

Taking Ministry to the Streets

by Paul Rees & Jack De Vries

Coachman Park is a regular haunt for many of the marginalised in the St Marys area. People with issues of substance abuse, homelessness, poverty, and loneliness regularly gather there. Coachman Park is also a busy thoroughfare connecting the main street with a nearby shopping plaza.

In April/May 2009 the church leaders of the Christian Reformed Church of St Marys were asked to endorse an outreach ministry to the local community. It was proposed to commence in June and run for some three months. The ministry would involve handing out good quality warm clothing as well as hot soup, kind words, and listening ears. These session leaders gave their wholehearted support. Approval was also sought from the local council to use Coachman Park for this ministry. The Penrith City Council agreed.



Members of St Marys CRC in NSW turned their focus to those outside the four walls of the church.

The Coachman Park Ministry commenced in mid June with the idea that volunteers would set up in the park every second Sunday. The ministry was intended to be for a short term, initially only three months. However, the need

remained and relationships had begun to build. So as the warmer months began, soup was replaced with sausage sandwiches and winter clothing with summer.

So every second Sunday since mid June 2009 brothers and sisters from St Marys

CRC have met with the regulars and with those who walk past, providing some food, clothing, and some spiritual conversation. Many of those who pass by find it difficult to understand how people just give something away for nothing. They ask, "Why?" Hearing brothers and sisters provide a gospel explanation for the free gift has indeed been a blessing. This ministry has not been a one

way street with blessings flowing only from the church family to the community.

It has been humbling to watch the Lord at work in the lives of the members of the church, watching people grow in confidence and in love.



Coachman Park in downtown St Marys

Kryna, one of the volunteers, had this to say about the Coachman Park outreach: *"St Marys Christian Reformed Church started to do something for the community in the form of hot soup and giving away free jumpers, in a local park. They were looking for volunteers to help. I had many excuses as to why I could not help. One Sunday I did go to the park to see what was going on. At first, I stood in the background, I didn't know what to say to these people. I went a few more times and gradually got to talk to some of the people, they were just people who needed some help. They could not believe that we would give away food and clothes for free. We would explain that God had blessed us with so much and especially that he gave his son Jesus. I now look forward*

