



**Australian Christian Mission**  
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## **Australian Christian Mission 2006 End-of-Year Report**

After returning from Furlough in 2005, the physical limitations of my back injury made life miserable for a while. I was able to get into a specialist by December and in less than a week I was on the operating table!

It was a real answer to prayer that my back was relieved, but it made my start to 2006 a little delicate, to say the least. Nevertheless, it's been one of our busiest years yet.

Our search for a new home began upon our return from Furlough in 2005. By December (in fact, while I was in the hospital) we had our loan approval and were actively looking around. Well, as much looking as a bad back would allow! But we were never at peace with anything we looked at. Even the very few times we became keenly interested in a house, something would always happen to close the door. But we believe it was God closing the door on the areas we were looking in. He obviously had something else in mind.

That's when we began looking further out of town. We came across a new subdivision being built about 20 minutes from Charlestown and soon discovered that this was part of a much larger plan by the City Council, the local governing body.

The Council had approved plans to build 3000 new homes in this area to expand the residential area westward, naming it Cameron Park. With plans for new shops, roads, transport and schools, it's easy to say that we were impressed by the vision of the developers. Even more impressive to us was the glaring lack of churches or church activity in this area. The proverbial light bulb was going off in our heads.

In the weeks to come our search for a suitable block in the area were intensified by the new facts coming out in the local media about Cameron Park. Within weeks of our settlement on a new block of land, the Council had announced that instead of 3000 new homes, there were to be more like 5000 new homes. Just a couple of weeks later, the Council announced plans to move their governmental offices on the edge of the new development, along with a complex of commercial buildings and the redevelopment of the transport interchange to transform it into the main interchange for the entire city! God is big!

Early in the year I met with the elders of the Charlestown Church of Christ to discuss our future with the congregation. While I explained that we would be moving on to a new ministry, I also revealed that we were more than willing to make it a gradual transition, giving the church till the end of our current term in Australia to find another minister (about 2 ½ years from January '06). They accepted this warmly and with gratitude to the many individuals and churches in America that had helped them so much over the years.

Plans began to take shape in that elders meeting that would carry us through 2006 with a sense of urgency in calling a new minister. By the time of the Annual General Meeting of the church in March, the church was setting aside the equivalent of two days of pay to get used to the financial impact of employing a new minister. The plan was to gradually move to three days, then four, etc., until by the time we were moving on, the church was more than capable of employing their

own minister.

Providing the finances for a new minister is only part of the story, though. As many churches can sympathize, there still needs to be a suitable candidate to hire. It is particularly difficult in a nation that has very few training institutes.

Though we have been working hard on the International Bible Academy (IBA) in Toowoomba, Queensland, it is still in its infancy and has not been running long enough to produce candidates. There is a non-instrumental Church of Christ Bible College in Sydney that seems to be getting back on it's feet again, but finding candidates willing to work in an "instrumental" setting may prove to be too difficult.

In May of 2006, I traveled with Jim Newman, the administrator of IBA, to New Zealand, where we had heard many positive things about the South Pacific Bible College, a non-instrumental college in Tauranga. From the reports we had from others, and the experience we had at the college, they and the students seemed much more open to working with the instrumental churches. This was good news for Jim and the IBA, but out of only about a dozen students I could find none suitable to interview for the position at Charlestown. Most were not even near the end of their studies.

So the quest for a new minister at Charlestown continues. We have several men who are capable of preaching so the prospect of waiting a bit longer doesn't seem to be a worry. Many have suggested that we find someone from America, but most of our local leaders feel that this would be a move "sideways", rather than "forward". There is a keen sense amongst all of us that the Lord might want an Australian minister here. Please pray with us that whoever is found, it would be what the Lord wants.

In August, several of us from Charlestown traveled down to Sydney to partake in a joint meeting between the non-instrumental Churches of Christ, the former International Church of Christ, and the instrumental Church of Christ (Christian). There were two American speakers invited to the event, Marvin Philips from the non-instrumental churches and Kerry Allen from the instrumental churches.

This was a ground-breaking meeting in Australia. There have been joint-meetings in the past, but never to this extent and with such reference to real, working relationships amongst the churches. Much of the momentum of what has happened in the U.S. has carried over to Australia and other countries around the world.

Already there has been cooperation between our groups for the purpose of education and church planting. Please pray for us and the others as we continue to look for positive ways to work together for the Lord's Church.

From June to August we were able to work with two interns from Ozark Christian College in Joplin, MO. Matt Wilmeth and Jared Henke contacted us through a mutual friend, Dr. Leonard Thompson, a professor of Missions at Ozark.

It was a pleasure to work with these two young Christian men who will undoubtedly become strong ministers of the Gospel. Please pray for them as they continue their studies at Ozark. Though we don't know what their futures hold, both have a standing invitation to return to Australia for short-term trips, or even full-time, as the Lord leads them.

Progress at the church during 2006 steadily increased in almost all areas. Our church service attendance and offerings were both the highest average of any year since we've been in Australia, which supports the vision of calling a minister to the church.

The youth programs of the church have continued to be the catalyst for church-wide growth. In January, a new Sunday school program called "Kidzone" was introduced on Sunday afternoons, rather than mornings. While we lost a few children by going to this format, the increase in attendance surpassed the previous year.

This clearly shows that it was the right decision and will provide for additional growth. Sunday mornings are increasingly viewed as "family-time" in Australia. Most non-Christian families felt that the timing of our Sunday school was encroaching on their family time. Kidzone on Sunday afternoon seems to have been the solution.

The Kids' Club program was introduced in 2005 and continued strong in 2006. It is for 8 to 12 year olds on a Thursday night, the traditional "late shopping" night for most families. This intermediate program provides a solid transition for those between the children's and high school programs.

High School Youth Group continued as our single most successful program in 2006. Average attendance grew once again to just below 30. This impact of this growth has been phenomenal. Many high school kids are now coming along to the Young Believers discipleship program on Sunday mornings, which is held in our home, and attending church services as well. At least half of them have no other family members attending church.

The increase in attendance has led the church to consider purchasing another 15-passenger bus, since our current 15-passenger just isn't able to cope with the numbers. We're also looking forward to moving into our new home quickly, as we are overrun by high school kids in the parsonage for the Young Believers program. Having an empty parsonage will allow us to spread out a bit more!

Through our work with the Youth Group, we learned of a unique opportunity in one of the local high schools in our area. Special Religious Education (SRE) has been a part of the public school curriculum since it's institution in Australia. While we have been involved in teaching in the primary schools, we learned that the high school hasn't had SRE for almost thirty years!

Our church spearheaded a combined church effort to re-establish SRE in Whitebridge High School. The Department of Education guidelines make it necessary for the establishment of SRE to be with as many local churches as possible, which was no easy task.

Even after we gained the support of local churches, the resistance from non-Christians was dramatic. A few teachers and parents who were known atheists and/or humanists really created quite an uproar for such a vocal minority. The Lord and the law was on our side, though, and SRE classes were given to a small number of 7th grade students whose parents supported the move.

We're happy to say that by the end of 2006, the administration agreed to allow SRE classes for all 7th grade students indicating a Christian religion, over 60% of the entire grade! Most of the remaining 40% simply left the religion portion blank on their enrolment form and will be given an opportunity to sign-up once school begins. This is all in addition to the original participating students, who are now in 8th grade.

In a school with over 1200 students, there are over two-hundred students in 7th grade alone. Imagine how many lives can be touched by the Gospel once we have established an SRE program for each year! Keep praying!

During our Furlough in 2005, we shared with our supporters the need to update our budget. Though our financial support has grown as the years have gone by, we have never asked for an official increase in monthly support from all of our supporters. With a growing family, the expense

of day to day living in Australia and a weakening American dollar, it became necessary.

In response to our proposed budget, almost every supporter has increased their giving at least slightly, with some having increased significantly. As a result, 2006 has seen our average monthly support reach \$5540. The average support for 2004 was \$4800/month (2005 was a Furlough year, which causes our monthly support to fluctuate too much to get an accurate monthly average).

Our monthly budget for 2007 remains at \$6245. That leaves about \$700/month short of our increased goal. Please pray that our monthly support will increase accordingly. The shortfall will not force us to leave Australia, but it will be increasingly difficult to meet our needs.

We pray that the Lord would continue to do great things in Australia in 2007. Thank you to each individual and church that has partnered with us so faithfully during 2006. We look forward to many years of fruitful service together for our Lord!

In His Grace,

Tim, Dawn, Lauren, Leah & Anna Yates