

For the last fifty years of my life I have been building. Although trained and called to be a preacher of the Gospel, I have constantly spent time planning, designing, building and altering houses, hospitals, churches, nursing homes, retirement villages and so on. I have had some part to play in the building, occupying or developing of over 400 buildings, together worth several hundred million dollars.

Architects, developers, builders, concreters, town planners and the like have trooped in and out of my offices and battles have been waged with councils, environment authorities, banks and the like with most battles usually won. No wonder the Housing Industry of Australia declared at the opening of some award winning houses, that one of Australia's leading builders was in fact a preacher!

In the slum areas of Melbourne we realised the buildings needed immediate repair. We jumped into the task. I remember Beverley, heavily pregnant, up a twenty eight foot ladder painting big walls with me close to midnight. We built additions to the church, a carport for the Manse, new fences and the like.

At Ararat, even in a brief ministry, I drew up plans for the total development of the site with new toilets, church and manse. We built the hall, kitchen and toilet block, concreted the paths, painted the walls and started on plans for a new manse. The manse was eventually built, and forty years later I was invited back to open the new Church renovations.

Up to now the buildings I was designing and working on, had mostly volunteer builders and very small budgets. When I came to Cheltenham the scope was widened – now we were working with professionals and a multi-million dollar budget. Later this was to become teams of professionals and budgets of hundreds of millions of dollars.

Within the family, building was always in vogue. With the help of eager children, I built a cubby house, 2 storeys high with an outlook over the rooves of houses to the Bay, with hammocks, blinds, ladder, slippery pole, sandbox and a whole lot of features to make the kids happy. Then we purchased in 1971 our own home at Dromana. That was going to be a big challenge.

Australians know much about moving mountains. We have shifted Mount Tom Price, Iron Knob, Mount Hammersley Mount Isa and Broken Hill. We can shift mountains by using heavy machinery. But how can you shift mountains by faith?

With faith you require only two things: work and persistence!

I decided to turn the Dromana house into a two-storey house. As I could not lift it up, I decided to go down. The house was 45 feet long and 25 feet wide. We had to go down about four feet. There was not enough room under the house for a machine; it had to be done with a shovel. I said to the mountain of earth, "Be moved!" And the Lord said to me, "Get a wheelbarrow!"

I got under the house and started digging. I filled up a wheelbarrow and wheeled it round to the front. We had half an acre of land on a gentle hill, so I started building up the bottom of the hill. Then, another barrow, and another, then fifty. Every Monday with a pick and shovel and a barrow, and I said to the Lord, "Move this mountain," and the Lord said, "Wheel the barrow!"

Gradually, I began to see a hole. It was then I discovered a great truth about dirt. More comes out of a hole than was in there originally. A hundred barrow loads of earth levelled the front lawn. Two hundred barrows of earth meant that the block beside us was now level. In went the first rumpus room, and then the laundry.

Meanwhile, we had to bring in barrow loads of concrete, new house stumps, windows, and dividing walls. But the earth was moving and the house began to increase in size. After another two years I had shifted enough earth for me to add a garage and workshop. I said to the Lord, "Move this hill," but the Lord said, "Keep wheeling. You and I are in this together." I said, "Yes, Lord, but I'm the one who is getting hot!"

Gradually the lawn area became smooth. Then came more concrete and, finally, the big, double rumpus room. Seven years after I began digging, the hill was removed. We finished the walls. I did all the plumbing, electrical, concreting, building myself, up to the standard expected by the Council building inspectors. We then moved in the fittings and put up the table-tennis table. The windows worked and the lights were fixed. Everything was beautiful. The furniture was in and the carpet was down, and we now had a house double its original size. Then Wesley Central Mission said, "Come to Sydney!"

When we put our Victorian home on the market, an interested purchaser said, “What a lovely smooth lawn you have!” He did not know that faith, plus work, plus persistence had doubled the size of a house and turned a hill into a smooth lawn! The improved value of that first house in Dromana enabled us to purchase an investment property also in Dromana to improve in value while we shifted to Sydney.

The value increased but it was a long way away for us to keep an eye on it. Beverley’s sister Gwen and her husband Jim did, but they then unexpectedly died within a year of each other. So we sold that house and purchased a new brick home on the side of a hill, overlooking the ocean at Terrigal. This Wamberal home was three storeys, and enough room for us underneath to dig out the dirt, level the back yard, and build a large rumpus room for the kids. That project was Dromana all over again. They loved it and we enjoyed the view. But going up and down three flights of stairs lost its attraction, so we sold it and looked for a larger area of land and with flat terrain. We found it on an acreage complete with dam and small orchard of fruit trees at Tumbi Umbi (Aboriginal for “tall trees”). We had a very large number of tall trees (most over 80 feet high). Soon we had our livestock in. Peter and Trina brought their goat, dogs, sheep, fowls and ducks while they lived there while building their own home on an acreage not far away. Tumbi Umbi was to become our home for retirement.

To make it how we wanted it, some more digging, another concrete slab and a magnificent study, the size of two rooms. Then a veranda built by Peter around two sides of the house – 66 metres long and 4 metres wide – the equivalent of about 8 additional rooms. Then, based on the lovely Dutch roof barns, I saw in America, I designed and Peter built a 2 storey barn for all our garden implements. Then a tractor and woodshed and a new hen house. By the dam we built a duck house, and soon the place was filled with life. This is the home to which Beverley and I have retired to, and from where I do my writing for Parliament and the media.

At the same time, we were living in Wesley Mission’s manse at Roseville. That was inadequate in many ways until I got the idea to build an internal staircase, remove the roof and build as a second storey a magnificent study, covering an area of four large rooms, with plenty of shelves for books, and windows looking out in every direction over the rooftops and the National Park lands. Building the house while you were living in it was not an unusual experience for us!

The first really big building for which I had responsibility was the Christian Retirement Centre at Cheltenham. The first idea for the CRC Cheltenham grew from an approach by Bernard Belgrove, on behalf of Rollands Hance and Co following an explosive Australia Day Dinner in the Moorabbin Town Hall which I addressed raising important questions about Australia's future. This was just weeks after the sacking of Gough Whitlam and political feeling ran high. But out of it came a meeting with Robert Hance, Michael Tinsley, David de Garis and John Bailey.

In August 1975 the Church voted to build the first Christian Retirement Centre and shortly after a second, Greenways Retirement Village. The church started fund-raising for facilities and the community centre. The Mayor organised a fund-raising concert. I spoke at more than a hundred meetings raising money and we purchased a piano, billiard table, bowls mats, large TV, nurse unit furniture, sick bay facilities, library books, and much more. The first residents moved into our second retirement village, 'Greenways' in August '76, and into the CRC in November '76. Beverley and I helped many residents shift personally and each one became a close friend. We helped our first thirty residents pack, shift and unpack. On many a night I was pushing someone's refrigerator into place or connecting up a washing machine.

The members of the Cheltenham Church of Christ were strong in their support of the development of both villages. Of the paid staff great help was received from minister colleagues Geoff Benson, Stanton Wilson, Malcolm Humphries, and Maurie Conrey, Social Worker Joy Rainey, and office secretary Joy Kavanagh. Our nurses Julie Acquoff, Helen Hall, Jan Robins, Marion Todd and Jean Freeland gave wonderful service. Steve Waixel and a great group of volunteers planted the lawns and gardens.

Outstanding service was given in administration by Col Junor, John Flavin, Malcolm Humphries and Graham Hall. The Board of Management all served voluntarily and physically did much work on the site. I remember with appreciation the service given by the Management Chairman Wal Steart, Church Board Chairman Don Stokie, Church Secretary Graham Hilbig, and Treasurers Charles Ferris and Ern Henderson.

Many women helped greatly in settling residents, setting up the community lounges and providing visitation. I remember the work of Pat Hilbig, Muriel Stafford and Fay Ferris particularly. Seven men joined with me in being trained by Graham Mortimer to gain our special bus drivers' licence, and in

our 18 seat Toyota, drove residents to free picnics at Sovereign Hill, Coal Creek, Swan Hill Pioneer settlement and other places. I only did the training program for the special bus drivers' licence to encourage the other men. In the end I received an articulated truck drivers licence. A minister of religion was then and has ever since been licensed to drive a heavy truck or semi-trailer.

Over 1000 people attended the opening of CRC by the Governor of Victoria, Sir Henry Winneke. Fay Ferris conducted our four choirs and musical ensemble and brass in a wonderful musical presentation. We announced that day the commencement of Stage 2 of CRC, together with the building of " Pine Lodge", and the building of stage 2 Greenways. 1977 and 1978 saw all these major additions completed. We had gradually acquired the additional houses and land for these buildings. Church Secretary Graham Hilbig did a great deal of work to make this possible.

In those thirteen years of ministry the real mark lay in the number of buildings that were built around the Cheltenham Church of Christ. A new manse was constructed; a new office for the church, as well as the twenty-three unit Christian Retirement Centre. Greenways Village, which went on to have ninety seven units and a nursing home, and then the Christian Retirement Centre stage 2 of thirty six new units plus two new tennis courts, then Pine Lodge with sixteen more retirement units, three houses to be demolished for car parking, and another to be built as a centre for administration.

The church was developing and growing, adding to its properties, and full-time staff and going out in faith for multi-million dollar developments. When the time came to announce my resignation, I indicated that I wanted to stay for one more year - our thirteenth - so that in that year we could completely clear any debts on the entire property leaving the multi-million dollar campus in pristine order with new buildings, a regular maintenance program and no debts at all. We finally purchased land for a new Church and I made some sketch plans. The new Church was constructed on the site, roughly conforming to the sketch plans, a few years later.

My wife and I have found that our prayers have been answered by God, sometimes in ways unexpected, and sometimes through people who did not even notice that they were the instruments of God. God's promise is assured and our prayers are answered. That is why we live with confidence. We know that He hears our prayers and answers our needs.

One day in 1977, we were at our church at Cheltenham, Victoria. There had been a lot of property expansion in our church. Our frontage had grown from 60 feet to 100 feet. As the congregation increased, we decided that we needed even more property. The only way we could achieve this in that intensely built up area was to buy houses. We bought one five houses away, then four away, then one away, then two away. But No.11 would not sell. We bought No.14, then Nos.13 and 9. Gradually we gained more area for development and our frontage went from 120 to 200, to 400, to 600 to 1400 feet! New buildings went up.

We spent several millions of dollars and we owned all the properties in the street, except No.1 in Pine Street! We needed it. Two lovely, elderly ladies lived there and I got to know them. I said, "Some day, when you are ready to sell, we would like to buy because we need the property to complete our development plans." They promised that they would sell to us.

When our expansion programme was at its height and we had no money, the old ladies chose that time to sell and shift! We had no money! I thought, "How can I get that property and fulfil the need we have?" I walked along the street, looking at the house and land and I said, *"I believe, God, that You want us to have this property so that we can minister to the needs of the people in this area."*

As I stood there, I said, *"Lord, I believe that You want your church to have this opportunity for growth and in the name of Jesus Christ I claim the house and land for the church."* I had never done that before, and as I prayed, standing in the middle of the road I felt a real goose.

A nephew of the two ladies was a member of our church. I said to him, *"George, would you talk with your old aunts and tell them we will negotiate a price."* He agreed. A week went by. He came back and said, *"We are getting closer to the right price, now."* I replied, *"Well, George, make sure it is the right price for us. Just do it quickly, because we haven't any money."* George said, *"Don't worry. I'll be back."* He returned to tell me he had placed a small deposit on the property. We were greatly relieved. My task then was to find a way of raising the money.

Next thing, there was a ring on our doorbell! A wealthy builder, who lived in the next street, was standing there. I said, *"Come in Bill."* He walked in and said, *"I thought I'd better tell you that I have bought No. 1 at the end of Pine Street."* I said, *"I don't believe it."* He said, *"I have."*

My response was, *“Listen, I have prayed about that property. You know that we have wanted to buy it. We have asked our church to pray about it. We intend to raise the money as soon as we know the price.”* He replied, *“I knew that you were after it and that I had to act quickly. I went round last night and paid a deposit. I have bought it!”* As his was a proper deposit, I guessed he had rights under Law over our minimum holding deposit paid by George.

I said, “Bill, you will regret this. Why did you do it?” He said, “My daughter is getting married, and we thought it would be good if she lived near us, just over the back fence.” “Yes,” I said, “I know about the wedding, I am conducting it. But I think you will regret what you have done.” Bill left, and the property, which I felt God had promised to us, for which I had asked in prayer, in His name and for the needs of His people, had gone to someone else.

It was a lovely wedding and the bride and her husband made a fine couple. They were going to be very happy, but they made a firm decision. They said to their parents, *“We don’t want to live next door to you. We think it is important to move away and live in our own house someplace else.”*

Bill, then, had to get tenants. The first lot used to drive their motorbike up and down the hallway. The second lot had a barbecue in the middle of the lounge room. The third tenant hammered pictures anywhere and everywhere around the walls. The fourth had regular barbecues and the smoke and rubbish went over the fence into Bill’s place. Broken beer bottles were thrown into his swimming pool. He came to me, complaining about the tenants and all the trouble he was having. I said, *“Bill, I told you.”*

After the fifth collection of terrible tenants, Bill came round and said, *“Listen, do you want to buy that property?”* I replied, *“No, not now. We haven’t any money.”* He said, *“I’ll do a deal with you. If you give me the contract to put up the new building, I will give you a fair price that is competitive. I need work for my tradesmen right now. I’ll build whatever you want, and when the building is finished I will give you, free, the titles to the property.”* So it was. Seven months afterwards, *“Pine Lodge”* was built on the very land we had prayed for, and we never paid a cent for it!

The Apostle John once wrote: *“He hears us whenever we ask Him; and since we know this is true, we know also that He gives us what we ask Him; and since we know this is true, we know also that He gives us what we ask from Him.”* (1 John 5:15).

The church at Cheltenham had now completed a tremendous program of building developments purchasing old properties, demolishing them and building a new manse and offices, five retirement villages catering for more than 300 people, a nursing home, tennis courts, extensive car parks and gardens and in the process the largest campus of probably any Protestant church in the nation. This meant as a minister I was used to dealing with finance, legal agreements, building contracts worth many millions of dollars and companies. This was all in preparation for the shift to Sydney.

After my appointment in 1977, I spent all of 1978 in preparation before shifting to Sydney. In this time I wrote a 150,000 word thesis describing what I intended to accomplish in this ministry, "TRANSFORMING THE CITY CHURCH". [Moyes, G.K. "Transforming the City Church". (Unpublished) U.T.C. Library.] I was very proud to have inherited Wesley Lyceum Theatre, given to the Mission in 1905, and the relatively new Wesley Centre. Wesley Centre, built in 1966, had become the hub of the Mission's growing pastoral and head office activities. But by 1979 I was seeing it in a new light: a wonderful facility which still had over a million dollars of debt owing on it, was facing large maintenance costs, and was a facility standing in the way of a more efficient use of the land.

From the height of the new Sydney Tower at Centrepoint in 1980, I looked down on the property of Wesley Mission and the newly formed Synod of the Uniting Church in New South Wales, and realised that what was needed was the complete removal of The Mission Settlement Building, the removal of Wesley Chapel, the removal of Wesley Arcade of shops and Christian enterprises, and the removal of the recently rebuilt Lyceum Theatre and Wesley Centre, at that time the finest church complex in the Southern Hemisphere. It would also require a total rebuilding of the whole site with expanded facilities! This was a daring insight. We would need to excavate two acres of Central Business District land to a depth of eight storeys then from ground level go forty storeys up.

This meant a project that would alter the skyline of the city of Sydney. It would mean the construction of a massive complex using the air space above the total site (51,000 square feet) in such proportions (12:1 Floor Space Ratio) that the new development would be large enough (686,000 square feet), when



leased, to provide the total cost of the Mission's portion of the construction. It was a grand vision. During its construction it would be the largest building enterprise in the city (Hely & Horne, Stuart and Perry: 'Piccadilly Plaza' Design Concept, August 1983). This projected development brought Wesley Mission a great deal of commendable publicity.

The initial projection of the cost was one hundred million dollars, an astronomical sum, but before the decade was over this sum would have risen four times. What would be accomplished on that site would not be at the expense of other developments, for Wesley Mission was to simultaneously embark on the most ambitious building program ever to be undertaken by any church in the world. Another one hundred million dollars of land acquisition, of buildings and the construction of new facilities would be undertaken in a huge expansion and renovation program in other areas of the church's ministry.

I had seen the retirement villages we had built serving a real purpose in the lives of people who could take a whole of life tenancy and whose families would receive 90% of their up front payment back when they vacated and another tenant moved in. As property values escalated, we were able to return 100% of all ingoings. I discussed the developments with the Mission Board one night in our lounge room. They decided to go ahead with three villages I had sketched out. "*What one shall we do first?*" asked someone. "*Let's do all three simultaneously*" I replied. So we started on the \$100 million project. Those four projects alone were costing four hundred million dollars, and we opened each one debt free. Starting with a million dollars of debt we now had four hundred million dollars of assets with no debt at all.

New initiatives in evangelism would be undertaken across the nation by television and radio, new missionary support in USSR, India, Bangladesh, new programs of support for village life in the Philippines and India would be undertaken, and more than two hundred new services for the poor and needy would be established. All of these would require additional property, the appointment of new staff, and a sustained fund-raising program beyond what had ever been attempted by a church before. My life suddenly became a constant round of meetings with architects, planners, financiers and bankers, builders and others in the industry.

Today Wesley Mission gives thanks to God for the successful completion of all these major works, without any residual debt, and at the height of its power looks forward to serving the needs of the community and witnessing to Jesus Christ.

The ministry of this single church is so widespread that few people ever get to see it. In one hundred suburbs, in dozens of rural and inter-state areas, and in a number of countries overseas, this church conducts a wide-spread ministry. Yet everything it does is according to careful strategy and Biblical precedent as it seeks to minister in both Word and deed. Its philosophy of care is continually spelled out to staff and members to remind people of the basis of its work. Its development has been due to the applications of Church Growth principles.

Over a period of seven years, the design concepts of our new CBD complex were developed, changed and eventually approved. Approvals were given at all levels for the redevelopment. We were building in conjunction with the Synod UCA, a four level shopping plaza, double the community service area we previously held – nearly 3 acres - including restaurant, youth facilities, auditoriums, rooms and halls, a 500 seat Wesley Church, a 250 seat Lyceum, and a state-of-the-art 990 seat Theatre and a 31 storey office tower that would have 4 floors used by Wesley Mission with the rest leased out to help pay for the building costs. Underneath it all would be a five level car park with parking for 400 vehicles.

There would be direct access into the main David Jones buildings, and an air-bridge over Pitt Street to the Monorail and the Hilton Hotel and to the new building on Market Street and Pitt, and from there to Grace Bros making an above ground-shopping loop. Another above ground air-bridge was to be built over Castlereagh St to take people directly into our building from the Sheraton Hotel and St James Railway Station. We would also liquidate the \$750,000 debt left over from the building 22 years ago in Alan Walker's time, which we had been reducing but upon which we are still paying heavy interest after all of those years.

To allow the new building to commence required us to shift into the Plaza Theatre, George Street and into a series of multi-storey buildings adjacent to the Theatre in Wilmot Street, alongside the biggest theatre complex in Sydney. This was the area where the people were walking every night and all the weekend. We would be directly on the bus route, two blocks down from Town Hall station, and along

the brightest lit street in Sydney. We believed this to be an excellent ministry area while the new complex would be built.

Companies often shift head office, but for Wesley Mission it was a more complex move. We would: shift our corporate headquarters; shift our church, its worship services and group activities; shift our School for Seniors; shift our 24-hour a day telephone counselling centre, LifeLine; shift our welfare and personal counselling centre; shift our media division. This was to be a major relocation involving hundreds of staff and thousands of people.

To this end, all of my preaching at the time was on the Urban Ministries of Jesus, looking at the principles in city ministry so that our people were being prepared to shift.

We used the shift as an opportunity for a new thrust in public awareness and outreach. The church is often like a snail that only advances by putting its neck out, but then, after looking around, decides to pull its head in and retreat into its shell. We are made of sterner stuff. For 175 years we had been on the streets of Sydney doing a job of caring for it. We know our job and we do it well. We would not retreat. We faced the future with confidence, and commenced new youth ministries and outreach programs to street kids.

Although the decision to demolish and rebuild a bigger and better Wesley Mission caused a lot of trauma, it proved to be the easiest part.

We faced one hurdle after another. As fast as they solved one problem another cropped up--council permits, site inspections, water-board inspections, electricity-board approval, sewerage, town-planning, D A (Development application) B A (Building application) and a host of other requirements too numerous to list. We had not only to design and build the Pitt Street complex but also the George and Wilmot Street complex, which in itself was a multi-million dollar reconstruction of existing adjacent buildings.

In carrying forward the tremendous undertaking Richard Menteith and his associates needed the patience of Job and the Wisdom of Solomon. Thanks are due to our Task Force: Chair Ed Walker; Secretary Robyn Dyer; Colin Gillmore (Director), Stan Manning, Andy Pettigrew, Peter Tebbutt and

Malcolm Burrells with Richard Menteith and myself being in the driving seat. Despite the setbacks, the proposals and counter-proposals, the worries and headaches, God answered our prayers for help and eventually all the preliminary requirements were sorted out by July 1988.

The biggest headache was trying to find temporary accommodation for the business offices and staff. We rented three different buildings-- there wasn't a hope of getting them all together--and they all had to be remodelled to suit our needs, and linked by new stairways, fly overs and corridors. The temporary premises were not time-efficient, work-efficient or money saving, but we had little choice. Even the temporary four storey mid city premises was a bigger building proposal than ever previously undertaken by any church in the nation. During these years Stan Manning, Richard Menteith, John Bush and their staff provided valuable help. It would never have happened without them and a remarkable team of helpers and volunteers who did what ever was asked of them.

Long before the Mission's temporary location was ready the demolition squad moved in, working around the staff in the old Wesley Centre. Board meetings convened with members shouting to be heard above the din of battering jackhammers and the crash of falling timbers. Telephonists, with a telephone to one ear and a hand pressed tightly over the other, endeavoured to carry on conversations to the noisy accompaniment of heavy boots tramping by doorways minus doors. Catering staff, office girls, pastors and teachers all battled along trying to concentrate on their tasks, while brawny fellows with tattooed arms, worked around them tearing out windows and removing fixtures, scattering dust, debris and bent nails in their wake. Nobody actually said so, but it seemed that while the demolition company worked with great gusto at the Pitt Street premises, the renovator-builders at George Street properties seemed to be purposely dragging their feet.

A crisis appeared inevitable. It came late one Friday afternoon when word spread that workmen on the George Street renovations had found a 50 cm by 37 cm piece of asbestos behind an electric power board. Instantly the relevant unions called all workmen off the site. Work stopped at the Wilmot and Central Street sites also, although no asbestos had been found on them. Nothing could be done during the weekend but as soon as I reached my office on Monday morning an official connected with one of the unions came to see me.

*"It's going to take months for that place in George Street to be thoroughly examined and cleared of any suggestion of asbestos," he announced. "The law says that my workers must not be in the building until it has been checked for contamination."* He then demanded every workman on site be sent by taxi to have chest X-rays, everyone to be given a new set of work clothes and boots, and several health checks.

Work on the renovations was so far behind schedule now that I could not entertain the thought of it being held up for months longer. The man's cocksure manner had already aroused my suspicions.

*"Is there anything that we can do to help speed up the process?"* I asked. *"There is,"* the official replied with what could have been a trace of triumph in his voice, *"but it will cost you money."*

I made no comment and the official continued, *"If I had \$40,000 to share between the workmen they would do the search themselves, and once they were satisfied that the site was safe, they'd pretty quickly get on with the job."*

I said nothing and taking my silence for consent the union official hurried on. *"If you want that to happen, bring me the money in a brown paper bag to the bar of the hotel on the corner of Pitt and Wilmot Streets tomorrow at 1 p m. Don't bring anyone else with you."*

I took a deep breath. Was this really happening? Was I hearing correctly? Surely such blatant bribery only took place on TV, not in real life. I replied firmly: *"Wesley Mission is a Christian charitable organisation and we will not pay bribes to have the building site cleared. We will use every other lawful method to get the work done. Good morning to you, sir."*

Next day I by-passed the unions and went straight to the building contractor in charge of the George Street alterations. Without using threats or coercion I pointed out the illegality of the unions' demand. After letting that sink in for a moment, I quietly let the contractor know about the many influential people in the building industry and town-planning office who were not only my personal friends but were sympathetic toward the Wesley Mission. The builder would not want his company to be black-banned for demanding bribes, would he?

The building contractor hastily denied any knowledge of the affair and to prove his honesty, in the weeks ahead he worked hard to have the site checked and declared clear, so that the men could get back to finish the renovations.

Even so there was a three-week gap between demolition and renovation when our staff had to occupy temporary quarters in the Teachers' Federation auditorium in Sussex Street. I declared these three weeks as a time of spiritual renewal for the Mission staff and delivered a series of powerful addresses on "Living in the Wilderness."

September 25 1988 was moving day. At the appointed hour a crowd of more than a thousand people accompanied by bands and banners, marched down Pitt Street to the George Street theatre. This building, with the others at Wilmot and Central Streets, became the Wesley Mission's headquarters for the next three years until the new Wesley Centre was finished.

However, the Unions had the last laugh. When the crowds surged into the building they found that the lift drivers were on strike and would not allow the lifts to be used to shift furniture up to any of the offices. As well as that, the \$1 million renovations were far from complete. Much of the building was still scarcely usable. There were hard days ahead for mission staff and worshippers alike.

In the long run it probably cost Wesley Mission far more than \$40,000 to maintain its integrity, but no one complained. Our church stood by its principles.

Spring Fair was scheduled for two days after the move to these temporary quarters and Beverley and her helpers faced almost overwhelming difficulties. In among the jumble of furniture stacked outside unfinished offices they had to find places to erect and decorate their stalls; some vital areas lacked electricity and could not be utilised; masses of delicate handwork and perishable stock had to be brought in and set out on their respective tables while all around them workmen sawed and hammered and filled the air with noise and sawdust.

Despite all these drawbacks, at the appointed hour the premier's wife graciously declared the Fair open and thousands of buyers crowded inside. Two days later the annual Spring Fair had raised \$217,000,

the second highest amount in its history – a fitting tribute to Beverley as Spring Fair President and her hard working team of volunteers.

So on with our rebuilding of the new Wesley Centre. Our plans from the earliest days were lodged with a quarter of a million dollars payment as our levy to the City Council under the Lord Mayor Doug Sutherland, for off-street parking. Later all underground parking was banned by the City Council who rejected our plans for an underground parking station for our office workers and congregations. We protested strongly that we had approval and the City Council had received our quarter of a million dollars and had already spent it. Then the State Government stepped in and sacked the Council and some staff for corruption. Three administrators were then appointed – all three members of my Rotary club of Sydney! I felt I now had a fair chance of getting our point of view across. The Administrators willingly listened to me.

A search was found in the City's records and there were our plans and receipts. So while no other central business district Sydney development has since been allowed to have car-parking underground, we have ours! Because the records were found by some efficient filing clerk to prove our rights! When God is in the development and wants His building built, no official opposition can halt it. Their own forgotten records allowed it! They happened to be found by a young girl assistant in the Housing department, who also happened to be a member of our church! God had surely placed her there.

A little prior to this I had an unusual confirmation of my ideas. One very dark night, I was being flown in a small, single engine aeroplane from Bendigo, where I had been speaking at the University, to Tullamarine, Victoria, where I was to catch the last flight back to Sydney. My pilot was Russell G. Withers, Managing Director of Pacific-Seven Pty. Ltd., the owner of hundreds of 7/11 stores.

Russell knew we were in the planning stages of building a new Wesley Centre. I was troubled because it involved demolishing the very fine Wesley Centre built only fourteen years previously under the leadership of Sir Alan Walker, and on which we still owed over a million dollars. Furthermore, Sir Alan had given me ten very strong reasons, which I still kept by my desk, why we should not redevelop our total site with a huge building many times the size of the existing collection of buildings including Wesley Centre. The new young minister was threatening total destruction of all he had built, and he was not pleased.

The decrepit buildings on Castlereagh St., and in Wesley Arcade concerned us. I was troubled about the need to refurbish the Lyceum Theatre and Wesley Centre, which had been rebuilt only fourteen years previously, but whose low cost fabric was now showing wear and tear, and high maintenance costs. I was dismayed at the small, dark and mouldy Wesley Chapel, even though I knew it held a place of endearment in the hearts of Sydney Methodists. They had argued at the Annual Conference of the Methodist Church for a century about the necessity of having a fine, proper church in which to worship in the centre of the city. It seemed to me that total re-development was the only answer.

I shared my concerns with Russell Withers, and in the dark cockpit of the small plane, he told me about the U.S.A. supermarket chain, A & P, the biggest chain in the world. They had slipped from being the greatest supermarket chain and had to close a thousand stores because they had not kept their stores up to date and looking good. He commented: *"The successful store operator in my game refurbishes his store every three or four years top to bottom. So have a look at your own site. You can't help an old location but you sure can help an old store."*

*"You can't help an old location but you sure can help an old store."* That was true. Our historic location in the very heart of the Central Business District was superb. The land value was perhaps as high as \$100 million - and we had it covered in the most part by low-level buildings more than a century old! We could not help our old location but we sure could help our old property! So I wrote to The Board of Finance and Property of the Uniting Church and suggested that together we redevelop the whole site in what would be one of Sydney's great building projects. They agreed. Committees were established and over several years approvals were gained, plans were drawn and re-drawn, a developer Capital Land Corporation, a financier Australian Guarantee Corporation and a builder Multiplex were locked into one of the most complex series of leases you could ever imagine. I appointed our own independent architects to check every detail and watch over our interests.

There are still many more building programs to come. Recently in 2005 we "turned the sod" on two massive new developments for housing the frail and the aged. These have a combined budget in excess of \$80 million for the 2005/6 year. What has been the combined value of all the buildings I have overseen being constructed? Somewhere around \$500 million.



Then there is a new hospital on the drawing board and thirteen other projects all at some stage of being built. One panel of the dodecahedron is rightfully called “Builder”. Another example of building started in the mid – 1990’s in what we called “Homes For Hope”.

I had the privilege of joining Craig Knowles, the Minister for Housing in NSW, and Phil Haig, CEO of HomeWorld, in laying the first bricks on the HomeWorld “Homes For Hope”. This has been an initiative of two staff members, Dian Ball and Paula Duncan. Wesley Mission gained over half a million dollars through the sale of the first house. This was followed by more than twenty, high cost houses that would be auctioned with the total proceeds coming into Wesley’s accounts to be used in social welfare.

HomeWorld at Kellyville was the world’s largest display village with more than 100 premier homes built by 40 of the nation’s top builders competing against each other for public approval. Allam Homes built our homes. Aussie Home Loans provided a \$100,000 interest free loan to the purchaser. BBC Hardware house provided over \$100,000 of materials. Harvey Norman provided over \$100,000 of furnishings. Boral provided over \$100,000 of building materials. 2UE provided over \$100,000 of advertising. The Sun Herald donated \$100,000 of advertising and TCN 9 made a special Current Affair program on the development. Daewoo gave us their most expensive car for the garage. The pool was donated by Blue Haven pools. Lego conducted a national Lego Competition for kids with Air New Zealand took the four people to Disneyland as the prizewinners. 200 people paid \$200 each to go on a Captain Cook evening dinner cruise featuring an auction by Alan Jones with all proceeds coming to us. We had brought together all of these people to facilitate house building.

The next year we built four other Homes For Hope, including one on the Gold Coast, and three in the Hunter. All work was donated and total proceeds went to help Wesley Mission’s full range of ministries to the homeless children, youth and adults cared for by the Mission. This building initiative has brought us in over \$5 million in cash in the first few years and a total of about twenty million when all are sold. But our homes have won national awards for design and construction, and our fundraising concept won us national fundraising awards. Awards were one thing, but strategic planning must come first.

In July 1985, our church members studied the theological requirements of a city church. When we had our theology right, we then drew the specifications from it, and the architects made the theological requirements and the specifications possible. We start building with our theological insights not with designs and pictures of our architect. Those nine theological requirements will explain what it is that we wanted to build. Our theological understanding determined our building complex. In 1978 I wrote:

*“The future of Christianity lies in its ability to effectively reach the people of our cities. The City Churches are on the frontline of the work of God in the centre of the greatest groupings of people in history. Yet the existing City Churches, while they continue their present patterns of ministry, are doomed to failure! The great empty Churches and Cathedrals of the major cities of the Western world bear mute testimony to this grim prophecy. Only new City Churches can fulfil the mission of God.*

*Contrary to our Akubra bush hats and four-wheel drives, mankind is not by nature a rural creature. People by nature are city creatures. Adam was a rural creature, but his son Cain lived in a city. Mankind has long left behind the concept of a rural Eden, and has headed for the city where he finds the fulfilment of his desires. Every achievement of humanity in art, culture, government, religion, politics, scientific and technological achievement has been born and developed in cities.*

*If Christianity is to impact upon mankind, it must do so in the cities of the world. Only a new City Church is viable.”*

These nine theological understandings must transform our ministry:

1. Sacrament: The City Church has a sacramental ministry. For the Church is a symbol of God's presence within the city. The Church reminds the world that God is at work in that city, and that He can take ordinary lives and transform them by His power.

When the Church administers the Sacraments in worship, it is participating in one of the most important things that ever happen within the life of the Church. When a person comes either to receive the Sacraments of Holy Communion or of Baptism, there is an affirmation about God being present in the life of that person. That person has been claimed by God and is loved by God. God loves these people in a special way and offers them His power for living within this City. So when the young child is faced with the pressure of a peer group to experiment with drugs, or to become involved in juvenile crime, or when the older member is tempted to be dishonest through his business, or to commit

adultery, that person knows God already has a place within his life. Consequently their behaviour may change.

Through the Sacraments people recognise that they are loved and accepted, that the Church loves and accepts them. It further says that the Church believes in possibilities in people and that by God's power lives can be transformed and renewed. When God has been present within the Church and His people renewal takes place.

Hence, the City Church must be built possessing the signs of the faith - a Cross symbolising the Name of the One in whom we meet, a font for infant baptisms and a baptistery for adult and believers baptisms, a free- standing communion table, a pulpit that is open on all sides and movable, together with open space for alternative forms of worship including drama, music groups, mime and dance. The symbols of the sacrament must be on view every minute the front doors are open and brightly illuminated to capture attention.

2. Salvation: The presence of the City Church is a reminder to the whole world of the forgiveness, healing and hope that God offers those who accept His salvation. That message of salvation must be passed on to others. Emil Brunner says, *"One who received this Word, and by it salvation, received along with it the duty of passing this Word on. Where there is no mission, there is no Church, and where there is neither Church nor mission, there is no faith."* ("The Word and The World p.108) The new city church must continue to point to salvation in Jesus Christ. Hence evangelism is primary in all we do.

Human nature has not changed since Jesus walked beside Galilee. In spite of all our technological and scientific ability we still have the same problems. Ours is "the age of anxiety". Something is still radically wrong within the heart. Neither education, technology, psychology, nor scientific progress answers personal need. The Bible indicates that apart from God we are sinners needing salvation. The new City Church must proclaim salvation that God has provided through Christ. Only Christ saves from sin.

But sin must not be conceived of only in terms of personal, transcendent and vertical relationships with God, but also in horizontal and structured relationship with other people. Many city people are living in

bondage needing liberation in both the horizontal and vertical aspects. These people suffer under economic exploitation, social, political or cultural oppression, and spiritual deprivation and bondage. The Church must proclaim the good news of what God has done through Jesus Christ. The City Church offers in partnership with God the possibility of a new creation, of liberation, and of an eternal future. Hence we must proclaim the Gospel. We must publicly proclaim the Gospel and privately counsel the salvation to be found in Jesus Christ. Salvation is the reason for our presence among the people of the city.

3. Sanctuary: There exists in human hearts a need to find a transcendence in city living. City dwellers need the elevating experience of worship. Where concrete replaces lawns and trees, where factories shut off the sunset, and where the noise of traffic substitutes for the song of birds and wind in the trees - the human spirit is dulled. There should be *"inspiration in a sanctuary so arranged and furnished as to be satisfying to the eye and quieting to the mind. Here in the worship service they can be lifted out of their cluttered, man-made environment, into the presence of the God who set the stars in their courses and laid the foundations of the world. Through participation in that worship members of the congregation may find meaning in life, strength and courage for ethical living, and Christian peace in the midst of a troubled society."* (Murray H. Leiffer: "The Effective City Church" p.181). Hence a new church should be a place of quiet refuge - carpeted fully, soft drapes, wall hangings, soft natural lighting, stained glass from our heritage and the atmosphere during non-service times encouraging prayer and meditation. The city church must be a sanctuary in the concrete city, pointing beyond itself to a deep and satisfying relationship each can have with our Creator.

4. Security: People in the city always feel insecure. But the Church can provide a sense of security in the midst of rapid social change. It can provide an eternal stability, a point of reference when all about is in a state of flux. Through counselling and preaching the city church emphasises spiritual security for people who are transient on earth, yet who through reconciliation with God, possess an eternal destiny.

So many city folk face loneliness, feel fragmented, alienated, depersonalised, and powerless. Personal wholeness and healthy interpersonal relationships are difficult. Their devotion to the things of this world seems to shut out ultimate concerns. The Church is given by God a ministry of reconciliation; bringing the warring and the divided self together under the Lordship of Christ; helping the defeated to

find dignity, courage, and power; and, first in importance if not in sequence, reconciling them to God even if now they are unaware of Him and uncommitted to Him.

Hence the city church must have areas where people can be at home, feel welcome, and find friendship. An original font, display of historical memorabilia, and old stained glass remind people that Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever. They feel secure when they see our Christian heritage that reminds them of childhood, mother, Sunday School.

5. Seminary: The City Church must equip Christians for their personal ministry. This involves all aspects of Christian education and of developing those gifts that lie dormant within each individual. Wesley Mission has thousands each week in small groups and classes, so adequate meeting rooms are required, together with all the electronic and static requirements for good teaching: midweek, at night classes, and on weekends. From the time we opened Wesley Centre we have developed our education programs. By 2005 we had 425 full-time students and 4000 doing part-time courses, in our Wesley Institute, 1750 in our two Schools for Seniors, and over 1000 in our Church have groups each week.

6. Servant: It is the will of Christ that His body, the Church, will be His servant people in the world. Our Mission depends upon the willingness of His servants to see the need of mankind and give themselves into the service of the gospel. The ministry of the Church, rightly understood, is the ministry of the whole people of Christ helping meet the whole range of needs of people.

This service will take many forms. It will take immediate form in providing the care, support and provision needed to give social relief and welfare to those who are hurt by society. It also involves long-term care and prophetic leadership to correct social injustice. The Church must involve itself in the fulfilment of its mission of caring for the poor and the powerless. The followers of Jesus must have a special concern for the poor and powerless. Hence we can provide instantly food and clothing, rent relief, a place to shower, and the basin and towel of humble service beside the bread and wine.

7. Society: When flying over a city you can see the structures of the city carved into the landscape. But a city is more than its limits and layout. The substance of cities lies not in their buildings, their freeways and overpasses, but in its social organism, the way people live together. The roads and streets

are a network of communication, the houses and buildings are shells in which we sleep and work, but the life of the city is in the relationships that exist between people.

At the heart of every city is personal participation. Those Churches around the world which make a contribution to the life of the city do so by bringing together the people of the city into participation one with the other. Against the impersonality, loneliness, and lack of communication between people who live in a major city, lies the Church with its sense of participation, communication and friendship.

That communication takes place over a table in the restaurant, in the lounges, in the church library, or in the social activities Churches are able to create. Through dialogue and contact, a sense of participation and co-operation breaks down the barriers of isolation and loneliness. The city Church must be putting some heart into a society, some content into our communication, and some fellowship into our acquaintanceship. Hence, space and facilities for informal and formal groups, eating areas and a cafeteria are essential, comfortable lounge chairs scattered throughout the building, newspapers and magazines fresh arrangements of flowers and hundreds of ferns and real plants – no plastic here! This is to remind us of the beauty of creation. (However I note Wesley Church has now added beautiful silk flowers!)

8. Space: Churches must provide space within the city. City streets are lined with building crammed against building, fighting each other as they reach for the sky. Small streets and laneways are overcrowded, as buildings seem to touch each other at the top. There always seems an overbearing pressure of buildings within the city and many people feel entombed within those city streets.

But the Church breathes space. High roofs and quiet atmosphere give a feeling of space to the spirit. I am sure this is the reason why many people come in off the street to the quiet and peace of an open Church during the middle of a busy day and sit for a moment of quietness, prayer and meditation. As their eyes are lifted to the stained glass windows, or to the high ceiling, they have a feeling of expansiveness within their soul. The Church breathes a spirit of calm and peace in overcrowded lives. The City Church can be the lungs of the city. We have built a magnificent Dunbar Library with 10,000 books available for borrowing. We also have a free video, CD, DVD and tape library available for those who cannot afford to buy or rent entertainment and education.

9. Spirit: The city church is the only provider of the essential human spirit. Every city dweller ingests some of the pressures, some of the tensions and some of the attitudes of the city. People who live their lives within an oppressive and hard environment cannot help but be infected by the spirit of their community. But the City Church can give people a new spirit. Here is the promise of a new creation, of a citizenship that goes beyond this earth to heaven, and a promise of a heavenly city, not made with hands but eternal in the heavens. This spirit transcends and overcomes the attitudes and the pressures from the outside street.

The hope of the Resurrection and the joy of Christian fellowship add a dimension to the inner urban dweller's life. This extra dimension, which comes through encounter with the living God, puts life into the existence of city people. Every city dweller needs a sense of transcendence, of hope, and of spiritual experience which takes them beyond their immediate environment. Mankind as a whole needs a hope that will hold their lives fast and give them something beyond what they have already and can ever achieve.

The Church's ministry provides a sense of meaning, hope, and transcendence that adds a fundamental dimension to living. City Churches have an enormous task to transform lives to become the agents of God's compassion and His ministry to the people of the city. This aspect of transmission and communication can be aided by good use of the media. A theatre capable of video presentation, TV transmission, and radio broadcasting can help fulfil the function of establishing and transmitting the spirit of the people. Production facilities, a broadcast studio and a film-editing suite were included from the start.

When a City Church has the rare opportunity of re-establishing itself and of building to the next century, the architect has the privilege of drawing the lines round theology and of making the Church real in the centre of the streets. "You can't help an old location but you sure can help an old store." That was the challenge we faced more than a decade ago. God has been faithful to our efforts to fulfil that challenge of making a new beginning for His glory and for the service of our city. This building is the facility to enable us to become His church to this city. No other church is so strategically situated in the Central Business District nor so finely equipped.

The ministry areas alone cost some \$40 million and were opened free of debt! There were thirty-two opening celebrations attended by 35,000 people.

When they enter our front doors for the first time, many people have declared they thought they were entering the lobby of one of the two international five star hotels adjacent the church. Others have compared it to the great shopping emporium next door "David Jones" authoritatively described as " the most beautiful store in the world."

In the foyer and reception area, we have a bookshop, one of the few Christian Bookshops in the CBD. To your right is Wesley Restaurant which hosts hundreds of city business people each day for breakfast, lunch, and dinner or for morning and afternoon teas. Wesley Centre provides catering facilities for office functions and executive conferences through the restaurant and offers an up-market package for special meetings, celebrations and conferences. Our restaurant was judged and awarded gold star rating for a medium to low price facility.

As you go further into the Centre you approach Wesley Church. This seats 500 and is the worshipping home of some of our Sunday and weekday congregations. Wesley Church is fitted with a new pipe organ, and a baptistery. It has retained the original stained glass windows, which beautified the old Wesley Chapel previously on this site. A second public area opens off the same lounge area and is known as the Lyceum. This too is used for our youth and Rotuman worship services. Both the Church and the Lyceum have multi-lingual translation facilities.

One level below are function and activity rooms, some large enough to contain several hundred people while others are designed for smaller groups and adult study classes. These activity rooms are used seven days a week by our parish, Sunday School, midweek groups, School for Seniors and other forms of training and education. A large kitchen can cater for over 800 people.

The third floor houses all of the offices of the Pastoral Division. Here people come for counselling from the large pastoral staff, or for membership classes. Here are also the offices of Sydney's School For Seniors with its fourteen hundred students. Some classes are taken in this complex which also houses music rehearsal rooms and areas for drama and dance. The large Dunbar Library of 10, 000



volumes offer reading and study facilities for church members in English and Chinese, and for School For Seniors.

A major attraction of Wesley Centre is the 1,000 seat Wesley Theatre. This theatre is the home to Wesley Mission's larger congregations each Sunday for many mid-week activities as a performing arts centre. Wesley Theatre has a large stage and music podium suitable for orchestras and drama and dance, a baptistery built into a side wall, multiple-translation equipment, a wide screen for film, slide and video presentation and a state of the art, electronic computerised system for sound and lighting.

The unique Christie Theatre Organ is built high into another wall of Wesley Theatre. This theatre organ dating from the 1930's is renown across the nation. From the opposite glass wall, parents with small children can feel part of all services without the children disturbing the rest of the congregation. All the items of furniture for Sunday worship have been specially designed and constructed to fit the decor of the theatre. Every single item has been donated by church members and friends. Outside the theatre doors, are 374 car parking spaces for worshippers, underground in the same area of land!

Just outside the main lobby of the theatre is a well-stocked kiosk with refreshments, and the John Lees Chapel for prayer and meditation. This whole area is fully equipped for thousands of visitors. Within two areas a score of telephone lines enable personal counselling following our national telecasts each week, and for special financial appeals through the media.

All these facilities and meeting areas are accompanied by open and spacious lounge areas in which visitors can relax. The whole Wesley Centre is easily accessible by the disabled through lifts, escalators and gentle ramps.

Above these levels is the massive office tower. One level is set aside for the senior staff of the Church as they provide management and expertise to our 450 other sites across the state. Here is our art department, media department, legal department, human resources, information technology, fundraising and senior executives plus conference and Boardrooms. Between 1985 and 2005, we provided accommodation for an additional 2000 people who now live in one of our properties and office facilities for the extra 2500 staff we added.

Apart from the major redevelopment of its mid-city church and office complex. Another one hundred million dollars was raised for land acquisition, buildings and the construction of new facilities for further community service. New initiatives in evangelism would be undertaken across the nation by television and radio, new programs of support, and more than one hundred and fifty new services for the poor would be established. All of these would require the purchase of additional property and the appointment of new staff, and a sustained fund-raising program beyond what had ever been attempted by a church before.

Worship is central to all we do. We were born in praise to God and today we find resources and strength for our total ministry through the worship experience of our people. If our people did not gather for worship, to hear the Word of God and to proclaim the Gospel, all point and purpose to all the good deeds of service we undertake, would be lost. That is why every person employed by Wesley Mission should be a committed Christian and a member of a worshipping congregation.

In the centre of Sydney's central business district, the central experience of the thousands of people touched through the life and work of Wesley Mission, is the worshipping community. It is precisely at this point where Wesley Mission is different from the other great social welfare agencies operated by denominational boards of churches, government welfare services, or those other agencies for the community's good, which, while born in a Christian environment, have now lost their Christian witness. Wesley Mission is unique in that it holds worship and service together. We proclaim on our worship bulletins every week, "The end of worship is the beginning of service".

Service and worship are inextricably bound together. Over the century we have maintained an increasing involvement in the worship of God by the people who serve in His name. Every Sunday this church has been the centre of the worship of God for people who live in the inner city, for those who come and uphold this centre of worship for the benefit of others, for tourists and visitors, for folk down in the city from their normal country home, and for international visitors who find in a strange land a place where they can worship God and feel at home.

But services are also held in Wesley Church every day of the week except Saturday, not just on Sundays, for the benefit of those who work and live in the city. Each of those daily services provides a different emphasis and attracts a different congregation. One service, Sing and Praise, celebrates the

goodness of God in music and song. The Healing Service is a service of witness in word and laying on of hands with prayer for those who are ill. Lunchtime Inspiration is a service to lift the spirit in worship and praise to God. Chapel-in-the-City is a service of preaching the positive power of God to lift a person's life. Mid-city Communion is a quiet and reflective communion service aimed at encouraging our personal devotion. Here communion is shared, baptisms are held, weddings are celebrated, funerals are conducted and special services designed to minister to the office worker and shop attendant.

Wesley Theatre is the scene of the main worship services of Wesley Mission. It is strange to many that we did not build one large, beautiful church to seat everybody at one sitting. Our understanding goes against that common trend. We have multiple facilities for worship and over 55 services each week, each with a differing ethos and feel about them. Many have different theological emphasis and other differing styles of worship. We offer a smorgasbord of worship experiences. Here, there is a service and a congregation to suit everyone's personal desires.

For 90 years Wesley Mission has used a theatre to proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ every Sunday night through wars, depressions and times of affluence. Its congregations have been varied. Hundreds of people from the widest variety of social, economic, educational, ethnic and vocational backgrounds joined together in one purpose to worship God and to proclaim the gospel of grace. Over the years the 'Church-in-a-Theatre' has been the centre of prophetic preaching, of frequent controversy and of faithful proclamation. With one of the finest theatre organs in the country, a magnificent screen and all the facilities for first-class cinema operation, the Church-in-a-Theatre operated according to its name, it was a church worshipping in a theatre, and therefore used lighting, sound and the screen every week to effect.

During the preaching and the reading of the Scriptures the verses are shown on the screen for people to follow. The success of this theatre as a centre of worship and evangelism was seen in the multiplying of crowded services throughout Sunday. When the decision was made to demolish the downtown properties, it was a unanimous decision of the membership to build a new theatre, a centre for the performing arts and a Convention Centre with state-of-the-art facilities which would house the church's major worship services, not a traditional cathedral style church.

Wesley Theatre congregations are probably the most egalitarian church worship service in the world. Here you will find literally professors and physicians, prostitutes and alcoholics, teachers and computer programmers, skid-row drunks and homeless teenagers, sitting side by side and hearing the proclamation of the gospel.

Stalwart Christians, who could have been much more comfortable in their own environment in their local suburban church, have committed themselves to this service week by week to uphold the preaching of the gospel and to enable the message to reach those in the community who desperately need the power of God to renew them. It is a fact that causes rejoicing, that on every Sunday for the past century lives have been changed, challenged and converted through the power of the gospel. One exciting development in the last two decades has been the development of ethnic congregations. From an early beginning of a handful of Pacific Island people, services have been conducted weekly in four languages Fijian, Rotuman, Samoan and Tongan, and from that handful of people twelve vibrant congregations of Pacific Islanders meet weekly for worship, communion, cultural experiences and fellowship around the meal table.

In 1979 I commenced a service for Asian people and that International Service has grown from strength to strength. Today every Sunday morning a congregation numbering one thousand from a variety of countries of origin meets in Wesley Theatre to praise God. That is followed by a Chinese service to cater for hundreds of Chinese speaking people. A Spanish Congregation was established and now thrives as a separate congregation of several hundred. An Indonesian congregation has also recently developed, as has an enthusiastic Japanese service. Massive Celebrations, our largest services, combining all our congregations for a special occasion, are held in the largest facility in the nation, or outdoors, such as when over 50,000 attend our Christmas Service and pageant.

Wesley Mission believes that in every large city there is a significant number of people who are either resident within the central city area or its immediate environs, who live at their places of work, as nurses in hospitals, students in dormitories, or caretakers in large city buildings, who together with visitors to the city, international travellers, tourists in motels, businessmen in hotels, seamen on board ships at the docks, and ordinary people who week by week are not attached to a local suburban church, need to find a place to worship.

Today through Wesley Mission thousands of people each week worship God. The church is the only centre in society that brings people together for worship, to encourage them to capture the feeling of transcendence in life, and to help them find resources to equip them for living.

One further aspect of building was the facilities for Wesley Institute.

Wesley Institute For Ministry and the Arts is a university level Christian college in the arts and Christian leadership. Over four hundred full-time and over 4000 part-time students and a very strong faculty make up the college body. It has schools in dance, drama, music, counselling, theology, missions, and visual arts. Vocational and community education students are trained by professionals in their special field, but all do core subjects from a Christian perspective. We purchased a very large Government secondary college and rebuilt much of it to suit the Institute.

This College is the first of its type to be fully accredited by both federal and state educational bodies. The potential of this college is enormous, especially as increasing numbers of students from the Third World and USA discover its standing and capabilities. Christian ministry is much wider than the pulpit ministry, and these Christians are trained to minister through the arts.

The new Wesley Centre was designed to enable performing artists to have the finest facilities in making their presentations to the city.

The Apostle Paul saw the cities as the decision-making centres, and their life the civilising force for the rest of the empire. His strategy was to win the empire by winning the cities. Over the centuries the church built great cathedrals dominating city squares, and church bells pealed across the city streets. In another era, the preaching from the pulpit of city churches had tremendous influence over the attitudes of people in the cities.

Today the church does not have any protected place in the life of the city. But it still has its charge to win men and women to Jesus Christ, and in a country like Australia where 86% of our people live in seven cities, to be effective in our evangelism of this country. To be nationally effective requires us to be effective in our evangelism of her cities, particularly Sydney. Greater Sydney, between Newcastle and Wollongong houses one out of every three persons in Australia. The Lord Jesus Christ has given

us the church to proclaim His gospel to people in this community. Wesley Mission has been faithful to its ministry of evangelism.

There have been some Christian missions, both in Australia and overseas, that have changed from evangelism to welfare, and then from the provision of welfare to the seeking of justice. We are not critical of their evolution of concepts, but we believe that evangelism is still primary in our tasks, and that all other emphases are in association with it. Consequently, Wesley Mission has lived by evangelism. We believe the church is only the church when it is the church in mission.

Behind all the ministry lies the adequate building program that has given us the tools to do the job.