



Stable on the Strand

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## Rescuing Christmas from Santa Claus

By Bruce Mullan

Sitting somewhere between Jesus and the tooth fairy is a jolly round man who has captured the hearts of our community.

As 21st century Christians scratch their heads, what was once a holiday to celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ has become a consumer binge which escalates to new heights every year thanks to K-Mart, Myer and a mailbox stuffed with catalogues.

The last weeks of December see an increasing panic as crowds take advantage of extended shopping hours to gather at the shrines of capitalism to acquire potential landfill and increase consumer debt.

While the earliest Christians captured the pagan festivals to bring the presence of Jesus to the community at large (we don't know the real date of his birthday), modern Christians struggle to promote the distinctiveness of the Christian message at Christmas.

Many Uniting Church people are still positive about the potential for the Christian message to come through at Christmas. Emmanuel Uniting Church minister Rev John Cox believes that in Christmas gift giving we have a symbol of offering ourselves to others.

"While rampant consumerism is the flavour of Christmas for many, if we in the church are willing to see the potential of the season we have a lot to work with," he said.

While few are keen to say "Bah, humbug" to Christmas, Uniting Church Youth Worker Robin Yang thinks the church has given in to consumerism and hasn't made a strong enough stand on what it means to be a Christian.

"People still connect with the Jesus story and the increased church attendance at Christmas services is a sign that the search for spirituality is alive in the community. But the church can do better in the way it taps into that."

While the legendary Saint Nicholas was reputed to have distributed gifts to the poor at night through their windows, his successor Santa Claus encourages the acquisition of cheaper and cheaper technological goods that would have been unimaginable a few decades ago.

Children who once sat around the radio with their parents listening to the Queen's Christmas Message now watch their own children captivated by iPods and Playstations, while those who engage in alternative gift giving are often viewed by family members as eccentric, if not decidedly weird.

Broadwater Road Uniting Church minister Rev Bruce Johnson said he and his wife had deliberately not promoted the idea



of Santa Claus when their children were small.

"We wanted to be able to share the Christian story of Christmas and knew that it was easy to get carried away with the Santa Claus thing and forget the true story.

"What we do to children is teach them about the Tooth Fairy, Easter Bunny, Santa Claus and God and as they get older we say they're all made up and the only one who is real is God and you can't see him.

"We wanted to capture the joy and fun in the Santa Claus story in our gift giving without making

belief in a mythological person centre stage."

Caboolture Uniting Church minister Rev Rob Brennan explained that the origins of the word "Christmas" are from the old English word meaning "Christ's Mass" which refers to the observance of the Lord's Supper or Mass which marked the celebration of Christ's birth.

*Silent Night*, one of the all-time favourite Christmas carols, invites us to take time out from the frenetic pace of our lives and meditate on the real meaning of Christmas.

Writing in the 16th century Martin Luther claimed that the Christmas Gospel is so clear that there is little need for scholarly interpretation.

"It is only necessary to ponder it well, to contemplate it, and to take it completely into your heart.

"None will derive more benefit from it than they whose hearts hold still and who divest themselves of material considerations and concentrate diligently on it."

More than just a commercial transaction, the Christ child was God's gift to the world, but do we hear that at the shopping mall?

### Uniting Church leaders call for fair laws

Industrial relations is only one area in which the Uniting Church has been pressuring the government over the past month,

strongly condemning aspects of both the industrial relations Work Choices package and the proposed anti-terrorism bill.

National Director of Uniting Justice Rev Elenie Poulos said under the new proposals, it has emerged that employers will be able to do away with many types of leave and allowances, as well as penalty and overtime rates without compensating workers.

"It will encourage employment practices that reduce the take-home pay and allow the exploitation of low-paid and unskilled workers.

"People can be required to work long and irregular hours at ordinary rates of pay, eroding leisure time, family time and community involvement.

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# Moderator's message

## The greatest gift of all

In his first letter to the church at Corinth, the apostle Paul declares that there is one thing that matters above all else, without which everything else is meaningless.

He calls it the "more excellent way", the way of love.

Now Paul would have known that Jesus, in his own ministry, had taught that love for God and for one another was the single most central truth of the Gospel.

All the commandments, Jesus said, were gathered up by, and expressed through, the divine principle of unconditional love.

*You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbour as yourself.* (Luke 10:27)



Moderator Rev Dr David Pitman

The love which Jesus says is the very essence of our relationship with God, and of all our human relationships, and the love in action of which Paul speaks, is *agape* love.

When, in the Greek New Testament, we come across this word *agape*, we know that it has a particular meaning and emphasis.

Agape love is the love with which God loves us.

God's love is sacrificial, self-giving, unconditional love.

It is the love that is exemplified in the life and ministry of Jesus.

Paul uses this word *agape* in the 13<sup>th</sup> chapter of 1 Corinthians, thereby declaring that we are to

## Unconditional love expects nothing in return

love one another with the same love with which God loves us.

The apostle John helps us to understand that God is present in every person who loves in that way.

God is present wherever unconditional love is offered and expressed.

If I were pressed to identify one verse in all the scriptures that for me expresses the very essence of my faith and life and ministry, this is the verse I would choose:

*God is love, and those who abide in love abide in God, and God abides in them.* (1 John 4:16)

In his book, *Unconditional Love*, Jesuit priest John Powell writes:

"Giving the gift of myself in love leaves me with a deep and lasting satisfaction of having done something good with my life.

"I live with the sweet memory of having contributed a gift of love to the lives of others.

"Likewise I am left with a sense of having used well the gifts which God has invested in me.

"Love takes time, demands a history of giving and receiving, laughing and crying, living and dying. It never promises instant gratification, only ultimate fulfilment."

Love is either conditional or unconditional. There is no third possibility. Either we attach conditions to our love, or we do not.

To the extent that we do attach conditions, we do not really love.

We may say we do, but we don't.

We deceive ourselves when we think we can love conditionally.

To love conditionally is not really to love at all.

Unconditional love accepts people as they are.

Unconditional love expects nothing in return.

Unconditional love endures despite disappointment and even heartbreak.

Unconditional love does not judge or condemn.

Unconditional love leaves people free to change.

Unconditional love forgives again and again.

Unconditional love requires that we also love ourselves.

Unconditional love is not wishful thinking or sentimental dreaming.

It is the love with which God loves us.

It is the love with which Jesus loved.

It is the love declared to all the world through his death and resurrection.

It is the love with which we are to love one another.

It is the love that is actually lived.

It is the greatest gift of all.

In this truth lies the real meaning of Christmas.

## From the Editor

Christmas has come a long way since A.D. 353 when Pope Julius I first declared December 25 as the date for the celebration of the birth of Jesus.

As a child, I remember Christmas as a much simpler event as we gathered around the tree with the family taking turns to open presents and enjoying excitement that was worth so much more than the carefully wrapped presents.

Someone has said that the task of perceiving Christmas through its wrappings becomes more difficult every year and it does seem commercialism comes into it's own as December approaches.

It reminds me of the story called the *The Gift of the Magi* by O. Henry where a beautiful young woman sells her hair to buy a chain for her husband's pocket watch, and her husband sells his watch to buy combs for his wife's beautiful hair.

Both sell their most valuable possessions to buy a gift for their loved one and end up with gifts that are of no practical use to them.

But most people hope for more than presents at Christmas. Deep down we believe that beyond the decorations, gifts and food there must be something more to life, something that will shift our attention away from fear and anxiety and towards peace and joy.

So, in spite of our ambivalent feelings about Christmas, we keep celebrating because we believe in something more. That's why so many return annually to church on 24 or 25 December, seeking

meaning, an anchor point and hope.

Yes, I'd like to reform Christmas, but in the end it continues to captivate me, not just because of the story it tells but because beyond all the decorations, cards and presents it reminds me, if only for a short time, what life can be like when we try.

Charles Swindoll summed it up this way:

"Some gifts you can give this Christmas are beyond monetary value: Mend a quarrel, dismiss suspicion, tell someone 'I love you'. Give something away anonymously. Forgive someone who has treated you wrong. Turn away wrath with a soft answer. Visit someone in a nursing home. Apologize if you were wrong. Be especially kind to someone with whom you work. Give as God gave to you in Christ, without obligation, announcement, reservation or hypocrisy."

Have a wonderful Christmas.

Bruce Mullan

## Next Journey

There will be no print *Journey* in January but we'll be back brighter than ever on the first Sunday in February.

[www.journeyonline.com.au](http://www.journeyonline.com.au) will be scaled down a little in December while we enjoy some holidays but will be a good way to keep up-to-date with news over the Christmas holiday break.

## Signs of the times



This year the Upper Caboolture Uniting Church Congregation celebrated its 130th anniversary. Like many of our modern church plants, Upper Caboolture started without a building and it was a number of years before its construction in 1871 as one of the first community buildings in what is now the Caboolture Shire. Local company Caboolture Bus Lines has a series of significant historical locations pictured on their vehicles. This one features a painting of the Upper Caboolture Church: free advertising for this local cultural icon everywhere the bus goes.

## JOURNEY

[www.journeyonline.com.au](http://www.journeyonline.com.au)

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### Journey

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# Schools and soldiers are targets of Pacific peace program

By John Harrison

**R**iven by civil strife since the 1987 coup, Fiji's major divisions are between the Methodist dominated Fijian majority and a Hindu Indian minority.

An ecumenical agency funded by Australian Churches through the Christmas Bowl appeal has been acting as an agent of reconciliation, and running programs for young people and members of the military.

Director of the Ecumenical Centre for Research, Education and Advocacy (ECEA) in Fiji Aisake Casimira visited Australia in November ahead of the Annual Christmas Bowl Appeal, to report to Australian churches on ECEA's activities.

In 2004, ECEA received for its work, a grant of \$50,000 from Christian World Service, the international aid and development arm of the National Council of Churches in Australia.

Working with young people, ECEA has been engaged in school-based practical workshops on inter-racial conflict management and conflict resolution.

Another aspect of ECEA's work has been the debriefing of Fijian military personnel involved in peacekeeping missions in the Middle East and the Pacific.

Some thirty middle ranking officers participated in the most recent workshop on Trauma Healing and Awareness at the Vatuwaqa Officers Training School in April 2005.

Aisake Casimira told a gathering in Brisbane that peacekeepers often



Aisake Casimira, Director of the Ecumenical Centre for Research, Education and Advocacy in Fiji  
Photo by Heather Grant

faced traumatic and violent events in the course of their duties and needed debriefing upon return.

Such programs also gave ECEA access to the military, some of whom have been part of the problem rather than part of the solution, on the issue of inter-racial reconciliation in Fiji.

Last year, the Christian World Service distributed nearly \$4 million in aid and development

funds to ecumenical agencies and partner churches around the world.

This was an increase of nearly half a million dollars above the previous year.

To read more about the work of ECEA go to: <http://www.ecrea.org.fj/>.

To find out more about the annual Christmas Bowl Appeal go to: <http://www.ncca.org.au/cws> or see page 8.



## ¼ million invitations to worship this Christmas

**S**eventy Uniting Church congregations will be delivering almost a quarter of a million invitation cards to households across Queensland as part of the *Gifts of Time and Love* Christmas campaign.

Warmed by the cute face of the boy in the box, the cards and thousands of accompanying posters will reinforce the message that Christmas is about taking time to be with others and offering love.

Manager of the Synod's Communications Services Unit Bruce Mullan said this was the biggest single public relations campaign undertaken by the Uniting Church in Queensland in recent decades.

Mr Mullan warned congregations to be realistic in their expectations about the results of the campaign.

"It is unlikely that hundreds of new visitors will arrive at your church this Christmas just because of a postcard in their letterbox, but you can be sure that at least they'll know you're there."

"This type of campaign is a long term strategy which will build over future years as people continue to receive warm invitations to worship at their local church at key times of the year."

According to Mr Mullan, the take up of the campaign has been so successful that it will be offered again at Christmas 2006 and perhaps also at Easter from 2007 onwards.

"Christmas is a great time for people to come to church because the songs, stories and images are familiar and bring a message of hope."

Moreton Rivers Presbytery Minister Rev Murray Fysh believes the *Gifts of Time and Love* campaign is a great initiative for the church.

"This is a fantastic opportunity to connect with the local community," he said.

"But putting a postcard in a letterbox or poster in a shop window is just step one. This project doesn't end at the mail box, it starts with the welcome at the church door."

## Uniting Church leaders call for fair laws

*Continued from page 1*

"We will continue to work alongside other Church agencies and community groups to lobby the Government for changes to the legislation; in particular, the protection of the more vulnerable members of society, both employed and unemployed."

The Uniting Church President Rev Dr Dean Drayton presented evidence to the Senate's inquiry into proposed workplace relations laws.

Dr Drayton said many unemployed people may continue to fall through the cracks under the new system.

"It is true that unemployment is at its lowest point in many years," Dr Drayton told ABC radio. "However, there are still many people who are looking for jobs."

"There are people who are vulnerable because they don't speak English, because they are from a multicultural society or because they are people who desperately need a job at a particular moment."

"These people, even in an economy which is running well, are going to be ... at a disadvantage."

"That is when the economy is running well, but economies go in cycles."

Dr Drayton said exempting businesses with under 100 employees from unfair dismissal laws was "outrageous".

Interviewed on the ABC's religion report Dr Drayton said that the Uniting Church is trying to support and help vulnerable people in the community.

"We sense that in fact this legislation has the potential for placing more pressures."

Dr Drayton also responded to the Government's draft anti-terrorism bill, which he believes has been introduced without adequate community consultation, and allows arbitrary detention of Australian citizens without charge, trial or appropriate judicial scrutiny.

"While every Government has a responsibility to protect its

citizens, these new laws send a clear message that the only way to do this is to erode people's rights. They have the potential to create an atmosphere of fear and distrust in Australia."

"We are concerned that the Government has failed to allow adequate time for public discussion and debate about the proposed laws."

"It is unacceptable that the community is being told to accept measures that radically curtail civil liberties without widespread and substantial consultation."

Rev Drayton said that politicians must remain accountable to the electorate and they must act to protect civil liberties.

"We all want to live in security, but laws which take action against citizens without the sanction of the judicial system damage trust and needlessly engender fear."

"We urge our political leaders to work for an open and tolerant Australia committed to overcoming violence through peaceful means."

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# Getting hands dirty in the Greenhouse

A small group of young adults from the TEA Party project (Toowong Early Adults) have been road-testing some of the training activities from the Greenhouse project.

Greenhouse project coordinator Mark Cornford has appreciated the opportunity to have a "real" group of young adult volunteer to try the Greenhouse process.

"Greenhouse is about mission and the Toowong young adults were prepared to try stuff with no idea about what would happen to them," he said.

Mr Cornford was reluctant to give much detail as he didn't want to "spoil the surprises" for other young adults who undertake Greenhouse training, but he did share one story.

"As part of the program we went with Tim Hodgson of Wesley

Mission to hang out with homeless people early on a Sunday morning.

One of the group invited a work friend who doesn't attend church.



Mark Cornford Youth and Children's Ministry Unit Greenhouse project coordinator

"Afterwards we had coffee together and talked about how we experienced God as we shared life and stories with the 'streeties'. She said, 'I believe in God - though I am not too sure what it means. But I do know this - what we did today was something that really excites me, would you let me be a part of this?'"

"So she is going to connect with Tim at Wesley and engage with them."

Tanya from TEA Party said the experience had opened her eyes to the possibilities of doing mission where she was.

"We weren't sure about how people would respond to us, but what was exciting was that we discovered that people are much more open to God than we thought."

"While it was scary, mission is not as hard as we expected. In fact it might even be exciting!"

Mr Cornford said that this is really what the Greenhouse is about: supporting young adults into mission and then seeing what God does with it!

The Greenhouse is an action learning process developed by the Youth and Children's Ministry Unit (YACMU) to support and mentor teams of young adults to develop mission projects in their own area. For more information go to [www.yacmu.com.au](http://www.yacmu.com.au) or contact Mark Cornford at 07 3377 9782.

## UCA-Korean missionary links remembered

The lives of eight Australian missionaries who died while serving in Korea will be forever remembered in a permanent memorial that was recently dedicated at Chang-Shin Christian College in Korea.

The eight missionaries were part of a group of more than 120 who have served in Korea from 1889 to the present day with the Presbyterian and the Uniting Church in Australia.

Unveiled on October 15 this year, the Australian Missionary Memorial pays tribute to the lives of those eight missionaries who died between 1890 and 1937 during service in Korea. The memorial is housed at the college which was established in 1908 by the Australian Mission Association - two years before Korea was subject to colonial rule by the Japanese.

In recognition of the Uniting Church's on-going relationship with the Presbyterian Church of Korea, the Assembly General Secretary, Rev Terence Corkin, was asked to attend the dedication and offer a congratulatory message.

"I was amazed at how these missionaries, who had given their lives, were so fondly remembered by the Korean Church and how significant their commitment was seen to be by the Korean people," Rev Corkin said.

"The visit reminded me how we sometimes undervalue the work we do and the impact it can have."

Principal of the College Elder B.D. Kang expressed hope that the memory of this selfless giving would be an on-going inspiration to his students in their life and faith."

Rev Corkin said during the visit the Presbyterian Church of Korea re-affirmed its on-going partnership with the Uniting Church in Australia by inviting Australians to work as missionaries and to teach English at the Chang-Shin College. Anyone interested should contact the Assembly's People in Mission Coordinator, Sandy Boyce, [sandy@sa.uca.org.au](mailto:sandy@sa.uca.org.au).

Uniting Church members who have missionary links to Korea are also being asked to contribute memorabilia, photos, stories and other items for a museum that will be established to remember Australia's missionaries. Those interested should contact the Assembly General Secretary [terencec@nat.uca.org.au](mailto:terencec@nat.uca.org.au).



Principal of Chang-Shin Christian College Elder B.D. Kang welcomes UCA General Secretary Rev Terence Corkin

## Synod website invites people to Christmas worship



Your Queensland Synod website [www.ucaql.com.au](http://www.ucaql.com.au)

Uniting Church Christmas services in Queensland are listed on the Synod Website as an invitation to people across the state to join in worship celebrations.

Congregations wishing to include their Christmas services should visit the website and register to have their service times included in the "Gifts of Time and Love" page.

Communications Manager Bruce Mullan said congregations with websites should also check whether they are listed on the "Find your local Uniting Church" page.

## Young adults go formal

Sixty-six Uniting Church young adults from three Brisbane presbyteries attended the first Formal Dinner for young adults at the Mt Coot-tha Summit Restaurant.

Because numbers were limited, coordinators were distressed that 20 young people were not able to attend the night of great food, goodwill and meeting others. The evening was a great success and will be repeated on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2006, but get in early. Read Tom Kerr's *How To* guide on the [yacmu](http://yacmu.com.au) website for information about how to run your own Young Adult Formal Dinner [www.yacmu.com.au](http://www.yacmu.com.au).



Tanya Richards, Adele Garnett, Jennifer Hargreaves and Julie Goss at the young adult formal dinner.

## A ward winner

St Andrew's has once again proven its world leadership in clinical outcomes by winning the 2005 Australian Private Hospitals' Association award for the achievements of our cardiac services team. This is the third time St Andrew's has been recognised by the APHA.

**ST ANDREW'S**  
WAR MEMORIAL HOSPITAL



# Camels, cake and cooperation make Christmas come alive

By Bruce Mullan

Uniting Churches across Queensland are building connections with the wider community this Christmas with Christmas tree festivals, carol services and advent workshops. One of the most spectacular is the "Stable on the Strand" project in Townsville.

From humble beginnings in 1999 with a simple nativity scene at Mt Louisa Uniting Church, "Stable on the Strand" has grown to be a city-wide festival supported by 68 individual church congregations together with corporate and community sponsorship.

Over 24,000 people visited the 2004 "Stable on the Strand". This year's presentation includes an air-conditioned Stable Marquee where visitors can stroll through the streets of Bethlehem as it was 2,000 years ago and experience the marketplace.



Real actors and real babies make the Stable on the Strand an authentic experience  
Photo supplied

Highlights include a Jewish wedding complete with dancing, a Roman chariot with soldiers and a real camel as well as the traditional manger scene.

Post-Stable hospitality includes 10,000 free slices of Christmas cake with tea and coffee and friendly conversation

New in 2005 is a national short film competition with entries shown in a youth tent "Under the Stars" on the beach.

"Stable on the Strand" organiser Pastor Anne Harley from Mt Louisa Community Church told how last year the team had felt the need to pray for the twin cities of Townsville and Thuringowa.

"We established a 24 hour continuous prayer centre for the city for 21 days leading up to the event," she said.

Visitors to the Stable were invited to write a prayer on a

prayer wall and Ms Harley was amazed that over 6000 prayers were offered.

"As families leave the stable they are offered a Christmas blessing by the pastors, ministers and priests of the city and receive a gift candle and an invitation to Christmas Church services," said Ms Harley.

Uniting Church member and publicity coordinator for the event Lena Crane said many people from out of town have traditionally been part of the crowd of "Stable on the Strand" visitors.

"Visitors coming to Townsville are invited to come and see the Stable while they are here on holiday during the period 18th to 24th December," she said.

"If they can't get to Townsville people can visit the website at [www.stableonthestrand.com.au](http://www.stableonthestrand.com.au)."



Stable on the Strand organiser  
Pastor Anne Harley

## New trainees out to test their call

Three young adults are commencing a year of service to the church under the Queensland Synod's traineeship program.

Gavin Core has just finished year 12 as school captain at Emerald High School and has been anticipating taking up a traineeship for the last 12 months.

Gavin will be working alongside the local high school chaplain as well as Emerald Uniting Church minister Rev Russell Reynoldson.

Monique Mawbey, Emerald, has been considering a gap year and will take up a traineeship in 2006 as an opportunity to test an early call to be a Minister of the Word.

Central Queensland Presbytery Pastoral Relations and Ministry Committee member Caroline Holmes met with the two young trainees at the beginning of the year and interviewed them again in November.

"I was very impressed by their call and the way they had developed over the year," she said.

After 12 months preparing herself for a traineeship, Tagisa Lale from St Ives Uniting Church Samoan Congregation has commenced a traineeship working with the chaplains at Wheller Gardens aged care residential facility at Chermide.



Synod Ministry Trainee Monique Morby from Emerald

Synod Traineeship Coordinator Paul Yarrow says traineeships are an excellent way for young people to check out ministry and test if God is calling them into fulltime ministry.

"Now is the opportune time to talk with those leaving Year 12, deferring their Uni course or wanting to make a change. If you know people aged 18 and 25 who have ministry gifts, encourage them to consider a traineeship."

Mr Yarrow said traineeships are about young people discovering more about themselves and hearing God's call, while working alongside someone in fulltime ministry.

"We all experience God's call in different ways. Some people know they have to get in and paddle hard and we would encourage those people to candidate for ministry, but for those who aren't sure, traineeships offer another option."



**NRCC Coordinator** (Located in Darwin)  
NRCC is the Northern Region of the Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress.

### Duties

The successful applicant will facilitate the Presbytery, be the representative for and on behalf of NRCC. The Coordinator will provide support and assistance to the Area Councils and congregations in Arnhem Land, West Kimberley and the Pilgrims in Central Australia. The Coordinator will mentor and train NRCC trainee.

### Selection Criteria

The successful applicant must have a demonstrable Christian commitment and an understanding of Uniting Church polity, doctrine and ethos. An understanding of Aboriginal culture and an ability to communicate and work closely with Aboriginal people is essential. The position requires the Coordinator to travel frequently to remote areas. The successful applicant will be expected to learn an Aboriginal language. The applicant must have a demonstrable ability in general administration and experience in financial administration.

### Remuneration

A remuneration package will be in line with a UCA stipend conditions. The successful applicant will be offered a five year appointment which includes a one year probation period.

Applications Closure : 20th January 2006

Further Information  
Contact NRCC Office  
PO Box 36921 Winnellie NT 0821  
[mervyn.brown@ards.com.au](mailto:mervyn.brown@ards.com.au)

## Student Group Home Parents

Charleville

Frontier Services operates Student Group Homes in Queensland that cater for students in secondary school. The position of Student Group Home Parents is available to couples and offers a unique opportunity to support people from remote areas.

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If you feel you have the qualities, skills and qualifications necessary to fulfill this important position, please call Lyn Trull on (07) 3377 9828 for an information package and position description. All applications must address the selection criteria.

Applications close Friday 16 December 2005 and should be forwarded to: Lyn Trull  
Community Services Coordinator (Qld & SA)  
GPO Box 674, Brisbane QLD 4001  
[comserveqld@bigpond.com](mailto:comserveqld@bigpond.com) or fax (07) 3377 9914



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### Somerville House

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[www.somerville.qld.edu.au](http://www.somerville.qld.edu.au)

### Brisbane Boys' College

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for boys in Years 4-12  
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[www.bbc.qld.edu.au](http://www.bbc.qld.edu.au)

# People are dying to give their money away

There has been a worldwide increase in gifting via trusts and foundations, but Uniting Church Foundation Development Manager Ken Edwards said people are demanding more value for their charitable and religious gifts.

Mr Edwards says the UC Foundation provides excellent value for benefactors because of low overheads and the absence of establishment costs and legal fees.

"You don't have to be wealthy to make provision for God's ongoing work in this way and a perpetual fund, often given a personal or family name, can be set up as a permanent memorial, living on, year after year, generation after generation.

"These endowment funds may be designated by you for specific purposes, or may be without restriction, for use by the

Foundation's general fund. No gift is too small."

The Foundation's Board of Directors distributes the tax-exempt investment income earned from the unrestricted fund to a variety of Uniting Church ministries, activities, and community services.

"Because priorities change over time these general grants enable support to programs, activities and innovations designed to meet current and future needs."

Through careful management, the interest distributed from the Foundation funds are more than the original given amounts which remain intact and growing.

Some people even prepay their Foundation bequests because they want the church to benefit during their own lifetime.

"This financial strategy has the added advantage that a tax

deduction can often be arranged," said Mr Edwards.

"The Church is fortunate that an increasing number of people are using part of their estate for God's work."

"Their special gift to future generations, from their accumulation of a lifetime of God's blessings, is a true reflection of the values and principles they treasure."

For information on making a bequest contact the Development Manager 3377 9777 or visit [www.foundation.ucaql.com.au](http://www.foundation.ucaql.com.au).



Ken Edwards Uniting Church Foundation Development Manager

# Young adults keeping them in the church

January is the time when many young adults from Queensland Uniting Churches will be moving off to new places for work or for study and many won't connect with a Uniting Church in their new area.

Early Adult Ministry Coordinator with the Youth and Children's Ministry Unit Tom Kerr says that your congregation's ministry to them isn't over until they are well and truly established in another Uniting Church.

"Times of transition can be very stressful for people and coping with all the change can be hard."

"Sometimes our people on the move fail to connect with another church because the idea of meeting even more new people and dealing with even more change can be just too much."

Tom said that sometimes young adults don't find another Uniting Church just because they are "slack" or perhaps haven't been encouraged to see joining a new church as essential to their discipleship.

"They don't know where to begin to find us or perhaps tried a church but it failed to care for them."

Tom said that the home church can do a lot to help young adults move to a new Uniting Church and keep connected to God.

"Without our help, they could easily fall through the cracks."

For further resources to help young adults in their transition times you will find an article by Tom on the Youth and Children's Ministry Unit website [www.yacmu.com.au](http://www.yacmu.com.au).



## Tom's tips for keeping young adults connected

Hold a significant "rite of passage" recognition for young adults who will be moving on. This could form a part of a church service or a whole church service.

Commit to follow up with pastoral care when young adults have moved until they are settled in to a new church. Hold them accountable as disciples, for connecting in with a new faith community.

Ask for permission to pass on news of how the young adult is getting along to the rest of the congregation with any prayer requests they have.

Ask your moving young adult for permission to pass their name and contact details on to Uniting Churches in their new area.

Check out the churches close to where your young adults will be moving. Give them a call to ask how they might look after your young adult. Ask if they will contact the young adult in the next couple of days. If the first church you contact doesn't work for the young adult, try another one.

When your young adult commits to another church in their new home, send a greeting to that church from your church and acknowledge that you are entrusting them with the pastoral care of that person, while you also will maintain an interest in their well-being.

Have welcome home activities and opportunities to share when your young adult returns home for visits or holidays.

# Congregations to link to Assembly theme

In the lead-up to the 11<sup>th</sup> Assembly of the Uniting Church congregations and faith groups have been invited to reflect on their local mission using a series of short, small group studies prepared by the Assembly President and President-elect.

*God's Word, God's World, Towards the 11<sup>th</sup> Assembly* is designed for reflection around the Assembly theme by small groups or for individual reflection and meditation.

The free resource, which includes short bible studies, reflections,

prayers and discussion starters, has been sent to each congregation across the country and can be used at any time between now and July 2006 when the 11<sup>th</sup> Assembly meets in Brisbane.

Uniting Church President Rev Dr Dean Drayton said the worksheets focus on four bible study passages and are designed to stimulate discussion, reflection and action about the church in mission.

"I have been very encouraged by the way many congregations are directly and very deliberately involved in God's mission."

"These worksheets give congregations a short, easy to use resource that can help them reflect on their local mission and to search out new ways they might share the good news of Christ," he said.

President-elect Rev Gregor Henderson said he hoped the sheets would help the Church focus its energies as the 11<sup>th</sup> Assembly approaches.

"As we prepare for the 11<sup>th</sup> Assembly, we hear God's Word spoken not only to us, but also to the world."

"We know well that in the Uniting Church there are many different points of view on a host of issues."

"What holds us together is our relationship with the living Lord and our commitment to sharing the good news of that relationship with others."

"We invite every congregation to make use of these worksheets and reflect on how they are living out God's Word in their community."

Additional copies of the worksheets can be downloaded from the 11<sup>th</sup> Assembly website <http://assembly.uca.org.au/11thassembly/involve-resources.htm> or purchased for a small fee through the Assembly's publisher MediaCom 1800 811 311.

The 11<sup>th</sup> Assembly of the Uniting Church in Australia will have its own website <http://assembly.uca.org.au/11thassembly>

**Celebrate Christmas with ...**

**WESLEY MISSION**  
Brisbane

**Christmas under the Stars**

**Saturday, 17 December 2005**

**King George Square, City**

**Children's entertainment 6.00pm**

**Main concert 7.00pm**

**Featuring:**

- The Brisbane Excelsior Brass Band with special guest Mark Ham
- The Queensland Highlanders Pipe Band
- Katie Tenkate and dancers
- The Birralees Blokes choir
- ENCORE featuring the two tenors Daniel Mallari and Lachlan Baker
- Children's entertainment featuring Supa Tony, The Christmas Elf, and special guest singer Alik
- Nativity Scene with baby animals

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

**An evening of FREE festive entertainment for the whole family**

**Proudly supported by the Brisbane City Council and**

**Uniting Church Investment Service**

*Enquiries: Wesley Mission Brisbane phone 3221 6788*



# The slow goodbye

Their lives filled with love and good memories, the two old lovers are saying a slow goodbye to this earth, surrounded by children who love them and nurses who care.

By Phil Callaway

Comedy was not my first choice. I wanted to be strong and good-looking. I wanted to have girls talk about me in front of my back. But I discovered early in life that the girls weren't looking for a sense of humour. They wanted solid, chiselled features and money for snacks. I had neither. So my dad tried to console me: "Poverty is hereditary," he said. "You get it from your children." A sense of humour is too. I got it from my dad.

For the most part, comedians come from either of two backgrounds: severely depressed or extremely happy. There is seldom a middle ground. I grew up in a family in which laughter was a staple; my parents loved each other and loved their children.

My earliest memories are of Mum reading me *Winnie the Pooh* and Dad hiding in darkened rooms waiting to scare the living daylights out of me. Each of our three children has at some point experienced me pulling back their collars and sneezing down their

necks. I got the idea from my dad. The older I get, the more this sense of humour is coming in handy.

Mum and Dad lie in separate beds in the same hospital now, not quite knowing where they are. Each time I visit they ask me about it so I explain it to them as if it's the first time. Then the lights in their eyes come on and quickly fade again. I once asked my dad the secret of their lengthy marriage and his eyes twinkled. "Senility," he said.

It was funny back then. But now the two old lovers are saying a slow goodbye to this earth, surrounded by children who love them and nurses whose sweetness surprises me at times.

Looking for Dad the other night, I found him slumped in a chair, tears streaming down his cheeks. "It's all right, Victor," said a slender young nurse, placing a gentle arm about his shoulder. "Hey," I joked to her, "he's already taken." Dad crossed his eyes and pushed his false teeth out at me.

The phone woke me one morning. It was Dad. "Someone stole my pants," he said. "Where's my wallet? Can you bring me some money?" I told him I was loaded; I'd be right over. "Hurry," he said, "I'm going to see a movie." My father hasn't stepped inside a movie theatre since becoming a Christian 60 years ago. By the time I arrived, he had been out riding the range with Roy Rogers, and the two were planning to rope cattle together. Seeing me, he said, "What are you doing here? Don't you work?"

Some doctors call it dementia; others Alzheimer's. None of us dreamed it would come to this.

Yesterday, my mother - a woman I have seen share her faith with leather-clad bikers, the girl who led me to Christ when I was a lad - was convinced that God had abandoned her. I was stroking her white hair and singing, "Jesus led me all the way," when this spiritual giant of a woman, who stands less than five feet now, interrupted, "No, He didn't," she said indignantly.

"You mean Jesus?" I asked, "When did He stop?"

"Last Wednesday." She was serious. Doubts come and go.

But tonight she is listening to beautiful hymns on a CD player she can't operate and smiling with her eyes closed. "Tell me about the kids," she says.

Dad is concerned that he has misplaced the keys to the car—a car that no longer runs. I tell him they're around here somewhere. I'll find them; don't worry. I can't believe I'm lying to my dad. Surely they have manuals for this kind of thing, but I'm learning as I go.

I've brought along a book and I read it to my mother out loud. It is the same tattered copy of *Winnie The Pooh* that she read to me when I was four. "How cold my toes ... tiddly-pom," I sing, using a tune she taught me.

I'm tough. I don't cry easily. But as I leave tonight, I take part again in this grand role reversal, whispering goodnight to the

woman who tucked me in with a thousand goodnight kisses. "God bless you," I say. "He does," she smiles; "He gave me you." Then she motions my daughter Rachael to her bedside. "Bernice loves you," she says. "Say it after me so you'll never forget. Bernice loves me." Rachael smiles and wipes a tear.

Dad is seated in a nearby chair, getting ready for a trip, he says. Going back to Ontario where he spent his boyhood. Gonna see the tall oak trees and swim in the Elora Gorge. He smiles as he tells me this and I wonder if it's not the most profound thing he's uttered in years. We're all getting ready for a trip, aren't we? Packing light. Going Home.

Outside, Rachael wants to drive. I can't believe she's already 16. "Will you visit me when I'm old?" I ask, wiping tears and fumbling for the car keys. She smiles her agreement. "I need a hug," I say. She leans close. Ah yes, I can feel a sneeze coming on.



Phil Callaway, editor of *Servant* magazine, is a popular speaker and author of a dozen books including *Who Put the World on Fast Forward* and *I Used To Have Answers, Now I Have Kids* (Harvest House). His web site is: [www.philcallaway.com](http://www.philcallaway.com).



## Family fun for free

The third annual Toombul District Community Fun Day held on 5 November was the biggest yet with more than 4000 people attending.

With games, rides, crafts, face painting, kids carpentry, balloon sculpting, entertainment food and much more it is no surprise the day was a success. The surprise however, was that everything was free.

Sponsorship from the Brisbane Airport Corporation and the tireless efforts of the congregations made this possible.

Parents were given gifts as they arrived to thank them for what they do for their family.

The Fun Day was also a combined Churches event this year, with a number of other denominations joining the Toombul District Uniting Church's vision.

One mum said, "This was such a great day. It's such a relief to let the kids go on every ride and join in all the fun without having to worry

about what it all cost, and having to say, No!"

Rev Jan Whyte said the congregation's mission is 'God's love in action serving the community'.

"We wanted to give a gift to the families in our community, living

in a society where families are often not valued," she said.

"For us, mission is no longer about giving money that goes somewhere out there. It is about giving ourselves - time, energy, money - to touch the lives of people with God's love right where we are."



Painting faces at the Toombul District Community Family Fun Day

### Uniting Church in Australia National Assembly National Director, Uniting International Mission



As executive officer of UIM the Director will provide leadership and vision to the Church in international mission and development of Church partnerships and initiate, recommend and implement policies and programs within the mandate of UIM.

The Director is responsible for the day to day management of a team of staff working in support of our partners, in international human rights, overseas aid and in the areas of communication and publicity.

This position requires a highly motivated person experienced at working in a team, managing a significant budget and with the capacity to relate to a complex array of issues and networks of people.

The successful applicant will have:

- tertiary qualifications in theology;
- a sound grasp of contemporary mission theory and practice and how this may be connected with the life of the church;
- significant experience in managing people and budgets;
- excellent communication skills, written and oral;
- capacity to work as part of a team of senior national staff;
- commitment to the consultative, inter-conciliar, ecumenical and multicultural ethos of the Uniting Church.

This is a full-time position commencing as soon as possible after July 1 2006. It is open to lay and ordained people and is designated as an Assembly placement. The position will be based in Sydney at the Assembly office at 222 Pitt St.

Applications are to be submitted in writing and should include a full curriculum vitae, specific comment upon how the applicant addresses the selection criteria and the names, addresses and telephone numbers of at least two referees. Applicants are also invited to provide a short statement (up to one page) on why they are applying for this position, and what in particular they can bring to the role and the national life of the church.

All enquiries and requests for information packs to the General Secretary phone: (02) 8267 4201, fax: (02) 8267 4222 or e-mail [terencec@nat.uca.org.au](mailto:terencec@nat.uca.org.au). Applications marked 'Private and Confidential' to Rev. Terence Corkin, General Secretary, Uniting Church National Assembly, PO Box A2266, Sydney South, NSW 1235.

APPLICATIONS CLOSE AT 5 pm on 31 JANUARY 2005



# Unwrap the real

By Mardi Lumsden

Christmas is a time of giving. Australians spent more than \$21 billion in EFTPOS transactions in December 2004 buying presents for friends and family (The Australian 7/01/2005).

At the same time the Boxing Day tsunami saw Australians donate more than \$280 million (according to [www.un.org](http://www.un.org)).

These figures show that despite being in the midst of the Christmas and post Christmas shopping frenzy, Australians were prepared to dig deep for victims of the tsunami.

These figures also show that Australians, though called extremely generous, donated to tsunami around 1% of what they spent on Christmas shopping.

This Christmas *Journey* is challenging individuals and churches to think outside the square when it comes to Christmas presents.

So before you buy dad more socks and hankies (though he may actually need them), think about what you can do to make a difference for those who are less fortunate and give the kind of gift that gets and keeps people thinking.

## Aid organisations with Christmas gift catalogues

- Baptist World Aid  
[www.shareanopportunity.org](http://www.shareanopportunity.org)
  - Care Australia  
[www.careaustralia.org.au](http://www.careaustralia.org.au)
  - Caritas Australia – Global Gifts  
[www.caritas.org.au/howtohelp/globalGifts.htm](http://www.caritas.org.au/howtohelp/globalGifts.htm)
  - The Leprosy Mission Australia  
[www.leprosymission.org.au](http://www.leprosymission.org.au)
  - Oxfam CCA  
[www.oxfam.org.au](http://www.oxfam.org.au)
  - Samaritans Purse (which runs Operation Christmas Child) has a gift catalogue found at:  
[www.samaritanspurse.org](http://www.samaritanspurse.org)
  - Tear Australia  
[www.tear.org.au](http://www.tear.org.au)
  - Uniting International Mission has the Gifts of Love Catalogue  
[www.uim.uca.org.au/ucoa](http://www.uim.uca.org.au/ucoa)
  - World Vision Smiles Catalogue  
[www.worldvision.com](http://www.worldvision.com)
- Websites outside of Australia
- [www.buynothingchristmas.org](http://www.buynothingchristmas.org)
  - UK based Christian Aid has <http://shop.christianaid.org.uk>
- This is by no means a definitive list, but just a few of the options for alternative Christmas presents.

## Christian World Service

Website: [www.ncca.org.au](http://www.ncca.org.au)  
Queensland contact:  
Queensland Churches Together  
PO Box 2045  
Milton BC QLD 4064  
Phone: (07) 3369 6792  
Email: [qctgsec@tpg.com.au](mailto:qctgsec@tpg.com.au)

### Mission

In Australia, Christian World Service (CWS) supports refugees and displaced people through advocacy, education and the work of ecumenical state council networks. CWS supports the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission in their work to provide a forum for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Principal programs are Christmas Bowl and Partners4Peace.

### History

CWS is the aid and development agency of the National Council of Churches in Australia (NCCA). CWS helps develop a better future for people suffering from injustice and poverty. Aid and Development is



delivered through overseas ecumenical partners in Africa, Asia, Middle East and the Pacific.

CWS co-sponsors *forceten* with Caritas Australia. *forceten* will cease operations in December and will be replaced with Partners4Peace.

Some gifts over \$2 are tax deductible. However, if you choose not to claim tax deduction, your gift will be directed to a project that would otherwise not be funded.

### The Christmas Bowl Story

The Christmas Bowl began in 1949. The bowl is a reminder that many of God's people suffer as a result of hunger, poverty, lack of education, health, equality, empowerment, and environmental issues.

Christmas Bowl is supported by AusAID.

## TEAR Australia

Website: <http://www.tear.org.au>  
Queensland contact:  
Dave Andrews and Ross Farley  
PO Box 5519  
West End QLD 4101  
Phone: 07 3844 1043  
Email: [qld@tear.org.au](mailto:qld@tear.org.au)

### Mission Statement

TEAR Australia is a Christian development, relief and advocacy organisation responding to global poverty and injustice.

Our vision is for a just and compassionate world in which all people have the opportunity to achieve their God-given potential.

### History

For over thirty years, TEAR Australia's partners have been working with some of the most disadvantaged communities in the world. Inspired by Jesus' example, they care for those whom society often neglects or ignores. Priority is given to activities that are sustainable, and that strive to fully involve the poorest

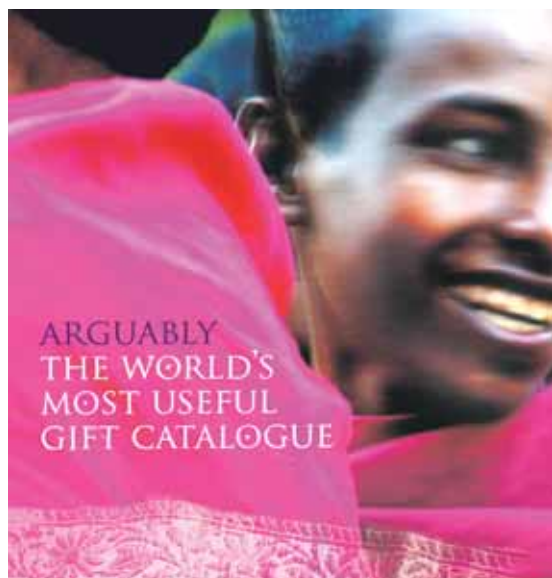
and most exploited people, regardless of their religious or political beliefs.

TEAR Australia is fully accredited with AusAID. TEAR is also a signatory to the Australian Council for International Development Code of Conduct.

For every item you purchase from their gift catalogue, TEAR will send you a gift card with a photo and description of the gift, and a space to put your message. It doesn't mention the amount of money. The cards can be used for any special occasion - Christmas, Birthdays, Weddings or Anniversaries.

TEAR Australia donations are tax-deductible.

Image courtesy of Tear Australia





# meaning of Christmas

## World Vision

Website: [www.worldvision.com.au](http://www.worldvision.com.au)

Contact  
GPO Box 399C  
Melbourne Vic 3001  
Phone: +61 3 9287 2233

### Mission

World Vision is a charitable organisation providing help on a need basis. Our work is to improve the lives of children, families and communities living in poverty. We work on long-term projects that address the causes of poverty and help people become self-sufficient.

### History

World Vision Australia began in 1965, as part of the World Vision international partnership.

They work closely with the Australian government, with full accreditation from the Australian Agency for International Development (AusAID) and work

under AusAID provisions and regulations as well as the Australian Council for International Development (ACFID) Code of Conduct.

With more than 350,000 Australians supporting the work of World Vision, it is the largest charitable group in Australia, helping over 10 million people every year.

Although best known for Child Sponsorship, World Vision provides many other ways to support people living in poverty.

The *Smiles* gift catalogue is not only World Vision's Christmas catalogue, but also a gift registry used all year round.

Gifts are available from under \$30 to over \$500 and include everything from a mosquito net to cleft lip surgery.

On purchasing from the *Smiles* Catalogue a card or ecard will be sent. Donations are tax deductible.



Photo from the *Smiles* catalogue courtesy of World Vision

## Oxfam Community Aid Abroad

Website: [www.oxfam.org.au](http://www.oxfam.org.au)

Queensland contact:  
Oxfam Australia  
102 McDonald Rd  
Windsor QLD 4030  
Phone: 07 3637 4600  
Email: [andreap@oxfam.org.au](mailto:andreap@oxfam.org.au)

### Mission

Oxfam Australia's vision is of a fair world in which people control their own lives, their basic rights are achieved and the environment is sustained.

They aim to increase the number of people who have a sustainable livelihood, access to social services, an effective voice in decisions, safety from conflict and disaster, and equal rights and status.

### History

Oxfam Australia began as a church-affiliated group called Food for Peace Campaign in Melbourne in 1953.

1962 saw the appointment of a full-time Director and a name change to Community Aid Abroad.

Community Aid Abroad became part of Oxfam International in 1995 and in 2001, the name of the agency changed to Oxfam Australia.

Today, the agency is a secular, independent, non-government, not-for-profit organisation working in over 30 countries around the world. According to the 2004 financial report, 76% of Oxfam Australia's income comes from community support.

Oxfam Australia's Christmas gift catalogue is called Oxfam Unwrapped and has everything from a pig or soccer ball to a rice bank. Donations are tax deductible.



Photo courtesy of Oxfam Australia

## Uniting International Mission

Website: <http://uim.uca.org.au/ucoa>

Queensland contact:  
Heather den Houting and Andrew Johnson  
Email: [heatherdh@uccentre.ucaqld.com.au](mailto:heatherdh@uccentre.ucaqld.com.au)  
[andrew.johnson@uccentre.ucaqld.com.au](mailto:andrew.johnson@uccentre.ucaqld.com.au)  
Website [www.socialissues.ucaweb.com.au](http://www.socialissues.ucaweb.com.au)

### Mission

To support and be involved in aid and relief programs run by our overseas partner churches. Areas of support include: water supply, health, food security, vocational training, education, economic empowerment, emergency relief.

Uniting Church Overseas Aid (UCOA) exists to express the Uniting Church's deep commitment to the alleviation of poverty, to community development, and to providing emergency relief. It is a division within the UCA national agency Uniting International Mission (UIM).

### History

UCOA is a member of the Australian Council For Overseas Aid (ACFID) and is a signatory to the ACFID Code of Conduct. UCOA is accredited by AusAID.

Uniting Church members and congregations provide a significant proportion of funds to ecumenical overseas aid initiatives such as the Christmas Bowl and ForceTen.

This Christmas, the UCOS gifts catalogue provides a place to purchase gifts from \$5 to \$400 for communities overseas. The Gifts of Love catalogue is available online or postage can be arranged. Once your donation has been received, you can request a certificate to give as a gift. Check the website to find which projects/gifts are tax deductible.



## Compassion Australia

Website: [www.compassion.com.au](http://www.compassion.com.au)

Contact  
Box 1, Hunter Region Mail Centre  
NSW 2310  
Phone: 1800 224 453  
Phone: +61 2 4935 5000  
E-mail: [compassion@compassion.com.au](mailto:compassion@compassion.com.au)

### Mission statement

To challenge, partner and equip the Church to release children from spiritual, economic, social, physical and emotional poverty in Jesus' name.

Other goals can be summarised in the following five words:

Advocacy, Integrity, Excellence, Servanthood, and Partnership.

### History

Compassion is a Christian ministry that started in 1977 and works in partnership with local churches in developing countries and sponsors worldwide, to help some of the world's poorest children and their families. Compassion's ministry is Christ-centred, child-focused and church-based.

These days more than 45,000 children worldwide are sponsored by Compassion Australia. In 2004 75.2% of Compassion's income came from child sponsorship. 79.6% of their expenditure in the same year went to child development.

Compassion also has a Christmas donation where you can give money to your own sponsor child and their family. Gifts over \$2 are tax deductible.

# Born into the ordinary

By Ronald Rolheiser

After the birth of Christ, we need not look to the extraordinary, the spectacular or the miraculous to find God.

God is now found where we live in our kitchens, at our tables, in our wounds, and in each other's faces.

That is hard to believe and always has been. When Jesus was on earth, virtually no one believed he was the Messiah, precisely because he was so ordinary, so unlike what they imagined God to be.

They had expected a superstar, a king, someone who would turn the world rightfully upside down.

Preaching meekness and gentleness, Jesus didn't live up to those expectations.

It is curious that Scripture refuses to describe what Jesus looked like. It never tells us whether he was short or tall, with beard or without, had light or dark hair, had blue or brown eyes.

Neither does it ever assign to him anything extraordinary in terms of psychological countenance. For example, it never tells us that when Jesus entered a room his eyes were so penetrating and his gaze so awesome that people knew they were in the presence of someone extraordinary. No.

In terms of his appearance, Jesus apparently wasn't worth describing. He looked like everyone else.

Even after the resurrection, he is mistaken for a gardener, a cook, a traveller.

Things haven't changed much in two thousand years. Seldom does Christ meet expectations.

We, like his contemporaries, are constantly looking beyond the ordinary, beyond the gardener, the cook, and the trawling stranger, to try to find a miraculous Christ.

It is for this reason that we fly off to Fatima or Lourdes to see a spot where the Blessed Virgin might have cried, but fail to see the

significance of the tears shed at our own breakfast table.

We are intrigued by a Padre Pio who had the wounds of Christ on his hands, but fail to see the wounds of Christ in those suffering around us or in our own emotional and moral wounds.

We pray for visions, but seldom watch a sunset. We marvel at the gift of tongues, but are bored listening to babies.

We look for Christ everywhere except in the place where the incarnation took place: our flesh.

Love is a thing that happens in ordinary places in kitchens, at tables, in bedrooms, in workplaces, in families, in the flesh.

God abides in us when we abide there. Through the Incarnation God crawls into ordinary life and invites us to meet him there.



Photo by Osker Lau

## Helping kids learn to give it away

Christmas is for the children who love the stories, carols and presents and generally bask in the family and holiday festivities but as the reflection from Donna Walck (page 16) demonstrates, Christmas is not just about "us". Helping children focus beyond themselves during this season can be a challenge for parents.

Children's Ministry Coordinator with the Youth and Children's Ministry Unit, Paul Yarrow, believes if we want the world to be a better place for our children, we need to teach them how to contribute.

"Getting children involved in serving others in their local community and in wider charitable activities teaches them that life is more than simply accepting things as they are.

"When kids are involved in making a positive difference, even in some small way, they can see the results and gain the confidence to help change the world one small step at a time.

"If we want kids who will help usher in the Kingdom of God then we need to do more than just tell them the bible stories and

teach them to pray. As parents, grandparents and adult friends we need to work with children to transform our community, or at least our small part of it.

Mr Yarrow sees the idea in the book and movie *Pay It Forward* as an example of how a real-life social movement has emerged worldwide.

"The small things we do for others and our environment all help change our world.

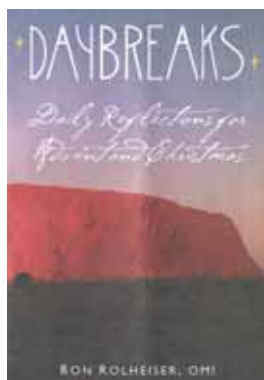
"The subtle things like picking up our rubbish after a picnic, talking to a new neighbour or donating to a charity seep into children's minds.

"Children learn what they experience. If we help our children to think beyond their own needs and to care for others then they experience the gospel in action."

Mr Yarrow says that children who are involved in activities that serve others might not like it at first, but that doesn't mean we shouldn't do it.

"Some kids don't like brushing their teeth or going to school but as adults we know these things are important and do our best to encourage our kids to do them.

"Is serving others any less important?"



Ronald Rolheiser OMI is from *Daybreaks: Daily Reflections for Advent and Christmas* Copyright 2005 Liguori Publications. Used with permission.

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303 Arthur St, Fairfield Vic 3078  
Ph 03 9481 6611 Fax 03 9481 2371  
www.rainbowbooks.com.au or your local Christian bookseller.  
At only \$2.50 RRP it's a great gift for Christmas.

### Looking for a place to take your Church group away?

Use **Venue Finder** to enquire of 215 Christian Conference Centres (with over 21,000 beds nationally).

Specify your requirements on the web site and only those centres that meet them will contact you.

**www.cciaus.org.au**

Any questions?

Call CCI Australia on 1800 069 697



### Dunedin South

Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa New Zealand.

FULL-TIME

#### ORDAINED MINISTER

Rev Noel Butler is retiring on 15th of December. We are looking for a man or woman of God who will heartily join and add to our evangelical vision.

We are a people through whom the life changing power of Jesus Christ is released in Dunedin South and beyond.

#### Nominator:

Rev. Geoffrey Skilton  
00643 453 5357  
geoffrey.skilton@paradise.net.nz



### Albert Street Uniting Church Wesley Mission Brisbane

"Sing It Yourself" Messiah will be held again this year  
Sunday December 11 2005  
Practice 5.00pm – Presentation 7.00 pm  
Albert Street Uniting Church

Please advise if you need music ph 3031 3030  
Come to sing or come to listen



### Vacancy for a Chaplain in Blue Care

Applications invited for a chaplaincy position: for Brisbane Central Blue Care – South. The successful applicant will be a Minister of the Word, Deacon, or lay person who is suitably qualified and in good standing with a recognised Christian denomination. For a Position Description, please contact Rev Gale Hall on (07) 3377 3324. An applicant will be expected to address in some detail the criteria as outlined in the Position Description, and include the names of referees. Completed applications should be sent to Rev Gale Hall at P.O. Box 1539 Milton, BC, QLD 4064. Applications close on Friday 16 December 2005.



# Fast news

## Shed-builders needed

Working towards a new mission plan, the Roma UC congregation is erecting The Shed, which will have a strong community focus for young people and young families in the town. More voluntary labour is needed to complete the project before Easter 2006.

Anyone who is handy with tools and prepared to spend a few days helping will receive fellowship, meals and accommodation (and some good memories). There are particular needs for a tiler in the near future. For more information contact Peter Hall 4622 1185 [peterh@qld.chariot.net.au](mailto:peterh@qld.chariot.net.au)

## Child Safe Church even safer

Youth and Children's Ministry project worker Renae Domagala is developing a new Child Safe Church train the trainer program. It is anticipated to be available in the first half of 2006. For more information call YACMU on 3377 9782 or email Renae at [CanDo@yacmu.ucaqld.com.au](mailto:CanDo@yacmu.ucaqld.com.au).

## Discovering God at camp

Looking for something for your children or grandchildren to do during the school holidays? Discoveries Camp 2006 will be held from 8-13 January at Lesley Dam Recreation Centre near Warwick.

An action packed week of discovery, laughter, learning and worshipping together for children in grades 3-7 (in 2005). Bus transport is available from Brisbane to and from camp.

More information visit [www.discoveriescamp.com](http://www.discoveriescamp.com) or phone Kyle & Juanita Remphrey on 3205 8136 or email [info2006@discoveriescamp.com](mailto:info2006@discoveriescamp.com).

## Firing up children's ministry

There is an invitation to join with 400 children's leaders to be equipped and encouraged in children's ministry and check out what resources are available.

"Ignite the Journey", Brisbane's Children's Ministry Expo, 3-4 March 2006. More information contact Paul Yarrow at YACMU 3848 6201 or email [ignite@cmn.org.au](mailto:ignite@cmn.org.au).

## More games for kids

The inaugural Brisbane KidsGames in September 2003, held at 55 venues in the greater Brisbane area, involved 2,300 children and closed in a huge Ceremony at the Brisbane Entertainment Centre.

It is anticipated that more than 5,000 children between the ages of 6 and 14 and their families will take up the opportunity to be involved in the 2006 Brisbane KidsGames. Planning is well underway for this exciting event. Find out how you and your church can participate at [www.brisbanekidsgames.org.au](http://www.brisbanekidsgames.org.au) or call the info line 3632 2255.

## More games for youth

Uniting Church youth are invited to participate in a fantastic opportunity to display their leadership qualities on a national stage at the inaugural Australian Scholar-Athlete Games at UQ from 23 - 29 January, 2006.

Students aged 17 - 20 who have demonstrated leadership qualities, consistent academic achievement and have participated in community service activities are invited to apply by visiting [www.scholarathlete.com.au](http://www.scholarathlete.com.au)

Applications close Thursday 15 December. For more information email [info@scholarathlete.com.au](mailto:info@scholarathlete.com.au) or call 3365 8205.

## Peanuts for Zimbabwe

Glasshouse Country UC folk recently feasted on an array of peanut based recipes for casseroles, cookies and fudge topped off with peanut-butter ice-cream.

With various craft and discussion activities, the congregation learned more about the customs and needs of Zimbabwean people and raised \$445 for the Bible Society.

## The future of Jesus

Jesus remains probably the most influential human being who has ever lived and yet, with the growing secularisation of the West, are ignorant of the basic facts about him.

Dr Peter Jensen, Anglican Archbishop of Sydney, hopes to provoke people when he presents the 2005 Boyer Lectures to read the Gospels as adults and recognise Jesus' significance for a modern world in which religion is suddenly on the agenda once more. The 2005 Boyer Lectures can be purchased from the ABC on audio CD, book or downloadable MP3 audio.

## Bullied clergy seek respite

A decade after the clergy sexual abuse scandal burst onto the front pages few would be surprised that the churches have a problem with a culture of bullying. This time it is abuse of clergy rather than abuse by clergy.

The Victorian Uniting Church tackled the issue at its recent synod, recognising abuse affects not only the minister and family but also the congregation and wider church. Most congregational abuse is bullying and emotional abuse by powerful people in the church, but it can also be physical, sexual or financial.

## Hardcore volunteers needed

Volunteers wanted for Hardcore Gigs at the Lions Den in the city. Are you into hardcore music? E.g. punk or mental and want to contribute to something exciting. The Lions Den (an outreach activity of Wesley Mission) is looking for volunteers to help out at gigs.

We are looking for volunteers to join either the support group or outreach group. Renown for its hardcore band scene the Lions Den attracts 300 people each weekend. Call Tim on 0407 035 443 or email [t.hodgson@wmb.org.au](mailto:t.hodgson@wmb.org.au).

# Kaye takes the challenge

At its November meeting the Central Queensland Presbytery appointed Rev Kaye Ronalds from the Capricorn Coast Uniting Churches as Presbytery Minister.

As a long term Central Queensland minister and acting-Chairperson on a number of occasions, Kaye was seen as having the skills, experience and local knowledge to do the job.

Kaye sees herself as a team player and an enabler who can help the church relate to the community.



Central Queensland Presbytery Minister Rev Kaye Ronalds

# New training for Aged Care Chaplains

A \$6000 grant from the UC Foundation has enabled the Chaplaincy Commission to assist a Blue Care chaplaincy pilot project providing professional development for chaplains and pastoral Carers in ministry in aged care.

An Introduction to Aged Care Ministry (Residential and Community) Course, based on the Certificate III in Aged Care Work, will be available in 2006. The material accommodates the area of chaplaincy and pastoral care as well as biblical, theological and chaplaincy articles.

Each participant will be provided with a comprehensive learning guide for each Unit of Competency, and will be given the opportunity to be involved in Aged Care Ministry. Assessment is part of the completion of each Unit of Competency.

The course will commence on 30 January 2006. Persons who live outside the Brisbane area can be accommodated.

Information and application forms can be obtained from the course coordinator Rev Jan Chalmers at Blue Care by phone 0415 487 825 or by email [j.chalmers@bluecare.org.au](mailto:j.chalmers@bluecare.org.au)



Synod Chaplaincy Coordinator Graeme Adsett and Course Coordinator Rev Jan Chalmers

## Senior Chaplain Corrective Services

Lifeline Community Care Queensland's Prison Ministry invites applications for the position of Senior Chaplain. The successful applicant will be a Minister of the Word, a Deacon, or other suitably qualified member in good standing of the Uniting Church or recognised Christian denomination who is willing to work within the polity and ethos of The Uniting Church in Australia. They will have undertaken the Ecumenical Hospital Ministry and Pastoral Care Course, Clinical Pastoral Education or equivalent training; and will have experience and/or education in pastoral care.

The Chaplain will provide Chaplaincy Services across Queensland according to the requirements of the Church and Corrective Service Chaplaincy Board Guidelines, ensuring professional Christian Ministry to inmates, staff and their families.

Please call (07) 3250 1823 for an application pack; applications must address the selection criteria and should be posted to "Confidential", Human Resources Manager, Lifeline Community Care Queensland, PO Box 491, Fortitude Valley Qld 4006.

For further information on this position, please contact Graeme Adsett on 07 3377 9822. Applications close Thursday, 22 December 2005.

Lifeline Community Care is a leading provider of community services for the people of Queensland.

## Religion on the ABC

Compass - The Religion Report  
Encounter - John Cleary  
The Spirit of Things - and more!

For a full round-up of what's coming up in religion and ethics on ABC Radio and TV, subscribe to the free weekly ABC Religious Programs email newsletter.

Each issue contains program details and web links to online audio, transcripts, news and features.

Just visit <http://www.abc.net.au/religion> and click on 'Mailing List'

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[www.ncca.org.au](http://www.ncca.org.au)

# What's On

**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.

**November 27-December 18, 5.30pm Sundays. Meditative prayer for Advent** using the songs and prayers of the Taizé community. St. Philip's Anglican Church, 115 Cornwall St., Annerley. All welcome. Enquiries to James Macdonald 3393 1567.

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

**December 9-11. West Ashgrove UC 2nd Biennial Festival of the Christmas Tree.** Theme: *Celebrating Christ in the Community*. \$3. Crafts, gifts, cafe. Cnr Waterworks Rd & Glory St, Ashgrove W. Fri 10am-8pm; Sat 9am-6pm; Sun 11am-4.30pm. Carols service Sun 11 Dec 5-6pm. Come along & share in the true spirit of Christmas.

**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 9-23, 6.30-10pm. Sandgate UC Christmas Lights.** A spectacular display of lights, colour and entertainment. Refreshments, gifts, craft stall, face painting, and free entertainment (7.00-9.15pm most nights). Contact 3869 0277 or [www.sandgate.ucaqld.com.au](http://www.sandgate.ucaqld.com.au).

**December 10. Make Poverty History Day.** Find out more about the Micah Challenge Campaign at [www.micahchallenge.org.au](http://www.micahchallenge.org.au).

**December 11, 6.30pm. Caloundra UC Carol Service,** cnr. Queen & Ulm Streets. Sausage Sizzle at 6pm in Church hall. All welcome.

**December 11-16. Late Teens/Young Adult Camp.** Gunnundi at Ballina. Fully catered, dorm style accom. \$205.00 per person. Activities include beach, games, studies, worship, craft, and much more. Contact Mal Hamill, PO Box 546 Ashgrove, Qld, 4060 or ph 3511 0741, 0411 224 248 email [mhamill@bigblue.net.au](mailto:mhamill@bigblue.net.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. Contact 5532 5915.

**December 12-16. Advent Workshop/Club** at Indooroopilly UC in conjunction with Kenmore UC. Contact Rev David MacGregor on 3372 0112.

**December 13-14, 6-9pm. Follow the Star Christmas Festival** at Glasshouse Country UC, Twin Peaks Drive, Beerwah. A presentation of the Christmas messages through Floral Art Scenes, Christmas Table Decoration Competition (no entry charge) with great prizes. Free Sausage Sizzle, Starlight Coffee Shop, Entertainment, Outdoor video & DVD Screenings, Kidz Cave Activities and more.

**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.** Annual Wesley Mission Brisbane Christmas Concert in association with the BCC. King George Square, Brisbane. BYO blanket, folding chairs & picnic tea. An evening of FREE festive entertainment for the whole family! Enquiries Andrea Griggs 07 3031 3035.

**December 17-25. 9 Days of Christmas,** Emmanuel Enoggera. BBQ and cafe open from 6pm. Highlights include Family Christmas Concert, Queensland Police Pipes and Drums, clowning and drama, puppet shows, the Colours of Christmas and Christmas carols. For more information visit [www.emmanueluc.ucaqld.com.au](http://www.emmanueluc.ucaqld.com.au).

**December 20-22, 6.30-8.30pm. The active streets of Bethlehem** at Indooroopilly UC, Station Rd. A great event for the whole family to experience the real meaning of Christmas.

**January 8-13. Discoveries Camp 2006.** Leslie Dam Recreation Camp (near Warwick) A residential camp for children grades 3-7 (in 2005). Camp forms available through YACMU on 3377 9782 or downloadable from [www.yacmu.com.au](http://www.yacmu.com.au). Contact Paul Yarrow on 3377 9782 or 3377 9834.

**January 9-13, 9am-1pm. Oasis Holiday Program.** Wilsonton UC, Toowoomba. \$2/child (\$5/family) Contact Andrew Bell on 4637 8384 or 0427 727 002.

**January 30 onwards, Mondays 11.30am-1pm. An 8 week course in Ethics** led by Rev Dr Noel Preston at the City campus of the University of the Third Age. Further details Ph 3003 1490.

**February 11. Clayfield College 75th Anniversary Dinner.** Brisbane Convention and Exhibition Centre. \$75. Contact Susan Gregory 3269 1342 [susangregory@optusnet.com.au](mailto:susangregory@optusnet.com.au) or Wendy Grummit 3262 3440 [wendyg@cgrgroup.com](mailto:wendyg@cgrgroup.com).

**Want to promote an event?**

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

## Tips on how to bag your church

By Kevin Smith

Recently I was involved in bagging our church. It was an interesting process that was undertaken without any previous experience so I give this advice to any others who are considering bagging their Church.

First, not all churches need bagging. However there are some that have become, for one reason or another, unappealing to those who observe from a distance.

The reason for this may be because of unattractive staining or perhaps the foundations have moved sideways.

A good bagging can fix the problem but not everybody will agree that it is the right approach.

Many will be happy with the way their church is and feel that change is not necessary.

If there are no alternatives then these are some of the things that you need to keep in mind when bagging the church:

- Have clear objectives; know when to stop.
- Listen to the advice of others.
- Be aware that the process may be upsetting to some who are comfortable with the way things are, but don't be afraid to go out on a limb if necessary to get the job done.



Church bagger Kevin Smith from Russell Street Uniting Church in Toowoomba is a builder and spare-time archery coach

- Don't try to bag a church that is made of the wrong stuff.
- Always start at the top.
- Research the subject and prepare well.
- Don't be afraid to get stuck in; sometimes any change is an improvement.

- Don't expect a lot of support.
- Be aware that the bagging process is messy and may leave a bad taste in your mouth if you are not careful.

Ideal ratio: 4 parts premix mortar, 1 part builders cement, 2 parts water, 0.25 parts Bond Crete.

## Blue Care gives Morayfield a new home

Morayfield Community Uniting Church has found a new home at the local Blue Care centre.

After worshipping at the local Blue Care centre since January 2004, the congregation placed a relocatable building on the site for worship and use as a community centre and officially dedicated it on 23 October.

Rev Beryl Nielsen said, "The church is most grateful for the generosity of Blue Care and we hope to become a permanent fixture on the site in the years to come. We have a vision to forge links with the community and discover ways we can live our mission to 'Cultivate Seeds of Hope'."

Blue Care Regional Director Bob Gilkes said the 11 acre site was gifted to Blue Care by Morayfield couple Jack and Jean Lindsay.



Moreton Rivers Presbytery Secretary Rowena Harris, Rev Beryl Nielsen and Moderator Rev Dr David Pitman enjoy the Morayfield opening. Photo courtesy of Morayfield Community Church

"Our vision for this site is to combine health and residential aged care together with a wide range of community services," he said.

Moderator Rev Dr David Pitman was guest speaker at the service followed by morning tea

and a traditional family picnic with a barbecue lunch and games.

The Morayfield Community Church is co-located with the local Blue Care centre at 12-16 Weier Road, Morayfield. To contact the church phone 07 5432 4770.

## Trinity College education opportunities 2006

Trinity Theological College is offering a number of intensives and short courses over January and February 2006.

**Summer intensive** *Doctrine and Truth after Modernity*, Rev Dr Geoff Thompson, 13-17 February 2006. In this course contemporary theology will be explored to show that doctrinal work is itself a creative and constructive core practice of the church with important pastoral, pedagogical, and apologetic functions.

**Summer intensive** *New Youth Ministry Directions*, 13-17 February 2006. This course will enable students to identify and explore contemporary contexts and issues relating to youth cultures in Australian society and equip them to articulate a framework for thinking and theologising about youth ministry.

**Short course** *Indigenous Life and Traditions* offers an appreciation of some of the issues with which indigenous people deal and the responses being made.

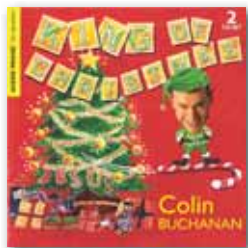
**Short course** *LABI* is for for ministers, elders, church councillors and pastoral visitors in communication skills, deeper listening, dynamics and is oriented to congregational life.

**Short course** *Code of Ethics* is designed to give participants an introduction and understanding to the UCA's Code of Ethics.

For more information contact Trinity Theological College, phone: 07-3377 9950, fax: 07-3377 9824, email: [ttc@uccentre.ucaqld.com.au](mailto:ttc@uccentre.ucaqld.com.au).



# Reviews



**King of Christmas**  
By Colin Buchanan  
Music CD  
RRP \$24.95

This album is another great kid's Christian album from one of Australia's premier performing artists. Following on in the theme of what is Christmas all about Colin takes you through some great new songs on this disc that are upbeat and fun as well as having a strong Christian message about the true meaning of Christmas.

Don't be fooled into thinking that this is another kid's "carols" album. Colin has penned some great tunes that celebrate the arrival of Jesus and is not afraid to sing loud about it.

He takes on a couple of different characters whilst performing this album and the entire CD is great listening for even the toughest critic. This album is perfect for the kids (or even the teenager, young adult or adult in your family) for Christmas. It's a double CD with disc 2 packed full of extras (on enhanced CD) including colouring in sheets, lyrics, music and even the famous "Aussie Christmas" from the bucko and champs album.

A great listen that I still can't get enough of.

Matt Gees



**Bonhoeffer: Agent of grace**  
Directed by Eric Till (1999)  
DVD Movie (M15+)  
RRP \$29.95

This film is based on the story of pastor and theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer an anti-Nazi conspirator, who was part of a plot to assassinate Adolph Hitler during the Second World War and also involved in sneaking Jews out of Germany.

Working on a book on ethics Bonhoeffer was reluctant to participate in these actions but

becomes persuaded that "it is worse to be evil than to do evil."

Director Till is successful in his goal of bringing to film the story of someone who showed moral action in a period of great evil. "I wanted to do a film showing the dilemma that confronts a righteous man when he's dealing with people who have no scruples."

While the film takes some artistic liberties with the story ("You can get bogged down by the truth of it all," said Till) it remains faithful to the essence of the real story although the romanticising of his relationship with his 18 year old fiancé, Maria, is a little clumsy.

I felt that, while the film demonstrates his courage, it doesn't really capture the theological genius of Bonhoeffer.

Perhaps the most effective aspect of *Bonhoeffer: Agent of grace* is its ability to convey expression of what life was like for intelligent dissidents in Nazi Germany and some aspects of the complicity of the state churches in their relationship with Hitler's regime.

The film finishes as strongly as it is played with Bonhoeffer facing a naked death on the gallows one week before liberation by the Allies and Gestapo investigator Dr Manfred Roeder's statement, "So, this is the end".

Bonhoeffer strongly answers "No!" and faces a martyr's death as bravely as he had lived.

Bruce Mullan

**Run, Shepherds, Run**  
By L. William Countryman  
Harrisburg: Morehouse  
Publishing, 2005  
RRP \$19.95

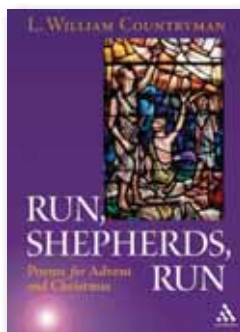
Poet and priest William Countryman would hope that readers considering this short collection of poetry – both recent and traditional, would take up his advice:

*...if you have a vague sense that something better is possible, that Christmas may have something better to say to real people living amid the real struggles,*

and use this new resource as part of daily devotional reading during Advent and the twelve days of Christmas. Poetry is offered to take the reader through to the Feast of the Epiphany on 6 January.

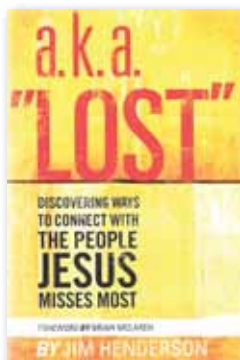
Poets featured include Emily Dickinson, John Donne, Gerald Manley Hopkins, Alfred Tennyson and WB Yeats, as well as Australian and New Zealand writers Judith Wright, Elizabeth Smith, Bruce Dawe and Colin Gibson.

Countryman, a professor in Biblical Studies at the Church Divinity School of the Pacific in Berkeley, California offers a helpful but short reflection prior to each poem.



With the potential for many of the poems to have usefulness as Calls to Worship or reflections as God's people gather each week, *Run, Shepherds, Run* will prove itself a worthy addition to the Advent/Christmas resources on offer.

David MacGregor



**a.k.a. "Lost": Discovering ways to connect with the people Jesus misses most**  
By Jim Henderson  
Waterbrook Press  
RRP \$21.95

This is an excellent book for those Christians who constantly feel guilty about not doing evangelism.

Author Jim Henderson is Executive Director of 'Off the Map', an organisation committed to the normalisation of evangelism for ordinary Christians and this book sums up his approach to helping people think and feel differently about sharing faith.

*a.k.a. "Lost"* makes evangelism doable. With good humour, sensitivity and dozens of practical examples Henderson shows how the task of being an evangelist is manageable for even the most cowardly disciple.

The chapter headings give it all away: "Evangelism isn't normal", "Boldness is overrated", "Ordinary makes a comeback", "Count conversations, not conversions", and "Evangelise with your ears".

This book is about a whole new approach to sharing faith which leaves the prepared script, contrived presentations and traditional programs far behind.

The "Attempting the ordinary" sections at the end of each chapter are filled with practical challenges.

Even before I'd finished this great book I was feeling I could share faith more successfully. Read it and your life will be richer and your evangelism more effective.

Bruce Mullan

**Unseen Footprints: Encountering the Divine Along the Journey of Life**  
By Sheridan Voysey  
Scripture Union Spirituality  
RRP \$19.95

As Scripture Union's latest evangelistic publication for 20 to 30 somethings, *Unseen Footprints* by Sheridan Voysey ambles well around Gen X-Y geography.

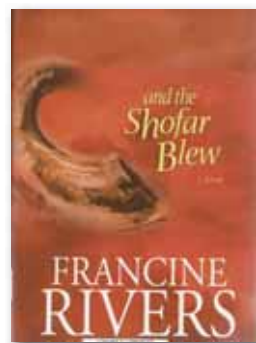
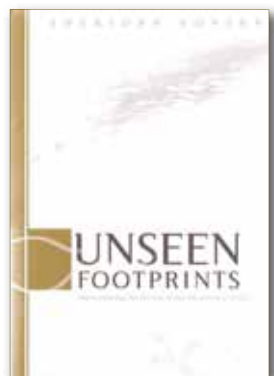
This book is more a journey than an answer, more an invitation into relationship with the author, than an adroit presentation of his views. Still, his strolling style is far from superficial. Voysey uncovers and asks many of the tough and relevant questions: What if God existed and who might God be? How come design, beauty and order exist in the cosmos? Why is there so much pain? What is my purpose? Who am I? These form the substructure of his work – a rambling apologetic really – through which he seeks to open our eyes to the often "unseen footprints" of God in the experience of life and the world around us.

And open our eyes he does. Voysey's combination of personal tales, real life anecdotes, fictional stories and questioning prose make for a reflective journey. We glimpse the winsome whisper of the authentic God who calls us and spot the transforming power of divine encounters with the God of love. We discover the soul-stretching terrain of dark seasons and doubt. We spy the hidden treasures of abundant life birthed in a surrendered heart. And we behold the journey's destination – a life lived with God in heavenly perspective. *Unseen Footprints* is a refreshingly honest read capturing well the mood of spirituality in the midst of life's ins and outs today.

Perhaps this contemporary feel is as much an aesthetic achievement as a written one. The layout is non-conventional and creative, text interspersed with images and space. Every so often quotes appear, some nestled amongst text, others lonesome and provocative. Comedians and songwriters, authors and talkshow hosts, mystics and theologians – each offer a line.

If its head hang-ups you're struggling with, then get Josh McDowell's latest volume. *Unseen Footprints* is unabashedly one for the heart.

Emma-Kate Moore



**and the Shofar Blew**  
By Francine Rivers  
Tyndale House, 2003  
RRP \$19.95

This first-rate novel is a must read for all ministers. An excellent example of what can go wrong when we stray from God's call, it is the story of a pastor who accepts the call to a struggling church.

He didn't know what to expect, but only hoped he could please God. So he and his young wife and child packed up and moved halfway across America. He arrived full of plans for the future. Before long Pastor Paul Hudson turned Centreville Christian Church around. Everything was going well. Only Paul could not understand why his wife who always supported him in the past couldn't see it that way.

In his success Paul pays a heavy price. He nearly loses his wife and child and loses touch with God. This is a great read. I couldn't put it down. It is a more extreme version of what can happen, but the realism in some parts really hits home.

Linda Hanson



Thanks to Hopscotch Films, we have **100 double passes** to *Joyeux Noël* to give away!

*Joyeux Noël* is a warming film set in the trenches of WWI. On Christmas Eve in Northern France, soldiers from Scotland, Germany and France put down their weapons and called a truce. It was an extraordinary act of generosity and humility.

Passes are valid from 9-11 December in selected cinemas in Brisbane and the Gold Coast.

To win email your name and postal address with the subject 'movie pass' to [journey@uccentre.ucaqld.com.au](mailto:journey@uccentre.ucaqld.com.au) or write to Journey GPO Box 674, Brisbane 4001

There are 2 exciting and huge events coming up in the next few months in the Bayside congregation and surrounding community.

Firstly we would appreciate your prayers for the Tremendous Christmas Festival, our bi-annual Christmas event. Involving a large number of volunteers and many months and of preparation, the Tremendous Festival runs from Friday 9 December to Monday 12 December. This year the theme is "Jesus – the Man for all Seasons". Please pray the Festival will reach out to many with the timeless Christmas message of joy, love, peace and hope.

Secondly, we would appreciate prayers for the Wynnum Wipeout – an annual event in mid-January involving all the churches in the Bayside Fraternal. Offering a holiday program for teenagers from Grades 6 to 12, Wynnum Wipeout reaches out to over 400 young people each year with an action packed program and a daily Gospel message. Pray that through these events the Gospel will be proclaimed and received with an increase for God's Kingdom.

Some of the challenges facing Bayside Uniting include how we can best offer pastoral care in the future, the need for more elders and church councilors, how best to support our Sudanese community, and the transition to new youth programs in 2006. We also have an ongoing need for more RE teachers, Sunday School teachers and a new Sunday School Superintendent. We have been reminded in our November stewardship program that God wants us all to give generously and cheerfully.

We especially give thanks for the 11 young people being confirmed at morning worship on Sunday 11 December, and value your prayers for our ministry team of Rev Ian Lord and Tim Griggs (Youth and Family Worker).



# PRAYER DIARY

*Our prayers are effective ONLY because they are to the one true God, Maker of all that is, seen and unseen*

18 December:  
Windsor

Recently we had a visit from a man from Kenya by the name of John Karanja, who spoke on what was happening in the Church in Kenya. He also had a word of encouragement for our church. He confirmed the heart of the congregation at Windsor to see God reach the current generation and he encouraged us to get down on our knees and pray.

We were encouraged that God will continue to work in his church to bring about the harvest.

Please pray for a number of activities that Windsor is involved in:

- Youth Group started this year and is run in conjunction with Wilston UC as a way to share resources;
- Chilchurac, an activity for the younger children that includes games, craft, Bible story, and singing. It has been quite successful this year – although still small in size, it's a lot of fun;
- The Bible Study group is studying spiritual gifts. Some of this group also joins together to pray for the church and God's work in this community;
- Sunday School has been faithfully run by a number of ladies for many years. It fluctuates in its attendance but is appreciated by those children who attend;
- Adult Fellowship meets regularly and includes devotion and prayer. Its main focus is supporting and fundraising for various church, mission, and community groups;
- Partnership with Prison Ministry and Spanish Church – Windsor has recently decided to partner with the Prison Ministry and the Spanish Church in their respective ministries. Please pray for the best way that Windsor can support these ministries.

25 December:  
Nambour

Nambour Congregation serves the steadily growing Sunshine Coast hinterland areas centred on Nambour and Woombye.

Give thanks for:

- The positive spirit within the congregation as we face testing challenges of a growing congregation in a growing area;
- Recent upgrading of our church audio and visual systems. Pray for wisdom to utilize these resources effectively in our local mission;
- Broadening horizons of our congregation through links forged with several overseas churches throughout 2005.

Pray for:

- Students and staff of Sundermann College in Nias, Indonesia (devastated by the tsunami and earthquake) as we send Christmas gifts and continue to correspond personally with them;
- Raronga College (PNG), the Church in Samoa and the Watoto children (Uganda);
- The Worship Team and many helpers sharing special services and events e.g. 'God in the Shed' Carols, Christmas Party Tea, Christmas Eve Candles in the Window, 'Faith Journeys';
- Our 7 teenagers who graduate High School as we honour them with gifts and a Moving On ritual;
- Our Creative Ministries team developing video and drama resources;
- All our groups and leaders as we look to a new year and seek the best way ahead, looking for some new faces to join current teams.

1 January:  
Kirwan/Jensen

The Kirwan/Jensen Congregations are located on Thuringowa, the rapidly growing twin city to Townsville. Both congregations have been through a time of re-establishment following radical change.

The challenges of the past two years have produced a wonderful sense of unity and fellowship. Both congregations are especially strong in the area of caring/supporting/welcoming people. A keen awareness of mission to the community, and a strong sense of God's guidance, is emerging.

Groups and study programs (e.g. "Hundred Days of Love") play a significant role in maintaining and developing communal and spiritual life. Please join us in praising God for the sense of renewal, caring and mission which has developed.

- Pray a 2006 placement will be available to continue the excellent ministry that has supported the people over the past two years.
- Pray that Congregational leaders be given guidance to act positively and with deep, spiritual insight.
- Pray for guidance on how we may reach families in our growing community with the Good News of Jesus Christ and find the resources to action this mission.
- Pray that members are enabled to step out of old moulds and move on in a great adventure of faith and service.
- Finally, join us in the prayer that God will enable us to grow in love, hope, faith and a sense of unity with His people, the Church.

At the end of our first half-year on the job, the Journey and Uniting Church Queensland Synod Communications Team wish you all a very blessed Christmas and some great rest and recreation as you prepare for the New Year. May the gift of Jesus Christ bring joy and peace to your home this season.

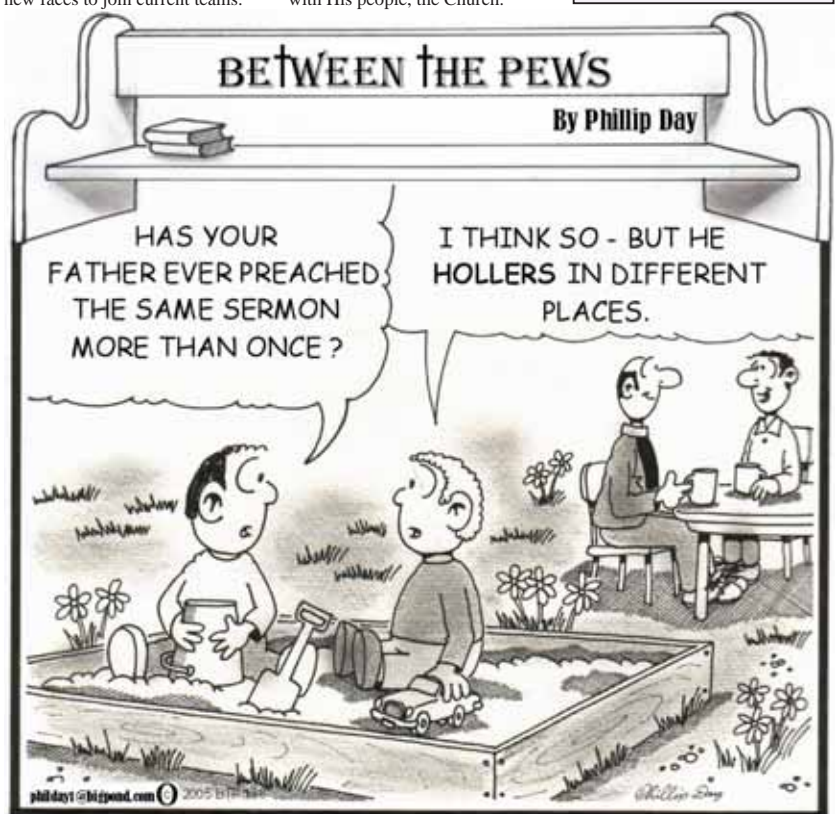
With God's help and the support of others we have achieved much more than we thought possible in a short space of time.

Thanks to all those whose assistance has been so helpful in our orientation and settling in to this role; in particular Mark Bateman who coordinates the prayer diary, Mark Young for his work on the reviews page, Kristine Bromiley who helped set up our administration, former Journey editors David Busch and John Harrison for their mentoring, the Editorial and Communications Advisory Panel for keeping us on track, Phil Day for the cartoons, our advertisers and sponsors, our many review writers and contributors and our great new team of proofreaders.

Thanks also to the amazing Synod Support Services, Information Technology and the Finance and Property teams who have helped make our many projects come together. Finally, thanks to all those who have written, emailed and spoken to us to offer encouragement and feedback.

As we said in the headline in October Journey, "it's good to be church".

**Mardi Lumsden, Osker Lau and Bruce Mullan**





## CLASSIFIEDS

### ACCOMMODATION

**Beachfront Cottage, Currumbin**  
Beach Queensland. Sleeps 4 to 6 people. Phone 3376 4247.

**Bribie Island Holiday Unit.**  
Welsby Court No. 4, overlooking Bribie passage, 2 b'rm, LUG, reasonable rates. Frank & Elva Dixon Ph 07 3264 8080.

**LONDONB & B.** Easy city access; lge double room, ensuite, self-catering. Reas rates. rachel@brockleybandb.fsnet.co.uk Ph/Fax: 001144.2086946538.

**ENOGERA - Half house to rent,** \$150 per week. Includes main bedroom with walk in robe, ensuite, security grills and carport. Prefer non-smoker, would suit mature person. Enquiries to Wendy 0417-713-778.

**Newly renovated 2 bedroom** fully self-contained 2 storey unit on The Esplanade, Miami. Across quiet rd from patrolled beach, 5 min drive to Pacific Fair Shopping Centre, 5min walk to local shops. Courtyard has pool and BBQ. BYO linen. Max 5 people. Please note: open staircase not suitable for children under school age. \$490 per week low season. \$600 per week mid season. \$700 per week high season. Phone 07 4663 7113.

### FOR SALE

**Pews for sale.** Modern square look solid silky oak 2.6m long. Ideal for verandas/covered outdoor areas \$350 each at Beerwah 5494 1555, 5496 9275.

**Canon SLR film camera.** EOS620 with a 35-105mm f/3.5-4.5 Canon lens. Includes carry bag. Good condition. Email journey@uccentre.ucaqld.com.au or phone 3377 9910

### WANTED

**Wanted** mature Christian person to look after elderly couple, with some special needs, in their own home in return for free board and lodgings and a small remuneration. Ph Ken on (w) 3265 3110 or (a/h) 3264 1807.

**Mature couple required to housesit** home (+dog) in Morayfield (just south of Caboolture), from 1 April 2006 to 17 June 2006. Ph 07 5498 5896.

### EVENTS

West Ashgrove UCA hosting their 2nd Biennial Festival of the Christmas Tree from 9-11 Dec. "Celebrating Christ in the Community". Full details in What's on.

Email your classified advertisements to [mardi.lumsden@uccentre.ucaqld.com.au](mailto:mardi.lumsden@uccentre.ucaqld.com.au)

or fax 07 3377 9796

## The Bible Divisive? Never!

I greatly appreciated your article "The Bible" (November *Journey*). The centre lift-out now occupies a place on my library shelf. I shall refer to its yellowing pages whenever the curious enquire from me what the Bible is. However, I was dismayed at your front-page title, "The Bible unique, prophetic and divisive".

The four biblical tenets described by the Basis of Union, as unique, prophetic, apostolic and testimony - to which your centrefold so clearly refers - did not align with the story's title. Referring to the Bible as 'divisive' in the given context can be seen as nothing more than an attempt to have readers' attention improperly seized and to generate reader controversy; the unfortunate hallmark of modern journalism.

Western culture increasingly limits us to a philosophy of two opposing viewpoints. Thus, there is a growing intolerance towards any possible solution, which sits outside of our regular ideas and practices. We are being reduced to an "either...or" mentality in the administration of our laws; the machinery of our politics, and the duopolies operating in our commerce, (usually hidden by a variety of corporate titles). There is a narrowing allowance for the use of any kind of "third alternative". Hence, our society is becoming more reliant on some legal remedy to claim its challenges and treat its ailments. The proposed civilianisation of military law for the Australian Defence Force is a recent example of this.

Yet it is in the magnificent stories and the profound insights into the meaning of human life within the Bible that we invariably find the use of the "third alternative"; the unexpected solution. Regardless of various interpretations we place upon it, the Bible still contains the basic principles by which we might best understand ourselves. Your article could have been much better titled, "The Bible unique, prophetic and DECISIVE".

**Bruce Raymond**

Disappointed and a little confused with the editorial (November *Journey*), I question whether we appreciate the purpose of our calling as a "uniting" church.

The term "divisive" was used in a part description of the Bible. The Bible may be "decisive" or "challenging", but never "divisive". The latter term seems to fall loosely from humanist ideology that sees scripture read and interpreted to suit individual taste and fails to take into account the divine nature of God's Word.

**Ivan Roberts**

With the subject of November *Journey* being the Bible, one could well anticipate that Jonah would be brought up.

**Bruce Gulley**

Thanks Bruce for the shortest letter ever. Editor

# LETTERS

The statements in the Basis of Union about the Bible are some of its most cryptic, so it is good to hear from someone who knows the code (Geoff Thompson November *Journey*)!

However, I feel that it is a pity that the Basis does not use the word 'inspired' in connection with the Scriptures. 'Inspired' is, after all, the word the Bible uses to describe itself (2 Timothy 3:16). The concept of inspiration allows us to do justice to the dual nature of the book - it points to the divine initiative and origin, but also acknowledges the human means and form.

The word 'unique', on the other hand, doesn't have the same theological depth of meaning, and it clearly hasn't prevented endless debate in the Uniting Church about the meaning and role of the Scriptures.

**Joel Corney**

You asked on page 7 (November *Journey*) to spot the mistakes. I believe the greatest mistake was yours, in the headline.

The bible is not divisive, people are. By wanting to hold onto sin our church is calling our guide flawed. The bible itself cannot be made to support homosexual practice.

Why put this issue on the agenda? Are you using *Journey* as propaganda, to push the pro84 line? Why are you calling the church to dialogue when no substantial biblical argument has moved the majority of people to believe that? Jenny Shaw summed it up in her excellent letter, "Diversity is not Unity", all Resolution 84 has done well is to divide the church.

The bible is not divisive but *Journey* is.

**Ian Watt**

## Res84 still talking

I read with interest Mark Cornford's letter (September *Journey*), in which he suggested that in relation to Resolution 84 we were having the wrong debate.

He quite rightly reminded us that Jesus reached out to those rejected by society, but then he added, "I am not saying Jesus never wanted their lives/lifestyles to change, but I don't see that he made their changing a condition of entry into the Kingdom of God".

What he was saying might sound very accommodating, but it is certainly not what Jesus taught, and nor is it consistent with the Gospel message.

Jesus commenced his ministry by saying: "The time has come... The Kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news."

Repentance results in a changed life and there is no entry into the Kingdom without repentance, a deliberate turning from sin and a deliberate turning to Jesus Christ.

**A. W. Ken Cutmore**

## Heretics or heros

I tend to agree with Phillip Ramsay's concern about the use of the term Catholic to describe one part of the universal Christian family - not that it keeps me awake at night! What troubles me more is the way another group (the Assembly of God in particular) has hijacked the term "Christian".

But on another topic, I find Craig Blackburn's distinction between "the heretics" and "the orthodox" to be less than helpful. My hunch is that we may have rather different spiritual palates here! Can we be clear about "pure truth?" And "big brains rather than humble hearts" sounds judgmental to me. I recall Dr Ian Gilman's observation in a lecture many years ago, that the declared "heretics" in Church history often knew a lot more about Christian love than did the "orthodox". In any event, is it not true that orthodoxy, like history, is written by the victor?

We are pilgrims on a journey, and we must each respect the journey of the other. Based on the Great Commandment, for me the quality of our relationship with God and neighbour is more important than our precise doctrinal position.

**Lee Smith**

**Clive Ayre**

## Historically Speaking



### FROM PADDLEWHEELERS TO THE CITY CATS

Today, sleek, fast City Cats, with aboriginal names associated with areas of the Brisbane River, dart to and fro, up and down the river, while many continue to mourn the loss of the city's cross-river ferries.

One special cross-river ferry was the steam-driven paddlewheeler vehicular vessel, the Hetherington, which saw more than 40 years service on the river. Named after a Brisbane City Council alderman, the Hetherington initially linked Kangaroo Point to Charlotte Street in the city in a service which operated from 1913 to 1921.

From 1925, this slow, but stable lady of the river moved downstream to the Bulimba reach, linking Oxford Street, Bulimba to Commercial Road, Teneriffe. Her original passengers were intended to be horse-drawn vehicles but her latter years coincided with the arrival of the car in numbers and the construction of the Story Bridge, which, ultimately, contributed to her demise in 1953.

**Alex Gow Funerals**

A Brisbane-owned family business, established in 1840.

**Phone 3852 1501**



# JOURNEY asks...



*How will you be spending Christmas this year?*



**Donna Walck**

Christmas, for our family, is traditionally spent going to church, spending the day with relatives and of course opening presents. Although our three boys, aged 12, 9 and 6, have been brought up in the Christian faith, the focus of Christmas was becoming lost with the commercial aspects of wanting and getting.

My husband and I thought we needed to show them a different approach.

When we became aware of the Mission's Christmas lunch last year, we thought it would be the perfect opportunity to show our children the value of helping others less fortunate than ourselves.

As volunteers on Christmas Day, my husband and I helped prepare and serve food, cleaned up, took out rubbish bins, whatever was needed. Our boys pitched in a little, although they were a bit reluctant.

When the guests had all been served, the volunteers sat down and ate. It was interesting to see the variety of people

who choose to have Christmas lunch at the Mission. One of the organisers commented that for some, this Christmas lunch would be the most significant event of their year. This thought combined with the genuine gratitude conveyed by the people being served was one of the most memorable parts of the day. An unexpected benefit was hearing the interesting stories of the other volunteers.

After we were finished, we were tired and hot; however the sense of community involvement and cooperation that we felt was invigorating.

This year we will be volunteering again and we look forward to our boys contributing a bit more. Professionally, James and I are involved in education and counselling on a daily basis. We know that volunteering on Christmas Day for a few hours is only a modest contribution; however, we're hoping that it will have a lasting effect on our children.

**Donna Walck and her family are members of the Lutheran Church.**

**Joan Dodsworth**

I have worked for Blue Care at Yeppoon Respite Centre for the last three years caring for others. But it is what I get in return that makes it really worthwhile. With family overseas and interstate, the clients are like family to me and I treat them all accordingly.

I am always trying to find ways to make the clients' day a little brighter. Last year before Christmas I thought of a fun project to work on at the Centre. "Aging with Attitude" was our version of the calendar girl movie. This involved twelve of the clients offering their services for a calendar, their ages ranging from 72 – 92 years.

In order to get the project off the ground various people needed to be involved. I was able to hire a local photographer and printer who offered their services for free and then,

with help, we were able to secure twelve sponsors. All money raised from the sale of the calendar was put back into the centre.

Kylie, the hairdresser who visits the centre, was also fantastic offering her services for free. Barbara Wilkins and I did the ladies' make up, which required catering for their individual taste!

To see the clients looking so beautiful and happy was a wonderful experience thoroughly enjoyed by all involved.

Christmas is a very special time of year and I like to do whatever I can to make it special for those around me. Each year I make chocolates, mince pies, rum balls and apricot balls which are individually wrapped and given to the clients and staff.

The clients are also given donated cake and pudding and enjoy the centre being decorated with Christmas cheer!



At the centre Christmas dinner is a highlight of the year with Trish Hinton and her cent sales raising the required funding.

The dinner is offered at no expense to the clients and a wonderful day is had by all.

They say if you can find a job you love you will never have to work a day in your life, which is what I have found at Blue Care.

We have a fantastic team of staff and volunteers at the centre and I feel very fortunate to be a part of the team, especially at Christmas.

**Joan Dodsworth is a part time staff member at Blue Care's Yeppoon Respite Centre and provides the Christmas goodies for over 80 clients.**

**Jo Schaefer**

I had thought that this was the first Christmas I would be spending in hospital. But on reflection, it will be my second.

The first was as a mum of a rather sick little girl who we rushed to Royal Children's Hospital at 5am. We spent the day being looked after by a wonderful number of nurses, doctors and Santas. I was just relieved as I saw the color come back into Laura's face and her skin lose that yellow pallor and 'doughiness.' Not how I had planned to spend Christmas Day!

This year will be different; it will be my first working as a nurse. I work in the respiratory ward at the Wesley Hospital in Brisbane.

I'm not really sure how I feel about working on Christmas Day. Some would

say that as it is a Holy Day I should not be working. It makes me pose the question, does working on this day mean that I am not spending the day in thanksgiving and celebration for all that Jesus did by coming into my life in new birth? I don't believe so.

It reminds me of another Holy Day I celebrated in a different way. It was the Sunday after the 9/11 bombing in New York. Instead of being at church as usual on a Sunday, we were at our son's soccer club end of year BBQ and presentation day. So was our pastor! Shouldn't we, more to the point shouldn't he, have been at church on this Sunday encouraging his flock and praying for peace? I don't believe so.

Here we were, here our pastor was, right in the middle of people, the people who don't know the eternal peace and joy of being right

with their Creator. The saints in church didn't need the words of peace and encouragement that the people outside the church did!

It seems a strange thing to compare this Christmas Day with that particular Sunday of four years ago, but one word, one life brings them together for me. The word my Lord and Saviour Jesus said to me: Go!

Some of my Christmas Day will be spent with my beautiful family, the rest will be spent being, as my pastor says, 'Jesus with skin on' to the patients and their families in the ward where I work. I so love being about his Kingdom business.

May the Lord Jesus bless you this Christmas, and may you take that blessing and Go!

**Jo Schaefer is an enrolled nurse at Wesley Hospital in Auchenflower.**

