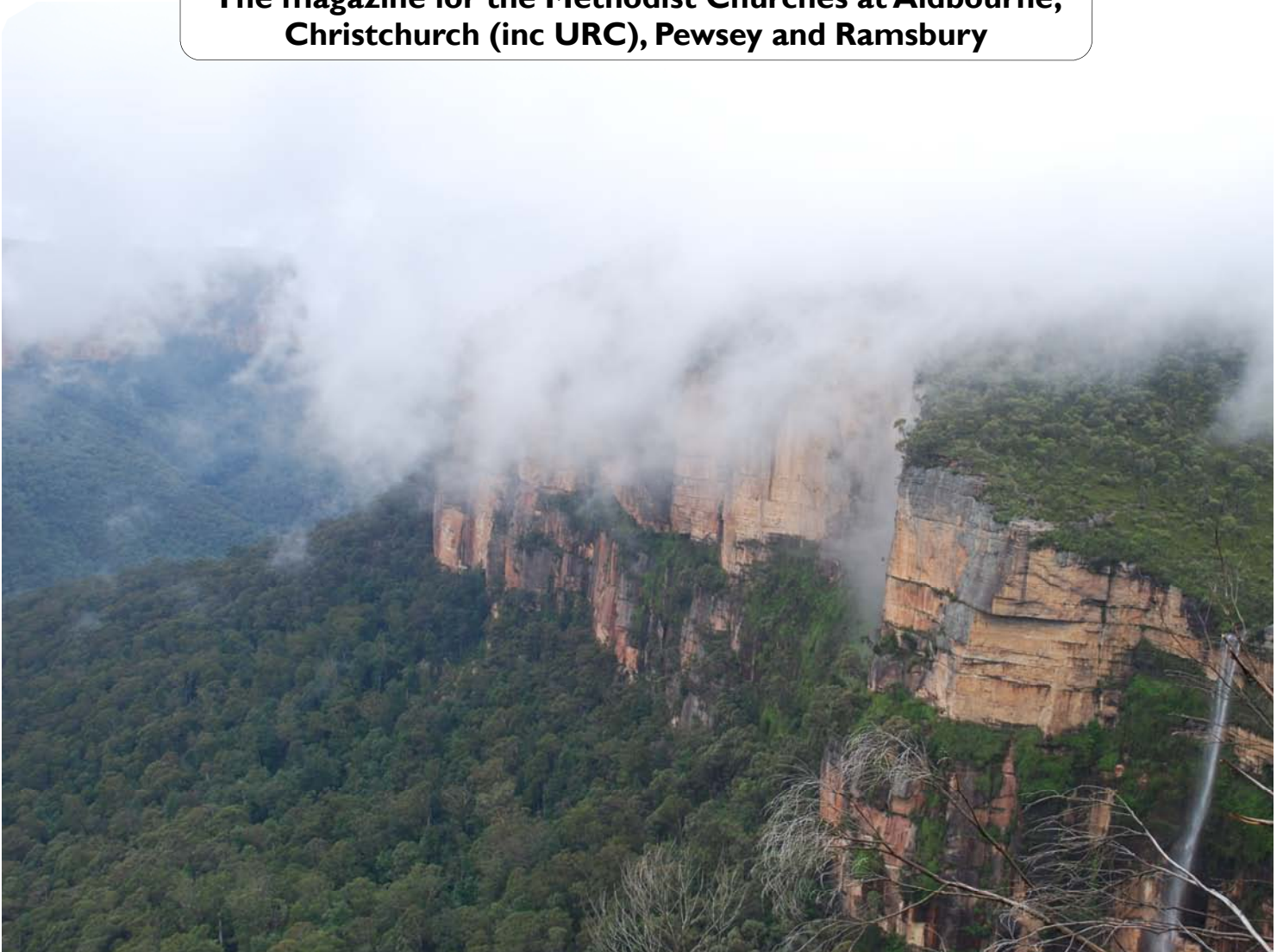


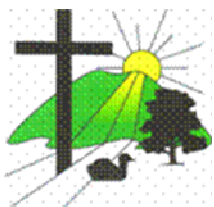
The Link

The magazine for the Methodist Churches at Aldbourne,
Christchurch (inc URC), Pewsey and Ramsbury

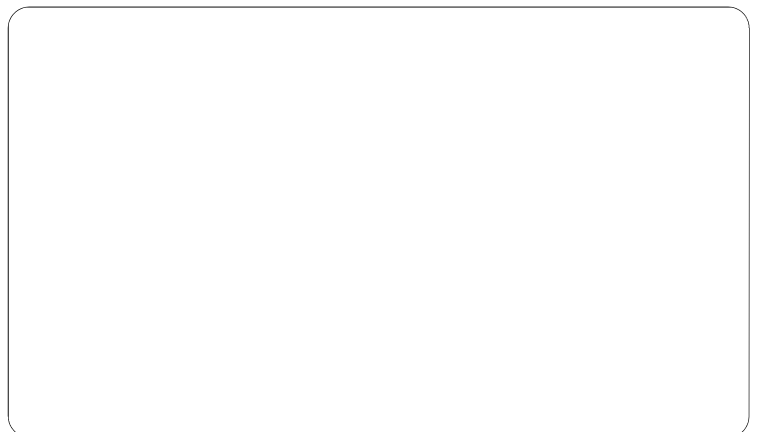


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*The Blue Mountains near Sydney, Australia, visited by
Rob and Alison Harris over Christmas. See inside for
more photos and report.*



COMMENT

For over a year now we have had two morning services at Christchurch. The '9am' is usually described as 'informal' but can be in fact as reverential and spiritually intense as the second service at 10.15, which is in turn not as 'traditional' as its name tag might suggest. The first takes music from the contemporary output as sung at Festivals like Soul Survivor, and makes use of YouTube clips of short sermons. Holy Communion is regularly celebrated, usually standing round the table and passing the cup and bread from one person to the next. The second service uses Songs of Fellowship and Hymns & Psalms, and follows a more conventional format of readings and a short sermon. The '9 am' for all its challenging early start, attracts most of the young people and a good number from all other age groups, the second has an older profile but with a couple of families with small children.

When researching other churches websites whilst preparing Christchurch's new one last year, I was surprised at how many churches had a similar two service arrangement—I had thought it may have been just us! All churches are trying to find ways to make space for different forms of worship and fellowship, giving the right spiritual food to everyone. The distinction is a much more complex one than between the 'young' and everyone else, and I have found much to appreciate in both services. Let's continue on this journey of exploration, support those who try out something different, and do all that we can to keep a strong sense of fellowship and belonging whichever service we prefer.



Phil Price

The Link

This Month's Editor

Link Coordinator

Other Editors

No 132 February/March 2011

Phil Price

Phil Price

Carole & Ian Walker

The Link is a monthly magazine produced by and for Aldbourne Methodist Church, Christchurch Marlborough, Pewsey Methodist Church and Ramsbury Methodist Church. Together they form the Marlborough District of the Swindon circuit, and Christchurch, a combined Methodist/URC church, is part of the South West Synod of the URC. Christchurch is part of Marlborough Churches Together.

Articles, poems, photographs, personal stories, jokes and suggestions for articles are wanted for each edition — please send to:

✉ office@christchurchmarlborough.org.uk (put the word **Link** in the subject line)

✉ The Link Editor, Christchurch, New Road. Marlborough SN8 1AH

We prefer to receive articles as Word documents or emails, however submissions on paper are welcome.

Views expressed in the Link are those of individual contributors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the churches and denominations served.

MINISTER'S LETTER

Dear Friends

I am suffering from sunlight deficiency and I know many of you are too! Today as I write I need lights on in the house wherever I go and although it is I am in the morning when I go out in a minute I will have to turn on the car lights. I have spoken to you about the importance of light in our ancestors lives before but I came across this again recently while I was looking up Candlemas.

The festival, first in Christian form in the 6th, has been designed to commemorate the 'churching' or purification of Mary as commanded in Leviticus 12:6-7; and the candle-bearing is understood to refer to what Simeon said when he took the infant Jesus in his arms, and declared that he was a light to lighten the Gentiles.

It was an important festival but by the Reformation had become an occasion for superstitious nonsense. Candles that were given out were watched to see whose would burn the brightest and longest as they would surely see God's favour that year! The stumps of the candles were kept to ward off storms and disease. It was said that the Yule log must be lit with this candle for a true Christmas celebration.

Hardly surprising then that Henry VIII decided something had to be done about this and gradually it was faded out by law. But for many years it was still the custom to say 'God send us the light of heaven' when the candles were lit at night.

I wonder though if this was a perfectly worthy celebration of an important event in Jesus' life, full of symbolism and meaning for us still, and which has been taken out of Free Church life. 'Throwing the baby out with the bath water' I think is the phrase!

As I look back now to the real meaning behind Candlemas I am saddened by its loss, because I feel the richness of our worship and a means of teaching about Jesus has been impoverished by the sinfulness of humankind which so readily turns to the superstitious. Superstition creeps in catching us unawares in our thoughtlessness and much later on the Christian community feels the effects. The meaning of All Saints has been blurred by the superstitious celebration of All Hallows' Eve.

Would you say Michelmas is superstition or another lost festival?

Many 'free churches' don't celebrate Ash Wednesday and because I believe this impoverishes our understanding of Lent I still try to have a service. We burn the palm crosses given to us last year as a symbol of our continued forgiveness by God through Jesus' death and resurrection. To bring the point home we can, if we wish, touch the ash, a symbol of God saying to us 'Yes, that's all gone, it's over, start again!'

I do hope that you will be able to come to Ramsbury on March 9th at 7pm for this section service.

May Christ as a light illuminate and guide you,
May Christ as a shield overshadow and cover you,
In light defeating darkness,
In wisdom conquering foolishness,
In trust overcoming fearfulness.

(Candlemas Blessing)



Rev Susan Holden

LENT TALKS 2011

Marlborough Churches Working Together

This year MCWT has linked the Sunday readings for Lent with works of art of all kinds that have struck the speaker as interesting – even exciting! If our preacher follows the lectionary readings we will be able to learn about their meaning for our daily lives on Sunday and then hear a gifted speaker delve a little deeper into the issues they raise through the art in the following week.

Beverly Lyle will lead the first session followed by Vincent Stokes, Tim Seago and Father John. Ian Cooper with Andrew Studdert Kennedy will lead the last meeting. After the speaker we will have tea and coffee before diving into groups to discuss further and the evening will close with worship together. Each church will be responsible for these basic refreshments. No cakes please!

It is difficult to choose an evening and Christchurch is always considered the ideal place. The first meeting is on Tuesday March 15th and will continue on that night. Please seriously consider not having your own house groups during Lent - the benefits are obvious.

I am not speaking myself because we needed a coordinator and somehow that became me!



Rev Susan Holden

CHRISTHURCH UNDER 4's

We have had a busy year and over 100 families have been supported since the group began. We held a "Children in Need coffee morning" last November raising over £60,

Weekly we do various craft activities including making a nativity scene at Christmas for the windows of the Wesley Hall,

There was a visit from the Mustard Seed book/gift shop

And the Christmas party held for 18 children plus parent/carers finished off the term with the children making decorations for the Christchurch Christmas tree and receiving gifts from Father Christmas around the tree, a special time for all.

We will finish off the term this year with the Easter party and the story of Noah

On a Pastoral note, to continue God's work as highlighted in our mission statement we are still in need of volunteers. At the moment we are just coping but I have fears for the future as two of our volunteers move on and as our numbers attending this week were 33 this will be a challenge. If any one feels able to come along and volunteer it would be a great help.

There is a lovely atmosphere at the group amongst the parents and children as well as the camaraderie of volunteers. You may be involved as much or as little as you want — you may like to make the tea or just come and chat with the mums and carers.

Please phone Mo Hill on 01672 514447

See the Group's Mission Statement on following page



Mo Hill

CHRISTCHURCH UNDER 4'S

(Messy Church)

Mission Statement

The group is run by parents for parents and their children.

We do not aim to 'get parents into church' but express the love of Christ through what we do and how we are as Christians. We show that we understand that parenting is physically, emotionally and mentally challenging. Sharing, sympathising and making available professional resources help. We seek to draw on whatever the local community has to offer providing it is broadly Christian in nature.

Led by The Spirit, the helpers seek to meet parents outside the church congregation (and its affiliated meetings) and build caring relationships, particularly with those who are isolated. No one should leave without having had a meaningful conversation with either another parent or helper.

The message of God's love for us through Jesus is communicated through
Bible based activities appropriate for this very young age
Displaying what has been made with a scripture verse for the parents to absorb
circle time – which includes the toddler prayer and song which can be used at home.
celebrating the major festivals of Easter, Harvest and Christmas. Easter and Christmas are celebrated in a party and linked to Noah and the nativity story respectively.

The generosity of God's love is expressed through the generosity of the congregation's support, both financially and through the volunteers. The leaders assess how much can be given from the balance every August to the church to help pay for power etc. We encourage the congregation to share their gifts, contacts and interests with the group.

The call to be Christ in the world is answered by
Fund raising e.g. Children In Need coffee morning
Having the prayer box visible at the front desk

Health and Safety

Christchurch Under 4's is part of Christchurch and therefore abides by its Safeguarding Policy.

RAMSBURY NEWS

Methodist Church services

Sun 6th February 10.30am Service at Ramsbury Rev Dean Louw.

Sun 13th February 10.30am local Preacher Mr Mark Cawte (Ramsbury)

Sun 20th February 10.30am H/C rev Susan Holden.(Ramsbury)

Sun 27th February 10.30am Rev Dean Louw. (Ramsbury)

If you have thought about coming to Church, but are not sure, please come and join us. You will be made very Welcome. We have lots to offer— so make this a good new Year!

Carol singing on Christmas Eve raised a grand total £107.54 for the Methodist Church. Well done all that came, and braved the cold!

We also received a cheque from the Charity shop in the village for £380 which will help to keep our church repairs going. Thank you to the Charity Shop!

Church & Hall available to hire. please call Sue Barnes 520558.

Coffee Mornings in February

Thursday 3rd 9.30am Cake stall.

Thursday 10th 9.30am Charity Stall

Thursday 17th 9.30am Charity Stall.

Thursday 24th 9.30am Card Stall.

If anyone would like to join us and run a Stall on the 2nd or the 3rd week of the Month at the Coffee Morning, please call me on 521085. 10% of sales are given to local Charities.

Julie Coe

Scenes of Alaska

A slide presentation evening presented by

Jackie Lampard and Peter Elliot

at Pewsey Methodist Church

on Thursday February 24th at 7:30pm

(Supper included)

Donations in aid of chapel funds

PEWSEY CHRISTMAS SERVICES

Due to the adverse weather conditions many outside of Pewsey village were sadly unable to join us for the Carol and Epiphany services so we thought you might like an idea of what we came up with this year.

Both services were a mix of traditional Christmas Carols and Readings interspersed with 'The Story' with a contemporary twist. Chrissie Whittington and Jackie Lampard came up with the idea of telling the Christmas story as a modern day two-part documentary entitled 'The Only Way Is Up'. This focussed on the difficulties faced by a less conventional young couple called Joe and Mary over the period of a year recording the major events of their lives.

Part one, Carols by Candlelight - The story retold!

The documentary maker established that Joe was born in Wiltshire but moved to Berkshire after his parents marriage broke down. He became an apprentice with a local chippie and eventually started his own small carpentry business which is when he met Mary. Mary didn't ever know her Mum or Dad as she was left in a cardboard box on the steps of the cottage hospital. She ended up in care and was eventually adopted by a well-off couple who sent her to a boarding school run by nuns. It was through the nuns that she got a job working at a home for retired nuns called St Thomas's, which they fondly referred to as the Heavenly Waiting Room, she likened the experience to having ten grannies all looking out for her! Joe and Mary got engaged and then, during a visit to her doctor, doctor Jesus Garcia, it was confirmed that Mary was pregnant even though she was still a virgin.

The documentary team caught up with the couple seven months later, near the end of her pregnancy. Joe had heard of that the council were releasing some low cost housing in a village called Pewsey but they had to be there on the day of the release to register or they wouldn't be considered. Despite Mary's reluctance Joe persuaded her to ride on the back of his motorbike with the promise that he would ride slowly, and avoid as many bumps in the road as he could!

The documentary team next caught up with them the evening they arrived in Pewsey. It was pouring with rain and Joe was desperately searching for somewhere for them to stay. Unfortunately most of places to stay in Pewsey were taken by people wanting to register for the cheap housing. A local lady offered the use her garage overnight which at least meant that they were in the dry. When the lady opened up her garage door it didn't have the usual garage stuff in it, it was being used to store other people's stuff! Still Joe and the lady did manage to make a comfy space for Mary to lie down: which was as just as well because the baby had decided to arrive! Thankfully it was a quick delivery with no complications except that there was no cot for the baby! Joe solved that one by 'borrowing' a shopping trolley from the Co-Op supermarket next door!

In a village news travels fast so the documentary team decided to call in at the local Community Tea Room and see if news of the birth of a baby in a garage had reached there yet. They met up with a couple of locals, the postman and a journalist, and asked them what they thought about the event but they were sceptical about the news. Then the butcher arrived confirming that there was a rumour that a baby had been born in a garage round the corner. The documentary team and the locals went to the garage where the journalist gathered the story while the butcher offered some lamb. They named the baby Jesus after Mary's doctor who reckoned he was a miracle child. The locals then left: the butcher to get a nice bit of lamb, the postman to carry on with

his rounds and the journalist to write his newspaper article. The documentary team left too.

Part two, Epiphany - The story continues!

The documentary team caught up with Joe and Mary for Part Two some short while after the baby's eventful arrival. They discovered that Joe and Mary had not been successful in getting one of the low-cost homes. When they made enquiries as to the whereabouts of the young couple and their new-born son, one local property owner was only too willing to tell them where they were, and he was not happy as they were squatting in one of his cottages. He was planning to pull the cottage down as it was so dilapidated, with no electricity or running water. He thought it outrageous taking a new baby into that situation and was applying to the Courts for an eviction order to get them out and had let Social Services know what was going on.

The plight of Joe and Mary had not gone unnoticed in the Village and visiting the local Tea Rooms again the documentary team came across three of the local worthies discussing Joe and Mary's situation. The Credit Union 'Banker' felt it was not right the young couple having to squat in that old cottage. He suggested looking into a Credit Union loan for them until they got on their feet as he was sure they would honour the debt, as there was just something about them! The Minister of Religion agreed that there surely was something different about this family. The congregation had got together some baby clothes and other bits and pieces for them. Word had gone out around the local Churches to find them some better accommodation and a job for the man, but so far had no luck. The Local Councillor, who also happened to be the local undertaker, was in agreement with the others that it wasn't right that that young couple are squatting in the old cottage. There was also the risk that Social Services wouldn't like it and could be after taking the baby away from them, at least until they could get themselves sorted out. He said the lad didn't appear to be afraid of hard work and was a trained chippie who had helped him out making up a coffin when his usual man was sick and even offered to act as a bearer if needed. He felt life was tough enough for them and also felt there was just something about them! So the locals decided to meet up later to look into ways they could help.

The documentary team next met up with Joe and Mary when the folk from the village arrived at the cottage. The Local Councillor said they had heard on the grapevine that the man who owned the place had applied to the Courts for an eviction order and had got Social Services looking into the case and they could be applying to the Court to take the baby into foster care at least for a while. Offers of help were then proffered: The Credit Union 'Banker' was pretty sure he could arrange a short term, low interest loan and had arranged a whip round giving them some cash to tide them over for a week or so. The Local Councillor had heard that there was going to be a release of some old MoD housing in Tidworth that they might have a chance of. The Minister of Religion had heard that the Army were looking for civilian workers to up-grade some of the barracks in Tidworth, so had spoken to a contact and arranged for Joe to have an interview. She had also got some cash from an anonymous donor to get him to the interview.

Continued on page 10



Course Details

Can parents stop their kids taking drugs? Marlborough & Surrounding Areas

Parents in & around Marlborough can find out '**How to Drug Proof Your Kids**' – on an innovative course that will benefit every parent concerned about drugs.

The first evening will run from **7.00pm - 9.00pm** on **Wednesday 2nd March 2011** at **Christchurch, New Road, Marlborough SN8 1AH**.

Exposure to drugs and alcohol is one of the major worries faced by parents today. 'Drugs' is a word that causes fear, confusion and denial. **How to Drug Proof Your Kids** is a community-based programme developed by national charity Care for the Family. It gives parents the information they need to encourage their children to have a responsible attitude towards drugs including cigarettes and alcohol and helps them steer their children away from their harmful use.

The course will be run by Mo Hill and Jo Vincent who have both trained as Licensed Facilitators of **How to Drug Proof Your Kids**.

"We're really excited to be running this course in Marlborough," says Mo. "I think every parent is concerned about this issue and they will find 'How to Drug Proof Your Kids' very helpful in allaying fears and building real relationships with their children. Of course there are no guarantees by doing the course your child won't experiment at some point, but it will help you give them the best opportunity to make healthy decisions."

Mo and Jo are two of nearly 400 facilitators from across the UK who have been trained by Care for the Family to facilitate **How to Drug Proof Your Kids** in their local communities. Parents attending the six-session course will discover some of the facts about drug use in their community and learn strategies for communicating with their children and encouraging them to make informed choices about drug use.

How to Drug Proof Your Kids covers:

- Parenting through prevention
- Building a strong foundation
- Creating integrity and responsibility
- Communication and participation
- Creating a 'safe network' and peace of mind
- Recognition and affirmation

Mo and Jo are looking forward to meeting parents at **How to Drug Proof Your Kids**. *"Most parents are worried about this and are wondering where to turn,"* explains Jo. *The good news is that you don't have to become an expert on drugs to be aware of how your children might be at risk. We tell parents some of the facts about drug use, but more importantly we tell them how to engage with their children, discuss drugs with them and give their children the means to make sensible and informed choices."*

Places can be booked by calling Mo Hill on (01672) 514447 or emailing moj.hill@btinternet.com

PEWSEY CHRISTMAS SERVICES

Continued from page 8

The documentary team stayed on after the three locals left to see what Joe and Mary would decide to do. A local lady warned them that the police would arrive soon with the man who owned the place. He had an eviction order and was determined to get them out, even muttering about having them arrested for trespass. Following this tip-off Joe encouraged Mary to get packed up quickly and get the next bus to Tidworth with the baby while he followed on the motorbike. They now had enough cash to find a B & B until they could get sorted and who knows maybe one day they would be able to move back to Pewsey to live. So the documentary maker and team left, perhaps to return to Joe and Mary's story a few years down the line to see what happened to them, and find out more about their son born in such unusual circumstances.

WORSHIP IN THE ANTIPODES

During our recent visit to the other end of the world, we were able to experience four very different morning services - two in Australia and two in New Zealand. We arrived in Adelaide from Brisbane at the end of November, in time for the second Test Match. The weather was glorious and having made enquiries as to the kinds of worship available within the Uniting Church in Adelaide, we ventured forth to Pilgrim Church, in the city centre. I make no apology for the fact that we discounted several places offering *inter alia* modern, contemporary or all-age worship together with appropriate music! The information we had had indicated that it would be a choral service and what a treat it was. Superb organ with a superb organist together with a very good, robed choir. In addition, an excellent preacher. The church is a union of Methodist and Congregational traditions and appears to be flourishing.

Onward to New Zealand and the start of the famous Abel Tasman walk, across wonderful mountain scenery in the north west corner of South Island. No, we didn't actually do the walk as it was raining and takes about 4 days to complete! But we did find ourselves in the small town of Takaka, where we attended worship at the tiny, timber-built Anglican church. A warm welcome, good singing and a congregation of about 60. The service was led by Graham and Faith and the vicar, one Mr Thatcher, (no relation), preached. Over coffee after the service, we were invited to lunch by Graham and Faith so joined four others of their friends for a very happy few hours.

Christmas morning, in one of the most beautiful spots you could imagine - Akorua, on the Banks Peninsula, south of Christchurch. (If you want confirmation, speak to Mervyn and Nina). We had sussed out the church scene and hit on the Presbyterians. But what a sad affair it proved to be, as we endured the most joyless service you could imagine. The whole thing was summed up for us by the fact that the hymns, having been projected onto a screen, omitted the last verse of "O come, all ye faithful" i.e. "Yea, Lord, we greet Thee, born this happy morning". Needless to say, two visitors from Marlborough led the congregation in the unaccompanied singing of the missing verse!

Finally, we found ourselves in Sydney for the New Year. The central Methodist City Mission is, as you would expect, right in the middle of the Central Business District. Again, part of the Uniting Church, its premises are housed on the ground floor of a huge block. Very modern, with impressive facilities. The service was not dissimilar to our own style and the congregation was "mature" but warmly welcoming. Interestingly, in a large room adjacent to the church, a simultaneous service was being held for a wholly Chinese congregation. Imagine our surprise to hear the singing of "Our God is great" in Chinese.

Wherever you find yourself in the world, we would recommend that you avail yourselves of the opportunities there are to sample different styles of worship. You will be amply repaid.



Rob Harris

TRAVELS IN AUSTRALIA

At the end of our recent visit 'Down Under' we enjoyed a brief visit with David Harper (well known in Christchurch) and his daughter Judith and her husband Paul. An hour's train journey west from Sydney took us to Penrith, where David and Judith collected us; a further hour's drive found us on the edge of the Blue Mountains. Unfortunately, the weather was not too kind and we were denied some of



the striking vistas of that area. Nevertheless, we were able to get one or two atmospheric snaps of the cliff faces emerging from the mist! (I think they are atmospheric anyway!) Onward then to the 10 acre 'block' in Cabbage Tree Road where David now lives, in company with 4 or 5 sheep and a couple of alpaca - an idyllic spot with lovely views. The next day we went with David to Richmond, a small town of about 6000

folk, where we were shown St Andrew's Uniting Church, and where, of course, David is organist. A lovely Victorian building, still with pews, for it is a Heritage site so cannot be altered significantly. The church also has a very impressive set of modern premises used for a wide variety of activities. Their minister,

interestingly, is Korean.

A shuttle bus back into Sydney and thence

to the airport, brought our Australian visit to a happy conclusion. David sends his love to all at Christchurch and looks forward to being with us again in the sum-



Rob Harris



Alison Harris