

Rick Sherrod tours Australia on shoestring budget
By Craig White

SYDNEY, Australia--They say you can't get blood out of a stone, but the Friends of the Sabbath sponsored Rick Sherrod lecture series proved otherwise. Mr. Sherrod, from Stephenville, Texas, frequently lectures on his specialty, the United States and Britain in prophecy. His tour down under was run on a shoestring budget, and the lecture series was more successful than anyone expected, including Mr. Sherrod and myself.

The lecture series, organized chiefly by nonordained members of the United Church of God with help from many others, had the following objectives:

- To use these lecture series as a means of outreach.

This proved successful with about two thirds of attenders not having any background in the Churches of God. Mr. Sherrod was also interviewed for an article in Coffs Harbour Advocate and by the Dr. Gordon Moyes, host of Australia's most popular religious radio program, Sunday Night Live.

- To revitalize interest in this key doctrine after 12 years of neglect.

Members of the Churches of God appeared well pleased with this series. Many said they found the lectures fascinating and brought further proof for our Israel identity in addition to the traditional proofs.

- To build bridges with similar Churches of God.

Members of the United Church of God, Global Church of God, Church of God International, Church of God of Monrovia, Calif., Independent Church of God, Intercontinental Church of God, Christian Biblical Church of God and unaligned Sabbatarians attended and appeared relaxed and happy with each other. Global announced the lectures to their people, as did some Worldwide Church of God pastors.

Many cooperated

The following organizations and periodicals permitted us to place announcements advertising the lectures in their mailings: the United Church of God, the British-Israel World Federation, Christian Educational Services, Servant's News, Faith in Australia magazine, The Journal: News of the Churches of God, the Independent Church of God, Perspectives magazine, Alert newsletter, Sabbath History newsletter, The Shofar newsletter, Origins of Nations magazine and History Research Projects.

This should be seen in the context of Matthew 12:30; Mark 9:38-40; and Numbers 11:27-29.

In Coffs Harbour, a small Protestant group actually arranged the hall for us since we did not have any contacts up there to do it for us. They were so interested in Dr. Sherrod's lectures that, in Sydney, they even videotaped the proceedings.

Before heading back to the United States, Dr. Sherrod said that he found Australia to be "an utter delight in terms of service that I have been able to contribute to the church. This is one of the

highlights of my career in the ministry. I am pleased that the turnout was as large as it was; I did not anticipate as many outside of the Churches of God."

He said that in the United States at least 90 percent of his audience was from the UCG, and most or all of the rest were from other Churches of God.

Approximate attendance figures were as follows: Sydney Sabbath services 80, Saturday afternoon 185; Sunday morning 80; Sunday afternoon 90; Canberra 56; Coffs Harbour 40; Brisbane Sabbath services 76; Saturday afternoon 186; Toowoomba 50; Melbourne first night 120; second night 86.

What to do next

In retrospect, a few things could be done differently, including pushing harder for follow-up Bible lectures on a range of topics to ensure that the non-Church of God visitors learn more about our teachings in a methodical and sequential manner.

I would like to thank Kevin Watson for paying for Dr. Sherrod's airfare and Peter and Vivienne Ellis for accommodating Dr. Sherrod and his two daughters in Sydney; Graeme Marshall and the Brisbane organizing committee; Walter and Cindy Steensby and Dale Heslin in Canberra; Wayne Matthews in Melbourne; Kevin Shaw, Murray Allatt, Karen Allen, Doug and Eve Gray and all others involved in any way with the arrangements; and the UCG national council for supplying literature.

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Correction

I noted the article in the June Journal concerning Rick Sherrod's trip had an error. I do not know how it crept into the article, but the Friends of the Sabbath had nothing to do with sponsoring the lecture series. It was jointly sponsored by Kevin Watson and History Research Projects.

It would be appreciated if you were to bring this to the attention of your readers.

Craig White

Sydney, Australia