



April 2008

Divinity and Religious Studies ALUMNUS NEWSLETTER

To the University of Aberdeen,

Many thousands of people in Australia can realistically look to Aberdeen with considerable gratitude. It was there that the seed of a now well established tree was sown.



Dr Francis McNab

It began in the late 1950's when I stumbled on two people who would be my mentors and firm friends over the ensuing forty years. One was David Cairns (practical theology) and Malcolm Millar (psychiatry and mental health). When I left Aberdeen with its PhD, I set out to bring together religion and psychotherapy and psychoanalysis under the name of The Cairnmillar Institute. As it rapidly grew in size and significance, it became closely linked with my ministry at St Michael's, the main city church of the Uniting Church, in Melbourne.

Now 38 years later, we reflect on what is a unique organization in Australia – a large city church with over 80 committees actively doing its work and a vigorous mental health institution that has treated literally thousands of people from many parts of the world, and has established a school for training counsellors and psychotherapists to graduate diploma and Master degree level.

Together, both organisations have a staff of some forty people. My own work almost reflects the PhD research I did on 'The divided mind and the complexities of schizophrenia'. I am the executive minister of St Michael's. This entails preaching most Sundays and being the responsible leader of the whole organization. Similarly at Cairnmillar, I am its executive director – involved everyday in a schedule of consultations and responsible for the effective

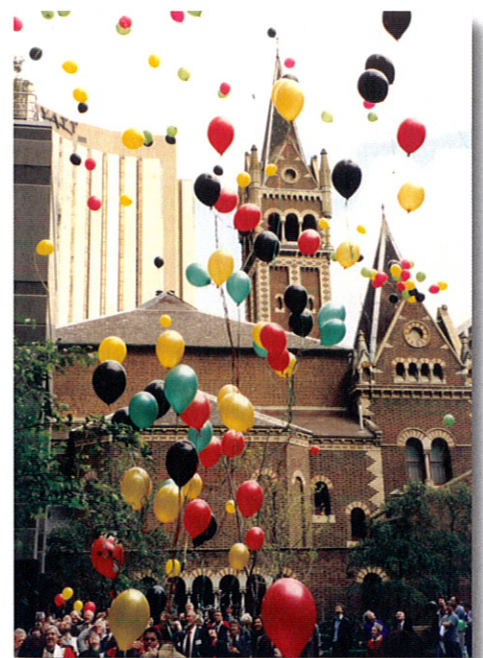
operation of all its staff. In addition, I have specialized in the treatment of severely traumatised people and have developed the first Mood Clinics for the more effective intervention in negative mood states. This not only involves a constant treatment schedule, but I also teach classes in Trauma and Mood Therapy and have written over 25 books in the dual fields of my work.

My role in both organizations has ensured that they are thoroughly supportive of their common causes. Several years ago, I had no difficulty persuading the congregation to dismantle a rarely used side chapel, and in its stead construct a dramatic sanctuary for people who have suffered a terrible grief or trauma, and for people who, every day, are living under a lot of stress. Within a few weeks, we raised over \$250,000 from people, church and non-church, who wanted to see this sanctuary established. It consists of traumatised rocks, quiet flowing water and special lighting. This "quiet place" called Mingary – (for good reason after Mingary of the Isle of Mull), has visitors every day from people of all walks of life, city workplaces, the hospitals, distant rural places and tourists from Japan to Scotland, from America to Romania.

As we search for many pathways to be a supportive therapeutic community of inspiration and hope, so we search for ways to a New Faith that speaks meaningfully to people



St. Michael's Church, Melbourne



Celebration

in our very secular society. People recognize Cairnmillar as one of the pre-eminent bodies in its field; so also people travel many miles (kilometres) every Sunday to take their place in St Michael's – itself recognized by the International Scholars of the Jesus Seminar, regularly searching for ways to be a relevant church of the 21st century.

St Michael's recognizes the hypnotic obsession with violence, destructiveness and waste across cultures and deeply in religion. Like Michael of biblical writ our task has been to propose an alternative way. A bonding of a positive in-depth psychology with a therapeutic liberating religion with significant and far-reaching effects on people's health and well-being, their coping with life's crises and life's boredom, their successful ageing, their enjoyment of the arts and their minds' pursuit of life's many 'secrets' and mysteries.

Anyone can explore a little further how this congregation operates by going to its website www.stmichaels.org.au. They will also see the scope of the Cairnmillar programs and services from its website www.cairnmillar.org.au.

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