

1300 UCA QLD
Call the synod

Sexuality and
leadership



Page 2

Page 6



Moderator plans a makeover

By Mardi Lumsden

With the 11th National Assembly of the Uniting Church in Australia to be held in Brisbane in July, there is continuing speculation about the follow-up to the Resolution 84 decisions of 2003.

The resolution, which deals with sexuality and leadership within the Uniting Church, has been hotly debated and has caused a divide in the membership of the Uniting Church in Australia.

Queensland Moderator Rev Dr Pitman believes there is a way forward from the current impasse and is bringing a proposal to the 11th Assembly.

The proposal acknowledges the division in the church as a result of the 10th Assembly Resolution 84, but encourages ministers and members of the church to continue to engage in open and respectful dialogue.

Dr Pitman also proposes the establishment of a register of ministers and congregations unable to accept ministerial placements or candidacy of people in same sex relationships and frees them of any obligation to do so.

The proposal also encourages a system of networks similar to those recently established in the South Australian Synod to support congregations of similar theological, missional and social standpoints.

"I have also been personally encouraged in the past few months by conversations with a number of ministers in Queensland who hold to the conservative position on these matters but who have indicated very clearly that they are committed to the UCA and have no intention of leaving regardless

of what the Assembly may decide," said Dr Pitman.

The Moderator also referred to the outcomes of a national gathering of leaders from various migrant-ethnic communities.

"Notwithstanding their commitment to the 'celibacy in singleness and faithfulness in marriage' principle, their desire to remain in fellowship with the UCA, to live with diversity, and to stop debating the issue is very encouraging," Dr Pitman said.

Since the Queensland Synod meeting in September 2005, Dr Pitman has met with representatives of The Reforming Alliance and EMU (Evangelical Members of the Uniting Church) with a view to trying to find a solution to the present impasse.

"They are very concerned about the impact any Assembly decision may have on their congregations.

"It is my belief, supported by most people I have talked with, that the next Assembly will not move from its present position in any significant way. This potentially creates a serious situation for many of the ministers and members of the Synod of Queensland.

"I believe I must do everything I can to avert another exodus in the second half of 2006 and in the process foster a renewed sense of unity, vision and purpose."

Wellers Hill-Tarragindi Uniting Church minister Rev Peter Arnett sees the potential of Dr Pitman's proposal.

Prayers for the church

Journey asked Uniting Church members to offer a short prayer for the church in 2006.

Yeh Lord, keep us together in love like you reckon is good and don't let self interested groups split us apart when we don't want them too.

Michael

Dear God, make church more fun for kids by letting them pray and having times where you're learning more about God and Jesus.

Caitlin (11 years)

Lord, by your Spirit, give us the gracious sensitivity to be a means of your grace to your world.

Ray

We pray that the church can be more comforting for everyone and is more exciting and fun. And more kids songs to sing.

Meg (10 ½ years)

My prayer is for a spirit of unity, love and servanthood towards one another, and for strong inspired leadership.

Naomi

Help us to see you cannot be bottled or packaged or confined by our finite understandings. Reignite us with passion to join you in your world.

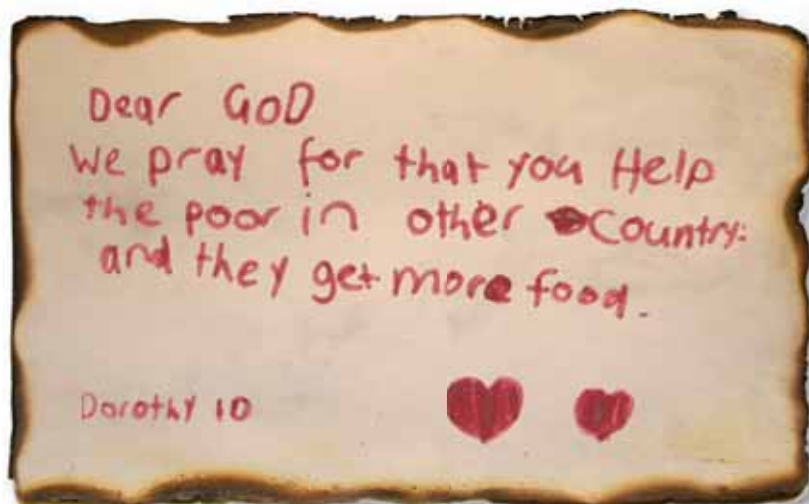
Barb

Thanks God for this great church. Please help us to be all that you want us to be. Save us from being anything less.

Tom

Get more pictures to go with the sermon.

David (7 years)



Moderator's message

Prophets and politics in the 21st Century

Over the New Year I've been reading Jim Wallis's book, *God's Politics*. It's a confronting book, as you might expect from the founder of Sojourners, but a very important and timely publication.

While the book's primary focus is on the developing relationship of contemporary religion and politics in the USA, most of the issues he addresses, and all of the biblical principles he identifies, are entirely relevant to what is happening here in Australia.

Wallis is deeply concerned, and rightly so, at the way in which political leaders are using God language (or the language of faith) to promote themselves in the public arena and at the same time are developing and implementing policies that are clearly in conflict with the teaching of the Old Testament prophets and Jesus himself.

These policies have both international and domestic significance.

On the one hand there is the blatant and self-righteous assumption that in the context of global conflict, "God is on our side", and a willingness to commit billions of dollars to achieving the desired political and economic goals involved, along with all the inevitable civilian and military casualties that occur.

On the other hand, corrupt and oppressive regimes prosper in many places; a third of the world's people live in abject poverty; racial and religious persecution abounds; the environment is being systematically exploited, polluted and destroyed at a rate that puts a huge question

mark over the long-term future of our planet and; the gulf between rich and poor continues to increase year by year!

Wallis writes: "God's politics... challenges everything about our politics."

"God's politics reminds us of the people our politics always neglects – the poor, the vulnerable, the left behind."

"God's politics challenges narrow national, ethnic, economic, or cultural self-interest, reminding us of a much wider world and the creative human diversity of all those made in the image of the creator."

"God's politics reminds us of the creation itself, a rich environment in which we are to be good stewards, not mere users, consumers, and exploiters."

"And God's politics pleads with us to resolve the inevitable conflicts among us, as much as is possible, without the terrible cost and consequences of war." (*God's Politics*, 2005, p. xvii)

Faithfulness to God expressed through justice for the poor, the social outcasts, the widows and orphans, and the refugees was the primary message of the Old Testament prophets.

Micah summed it up in his declaration to the people, "And what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?" (Micah 6:8)

In the preaching of the prophets, the spiritual health and wellbeing of the nation and the acceptability of their worship of God was directly related to their willingness to live in accordance with these fundamental principles.



Moderator Rev Dr David Pitman

The significance of all this in the biblical witness is given even greater emphasis when Jesus adopts a prophetic manifesto from the very beginning of his ministry, as he declares in the synagogue at Nazareth, "The spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free." (Luke 4:18)

As a minister of the gospel (and as a moderator) I am not free to ignore the implications of how Jesus understood and practised his ministry. In the prophetic tradition this means at least two things.

Firstly, I must be faithful in my preaching and other public pronouncements to the biblical principles of justice for the poor, the vulnerable, the oppressed, and the marginalised.

This may well mean confronting and critiquing from time to time the policies and practices of our political leaders, not least holding accountable those who publicly profess the Christian faith.

Secondly, I must also constantly remind the church itself that we are as much subject to the judgement of God for our attitudes and actions as was the nation of Israel in Old Testament times.

We can so easily become too preoccupied with ourselves and too readily indifferent to our calling in Christ to be a strong, prophetic presence and voice in our society.

A personal faith in Jesus as Saviour and Lord is vital, but it is not enough!

Faith is not a private matter. Many of our politicians would prefer that it were, but it is not.

Jesus, in the tradition and spirit of the prophets, calls us into the world to live, to speak and to struggle for justice.

Jesus Christ is raging, raging in the streets, where injustice spirals and real hope retreats. Listen, Lord Jesus, I am angry too. In the Kingdom's causes let me rage with you. (*Together in Song*, 665)

From the Editor

It may not be the most important thing that will happen in the Uniting Church in Queensland in 2006, but the 11th Assembly to be held in Brisbane 5th-11th July will certainly dominate the attention of the popular media and probably the energy of many of our leaders and members.

There have been many anxiously waiting since the 10th Assembly met in Melbourne almost three years ago to see what might happen with regard to the decisions now known as Resolution 84.

So much energy has been taken up by the debate around this issue that for a while it seemed the ministry and mission of the church might almost grind to a halt.

As our moderator has correctly pointed out, Queensland has suffered more than most from the fall-out of the last Assembly and it is ironic that the Queensland Synod should be responsible for hosting the next meeting.

How we do that will be a real test of our Christian witness.

What kind of welcome and hospitality will we offer the Assembly and its delegates?

When Jesus asks us to do good to those who hate us, to bless those who curse us and pray for those who abuse us, it would seem reasonable that we should roll out the red carpet for those who don't agree with us.

How we live in disagreement will be the litmus test for the "Uniting" bit of our church name.

Our church came into being on 22 June 1977 as a result of the coming together of the Congregational Union in Australia, the Methodist Church of Australasia, and the Presbyterian Church of Australia.

This has not been a simple or painless process and those who led us through that time will testify to the agony and distress of losing those who strongly dissented and being vilified by those who were determined to subvert the process.

A church born of over 50 years of painstaking negotiation and work will inevitably have deep in the core of its DNA a commitment to that unity which is both Christ's gift and will for the Church.

Many Uniting Church members remember the hard work in the days pre-1977.

They understand and have experienced the energy required to hold in tension this diverse and disparate collection of God's people called the Uniting Church in Australia.

From this very basis of who we are comes a deep desire and firm commitment to continue seeking that unity in the power of the Holy Spirit.

The Basis of Union calls us to "acknowledge one another in love and joy as believers in our Lord Jesus Christ".

If ever there was a year to live that out, 2006 is a pretty good time to start.

Bruce Mullan

Sign of the Times



It was a fortnight before Christmas when Centenary Uniting Church displayed this sign. Rev Dr Paul Walton explains:

"Teddy is an elderly man from the Middle East who has been coming to Centenary for some time. 'Teddy' isn't his proper name; he said we wouldn't be able to pronounce his first or second names, so we didn't know them," said Dr Walton.

"Teddy walked home from church and we weren't sure just where he lived. We didn't see him for a while, and so we asked 'Teddy where are you?' on the church sign."

"One music practice, a woman came and asked if the sign was about her father. It was. She told us that he was in Damascus caring for a sick friend."

Centenary UC was then able to send him a Christmas card, which may have even got to him before Christmas Day!

JOURNEY

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Opinions expressed in *Journey* do not necessarily reflect those of the editor or the policies of the Uniting Church.

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Fired up to manage Assembly business

Former firefighter and recent Bachelor of Theology graduate Mr Tony Litfin has been appointed as Administrator for the National Uniting Church in Australia Assembly meeting to be held in Brisbane in July this year.

Mr Litfin will be responsible for the day-to-day administration of the local Assembly 2006 office and work with the Management Team and volunteers to ensure that Assembly delegates are housed, fed and resourced for their task.

A Gold Coast resident, Mr Litfin was the local arrangements coordinator for the 23rd Synod at Robina in 2002 and finds it interesting that he keeps being called by God into event management.

He has also worked as Administration Manager for a commercial tiling contractor.

Mr Litfin said Assembly is a major event which will require a lot of effort, but believes that it will be meaningful and satisfying work which will fit well with his recent three years of theological study.

"I don't think you come away from theological study without being convinced that the church, however you want to define the church, is an essential part of God's mission in the world."

"I have no doubt that the Uniting Church is an important part of that."

As a "conservative" Christian Mr Litfin finds it ironic that the Assembly may be dealing again with the issue of sexuality and leadership.

"It's only one aspect of the Assembly and that's where the media circus will be, which will impact on everyone, but the reality is that this issue is just one of many topics that will be discussed and it isn't really relevant to my task," he said.

Coordinator of Administrative Services for the Assembly Management Team Mr Gary Adsett is looking forward to working with Mr Litfin.

"He's a real quiet achiever working in the background making sure that every detail is attended to and in doing that he's highly professional, very efficient and does his job outstandingly well," Mr Adsett said.

People wishing to assist with local arrangements for the Assembly can contact Tony Litfin on 07 3377 9729 or email tony.litfin@uccentre.ucaqld.com.au



Synod receptionist and switchboard operator Richelle Watkins will be answering your 1300 phone call
Photo by Osker Lau

1300 UCAQLD

Synod available to rural congregations for the cost of a local call

In an innovative move to increase accessibility for congregation leaders outside the Brisbane metropolitan area the Synod has established a 1300 local call telephone number for people wishing to access Synod services and staff.

Synod Communication Services Unit Manager Bruce Mullan explained that previously, for most Uniting Church congregations and members in Queensland, a telephone call to the Synod Office was an STD call charged by the time taken for the call.

"Now whether they are phoning from Mount Isa, Maryborough or Morayfield, people will be able to call the Synod Office for 20 cents."

Mr Mullan praised the Department for Financial and Property Services for both resourcing the cost of the 1300 service and for undertaking the negotiations to get the unique Uniting Church number.

"I sometimes have trouble with my own phone number but even I can remember 1300 UCAQLD and it fits beautifully with our www.ucaqld.com.au web address."

Synod General Manager Operations Stephen Costello said the number is active and claims the service will be excellent in terms of easy access for rural people.

"People can reach us at negligible cost using one central number that references the church by name and everyone can remember," he said.

People using the 1300 number will initially be greeted by Richelle Watkins on the Synod switchboard and then transferred to the appropriate department or person who can assist with the enquiry.

"I think it's a very necessary service especially for people up

North because since I've been living down here even I forget that there is so much else going on around the state," said Richelle who grew up in Mount Isa.

North Queensland Presbytery Minister Rev Bruce Cornish believes the 1300 number is a positive move.

"What it will say to people in North Queensland is, 'Hey, we're thinking about you guys and we recognise that there is an extra cost that we don't have in the south-east

corner that you do and we want to subsidise that'," he said.

"It's a pastoral action and my hope is that the new 1300 number will be seen as a statement that this is not just a South East Queensland church but a state-wide church."

Mr Mullan encourages people in the Brisbane local telephone area not to use the 1300 UCAQLD number but to continue to use the old 07 3377 9777 number for Synod business.



Assembly Administrator Tony Litfin

Moderator plans a makeover

FROM PAGE 1

"I think this proposal provides a constructive and positive way forward that preserves the unity of the church," said Mr Arnett.

"I think David has responded well and compassionately to the real issues that exist in the synod. I feel quite excited that this is a possible way forward that may prevent the self destruction of congregations and presbyteries."

Downs Presbytery Chair Rev Evan Stenlake has had discussions with a number of people in congregations who are on the edge of re-evaluating their membership in the Uniting Church and feels the proposal will get a mixed reaction.

"I don't think the proposal would dissuade all the people who are thinking of leaving. It doesn't go far enough for some people," said Mr Stenlake.

Dr Pitman points to voting patterns since 1991 as evidence that there is a discernible movement in Queensland toward a more inclusive position and predicts that

in the next 10 years, those presently in the majority may become the minority.

"It is imperative, therefore, as this process unfolds that we continue to uphold the position that we can live with diversity within the unity that we have in Christ, respecting the convictions that people hold with sincerity in the theological and biblical frameworks that inform and guide their faith and practice."

"The reason for involving the Assembly is that I can't emphasise strongly enough how important it is for the Assembly to say and do something more than Resolution 84 achieves."

"This is not about drawing back from the position the Assembly has adopted but about the Assembly making a statement that frees those congregations from the feeling that they are under constant pressure from the rest of the church to accept what they cannot, in conscience, accept under any circumstances."

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Kathy Stephen
Kathy Stephen
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Murgon Shire Uniting Church entrance was part of the congregation's entry for "Light Up Murgon for Christmas" Photo courtesy of Fay Barton

Uniting Churches had Christmas all wrapped up

By **Mardi Lumsden**

Christmas 2005 proved to be as busy as ever in Uniting Churches around Queensland.

With seventy Uniting Church congregations participating in the Gifts of Time and Love Christmas campaign, the visibility of the church in local communities was raised significantly.

Uniting Churches in Queensland celebrated Christmas in numerous different ways.

Murgon Shire Uniting Church enlightened their congregation by participating in the "Light up Murgon for Christmas" competition open to homes, businesses and organisations. Murgon UC has won the organisation section each year for seven years.

Murgon UC also hosted the combined churches Christmas carols which, according to member Fay Barton, were a great success.

"All the churches of Murgon and Cherbourg were involved in some way," said Fay.

"Children played on the grass and helped lead the singing - the fun and fellowship were fantastic."

Murgon's new mayor joined the children to sing Colin Buchanan's

new Christmas song, "Go Tell It to Australia".

Without a minister in the Dawson Valley in 2005, faithful RE teachers and study and worship leaders were heartened when the Emerald congregation and the Central Queensland Presbytery made ministry candidate Jenni Farquhar available to four Valley congregations for two weeks to provide resources, respite, and encouragement to leaders and members alike.



Lil Collier's Christmas greeting was "Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year from The Boulevard Restaurant and Cafe". Photo courtesy of Jenni Farquhar

The township of Theodore saw an empty shop turn into a gallery of children's art work from RE classes and space for children to make Christmas gifts or decorations.

Ms Farquhar enjoyed visiting local businesses and representatives of various groups where willing staff were photographed and invited to write a greeting to the town for display in the window.

The display and a slide show of the town and its people provided a backdrop for the revived annual Carols by Candlelight organised by the hospital and Lions.

"Jenni's encouraging visit was a great boost to the spirits of those whose energies are often greatly taxed at the close of the school year and in the run up to Christmas. Thanks Emerald, Presbytery and Jenni," said Theodore Uniting Church member Ann Hobson.

Glasshouse Country Uniting Church held the "Follow the Star Christmas Festival" in December during which a nativity mural painted by Beerwah High School Students, under the direction of teacher Karen Massingham, was displayed in the church foyer. The festival was supported by a \$3000 grant from the Uniting Church Foundation.

Home, Sweet Home

In the early 80s seven Perth pastry cooks cooked up a 2.4m tall gingerbread house.

This may have been the inspiration for Pine Mountain Uniting Church's pre-Christmas event where the community was invited to a workshop to make their own gingerbread house for the holiday season.

Over 100 people gathered on 23 November for the event which saw around 110 gingerbread houses built and filled with sweets.



One of the delicious gingerbread houses at the Pine Mountain event Photo courtesy of Pine Mountain UC

Pine Mountain congregation member Leigh Eeles started baking the gingerbread in October. A family tradition, Mrs Eeles has baked gingerbread houses for retail outlets but this year devoted her time to the church.

Organising team member Barbara Lulis said the evening was a great success. All 100 tickets were sold and a waiting list had to be drawn up.

"It really brought families together on Christmas day when you smash it and eat the lollies inside and have some gingerbread," she said.

Although not as large as the one built in Perth in the 80s, each gingerbread house was individually created and transformed into a home with countless lollies, oodles of icing and plenty of laughter.

Pine Mountain UC hopes to repeat the event this year and perhaps make it even bigger so people don't miss out. *Journey* hopes Mrs Eeles has a break before she has to start cooking for the hundreds of people who may join in this year.



Glasshouse Country UC Christmas mural Painted by Beerwah State High students

Read some of the great responses from the *Gifts of Time and Love* Christmas campaign in the Letters section on page 15.



Minister of the Word

Mt Pleasant Uniting Church (WA) (MPUC) is seeking a Minister of the Word to lead our ministry team that includes part time ministry positions in youth and children's ministries, a part time music director and office support staff. The church is located 10 km south of the CBD in Perth and currently has a membership of 180.

MPUC is looking for a minister who will work with the many gifted members that God has given to this church, performing the role of leader, listener and guide. The key tasks of the next minister will be:

- preaching God's word
- coordinating the development and implementation of the Church's vision
- encouragement and equipping of key leaders
- training in theology and discipleship
- regular interaction with and supervision of key ministry areas.

The Church is open to the possibility that this role may be shared between two people, both employed on a fractional basis.

This position is available from April 2006. For further information about the process of application and for a copy of the Church Profile, please contact the General Secretary, Uniting Church in Australia Synod of WA GPO Box M952 Perth WA 6843. Ph: (08) 9486 1577, Fax: (08) 9486 1599 or e-mail john.evans@wa.uca.org.au.

Closing date - **Friday 24 February 2006.**

UNITING CHURCH IN AUSTRALIA NSW SYNOD ASSOCIATE SECRETARY (MINISTRY)

The NSW Synod of the Uniting Church is seeking an astute and confidential person to fill the role of Associate Secretary (Ministry). This is a full-time position based in the Synod office, 222 Pitt Street, Sydney.

The Associate Secretary (Ministry) will be responsible for:

- Misconduct and discipline issues administered by the Synod
- Support for Presbyteries in misconduct and discipline issues
- Administration of the Placements Committee
- Reception of Ministers from other churches
- Representing the General Secretary on the Synod Mission Resource Fund, and the Lay Pastors Committee

This position may be filled by a person in one of the specified ministries or by a lay person. The person in this role will be a close colleague of the Synod General Secretary.

For an information package including the job description and selection criteria please contact Sandra Wright on (02) 8267 4325 or sandraw@nsw.uca.org.au. Applications should be sent by 17 March, 2006 to the Rev Paul Swadling, General Secretary, NSW Synod, PO Box A2178, Sydney South NSW 1235.

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Do you have a heart longing to facilitate the journeys of others in the Spirit?

Have you a desire to develop your gifts in leading retreats?

A new group is now being formed in SOUTH EAST QUEENSLAND for people who have had some experience of spiritual direction and who wish to develop their gifts in the area of retreat leadership. There will be about 10 participants in the group, which is ecumenical.

SOUTH EAST QUEENSLAND... COMMENCE with 6-day tutorial at the Society of the Sacred Advent Community House, Albion, late 2006

Four live-in tutorials will be held in or near Brisbane over two years.

FURTHER INFORMATION: Please contact...

The Secretary
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Trinity Theological College graduate
Lucie Bennett

Trinity graduates ready to start

Ministry of the Word graduates from Trinity Theological College Lucie Bennett and Wayne McHugh will commence their placements as intern ministers at the start of 2006.

For Lucie, candidating for ministry was something she first thought about 20 years ago but it wasn't until three months before her husband was diagnosed with cancer that she received another call, and two years after he passed away she began her studies.

Lucie's focus is on working with the elderly and she has been placed with Wesley Mission Ipswich in Aged Care Chaplaincy.

"I'm looking forward to serving as well as learning, and giving of myself, rather than only receiving through study," she said.

Wayne explained that his call to ministry was really God's idea but there had been a lot of time building up to Ministry of the Word.

"I started by doing the Lay Preachers course and, at that time, Ministry of the Word was not something I ever imagined doing," he said.

"I'm interested in lives being transformed by encounters with Jesus, and participation of the whole congregation in the Kingdom of God."



Trinity Theological College graduate
Wayne McHugh
Photographs courtesy of Uniting Church Investment Service (UCIS)

Ministers are on the move

The start of 2006 has seen a big move of ministers taking up new and interesting placements across Queensland.

Ex-South Australian Synod Secretary Rev Stuart Cameron takes up the team leader role at Robina Uniting Church on the central Gold Coast.

A former Convention Manager for two consecutive and highly successful National Christian Youth Conventions, Adelaide 1995 and Tasmania 1997, Mr Cameron brings high level management skills to the task of leading one of Queensland's larger churches.

Mr Cameron, who described himself as "scared witless and excited as anything" about taking on the role, wants to see people come to faith but also share with people as they deepen their faith experience.

"I want to see the transforming presence of Christ in all aspects of Church life and in turn we become a transforming presence on the Coast and a positive influence in the wider community spiritually, physically and politically."

A new partnership between the Robina congregation and the neighbouring Ashmore congregation will be complemented by the induction of Rev Bradley Foote (ex-Bulimba) this month.

Mr Foote has moved his family of nine to the coast and sees his second placement as pivotal for his ministry and the development of his maturity and skill.

"With this congregation I want to discover skills that I can develop to a specialist level as I share in a different kind of team ministry," he said.

Looking enthusiastically towards the new relationship with Robina, Mr Foote stressed that the arrangement was a partnership, not a "take-over".

Also moving to his second placement as a Uniting Church minister, Rev Scott Ballment (ex-Pittsworth) has settled in as minister for the Noosa Coastal congregations.

Mr Ballment also is keen to see the congregation make connections with the community, particularly through ministry with children and young people.

"I want to see faith in action, not just in words as we reach out and get involved in the daily lives of kids and their parents," he said.

Veteran Youth Worker Peter Smale (ex-Broadwater Road) is taking on an interesting challenge.

The Morton Rivers Presbytery has appointed him to the Southside Cooperative venture sharing ministry between the five churches at Morningside, Camp Hill, Coorparoo, Norman Park and Mayfield.

"My hope is that we can find a different way of operating together that might prove to be a significant model for the church in other places."



Rev Stuart Cameron moving from South Australian Synod Secretary to minister at Robina-Surfers Paradise

Other ministerial moves include:

Rev Paul Walton to Centenary
Rev Alan Kuchler to Maroochydore
Rev Chris Barr to Graceville
Mr Richard Marlow to Wolston UC and as youth worker in the Bremer Brisbane Presbytery
Rev Paul Jensen to Middle Ridge, Toowoomba
Intern minister Ms Lucie Bennett as Blue Care Chaplain, Wesley Mission, Ipswich
Rev Jackson Gill to the Central Downs
Mr John Gill to Merthyr
Rev Rob Paker to Beaudesert
Rev Kaye Ronalds as Central Queensland Presbytery Minister
Intern minister Mr Wayne McHugh to the Proserpine-Whitsunday congregations
Mr Ivan Hewett to Community Minister at Chinchilla
Mrs Pauline Denning as Chaplain at Toowoomba Hospital
Mr Devadosan Sugirtharaj to be ordained and inducted to Moggill
Rev Michael Skinner as Campus Minister at Forest Lake College
Rev Ivan Kirk to St David's Coopers Plains
Rev Andrew Gunton to The Hills
Intern Youth Worker Mr Peter Gavel to Albany Creek
Ms Lynnette Falkenhagen as Lay Pastor to Sarina
Rev John Walker as Blue Care Chaplain, Townsville and Wulguru congregation
Mrs Beatriz Skippen as Senior Chaplain for Prison Ministry with Lifeline Community Care
Mr Mark Cornford to Deception Bay
Rev Barry Walker as Intentional Interim Minister for South Moreton Presbytery
Rev David Graham to Granite Belt.

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Sexuality and leadership back on the agenda

Synods across Australia respond differently to the 10th Assembly decisions on sexuality and leadership known as Resolution 84.

By Bruce Mullan

An interim report on proposals about people in committed same-gender relationships being in leadership roles was presented to a meeting of the Assembly Standing Committee in November 2005.

The Standing Committee had set a date for such proposals to be submitted prior to the end of the 2005 calendar year so that they could be reviewed and made publicly available well before the Assembly meets in July 2006.

Assembly General Secretary Rev Terence Corkin said that four

Synods have debated the issue and have sent proposals for the 11th Assembly.

As reported in the October 2005 issue of *Journey* the Queensland Synod meeting at Carrara in September endorsed a proposal which affirmed that sexual intercourse should be expressed solely within the covenant of marriage between a man and a woman.

The proposal brought to the Synod by Rev Hedley Fihaki and Rev Lu Senituli also asks the Assembly to acknowledge the damage that the passing of Resolution 84 has done to

the Indigenous and ethnic congregations and asked that the voice of Indigenous peoples and migrant-ethnic national conferences within the UCA be given a fair hearing at the 11th Assembly.

The Queensland resolution also stated that the church should not normalise homosexual practices by ordaining practising homosexuals or blessing homosexual unions.

The NSW Synod resolved by agreement that the 2006 Assembly should consider as guiding principle that applicants for leadership continue to be considered by the appropriate Councils of the

Church on an individual basis with due regard to the individual's God given gifts and graces for ministry and call from God.

The Western Australian Synod noted that there is a variety of views on whether people in committed same gender relationships should be in leadership roles in the church and that these views continue to be held with integrity, making it impossible for the Uniting Church to reach consensus at this time.

The WA Synod recommendations were that the church recommit itself to its primary purpose of "worship, witness and service" and called upon the members of the church who hold different views to live together in peace, as together they listen for God's living Word in Scripture, the sacraments and the councils of the church.

The WA Synod also asked the Assembly to continue to allow all congregations and presbyteries to make their own decisions on the issue of whether people in committed same gender relationships can serve in leadership roles.

The response in South Australia was to create one presbytery and invite congregations to join one of a number of networks including four which describe themselves as "conservative-evangelical" in theology and one which identifies itself as affirming the principle of "celibacy in singleness and faithfulness in marriage".

Introducing the plan in a speech to the South Australian Synod in November 2004 the then Moderator Rev Dr Graham Humphris noted that there were people in the church keen to continue to discuss this issue of sexuality and others who were happy to move on and live and work under Resolution 84.

"We also have to recognise that there are some faithful Uniting Church people who are feeling worn out by this issue," he said.

"They feel that they've done enough listening and theological

reflection over these issues and now they are looking for some way to bring closure to this issue so that they can remain in the UCA.

"Quite frankly the way we are dealing with this issue of sexuality at present, in many places, is suffocating our mission, polarising our people, threatening our unity and bringing out the worst in us."

The Synod dissolved the previous four presbyteries and formed the new Presbytery of South Australia in November last year.

The Synod of Victoria and Tasmania determined that the time and energy spent on the ongoing debate has in many places distracted the church from its central role of ministry and mission and recommended that the 11th Assembly make no further decision on matters relating to people in committed same gender relationships being in leadership roles including ordained ministry.

Victoria and Tasmanian also asked that the time devoted to this issue in the Assembly meeting be used as a time of listening, dialogue and prayer.

Mr Corkin said a meeting of the Proposals Sub-Committee of the Assembly Business Committee will be convened in January 2006 to review all the proposals that had been submitted on sexuality.

"If there are any constitutional issues or issues relating to the clarity of any of the proposals, the Proposals Committee will raise these with the proposers, but there will be no requirement that proposals be changed in any way," he said.

This work will be completed by 28 February 2006 and a report will be brought to the March meeting of the Standing Committee outlining the full list of proposals that have been received.

"All proposals coming to the Assembly, including those related to people living in committed same gender relationships, will be made available on the Assembly website at the appropriate time," Mr Corkin said.



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Deacons: still serving God on the edge

There are almost 80 ordained deacons serving in the Uniting Church across Australia but most congregation members have never met a deacon and have no idea what they do.

St Stephen was the first recorded deacon in AD 34 but his daring preaching of Christ led him to become the first Christian martyr.

Another early deacon was St Laurence, known as the patron of the poor, who defied Emperor Valerian's order to hand over the church treasures to him.

Instead St Laurence assembled the poor of the city, shared the church's possessions among them and then presented them to the Emperor, saying, 'These are the treasures of the church.'

His punishment back in AD 276 was to be slowly roasted to death on a gridiron.

These days, Deacons who follow the servant tradition of these early saints are not so harshly treated.

They are more likely to be ignored or unrecognised for the work they do in the church and community.

Rev Paul Walton, convenor of an extensive report on the diaconate presented to the 2003 UCA National Assembly, reported widespread ignorance about the ministry.

"The Diaconate was renewed in 1991 but more than a decade later people still did not understand what this ministry was about," he said.

Rev Tim Hodgson, Deacon from Wesley Mission Brisbane, said that while Deacons preach and celebrate the sacraments regularly within their placement their ministry is focused on reaching out to people in the general community, especially the poor and oppressed.

"In the Uniting Church, Deacons are Ministers of Word, Sacrament and Service, who have a strong emphasis on service," he said.

The range of ministries exercised by Deacons is extensive.

Tanya Richards is a student Deacon at Trinity Theological College who runs a Band Ministry at Wesley Mission on a part-time basis.

Every Saturday night Tanya sees hundreds of youth from the hardcore punk and gothic scene come into the Lion's Den Café to listen to punk rock bands play.

Rev Ann Hewson is a Deacon serving as a church planter at Bray Park in Brisbane's northern suburbs and leads a team developing a unique church approach.

"We are so conscious that we need to be where the pulse of the community is and engage at every opportunity," said Ms Hewson.

"We are an outward focused group and as a Deacon I find this exciting, challenging and invigorating."

Also serving out on the edge is Deacon Intern Michelle Cook, who



Rev Tim Hodgson talks with 'residents' of a homeless tent village in South Brisbane. Photo courtesy of Wesley Mission Brisbane

is currently working on Cape York Peninsula as a Frontier Services Patrol Minister.

"I am focused on connecting people from remote stations to other people on the Cape, while at the same time connecting Indigenous with non-Indigenous people," said Michelle who travels around the Cape visiting remote townships and stations as well as ministering with the congregation of St Luke's in Weipa.

In inner-city Brisbane Rev Tim Hodgson is the Minister with the homeless at Wesley Mission.

Rev Dianne Bos works as a counsellor at Lifeline Ipswich in the area of child protection where she is working on programs to respond to the needs of abused children.

"In such situations, I am just so aware that I work with some of the most traumatised and vulnerable people in our community, those children and adults who have not had the single most basic necessity in life – at least one person who has been able to act in a protective and loving way towards them," said Dianne.

"To offer people the capacity and time to listen to them, to enter into the pain they feel, and to stand

with them as they try to regain their lives is to participate in God's healing and restoring work in the lives of others."

Another specialist Deacon, Rev Jan Chalmers, trains Blue Care aged-care chaplains in a range of areas such as palliative care, spiritual care of people with dementia and Alzheimer's, and the spiritual needs of the ageing.

"Statistics indicate that the number of people over 65 years of age will almost double by 2024 so equipping people for ministry with ageing and aged persons is critical for the Church and the wider community," she said.

At a time when the church is struggling to build a bridge between itself and the community, Uniting Church Deacons are reaching out to the general community in many unique ways.

"Anyone who feels they have a call from God to minister to people in the community should call me for a chat," said Mr Hodgson.

Rev Tim Hodgson can be contacted on 0407 035 443 or email at t.hodgson@wmb.org.au

St Francis of Assisi (1181 - 1226)

St Francis was another diaconal worker whose *Prayer of Peace* could be a deacon's mantra.

Prayer of Peace

Lord, make me an instrument of peace.
Where there is hatred, let me sow love.
Where there is injury, pardon.
Where there is doubt, faith.
Where there is despair, hope.
Where there is darkness, light.
Where there is sadness, joy.

O Lord,
grant that I may not so much seek to be consoled
as to console;
to be understood as to understand;
to be loved, as to love;
for it is in giving that we receive,
it is in pardoning that we are pardoned,
and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life.

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Touchdown for McKay Patrol



McKay Patrol Padre Rev Garry Hardingham with the new engine and propeller

McKay Patrol's Rev Garry Hardingham is flying high quite literally with a new engine/propeller refit for the Patrol's Cessna 182 aircraft.

The Patrol named after the late Rev Fred McKay, successor to Royal Flying Doctor Service founder John Flynn, covers an area of over half a million square kilometres across north-west Queensland and into the Northern Territory.

The flying padre travels about 80,000 kilometres a year visiting remote communities and sheep and cattle stations, costing around \$25,000 in fuel. The new engine and propeller will reduce this cost

by about \$3,000 of fuel per year.

The old engine had come to the end of its usable life and for safety reasons and to meet Civil Aviation Safety Authority (CASA) requirements the refit was scheduled for late 2005.

Director of the Synod Department for Financial and Property Services Mr Bruce Binnie described the McKay patrol as an icon of the Queensland Uniting Church that is not only well-known and recognised, but more importantly well-received in the outback areas.

"Replacing the engine has been a major project in terms of the cost

and has been well supported from a whole variety of sources, but the challenge remains and more funds will be required because of escalating costs," said Mr Binnie.

Mr Hardingham said the new engine will also increase the safety of the aircraft. The savings in flying time and fuel costs is an added benefit.

"In a return trip to Borroloola the old combo would have taken six hours and cost \$456 in fuel. With the new combo the same trip will take less than half the time and cost \$420, a saving of at least \$30."

Grateful to the many generous donors who made the new engine/

propeller fit-out possible, Mr Hardingham said that despite the savings, it is crucial for the McKay Patrol to raise more money to keep the plane in the air.

"We desperately need money to refill the engine bucket and keep running costs going," he said.

"The most important thing is that we get a much better performing aircraft that will take off towards heaven like a home-sick angel!"

Happy take-offs Garry, and we pray that you have just as many safe landings.



Queensland's oldest citizen
Louisa Russell

Blue Care resident is Queensland's oldest person

Blue Care Southerden Lodge Hostel resident Louisa Russell recently celebrated her 108th birthday with family and friends.

Ms Russell, who moved to the retirement home at the Grange 15 years ago, said she's had her share of birthdays and would sooner let it pass. "But I can't complain too much because I've had a life full of simple pleasures," she said.

The Brisbane woman, brought up in Hill End, raised her family of two boys (now 82 and 78) with her husband Robert whom she married in 1920.

She had an interesting childhood and left school when she was 11. "I went and minded children all over the place ... mostly two little boys in Toowong and I had to catch the boat across the river to get there," she said.

Her son Mervyn said the boat owner used to let her take the oars and guide the boat into the shore, about where the Regatta Hotel stands today. "She always said it made her feel like the Queen of the River," he said.

To get to and from her young charges, Ms Russell also had to walk through Toowong Cemetery, a somewhat daunting prospect at night. But a Mr Petrie, who made many of the stone monuments in the cemetery, often accompanied her. "I thought it was lovely of him because I felt safe," she said.

A childcare worker until she married, Ms Russell says those days really prepared her for life, especially motherhood. "My husband was a lovely fellow, very kind to me," she said of Robert, who died from a sudden cerebral haemorrhage, 46 years ago.

"It must be my independent spirit that has kept me going all these years, and they do look after me very well here at Southerden Lodge. I've lived here since I was 93, and the Blue Care staff are always so friendly and kind to me."

Asked what the secret to long life is, she joked: "Breathing in and out, of course. No, really, if you look after yourself, you love your family, you give and receive kindness - you'll be all right."

Focus on peace and leadership for 2006 Lent Appeal

Peace building initiatives in Sri Lanka and Bali and leadership development for PNG, East Timor and Indigenous Australians are key projects to be supported by the Queensland Synod's annual Lent Appeal held in the weeks prior to Easter.

Appeal coordinator Bruce Mullan says the theme "Sharing the Hope" captures the aspiration of the projects to bring Christian hope to people who might otherwise not receive the support of the wider church.

"Sri Lanka has experienced three decades of racial and religious violence and Balinese society is in

a fragile state with increased inter-faith tensions since the recent bombings," he said.

Skills development in carpentry, engineering, boat building and financial management will be provided for people in the Papuan Islands Region of Papua New Guinea, and key Aboriginal leaders will participate in the triennial National Assembly of the United Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress to be held on the Sunshine Coast in 2006.

Eight young people from East Timor (one of the world's newest and poorest nations) will study law, community development



Young people in Sri Lanka participate in a trust-building activity as part of the peace-building program. Photo courtesy of YAP

and health care at the Methodist University in southern Brazil thanks to the 2006 appeal.

The common language of Portuguese, the official language of East Timor, will consolidate this investment in East Timor's future.

Ms Heather den Houting, Social Responsibility Advocate and International Mission Consultant, is enthusiastic about

the projects selected for this year's Lent Appeal.

"In 2005 congregations gave over \$60,000 in genuine Christian aid and our prayer is that our people will be just as generous in 2006," she said.

Contact your local congregation for Lent Appeal donation envelopes.

Story courtesy of Blue Print Blue Care staff and volunteer newsletter.

Queenslanders and the Solomon Islands partner in ministry

Five Queensland volunteers travelled to the western province of the Solomon Islands over their Christmas holidays to share with the United Church in the Solomon Islands, a partner church with the Uniting Church in Australia.

Retired minister and former teacher at Rarongo Theological College in Papua New Guinea Rev Dr Alan Morrison travelled to Kokeqolo with his wife Judy, also a teacher, as guest lecturer at the continuing education program for United Church ministers, pastors, spouses, and Assembly and regional office staff.

"We looked at the Church's understanding of and possible responses to AIDS, at some new directions in New Testament studies, at general theological, pastoral care and family issues.

"It was also good to see the level of leadership available to the church there, from both men and women, and pleasing to be able to renew friendships with a number of people who were my students over twenty-five years ago and to note their progress," he said.

Teacher/librarian Annette Dale from Clayfield College travelled to Seghe, also in the Western Province, to work with library staff at the United Church in Solomon Islands Theological College.

"I got pretty much everything I needed to do in the library done and learned more about plans to incorporate a new rural training centre into the college campus."

Teacher Clara Mullan and husband Synod Communications Manager Bruce Mullan also travelled to Kokeqolo/Munda and Honiara to undertake information technology training and check and repair computer equipment.

While in the Solomon Islands the Morrisons and Mullans attended the induction of Rev David Barakana Havea as the second Moderator of the United Church in Solomon Islands where Dr Morrison brought gifts and greetings from the Uniting Church in Australia.

"The United Church in Solomon Islands is seriously trying to come to terms with the issue of what it means to be the church and it was a rewarding experience to have been a small part of that," said Dr Morrison.



New Solomon Islands Moderator Rev David Barakana Havea greets Dr Alan Morrison from Queensland

Flipping out over Pancake Day



Comedienne Corinne Grant (*Rove Live, the Glasshouse*) gets ready for Pancake Day. Photo courtesy of UnitingCare

Staff at St Andrew's War Memorial Hospital in Brisbane are preparing for their fourth annual Pancake Day on Shrove Tuesday, 28 February.

Over 220 organisations throughout Queensland are joining St Andrew's and have registered to cook, flip and sell pancakes on Shrove Tuesday to help raise funds for UnitingCare Queensland's agencies.

This year comedienne Corinne Grant (*Rove Live, The Glasshouse*) is just one of the many celebrities helping to promote the day.

Pancake Day is organised annually across Australia between UnitingCare and Uniting Church organisations.

UnitingCare Queensland, through Lifeline Community Care, Blue Care, Crossroads (Qld), the Wesley Missions and five hospitals, provides support and care to Queenslanders in need.

Rev Robyn Kidd from St Andrew's War Memorial Hospital is organising the hospital's Pancake Day, which will be held in the hospital's café.

"The thing we love about Pancake Day is that it is so easy – we are sent the mix and maple syrup, along with posters, an apron and balloon that make the event quite colourful and lots of fun," said Ms Kidd.

Pancake Day has attracted registrations from all corners of the state, with organisations registered from Thursday Island to the Tweed Border.

To be part of Pancake Day go to www.ucareqld.com.au and click on the Pancake Day logo or phone 1800 060 543

Back-to-school with some generous gifts

The area around Kristine Bromiley's desk in the Synod office looked more like a facsimile of an Officeworks sale as she sorted school packs for the Solomon Islands in January.

Before the project was even underway it had attracted huge interest around Queensland as families added stationery for a school pack for a Solomon Island child to their back-to-school shopping list.

Ms Bromiley told how one mother and her children had dropped two packs in on the way home from their back-to-school shopping excursion.

"The kids were so excited as they handed over the packs and I told them where they would be going and how they would be used," she said.

Project coordinator and International Mission Consultant Heather den Houting has been overwhelmed by the response, much of which came as a result of a morning radio interview in December with ABC reporter Phil Smith.

Uniting Church congregations and families are being asked to buy a school backpacks for \$10 each and fill them up with basic school supplies such as pencils, rulers and exercise books, for shipping to partner church, the United Church in Solomon Islands which has key responsibility for village primary schools and some district and regional high schools.

"One congregation on Magnetic Island was so enthusiastic that they couldn't wait for the packs to arrive so they did a deal with the local newsagent and shipped two huge suitcases full of school supplies direct to the Synod Office," Ms den Houting said as she answered yet another call asking for packs and brochures about the project.

Ms den Houting explained that with every pack she would include a broad brimmed hat and an English language copy of the New Testament.

The packs arriving at the Synod office have also included other educational equipment including glue, scissors, balls, dictionaries, atlases and pocket calculators.



Ana Mila and Kristine Bromiley pack school packs for the Solomon Islands Photo by Osker Lau

President consults with migrant leaders

The leaders of seven migrant communities have met with Uniting Church President Rev Dr Dean Drayton and Assembly General Secretary Rev Terence Corkin to discuss the impact of the decision on Membership, Ministry and Sexuality made at the 10th Assembly.

Mr Corkin said that the leaders met to explore ways the voices of migrant communities can be heard in discussions on membership and ministry at the 11th Assembly.

"The meeting was an opportunity for honest sharing and open conversation and while there was a variety of views expressed, there was an overwhelming sense of goodwill expressed and a general confidence that migrant communities value, and want to remain within, the Uniting Church," he said.

"While those present acknowledged that the migrant communities of the Uniting Church do not speak with one voice, the meeting discussed ways to ensure that the variety of perspectives and views can be heard at next year's Assembly."

Child Safe Church Training revised

An all new Queensland revised Child Safe Church Training is due to commence with a Train the Trainer program next month. The dates and venues for Train the Trainer as well as Leader Training will be published in UC Information and

Fast News

next month's Journey. Training will be conducted in various locations around Queensland, including Brisbane and surrounding areas, as well as regional areas.

Child Safe Church Convenor Renae Domagala can be contacted at YACMU on phone 07 3377 9782 or email CanDo@yacmu.ucaqld.com.au for general information.

Torres Strait Escape with Uniting Church Safaris

This year's 24-day tour provides people with an exciting way to share in the fellowship of travel with unique opportunities to meet real people of the outback, gain an understanding of the mission of the church and to support them financially.

Uniting Church Safari is by coach from Brisbane to the Town of 1770, Airlie Beach and Cairns, boat to Thursday Island, the west coast of Cape York and back to Cairns. Coach from Cairns to Cooktown, Chillagoe, Atherton Tableland, Charters Towers, Emerald, Cania Gorge and Brisbane from 10 July to 2 August 2006.

For more info or for a brochure, contact Tour Leader Bob Heathwood on 3201 7995 email bob.h@bigpond.net.au or contact UC Safaris Chairperson Doug Fergusson phone 3273 2689 email doug_fergusson@hotmail.com.

UCA Presidency goes full-time

The Uniting Church in Australia Assembly Standing Committee has recommended changes to the constitution and regulations relating to the appointment and conduct of the Uniting Church President.

Assembly General Secretary Rev Terence Corkin said the recommendations include that the role of President move from a part-time placement (as it is currently) to being a full-time position from the 12th Assembly onwards.

"The 11th Assembly will be asked to approve the new election process, the concept of full-time Presidency and necessary changes to the regulations when it meets in July this year," said Mr Corkin.

The Assembly Standing Committee also wants to give Presidents more access to human resources, both administrative and pastoral, so as to be better supported in the role.

"While the new selection process will not be introduced until after the 11th Assembly, it is important that people considering nominating for the position of President-elect at the 11th Assembly are aware that the Assembly may decide the role of President will be full-time from their term onwards," he said.

The Squiz - The Rural Muster of 2006

You're invited to join others in 'having a squiz' at rural church and ministry Friday 31st March - Sunday 2nd April. Facilitator will be Coordinator of the Rural Ministry Unit of NSW Board of Mission Rev Simon Handsford. This event is hosted by the Central Burnett Uniting Church at Munduberra.

A glimpse of what's happening: "Riders not Spectators: how do we take the initiative in being proactive rural churches in local communities?" "What don't we know about our town and how do we respond authentically to our place?" "Networking in small communities - pastoral responses to connecting with community." "Communication ministry in worship" and "Encouraging the small town church".

All sessions are active and proactive workshops. All sessions will be locally relevant for participants, because participants will be providing the 'stuff' of each workshop.

Participants will be able to support and resource each other with their own stories and listening to others' stories.

Download the brochure from the Central Burnett Website www.centralburnett.unitingchurch.org.au or contact Ruth Vicary 07 4165 4453 glenrock7@bigpond.com or Vicki Diprose 07 4165 1430 vickidiprose@hotmail.com.

Rev Upham celebrates 50 years

On 28 February 2006, the Rev Dr Bruce Upham will celebrate the 50th Anniversary of his Ordination, which took place at the Balmain Congregational Church in Sydney. Bruce ministered at Balmain, Islington, Lambton (NSW) and Chermide (QLD) Congregational Churches.

From 1970-1977, he was Principal of the Queensland Congregational Theological Hall, and then became a member of the academic staff of Trinity Theological College, Brisbane. In retirement since 1993, Bruce continues to conduct services at Kenmore. He and his wife Margaret (neé Wilcox) will celebrate their Golden Wedding on 12 May 2006 at 33 Currong Street, Kenmore, Queensland, 4069.

Barbara Birkbeck 1945-2005

The UC family in Cairns lost a valuable and loved member in September with the death of Barbara Birkbeck after a relatively short struggle with leukaemia.

Barb was treasurer, Church Council member, auditor and a foundation member of the Cairns Lifeline Board. People often ask why the Lord chooses to take good people from earthly life at such a relatively young age. The Cairns people like to think that God put Barb on earth with a list of things to do to make the world a better place, and Barb got stuck in, finished them ahead of schedule and was allowed to go home early.

Enid May Cramb 1923-2005

The Uniting Church in Cooroy lost one of its longest serving members with the death on 14 August 2005 of Mrs Enid May Cramb.

Enid's strong Christian faith was expressed by her involvement in many activities including Sunday School teaching, leadership of Rays and Comrades, Christian Endeavour, Ladies Guild and Bible studies. She was a member of the Property Committee and the Church Council.

Enid is remembered for her hard work, dedication and willingness to use and share her gifts in the service of others.

Nancy Eason 1927-2005

Nancy was engaged heavily in the life of her Church, playing the organ, leading and teaching youth groups, Sunday School and religious education classes at Darra Primary. In retirement, Nancy led an after-school children's club and helped organise language classes for the local Vietnamese community. The list is endless.

Nancy was generous, kind, caring, gentle, loving, and humble. She is greatly missed by her family and by her fellow servants in Christ in the Darra Uniting Church.

Number one whistle blower for youth and children's ministry

NRL referee Tim Mander was set to blow the whistle on youth issues when he took on the role of CEO of Scripture Union Queensland, one of Australia's leading Christian youth and children's organisations, on January 9.

The move comes just months after being named the world's number one referee.

SU Queensland is renowned for its camping and holiday programs and more recently has been recognised as the main employer of chaplains with more than 200 in Queensland schools next year.

Mr Mander said the career change was not a decision made overnight. After a highly satisfying NRL career and years of volunteer involvement with SU Queensland, it was the right time to move.

"With the full time siren blowing after 14 years as an NRL referee, I realised this was my chance to consider again the greatest passions in my life - my family, my faith and my lifelong desire to support children and youth," he said.

"SU Queensland is absolutely intent on providing youth and children with hope, direction and purpose which can only come from a personal relationship with Jesus Christ.

"Each SU Queensland program is a vehicle for local churches to use to reach a young generation."



New Scripture Union QLD CEO Tim Mander and family. Photo courtesy of SU QLD

After serving as Deputy State Director for SU Queensland in the 90's and chairman of the board, Mr Mander sees the move "as though I'm returning home. I can't think of a better place to be."

Mr Mander, 44, completed studies at the Bible College of Queensland with a Bachelor of Ministries in 2003. He refereed the last two Telstra Premiership Grand Finals, and was named International Referee of the Year for the 2005 Golden Boot Awards.

He was also 2005 Queensland Father of the Year.

Outgoing CEO Duncan Brown said Tim was the right person to steer the movement through a period of continued rapid growth.

"In the past five years, SU Queensland's services have skyrocketed in demand and scope. Tim's passion, his top management skills and his positive profile make him the ideal candidate for CEO," Mr Brown said.

SU Queensland reach out to young people through a range of services, including chaplains in schools, extensive camping and holiday programs, short term missions, specialist help in primary and secondary schools, and a dedicated force of over 250 staff and chaplains.

More than 3500 volunteers dedicate their time and energy to working with youth through SU Queensland to change kids' lives.

16 years to call Australia home

By Mardi Lumsden

After 16 years of living with the constant threat of deportation to a country where he had been a political prisoner, Ephrem Dehne Wold-Mariam has finally been granted a permanent Australian Visa.

At the age of 63 and with deteriorating health, Mr Wold-Mariam has been granted a permanent Employer Nominated Migration Visa (Subclass 856). This visa allows him to work and states that he is eligible for Centrelink allowances, but an assessor is required to pay any Centrelink payments he may receive over the next two years back to the Australian Government.

Mr Wold-Mariam arrived in Australia in 1990 after escaping from Ethiopia. He was allowed to leave Ethiopia only after his wife obtained government permission to invite him to Russia, where she was and is still living. At the time, Ethiopia and Russia had close ties and Russia was conscripting men to fight the Soviet-Afghan war.

Mr Wold-Mariam then obtained a tourist visa to Australia in Kenya and applied for protection when he arrived.

Many individuals in the Uniting Church have been touched by Mr Wold-Mariam's plight. Rev Shayne Blackman and Rev Dr Rob Bos are two such people.

"When I first came to know Ephrem in 1990, he was a dapper, well-groomed and highly intelligent encyclopaedia of information about Ethiopian history and politics," said Dr Bos. "He has lived in Australia with constant uncertainty and stress about possible deportation and

frequently has nightmares. It makes me wonder if we had processed his application much more quickly and humanely whether his physical and mental health would now be much better than it is."

UCA President Rev Dr Dean Drayton had also appealed directly to Immigration Minister Senator Amanda Vanstone on Mr Wold-Mariam's behalf.

A well-educated man, Mr Wold-Mariam has completed Masters degrees in both the USA in English and in Moscow in Russian; neither language his first. Mr Wold-Mariam worked as a journalist for the former Ethiopian Emperor Haile Selassie, who was overthrown by a military junta.

"I was a political prisoner in Ethiopia. The conditions were deteriorating especially because of my ethnic background and my relatives who had been executed. After imprisonment, I was told I was a blacklisted person and if I were again imprisoned, my life would be highly endangered. They told me I would be executed on the spot. That made me desperate not to stay in Ethiopia," said Mr Wold-Mariam.

"It became a kind of ethnic civil war. They took us to a very inhumane place to be imprisoned. It was a very horrible place ... they were torturing people. It was very crowded: 150 persons to a place 4 metres by 4 metres. We were sleeping in shifts. I asked what problem I made to be imprisoned like that? Nobody is answering this question."

A family friend in Mt Isa sponsored Mr Wold-Mariam

to travel to Australia. Once in Australia, Mr Wold-Mariam applied for a protection visa. The answer took four years. The visa was refused. He continued to apply and reapply for visas (with the help of the Refugee and Immigration Legal Service in Brisbane) and after several years was told by officials in Canberra that his case was hopeless.

"If the situation in Ethiopia had been alright I would have returned. Really, I don't mind. Still now there is no peace," he said.

Over the years, Mr Wold-Mariam has only been allowed to have temporary work depending on his visa limitations and so has been supported by the community and various church groups throughout Mt Isa, Townsville and Brisbane.

"Still I am dependent for my rent and for my food. It is better than nothing, but I am still dependent. If I had a work permit I wouldn't have minded to work as a cleaner. The problem was that I did not have the chance to work."

"There are many people who have come from Ethiopia and Sudan who don't even speak English and somehow they are here, they are working and living a good life."

"They [the Australian Government] are saying they have taken enough from Ethiopia and those who are already here are queue jumpers."

Currently, the Queensland Synod of the Uniting Church assists Mr Wold-Mariam in rent payments (thanks to money received through past Lent Appeals); St Vincent De Paul gives him weekly food



Ephrem Dehne Wold-Mariam stands proudly by the Australian and Uniting Church flags. After 16 years he is now a permanent Australian resident
Photo by Osker Lau

vouchers and has paid electricity and phone bills; the Mater Hospital has helped with medical treatment (after he suffered a stroke and was diagnosed with diabetes in 2003); and Jubilee Community Care have visited him and helped in a host of practical ways.

After his experiences in Ethiopia and with the Australian Immigration Department Mr Wold-Mariam now suffers from post-traumatic stress disorder.

For Mr Wold-Mariam the road has been long and hard.

The Australian government has never recognised him as a refugee, although the Minister for citizenship and Multicultural Affairs has now given him permanent residence. He has not been able to leave Australia and thus could not attend his mother's funeral and has not seen his wife in over 17 years.

However, the type of visa Mr Wold-Mariam received was irrelevant as long as it contained the one word he was desperate to see: permanent.

Reds centre wins the heart of UCA lads

By Tessa Mahoney

Queensland Reds centre Steve Kefu is preaching the Rugby Union gospel outside of Ballymore, coaching a group of youths from the Park Road Tongan Uniting Church in the game they play in heaven.

Kefu jumped at the chance to give back to the various island communities in Brisbane.

"When I was asked by the kids from the youth at church at West End (to coach the team), I could not turn the chance down. I'm enjoying it immensely; I love coming along and meeting a lot of new faces," said Mr Kefu.

"It makes me nervous, the same nervousness when you run out for Queensland, coaching here and seeing these kids come through."

Proving to be a popular and influential presence at the youth group, Mr Kefu's presence made for a strong turnout.

"First session I came to I had 40 kids and word got around and I ended up with 50. The only hard thing is trying to put 22 into the squad but all the other boys still turn up to support them."

Combining a unique blend of Samoans, Tongans, Fijians, New Zealanders and non-Polynesians, the Uniting team has players from all walks of life.

With quite a few of the youth in the team coming from troubled backgrounds, Mr Kefu appreciates the importance of the team.

"I know a few of the kids in my side especially have had histories that have been a bit sketchy sometimes and seeing them come to training and putting them through a few drills and being part of a team, they realise how important they are in this family environment, in this team."

The team recently entered the Pacific Fiefa Rugby Tournament which promotes community

relationships and cultural customary leadership in an alcohol-free and drug-free environment.

United team captain Rob Pitau said Mr Kefu is "cool, calm, funny and someone these guys can look up to".

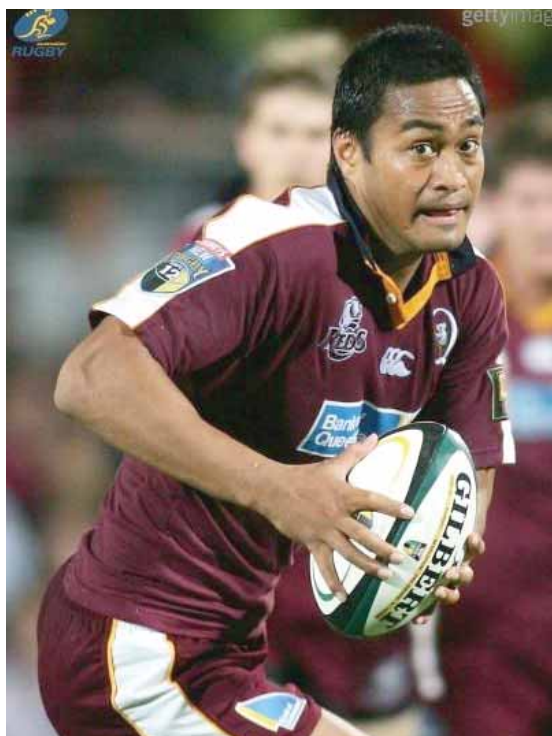
"Tournaments like these are important for us kids to be involved in activities like these. A lot of Polynesian kids are in jail or detention centres. It is important for them to spend their time out here playing footy, not doing bad stuff," Mr Pitau said.

Mr Kefu agrees.

"It's important for the cultures to come out here and meet each other. It's great to have the families come out and support their children," he said.

The Uniting team finished first, taking home the Sione Mafi Cup and, at the end of the season, they acknowledged that winning wasn't the only thing.

Photo courtesy of Queensland Rugby Union Pty Ltd



Queensland Rugby star Steve Kefu coached a UCA team to victory

What's On

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 or Wendy Grummit 3262 3440 wendyg@cgrgroup.com.

February 12, noon-2pm. Barnabas Fellowship at Oxley UCHall. Meets 2nd Sunday of each month, except January, May & Dec. All interested in the continuing ministry of the Barnabas Community, where adults both able and disabled are welcome, come. Bring food to share and help us celebrate through 2006, our 10th year of operation at Barnabas House, Durack, Brisbane. More information ph Mareta 3279 9065 or Ed 5598 2439.

February 16-18, Wheller Gardens Auxiliary rummage sale. Wheller Gardens, 930 Gympie Road, Chermside. Thursday-Friday open 8.30-3pm. Sat open 8am-12pm. Clothes, knick-knacks and books available.

February 21, 3-4.30pm. Farewell afternoon tea for Charlie Greer downstairs at the Synod Centre, 60 Bayliss Street, Auchanflower. If you are unable to attend and wish to send an email message thanking Charlie for his service to the church and prison ministry, please email Graeme Adsett on graeme.adsett@uccentre.ucaqld.com.au.

February 25, St Paul's Stafford first free one-day workshop in the "Solar" programme - a community initiative helping families and singles deal with the issues affecting relationships. Information and bookings on 3356 9465. Morning tea and lunch provided.

21 February, 9am-5.30pm. National Symposium Responding to Cronulla: Rethinking Multiculturalism hosted by the Centre for Multicultural and Community Development at the University of the Sunshine Coast and Griffith University Multi-Faith Centre, Nathan Campus, Griffith University, Brisbane.

March 4, 9am-4pm. Workshop: How Can We Celebrate a "Progressive" Holy Week and Easter? New Farm Uniting Church, 52 Merthyr Rd, New Farm. Guest presenter Rev Rex Hunt from Canberra leads a full day exploring issues around the celebration of Holy Week and Easter by Christians who embrace critical religious scholarship, inclusive spirituality, progressive theology and social justice. Also includes workshop on developing new liturgies and resources for Easter. Further details phone 3488 2300 /3844 3557 or visit www.progressivespirituality.net.

March 10-12. Young Adults Informal Camp for Uniting Church young adults and their friends, individuals, church groups, families, couples, friendship networks - all welcome. Venue: Cool Seas Caravan Park/Camping Ground, David Low Way, Coolumb Beach. Enquiries and bookings to Tom.Kerr@yacmu.ucaqld.com.au or 3377 9935.

March 12. Oxfam Walk against Want 40th birthday! Join the long list of supporters who have taken steps against poverty. To register call James on 3637 4620 or email waw-qlld@oxfam.org.au. Visit www.oxfam.org.au/walk.

March 31-April 2. Rural Muster hosted by the Central Burnett Uniting Church, Mundubbera. See *Fast News* for more information.

Want to promote an event?
Email mardi.lumsden@uccentre.ucaqld.com.au
with the subject 'What's on' or fax (07) 3377 9796.



Kathryn Plonka, Aleta Edwin-Smith and Shelley Edwin-Smith from The Gap backed up by Andrew Todd from TEA Party at the Young Adults' informal Camp at Brunswick Heads. Photo courtesy of Tom Kerr

Things to do in 2006

Journey asked for some mission and ministry suggestions for groups in your church and community.

Children's ministry

1. Celebrate special achievements and events in the lives of children (birthday, start of school, successes at school, etc)
2. Put together a welcome pack for children who come to church, with activities, treats and information on children's activities.
3. Have a monthly baby-sitting night for children where congregation members look after the children, so parents can be free.
4. Plan a Christmas worship service that is designed specifically for children.
5. Commit to making the first song during worship child friendly!
6. Create a children's space in the church where activities, pictures and craft created by the children are displayed.

Youth ministry

1. Have a sporting competition between the young people and adults - this could become an

annual event with a trophy.

2. Host a progressive dinner where the young people visit various adults from your congregation.
3. Plan a 'board games' night and invite the whole church - it is important that young people are able to spend time with adults from your congregation.
4. Run a 'Youth Alpha Course' or start a discipleship group and help young people grow spiritually.
5. Invite the young people to arrive earlier each week to youth group or Bible study and share a meal together.

Young adult ministry

1. Invite some young adults over for dinner to get to know each other better - share something of your faith journey together.
2. Invite young adults to join your Bible study group - or set one up.
3. Set up a leadership team which will focus on developing ministry with, to and by your young adults.
4. Invite young adults to write a few paragraphs on "What impresses you most about Jesus?" and publish the responses in your newsletter.
5. When church councils are making decisions that affect young adults, ask a focus group of young

adults what they think.

6. Nominate gifted young adults to be members of your church councils or to serve as elders.

With older people

1. Visit residents of a Nursing Home (Aged Care Facility) as a Friendly Visitor (Volunteer)
2. Regularly visit an older person (shut in) to listen to their stories.
3. Take an older person for a drive and have morning/afternoon tea.
4. When going to do your shopping ask the older person if there is anything they need at the shops.
5. Transport an older person to their appointment. e.g. solicitor, doctor, dentist, hairdresser, bank.
6. Do gardening, weeding, mowing as well as taking their rubbish bins out on collection day.
7. Offer to transport an older member of the congregation who can no longer drive to church

Contact Youth and Children's Ministry Unit on 3377 9782 or CanDo@yacmu.ucaqld.com.au or visit the YACMU website at www.yacmu.com.au. Thanks to Rev Jan Chalmers from Blue Care for older people suggestions.

Minister of the Word

Corrimal Region Congregation - Presbytery of Illawarra



Are you an encourager-facilitator with the vision, energy and skill to help our Congregation and its teams to grow effectively in mission in the Corrimal Region?

If so you will be able to

- Encourage and facilitate teams in the areas of:
- Young families
- Retirees
- Baby boomers
- Other future ministry areas
- Inspire the Church Leadership and give discerning direction
- Preach the Word and administer the Sacraments
- Oversee Pastoral Care

This is a full time placement open to ordained persons - available now.

Applications close 5.00 pm March 10th 2006.

For an information pack contact Rev Steve McLean phone 4297 7924 or 0405 105 772 email steve.lakeview@efftel.net.au

Applications to Rev Diane Anderson. Associate Secretary, Ministry Oversight

NSW Synod PO BOX A2178 Sydney South 1235.

Under the Commission for Children & Young People Act 1998 it is illegal for prohibited persons to apply. A "Working with Children's Check" will be required.



The Brookfield Centre

www.brookfieldcentre.org.au

(07) 3878 3348

Semester 1, 2006 Spirituality Program

Taize Prayer Workshops and Evening Prayer. Br Nathan-James SSE.

4 February. St James' Anglican Church, Biggera Waters. (1.30 pm - 7.30 pm)

18 February. St John's Anglican Cathedral, Brisbane. (1.30 pm - 7.30 pm)

25 February. St Mary's Anglican Church, Tewantin. (1.30 pm - 7.30 pm)

15 July. St John the Baptist Anglican Church, Nambour. (1.30 pm - 7.30 pm)

Kata Makon: Exploring the Gospel of Mark (Year B Gospel). The Rev Dr Greg Jenks

11 February. St John's Anglican Church, Burleigh Heads. (9 am - 12.30 pm)

11 March. Brookfield Centre, Kenmore. (1 pm - 4.30 pm)

18 March. St James Anglican Church, Toowoomba. (1 - 4.30 pm)

Love has a Paschal Rhythm: Fostering a Eucharistic Imagination. The Rev Philip Carter

10 March. The Brookfield Centre, Kenmore. (10 am - 4 pm)

Spirituality of Childbirth. Sharon Moloney PhD candidate JCU

5 May. Dismantling the Fear of Birth. The Brookfield Centre, Kenmore. (7-9.30 pm)

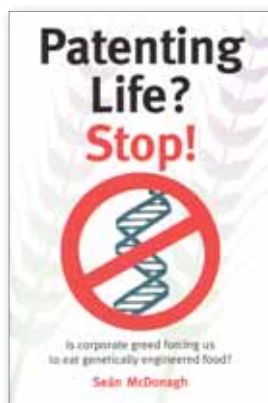
6 May. Mending the Broken Weave - An Experiential Workshop for Women. (9.30-4 pm)

Meeting God in the Spirit of Creativity: A Weekend Non-Residential Retreat.

Noel Davis, Australian Author

2 - 4 June. The Brookfield Centre, Kenmore. Fri 7 pm - 9.30 pm, Sat 9 am - 4 pm, Sun 11 am - 4 pm.

Reviews



Patenting Life? Stop!
by Sean McDonagh
Dominican Publications
(2003)
RRP \$32.95 (paperback)

Fr McDonagh tackles the important contemporary environmental issue of biotechnology's developing challenge and its current negative impact on the diversity of life in our world and the move toward making more artificially genetically modified food products.

A single crop like corn used to have many varieties which have contributed to their God-given ability to adapt to new environments and diseases. Patenting and marketing has led to a severe reduction in the diversity of certain staple food crops. Direct genetic manipulation of a species while promising much in increased yields and vigour, still presents many problems in terms of unplanned effects, toxicity and spreading of GM species.

McDonagh introduces these issues from a Christian perspective as well as summarising the national and corporate politics which threaten an ongoing major environment impact.

These issues will affect us all in the next decade on a daily basis. However, I found some aspects of McDonagh's analysis frustrating.

His examples flit from the assumed evils of transnational companies to crop production in Asia and Africa to Dolly the sheep, almost at random.

Much of the content and proposed activism would be found in any secular documentary reporting and on the excellent list of websites included in the book's appendix.

Biblical and Christian reflection was expected and this could have been more thorough to highlight the contribution that clear Christian thinking can make to this issue.

His final chapter is the best and summarises the issues and what is at stake for all of us while we live on this planet. A useful read for those new to the issue; the experienced reader will be looking for more.

Rob Brennan

Living Life to the Full
by Christopher C. Walker
Open Book (2005)
RRP \$19.95 (paperback)

Living Life to the Full is an autobiographical exploration of spirituality for today's baby boomers.

A minister of the Uniting Church in Australia, Christopher C. Walker has served in congregations in New South Wales, as an evangelism consultant for the Synod of Queensland, was principal of Parkin-Wesley College in South Australia, and is now mission consultant for the Parramatta-Nepean Presbytery in New South Wales.

Living Life to the Full introduces generational differences, focusing on the distinctive features of the Baby Boomer generation, drawing mostly on Hugh Mackay and Craig Kennet Miller.

Walker goes on to describe his own experiences of growing up as a Baby Boomer and writes about the experience of reaching fifty and turning attention to questions of spiritual capital usually associated with the end of life.

So how does this rate as a resource for Baby Boomers considering spirituality for life?

It's certainly interesting to read of Walker's experience of growing up in the Baby Boom era but it is not clear who Christopher is writing for.

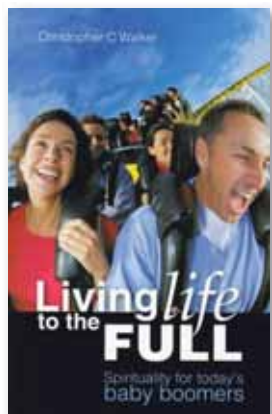
If he's writing for Baby Boomers considering spirituality, he's gone right over their heads. He's making sweeping generalisations about Baby Boomers rather than appealing to them.

For a book designed for the Baby Boomer audience, the issue of spirituality appears far too late in the plot.

Perhaps it is a theology textbook, designed to help people connect sociology, theological texts, and biblical narrative.

This book would benefit from a healthy edit; the chapters seem to go on for too long without section breaks and the book would be much more interesting with the addition of photographs.

Duncan Macleod



The Legend of the Sky Kingdom
DVD animated movie
[Rated G]
Roadshow Entertainment
RRP \$29.95

The Legend of the Sky Kingdom is a children's story about three children who make a daring escape from slavery in an underground city and embark on a dangerous journey in search of the Sky Kingdom.

Along the way they are caught in a battle for their lives between the great Prince Ariel and the Evil Emperor who will stop at nothing to get them back.

Produced in Zimbabwe using stop-motion animation and a hauntingly beautiful Afro-pop soundtrack, the production of this film is nothing less than a work of art created by a tiny and youthful team on a shoe-string budget.

They call their style "junkmation" and almost the entire set and characters are magnificent constructions made from junk and rubbish such as hessian bags, tyre tubes, rusty shears, paint tins, old toothbrushes, electrical clips, crushed Coke cans and tennis balls.

Unfortunately the absolute brilliance of this award-winning animated movie is wasted on a shallow allegory modelled on the story line of Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, complete with contrived biblical-style place-names.

The heroes of the story escape from wolf-like hyenas, a scrap-metal crocodile and skateboard-riding jackals shooting flaming arrows as they travel through the Desert of Desolation, the Forest of Fear and Doubt, and even the Valley of Death.

The absolute attention to detail and total dedication to the task have produced a visual masterpiece which took the team of 15 three years of painstaking work shooting 24 frames per second for the action scenes and 12 frames per second for the others.

Sky Kingdom has been compared to the animated movie hit *Chicken Run* made by a team of 180 professional animators in the USA at a cost of US \$42 million. That in itself makes this movie nothing short of inspired and consummate.

The testimony of this movie is not the storyline-metaphor of salvation but the ingenious and marvellous accomplishment of God's created children.

Bruce Mullan

'Forget the Former'
By Leigh Allison
ISBN 1-58169-175-0
Gazelle Press
RRP \$17.95

Forget the Former by Leigh Allison is about one woman's journey through mental illness to spiritual wholeness. It is only 78 pages long, with a useful appendix of helpful scripture extracts and explanations taking another 20 pages.

It is for people who work by 'dreaming dreams and seeing visions', and uses the Bible as a guide through a step-by-step dream sequence of a courtroom struggle between Evil, acting as Prosecutor, and Christ, the Defence Counsel.

The 'accused' is the woman seeking to leave her past negativity and move to a positive view of life, with Jesus as her guide.

The judge carefully looks at both arguments before pronouncing judgement.

Each quite short chapter is another step forward and concludes with a well-chosen and relevant Bible passage. In keeping with the dream theme, the language is quite lyrical.

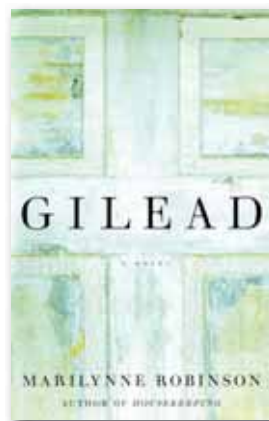
In fact it is a variation of the psychologist's Cognitive Behaviour Therapy. For people who need the constant re-enforcement of assurance of God's forgiveness, the Bible references and the way they are illustrated make helpful pictures, which could be comforting guides.

Mental illnesses are still often undiagnosed or misdiagnosed, and many people suffer because no-one acknowledges their need for professional help.

This woman did seek help and, after much trauma, was finally led to this biblical understanding of a way to put the past behind her and move forward in the love of God. It is, however, a continuing struggle.

She felt moved to share her experiences of accepting the offer of salvation with others who are experiencing despair.

To purchase call 1800 150 547.
Joan Cook



Gilead
by Marilynne Robinson
Imprint: Virago
RRP \$39.95

Gilead is a series of reflections about grace and forgiveness, shared in literary form as a letter from an ageing Congregationalist Minister to his extraordinarily young son.

Set in the small town of Gilead, Iowa USA in 1956, this novel traces John Ames' reminiscences of his father and grandfather, both pastors, and becomes nothing short of a prayer book.

Gilead won the 2005 Pulitzer Prize for literature and is Marilynne Robinson's second work of fiction, published 23 years after her first (*Housekeeping*).

Ames is the first-person narrator who has little time to live. He has married late in life, unexpectedly, to a strong and gentle woman who is portrayed with biblical affection as the personification of Grace.

Ames' descriptions of his son playing with his friend, his cat and his surroundings are awesome and heart-breaking. He also describes his own sin, namely the fear and, at times, malice he holds about his godson and namesake, John Ames Boughton, the wayward son of his best friend Old Boughton, Gilead's Presbyterian Minister.

Young Boughton is a troubled angel who wants Ames to explain predestination, not for the sake of a deceptive argument, as first feared, but for his own soul which he feels is imperilled by mistakes heaped upon mistakes. There are also other sturdy narratives in *Gilead* about the Civil War, slavery, racism and small town America.

This book has the makings of what educators call a 'teachable moment': that is, a private experience of wisdom that the reader will want to talk about with others. *Gilead* is an intimate view of mature faith expressed with perfectly naive and sensitive language.

I can't recommend it highly enough.

Mark Young

Read more reviews online at
www.journeyonline.com.au

PRAYER DIARY

5 February: Crows Nest District

The Crows Nest District is a rural parish at the top of the range just north of Toowoomba, and consists of congregations at Crows Nest, Gowrie Flat, Ravensbourne and Thornville.

Give thanks to God for His faithfulness and for the dedication and commitment of the people in this area. Give thanks for the regular miracles we see happening in people's lives and for the wonderful rain which has fallen, but continue to pray for greater falls, particularly in the catchment areas of Perseverance and Cressbrook Dams, where levels are still well below 30% and we remain on Level 4 restrictions.

Please pray that the Church will powerfully and efficiently maintain its mission statement: To bring glory to God through regular worship and effective witness of God's love in the community.

Particularly pray for the activities of the Church and for leadership to guide these ministries. These include our Girl's Brigade Company, Children's Church, RE in schools, Home Study groups, Prayer Group, Combined Churches Choir, KYB, and Blue Care, both Domiciliary and Respite. Pray that God will continue to guide and bless the ministry in this area.

12 February: St Paul's Stafford

Pray that St Paul's congregation will become a spirit-filled, vibrant and holy church; that it will become a beacon for the Stafford community and draw many to it.

Pray for anyone who comes through our doors, that we will be able to meet their physical needs, whilst also providing them with spiritual food.

Please pray for our community outreach programmes such as Community Australia Day Celebrations, Easter March of Witness and Queensland Day, that they will be driven by faith, in spite of tough conditions.

Pray that some members will be called into full-time service and that the congregation will support them fully.

Pray that we will be able to mobilise more prayer and labourers.

We do thank God for sound teaching, the preaching of the Gospel of Christ and spiritual growth.

Ministry opportunities abound and it is now harvest time, so please pray for the work of Uniting International Mission. Millions on our doorstep have yet to hear the Gospel of Christ and are still gripped by the spiritual darkness of the big cults. Reports indicate that

in spite of adversity and persecution Jesus Christ is building his church.

Pray for China's 'Back to Jerusalem' movement which has a vision to send 100,000 missionaries back along the 'old silk roads' by 2007. We encourage you to read the book *The Heavenly Man* to learn more about the Chinese Christians and about this movement to take Christianity to nations highly resistant to the Gospel.

We would continue to seek the Spirit's anointing on our new missional directions, particularly in the area of SOLAR (Some of Life's Answers Revisited) which is an outreach to the families of Stafford.

Pray our new relationship with North Lakes Faith Community opens up doors to a wide variety of missional opportunities – that it also offer exciting avenues for reaching out in Jesus' name to these new housing areas.

19 February: Broadwater Road

Broadwater Road, Wishart is facing a time of transition. After 11 years our Youth Worker Peter Smale has moved to a new placement. Please give thanks for Peter's long and faithful ministry among us and pray for Peter, Belinda and their family as he begins a new placement in February.

We have not yet been able to find a replacement for Peter. Please pray that we will discover the new directions in worship and mission into which God is leading us. Pray that we will discover new leaders in our midst who might take up some of the ministry among our young people.

In December a number of churches in the area combined to hold a Community Christmas Festival in the Mt Gravatt Showgrounds. This was exciting as for many years the Uniting Church ministers have tried to motivate local clergy to work more closely in bearing a united witness. Please pray that as a local festival committee is formed this year, it might be the impetus for further united community outreach.

Please pray for our Church Council's leadership this year. We have recently commissioned a number of Church Councillors who are serving in this way for the first time.

We are expecting that God has much to show us through the insights and enthusiasm of our Church Councillors. Our deepest desire is that we discern and fulfil God's vision for our congregation in the year ahead.

26 February: Indooroopilly

We are a medium sized congregation with an average Sunday attendance of 250-350, which includes a large number of children and youth. Indooroopilly UC is a diverse group. We aim to create a community of grace, expressing this through an appreciation of diversity and an acknowledgment that truth can be expressed through many theological, ideological and political perspectives. We seek to be an inclusive community, celebrating our unity as the family of God, in Jesus Christ.

Situated on a strategic site, a busy corner opposite the Indooroopilly Shopping Centre, we are literally located at the crossroads of our local community.

We have set our face to renewal and redevelopment in 2006. The members have committed themselves to redeveloping our facilities and expanding our local mission.

We give thanks for special opportunities to worship and witness during Advent/Christmas. Just under 1000 people participated in the "Stroll through Bethlehem" nativity street tableaux, over three evenings, with record attendances. The 'Christmas Adventure' holiday club attracted many children from the community and the Sunday School Christmas Pageant involved most of our own children. Christmas services were very well attended.

For 2006 we invite prayers for: Worship-leaders' Workshop planned for 5 March; the start of a new Sunday evening teenage/young adults discipleship group; DISCIPLE 1 and 2 Bible Study courses starting in February; the introduction of a "Care Circles" approach to congregational care; a new focus on the welcome and follow-up of newcomers; the welcome of Rev Geraldine Wheeler as our new Minister-in-Association; and the hosting of one of the lay leaders from the East Timor Protestant Church, Afun Marcal, who will be with us for 3 months while taking a course in English.

CLASSIFIEDS ACCOMMODATION

Fantastic location for beachfront holiday in charming cottage at Currumbin Beach, Qld. Vacancies available 2006. 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.

COOLUMB BEACH QLD HOLIDAY Renovated 3 bedroom brick house, walk to patrolled beach & shops. Church members discount. Book online: <http://users.tpg.com.au/coolumb> or call 0418 889657.

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

WANTED

Wanted. Mature Christian widow or spinster with drivers licence and references for fully furnished, as new, air conditioned unit for elderly lady, rent \$30 a week (to cover electricity and maintenance costs) in return for light home duties and driving. Could have part-time job if hours mutually convenient. Ph 33985632 after hours.

Email your classified advertisements to mardi.lumsden@uccentre.ucaqld.com.au

or fax 07 3377 9796

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

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

Advertising and editorial deadline for March *Journey* Friday, 10 February

MINISTRY VACANCY (Full Time)

Kingscliff Tweed Coast UCA seeks an enthusiastic, self-motivated full-time person to:

- lead and support the Kingscliff congregation (50% of workload)
- plant a faith community at the rapidly growing coastal town of Pottsville. (50% of workload)

The successful applicant will be a Minister of the Word, a Deacon, or other suitably qualified member in good standing with the Uniting Church (or recognized Christian denomination), who is willing to work within the polity and ethos of the Uniting Church in Australia

FAR NORTH COAST PRESBYTERY, NSW

For an information kit, email: iecrabb@hotmail.com

Applications close on Monday 8 March 2006



UC Foundation Grant recipients 2005 second round

UC Foundation grants are made possible by those people whose Will has resulted in an unrestricted bequest being for God's work. **The closing date for next round is 31 March.** For more information contact Development Manager on 3377 9777 or visit www.foundation.ucaqld.com.au.

- Ashgrove Avenue The Grove UC for The Living Room \$4,500
- Beaudesert UC for Wayside Pulpit \$3,000
- Boonah UC Combined Churches for Family Funfest \$400
- Boonah UC for Outreach Event at Boonah Pool \$700
- Central Downs UC for Youth & Children's Ministry Leadership \$3,000
- Cromwell College for a Drug Education Program \$3,000
- Gympie UC for Wesley Place \$3,000
- Lifeline Community Care for Prison Ministry Power Point Equipment and Resources \$5,500
- Mt Isa UC for Shepherd of the Outback \$2,500
- Toombul UC for Toombul District Community Needs Survey \$5,000
- Trinity Wilston UC for Well Balanced Falls Prevention Program \$2,237
- Tully UC for a new congregation \$3,900
- Total \$36,737**

A prayer for the church in 2006

Between already and not yet

Our God, you call us to be a community of change, to act with you in transforming the world into the community of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

Through his life and death you have shown us that to accomplish our mission you require us to live in the world but not of it;

That we cannot escape from the world and be faithful; yet, neither can we be so enmeshed in the world that we lose our souls.

We confess, Lord, that we find your call to live simultaneously in this world and in your community, to live all the time on the border and always risk disagreement and error, to be difficult and demanding.

Nevertheless, in the strength of your love, renewed by your grace, and confronted by your word, we commit ourselves to you as a people to whom you have given a peculiar memory;

A memory of being called continuously to leave where we are, and to go somewhere else and be someone else, a people never staying still or holding on to present understandings and ways.

We commit ourselves to you as a people to whom you have given a peculiar vision – a vision of a world not yet realised and yet already come;

A people from whom you demand dissatisfaction with life as it is, whom you haunt with the promise of a new age, and pull toward its fulfilment.

We commit ourselves to you as a community to whom you have given a peculiar hope – a hope that gives meaning to life as a pilgrim people on a mission under the power and purpose of the gospel;

A hope that proclaims that persons and institutions can change, that people and public orders can be transformed to embody more fully your will for justice, freedom, harmony, community, and peace.

We come in worship to praise you for your mercy which is more than our minds can measure, to confess that we have wavered in our loyalty to you, and to celebrate the presence of the risen Christ in our midst.

We come and we ask in the name of Jesus our Saviour that you will judge our sin, shatter our complacency, speak to our fears, strengthen our resolve, and then send us into your world to discern and do your will.

Amen.

Used with permission from the author.
This prayer was taken from *Be Our Freedom Lord: responsive prayers and readings for contemporary worship*, Second Edition, prepared and edited by Terry C. Falla, Openbook Publishers.

Available online at www.openbook.com.au



LETTERS

Christmas cards spread Good News

Tallebudgera

Within one hour of our first batch of Postcards being delivered this morning, I have had a phone call from a grandmother who will be coming to our carols with her husband, daughter and son-in-law and three grand-kids along with two other families. She said she may even come to the little church too.

Now granted – this may be the first and only call we get – but I have to say that I am pretty excited!

Thought this might encourage you and I am sure there will be lots of stories like this one from around the state!

Keep up the good mission!

Dave Thomas
Community Minister

Hospital Chaplains

Thought you might like some feedback on the effect the Christmas postcard promo is having.

Took one of ours to show our publicity person what we're distributing in the wards – and her secretary pulled one out of her handbag – she'd just had one of those invitations from her local church.

Iris Carden
Chairperson
RBWH & RCH Chaplaincy Department

Gympie

Just to let you know I sent away the suggested press release and copy of postcard to the *Gympie Times*. They printed the lot in a really nice article. Thanks for the idea. It really works!

Linda Hanson
Minister

Dayboro and Mt Mee

Your innovative postcard and poster promotion of Christmas has produced excellent results for Dayboro and Mt Mee. We received a 30% increase in attendance this year at our services. It was obvious that those attending included a large proportion of non-regulars.

We also used this advertising project to promote our ecumenical activities (eg combined Carols where 300 attended). My congregations were encouraged to think ecumenically this Christmas and to attend any of the five Dayboro Churches. The Dayboro Churches in turn chose non-conflicting time slots on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day.

Even with a significant number of Uniting Church people visiting our friends in the other churches, we still had a packed Uniting Church.

The distribution of the cards to 2000 homes was also an interesting exercise. One family volunteered to deliver 500 of the cards on

their pushbikes with small trailers attached. They rose at 4.30am to beat the heat and worked for three days until about 7am.

The attendances started increasing three weeks before Christmas and have been sustained since. We are hopeful of retaining many of these new people who have enjoyed the fellowship and the way in which they were made welcome.

Any more great ideas are welcome!

Paul Inglis
Community Minister

Southport and Labrador

We were absolutely delighted with the *Gifts of Time and Love* project. During our Christmas Festival and leading up to our Christmas Services we distributed over 2,500 postcards.

The extra snippets provided were used in weekly newsletters and on our data projector for services prior to and including Christmas Day.

We thank you for the efficient and cost effective manner with which our order was delivered and the posters were an added bonus. These were distributed throughout our community for extra coverage.

Good work and congratulations on the idea to spread the gifts of time and love.

Audrey Savage
Secretary

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

Contact us: *Journey* GPO Box 674 Brisbane 4001

Email: journey@uccentre.ucaqld.com.au

Historically Speaking



The oldest funeral business in Queensland

When Alexander Gow bought his Brisbane funeral business in 1910, he became the proud owner of the first and oldest funeral business in Queensland.

Care and compassion were old-fashioned – even in the convict days of 1840, two years before free settlement in the colony of Moreton Bay. But in 1840, they were watchwords for Andrew Petrie, often referred to as Queensland's first free settler, when he began the state's first undertaking establishment. His son, George Barney Petrie ran the business until it was sold to Walter Barrett in 1877.

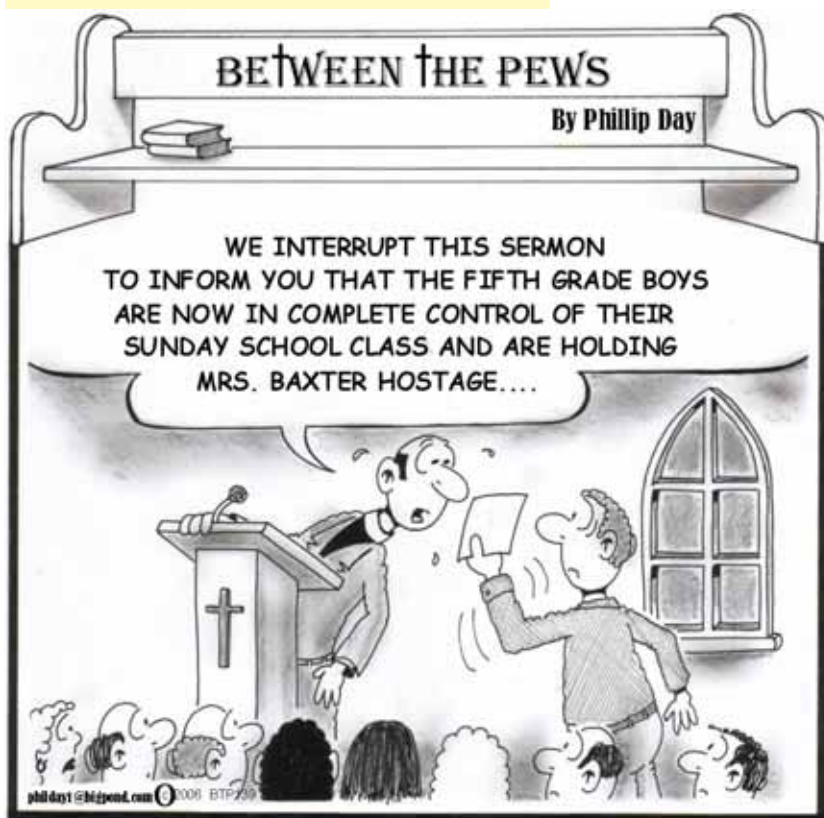
The business changed hands four times before Alexander Gow bought it.

Today, Alex Gow Funerals is one of only two funeral businesses established in Brisbane before 1883, which remain trading today, but both under different names.

And today, guided through the years by four generations of the Gow family, the same highly-valued principles of old-fashioned care and compassion drive the company and its people.

Times change, but some things which meant a lot in 1840 are still the same.

Alex Gow Funerals
A Brisbane-owned family business, established in 1840.
Phone 3852 1501



Sometimes when times get rough and there is trouble and strife people find it easiest to walk away. As we face the year 2006...

JOURNEY asks...

Why do you hang in with the Uniting Church?



Mark Cornford

If I had been asked this question ten years ago I would have answered with something like "the Uniting Church is no better or worse than any other church".

I had a general agreement with most of the theology of the Uniting Church, historically it was where I had grown up, and I had a vague sense that this was where God wanted me to be.

Since then a lot has happened, not only in the UC, but in my own life and ministry. I have had great times, frustrating times and sometimes very painful times with friends and companions as together we lived out our faith as God's church. I have had times of great anger and annoyance at 'the institution' and wondered why I bothered at all. And I have reflected on why I did stay, especially when faced with the possibility of leaving.

None of my reasons from ten years ago has enough foundation to keep me part of the UC.

As a human institution it is just as fallen as every other institution and there is nothing particularly special about it. But that is the point. It is not another human institution.

About 5 years ago I discovered a statement from the inaugural worship service of the UC in Sydney in 1977 expressing the call of the UC (see the text box).

This is why I stay with the UC. Because God has called me to join with him and others in living out God's mission of transforming the world through the Gospel of Jesus in the power of the Holy Spirit.

And God has called me to do this with this bunch of people who call themselves the Uniting Church.

Nothing could be more exciting. Nothing could be more frustrating and scary. But this is Jesus' call and I can do nothing else but follow.

Mark is ministering in the Deception Bay community and church



Our call as the Uniting Church in Australia is

- To preach Christ the risen crucified one and confess him as Lord;
- To bear witness to the unity of faith and life in Christ, rising above cultural, economic, national and racial boundaries;
- To engage in fearless prophetic ministry in relation to social evils which deny God's active will for justice and peace;
- To act with God alongside the oppressed, the hurt, the poor;
- To accept responsibility for the wise use and conservation of the finite resources of this earth for the benefit of all;
- To recognise, treasure and use the gifts of God's Spirit given to all God's people for ministering;
- And to live a creative, adventurous life of faith, characterised by openness and flexibility, hope and joy.

From a statement at the inaugural worship service of the Uniting Church in Australia, Sydney, June 1997

Rob Brennan

I've lost count of the number of times I have asked myself that question since most of my first congregation have left as well as many clergy friends as a result of Resolution 84. Hey, I was always the impatient one,



who always thought I would go before the others.

So why stay? Firstly, there is the real sense of God's call. When I felt the call to ordained ministry, I struggled for months asking, "Why that God? Why the UCA?" I lost, God won. So this was the place I trained and ministered.

There is also a shepherd's serious sense of duty with promises made to care for and participate in this church's life. These things are not lightly placed aside. However, neither are convictions that it is God and not we who defines the nature of both sin and the gospel.

I cannot ultimately put my understanding of experience or reason or even a sense of belonging above God's word. This is ultimately what Resolution 84 asks of us. Our life in faith is held in tension between Scripture, reason and experience.

As a Christian in evangelical charismatic traditions, I am prepared to stake my life and eternity only on Scripture. This is in spite of working in many different industries with

Ann Hobson

I stay in the UC because the Basis of Union, the Code of Ethics, the Child Safe Church, the regulations for dealing with misconduct, and guidelines for conducting meetings and for preventing vilification and harassment keep reminding me that this denomination has an ideal of saving and safekeeping its members and those vulnerable people to whom it ministers.

It takes seriously Jesus' command to do good, not harm, with our religious practice.

I feel most like leaving when these underlying values are ignored or overridden either through ignorance or in the interests of popular support or internal appeasement.

I have experienced a lot of good from the church - some wonderful leaders and friends, home devotions and studies, Sunday School exams and Lay Preachers' courses and camps.

Parent Effectiveness Training, and pastoral and management training all came to me through the church.

These gave me a depth and breadth of scriptural knowledge, theology and praxis that taught me the values from which I choose those that enhance both personal and religious life, and the tools to challenge destructive beliefs and practices.

There are a lot of other denominations where a laywoman would not have been allowed these opportunities, or be accorded these safeguards.

Thank you UCA! Just keep it up!



Ann Hobson is a lay leader from the Theodore Congregation

many different types of people and having been a lifelong student.

To give up would mean giving up hope of being able to reform the UCA. As I wrote recently in *Travelling EMU* it is never okay to leave, but sometimes necessary. My hope and prayer is that I never have to reach that point of grief but that, along with many other evangelical Christians, I will be able to find a continuing place to proclaim Christ's gospel where Christ has placed me.

Rob Brennan is minister with the Caboolture Region Uniting Churches



Michelle Cook

Encouragement, exploration, empathy and excitement are the reasons why I hang in with the Uniting Church. I have experienced these 'Es' since my childhood, growing up at Indooroopilly UC.

In many churches a youth service is one where a young person reads the Bible, perhaps sings a solo and the rest of the congregation clap and think, "How nice, for the young people to be involved". In the congregation where I was a teenager this didn't happen. Instead everyone was encouraged to lead worship. This inspired me to lead worship myself.

When I was exploring the option of confirmation I continually came upon the stumbling block, for me, of the Nicene Creed. Where was the stuff about justice? The Holy Spirit? I was lucky because I could ask these questions and explore with my minister what the Nicene Creed meant.

Now with more awareness of the whole church I am constantly amazed at the empathy of people and groups within the UC.

There are people concerned with justice for those who are excluded by the church, the society or both. This is not just an idle concern, but it is deep; rooted in the stories of the Bible, stories where God gives voices to the oppressed, the poor, and those seen as unclean.

Excitement in the UC is not always a positive experience. Sometimes it is more like agitation and other times like exhilaration, but in the coming year I am looking forward to the church embracing the call of Christ on our lives: "To bring good news to the poor, proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free and proclaim the year of Jubilee" (cf Luke 4:18-19), to "Go and make disciples of all nations" (cf Matthew:19) and to live as if there are no longer divisions between us for we are all one in Jesus the Christ (cf Galatians 3:28).

Michelle Cook is an Intern Deacon in Weipa and the Cape York region