Boat people are locals when the tinnie’s sunk

IN THE SAME BOAT: Australia has a humanitarian program.

**Pooh-pooh the notion of these hectic times**

**OUR world seems more frantic than ever. We all hit the ground running, but no one is sure which direction to take.**

Our world seems more impatient than ever. I had to wait nearly a whole second to connect to the internet and now I’m consumed with frustration.

Our world seems busier and more crowded than ever. Some sneezes in Mexico and we run for cover in Nova Scotia.

Our world seems more disconnected than ever. I know the names of all the characters on my favourite soap opera but not my next door neighbour.

Our world seems more pressured than ever. A recent survey reports that on average most of us get two hours less sleep per night than we did 30 years ago.

Most of us are also working longer hours. I’m writing this at midnight.

So here’s a little upside down advice that might put the world the right way up. Instead of worrying so much about how you are going to spend your time, make a little space for wasting some of it by doing that rare and beautiful thing - nothing.

In support of my case I quote a wise and valuable source. “What I like doing best,” said Christopher Robin, “is nothing.”

“How do you do nothing?” asked Pooh, after he had wondered for a long time.

“Well, it’s when people call out at you just as you’re going to do it,” said Christopher Robin, “and you say ‘Oh nothing,’ and then you go and do it.”

“Then why do you do nothing?” asked Pooh.

“Because you can,” was the reply.

“‘Oh I see,’” said Pooh. “It means just going along, listening to all the things you can’t hear, and not bothering.”

This seems to be a very good way of spending time. In fact, I think the world would be a happier place if we spent more time listening to the things we cannot hear and therefore coming closer to the things we cannot see.

For “faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things unseen.” (Hebrews 11:1). Or as CS Lewis put it, “Heaven is much too serious a place for work. It will be all dance and play there.”

Often God can best be found in the silences between the notes: in what is written between the lines; not through our effort, or hard work, or even our goodness, but in those moments of forgetfulness, of sleeping and dreaming, when we are caught unaware by the wild and mysterious beauty of the world.

So switch off the TV, put this paper down for a minute; shut your eyes; breathe deeply; dream; do nothing but listen to the things you cannot hear. Nurture your inner sib. You might even find you begin to pray – not saying a lot of stuff to God, but enjoying the intimacy of God’s presence and the fragile beauty of each passing moment.

Or put it another way: don’t just do something, sit there.”

**Stephen Cottrell is the Bishop of Reading, England. He is visiting the Anglican Diocese of Newcastle this week. Among his many books on spirituality and discipleship are Do Nothing to Change your Life: Discovering What Happens When You Stop (CHP 2007). This article is submitted by the Churches Media Association www.cmahunter.com.au**

**Today’s fact**

In 43 AD A Roman physician named Scribonius Largus performed shock therapy using electric catfish.

**Today’s word**

Eschatological: A brilliant display or dazzling effect. Social distortion: conspicuous success; universal approbation.

**It happened today**

From our files – 1996: While falls of rain on the road have been rated as good to very good the situation in the Upper Hunter has been rated by district dairy officer Mr L. J. Barnett as “extremely bad to disastrous”.

**Today in history**

1626: Dutch governor Peter Minuit buys Manhattan from a local Indian tribe, reputedly for trinkets worth $524.

1912: On Our Selection, considered to be the first real Australian play, opens in Sydney to mixed reviews.

1915: The Australian attack on Gaba Tepe, Gallipoli, ends in failure.

1932: Mobster Al Capone is convicted of income tax evasion and jailed at the federal penitentiary in Atlanta.

1979: Margaret Thatcher becomes Britain’s first woman prime minister.

1989: Tens of thousands of Chinese students march to Tiananmen Square, calling for freedom and democracy.

1998: A major World Bank agreement settles the claim of a 71-year-old Navajo survivor of the first settlement in the dispute over Jewish-owned accounts missing since World War II.

**Born today**

Andrey Hechurn, pictured, Australian born actress (1929-1993); Steve Liebmann, Australian model and Miss World (1952); Randy Travis, US country singer (1959); Andrew Bonn, Australian media personality (1960).

**Odd Spot**

The parents of 13-year-old autistic boy Kenton Weaver are stunned when he went unnoticed when boarding a flight from California after taking his father’s car and driving 40 kilometres to Fort Lauderdale airport to use his father’s credit cards to buy the ticket.

**Today’s text**

Christ is the key that opens all the hidden treasures of God’s wisdom and knowledge.

Colossians 2:3