

MANNA matters

Newsletter of MANNA GUM.

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News from Manna Gum

In March Kim led the *Arts of Home Economy Weekend* at Campbell and Tanya Holt's farm near Nathalia. As last year, it was a fantastically productive time, involving bread making, pasta making, cheese making, bottling and preserving, composting, care for soils and fruit trees, and an impromptu tour of a biodynamic dairy farm (phew!). More important than the skills being learnt is the process of getting together to share practical things that add richness to our lives. This is something that just about any church community could do itself. Many thanks to the Holt family and Janet Ray for all their work.

In March we also led a short, albeit ambitious, series on a Christian approach to political economy, exploring a Biblical lens on such insignificant issues as the state, capitalism and social change. We answered all the big questions, but unfortunately we didn't take notes ...

In the coming term (23 April - 11 June) Jonathan will be running an eight-week series on the Household Covenant in Greensborough at the All Saints Anglican Church. Check the website for details. The dates have also been set for this year's *A Different Way* week - check the back page for more information.



Good Work

by Jonathan Cornford

It is a sobering thought, but most of our waking hours on this earth will be spent in some form of work. Whether it be paid or unpaid, recognised or unacknowledged, outside of the home or inside the home, the way we approach work is a large part of the way we approach life. And if we remember that, according to the Bible, God is profoundly interested in our *whole* life and how we live it, not just some quarantined-off spiritual bit, then all this places the issue of work very high on the agenda of Christian discipleship.

William Temple, Archbishop of Canterbury during the Second World War, once wrote that:

Some young [and we could add, older] people have the opportunity to choose the kind of work by which they will earn their living. To make that choice on selfish grounds is probably the greatest single sin that any young [or older] person can commit, for it is the deliberate withdrawal from allegiance to God of the greatest part of time and strength.

That is a serious claim about the importance of how we think about work; nevertheless, it is probably uncommon for Christians to treat the decisions they make about work as a central component of how they try to follow Jesus in the world.

On the whole, I think it is fair to say that our attitudes to work are primarily absorbed, like so many other things, by a process of subconscious osmosis from the broader culture, and that is a culture where work has become deeply unhealthy. On one hand, the approach of many to work is driven by ambition, the need to succeed or the quest for higher incomes, and is too often manifest in overwork, for which families and marriages pay a price. On the other hand, an unsettlingly large number of households have no member involved in any purposeful work, an absence which also has dire consequences on the health of families. In the middle are a large number of people for whom work is a source of stress and distress. How can we step back and gain some perspective on this troubling picture?

Work in the Bible

The Bible has much to say about the place of work in our lives (for the moment I am not making any distinction between formal and informal, or paid and unpaid work). Most strikingly, in Genesis 2:15 we are told that participating in work is fundamental to our created identity and purpose: 'The LORD God took the human and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it.' Without some purposeful work to undertake, we are not fully ourselves. This is not just a theological proposition, it is an observable fact: in the previous two editions of *Manna Matters* (Sep 2012 and Dec 2012) Tim Trudgen has demonstrated just how destructive the absence of meaningful labour has been to Aboriginal communities. As the Apostle Paul says, 'For we are what he has made us, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand *to be our way of life*' (Eph 2:1). (Yes, Paul really said that!)

The Bible is imminently practical in recognising that we must work to sustain ourselves and our families and affirms that there is both dignity and meaning in labouring to live. Paul says that 'Anyone unwilling to

Without some purposeful work to undertake, we are not fully ourselves.

work should not eat.’ (2 Thess 3:10). However, there is also recognition of the profound satisfaction that we derive from ‘good work’- that is, work that is intelligently, skillfully and creatively undertaken in the pursuit of a good purpose.

In Exodus chapter 35, a passage generally too obscure and boring for modern readers of the Bible, there is a fascinating picture of what good work looks like in the instructions given for the construction of the tabernacle and its paraphernalia. Critically, for a people who have just been liberated from slavery in Egypt, the passage begins with yet another reminder to keep the Sabbath – good work can only be good when it has boundaries and limitations placed upon it, and balanced with time for rest and relationships. Those who are to undertake this good work are those with a ‘willing spirit’, those whose ‘heart was stirred’, and those who are ‘wise hearted’ (most translations these days say ‘skillful’, however the old King James rendering is probably closer to the sense of the meaning). How interesting that the critical job criteria are wisdom and orientation of heart – not criteria that are high in today’s job application processes.

In the Biblical vision, good work has a central place in the good life. However, as in all things, the Bible also lifts the veil on the dark side of work. For the fallen Adam and Eve cast out of Eden, and then for Cain after them, the vision of good work had become a curse of futile toil. Their distance from God is immediately evidenced in their experience of work as hard labour (Gen 3:17-19). In Exodus, the archetypal story of liberation for God’s people is a story of liberation from (amongst other things) bad work – bad because it was work under compulsion and under bad conditions, and bad because it was work serving a bad purpose, which was the building of Pharaoh’s empire.

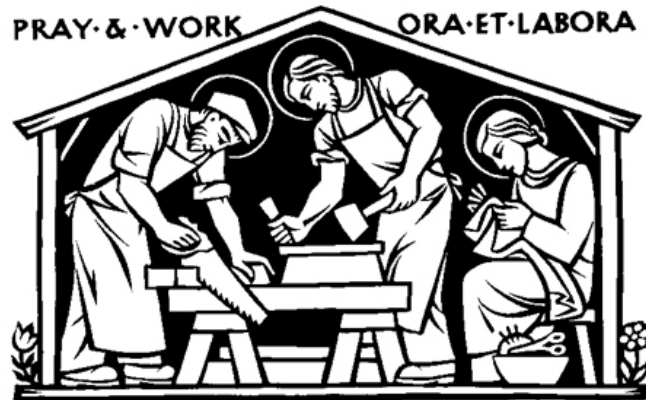
The Bible also asks critical questions about our *attitudes* to work, the sort of work we undertake and the *underlying motivations* of our work. Perhaps most importantly, the Bible is consistently scathing about devoting our working lives in the pursuit of a hollow dream of wealth, comfort and success: ‘You fool!’, Jesus says when he tells the story of a man who wasted his life in the pursuit of wealth and comfort (Luke 12:20). The Biblical challenge is to think critically about how we invest our limited time and energy on this Earth:

Why spend your money on what is not bread,
and your labour on what does not satisfy? (Isa 55:2)

This prompts us to think about what things are actually worth

our labour.

But there is also a danger that, whatever the purpose of the work, the work itself becomes its own end – the thing that is valued above all else, the thing that supplies all meaning and sense of purpose. In biblical language this is called idolatry, and it is a consistent refrain of the prophets that humanity is consistently drawn to worshipping the work of its own hands (eg. Isa 2:8).



Moreover, not only is the Bible interested in the underlying motivations and purpose of our work, it is fundamentally concerned about the ethics of the work we do. There is no room in the Bible for any justification of work that involves harm to other people and to the community as a whole. Much of the work of the prophets is given to exposing and denouncing the systematic injustices of the ‘respectable’ world of commerce and business. In the eyes of the

prophets, just because something is legal or even standard practice, does not make it acceptable and does not change the fact that people are suffering because of it:

The LORD enters into judgment with the elders and princes of his people: It is you who have devoured the vineyard; the spoil of the poor is in your houses. What do you mean by crushing my people, by grinding the face of the poor? (Isa 3:14-15)

Of course, the most profound ideas about work in the Bible are found in the New Testament. The New Testament writers are distinctly uninterested in how ‘important’ our work is or what our place in society is. Whoever we are and whatever our skills or position or lot in life, there is one big idea about work that applies to us all – we are called to participate in the work of God. This core idea is articulated in many different ways, again and again. Most

profoundly, the resurrected Jesus says to the disciples in John 20: ‘As the Father sent me, so I send you’ (v.21). And what is Jesus’ work that has now been entrusted to us? Paul puts it most succinctly in 2 Corinthians:

All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God *was reconciling the world to himself* in Christ, not counting people’s sins against them. And *he has committed to us the message of reconciliation*. We are therefore Christ’s ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. (2 Cor 5:18-20)

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The job with which we have been entrusted is nothing less than participating in the healing of the brokenness of the world. This means working to restore the broken relationship between humanity and God, the broken relationships between people, and the broken relationships between people and creation. This is such a big job that we all have a part and we are all needed – there is no such thing as unemployment in the Kingdom of God!

Paul expects that members of the Christian community will be involved in widely varying work. However, he urges all of them to think about how their work, whatever it is, can play some part in God's work. Although there are many jobs to be done, and many different things needed, the most important thing is to think about our work in terms of *the contribution* it makes to the community

(1 Cor 12:7). Paul talks of 'co-workers in Christ' (Rom 16:9), being involved in 'good works' (Eph 2:10), 'works or service' (Eph 4:12), and work that 'builds up' rather than pulls down (1 Cor 10:23-24). 'So then, whenever we have an opportunity, let us work for the good of all, and especially for those of the family of faith.' (Gal 6:10)

Living out good work

So how do we use the Biblical vision of work to inform the choices that we make in a world in which unhealthy attitudes predominate? Most of us would admit that we are unhappy about some aspect of how work unfolds in our life. While this is an important and necessary realisation, we must also realise that we cannot 'solve' it all in one fell swoop. We need to think about what changes we can and should make carefully and prayerfully, and learn to accept the things we cannot change (for the time being at least). Some things we will be able to act on immediately, and some changes we are going to need to work towards over a longer period of time, perhaps even years. Below are a range of things to think through.

1. Standards of living

If we are wanting our working lives to contribute to the greater work of God, then we cannot think about this apart from the issue of standards of living. How much do we need? How we answer this question is the central determinant of the major time allocations in our life between paid employment and other endeavours, and also in what type of work we pursue. Can we live with less? If we can answer yes to this question, then we can potentially liberate a whole realm of creative choices in the world of work (see 'Less is more: Living on a low income', p.13).

2. Rethinking household work

When it comes to the work of the household, we have all got the wrong end of the stick. With the industrial revolution men became wage earners, divorced from the home, and household work became the lot of women, unrecognised,

unvalued and isolated. Now women understandably want to abandon such stigmatised and isolated work, the result being a convenience economy in which no-one wants to undertake the labour of running a home. Nevertheless, while women have moved more into paid employment they still tend to bear an unfair burden of household labour.

However, there is perhaps no more satisfying work than the mutually shared and skilfully undertaken work of running a productive household economy that gives health to and strengthens the bonds of all its members. Indeed, it is hard to

imagine – especially when one considers the raising of children and the care of the elderly – more important work. A healthy overall attitude to work requires *both men and women* to re-appraise much more positively the work of the household, and to renew a sense of partnership in it.

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3. Non-paid work

If we are prepared to live with less, then one option that is opened up is the possibility of working part-time, to give more time to *good work* that is not paid. In Christian ministry circles this idea has long been referred to as 'tent making', from the Apostle Paul's example of making tents to fund his work. However, tent making should not be restricted to



‘Christian ministry’; it can be applied to volunteering in the community sector, working for a church community, building creative ventures in community, caring for family, or pursuing a richer, more productive, more sustainable and more healthy household economy. For some people, undertaking paid part-time work still needs to be ‘meaningful’ work for them; for others, as long as it pays the bills, is not unethical or degrading, then it is just fine.

4. *Choosing paid employment*

‘What job should I choose?’ This is the big question for many school leavers entering study, or many graduates entering the workforce. It is also increasingly a question for many who have been in the workforce for a long time. Everyone has different abilities, skills and education, and the range of options in paid employment for each one of us are quite different. If we are seeking to align our paid work, as much as we can, with God’s work, then there are a number of things to think through:

- (i) What are you good at and what do you enjoy? This is obviously an important consideration. It is true that sometimes we really are called to undertake things we don’t enjoy and don’t feel particularly good at, but mostly God wants to employ the gifts and passions that we have.
- (ii) Is the work you are considering in any way damaging or harmful to people or creation? There are some jobs that Christians clearly should not do. Many people could agree that Christians shouldn’t be involved in any way with the arms industry, pornography, gambling or tobacco. Some people feel that Christians should have no part in advertising or speculating on financial markets. And there are large grey areas – what about the pharmaceutical industry, which has an appalling ethical record, but which provides a service which can (when done well) alleviate much suffering? These questions cannot be answered here, but asking and wrestling with such questions absolutely should be part of our framework for making decisions about employment.
- (iii) What contribution does this work make to the world? Can we seek employment in activities that contribute something positive to the world? It is no accident that Christians tend to be over-represented in the helping professions – doctors, nurses, carers, teachers, aid workers and social workers – and this is as it should be. However, we should remember that the world needs far more professions than these – we really do need good farmers, plumbers, mechanics, IT people, builders, and thousands of other jobs that many people hardly consider to be important. Whatever the job, the ultimate question for us all is ‘Who does my work serve?’. Does it serve my personal ambitions, does it serve someone else’s greed, or does it serve need in the world?

There are few places in our society where following Jesus comes at any real cost, however the workplace is one arena where participating in the good work of God might just require us to suffer.

5. *How do you perform your work?*

Whether you choose to be a doctor, social worker, plumber or mechanic, the extent to which your work actually makes a positive contribution to the world depends entirely on *how* you do your work. Most of us have experienced how in a time of desperate need, a *good* doctor, mechanic or plumber – someone who does their work skillfully, sensitively, compassionately and with understanding – is something like a God-send. However, getting a *bad* doctor, mechanic or plumber at such a time can just add to the suffering. In essence, doing a good job (by a Biblical definition) requires not just skill, but being fully conscious of the human dimension of our work – that is, its impact on people.

Whatever your work, if you are trying to follow the ethic of Jesus in your workplace, there is a very good chance that at some point it will require you to perform your work differently from the norm. What would it mean, in

the context of your job and workplace, to take seriously the example of speaking truth to power, forgoing personal ambition, standing up for the weak, acting justly, and always showing concern for human need? Let’s be honest, these can be seriously inconvenient

traits in the workplace, and by many standards today they may even be considered ‘unprofessional’.

It should not be surprising that trying to follow the way of Jesus in the workplace – whatever the latest ‘best practice’ fad – is highly likely at some point to bring you into conflict with some other workers or management. Nevertheless, my hunch is that this is something that not many Christians have really thought through. There are few places in our society where following Jesus comes at any real cost, however, the workplace is one arena where participating in the good work of God might just require us to suffer. I am certainly not advocating that people go looking for workplace martyrdom, but thinking through the potential cost of faithfulness is something that every Christian should do.

6. *Beyond work*

Whatever work we do, it will never be fully good if it comes at the price of relationships with our families, communities and with God. The task-focussed nature of work tends to accumulate collateral damage, which is why the Old Testament is so strong on keeping the Sabbath: ‘You shall keep the sabbath, because it is *holy* for you’ (Ex 31:14). For us to be whole, to be a part of healing, there is a need for all work to come to a stop. ‘Be still and know that I am God.’ Good work is by definition work with limits. We need to give serious attention to finding the time and the practices that nurture health and connection, and that *re-create* us.

Ultimately, as in all things, the calling of a Christian approach to work (whether paid or unpaid) is to be a witness to the health, wholeness and justice – that is to say, the *goodness* – of the kingdom of God.

An Update on Climate Change

The bad news and the good news

By Thea Ormerod

Thea Ormerod is the President of the Australian Religious Response to Climate Change (ARRCC), a multi-faith member-based organisation.

If you have been following the news about climate change, the issue can be quite depressing. Add to the mix the weakened commitment of the Australian public to climate action and the strong temptation is to either despair or denial. As Christians we place our trust in God and this is right, but there is also a massive movement for change afoot and it's time Christians as a whole joined in more wholeheartedly.

In this article I hope to sketch out the developments regarding climate change over the past three years: the scientific developments, the legislation, action here and internationally and the possibilities for Christian engagement. As you will see, there's reason for optimism too.

The science

First, the bad news. From the first Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) assessments report (1990) to the fourth (2007), scientists have shown increasing certainty about the IPCC's climate modeling and their conclusions that climate change is largely human induced. The fifth assessment report is due in 2014.

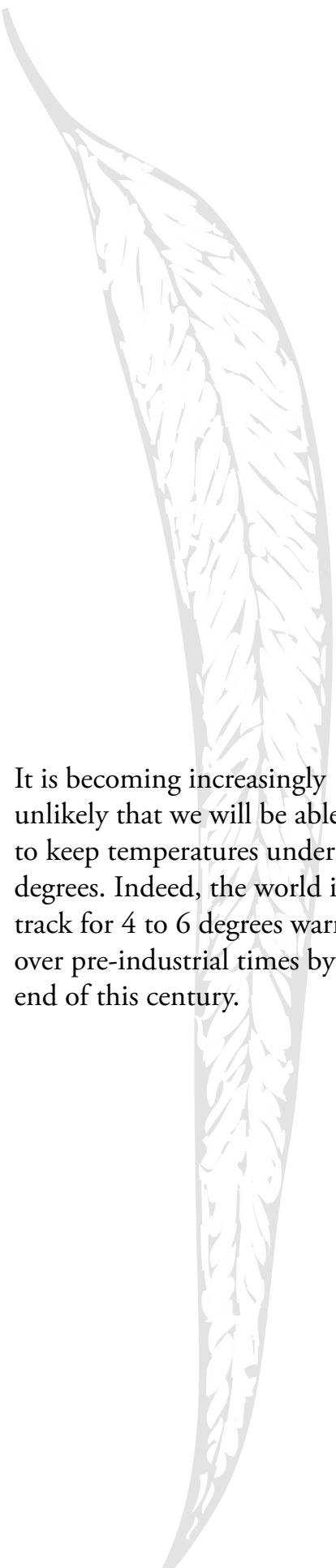
In the meantime, dozens of scientific reports have shown worrying global trends. By late 2012, reports by PricewaterhouseCoopers, the World Meteorological Association, Global Carbon Project, Potsdam Institute and World Bank, among others, concurred that it is becoming increasingly unlikely that we will be able to keep temperature rises under 2 degrees. Indeed, the world is on track for 4 to 6 degrees warming over pre-industrial times by the end of this century.

Those of us who value social justice are particularly concerned for the fate of people in the developing world. In the words of the World Bank report: 'It is likely that the poor will suffer most and the global community could become more fractured and unequal than today.'

More locally, the Climate Commission released a report in January called *Off the Charts: Extreme Australian Summer Heat*. The report says that the number of record heat days across Australia has doubled since 1960, and much greater increases in extremes can be expected in the next 30 to 50 years.

International Politics

Since the Copenhagen Climate Summit in 2009, negotiations at the annual UN Conference of Parties have produced only modest results. Most NGO observers, scientists and representatives of developing countries are exceedingly frustrated by the slow pace of progress. There has been no increased ambition from the major emitters to strengthen emissions reduction targets since Copenhagen. Also, there remains no practical, detailed pathway towards achieving the goal of a \$100 billion



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In the summer of 2012 the Greenland ice sheet melted faster than at any time in recorded history.

a year Green Climate Fund for financing the adaptation needs of developing countries.

The best that can be said is that the Doha Climate Summit in 2012 concluded with an agreement to streamline negotiations towards a new legally binding agreement by 2015 that covers all major emitters, including the USA and China.

The take-home message is that the governments, business sector and civil societies of each country need to scale up their own efforts to reduce carbon emissions, regardless of what happens at international negotiations.

Climate skepticism in Australia

While the scientists have become more and more certain of the difficulty we are facing, Lowy Institute polling shows Australian opinion has become less and less convinced about the need to act. The proportion of people acknowledging that global warming is a pressing problem requiring action that may involve significant costs has declined from 68% in 2006 to 36% in 2012.

There are a few reasons for this: (1) Vested interests have supported a small minority of vocal opponents to the scientific consensus. The intention is to create enough doubt to prevent people from actively seeking solutions. (2) The relentless campaign waged by the Opposition against the Clean Energy Future legislation, or carbon price. (3) The willingness of the Rudd Government to walk away from political confrontation over what it earlier described as 'the greatest moral challenge of our generation'. (4) The failure of international climate talks to secure an equitable and binding agreement on emissions reductions.

Australian politics

Here's where the good news begins. The Australian political scene has changed dramatically since the days of the Carbon Pollution Reduction Strategy (CPRS) of the Rudd Government. At that time Labor was resistant to any input from the Greens, despite strong opposition to the CPRS from climate activists. After Julia Gillard became Prime Minister, she changed this situation by inviting input from the Greens, the Independents and the Coalition into the design of new legislation. The Coalition, by then under the leadership of Tony Abbott, refused to participate.

As a result of this broader participation in its design, the Clean Energy Future legislation (or carbon price) was a significant improvement over the original CPRS. It received broad support from the climate movement, which organized the 'Say

YES' campaign, despite some environmental organisations remaining critical. Among its advantages over the original scheme are its limit on the use of international offsets to 50%; allowing voluntary actions to be additional to actions required to meet the 20% renewable energy target;

that free permits to industry are guaranteed only for five years instead of ten.

The legislated measures are enough to ensure no new coal-fired power stations will be built. According to Tony Mohr of the Australian Conservation Foundation, in the six months from mid-2012 when the carbon price was introduced, 3,000 MW worth of generators have been retired. This is the equivalent of three coal-fired power stations or like taking 5.8 million cars off the road. No new coal-fired power stations are being planned.

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Australia and Kyoto

It is encouraging that Australia has joined those few countries who have signed up to the Kyoto second commitment period. According to The Climate Institute, this locks both major parties into their promises of up to 25% emission reductions on 2000 levels by 2020. Also, by the end of 2013, Australia will need to show the world it has a clear plan to increase its contribution to the Green Climate Fund.

The Australian Religious Response to Climate Change (ARRCC) advocates for an emissions reduction target for Australia of at least 40% on 1990 levels by 2020. This is in line with the science and within our technological and economic capacity. We also advocate that Australia scales up its adaptation financing from the \$600 million it has committed so far, to a figure closer to \$2 - \$4 billion annually. We have the moral responsibility and we have the capacity to do it.

International action outside of UN Climate Talks

Internationally there are some large well-resourced NGOs working tirelessly on climate change. Examples are Greenpeace International, ClimateWorks Network, 350.org and Friends of the Earth International. Large faith-based NGOs include Interfaith Power and Light in the USA and Operation Noah in the UK. There are also hundreds of thousands of smaller grassroots organisations and groups mobilised.

ClimateWorks is particularly impressive. Their 2011 Annual Report documents international progress: ‘In 2011 the deforestation rate in Brazil was down by 75 % from its peak in 2004; in Europe more than 70 % of new power plant capacity added in 2011 was from renewable resources. As next-generation power plants increasingly become low- or zero-carbon emitters, retirements of high-emitting power plants are accelerating.’

The Climate Institute notes that national carbon pricing schemes are now in place in 34 countries, with schemes also in place in certain States in the US and Provinces in Canada. China is piloting schemes in six provinces and cities. Professor Peter Newman, at last year’s Climate Summit, told us that car use is declining globally and metros are being built in 82 cities in China and 42 cities in India.

China, as the world’s biggest investor in renewable energy, is largely responsible for the rapid drop in the price of solar panels in recent years, and solar technology is becoming ever more sophisticated. The global market for clean energy has grown by 70% and is now worth about \$260 billion annually. *Bloomberg New Energy Finance* reported that more money was invested in renewable energy in 2011 than fossil fuel power sources, such as coal and gas.

Scope for action

The call to action is both personal and structural. Ultimately we need to move away from the blind pursuit of economic ‘growth’ and replace it with the pursuit of human and ecological well-being. We need to re-imagine human

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prosperity and transition to an economy that encourages lifestyles that reflect ecological sustainability and justice. Such a transition is entirely consistent with all the religious traditions which advocate that human flourishing derives from our relationship with God, each other and the Earth, from

justice and service to those in need and from contentment with simple living.

For us as Christians, in day-to-day terms this could translate into making lifestyle changes that will reduce our impact on the environment. These are changes such as using public transport more, insulating our homes, cutting unnecessary plane travel, moderating our use of air conditioning, eating less red meat, buying more locally, composting and using more renewable energy. Switching to 100% GreenPower



CHRISTIAN CLIMATE ACTION KIT

The Australian Religious Response to Climate Change has a new set of resources for church communities who want to integrate caring for creation into their common life, including their operations. Attractively presented, the downloadable Christian Climate Action Kit is full of all sorts of useful resources, inspiring spiritual, theological and liturgical material as well as the scientific, strategic and practical information.

www.arrcc.org.au/climate-action-kit



or installing rooftop solar systems are among the most effective measures people can take. There are now 1.5 million Australian rooftops with either solar hot water or solar panels.

Such actions are a matter of personal integrity even if their global impact is obviously small. How can we, especially those of us who are Christians, allow a gap between our claims to care about creation and our actual consumption practices? Moreover, these are the only actions over which we have full control.

Our individual efforts are multiplied if we can bring our communities on board. A whole community can raise awareness among its members, make the community's operations more sustainable and integrate caring for creation into their liturgical services. The Australian Religious Response to Climate Change has an excellent online up-to-date Christian Climate Action Kit now available to help make this more possible (see box). Other kits are being created in the Islamic, Hindu, Jewish and Buddhist traditions.

To make the most far-reaching difference, however, structures that drive high fossil fuel consumption need to be changed. Hence, the major campaigns in Australia advocate for:

- Halting the expansion of coal mining and export
- Moratorium on coal seam gas mining and exploration
- Closure of coal-fired power stations
- Increasing the renewable energy target and the use of renewable energy
- Protecting Australia's biodiversity and the Great Barrier Reef
- Building local resilience against extreme weather events

The election will be a major focus this year, with many NGOs advocating for strong action on climate change while remaining non-partisan. A common approach to this challenge is to develop an environmental scorecard for each of the parties, although it's ultimately difficult to avoid the appearance of support for certain political parties.

Beacons of Christian hope

Already there are dozens of Christian parishes, networks, schools and organisations around Australia that have responded to the call to take action. These communities are beacons of hope for other Christians who understand the importance of responding to the 'signs of the times' (Matthew 16:4). Some of the organisations are the Pacific Calling

Partnership, TEAR Australia and Caritas Australia, and some of the parishes are Templestowe Uniting Church, Victoria, and Holy Trinity Anglican Church in Tilba Tilba, ACT.

They have had to overcome the barriers we all face in attempting to address this issue – preoccupation with more immediate demands, human denial, concerns about costs, the risk of getting people off side and the temptation to believe that our own efforts will make no difference. Caring communities such as these demonstrate that the barriers are not insurmountable.

In the past, Christians have been leaders in various movements for social change. Once again it is time for Christians to be active agents for change in response to this arguably most urgent moral challenge of our time.



Anglican Bishop Tom Wilmot and Uniting Church Associate General Secretary Rosemary Hudson Miller, pictured with an article in *The Western Australian*, 'Holy alliance on climate change', 13/12/12

Economics of Remote Aboriginal Communities

Part 4 - Building indigenous economies from the ground up

by Tim Trudgen

What is the basis of economically sustainable indigenous communities? In the Northern Territory it is the 'growth town' model that predominates, but it is built on a false understanding of sustainable economies. The emphasis on developing large 'urbanised' centres seems to assume that economic development is a consequence of adequate infrastructure. The argument often compares indigenous communities with towns in southern Australia of similar size, noting that they have more than 200 local businesses. But this whole concept is flawed, because they forget that those 200 businesses are only possible because of the income provided to these towns by the surrounding farming and production industries. Historically, where economies have been pioneered, farming, mining and production came first and the town followed.

I raised this with the NT Government Treasurer in July 2010, only to be told that the Government was looking at ways they could create fishing and mining jobs, as examples. Her comment made it clear that this is something the Government would solve *for* people by *bringing* industry into the region, rather than something that would grow out of local ownership. She inadvertently confirmed our fear that the NT Government's only plan regarding economic development was to import big business as the solution to economic failure.

A similar mindset is demonstrated in the amendments to the Land Rights Act, where a special category of headlease was created – leases specially designed to prevent land owners putting restrictions on the leases that might limit who the Government can give subleases to. The argument for this is to encourage private land ownership and business investment. Thus the Government solution is to make it easy to sell the view, location, and the local labour to external investment – and the rich. Now, if all we care about is economic growth and not people, this will work. Aboriginal land would be worth millions of dollars, if it is opened up to anyone with money to spare. But an open-slathe external investment pathway will have the opposite of the intended effect. It will result in local Aboriginal people becoming slum dwellers, while industry and holiday homes are built up around them. Cheap labour will be imported, simply because it will be easier to do so than to train locals. (This already happens in our community – Asian immigrants and southern low-income earners are used to run the few privately owned shops and takeaways and almost all trade and labour positions for government developments are filled by outside contractors, rather than training locals).

However, a ground-up model that encourages local ownership and the production of local products is possible, if the Government is willing to go slower. Local land owners all over Arnhem Land are keen to support investment and to build enterprises and to partner with others, but want to do so on their terms. Current partnership models undercut ownership by traditional owners – mining agreements are a classic example. They often offer small royalties, jobs, infrastructure and services rather than encouraging participation in ownership of the mining enterprise. The fact that indigenous people don't know that they could ask for a significant share in the project works to the mining industry's advantage, but ultimately

... the NT Government's only plan regarding economic development was to import big business as the solution to economic failure.

undermines the opportunity to include Aboriginal people in the economic development and avoid some of the antagonism between mines and the local community.

Local ownership is required to make possible the genuine participation of the people in the effort of developing sustainable enterprise. But it is most important in primary production. Why? To avoid exploitation of land, environment and the local community. This is a well know phenomenon recognised in the study of appropriate native wildlife industries. Where landholders, farmers, and indigenous groups are given exclusive rights over wildlife products, such as ivory, skins and exotic pets on their land, they come to value the native species, work to encourage the growth of the species on their land and use the species in a sustainable way that ensures the survival of the species. When animal and plants do not belong to anyone, there is no one to protect them as an asset and the result is poaching and exploitation. This is a major problem even in government controlled industries, such as the fishing and timber industries. Companies who are given licenses to cut or catch, work to maximise profits without considering the impact on the land or the fish population. For them, a 'bird in the hand is worth two in the bush', because they can always get a license to go elsewhere, and they have to get the absolute most out of the license while they have it.

This same phenomena of exploitation plays itself out in indigenous communities. For example, community gardens in Arnhem Land consistently fail. Although these are typically set up as 'community owned' ventures they ignore the fact that Aboriginal communities are usually made up of more than a dozen different corporate entities (the various clans or tribes), with only a few of them being actual land owners under Aboriginal law. These gardens suffer from seemingly self-defeating exploitation as kids and other locals steal the

crops before they are even ripe. After years of work when the mainstream personnel hand over a productive farm to the indigenous trainees, the garden quickly disintegrates, through lack of participation and stealing by the community. The local workers have no basis for ownership of the garden in the eyes of the community. The 'white fellas' were seen as the owners, having ultimate control and the ability to arbitrate between the different tribes' interests. Now, from the community's perspective the workers are not traditional owners and they are also not 'white fellas', so they can't claim ownership under Aboriginal law or mainstream laws. Thus, the garden disintegrates under the competition of the various corporations (clans) for the garden, the disempowerment of the workers and 'grab while you can' attitude under an authority vacuum.

Local ownership is required to make possible the genuine participation of the people in the effort of developing sustainable enterprise. But it is most important in primary production.

Where indigenous land owners are given control, an entirely different situation can eventuate. Their corporation has an interest in sustaining the enterprises and its productivity, because these resources are their assets. Furthermore, because the traditional owners have

legitimate land title, they have the recognised authority to give control to other entrepreneurs and corporations (clans), providing workers with the legitimacy, security and the authority they need.

However, be warned – simply declaring that land owners are in control is not enough. They need to take control of their own motivation, exercise their authority, and they need to understand the industry they are supporting. All the other aspects of the cross-cultural environment must be considered, because these barriers undermine motivation and control. Promoting ownership is more about allowing people to take up ownership and take action where they want to, rather than about any kind of 'handover'.

I believe the same benefits extend to the case of managing



Maningrida is a Northern Territory 'growth town' which now has a larger non-indigenous population than indigenous population.

townships. When land owners have ultimate ownership, they will work to make it a peaceful and profitable environment for the long term. Because they can, and because they have confidence that it is not going to be taken from them. They must be able to rely on the income and stability of the assets of the township into the future, even for the generations to come. Land for accommodation and enterprises in townships should be considered a primary product in and of itself. In our East Arnhem communities local traditional land owners want to manage this resource for the benefit of all. It is the same elsewhere, but this cry is usually ignored as a result of stereotypes that label land owners as blockers of development.

Unfortunately, it seems the mainstream systems seek constantly to undermine indigenous ownership. The most obvious example is the recent re-invention of the township lease on Aboriginal Land (often referred to as 99 year leases). This current model, on the surface, is designed to include and engage traditional land owners and their representatives in managing townships and the profits from them. Once a lease is established, the traditional owners sit on a committee to make recommendations on all matters regarding the use of land, the issuing of leases, investment in the townships and the profits from rent. All rent then also goes to the traditional owners. It is a good model, but for one vital design flaw. The town lease is not held by the local indigenous land owners, but by a statutory body. The director of that body has the final say on all matters regarding the lease. So who will really control decision making? Not the traditional owners but the statutory body. The result will be that land owners will come to treat the management of the town lease as a political game, with the various land owners competing for control of income. They will play up to the Balanda bureaucrats to get their trust and support over and above others. This game will turn away land owners who truly love the land, and others willing to play the game once again will turn into rich beggars.



The mainstream seems to believe that indigenous people, and especially land owners, are too incompetent to manage their land, or that they are out to exploit it. But this view, if there is truth to it, is a result of models that insulate indigenous people from real decision making. Until now, some traditional owners have lived as exploiters, because royalties without responsibility is all that is offered. The current models for economic development continue to perpetuate this model.

Real local ownership encourages sustainable and sensible use of primary products such as land. Instead of enterprise without responsibility, we must offer people ownership and control, with all the responsibilities that come with it. The Government must allow Aboriginal people the job of building their own future on their own land – even though they will make mistakes along the way – and support them with the information, education and practical support they will need. Under these circumstances, we will see primary industry appear out of the very ground they own, in ways the rest of us never expected.

Tim Trudgen is the Managing Director of Why Warriors Pty Ltd. He has worked closely with indigenous people from North-East Arnhem Land (Yolngu), Northern Territory, Australia, since 2001. Today he works as a cross-cultural educator and as an Enterprise Facilitator to help Yolngu develop their economic and social endeavours.

Volunteer Opportunities

The Arnhem Human Enterprise Development (AHED) Project is the not-for-profit project of Why Warriors Pty Ltd. Our mission is to empower Yolngu and other First Nations people to live out their full potential.

Building and landscaping working party, Galiwin'ku, June/July 2013

The AHED team is looking for a working party (maximum total of 8) to join us in Galiwin'ku, (Elcho Island, Arnhem Land NT) for up to two weeks in the NT school holidays in June/July 2013 (during the period 22 June - 21 July) to assist with urgent renovations and landscaping needed for the team's accommodation.

Other volunteer positions being sought:

- Project manager, website redesign
- IT support for Yolngu enterprise

Go to: www.whywarriors.com.au/ahed-project/volunteer-opportunities.php

Less is more

Living on a low income

by Jonathan Cornford

When Kim and I were married in 1995, we resolved at the outset that as an expression of our desire to work for justice we should try to 'live simply'. Living in Townsville at the time, we had hardly any idea what this meant and virtually no example to follow, and we have since discovered that 'simple living' can be quite a complicated matter. However, one thing we understood right from the start was if simple living was to have any meaning or relevance, it required living off less money than the norm. Since then, this seed of an idea has sent down deep roots into our faith and come to be a way of life that we cherish.

In the first few years of our marriage we earned more money than we have at any time since. Kim was working at the Tax Office and I had a postgraduate scholarship, together amounting to about \$45,000 a year – a respectable sum for a young, childless couple in 1995. Recognising we could live on a lot less, we lived off only one income and saved the rest. In 1999 we moved from Townsville to Melbourne to live in an urban mission community and our income for that year dropped to \$0 (we lived off savings). In the last few years, with two children in tow, our household income has risen slowly back to about \$45,000, which, once inflation is factored in, is about 65% of what it was in 1995.

According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics and other measures of wealth we are a 'low-income family'. We have qualified for the Low-Income Health Care Card ever since it was invented, and in fact, according to the University of Melbourne's Institute of Applied Economic and Social Research, our weekly disposable income for the last few years has been below the Australian poverty line (see table).

Having consciously chosen this position must reflect a truly sacrificial way of living, right? Wrong! Although we have made conscious decisions to live on less *than the norm*, our lives are far from ascetic and could in no way be characterised as poor. We live in a comfortable house, have a good car, two computers, a stereo, TV, microwave and all sorts of other household conveniences and comforts; our fridge and pantry are full of ample food, including things that up until very recently have always been considered luxury foods – coffee, chocolate, ice cream, chips etc. Indeed, although we are now considered to be below a supposed poverty line, our standard of living, when measured in material consumption and life ease, is at a level that my grandfather, a middle-level civil servant, only approached late in his life. When we travel in Laos, or even when we visit the houses of our refugee friends in Melbourne, we are painfully aware of just how fantastically wealthy and comfortable we are. The question of whether we are rich or poor is entirely dependent on where you stand and according to the Global Rich List website (www.globalrichlist.com) more than 90% of the world's population would consider us rich.

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Our gross weekly income 2011	\$852	Average Australian gross household weekly income 2010 (couple with kids)	\$2000
Our weekly <i>disposable</i> income (gross minus tithe & tax) 2011	\$717	Australian poverty line 2010 Weekly <i>disposable</i> income	\$754

All this reveals a great deal about our society's perceptions of standards of living. The current political blether is dominated by talk of how 'average' Australian families are 'doing it tough', and this supposed fact will become a mainstay of the coming federal election campaign. Recently, Federal Labor MP Joel Fitzgibbon stated: 'In Sydney's west you can be on a quarter of a million dollars family income a year and you're still struggling.' There is little doubt that there are many families under financial stress, however, there is virtually no consideration of the role played by our wildly inflated perceptions of standards of living requirements in generating this stress. As a culture we have completely lost sight of what is actually needed to furnish a decent, dignified and satisfying life.

Let me state this plainly: although we now find ourselves at the bottom end of Australia's income ladder, at no point have we ever experienced hardship, or felt poor, and financial stress has been blissfully absent from our lives. We would describe ourselves as 'comfortable'. Indeed, without any hint of romanticising, choosing a lower standard of living than the contemporary Australian norm has been, without a doubt, a blessing to our family. But before explaining this, let me briefly summarise our steps towards living on a lower income.

How we have come to live on less

Over the course of our marriage, the simple idea of living on less has solidified into some core practices that shape our household economy.

1. Tithing

From the outset we decided to tithe a minimum of 10% of our gross income, and to make this decision the foundation stone of our household budget – it is the first line-item of the budget, to be taken out before rent, food or bills. Tithing, when it is healthy, is not some rules-based religious obligation, but a rich practice with layers of meaning. I have written at more length about this in a previous *Manna Matters* (August 2011), however, at a practical level, tithing is an active and voluntary decision to live on less money than you otherwise could.

2. Part-timing

Since leaving Townsville we have chosen to work or study on only a part-time basis. At first this was just the result of practical decisions, but it has become now a central commitment about how we want to live our lives. Once again, the reasons for this are multi-faceted, however, the end result is less money.

3. Living frugally

Living on a lower income necessarily means doing without a bunch of stuff that the advertising industry tells us we should have. To do this, we have endeavoured to keep luxury food as luxuries (things we really enjoy once in a while) rather than normalising them; we have rejected the need to constantly upgrade our technology when it is working just fine; we have rejected the need to take up many new technologies that we have so far lived perfectly well without (and whose contribution to our quality of life we are dubious about); we have never had a credit card (we use a Visa debit card), but

live by the rather more simple standard 'if you don't have the money, do without or save up' (although we wouldn't apply this to buying a house); we buy as much as we can – clothing, car, furniture, technology, household goods etc – second hand; we are endeavouring, bit by bit, to produce as much of our own food as we can.

4. Paying more

To start with, our idea of living simply involved trying to live as cheaply as we could, and involved buying lots of generic brand groceries. Then we started to learn about the global food system and trade system and realised that groceries can only be sold so cheaply by doing harm to people and the planet. This put us on a long journey to try to be responsible for the impact of what we consume, and has led to the realisation that for many things we need to pay more for more ethical and sustainable products (eg. fair trade, organic, more local, durability, recyclability, efficiency etc). Of course, paying more means you can afford less, which is a pretty effective way of reducing the volume of what we consume.

5. Budgeting

It sounds boring, but we have found budgeting an essential practice to living on less. Any budget, whether it is the Federal Government's budget or our household budget, is a statement of priorities and therefore a statement of values and therefore a statement of belief. More practically, doing a budget once in a while is an excellent way of discovering what we are actually spending on various things, which can often be surprising. It provides the opportunity to reflect on our use of money, and to begin to think about what things we could change to better align with our values.

Why live on less?

What began as a fairly simple and one-dimensional choice to live on a lower income has turned out to have a whole lot of other dimensions – I might even call them dividends. It turns out that in God's created order, what is good for my neighbour and good for the earth is also good for me. Here are some good reasons to make the choice for less:

1. Care for the least (the justice dividend)

At a simple level, a decision to live on less is a conscious decision to limit the vast and growing chasm of wealth inequality between us and the rest of humanity. But more than that, the reason why the consumer economy can provide us with so much stuff so cheaply is because other people, elsewhere, are being ripped off. By limiting our participation in that economy, we are in effect limiting its harm.

But isn't it better that I keep buying stuff so that poor labourers in China can at least earn a living? This is indeed a major argument of the proponents of the current system. It is a complex question with lots of underlying assumptions, and much more than we can discuss here, but I believe the short answer is 'no'. This will have to be a topic of discussion for a future *Manna Matters* piece.

2. Care for the planet (the ecological dividend)

Whatever the complexities of whether the consumer economy benefits poor labourers in the developing world or not, the simple fact is that the planet cannot sustain our current levels



Some of the fruitful dividend of having more time (but less money): bottled tomatoes, tomato sauce, relishes and chutneys, jams and marmalades, cordial, bottled fruit, home-baked bread, home-made soap and fresh produce from the garden.

of consumption. No one benefits from the collapse of the biosphere. The choice to live with less is, at its core, a choice to use up less of the produce of the earth to ensure that more is available for the other creatures who share this planet, and for future generations.

3. *Time for important things (the relational dividend)*

What began for us as a choice to live off a lower income has primarily become a choice for more time. Time, we have come to realise, is the critical ingredient needed to take steps to explore more ethical and sustainable ways of living. It is also the central requirement for any communal action and sharing with other people, such as in church communities and food cooperatives. But perhaps more than anything, the immense value of time – inestimably more valuable than mere money – became clear to us when we started a family. The first five years of childhood before school fly by so quickly and can never be got back, and one of the things we are most thankful to God for is having had time and space to fully enter into this beautiful season of life. We are not up to the tricky teenage years yet, but it is not hard to see that, in a different way, time will be important then too. And finally, the time that Kim and I have had to explore all these things together – all rewarding forms of unpaid work really – has been a rich blessing to our marriage.

4. *Breaking the yoke ... (the spiritual dividend)*

Every day, in thousands of ways, we are bombarded with messages about how we should look, what our homes should look like, what toys our kids should have, what gadgets we should have, what sort of career success we should pursue, what life should look like ... To make a discipline of saying no to these things is freedom itself. With the rejection of the whole package of consumer life comes the liberation of seeing just how hollow it all is. Then comes the realisation, 'I didn't make a sacrifice in saying no to all this - I was saved from it!' Why else did Jesus make renunciation such a central part of following him: 'those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will find it.' This is

not intended as a test of faith; it is the gateway to freedom.

5. *Discovery of a witness (the evangelical dividend)*

Saint Francis said: 'Preach the gospel at all times, and if necessary, use words.' The scandalous idea of the New Testament is that God's message to humanity cannot possibly be communicated by mere words – it requires lives. The word must become flesh, and it is because of this that choosing to live with less in an evangelical act.

We have noticed that when, through our lives, the dominant idols of our time are challenged, people notice. Questions are asked, conversation follows. Sermonising is not necessary. We do not have to use religious words, but what we cannot hide is that for us, the journey of trying to follow Jesus has indeed been good news. Not just in some spiritually abstract way that is confoundingly difficult to communicate (that too!), but in the real, earthy fruit of life in abundance. As Cardinal Suhard once wrote:

To be a witness does not consist in engaging in propaganda, nor even in stirring people up, but in being a living mystery. It means to live in such a way that one's life would not make sense if God did not exist.

I believe the primary evangelical task of Christians in the twenty-first century is simply to live well in a world dominated by bad living.

This is something of our story, and obviously it would be silly to generalise our particular experience as some sort of 'model' for others. Nevertheless, our experience is one more concrete example of a truth that I believe all followers of Jesus should heed, and that is that a good life – an abundant life – does not require anything like the material standard of living that our culture tells us is 'normal'. In fact, there is little doubt that this standard of living is an obstacle to rich and full living, and it is certainly bad for the planet. For us, choosing less has been a choice for *more* of the things that a consumer economy can never supply us with, and they just happen to be the most important things of all.



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1. Provide resources for Christian groups to understand and practise the social, economic and political implications of the Gospel of Christ; and

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