

A much needed wake-up call: Jesus said, 'Follow me'

A wake-up call

In his review of *Seeking Justice* by Keith Hebden (p.23) Canon Donald C. Macdonald confesses that the implications of his own agreement with the author's main thesis for his own 'priestly praxis are terrifying and yet irresistible'. The book, he writes, 'offers me a much-needed wake-up call and motivation to do more to work for justice and true peace'.

I trust and pray that this issue of *Green Christian* is also a wake-up call for us all for our own daily discipleship praxis, whether we are priests or not!

Joy in Enough

The Joy in Enough conference, the latest CEL initiative, together with partners A Rocha and Speak was a wake-up call for all who participated. When we live in a culture which defines the way we live by its definition of consumerism – 'a social and economic order that encourages the purchase of goods and services in ever-greater amounts' (Wikipedia) what does it mean to follow Christ? To follow Him means a confession that the implications of discipleship are both terrifying and yet irresistible for our way of life. This initiative will offer us a much-needed wake-up call to live justly and joyfully with enough (see pages 4-7).

Resistance

Canon Macdonald also comments that Hebden 'demonstrates a convincing and well-illustrated defence of non-violent resistance and of the importance of compassion in the motivating "force" in opposing oppression.'

Sandra Dutson's powerful story of participating in non-violent direct action is another illustration. It is resistance motivated by obedient discipleship and the irresistible need to change our way of life. 'We feel are up against "principalities and powers", she writes. Her resistance resulted in this expression of faith: 'I feel grounded in love and hope in ways not really experienced in such depth before' (see

pages 10,11). Macdonald's book review recommends *Seeking Justice* for the 'passionately- argued defence for a political gospel and a political Christ that draws out the power and subtlety of that attack which both Jesus and Paul made on vested interests and powerful elites and cliques of their day'. Even this issue's poetry page is a 21st century example of the passion of the spirit of Christ resisting both the power of the multi-nationals in the first poem and our attitude through educational policy towards children in the second (see page 22).

A community of resistance and hope

So this issue of *Green Christian* also offers a much needed wake-up call. A reminder that being a disciple of Jesus, the Christ, is a journey. It is a journey of change responding to the state of the dominant culture. So it is that our own CEL structures and way of being will need to be in continual transition. In the article on the centre pages (14-16) George Dow and Paul Bodenham reflect on new ways of belonging to CEL. They envision a way of life appropriate to our CEL calling and maybe a change of name. Remember that these two issues are separate. They do not rely on one another. But both envision change.

Jesus said, 'Follow me'

The Rule of St Benedict includes a dedication to a life of change. This is the realization that the whole of life needs to be open to change, with an open and free response to the challenges that being a disciple of Jesus brings. It means a constant letting go, responding to biblical demands in daily life. We are all in a constant transition. Michael Davies' honest *In Transit* article (page 12) is an exemplary illustration of this journey. My response to organisational change is a response to the question: How best can this cherished movement of CEL encourage me to follow Jesus and at the same time reveal to me when I have so normalised, in my life, the dominant

culture that I have neglected to answer the Lord when he calls: 'Come, follow me'?

Follow me

This is the wake-up call of all wake-up calls. It is the call to follow Jesus. This is not about the inconveniences of organisational change but it the radical call to so change our lifestyles that we resist the destructive status quo and, because we resist, we reveal hope.

Once again *Green Christian* illustrates what that sort of discipleship means to ordinary Christians who live in extraordinary times. ■

Dr. Miriam Pepper, our Book Review editor, starts a new job

The Uniting Church in Australia in NSW/ACT has started a new initiative called 'Uniting Earth Ministry'. The project is strongly rooted in the Church's understanding that we are servants of God's mission, which is the reconciliation and renewal of the whole creation, always on the way of encounter with the crucified and risen Christ. The project asks: What does it mean to live a faithful life in the present context of our changing awareness of the place of human beings within the whole creation?, and how do we confess the Lord in fresh words and deeds in this context (of accelerating human impact on the planet's ecology and our increasing understanding of our relatively short part in the story of life on earth)?

Miriam together with her colleague the Revd Dr Jason John will be working in partnership with others to

- resource, enable and engage congregations and faith communities to engage faithfully with environmental issues they face.
- Initiate and develop, and support others to develop new forms of Church with a focus on ecologically-aware expressions of faith
- Develop and deliver ecotheological education for mission
- Mentor those engaged in learning and developing leadership skills in ecologically engaged ministry
- Engage directly in public theology and prophetic ministry.