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Newsletter
from Neil & June Prott



Supporting and encouraging gospel ministry, including listening, resourcing, strategizing, trouble-shooting, brain-storming, networking. Our work is: Bible-based, freelance (supported by friends), trans-denominational, strictly confidential.

May 2005

Dear Friends,

I write this letter with a heavy heart. My recent trips have taken me to the drought-ravaged western parts of the State. It seems like another world when compared with conditions in the Sydney region. Apart from the inconvenience of water restrictions, we have not suffered any other deficiencies. We've noticed some fluctuation in the prices of fruit and vegetables, but our shops are loaded and our gardens are green.

How different it is further west! There are large paddocks without a single blade of grass - even dead grass. I drove 100km in one stretch without seeing a sheep or cow. In a circuit from Nyngan to Bourke to Cobar not one roo was sighted. Even the emus have made themselves scarce. On properties where some sheep remain, ewes have been walking away from their lambs because they haven't enough to drink to produce milk.

I spoke to a farmer in his 80's. "How's it going?" "I've been here all my life and this is the worst I've ever seen it. We've been handfeeding our stock since May, 2001." "You've been doing it every day since then?" "That's right. There is no grass. We have many dams on this property. All but two have dried up, and they are only one-third full. When they dry up, there'll be no stock left on the place. I don't know what we're going to do."

Currently, 87% of NSW is drought affected with 8.7% marginally affected. Only 4.3% of the State is "satisfactory". The impact of such severe and prolonged drought is really starting to have serious effects on the whole rural infrastructure. Already farmers have walked off their properties. Businesses in the towns are struggling and churches are feeling the pinch financially. One farmer's wife told me they had spent \$73,000 to buy hay but could spend no more. Although some forecasters believe there could be some relief in the north of the State, there is little hope for those in the southern half and west of the Great Divide. Some speak of it as the worst drought since 1900 while others are convinced it's the worst since white settlement. The city of Goulburn expects to have no water before Christmas and is now under severe restrictions. In some places they have a "green drought". Enough rain falls to germinate grass seed and bring up green shoots. But there is no run-off. Rivers, creeks and dams are dry. To the untrained eye the appearance of some paddocks gives a false sense of security.

What can Christians do? No doubt all of us have been praying for rain. We need to ask for steady, soaking rain. However, personal support for the people in the frontline is very important. If you have friends or relatives in the bush, why not drop them a note or give them a call? Let them know they're not forgotten. Link up with a church in the north-west, central west, or south-west of the State. Pray for them, visit them. Take some parcels of nice food and/or quality toiletries: small luxuries to encourage people. If you know people who are hand-feeding stock daily offer to stay for a week to let them have a break away.

At a recent church service out west we prayed for particular missionaries in Kyrghystan! From the midst of their difficulties our rural brothers and sisters remember others far away. Please pray for the Christians in our west.

I've been excited to have opportunities to train rural Christians in ministries such as public Bible reading, preaching, small group leading, and evangelism. If every Christian would take another step higher in serving our Lord it would make a big difference. Our aim should be to improve our character and performance and serve Him with excellence. This applies to every Christian in every situation. More country people will be needing to take on ministries they have not done before. Equipping and training are very important. If you know of any churches or individuals in country areas who would like me to help them in this way, please let me know.

Before we leave the drought, can I encourage you to look at the Bible references to "drought" and "famine". You will find much food for thought and prayer. You can access NSW drought maps on this

website: <http://www.agric.nsw.gov.au/reader/drt-area>

Is there a lesson to learn from all this? If we find our joy in our circumstances, we will swing between deep discouragement and exhilaration. When we rejoice in our Saviour, we can "rejoice in the Lord always." (Phil 4:4).

One current interest is in maintaining or reviving good music for church services in country NSW. If you have any suggestions they would be most welcome. We are talking about churches where there may be no musicians, or even power-points! Do you know of any CD's that provide musical backing for good hymns and/or choruses?

We deeply appreciate your prayers and financial support as we serve our brothers and sisters in the bush. Thankyou for helping us to help them.

Sincerely,
Neil and June

PRAYER POINTS

1. Praise the Lord as our great Creator and Sovereign Ruler over all.
2. Give thanks for our great and undeserved salvation.
3. Adore the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ as the one, true, and living God.
4. Thank Him for the high privilege of being able to serve Him in every aspect of our lives.
5. Rejoice in the fact that, no matter what the circumstances may be, our standing before God as His sons and daughters will not change and our salvation is sure.
6. Confess - the times when you rely on your own strength and cleverness to get through.
 - the temptation to "tough out" the difficult times rather than depend on Him.
 - the natural tendency to selfishness rather than God-honouring service.
 - the spiritual ignorance and rebellion of our nation.
7. Pray for - forgiveness on the basis of Christ's death on the cross.
 - strength to improve your character and your performance as a Christian.
 - ability to stand on "whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable" (Phil 4:8).
 - pray for a deep and continuing work of God across Australia, that many thousands may hear and receive the message of Christ crucified, risen, and coming again.
8. Ask the Lord in His mercy to send steady soaking rain across our State. Also ask that, when it comes, we will be ready to acknowledge His gift in our personal conversations.
9. Pray that many Christians in the bush will be ready to volunteer for further training so the work of the gospel will continue to grow even where there are no pastors.
10. Soon June and I will be involved in a short locum at Pt. Macquarie Presbyterian church. Pray for wisdom for us that we might encourage the saints, and for refreshment for the pastor and his family.

JESUS MY GLORY *(an old prayer for your use)*

O LORD GOD,

You have commanded me to believe in Jesus;

and I would flee to no other refuge, and wash in no other fountain,

build on no other foundation, receive from no other fullness, rest in no other relief.

His water and blood were not severed in their flow at the cross,

may they never be separated in my belief and experiences;

May I be equally convinced of the guilt and pollution of sin,

feel my need of a prince and saviour,

implore of him repentance as well as forgiveness, love holiness, and be pure in heart,

have the mind of Jesus, and tread in his steps.

Let me not be at my own disposal, but rejoice that I am under the care of one

who is too wise to err, too kind to injure, too tender to crush.

May I scandalize none by my temper and conduct, but

recommend and endear Christ to all around,

bestow good on every one as circumstances permit,

and decline no opportunity of usefulness.

Grant that I may value my substance, not as the medium of pride and luxury,

but as the means of my support and stewardship.

