

Welsh Singers
end on high note

Page 5



The Bible unique, prophetic and divisive

Formed in 1977 on the basis that its faith and obedience are nourished and regulated by the Bible, the Uniting Church has faced increasing tensions over the way its people read and interpret scripture.

By Bruce Mullan

Many have identified the question of how we read the Bible as the key underlying issue in the recent divisive debates over homosexuality and leadership in the Uniting Church.

While protagonists from all sides have used scripture to validate their argument and justify their position, others warn that such debates are not mere abstract discussions and historically people have died as a result of biblical interpretation on issues such as war, women, crime and sexuality.

Writing for *Christianity Today*, Professor of Systematic and Historical Theology at Regent College in Vancouver, Canada and pre-eminent evangelical theologian Dr James I. Packer said that each view of biblical authority sees the other as false and disastrous to the long-term welfare of Christianity.

"The continuing conflict between them, which breaks surface in the disagreement about same-sex unions, is a fight to the death, in which both sides are sure that they have the church's best interests at heart," said Dr Packer.

National Uniting Church Director for Theology and Discipleship Rev Dr Rob Bos said that in the recent sexuality discussions people on all sides of the debate have taken the scriptures seriously.

"One side does not have a monopoly and it is unfair to accuse people who have agonised over scripture and come to a different view from ourselves as being 'unbiblical'," he said.

Lecturer of Theology at the Wesley Institute in Sydney Kit Barker (writing in this issue of *Journey*, see page 9) points out that people's doctrine of God and scripture are essentially related, and determine the way they read and interpret the Bible.

Mr Barker believes that God is sovereign and communicates very intentionally. He said this understanding of God produces a "distinct view of scripture when scripture is understood to be a primary means by which God performs this communication."

Others such as the Assembly Working Group on Doctrine claim new circumstances demand that the church "confess its faith anew in the light of contemporary challenges to the gospel".

Dr Bos said we need to listen to each other and learn from each other so we can enrich each other's understanding of the Gospel as we learn to appreciate others' perspectives.

"Disagreement of views does not necessarily mean rejection of the people who hold them, or even a failure to take their views seriously.

"While we need to listen to each other, we ultimately listen for the guidance of God, who may not always want what we want, or see things in the way we think God ought to see them!"

Lent Appeal: you made a difference

Pacific Islands partner churches were the main recipients of over \$70,000 donated by Queensland Uniting Church members in this year's Lent Appeal.

Over \$23,000 was donated to provide a fresh water supply for Sege Theological College in the Solomon Islands and for the 100 year old Dilkusha home for orphaned Indian children in Fiji.

Dilkusha is currently home to 45 children from the ages of six months to 22 years, many of whom will go on to become leaders in the Fijian church and community.

The United Aboriginal Islander Christian Congress received over \$22,000 for ministry with the Mapoon Indigenous Community on Cape York and to support Indigenous Interns entering a Leadership Training Program.

In 1990 the President of the Uniting Church apologised to the people of Mapoon for the church's failure to stand with them when they were forced to leave in 1963 when the town was closed.

The 2005 Lent Appeal also supported refugees and asylum seekers in Queensland, and assisted in the provision of a new engine

for the twenty-six year old Cessna 182 aircraft that transports McKay Patrol Padre Rev Garry Hardingham to isolated communities in North Western Queensland.

Moderator Rev Dr David Pitman said that the generosity shown by church members to the 2005 Lent Appeal was a great sign of the strong sense of community and partnership that exists in the Queensland Uniting Church.

"Witnessing the open-hearted and generous response of people to a particular need within the human family is a great encouragement to us all," he said.

Read more about the Uniting Church and the Bible

Pages 8 and 9

- How we read the Bible
- Which version should I read?
- DaVinci not the code for Bible readers
- How evangelicals read the Bible
- The Bible: not child's play
- Bible Gateway, website of the month
- Bible tools
- Did you know?

Page 2

- Divine manifesto for mission
- Editorial

Page 10

- Indigenous people read the Bible through different eyes
- Youth have a more critical approach

Page 16

- *Journey* asks: Did Jonah really spend three days in the belly of a whale?

Moderator's message

The Bible - a divine manifesto for mission

In this issue of *Journey*, with its emphasis on the Bible and how we read it, I want to reflect a little on the Bible as a manifesto for mission.

A manifesto is a declaration explaining the intentions, motives and principles of actions to be undertaken.

In that sense we can engage with scripture as one of the key ways in which God declares and explains the divine purpose revealed in Christ and now entrusted to the church.



Moderator Rev Dr David Pitman

According to the Gospel records, Jesus began his public ministry in Galilee, "proclaiming the good news of God, and saying, 'the time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news.'" (Mark 1:14-15).

Luke tells us that in the synagogue at Nazareth, Jesus identified the nature and purpose of his own ministry by quoting from Isaiah and applying the words to himself: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor.

He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour." (Luke 4:18-19, cf. Isaiah 61:1-2)

I believe we are meant to understand from these words of Jesus that we know the kingdom of God, or the reign of God, has reality in the life of the world as we see the evidence unfolding before us in the renewal and transformation of people's lives.

The mission of the church, and of every disciple of Jesus, is to participate with God in this ongoing miracle of grace.

We believe that the biblical witness reveals a God who loves us unconditionally and invites us into a life-changing relationship.

"In our changing world, in response to the imperative of the gospel and our experience of God's grace, we are called to share with God in transforming the world." (*Vision for Mission*, Queensland Synod 2005)

"In our changing world, in response to the imperative of the gospel and our experience of God's grace, we are called to share with God in transforming the world." (*Vision for Mission*, Queensland Synod 2005).

This understanding of the mission of God has its roots in the witness of the Old Testament.

While Jesus takes the words of Isaiah as a manifesto for his own ministry, the same vision for mission is entrusted to the people of God.

Again it is Isaiah who makes this plain: "I have given you as a covenant to the people, a light to the nations, to open the eyes that are blind, to bring out the prisoners from the dungeon, from the prison those who sit in darkness... I will give you as a light to the nations, so that my salvation may reach to the ends of the earth." (Isaiah 42:6-7, 49:6).

Jesus gave "power and authority" to his disciples to engage in the same ministry when he sent them out "to proclaim the kingdom of God and to heal" (Luke 9:1-2).

And when his own earthly ministry was complete Jesus commissioned the disciples to be witnesses to the reign of God to the ends of the earth in the power of the Spirit (Acts 1:8).

It is this truth we have sought to express in the Vision for Mission, widely circulated across the church in recent months, and endorsed by the recent Synod. Look again at some of its key statements:

"We believe that the biblical witness reveals a God who loves us unconditionally and invites us into a life-changing relationship.

"We see this reality most clearly and powerfully revealed in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus.

"As Christians, our identity is determined, and our purpose is defined, by the relationship we share with him.

"We receive through scripture and tradition the imperative to communicate this good news with others, wherever and whenever we can, though always sensitively and respectfully.

"It is our deep desire that others will come to know Christ for themselves, put their relationship with him at the centre of their lives, become active participants in some part of the Christian community and committed to public witness and service in the name of Christ."

There is a clearly identifiable manifesto for mission in the Bible. It confronts us, challenges us and guides us. It explains the intentions, motives and principles that undergird the mission we undertake in the name and spirit of Christ.

From the Editor

This issue of *Journey* looks at the Bible, a book written over a 1500 year period by more than 40 authors from every walk of life.

Read by more people and published in more languages than any other book in history, the Bible has been translated, retranslated, and paraphrased more than any other book which has ever existed.

The Bible is also probably the most quoted, most referenced and most studied book ever, and has spawned countless Bible encyclopaedias, lexicons, atlases, commentaries and concordances.

It has also led to libraries of biblical interpretation, doctrine, theology, apologetics, religious education, church history, devotional writings, hymns and endless other works.

It would be impossible to do justice to the Bible in one small newspaper but *Journey* was keen to present just some issues and information which might stimulate conversation around the church.

As a teenager I was made to feel guilty about my inability to discipline myself to the "daily quiet time" which was seemingly mandatory for serious Christian disciples.

I also experienced the usual problems of getting bogged down in "proof-texting" individual verses until I lost sight of the big themes of the Bible: the salvation found in Jesus Christ and expressed in love, forgiveness, grace, liberation, justice, peace, and the goodness of creation.

I now read the Bible very differently and it speaks to my life in very different ways. As I get older I believe less in the inerrancy of the scriptures, yet find they occupy a more profound and important place in directing my life and actions.

It is the prayer of the *Journey* team that this issue of *Journey* might awaken in you a new enthusiasm to engage with the Christian scriptures and discover new insights and motivation in God's very precious word.

We are very conscious that some readers will find the stories from the West End conversation (page 7) confronting.

What has been shared in that article are just snippets from real life stories shared by two Christian people.

While as Christians we might argue about doctrine, theology and ethics, the testimony of another is not something to argue with, simply something to listen to and consider.

While we will not all agree with the suppositions implied, we ask that readers respect what has been shared in vulnerability and honesty.

A big thanks to all those congregations who took up the vision for the *Gifts of Time and Love* Christmas project for 2005.

Over 230,000 postcards will be delivered to letterboxes across Queensland in the next few weeks and 1500 posters will be placed on noticeboards in schools, shopping centres and sporting clubs.

This is a huge statement about the commitment of congregations to engage with their wider community and open the doors of their churches to all who might wish to worship this Christmas.

While it would be unrealistic to expect that a few postcards will lead to full churches on 25 December, the Uniting Church in Queensland has made a clear statement to the community and it will be heard.

Bruce Mullan

Signs of the times

This sign from Burrum Heads Uniting in the Hervey Bay area shows the kind of genuine commitment to ecumenical activity talked about in the *Australian Churches Covenanting Together* document recently signed by the Uniting Church (see story, page 3).



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It may not look much like church

By Bruce Mullan

The Synod Leadership Team is moving swiftly to implement the Vision for Mission endorsed in September by the 25th Synod and has called for expressions of interest for a Vision for Mission Facilitation Team and a Vision for Mission Advocate.

Synod Secretary Rev Jenny Tymms said the Vision for Mission Facilitation Team will be a small group of creative, innovative, energetic leaders to oversee the implementation of the Vision for Mission.

"Together with the Vision for Mission Advocate, the team will offer support and guidance for the establishment, development, nurture and evaluation of mission initiatives across the Uniting Church in Queensland," she said.

"The goal is to seed many new mission ventures through organising collaborative efforts throughout the church.

"The kind of people we are looking for will be committed to the establishment of new mission initiatives and have a good understanding of the changing world in which we live.

"They will probably be the kind of people who think beyond the usual church square and may feel more comfortable outside

traditional church leadership structures."

Moderator of the Queensland Synod Rev Dr David Pitman is committed to ensure that the group can operate in flexible and creative ways.

"Unfortunately the experience of some creative initiators and leaders of new mission ventures within our church has been that the structure and institutional rigidity of parts of the Uniting Church has

stifled, rather than encouraged, new initiatives," said Dr Pitman.

The criteria for any funded initiatives will include, among others, its congruence with the Vision for Mission, intentionality of relationship building with people in the wider community and creative alternatives to the employment of full-time persons and ownership of property.

Ms Tymms said an information kit will be developed to assist groups wishing to access funding for new mission initiatives.



General Secretary of the Queensland Synod Rev Jenny Tymms is seeking leaders on the edge

School packs for the Solomons

Things are tough in the Solomon Islands. While the half million inhabitants don't lack food or shelter, recent conflicts have made the country unstable and interrupted education, services and business.

Few children complete primary school, education services have been seriously disrupted, education facilities are deficient and instructional materials are non-existent in most schools.

School Packs for the Solomons is a campaign designed to

allow Queenslanders to provide educational resources for children in the Solomons and to do something tangible for our Pacific neighbour churches

Coordinator of the campaign in Queensland, Heather den Houting, is enthusiastic about the opportunities the campaign will bring.

"The United Church in Solomon Islands is managing a large number of primary and secondary schools, particularly in the Western Province.

"The Uniting Church in Australia has strong links with the church there, and is only too happy to help equip young people in their education," said Ms den Houting.

"Individuals or groups can buy a backpack from the International Mission office of the Queensland Synod for a nominal cost, and fill the backpack with a set list of school materials such as exercise books, pencils, ruler, eraser, scrapbooks and t-shirt.

"The initial charge for the backpacks will be used to pay for the packs and the transport costs to the Solomons."

The campaign is set to start in December 2005, with an expected delivery date in the Solomons in March 2006, just after the beginning of the new school year.

"This means that people can pick up basic school resources very cheaply in shops during the back to school sales," Ms den Houting said.

Ms den Houting is looking for volunteers to assist with the program and a friendly church that would be willing to store the backpacks as they are collected. Please contact her on 07 3377 9805, or email: heatherdh@uccentre.ucaqld.com.au.



Solomon Islands Children from Koleasi village have few resources



Christian Unity Working Group Secretary Rev Dr Sandy Yule

Working together

Ecumenism can no longer be relegated to the domain of the church bureaucracy.

That's the message coming from the Assembly's Christian Unity Working Group, following the signing of Australian Churches Covenanting Together by the fifteen member churches of the National Council of Churches in July 2004.

The document challenges all Uniting Church congregations to play an important role in creating a truly shared mission with other Christian churches.

At the same time, presbyteries and synods have been challenged to renew their ecumenical commitment, particularly through the sharing of prayers and mission oversight with partner churches.

The Working Group will also ask the 11th Assembly in Brisbane for encouragement and action to help local congregations live out the commitments made in the NCCA covenant signed last year.

Australian Churches Covenanting Together registers the commitment of some of the member churches, including the UCA, to such things as resource sharing, common mission and ministry, common recognition of baptism and continuing work towards full eucharistic sharing and shared ordained ministries.

Christian Unity Working Group Secretary Rev Dr Sandy Yule said the 11th Assembly will be asked to commend the Covenant to congregations, presbyteries and synods, and to offer guidance on how they can use it to enrich their local mission.

"While the specific nature of the Covenant varies between Churches, the overall message in it is a commitment to further exploration, conversation and sharing ecumenically.

"Although it was signed by leaders of 15 denominations it can't just be interpreted at the national level.

"Within the one faith community, the body of Christ, we all have a wider responsibility to spread the word that God is totally committed to all humankind.

"It's up to the Assembly to join with synods and presbyteries in encouraging and supporting local congregations so they can engage with other Christian groups in their communities.

"I want to get this document on the table as a gate opener for people to take this issue more seriously. The Covenant actually opens the door for local leaders to consider committing their Uniting Church congregation to discussions with a range of denominations.

"It is only by finding the limits of what is permissible between Churches, that we can define what is possible for all of us."

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Lynne

Honour for urban Indigenous ministry

A small crowd of around 40 people gathered at West End Uniting Church, Brisbane in October to hear the history of the Queensland Uniting Church's urban Aboriginal and Islander ministry since the 1970s, and to honour and support the work of aboriginal leaders in ministry Aunty Jean Phillips and Mrs Elizabeth Law.

Aboriginal leaders Elizabeth Law from Zillmere and Aunty Jean Phillips from Highgate Hill, shared their perspective on some current ministry and social justice challenges facing the Brisbane community.

Former Director of the Centre for Social Justice Rev Dr Noel Preston and former Democrat Senator Rev John Woodley gave accounts of the turbulent and colourful history of those involved in urban Aboriginal and Islander ministry in Brisbane in the 1970s, 1980s and the early 1990s.

Mr Woodley and Mr Preston told tales of Pastor Don Brady and Pastor E. Charles Harris who ministered with the Indigenous community in Brisbane through the tumultuous days of Premier Sir Joh Bjelke-Peterson and the Brisbane Commonwealth Games.

This evening of important oral history has been recorded and is available for download from the www.journeyonline.com.au website in the 'Features' section.



Indigenous leaders Aunty Jean Phillips and Elizabeth Law at West End Uniting Church, New Farm, have presented them with bicycles.
Photo by Bruce Mullan

Position Vacant Part-Time Ministry UCA NSW Synod Far North Coast Presbytery



A pioneering Christian part-time ministry to establish faith communities with people who embrace alternate lifestyles in the Byron Bay, Mullumbimby and Nimbin areas is to begin. The person we are seeking must accept the polity and ethos of the Uniting Church in Australia and agree to a Working with Children Check.

For an information kit, email admin@fnc.nsw.uca.org.au
Applications close 20 November 2005

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Sounds Like Chicken saxophone player Joel Dawson, onstage
Photo courtesy of *Sounds Like Chicken*

Arts festival leaves punters stumped

By Catherine Mullan

Blackstump Christian Music Festival celebrated its 20th Anniversary from 30 September to 3 October in Sydney.

Almost 5000 people from around the country came together to enjoy some of the best Christian music, arts and teaching in Australia.

Weather conditions held up for campers, leaving many to consider the 20th anniversary of the event, the best ever Blackstump.

In his final year as Festival Coordinator, Rod McLean rated Stump '05 as a wonderful year and an amazing experience.

The festival provided a wide range of activities for 'Stumpers' including workshops, Bible studies, worship times, bands, performing arts, a celebration carnival, and even snowboarding.

Melbourne band *Sounds Like Chicken* played at the festival for their fifth consecutive year.

Saxophone player Joel Dawson said the band kept returning because of the atmosphere of the festival.

"We really just love the arty feel of the festival and the interesting people you see wandering about. Definitely some of the nicest crowds we've played for," he said.

Sounds Like Chicken were just one of the numerous bands to attend the festival this year.

Queensland bands included: *The Winnie Coopers*, *Alabaster Box*, *The Amazing Joel Hockey Movement* and *Juxtapose*.

First time 'Stumpette' Liz, 21, from Queensland said she would definitely return next year.

"The worship gatherings, workshops and bands were great."

Organisers said they were looking forward to seeing more Queenslanders at Blackstump 2006.

Merthyr members: get on your bikes

Three refugees from Burundi will find getting around Brisbane much easier now that the members of Merthyr Uniting Church, New Farm, have presented them with bicycles.

The three young men live at a hostel in Bowen Hills and have been walking to New Farm for church, about 4 kms.

The three bikes were newly repaired by Gerry Brockman and accessories were donated by Mrs Mae Jones in memory of her husband Arnold who died in August.

Merthyr UC member Desley Garnet said, "This project has engendered a real sense of community in our church and has been a great way of the young lads feeling excited about being in Australia."



From left: Daniel, Mae Jones, Gerry Brockman who repaired and restored the bikes, Desire and Vianney with their new bikes
Photo courtesy of Merthyr Uniting Church

Painted faces win smiles in Beenleigh

By Mardi Lumsden

Beenleigh Region UC is quite literally putting smiles on the children of the area with their new initiative Happy Faces.

Happy Faces is a face-painting group launched at the Beenleigh Show. The group painted over 350 faces for free and is mainly run by

members of the youth group who got a taste for face-painting at the Sunday School Picnic.

Youth leader Lyndal McGregor-Lownes is one of the driving forces behind Happy Faces.

Ministry of the Word candidate Jennifer Lynn said, "Lyndal both caught the vision and ran with the vision. I acted within the role of support/mentor and allowed Lyndal the space and creativity to really make this her own project."

"Many were surprised that there was no charge for either the face painting or the balloons - which led to us being able to share a little about ourselves."

The Happy Faces team did a repeat performance during Mental Health Week in October.



Beenleigh Region UC youth leader and Happy Faces co-ordinator Lyndal McGregor-Lownes with a very happy customer, Grace Wein



Newly elected Toombul District UC Church Council members Colleen Heffernan, 13, and Rosie Dennis, 16

Teens hang out in Church Council

When a call went out for nominations for church council members of the Toombul District UC, no one expected two members of the youth group to apply.

Thirteen year-old Colleen Heffernan and sixteen year-old Rosie Dennis were delighted and surprised when they were elected to their church council.

Minister Rev Jan Whyte said the girls are part of a vibrant group of young people within the church.

"They know that they have something significant to contribute to the church and are burning to do it," she said.

"They really didn't expect to be elected, because they worship in the Café Church group, and thought

the people from the traditional service would not know who they were, and so would probably not vote for them."

Ms Heffernan is not the only one excited about her new position.

"My parents were very proud of me for having a go and wanting to make a difference. Young people can make a difference in the church. This is one way we can do it."

Ms Whyte said although the nominations were a "bit of a surprise at first, it is very exciting that Rosie and Colleen want to be leaders in the congregation, and feel comfortable about offering to play their part on the church council."

"It is great that the congregation value them enough to vote for

them. I think they will be good for us in a lot of ways.

"I hope we might have something to teach them, but I am sure that they have a lot to teach us, and I am looking forward to working with them."

The older of the two new Council members, Rosie Dennis, believes young people have an important place in the church.

"Young people are important. We want to have a part in the decision making in the congregation. Just because we are young, doesn't mean we don't have anything to offer," she said.

Youth leader and elder Meri Whyte has agreed to mentor the girls in their new positions.

Welsh singers end on high note

The Brisbane Welsh Singers sang their final concert to a full house at Bayside Uniting Church on Sunday, 9 October in a celebration of singing presented by the Saint David's Welsh Society of Brisbane.

The all female choir has been in operation for seventy years and has sung for everyone from royalty and at Brisbane's Expo '88 to the community in Murgon.

The Apollo Male Choir and the Moreton Bay College Senior Primary Choir also sang on the day, in a mixture of Welsh and English, with the congregation joining in for some rousing hymns and, as is tradition, starting with the Welsh national anthem and finishing with a sacred piece.

More than 300 people attended the celebration including 100 year-old former Brisbane Welsh Singers member Herba Tronson, who received a certificate of appreciation, as well as Acting Musical Director Harriet Remy-Maillet and conductor Audrey Bellingham.



Brisbane Welsh Singers conductor Audrey Bellingham (far right) enjoys a chance to sing during their final concert, at Bayside Uniting in October
Photo and story by Mardi Lumsden



The new library and IT Centre at Shalom Christian College in Townsville

Shalom opens new library

Shalom Christian College realised its vision in equipping its Indigenous students with skills in library research and information technology when it opened its new Library and Information Technology Centre (left) in Townsville.

The much-needed library boasts an array of information technology resources including computers and IT peripherals, and an ever-growing collection of books and other learning material.

The new centre was majority funded by Shalom with contributions from the Australian and Queensland State Government.

UiW2 launched in Brisbane

National Working Group on Worship members Paul Walton and Robert Gribben share a relaxed moment at the launch of *Uniting in Worship 2* in Brisbane in October. To obtain a copy of *UiW2* go to www.mediacom.org.au or call Mediacomment on 1800 811 311.



Photo by Mardi Lumsden

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Taize Brother Ghislain with an image used by Taize called 'The Friendship of Christ' which depicts Christ on the journey with each of us
Photo and story by Mardi Lumsden

Taize Brother proves to be a light in the darkness

Just weeks after the stabbing death of Taize founder Brother Roger, Taize Brother Ghislain brought the unique form of worship to Australia.

Br Ghislain said despite the community being rocked by the death, things were progressing as normally as possible.

"Br Roger prepared us for a long time to be able to continue after he had gone. The pain is there, that is clear and because of the circumstances it will probably take a long time. Personally, I feel a kind of urgency to continue what we have learnt and been doing," he said.

"Our message of reconciliation and peace has been heard. We have to be consistent to that. So many young people have been touched, we weren't going to stop now. Nothing at Taize stopped.

The praying, the singing, nothing stopped.

"The day after Br Roger's death one of the older brothers spoke beautifully. He said, 'Now let us help each other to live in peace and hope'. We are to be a little seed of hope in the world."

The Taize movement has particularly attracted young people, much to the surprise of the brothers.

"In a way we are still wondering why because as a monastic community we were not prepared to welcome young people. Maybe young people felt a place where they were welcomed and listened to. We have tried to listen to their questions and searching. Perhaps they like the simplicity of life.

"We have simplified our way of praying so young people can feel

at home and feel meaning. They can express questions. We don't promise an answer to everything. Through prayer the door will be opened.

"I think young people enjoy meeting other young people with the same questions. They are not told what to think or do."

A number of events were organised for Br Ghislain to share the essence of Taize worship around Queensland. He said he hoped people would feel refreshed and full hope of hope after attending.

The visit was sponsored by Queensland Churches Together.

Find out about other Queensland Churches Together events in What's on and at www.qld-churches.asn.au



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Saturday, 17 December 2005
King George Square, City

Children's entertainment 6.00pm
Main concert 7.00pm

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- The Queensland Highlanders Pipe Band
- Katie Muller and band
- The Birralees Blokes choir
- ENCORE featuring the two tenors Daniel Mallari and Lachlan Baker
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- Nativity Scene with baby animals

Bring chairs, cushions, rugs, candles, picnic tea.

An evening of FREE festive entertainment for the whole family
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Enquiries: Wesley Mission Brisbane phone 3221 6788

Needed: Uniting Church families who care

Uniting Church families have been recognised by the Department of Child Safety as potential providers of loving homes for children in special need.

As part of the Queensland Government's initiative to find safe and nurturing homes for children at risk, the Combined Churches Community Services Forum has employed former Lifeline Mission Director Gregory Miles to assist in promoting opportunities for community oriented people to offer themselves as foster carers.

Mr Miles said that experienced carers Alan and Heather found rewards of fostering outweighed the challenges which are most often found in the day-to-day moments they experience through sharing their lives with children.

"As caregivers, we have experienced a lot of joy and satisfaction in being able to provide a good home and stable environment for children," said Heather.

"Our own children have had to adjust to the changes within the family unit, which at times has brought out both the best and worst in them, but overall it has been a rewarding and loving experience for our children as well as the foster children."

When they realised that there was a need for foster parents Alan and Heather found the idea of providing opportunities for young children who might otherwise not receive them appealed to their hearts.

"While not perfect parents, we thought we'd give it a go," Alan said.

Can you help?

Families with a capacity to share their lives and walk in the shoes of a child with different and sometimes traumatic experiences may like to seek further information by visiting www.childsafety.qld.gov.au or phone the Foster Carer Recruitment line on 1300 550 877

Foster carers... make a difference



Become a foster carer
1300 550 877
www.childsafety.qld.gov.au

DOCTORAL PROGRAM IN

Pastoral Work

This exciting new program begins in 2006 and provides an opportunity for in-depth continuing education for pastoral ministry.

The pastoral work field sits within the existing PhD program of The University of Queensland's School of History, Philosophy, Religion, and Classics. While the major focus is research, the program also has a coursework component. The coursework consists primarily of doctoral seminars.

Features include:

- Participation in a community of research with other pastoral practitioners and academics.
- Reflection on personality spirituality in the context of ministry.
- Availability of a wide range of course offerings related to pastoral theology.

Candidates should hold either an Honours or a Masters degree. The program can be completed on either a part-time or a full-time basis. As this is a postgraduate research degree, there are no tuition fees payable for Australian residents.

For further information, please contact the coordinator of the program, Reverend Dr Neil Pembroke, phone (07) 3365 2598 or email n.pembroke@uq.edu.au.



THE UNIVERSITY OF QUEENSLAND
AUSTRALIA



MINISTER FOR COMMUNITY COHESION AND CARE

St Michael's Uniting Church, Melbourne

If you are young and enthusiastic and seeking an exciting multifaceted challenging position in your career as a minister then this position is for you.

St Michael's Uniting Church, Melbourne, one of the largest city Uniting Churches in Australia, is seeking a young post graduate Minister who has some experience, leadership qualities and the capacity to meet the challenge of an environment that is in pursuit of an understanding of the faith and its relevance to life, health, spirituality and wellbeing.

This position is one of the most exciting in Australian ministry today. It offers the person a role that encourages initiative and the opportunity to implement new ideas. Youthful energy is a plus and demonstrated empathy and compassion essential.

The position is for a two year period with the option to increase this time by mutual agreement.

Responsibilities include

- The management of our diverse and numerous programs
- Active involvement in the pastoral care and wedding programs.
- Involvement in the exploration of contemporary faith issues
- Assisting with the Sunday worship service and relieving in the pulpit when required.

The church is led by Dr Francis Macnab, internationally recognized theologian and psychologist, whose vision continues to make St Michael's one of the most progressive city churches in Australia.

For more information and a Job Description go to www.stmichaels.org.au
Applications or enquiries to Dr Francis Macnab office@stmichaels.org.au

JOURNEY

Advertise in Journey

Share your news and product information with over 30,000 Uniting Church goers across Queensland.

For rates and information visit www.journey.ucaqld.com.au or call Mardi on (07) 3377 9795.

Advertising and editorial deadline for
December Journey
Wednesday, 9 November

Finding the gift of a safe space

By Mardi Lumsden

A safe space that creates honesty and faith sharing is a gift to the church and not a threat. That is the experience of one UCA congregation recently.

The idea of having ordained ministers or lay leaders who are also gay is abhorrent to some and welcomed by others, but many of these discussions take place without listening directly to the voice of gay and lesbian people or acknowledging their presence in Uniting Church congregations.

At a conversation series on homosexuality and leadership in the Church, hosted by the Progressive Spirituality Network at West End Uniting Church, this was definitely not the case.

Those who attended the conversations heard the faith stories of two people: one gay man and one lesbian woman. From a young age both had a strong faith, an awareness of a call to ministry, and both knew they were gay.

Both married and had children. One became a Baptist minister and the other was the wife of an Anglican minister.

Hearing their stories opened ears and hearts. Both acknowledged the pain of rejection because of their sexuality.

Anne James, now Senior Pastor at Metropolitan Community Church, said her sexuality and her faith have always been intrinsically linked.

"At four years old I both had my first crush on a female and I had my first conscious awareness of the God of love," she said.

"My family was very rejecting of me as a lesbian. They did not attend my graduation, 'what did you expect with your lifestyle choice', and I was excluded from my sister's funeral," said Ms James.



"When they read my story of my journey as a lesbian and a Christian they began to change."

Ms James also spoke of the damage caused by Christian groups who believe they can turn homosexual people straight.

The former Baptist minister who did not wish to be named said, "For so many years, I had prayed to be different. I had, at one time, even sought an exorcism."

"The time had come for me to be reconciled to what was my essential nature. I would reach out in friendship and love to that dimension of my being against which I had fought: but it would come at a cost."

He said he had never experienced a need to 'come out'; instead, he felt he needed to do the opposite.

"I have experienced a deep need to 'come in' in order to explore the mystery and the meaning of it all. My deepest experience has been that of 'coming home.'"

"I have allowed any self-disclosure to be influenced by the words of Jesus when he counselled not to cast our pearls before swine because they would trample them underfoot and then turn and rend us."

"I need to tell you that I regard my sexuality as sacred to who I am and I have not offered that truth to those who have no capacity to respect it."

"The experience of one gay man is that the church rewards secrecy and punishes openness."

Until such a time as he feels the church is able to offer a 'safe space' for homosexual people, the former Baptist minister will remain on the outskirts of conventional Christianity in the knowledge that God is bigger than the issue.

"I am content to live in the margins and not to be on the roll of any denomination within organized religion."

"My deepest truth, in relation to the visible Church, is that I belong nowhere but everywhere; to no one, but to everyone."

"I am content to be among the least in the Kingdom of God. I can only be who I am."

"It is my belief that the Church will find its way through this issue when it is willing and able to think much less about behaviours and much more about a way of being in the world: when it has as much respect for diversity as the Creator seems to have."

Read another participant's response in "Letters" page 15.



Coconut oil production in Salamo, PNG

Salamo hunts world market

It has been a long time since the Papuan Island region of the Uniting Church has run business enterprises in Salamo, but all of that is about to change.

With the help of the locals and some dedicated UCA members Papuan Islands Region Enterprise has restored and re-opened a coconut oil factory to help provide income for local workers.

Ray Scarlett was sent up to Salamo to review business practices. Mr Scarlett is enthusiastic about the product and encourages others to get on board.

"It is wonderful stuff, but at this stage we don't have a market process for it. I would appreciate assistance from importers, bottlers and marketing people who are able to help," he said.

"There is no real income up there, but women can scout around their village and fill up a canoe or two of coconuts, take the money they earn and buy pots, pans, blankets, and whatever they need for their house."

"That just doesn't happen any other way. It gives a normal village person an income stream."

1. Is the Church too small for you?
2. Do you think outside the square?
3. Are you passionate about making a real difference in local communities?



IT ALL STARTS HERE

VISION FOR MISSION ADVOCATE (Full-time: three year contract)

The Queensland Synod is seeking a creative, innovative leader to drive, energise and resource its Vision for Mission Initiative. Successful applicants must: have previous experience in innovative church ministry; be able to promote new initiatives; possess high-level analytical, problem-solving and research skills; be a team player with strong communication skills; possess a degree in one or more areas of community, human services, theology, or social sciences; and be committed to the ethos of The Uniting Church in Australia, which is an equal opportunity employer.

Commencing no later than January 2006, the position will be based in Brisbane, with travel throughout Queensland as required.

If this sounds like you call for an information pack. Contact Kristine Bromiley (07) 3377 9825 or kristine.bromiley@uccentre.ucaqld.com.au

APPLICATIONS CLOSE MONDAY, 29 NOVEMBER 2005.

Spot the Mitsake?

How many errors did you find in this issue of *Journey*?

Journey would love a volunteer proof-reader to offer one Thursday each month to read through the pre-print proofs for grammar, punctuation, typographic and spelling errors. This position is based at Auchenflower and would ideally suit a retired school teacher or pedantic reader.

Contact Bruce Mullan at bruce.mullan@uccentre.ucaqld.com.au or call 3377 9801

Position Vacant Administrator National Assembly 2006

The Administrator will work with the Assembly Management Team to implement operational aspects of Assembly 2006.

This includes: day-to-day administration of the local Assembly 2006 Office; administrative support to the Management Team; administrative support for the Assembly in session; the operation and maintenance of a database; administrative support for volunteer management; administration of copyright responsibilities associated with Assembly 2006; administrative support for special events during Assembly; liaison with organisations operating trade displays and other outlets.

Location: Level 2, 60 Bayliss St, Auchenflower
Status: Full-time - February to August 2006

For position description and further information contact Gary Adsett, ph 07 3377 9822 or 0437 091 862 or email gary.adsett@uccentre.ucaqld.com.au.



Expressions of interest to National Assembly 2006, c/- Gary Adsett, GPO Box 674, Brisbane QLD 4001. Applications close 30th November

A calling for those who dream of a church that is growing at the edges.



VISION FOR MISSION FACILITATION TEAM

The Queensland Synod is seeking to appoint a small group of creative, innovative, energetic leaders to oversee the implementation of the Vision for Mission Initiative. Together with the Vision for Mission Advocate the team will offer support and guidance for the establishment, development, nurture and evaluation of mission initiatives across the Uniting Church in Queensland. The goal is to seed many new mission initiatives through organising collaborative effort throughout the church.

This is a volunteer position which will ideally suit those who are committed to new missional initiatives and are committed to the ethos of The Uniting Church in Australia, but who feel more comfortable outside traditional church leadership structures. The Vision for Mission Facilitation Team will meet in Brisbane.

If this sounds like you, please forward an expression of interest to Kristine Bromiley, GPO Box 674, Brisbane QLD 4001 or email kristine.bromiley@uccentre.ucaqld.com.au

PLEASE RESPOND BY MONDAY, 29 NOVEMBER 2005.

DaVinci not the code for Bible readers

"The Bible is product of *man*, my dear. Not of God. The Bible did not fall magically from the clouds. Man created it as a historical record of tumultuous times..."

So declares Sir Leigh Teabing, the villain of Dan Brown's gripping novel, *The DaVinci Code*. Like any fictional character, Teabing can play fast and loose with the truth.

Yet some of what he says is absolutely true: the Bible didn't fall from the clouds and it did emerge through human discussion and debate. He is wrong, however, to suggest that it was created to establish a 'record of tumultuous times'.

I can only speculate as to how Dan Brown might have incorporated a character who really did understand why the Bible was created. In the meantime, however, I will just have to make do with the *Basis of Union*.

Embedded in the *Basis* are four words which are theological code for what the Bible is and why and how it came to be: *unique*, *prophetic*, *apostolic* and *testimony*. Each of those words tells a story.

The framers of the *Basis* deliberately chose *unique* over 'inspired'. They wanted to avoid endless debates about different theories of inspiration, and to make the more important point that in the midst of all God's inspiring work throughout history, the Bible is uniquely where we hear the story which defines Christianity.

Prophetic is code for the Old Testament. Some early Christians disputed that Jesus' God was the God of Israel, and encouraged the church to jettison the Old Testament. Combining the Old and New Testaments in one volume resolved these disputes.

The very existence of a two-volume Bible is a permanent reminder that Jesus was and is significant only because he was first interpreted as the Jewish messiah. Whenever he is re-interpreted as a generic 'religious' or 'spiritual' figure he is interpreted away.

Apostolic refers to the fact that from amongst all the early Christian literature, only that which was consistent with the first apostolic preaching was included in the New Testament.

This cannot be reduced to a heavy-handed bid for power; it was a theological statement about the radicalness of the Incarnation. Versions of Christianity had emerged which had begun to downplay Jesus' death, overplay his resurrection and sit lightly to his humanity. "Apostolic" literature was the benchmark for rightly balancing these issues.

As *testimony* the Bible is not history, science, philosophy or myth. Still less is it a personal guide- or rule-book, or a political manifesto. Nor is it a 'text' as constructed by hermeneutical theorists.

It is *testimony* whose function is to keep the church focused on the person and events without which there would be no church.

Unique, *prophetic*, *apostolic*, *testimony*: four code words that tell us what the Bible is, even before a single verse is read.

Geoff Thompson is Academic Dean and Head of the Department of Systematic Theology at Trinity Theological College, Brisbane.



How do I choose?

Faced with the increasing array of available translations readers might ask some questions to help identify the most appropriate version to read.

- For what purpose will I be using this translation (reading or formal study)?
- Is it a translation or a paraphrase?
- When was the translation produced and who produced it?
- Is the translation translated directly from the original languages?
- Does the version derive from previous translations?
- Has the translation itself been revised?
- Has the translation gained wide acceptance among Christians?
- Has the translation gained widespread criticism or been the subject of controversy?

How we read



King James Bible, dated 1612, from the Trinity Theological College Library rare book collection

Which version should I read?

There are a staggering number of different English language Bible translations. Here are some of the more commonly used in Uniting Church circles.

King James, 1611

The *King James Bible* was translated from the original Hebrew and Greek languages into English at the request of King James I of England. Fifty-four translators gave diligent attention to rhythm and punctuation to give the text a fresh oral quality that no other translations to date could match. Also known as the *Authorised Version*, it has endured as one of the most loved translations but the American Bible Society recently listed no less than 506 archaic and obsolete words and phrases found in the *King James Version* which have changed in meaning in the last 350 years.

Good News Bible, 1976

Originally translated by the American Bible Society for speakers of English as a second language, the *Good News Bible* proved popular with native English speakers as a very readable and helpful translation. The *Good News Bible* sought to express the meaning of the original texts in easily recognisable words and forms, and was subject to a policy of continual revision, with changes made in each new edition. A version which incorporates Australian usage and idiom was released in 1988.

New International Version, 1978

Considered the version of first choice by many evangelicals, the *NIV* was intended to be clear, have literary quality, and be suitable for public and private reading, teaching, preaching, memorising

and liturgical use, while preserving some continuity with older translations. Updates of the *NIV* have included a 'inclusive-language edition' and other changes which reflect advances in linguistic and archaeological knowledge, as well as recent changes to the English language.

NRSV, 1990

The *New Revised Standard Version* is an up-to-date and more readable revision of the original 1952 *Revised Standard Version* (RSV) text. Highly regarded in scholarly circles this translation was authorised by the National Council of Churches of Christ in the USA and is the work of an interdenominational team of scholars.

The Message, 1993

Translated directly from the ancient Hebrew and Greek texts into today's contemporary idiomatic speech, *The Message* was designed as a reading Bible. With no verse numbers or formal language *The Message* is highly colloquial and interpretive, paraphrased by Eugene H. Peterson over a period of ten years, straight from the Bible's original languages.

Contemporary English Version, 1994

The highly readable *CEV* translation was designed to be readily understood by a wide range of readers and was intended for both reading aloud and private study. Based on the best original-language texts available at the time the text is a meaning-based, rather than a strictly-literal, translation and is continuously revised as improved ways of expressing the original meaning are found.

John 3:16

New International Version

For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.

The Message This is how much God loved the world: He gave his Son, his one and only Son. And this is why: so that no one need be destroyed; by believing in him, anyone can have a whole and lasting life.

King James (Authorised)

Version For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

Contemporary English

Version God loved the people of this world so much that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who has faith in him will have eternal life and never really die.

Amplified Bible For God so greatly loved and dearly prized the world that He [even] gave up His only begotten (unique) Son, so that whoever believes in (trusts in, clings to, relies on) Him shall not perish (come to destruction, be lost) but have eternal (everlasting) life.

Laughingbird.net (an Aussie translation by Nathan Nettleton)

God's love for the world is so overwhelming that even giving up his own son was not too great a cost to ensure that no one need succumb to death. All those who put their trust in him can have boundless life instead.

SMS Bible God luvd da ppl of dis wrld so much dat he gave his only Son, so dat evry1 who has faith in him will have eternal life & neva really die.

the Bible

How evangelicals read the Bible

Evangelicals, like others, do not have a single method for interpreting scripture; however, despite the diversity within evangelicalism concerning specific methods of biblical interpretation, features remain which still enable one to classify certain approaches and people as “evangelical”.

The defining features of an evangelical interpretation of scripture are found in its presuppositions, that is, those basic beliefs which shape one’s worldview. These defining presuppositions are largely related to a doctrine of God and doctrine of scripture. In fact, the same can be said for non-evangelical perspectives. One’s doctrine of God and scripture are essentially related and they determine the resulting method of biblical interpretation.

For the evangelical, their doctrine of God includes a God who is both transcendent (distinct from his creation, holy and sovereign) and immanent (present with creation, concerned and active in creation). It also includes a God who communicates to humans made in his image in order that they might have a relationship with him.

This sovereign God is also an *effective* communicator. This means that his communication is both meaningful in its content and powerful in its ability to accomplish his purposes.

As you can imagine, this picture of God produces a distinct view of scripture when scripture is understood to be a primary means by which God performs this communication.

When we come to an evangelical doctrine of scripture we find that it is consistent with this picture of God. According to evangelicals, the God who communicates continues to communicate in every age through the scriptures. While affirming the divine nature of scripture, evangelicals do not neglect the human contribution. In fact, the human authorship of scripture is basic to their method of interpretation.

Evangelicals see a goal of biblical interpretation as the uncovering of the human author’s intention. Giving priority to the author’s intended meaning provides biblical interpretation with objectivity and stability.

The processes involved in the divine and human production of scripture are debated within evangelicalism, but there is agreement concerning the result of this process. All scripture is “God-breathed”. As such, it provides us with a continual standard upon which we can measure all other potential sources of God’s communication.

The result of these presuppositions on an evangelical

interpretation of scripture can be summarized in a word: “confidence”. Confidence that God has communicated effectively to humanity; confidence in his ability to communicate truthfully, meaningfully and powerfully; confidence that he has communicated in such a way that we are able to interpret and understand his communication; confidence that his word continues to be relevant to the Christian community and the world in every age; confidence that his message, which he sovereignly communicated, is not corrupted by any supposedly erroneous world views or ungodly motivations of the human writers; and confidence that those writers were moved by his Spirit in such a way that what they wrote is what he wanted them to write.

Evangelicals come to scripture with confidence because they come to God with confidence, a confidence not in themselves, but in God’s power, God’s desire for us to know him and so be transformed by him.

Kit Barker is Lecturer of Theology at the Wesley Institute in Sydney.

Bible tools

Bible Dictionary

Contains articles on most biblical names, places, images, themes such as the Anchor Bible Dictionary or the Interpreters Dictionary of the Bible.

Bible atlas

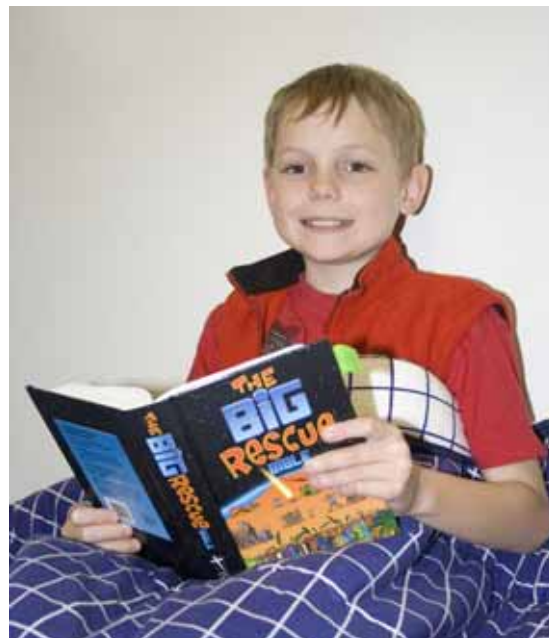
A book containing maps and diagrams, and often also pictures of biblical geography such as the Harpers Bible Atlas and the Macmillan Atlas of the Bible.

Concordance

A book listing all the passages in the Bible (OT and NT) in which a particular word is used. Particular Hebrew or Greek words might be translated with various different English words so always also look up related words and synonyms.

Study Bible

An edition which prints not only the biblical text itself but also “editorial material”, such as introductions, footnotes, cross-references, and appendices with maps, charts and time-lines. Study Bibles are for more serious study and will often include annotations explaining difficult passages or points of theology and doctrine.



Chris Hartley from St Mark’s Mt Gravatt snuggles up with the good book
Photo by Bruce Mullan

The Bible not child’s play

For most books, the reader starts at the first page and reads to the end of the story, and children see the Bible just like any other book.

Children’s Ministry Consultant with the Youth and Children’s Ministry Unit Mr Paul Yarrow says that we should discourage children from starting at Genesis and reading all the way to Revelation.

“Most adults read the Bible more like a magazine, reading a few pages here and jumping over and reading some more elsewhere, and we need to explain to children that the Bible is a collection of books written in many different styles by different people over a long period of time,” said Mr Yarrow.

“The Bible is a difficult book for children to read because of symbolic language and imagery. It is really a book for adults and we even struggle to understand at times.”

Mr Yarrow explained that, although the reader needs to be able to think abstractly in order to understand the parables, young children can still enjoy these and will often get a different meaning from stories than adults will.

“Trying to understand the Bible in 2005 is not easy because the experiences of the people in the Bible are so far removed from life today,” said Mr Yarrow.

“Few children could understand the life of a first century shepherd or fisherman and the Bible doesn’t even mention television, cars or the internet.”

Mr Yarrow believes that even contemporary Bibles are difficult for children to understand and that, even though the Bible may have an appealing cover and be an exciting gift to receive, reading it is a whole different matter.

“We wouldn’t dream of giving most children a copy of *War and Peace* to read because it’s a large book filled with small print and has no pictures.”

Despite the difficulties Mr Yarrow firmly believes that God speaks to children through the scriptures as much as to anyone else.

“While children can read the Bible, we need to be aware of the difficulties and teach them some basic skills for engaging with the scriptures.”

Did you know?

In 393 AD, the Synod of Hippo officially listed the 27 books of the New Testament, which had already been widely accepted in practice.

This ruling was reconfirmed four years later by the Synod of Carthage in 397 AD, thus putting an end to debates about the canon.

Before this, many books had been questioned. Revelation and Hebrews, in particular, were strongly disputed by many Christians, as were James, 2 Peter, and 2 and 3 John.

Other disputed books were not included in the New Testament although they were considered inspired by some: Shepherd of Hermas, 1 and 2 Clement, and the Didache.

Website of the month www.biblegateway.com

The Bible Gateway is a tool for reading and researching scripture online in the language or translation of your choice!

The Bible translations are available in 30 languages including Dutch, Spanish, Vietnamese and Korean, and 19 different English language translations including the *New International Version*, the *Contemporary English Version* and *The Message*.

Five of the English translations and a number of the other language groups are also available in “audio” so you can listen to the selected passage as well as read it.

Bible Gateway provides advanced searching capabilities, which allow readers to find and compare particular passages in scripture based on key words, phrases, or scripture reference.

The Bible Gateway is maintained by Gospel Communications International, a non-profit, non-denominational Christian ministry dedicated to spreading the Gospel by means of the internet and other media.

This website is a fantastic resource for serious students and casual visitors alike.



Indigenous Australians read through different eyes

Aboriginal minister Rev Dennis Corowa explains how Indigenous people read scripture.

We do it out of 60,000 years of culture. We were and remain the owners and custodians of this land. God was known and active among Indigenous people prior to colonisation by Europeans.

The author of Acts would suggest that the presence of Indigenous Australians was not a matter of chance or mere accident.

"[God] made all nations to inhabit the whole earth, and he allotted the times of their existence and the boundaries of the places where they would live, so that they would search for God..." (Acts 17:26-27b NRSV).

God determined that Australia would first be occupied by the Aboriginal and Islander peoples.

We are the first peoples of this land. We are part of nature – part of God's creation, not apart from it.

As Indigenous people, we look at God in nature and our spiritual dreaming. Spiritually through our dreaming, we are linked to nature through our totems. It is about relationship and survival, as our dreaming is linked to plants, land, animals, birds and fish.

God placed Adam in the Garden and instructed him to "work it and care for it". Humans were made as divinely appointed stewards of creation. God formed us out of the earth: "Man was created from the dust of the ground, and God breathed into his nostrils the breath of life" (Genesis 2:7).

This is a very organic concept and to survive we are linked to this. Indigenous people are secure in their place in creation, following the seasons and food for survival. We speak of land as our 'mother'.

Romans 1:20 describes seeing God in nature: "From the time the world was created, people have seen the earth and sky and all that God made. They can clearly see the invisible qualities – his eternal power and divine nature. So they have no excuse whatsoever for not knowing God."

The incarnate process of eternal life in the Spirit is something Indigenous people always celebrated through their totem beliefs. My totem is milmarjl - the barramundi. My spirit lives on in something that is alive, is of nature. I have to protect it and cannot eat it. I am a custodian of it.

Each Indigenous person has a totem. In this way we help to keep

God's creation in balance so that it sustains all of us.

The way Indigenous people read scripture may reveal truths in new ways. Our respect for the past traditional ways helps us view with scepticism and different eyes, new ideas and visioning. This is grounded in creation.

Rev Dennis Corowa was born in Murwillumbah, NSW, lived most of his life in Mackay and was called to minister amongst Indigenous people in Townsville in 1989.

He is a father and grandfather, co-author of two published books on Indigenous Theology, and is chairperson of Calvary Presbytery.



Our Aboriginal Christ
Artwork by Jasmine Corowa

Youth: more critical approach

Recent publicity about how postmodernism is impacting the English classroom has alerted church leaders to the understandings that today's high school students will apply to the reading of scripture.

Journey spoke to the Head of English at a Toowoomba high school, Annette Curnow, who explained that when students encounter texts, they are taught to consider the authors and their backgrounds, the purpose of the texts, and the intended audience.

"Texts can be read in different ways and people bring different backgrounds and life experiences therefore making different readings or interpretations of text," said Mrs Curnow.

"A Christian will read the scriptures as the word of God, while an historian will see it as an historical artefact."

Mrs Curnow said students are taught that all texts are constructed through a process of selection and omission, and this construction process re-presents information and ideas in a particular way and,



consciously or unconsciously, the texts invite their audience to view or interpret these texts in a particular way.

Students are taught to question gaps and silences in texts, such as the lack of reference to Aboriginal Australians in some texts about Australian life.

"They will discuss whether these gaps are significant," said Mrs Curnow.

"Encouraging students to deconstruct texts empowers them to resist advertising, propaganda

and other texts which may work against their interests.

"The principles being taught apply to visual, auditory and technological texts as well as the traditional written word.

"This move to technology already has had significance in determining how the Bible is presented to the unchurched."

While there has been much criticism of the teaching of what is now known in Queensland high schools as 'critical literacy', this approach is not new.


"This has been used in universities for some time and in many classrooms of English for at least ten years," said Mrs Curnow.

While English teachers may use biblical stories and images to assist students to understand other literary writings and the dominant belief systems and social orders of their culture, teachers are also encouraged to use other "holy writings", myths and beliefs when working with students.

If students apply the critical analysis principles to their reading of the scriptures they will approach the Bible differently and ask different questions than adults who were educated in earlier systems.

"Encouraging students to examine the construction of texts empowers them for a rapidly changing world where communication media are constantly evolving."

It will also dramatically affect the way they read the Bible.



QUEENSLAND CHURCHES TOGETHER

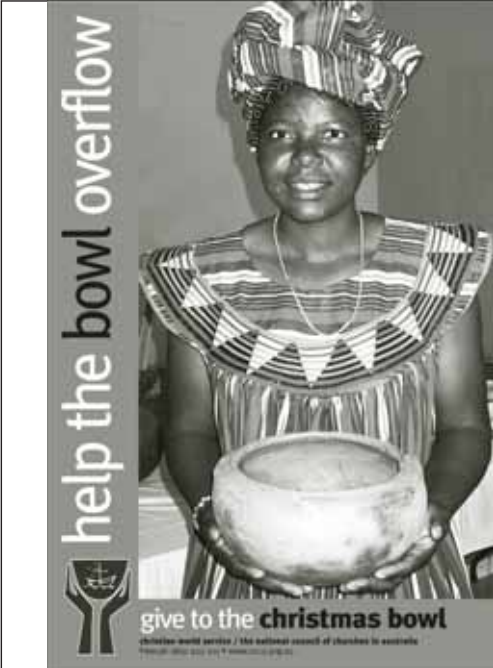
James Warner Trust: call for submissions

The James Warner Memorial Trust provides small grants for ecumenical projects including:

- training in ecumenical relations
- acquisition of resources for ecumenical libraries
- the promotion of ecumenism e.g. through liturgy and worship
- artistic endeavour

Applicants must belong to a member body of Queensland Churches Together and could include students of the Brisbane College of Theology. Applications from groups or individuals are welcome.

**For information please contact Queensland Churches Together
ph 07 3369 6792, e-mail qctadmin@tpg.com.au.
Send applications by 28 February, 2006 to:
The General Secretary, Queensland Churches Together
PO Box 2045, Milton BC, Qld 4064**



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finally...

a station for the whole family!

96.5 FM Family



Paul Blackmore - a gentle and disarming communicator

Paul returns to the road with faithful friends

By Mark Young, part-time public servant and *Journey's* reviews editor

Paul Blackmore fell off his motorcycle in 1973 during his first year of journalism studies at the University of Queensland. Knocked unconscious, Paul's heart stopped for 20 minutes.

With the help of a medical practitioner who witnessed the accident, as well as three years with the Commonwealth Rehabilitation Service, Paul lived to tell the tale and more.

Now nearly 50, Paul knows that the damage he sustained on Sir Fred Schonell Drive closed some doors in his personal and professional life.

He has limited use of his right hand as a result of his brain injury, as well as associated difficulties regarding concentration, vision and co-ordination.

Paul believes that some doors have opened as a result of his experience.

"Before my accident I used to strive for perfection. Nowadays I can't spend as much time striving for perfection, so I strive in different ways."

Paul channels his efforts into the community: he has been an area coordinator with Neighbourhood Watch and is an active member of Emmanuel Uniting Church, Enoggera.

Paul was a full-time Queensland public servant for over two decades.

In April last year, Paul retired from his job in the Seniors Card program, having spent seven years helping seniors apply for their Queensland Government discount card. I worked with Paul for five of these years. His great gift was to communicate in a gentle and disarming way with people of different cultures, temperaments and physical abilities.

I also witnessed Paul's Christian commitment to welcoming the stranger. This was how Paul met Kevin and Crispin. Kevin, 63, sight and hearing impaired, is supported by Crispin, his carer. Paul, with Crispin's support, helped

Kevin to claim his Seniors Card entitlements. He also encouraged Kevin and Crispin to connect with the Emmanuel-Enoggera Uniting Church where, as Paul observes, "people are very thoughtful about other people".

Rev John Cox, Minister of the Word at Emmanuel-Enoggera, told *Journey*, "One of Paul's real passions is for connecting with the community and especially with people who have had a different experience of life."

Paul agrees: "In my retirement I plan to be involved in supporting other people with a disability."

"I have learnt many things that I wouldn't have discovered without the accident. For example, having a head injury is not the end of the world."

Here comes Assembly '06

The Queensland Synod will be taking lead responsibility for the management of the Assembly program to be held at the University of Queensland in July 2006.

While the responsibility for the business and discussions during Assembly will be in other hands, Queenslanders will be leading the day-to-day management of the Assembly organisation.

The Management Team is expecting almost 400 people to be in Brisbane for the event including a number of overseas church representatives."

The Management Team is currently working to appoint an administrator to oversee the day-to-day management tasks leading up to the Assembly.

11th Assembly administrative services coordinator Gary Adsett said the position would be full-time from February to August 2006.

"We are looking for an organised and efficient administrator who can handle the multiple tasks required to coordinate an event of this type," said Mr Adsett.

Chairperson of the Assembly Management Team Ralph Collins from Wilston Congregation indicated that there would be a large number of volunteer positions to be filled during the Assembly including hospitality, first aid and chaplaincy services.

"For one short week it will be all hands on deck as Queensland hosts this important national church event."



Youth leader Leonie Gaffel with Youth and Family Pastor Jeff Savage

Churchyard blitz in Bundaberg make over

By Matt Gees

Like something out of a television renovation program, the Bundaberg Uniting Church property was turned into a state of demolition during its recent overhaul.

The first stage was the refurbishment of the old church with a make over which included recarpeting, remodelling the sanctuary and choir stalls, replacing the old, heavy wooden pews with modern furniture, installing up-to-date audiovisual facilities, and replacing all of the sanctuary furniture.

The redevelopment created opportunities for members of the congregation to work side by side, fetching and carrying, digging, cleaning, and generally getting down and dirty.

The restoration is not just in the buildings and at a recent Sunday night service two new adults were

baptised and ten people were confirmed as full members of the Uniting Church in Australia.

Youth and Family Pastor Jeff Savage reported the ages of the confirmands ranged from 15 years to mature adults.

"Now, if you say God isn't at work in this church, I don't believe you," he said.

Congregation Chairman Frank Millet said that while the redevelopment has drawn many positive comments the more important aspect is the growing sense of optimism as people grow in strength and faith in their mission to share God's love and to reach out to those in need.

"We cherish the past and those who have paved the way, thank God for what we have now, looking forward in faith and renewed energy towards the future," he said.

CALL FOR EXPRESSIONS OF INTEREST FOR MEMBERSHIP OF GOVERNING BOARDS/COUNCILS OF UNITING CHURCH SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES

Expressions of interest or applications are called for membership of Governing Boards/Councils of Uniting Church Schools and Colleges in Queensland.

Vacancies will exist from 1 January 2006 for varying terms of office on all Boards/Councils:

- **Moreton Bay College** (8 vacancies)
- **Calvary Christian College** (1 vacancy representing the Synod)
- **The SCOTS PGC College**
- **Colleges of Educare Ltd.** (Company Directors - up to 3 vacancies)
- **Presbyterian and Methodist Schools Association Council (PMSCA)** is responsible for providing young Queenslanders with understanding of Christian beliefs, values and traditions and a sound formal education from years four to twelve, through its schools, Brisbane Boys College, Clayfield College, Somerville House, Sunshine Coast Grammar School and Moreton Bay Boys College - up to 6 vacancies)

The Selection Criteria for appointees to these Boards/Councils are:

- Membership of the Uniting Church
- Values consistent with those of the Uniting Church and of the particular college
- Sufficient experience in boards/councils to develop a good understanding of corporate governance
- Ability to apply sufficient time to achieve the objectives which the Board/Council has for the particular college.
- Willingness to publicly identify with Christian-based schools

All members of Governing Boards/Councils must hold a Suitability For Child Related Employment Card (Blue Card).

The Uniting Church will make its appointments to ensure that the Board/Council collectively has an appropriate balance of expertise across the following skill areas:

Pastoral Care, Business/Commerce, Finance, Education, Legal, Planning and Development, Marketing, Public Relations, Industrial Relations, Fund Raising.

Expressions of interest or applications addressing the above selection criteria and skills list should be forwarded to Rev Jenny Tymms, General Secretary, UCA, Queensland Synod at genssec@uccentre.ucaqld.com.au or GPO Box 674, Brisbane Qld, 4001 by **18 November 2005**.

Uniting Church in Australia Synod of South Australia



Positions Vacant

Rural Ministry Mission Planners (Full Time)

Two full-time Rural Ministry Mission Planning positions are available working within the Mission Resourcing Network of the Uniting Church in South Australia beginning 1 February, 2006. The successful applicants will live in rural South Australia and assist lay-led congregations with leadership and mission development; placement of ministers and other leaders; property and finance development, and new initiatives. They will report to the MRN Team Leader, and be expected to work as a team as well as focussing on the particular area where they are located - one operating north of Adelaide and the Riverland; the other working from Murray Bridge.

Mission Planner - Ministry with Youth (Full Time)

A full-time position assisting the Uniting Church in South Australia develop strategies for developing congregational and other mission with youth exists within the Mission Resourcing Network. The successful applicant will have a proven record in helping communities develop new initiatives in this area. They will report to the MRN Team Leader, and work as part of an enthusiastic, creative team of mission planners and consultants.

Mission Planner - Ministry with Children (Half Time)

A half-time position assisting the Uniting Church in South Australia develop strategies for developing congregational and other mission with children exists within the Mission Resourcing Network. The successful applicant will have a proven record in helping communities develop new initiatives in this area. They will report to the MRN Team Leader, and work as part of an enthusiastic, creative team of mission planners and consultants.

Applications received up to close of business 30 November 2005.

Indications of Interest and Job Specifications c/- Heather Bald (08) 8236 4243 heather@sa.uca.org.au

What's On

November 5, 10am-3pm. Family Fun Day. Earnshaw State College Sportsfield, Banyo. Hosted by the combined churches of Toombul District. Bigger and better! Everything is FREE - admission, show bags, entertainment, food, craft, games etc. Contact Joan or Graham 3267 5895 for more information.

November 5, 10.30am. Caboonbah Udenominational Church, Brisbane Valley, celebrates its centenary. Bring a lunch to share. For more information ph 5423 1211.

November 8, 10am. Brisbane Welsh Singers at Holland Park Pensioner's Club, St Joachim's Catholic Church Hall. Crown St, Holland Park.

November 11-13. Young Adults Informal Camp, Broken Head Holiday Park, 7km south of Byron Bay. More details email Tom Kerr Tom.Kerr@yacmu.ucaqld.com.au or ph 3377 9935.

November 11, 9.30am-3.30pm. Mult Media Sharing Day. Nambour UC, 37 Coronation Ave, Nambour. \$20 inc lunch, morning and afternoon tea. To register email nambuca@ucaqld.com.au or ph 5441 2948.

November 16, 10am. "Christmas Melodies" - A Festive Morning Tea, hosted by the Bald Hills Uniting Church will be held in the Memorial Hall, Gympie Rd, Bald Hills. Music by John Colwill & the Prime of Life Choir. Admission \$8. Contact Lesley Fenney on 3261 1997 or Lyle Elliott on 3261 1841.

November 17-19. Wheller Gardens Auxiliary Rummage Sale at Wheller Gardens, 930 Gympie Rd, Chermiside. Thursday and Friday 8.30am-3pm, Saturday 8am-12 noon. Clothes, knick-knacks and books will be available.

November 19, 9am to Noon. Garage Sale Wilston Trinity UC. Great morning tea and sausage sizzle. Cnr Kedron Brook Rd and Hawdon St, Wilston.

November 22, 10.30. The Brisbane Welsh Singers - The Final Fling. Brackenridge Uniting Church, Cnr Brackenridge Road and Pelenore St, Brackenridge.

November 24, 10am. Frontier Services Auxiliary Christmas Cheer morning tea. St Andrew's Hall, Creek St, Brisbane. Music by the Brothers James. \$6. Contact Jessie Logan on 07 3278 1868.

November 26, 10am-4pm. Challenging the Church with the Gospel seminar hosted by Trinity Theological College and Vision Books. Indooroopilly UC. UCA President Rev Dr Dean Drayton will discuss his book *Which Gospel?* For more information go to www.trinity.qld.edu.au or ph 3377 9950.

November 26, 1pm-4pm. Defending Christianity in a Scientific Age seminar hosted by Trinity Theological College and Vision Books. Indooroopilly UC. Prof Peter Harrison (Bond University) and Prof Ross McKenzie (UQ) will provide insights into Alister McGrath's, *Dawkins God: Genes Memes and the Meaning of Life*. More information go to www.trinity.qld.edu.au or ph 3377 9950.

November 27, 2pm. Southport UC Christmas Concert by the Brisbane Concert Choir at St Andrew's, Scarborough St, Southport. \$10 inc. delicious afternoon tea. More information ph 5532 5915.

December 3-24, 10am to 3.30pm daily. Montville UC Christmas Tree Display.

December 9-13. Bayside Uniting Church is celebrating the 5th Biennial *Treemendous Christmas Festival*. For more information contact the church on 3890 2392 or 3890 2395.

December 10. Make Poverty History Day. Find out more about the Micah Challenge Campaign at www.micahchallenge.org.au.

December 12-16. Festival of Christmas Trees at Southport Uniting Church, Scarborough St, Southport. Theme: 'The Greatest Gift'. Entry free. Complimentary Christmas cake and tea or coffee. Groups welcome by arrangement. Ph 5532 5915.

December 14-24, 7-9.30pm daily. Kawana Waters UC Christmas Festival. Kawana Waters UC, Thunderbird Dr, Bokarina.

December 17, from 6pm. Christmas Under the Stars. Come and enjoy the annual Wesley Mission Brisbane Christmas concert in association with the Brisbane City Council. King George Square, Brisbane. BYO blanket, folding chairs & picnic tea. An evening of FREE festive entertainment for the whole family! Enquiries to Andrea Griggs 07 3031 3035.

Want to promote an event?

Email mardi.lumsden@uccentre.ucaqld.com.au with the subject 'What's on' or fax (07) 3377 9796.



Get the message? The *Make Poverty History* campaign got to Kangaroo Point Cliffs, Brisbane, 10 September
Photo courtesy of Heather den Houting and Micah Challenge

Fast news

Former detainee elected Moderator

Tongan born minister Isileli Jason Kia has been elected Moderator of the Uniting Church Synod of Victoria and Tasmania.

Mr Kia drifted towards religion when placed in an immigration detention centre in 1983 and threatened with deportation for being an illegal immigrant. During his 11 days in detention, he made a bargain with God that if he got out of there he would serve the church for the rest of his life. Mr Kia believes the biggest challenge in his new role will be to encourage people to accept diversity within the Uniting Church.

Glasshouse UC garden party

Glasshouse Country UC Adult Fellowship hosted a Garden Party, featuring a display of paintings by local master pastellist Christopher Blake, who also painted on site during the event. The occasion raised \$630 for their Mission Distribution.

Huttons help in Sri Lanka

Queensland Volunteers in Mission Frank and Ruth Hutton from the Pine Mountain Uniting Church congregation have commenced 12 months serving in Sri Lanka.

The Huttons are some of many early retirees taking the opportunity to offer gifts and skills to partner churches in Asia and the Pacific. They are expecting to work in Jaffna's House of Hope residential facility for boys with disabilities.

Aspley UC thanks volunteers

Aspley Uniting Church held a Day of Celebration service on 9 October. The day was a time to celebrate and give thanks for the service the congregation has offered to the community.

Members of the congregation have helped at local schools, sports clubs, Scouts and Guides groups, Rotary, Lions, Blue Care, Aspley Seniors, the Ekka, Crossroads and much more in some cases for over the 50 years.

Get set for a Treemendous Christmas

Almost a quarter of a million households in Queensland will receive a Christmas card from their local Uniting Church this year as part of the *Gifts of Time and Love* Christmas project.

In total, over sixty congregations from across Queensland signed up to receive personalised Christmas postcards.

Christmas is a wonderful time to connect with the local community and many Uniting Churches have exciting events coming up.

Here is what just a few churches are doing:

Bayside Uniting Church is celebrating the 5th Biennial *Treemendous Christmas Festival* from December 9 to 13, open 2pm to 9pm daily. Admission by donation.

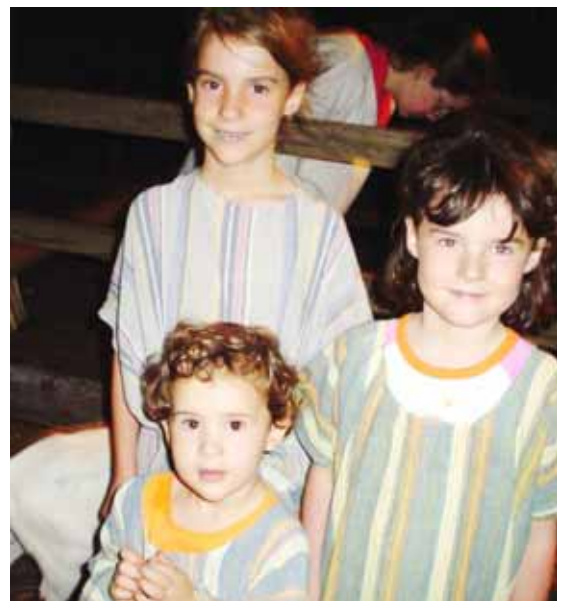
The festival theme is 'Celebrate Christ - the Man for all Seasons' and will display 50 to 60 themed Christmas trees, a Nativity Scene Creative Challenge, live music, street entertainers, an animal petting farm (Saturday afternoon) and much more. Don't forget the Combined Bayside Christian Churches *Carols Service Under the Stars* on the Sunday evening. Full details at www.bayuca.ucaqld.com.au/tcf or contact Bayside UC between 9am-1pm, Monday to Friday on 3890 2392 or 3890 2395.

Montville Uniting Church holds its annual Christmas Tree Display from December 3 to December 24, open daily from 10am to 3.30pm.

The trees depict the benefits of this year's theme, 'The Perfect Gift - Ritual or Relationship', and celebrate Jesus as the perfect gift to humankind. Last year 1200 people visited this little church in the middle of Montville Village. Organisers expect an even greater turnout this year.

The Kawana Waters Uniting Church Christmas Festival has run for eight years and has become a must-see event for the whole community.

Life-size figures, live actors, beautiful sets and costumes, cuddly animals, and home-made biscuits are just some of the aspects of the festival which will this year run from 14 December to 24 December, from 7pm to 9.30pm at Kawana Waters UC, Thunderbird Dr, Bokarina. Thanks to a UC Foundation grant which will fund their ongoing outreach program for the next twelve months, Kawana has produced a free beautiful take-home booklet reminding guests of the real meaning of Christmas.



The Morcom gang ready to take Mary for a ride through Kawana on the donkey in the 2004 Christmas celebrations
Photo courtesy of Ann Huth, Kawana Waters Uniting Church

Reviews

Small Miracles
Directed by Martin Duffy
(PG 2004)
RRP \$19.95 on DVD (or
available for rental)

You'll have to hunt through the local video store for this one. *Small Miracles* was originally released in 2000 as *The Testimony of Taliesin Jones* and won critical acclaim and numerous international film festival awards.

The coming of age of 12-year-old Taliesin Jones, complicated by bullying at school and family breakdown, becomes a spiritual quest after he witnesses his piano teacher heal a woman's bad back.

Described by critic Michael Medved as "a film of uncommon grace and substance", *Small Miracles* is a warm and powerful story in the best of British film making tradition.

This excellent production features a brilliant performance by John-Paul Macleod, a young actor of extraordinary talent, who develops Taliesin into a convincing and remarkable character whose story tugs at the heartstrings.

The remarkable narrative is placed against a backdrop of the magnificent beauty and serenity of the Welsh countryside.

Most interesting of all is the respectful development of Christian spirituality without being preachy, overtly evangelical or forced. The film calmly affirms simple faith and tells of prayers that are sometimes answered.

Taliesin's faith in God and in miracles receives little support from his parents or the local minister but reminds us of the deep and mystical questioning that comes with the transition from childhood to adolescence.

Small Miracles is dedicated to Ian Bannen who died in a car crash shortly after giving his fine performance as Taliesin's mentor, Billy Evans.

Bruce Mullan



Look To You
By Hillsong United
Music CD/DVD
Hillsong Music Australia
RRP \$29.95

Hillsong United, *Look to You*, is the latest live youth album from the Hillsong stable. The CD comes standard with an accompanying DVD featuring some, but not all, the songs. A CD backing track is also available.

I discovered the wisdom of the inclusion of the DVD. The CD alone gave the sounds, but I was not introduced to the experience until I viewed the DVD.

The fast moving camera shots, micro-second close-ups, fast zooms, in focus to out of focus, moving aerial cameras, bouncing mosh pit worshippers moving as one organism, all create an atmosphere well suited to its target demographic, but could make the heads of others spin.

For those in their early 40s and beyond, it could be a genuine cross-cultural effort to enter into this worship experience.

Some songs are fast and loud, others are slow and reflective. The lyrics are simple and repetitive. The lack of theological depth may cause some to cringe, but is appropriate to this genre which values experience over words.

The emphasis of the lyrics is praise to God for all that he has done for "me", accompanied with expressions of commitment, faith and evangel. It takes a very individualist view of salvation, mission and worship. But that's just the lyrics. The experience pulls the individuals into a collective, creating a unified worship experience.

The album features excellent musicians and for a live album, the mixing is superb. Electric guitar is outstanding, adequate to good vocals and the drumming is sensitive to the mood. The lack of mix volume for acoustic guitar left me wondering if the guitars served as props for the worship leaders.

For someone as old as me (I am 36) I was saved by the mix down and my own personal volume control. I enjoyed it more after seeing the DVD, but fear I would not appreciate the volume of the live experience.

Michael Brumpton

**Look to you is available in various other formats from
www.hillsong.com**

Witness the Glory of God
By David Pitman & Geoff Scott
MediaCom
RRP \$15.00 (inc postage and handling)

David Pitman from Brisbane and Geoff Scott from Adelaide were deeply challenged by the theme of the 10th Assembly of the Uniting Church in Australia, Witness the Glory of God, and responded to the challenge by producing their book.

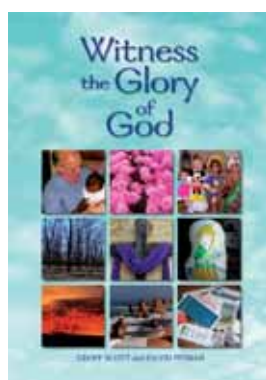
Witness the Glory of God identifies a number of the diverse avenues by which God's glory is revealed - in Christ, in the natural world, in the worship of the faith community, in communities that nurture their citizens, in the service that is offered and received, and in those moments when we feel abandoned because of our life circumstances.

This is an interactive resource for individuals, congregations, worship and study leaders and is liberally sprinkled with photographs and images. Faith stories are shared with the readers and there are frequent suggestions of "something to do."

The book contains essays on themes, but is not simply a theological text book; it has discussions starters but is not simply a discussion group booklet; it makes many suggestions that can be incorporated into worship but is not simply a worship resource. It is all of these and more.

Witness the Glory of God expresses the conviction that, notwithstanding controversy, the glory of God was evident at the 10th Assembly and that God's glory can be, and is, found in the lives of Uniting Church members and congregations.

Gavin Melvin



Soulsurfer
By Bethany Hamilton
Simon & Schuster (Australia)
Pty Limited
RRP \$18.95

The back cover contains as good a synopsis as it gets - "the amazing story of the thirteen year old surfer girl who lost her arm in a shark attack but never lost her faith - and of her triumphant return to competitive surfing". And so it is - a story that illustrates the juxtaposition of faith and the human will and that ephemeral quality of



courage - how they intertwine and form a complete whole.

We know the balance underneath in us somewhere; for some in quite ordinary circumstance, for many as it is tested much further. In this story, Bethany Hamilton takes us on a journey of living through tribulation.

When there is so much human strife in the news it would be easy to treat this as just another hard-luck story. But like many who rely on God in tough times, Bethany lets us know how faith experience informs chosen attitudes and decisions and, through that, gives quite a sense of how God intends our relationship to be (this partnership thing).

You probably wouldn't read it if you just wanted to fill some time - but it is a great read if you want to listen to someone tell it like it is ... to be challenged by an author of fourteen years of age.

The book is short, succinct and almost staccato. It doesn't muck around with the English language - it just tells the tale. The book relates well to younger folks (like me ... right).

Michael Hewson

Voices from Heaven
By the Soweto Gospel Choir
ABC Music CD
RRP \$30.95

Ever since I saw the *Power of One* film and heard first-hand the sounds that were put together for that movie, I have had a soft spot for the sounds of traditional African harmonies and melodies.

This curiosity led me to listening to this album from the Soweto Gospel Choir.

The album is a combination of the classic rhythm and melodies of the African nations and the western structure of a Gospel choir. The 32 strong choir is sourced from churches across Africa and bring the sound of their nations to us in a format that can be stirring, moving, exciting and melodic, all at once.

This is over one hour of listening pleasure with great African sounds in songs performed in the native tongue and well-known western gospel standards performed in English. Overall the quality of sound and the quality of performance make an unbeatable combination to bring you *Voices from Heaven*.

Some of the outstanding tracks off this album include an uplifting version of *Amazing Grace* where the choir put their all into the song and the first track, *Jikela Emaweni*.

Rarely in their home continent, this choir travels all over the world performing and raises money for children's charities back home.

Highly recommended listening for anyone who wants to relax or just be uplifted by great harmonies.

Matt Gees



More reviews
available online

www.journeyonline.com.au

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We didn't think so.
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Journey reviews at our
website.**

NORFOLK ISLAND
\$285 4 days
7-11 Jan 2006

Inner Faith Travel invites Clergy / Lay Leaders prepared to lead a Norfolk tour in 2006/ 7 to apply for this Tour led by Lew Born. Fares, accommodation, car hire and 5 tours included.

IFT toll free 1800 07 4426 or
Lew 5593 3852





Are you in this PFA photo?

Anyone interested in a reunion of the St Andrew's PFA, Brisbane please contact Barbara Dungavell on barbara@dungavell.net



Happy campers: the North Queensland Presbytery young adults' camp

Thirty young adults from four congregations shared great food, conversation and worship at the North Queensland Presbytery young adults' camp in October. Speaker Mark Cornford explored the theme: 'Soul Whisperer'.

John from Aitkenvale said, "Camp was bigger than my Grandad's undies. I enjoyed the relaxed atmosphere that was created on the camp. The worship team did a fantastic job of creating meaningful worship."

A CALLING FOR A Minister of the Word in New South Wales

THE UNITING CHURCH IN OATLEY NSW

Oatley, a southern village suburb of Sydney, in the George's River Presbytery, seeks expressions of interest in the role of Minister of the Word.

This evangelical congregation desires a minister with strong preaching and teaching skills, an ability to pastorally care for a diversity of age groupings.

The congregation has two distinct worshipping communities – a traditional morning service and a contemporary youth / young adult focused evening service.

The minister will be a leader able to work in a team situation with a youth pastor and a strong lay leadership.

The minister will:

- Teach, preach and model Jesus Christ in the life of the congregation and community we serve
- Have a heart for pastoral care
- Participate in, encourage and support the youth ministry
- Encourage people in their faith and the development of spiritual gifts
- Help formulate and implement both short and long-term mission plans

For further information, including a congregational profile, contact Mrs Helen Phillips (02) 9579 3578

Applications should be returned to Rev Diane Anderson, Associate Secretary, NSW Synod, PO Box A2178 South Sydney 1235

Applications close on Friday 25th November 2005

Under the Commission for Children and Young People Act, 1998, it is illegal for prohibited persons to apply and a 'Working with Children Check' will be required.

PRAYER DIARY

We are confident that God listens to us if we ask for anything that has his approval. We know that he listens to our requests. So we know that we already have what we ask him for.
(1 John 5:14-15)

13 November: St David's Coopers Plains

Coopers Plains in the south-western of Brisbane is a suburb which borders large industrial and commercial sites. The congregations began full co-operation before union and the church building was among the first built for disability access.

We seek your prayers for the call to ministry placement which has been extended from Church Council.

We also ask for prayer that the pastoral carers program works well, discovering and supporting folk in times of more extreme need. The team is strong in its own prayer life, ably supported by the prayer chain that works through the whole congregation.

Please pray for the a Community Neighbourhood Centre that congregation sponsors which provides programs to children in the local school, gives mothers a break from child care, helps mothers to be better equipped for their important job, and gives opportunity for older citizens to use their skills and develop new ones.

We would love you to pray for the Sudanese community using our property. This community is considering applying to the UCA to be received as a congregation. Work is progressing on translating the Basis of Union into Nuer, the predominant language of that community.

20 November: Russell St Toowoomba

Our mission is "Out There", responding to God's love by making that love known in the Church, the community and the world.

Give thanks with us for the ministry to children and youth. Pray for the leaders, participants and for potential new members, that they may deepen their knowledge of and love for Jesus.

Each year we conduct Christmas Workshops as an outreach to children who may otherwise never hear the true Christmas story. These culminate in a Christmas Eve Worship Service and sausage sizzle for the children and their families. Pray for the organisation and leadership of the workshops and that we may reach many families with the message of God's love.

Cafe Church on Friday evenings (in addition to Sunday morning worship) is a contemporary service for the young at heart. Pray that we may reach even more, especially university students.

In recent years we have held Carols on the Lawn in front of the Church. This year we hope to gain permission to move out on to the street. Pray that folk will feel welcome to join us.

We have assisted several Sudanese to come to Australia from refugee camps in Kenya. Some fifteen now attend worship. Pray that we may overcome barriers of language and culture, and be sensitive to one another's needs.

Praise God with us that our block of land on the western outskirts of Toowoomba is debt free, and that we are planning for our eventual move out there. Pray that the Future Directions Committee will discern God's will in all things connected with this wider community outreach.

27 November: Nerang

We are located in the area known as "the gateway to the Gold Coast". Although our area is an older part of the Coast, we are a vibrant and extremely loving community. While we lack in the area of youth this is more than compensated for by what we have in experience. We are involved with the other local Christian communities in seeking to have a witness in our local High School by way of supporting a Chaplain. It is planned to take this outreach further and into the primary schools as well.

Pray that our planned Carol Night in December will enable us to become better known for what we offer to our local area. This is especially so as we seek to build contacts and relationships with the families involved in two playgroups which use our premises on a weekly basis.

As a congregation we are linking with Coomera and Pimpama in 2006 to share our resources and bring mutual encouragement. Pray that this move will bring new growth to all three communities.

One of the strengths of the congregation lies in the area of our mid-week fellowship gatherings. Three focus groups provide an opportunity for friendships to be established and fun times to be shared by all.

We join with all Church communities in asking that we will be wise in knowing how to bring the Gospel to a needy community; how to let our light and love show in a way that will bring people to know and love our Heavenly Father.

Also, we ask you to join with us in asking God for the life-giving rains to break the drought and refresh the land.

BOOK EARLY
 2004 Brisbane performance sold out

The Queensland Orchestra presents

MESSIAH

by George Frideric Handel

With exquisite melodies and stirring choruses, this is an event not to be missed on any concert-goer's calendar.

Michael Christie conductor, Teresa La Rocca soprano
Kathryn Dineen mezzo soprano, Paul McMahon tenor
Michael Lewis baritone

7.30pm Thursday 1 December 2005

Gold Coast Arts Centre
Featuring Gold Coast City Choir
BOOK NOW Dial-a-ticket 5588 4000

8pm Saturday 3 December 2005

Brisbane Concert Hall QPAC
Featuring Brisbane Choral
BOOK NOW Qtix 136 246

www.thequeenslandorchestra.com.au

Gold Coast Concert Partner

NEDLANDS CONGREGATION WA

Youth Worker / Pastor

Lay or Ordained
Part-time or full-time

This is an exciting position working with youth and young adults in the Nedlands Community to assist the Nedlands Congregation to proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ and to nurture growth in the Christian faith.

Suitable applicants should enjoy working with young people and may have experience in school chaplaincy, youth work, social work, teaching and/or student ministry or be completing a qualification in one of these areas.

To discuss the position, please contact Steve Francis: 08 9386 1770.
For job description and selection criteria, please email or phone: Vicki Hunter, Nedlands Uniting Church, 237 Princess Rd, Nedlands WA 6009
Ph (08) 9386 1770
Email: office@nedlandsuniting.com

Applications close 13 December 2005

West End's safe space

I was present at the Conversation at West End DC, "Homosexuality and Christianity - pathways to inclusiveness" that was an activity of the Progressive Spirituality Network.

I wish- to express my gratitude to the organisers and to the guest speakers. The event was the closest I felt the Uniting Church in Queensland had come to public concrete outreach during the pain-filled debate of recent years.

'Debate', 'controversy', 'theologizing', and old fashioned 'grandstanding' seem to have been easy to find, but a church sponsored 'safe place' that prayerfully informs and supports my own process of discernment has not been available.

I have been a Christian all my life. I've known myself to be bisexual since my early teens. I've been married for decades. I've remained faithful in my marriage and so I do not fall within that seemingly all significant category 'the practicing homosexual'. I experience this label as bizarre. I too am homosexual; it is the nature of my being. My selfhood, my sexuality and my spirituality cannot be compartmentalised. My expression of my sexuality is not reducible to my 'sexual preference' let alone to sexual practice. I am not faithful to my partner because I believe homosexuality to be evil, but because I believe we are all called by God to be faithful in loving relationships.

I am a 'member in good standing' and this debate has created more pain alienation and spiritual confusion in me than I can begin to describe. What must it be like for any in our congregations who are in same sex relationships and what must it be like for their families? To the best of my knowledge there is no 'safe place' of UC outreach here in Queensland. Given the present polarity of theology and opinion on this subject, such a ministry would need to be free of theological judgments or agenda.

I'm not speaking of a 'counselling service' here. I'm calling for an outreach of confidentiality and prayer. Surely some energy and funds could be directed towards creating an advertised outreach of unbiased prayer support for the faith journey of homosexual Christians and their families?

Name withheld by request

The conversation referred to is in the story on page 7 - Editor.

LETTERS

Colourful not factual

I read the article, "Synod affirms multicultural proposal", in the October 2005 edition of *Journey* which contains errors of fact. I do not understand how the Synod could pass a resolution which calls into question the integrity and character of so many of the members and leaders of my church.

For many years I have sought to listen to my brothers and sisters from other cultures and to be sensitive to their point of view. However, this does not mean endorsing opinions which are just plain wrong.

There is, unfortunately, a discredited tactic sometimes used in debates, which seems to be prominent in the debate about homosexuality. It is the tactic of attributing those who do not agree with one's own position, dubious beliefs and attitudes which enable the other to be more easily dismissed as heretical and of unsound character: Accusations that the other is outside the one, holy catholic and apostolic church; has watered down doctrine and theology and is unbiblical may be colourful, but such accusations have no basis in fact.

John Woodley

A more detailed statement by Rev Woodley is available at www.journeyonline.com.au - Editor.

Beware of heritics

Thanks for the effort that has gone into upgrading the graphics and presentation of *Journey* recently. Some of the content however has left me unsettled.

A few months ago I began consuming *Journey's* Sunday Lunch but developed indigestion. While I can adapt to the point of appreciating people's perspectives, I can also imagine Peter the shepherd pleading for

pure truth warning about the danger of applauding those with big brains rather than humble hearts.

Griffin (1978) admitted according to some criterion that "heretics now outnumber the orthodox". Such a conclusion gives no comfort at all, rather an alarming concern and call to guard the Faith for the sake of the spiritually vulnerable (all of us).

Craig Blackburn

A Catholic monopoly

I suggest that in this more-than-taken age of ecumenism the Pope should acknowledge the misleading use of "Catholic" as a popular title. The word means "universal" but since the dropping of "Roman Catholic" and "RC" the practice had become a quasi monopoly of naming rights.

It leaves other Christians disfranchised, at variance from John 17 prayer, and confused when they recite the creed.

The current title misleads by its exclusion. For every believer the right to catholicity!

Phillip Ramsay

Diversity is not unity

The situation remains - all the love and compassion in the world will not change the fact that Resolution 84 is destructive. The only thing it can achieve is that which, so far, it has done very well indeed - divide the church!

Have your say!

Letters to the editor may be edited due to space limitations.

Contact us:

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Resolution 84 is not unity in diversity - it is simply sowing the insidious seeds of disunity.

Two diametrically opposed faith statements cannot exist side by side in the church. To attempt such, is to place the church in the same position as those out in the world; those who cannot decide what they believe, and so have no hope.

Jenny Shaw

Respect and belief

Today in Australia many people are searching for ways to sustain our life together, as families, communities and nations. For these people, who are looking for more than individual salvation, the Gospel expressed in terms of reconciliation, as it is in the Basis of Union, offers what they seek.

Yet, if we are to offer a Gospel expressed in these terms, our life together must demonstrate reconciliation. This requires a willingness to respect another's convictions even when they are contrary to one's own strongly held beliefs. This is not an easy thing to do, but without this we have no Gospel of reconciliation

Alan Demack

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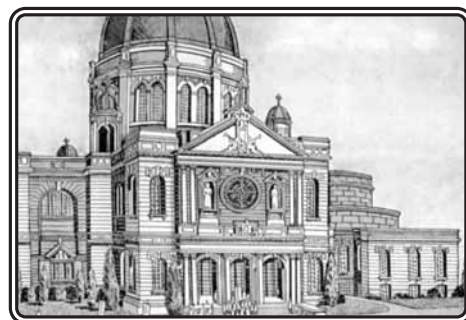
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Historically Speaking



THE CATHEDRAL WHICH NEVER WAS

It was to have seated 4,000, its Romanesque basilica dominating Brisbane's skyline. Inspired by a cathedral of the same name in Chicago, the Cathedral of the Holy Name had been the vision of Catholic Archbishop James Duhig.

The long-serving archbishop, known as James the Builder, laid the foundation stone of the cathedral in 1928. Such was his passion for the project, he was prepared to demolish his own residence, the imposing Dara, to ensure the realisation of his vision.

For many years, the city held its breath, awaiting word of the commencement of construction from within the sandstone walls. But in the late nineties, the site was sold for a multi-unit development.

All that remains of the vision are the architectural drawings for the cathedral that never was.

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JOURNEY asks...

Did Jonah really spend three days in the belly of a whale?

Tim Robinson

My purpose in daily Bible reading is to hear God's message to me today as the Spirit brings it alive, so that I can continue to grow in a deeper understanding of God and, consequently, in my discipleship.

Because of its unique prophetic and apostolic witness, the Bible holds great authority for me in working out my faith. Some of its richness is the diversity of its style and content. A collection of books written over hundreds of years by different authors in different lands, it can move from historical narrative to poetry, from psalms to sayings, from dreams and visions to parables, and from laws to letters.

Because of its diversity, the Bible can sometimes be confusing. The story of Jonah is no exception! How can a guy be swallowed by a giant fish, spend three days inside, and then be vomited up to tell the tale? I can understand if people find the story hard to 'swallow'.

To be honest, I don't know whether it literally happened or not but I think when dealing with this kind of issue I need to ask an important question: is believing that part literally crucial to the message of the prophet's short story? I'm not sure it is.

I would never want to underestimate the Creator of the universe by suggesting that God is incapable of the miraculous but, despite what our Sunday Schools have taught us, the story of the fish is not the heart of the narrative.

Jonah's is a story about a reluctant prophet who needs a lot of serious nudging to do God's work. It tells a beautiful narrative of God's abundance of mercy for those who don't deserve it and our human inability to deal with it.

Doesn't sound much different to today does it?

Tim Robinson is youth worker at Emmanuel Uniting Church in Brisbane.



Joan Cook

Jonah's is one of a few delightful stories tucked inconspicuously in the middle of weightier material. It's like Jesus' parables, a story to illustrate a truth.

Do I believe that Jonah was swallowed by a whale? The short answer is 'No!' or as the youth of today would say, 'Get real!'

To begin with, when did the whale come into the story? Whales don't belong in the Mediterranean Sea! My Bible – various translations – says 'big fish', but even so, can you imagine anyone surviving for three days swimming round in all that digestive acid?

So, what is it saying?

I imagine the fear of storms and drowning in the depths of the sea, gives a graphic picture of a person running from God until in the darkest depths of turmoil and despair he realises running away is futile – that makes sense! The large fish makes a great metaphor of God's hand in the rescue.

My enquiring mind as I explore the Bible has always got me into trouble!

When quite young I read Genesis, and this is when my first problem arose, as I wanted answers. I wasn't satisfied with 'Just believe what is written!'

For example, at the beginning were two stories of creation, with different statements about the making of Eve. Then, wherever did Cain's wife come from if there were only three people on earth?

Next, there was the impossibility of getting two elephants, two giraffes and two kangaroos – not to mention crocodiles – into the ark! Can you see a child's dilemma?

It only began to make sense as a wise person encouraged me to explore the background of the stories. When were they written? What was happening at that time? What were they trying to teach about God?

It's a lifelong quest!

Joan Cook is a lay member of the Wavell Heights congregation.



Michael Brumpton

Let's forget about the whale. The Bible talks about a big fish. Did Jonah really spend three days in the belly of a big fish?

"Of course he did." Otherwise, how could he have become a puddle of fish vomit on a beach?

The story of Jonah is a series of supernatural happenings, impacting on Jonah, the sailors, and the people of Nineveh.

In addition to this, it is a story which speaks to these same people, as well as to a faithless Israel (even a godless city repents at the words of God's prophet, why won't they?) and to us today.

When looking at the miracle of Jonah alive in the fish, we tend to ask the question, "Is it possible?" and some Bible-believing Christians will try and prove that it is possible.

But the whole point of a miracle is God working outside of the bounds of possibility.

With Jonah in the belly of the fish, God does the impossible. And Jonah's reaction to this is "Hey, I'm in the belly of a fish – God has saved me!" I wonder how many of us would consider ourselves saved, sloshing around in the gastrointestinal juices of a marine vertebrate.

I am personally challenged by much of what is in the Bible. But for me, it's a faith issue. Do I believe that God can work supernaturally in a natural world? You bet I do. But it's only by faith that I can believe this.

How many times does Jesus exhort, "Have faith"? or condemn, "you faithless".

In Jonah, God teaches a reluctant, but successful prophet what he is like. He is a God of justice who calls us to repentance, so as to be able to demonstrate his grace and forgiveness.

This is also my story. The God whom I pray to, the God whom I serve, can and does enter my world and circumstances, and makes the impossible happen.

The first of which is salvation.

Michael Brumpton is a Minister of the Word Intern serving in the St George area on the Darling Downs.

