship. I like to encourage them to get their whole body involved. So there's usually lots of movement and dancing. Colour is so important too. This is where you can let your imagination take over. I

think its not complete without streamers or flags or something similar.

Stories can be presented in a number of stimulating ways that are guaranteed to have the children enthralled.

We have tried flannelgraph, videos, storytelling, puppets and drama with positive results. We generally follow this with a game or art activity to reinforce the message.

Eventually I hope to see the children trained and released to lead the worship, pray for each other, prophesy and preach so that it is truly a children's church for children. I believe this is not an impossible dream for they have the same Holy spirit living inside them. **(Chris Richards)**



Chesed Fellowship

Thus said the Lord of Hosts: In those days, ten men from nations of every tongue will take hold - they will take hold of every Jew by a corner of his cloak and say, "Let us go with you, for we have heard that God is with you".

Chesed Fellowship is a group of believers in the Messiah who have joined together in order to -

- glorify the God of Israel and His Son Yeshua the Messiah
- meet together as a community of believers for worship, prayer, teaching, encouragement and support

They continued faithfully in the teaching of the emissaries, in fellowship, in breaking bread and in the prayers. Acts 2:42

- walk with the Jewish people and the nation of Israel through prayer, action and material and financial support

But Ruth replied: "Do not urge me to leave you, to turn back from following you. For wherever you go, I will go; wherever you lodge, I will lodge; your people shall be my people and your God my God". Ruth 1:16

For if the gentiles have shared with the Jews in spiritual matters, then the gentiles clearly have a duty to help the Jews in material matters". Romans 15:27

The King will say to them, "Yes, I tell you that whenever you did these things for one of the least important of these brothers of mine, you did them for me!" Matthew 25:40

- endeavour to live a biblically correct lifestyle and to encourage one another as we learn and walk together

Teach me O Lord, the way of your laws: I will observe them to the

utmost. Give me understanding, that I may observe your teaching and keep it wholeheartedly. Lead me in the path of your commandments for that is my concern. Psalm 119:33-35

- the spread of teaching on the biblical Jewish roots of Christianity and the importance of the Jewish people and the nation of Israel in God's great redemptive purposes and the Church's debt to God's still chosen people

In the days to come, the Mount of the Lord's House shall stand firm above the mountains and lower above the hills, and all the nations shall gaze on it with joy. And the many people's shall go and say, "Come, let us go up to the Mount of the Lord, to the House of the God of Jacob: that He may instruct us in His ways, and that we may walk in His paths. "for instruction shall come forth from Zion, the word of the Lord from Jerusalem".
Isaiah 2:2-3

Now if the challak offered as first fruits is holy, so is the whole loaf. And if the root is holy, so are the branches. But if some of the branches were broken off, and you - a wild olive - were grafted in among them and have become equal sharers in the rich root of the olive tree, then don't boast as if you were better than the branches! However, if you do boast, remember that you are not supporting the root, the root is supporting you. Romans 11:17-18

(Chesed Fellowship is based in Nambour, Queensland)

References - Complete Jewish Bible - JNT Publications Jerusalem 1998.

Sheep seek a bigger fold - and more sheep.....

Epsom Downs, a large sheep station a short distance from Hay NSW, has been in the Parslow family since the 1800s.

A few Christians have gathered there with Clare and Harry Parslow for some time, but believe God is calling them to have a more obvious profile in town.

Since 18th July, the Community Hall in Hay has been the new venue for this Home Church. They clearly wish to remain essentially Home Church with emphases on relationships and shared giftings in the building of the body of believers.

I met with Clare and Harry Parslow over lunch during my recent trip up north. They share a longing to see the people of Hay come to a deeper experience of



Clare & Harry Parslow

the Lord and His church.

A mid-week meeting attracts people from various churches in the town, from Catholic to Pentecostal. We see Clare (on the left) and three of the ladies of the group.

They find they are enriched by praying together and sharing around His word. They earnestly



pray for the unity of the body of Christ in their town.

This gathering takes place in Bishop's Lodge, formally the home of the Bishop of The Riverina. This property has been taken over by the Hay community and the committee in charge are glad to see it appropriately used by church groups.

Various outreach activities including men's prayer breakfasts, ladies lunches and youth music outreach programs are regularly held here with the Home Church very actively involved.



OIKOS is looking forward to hearing more about how they are faring at the Community Centre - once the shearing is over back on the property, and Clare has time to get to her computer. **(Bessie)**

Gathering of interested saints in Melbourne

September 21-22, 2000

Conferring of believers - Donald & Joyce Dunn, Shaun Kearney, Ray Harrison and others

Seeking God's face God's thoughts and God's ways

Fellowship prayer discussion

Venue: 16 Sinclair Street, South Oakleigh, Melbourne.

Further information: Mark Stroud E-mail purpose@alphalink.com.au phone 03 97222481

Visit to Home Churches in India



Vijay

By Dan Beaty
A Partner in OIKOS in USA

This story begins in 1997, when **Dr. Vijayaravan Karruppia** (known by us as brother Vijay) began seeking the Lord concerning his government's sending him to the U.S. for educational purposes. Out of several possible choices, he chose the Ohio State University in the city of Columbus. Upon arriving in January of 1998 he immediately began inquiring for like-minded believers with whom he could fellowship. The short of it is that we discovered one another by the internet and e-mail, which led to an eventual face-to-face meeting.

Immediately it became evident that the Lord had drawn us together for His greater purposes. For the remaining months of his stay, Vijay became a part of our home fellowship. It was a very blessed season in the Lord for us all, and many things were confirmed in Vijay's heart.

Soon after his return to India, a new home fellowship was established in New Delhi on the Pusa Campus, where this spring's conference would be held.

A little over a year later, I was challenged by a beautiful Chinese brother, Charlie Chen, to pray about going to India.

From that time on, the desire and belief began to build that God would send some of us to be with Vijay and the saints there. On his end, doors began to open up in one of the Southern states, and The Lord's direction began to unfold.

From Vijay's original invitation, the brothers in Columbus had only a time of fellowship and seeing India in mind. But later we came to understand that this was to be a time for strengthening the believers in the Home Churches, and equipping them for His service. Little did we realise the extent of this work, and very powerful witness of the Life of the Holy Spirit which all would experience!



Home Church in Delhi

I was especially impressed with how the children participate in the meetings, in the singing and being always ready to read out loud the particular passage of Scripture that we were discussing. Later Vijay's wife, Lalitha, shared her original concerns for the children. She was worried that the needs of the chil-

dren would not be met in so small of group. But in time she saw the Lord's provision for them, even beyond her expectations. While they are learning probably more than in the traditional

Sunday School, the blessing of the Lord goes even beyond that.

The Johnson's who have been separated in part from their parents after they left the Roman Catholic Church, found other

grandparents for their two daughters in the Body of Christ. Not only are they receiving love and attention from Vijay and Lalitha, but the Lord has also met part of their needs through Warren and Helen Peterson of the US, who visited them before me. Their thoughtful gifts and prayerful concern have earned them the title of 'grandparents', with these beautiful children! And don't forget "uncle" Dan from Ohio!

This House Church is strategically located on the university campus in Delhi, where Brother Vijay is employed as an



Studying the Scriptures at the conference



The brothers and sisters that meet regularly with Brother Vijay have become very dear to me. It was such an encouragement to be with them for the four days of the conference.

agricultural scientist. Consequently, many nationalities were represented in this small 4 day conference held in his apartment. People from Ethiopia, Mongolia, Kenya, as well as from distant



Vijay is seen sharing from Wolfgang Simson's new book, "Houses that Change the World," his thesis on the 3rd reformation through home/small group meetings.

states in India were in the meetings. All had come with the expectation of receiving something from the Lord to take with them upon returning home.

The young brother from Mongolia was especially touched, as during this time he was delivered from Buddhism, and was later baptised by the church there!

There are some general misconceptions that Westerners have concerning Christianity in India. Christians are in the minority there, but the institutional church, and the institutional mindset continues to thrive.

This makes India very ripe for the recovery of New Testament practices and principles. The old restrictive concepts are now being challenged, so that the people themselves can have greater liberty in their meetings and their witness for Christ.

Everywhere I found a great hunger for the deeper truths of God's Word.

This hunger made our work very easy. Everything we shared was eagerly received, with a readiness to 'search the Scriptures to see whether these

things be so'.

After the first week in New Delhi, Vijay and I boarded a plane to Chennai, in the Southern state of Andhra Pradesh.

There we were greeted by his friend John, one of the sons of a well-known and respected evangelist in India.

He was particularly interested in the concepts of small groups and Home Church. But we were quick to Emphasise the centrality of Christ as revealed in the Scriptures as the only basis for church life.

After spending the evening and the following day with him, we left him some literature and boarded the train for Vijayawada. Upon our arrival at the



The dedication service for a newly built mud-hut home/church in Andra-Pradesh

station we were greeted by Brother Israel, an old friend of Vijay's from his youth. It was incredible in the way the Lord brought these two together with me after 20 or so years!

Soon we were riding in his "Gospel Jeep" towards the city of Guntur, visiting a village church on the way. Israel is a true servant of God with a shepherd's heart. Very few men of his calibre would be willing to dedicate

their lives to these materially poor, but spiritually rich children of God.

The impact of the jeep ride through these rural areas on me personally is difficult to describe. As I sit here writing this today, it is like a dream of living in the days of Paul and Peter. If you can imagine the millions of poor, and unenlightened precious souls scattered across this land that have yet to even hear about the love of Jesus!

And then to find these lone workers spending their days and nights caring for those scattered groups of believers, meeting in straw and mud huts, and unknown to the rest of the believing world! All of this adds new depth of meaning to the words of Jesus, "Truly the harvest is great, but the labourers are few. Pray ye therefore the Lord of the Harvest to send forth labourers into the field."

Well, truly that prayer is being prayed, and the Lord is indeed answering. During the four days we were in Guntur, the Lord sent labourers from a radius of many miles to be built up and encouraged and instructed. Vijay and myself, with Israel translating poured just about everything we had into them, considering the time limitations and the fact that we knew very little of what they had been previously taught.

From the looks on their faces and later feedback from Israel, we took it that the ministry was well received and appreciated. I pray that those things which were from Him will abide in their hearts and continue to strengthen them as they are sent with His Good News of the Kingdom of God to these many poor.

Included in that good news is that they are free from religious bondage to worship Him and to live together under His Lordship. May this wonderful news prevail in this great country of India in the days ahead!

And from Vijay himself.....

When my wife and I heard the voice of the Lord to leave our traditional church some years ago we felt like Abraham who started his journey by faith.

As we entered the territory which had not been glimpsed by us, we were afraid of unmarked path, and of ridicule and possible failures.

What bothered us was our small size of Home Church and also the loneliness due to our separation from traditional churches. What we did not know was God's wonderful plan of teaching us that church has to become small in order to grow big.

Dan's visit proved to us not only the bigness of heart of house church but also our nearness to millions of saints of Home Churches who are scattered all over the world. Dan had to travel thousands of miles and spend a lot of money just to be with a small group of saints who meet in homes.

The visit of Brother Dan to our Home Church conference, may be the first of its kind in the city of Delhi. It has been like a time of celebration of the Feast of Tabernacles in our midst as we have been experiencing Christ through one another. The new songs taught by Dan brought added joy to all of us. His testimony of his spiritual journey and his experiences with Home Church strengthened all of us.

Finally we bow down and worship the Lord Jesus Christ the builder of the Church, who has come to our city.

(Vijay receives OIKOS via the Internet)**DID YOU KNOW?**

As well as India OIKOS is sent to -

- ◆ England
- ◆ Wales
- ◆ Scotland
- ◆ Ireland
- ◆ South Africa
- ◆ United States of America
- ◆ Canada

Appeal from Rowland Croucher.....

Dear Bessie

I visited a client in Ararat prison the other day, and in the conversation mentioned that our daughter Lindy has visited the Victorian women's prisons (Deer Park and Tarrengower) for 'friendship evangelism' most weeks for the last five years.

My friend's eyes filled with tears as he said: 'She will never know how incredibly important that is.' Later, as we prayed, he asked the Lord to bless the ministry of Lindy and her co-workers each week.

I am writing on my own initiative to ask for your help for this ministry. Two women - Marj Swales and Laurel Gore - are the full-time staffworkers for Prison Network Ministries (PNM).

This little - but very strategic - ministry, which originated with Campaigners for Christ, reaches into the hearts and lives (and families) of women in our goals.

In the Deer Park prison there are weekly 'Christian discussion groups' and craft classes, and monthly evangelistic services (attended by up to sixty women). In addition, these two women are available 24 hours a day to support women in crisis. (Lindy's role is to coordinate volunteers for the regular visits).

PNM has very limited funds, and the cars these women drive are leased. Both cars are on the road most days, visiting courts and prisons, transporting children to visit their mothers, and bringing women 'home' (actually many don't have homes) on their release.

The lease for one of the cars has just expired. A new contract would cost \$629 a month. I believe that's outrageous, and am asking individuals and churches to either write PNM into your missionary budgets, or make a generous one-off donation towards the purchase of a car, and/or ongoing support for PNM. Donations may be sent to -
PNM, Box 46, Kerrimuir, 3129.

The aim of this letter is simply to personally endorse this wonderful ministry. Further enquiries may be made to Helen Walker, the treasurer (9899 0800).

Thanks, on behalf of those we are called to serve in prisons (see Hebrews 13:3: 'Remember those who are in prison, as though you were in prison with them').

Love and peace,
Rowland (and Jan) Croucher



Praise + Glory to the Lord

B.J.F. 1997

A E7 A D A E7 A

1. With hum-ble heart I
2. I come to clap my

come in- to your Pre-ence,
hands and shake my bo- dy.

To sing + dance + make a joy-ful
I come to stamp my feet and dance for

noise,
you,

To praise you for your grac-ious love and what you've done for
I come to lift my heart + hands un- to your Ho-ly

me
throne,

You sac-ri-ficed your Son on Cal- var- y
Let all within me praise your Name a- lone.

And I sing

praise to you Father, praises to you Son,
Glor-y be to

Jes- us, through Him your King- dom comes,
Praise to the Spir- it who

makes our hearts as one,
Praise and glory to the Lord

Praise and glory!
Praise and glory!

Praise and glory to the Lord!

(Use freely in any non-profit worships)



I wish to subscribe to OIKOS - Annual sub. \$15 within Australia (4 issues or \$4 per copy) \$AUS20 overseas

(Subscription year is from 1st October -30th September)

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I wish to become a Partner in OIKOS and enclose \$.....(minimum of \$1 per week - i.e. \$52 per annum - see p.2 for further details)

Post to - OIKOS

10 Viviani Crescent, Heathmont Vic 3135

Are you on the Australian Home Church Directory?

If you would like to be then send these details to Ken Goodlet -85 Winbourn Road, Hazelbrook NSW 2779

NAME OF CHURCH (if applicable).....

NAME OF CONTACT PERSON.....

ADDRESS.....

.....p/c.....

PHONE (.....).....FAX(.....).....

E-MAIL.....

DESCRIPTION OF YOUR CHURCH AND IT'S ACTIVITIES.....

God is full of blessings day by day

Last night I met two families who are members of a Home Church just across the railway line from where I live.

I learnt of their existence about a month ago, but had not had contact.

I heard their stories about how they came to leave the institutional church for Home Church, and their stories could be yours or mine! And their search could be your search.

Its just so amazing how the Church is returning all over the world, quietly and not noticed by those who are not looking for it.

Jesus said He would build His church, and He really is today.

Jessop Sutton (South Africa)

