

April 2006

JOURNEY

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A Penny for
your thoughts

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galore

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Prison policy: have we got it wrong?

By Bruce Mullan

It's not only the total number of residents that's exploding in sunny Queensland, the prison population is booming too, but the nagging question remains as to whether there is more to prison than punishment and whether this is the best way to keep the community safe in the long-term.

Global trends are moving towards "decarceration" as the most effective mechanism for combating crime.

Meanwhile, the Queensland Government pursues a "lock 'em up" approach with the intention to build a new 4000 bed "super prison" at a projected cost of \$2.2 billion.

The Australian Bureau of Statistics reports that in Queensland there are 177 per 100,000 of population currently in prison with an increase of 212% between 1994 and 2004 – nearly five times the national increase in the same period.

The Department for Corrective Services describes its strategic approach as "strengthening community safety through managing growth in prisoner numbers" but groups such as the INCorrections Network and Sisters Inside are convinced that increasing prison beds is not a viable solution and that efficient and effective alternatives exist.

Heather den Houting from the Queensland Synod's Office of the Social Responsibility Advocate is convinced that there are alternative programs such as victim-offender mediation that do work.

"Here in Queensland we have some fantastic programs in the youth justice sector which are using the community conferencing process."

Churches in Queensland have responded both by providing pastoral care for prisoners and their families and by engaging in dialogue with the state government about prison and rehabilitation issues.

There are currently around 80 volunteer and accredited chaplains from many denominations who are giving an average of three to four days per week in the various correctional centres around Queensland.

If they were all remunerated at the rate of a minister's stipend this would translate to around \$1.8 million per annum.

This represents a significant investment in the care of prisoners and families.

Churches have also pressured the State Government and the Department for Corrective Services to reassess their current policy direction.

The UnitingCare Centre for Social Justice in Queensland was instrumental in the production of the *INCorrections* report which called for major reforms in the way prisoners are rehabilitated into the community.



"I was in prison and you visited me" Matthew 25:36

Prison Ministries Senior Chaplain Mrs Beatriz Skippen says about 500 inmates will leave the prison system in South East Queensland each month.

"That's about 6000 in a year. With some estimating a recidivism rate of over 50% we can expect to see about 3000 re-offending within two years," she said.

"It seems that much more needs to be done to assist inmates in making a successful transition back into the community."

Queensland Uniting Church Moderator Rev Dr David Pitman has spoken with Premier Peter Beattie about the "super prison" proposal as well as rehabilitation and prisoner release schemes.

The rate of imprisonment is not beyond government control and is influenced by political choice and departmental policy as well as crime rates and court decisions.

Over the course of a decade Queensland has gone from having an imprisonment rate that is below the national average to having one that is significantly higher and the State Government must own its share



Senior Prison Chaplain Mrs Beatriz Skippen

of the responsibility for failing to implement successful strategies to reduce prisoner numbers.

While Minister for Police and Corrective Services Judy Spence predicts a further 90% increase over the next ten years, such growth in prison numbers is neither inevitable nor obligatory.

Read more about prison issues

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Moderator's message

From the Editor

Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom

Richard Lovelace, 17th Century English soldier and poet, was twice imprisoned for his royalist sympathies during the time of Oliver Cromwell.

During the first of these sojourns in prison he wrote the poem, *To Althea - From Prison*, which includes the famous lines:

*Stone walls do not a prison make,
Nor iron bars a cage.*

The poem is about the way in which the human heart and spirit can be set free by the power of love and so transcend the particular circumstances of a person's life at any given time.

The poem concludes with the words:

*If I have freedom in my love
And in my soul am free,
Angels alone, that soar above,
Enjoy such liberty.*

Paul and Silas had a similar experience when they were imprisoned in Philippi. They too were surrounded by stone walls and iron bars, their legs locked in chains.

In spite of their predicament, the inner freedom of the spirit they

enjoyed was expressed through prayer and the singing of hymns.

By God's power, they were also set free from the physical confines of that prison and were able to continue their apostolic and evangelistic ministry.

And there were others who were also freed from their personal prisons at that time. A young woman was both healed and released from the bondage of slavery, and a prison guard and his family came to faith in Christ and were baptised.

Eighteen centuries later, Charles Wesley drew on the images and metaphors of that story from Acts 16 in order to testify to his own experience of the freedom that faith in Christ brings to our lives.

*My chains fell off, my heart was free,
I rose, went forth, and followed Thee.*

These stories remind us that there are varieties of prisons. There are the prisons that society constructs for the purpose of punishing those found guilty of breaking the laws of the land.

There is major focus in this issue of *Journey* on that kind of prison. We have to have them, but there are critical issues regarding their management and effectiveness that cry out for urgent attention.

There are also the psychological, emotional and spiritual prisons in which human beings sometimes try to confine each other.

That happens when people are subjected to discrimination or prejudice that is motivated by differences in race or culture or religion or personal circumstances.

It happens when individuals are denied natural justice or

find themselves at the mercy of insensitive and uncaring bureaucracies.

It happens when the innocent and the vulnerable become the targets of bullying and abuse.

It happens when people are persecuted for their beliefs.

And there are the prisons of our own making.

We can be locked in and limited by our inflexibility and unwillingness to change, by the smallness of our faith, by our contempt for those whose convictions are different to our own, by our refusal to forgive those we feel have offended us, by our greed and materialism, by our fear and insecurity.

The Bible includes many stories that illustrate the nature and impact of all three kinds of prisons.

These stories are illuminating and confronting because they reveal with disturbing clarity how God's ways are so different from our own.

God's purpose for us in Jesus is that we should be set free to enjoy the fullness of life that is his free gift to us.

By God's grace, we can embrace and experience that freedom in every area of our lives.

People incarcerated behind prison walls can know that freedom.

People subjected to the willful and destructive behaviour of others can know that freedom.

People locked into prisons of their own making that can know that freedom also.

Why? Because "the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. (II Corinthians 3:17)



Moderator Rev Dr David Pitman

JOURNEY

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Stay in touch during the 11th Assembly

On-line subscription is now available to a range of news services in the lead up to, and during the 11th Assembly meeting. These include:

- A daily newsletter for members which will also be made available on the Assembly website each day,
- A daily news alert sent by e-mail each night with news, stories, reports and resolutions,
- A daily media resource kit for congregations who would like help to communicate with local media.

For more information or to subscribe to either the Daily News alert or the Media Resource Kit visit the 11th Assembly website <http://assembly.uca.org.au/11thassembly> and follow the links.

Imagine being imprisoned for thirteen years. How much would society have changed in that time?

In 1992, the last time you were a part of society, the Australian Prime Minister was Paul Keating and Queensland's Premier was Wayne Goss. Mobile phones were rare and resembled a brick and the Internet was just catching on. Fittingly, the 1992 Academy Award winning film was Clint Eastwood's *Unforgiven*.

Imagine living in a hostile and angry environment for thirteen years and walking out the door to freedom with little preparation for the outside world. Perhaps the feeling would be like abseiling, as you stand at the edge of a cliff and take the first step off.

Tasks that most people do everyday, like grocery shopping or catching public transport, become daily challenges.

In this edition of *Journey*, we are focusing on prison ministry. This is one of the few ministries we are specifically told to do, along with looking after the poor.

Prison ministers are a special breed. They have a sense of calm about them. They deal with society's so called 'worst criminals' and treat them like the real people they are.

Inmates are someone's daughter or son, mum or dad, friend or partner. Some inmates practise religion, including Christianity.

How challenging is it for us as Christians to relate to these people without judging them on their convictions? For me, it is very hard.

In my research I have read a lot on the way prisons operate and the

history of Australian correctional institutions. I've read about faulty DNA evidence convicting people for 13 years. I've heard stories of abuse of the justice system and of power.

I've read the inside stories from people like award-winning journalist Bernie Matthews who studied while in prison and has experienced the true cruelty of the worst aspects of the prison system.

Mr Matthews' story on the power prison chaplains have and the great respect a lot of prisoners have for them can be read on Page 9. It is a moving account of what it feels like to be in prison and have someone care for your physical, emotional and spiritual health in a practical way.

Many prison chaplains have said that a lot of prisoners should not be there. They were in the wrong place at the wrong time, or they did something without thinking. That is not denying people need to be accountable for their actions, but don't we all?

To be released from prison, inmates need to provide an address. Without family or friends and with limited accommodation for people leaving prison, some inmates have nowhere to go and so remain in jail.

Reading this edition of *Journey*, you might ask yourself how you and/or your congregation would welcome a former prisoner. Would their conviction make a difference? What if they were a sex offender? They are tough questions to answer.

Mardi Lumsden
Associate Editor

Sign of the Times

Rev Don McKay makes sure nothing gets wasted at Samford Valley Uniting Church. When they needed a sign last Easter, Don whipped the tyre off his beloved restored Bulldog tractor to advertise the 2005 Easter Services. The tractor has looked a bit strange since, with one green tyre and one black one.



Youth worker Devon Bull (left) and Rev Don McKay



Assembly Bible study leader Rev Dr Mvume Dandala

World renowned Christian leader to present 11th Assembly Bible studies

Visitors and members of the 11th Assembly can look forward to an exciting Bible Study program headed by one of Africa's most gifted evangelistic preachers, Rev Dr Mvume Dandala.

A South African Methodist, who served as the Presiding Bishop of the Methodist Church in Southern Africa during and after the apartheid era, Mr Dandala promises to bring a fresh take on the Assembly Theme, *God's Word, God's World*.

Uniting Church President-Elect Rev Gregor Henderson said although exact details of the Assembly Bible Studies were still a well-guarded secret, Mr Dandala's

studies would draw heavily on his passion for mission, evangelism, social justice and human need.

"Mvume is the current General Secretary of the All African Council of Churches (AACC), an ecumenical fellowship formed in 1963 to represent more than 120 million Christians from 133 churches in 39 African countries.

"Mvume is leading the AACC in the battle against HIV/AIDS on behalf of the millions who suffer and thousands of children who have been orphaned.

"He is also deeply committed to the world ecumenical and mission movements and is really excited about helping members of the Uniting Church unpack

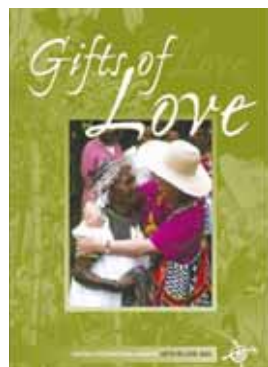
and explore the missional nature of our Assembly theme," said Mr Henderson.

"In the World Council of Churches he's regarded as being in the vanguard of the new African world leadership of the ecumenical movement and of the church worldwide."

"He has a proven record of courage and determination in leading the church in South Africa and all over Africa to address issues of injustice and human need."

Full details of the Bible Study program for the 11th Assembly will be available on the website in the coming month.

<http://assembly.uca.org.au/11thassembly>



The new 2006 *Gifts of Love Catalogue* is now available from Uniting International Mission (UIM).

This booklet is not just a catalogue but a glimpse into the range of projects of our Partner Churches that the Uniting Church in Australia is supporting.

These partnerships work towards empowering and encouraging communities and focus on Southern Africa, Asia and the Pacific.

A gift of \$7 will provide clothes for school children at Veilomani

Boys Home in Fiji. \$20 will provide vocational training at the Nandyal Training Centre in India. \$180 will make safe drinking water available and accessible in rural villages in Zimbabwe.

There are many great gifts to choose from that will really make a difference.

To see more information about the work of UIM or download a PDF copy of the 2006 *Gifts of Love Catalogue* at www.uim.uca.org.au or email team@nat.uca.org.au or call (02) 8267 4269.

Faith goes with culture for Indigenous prisoners

In June 2004, there were 5,048 Indigenous people in prisons across Australia (21% of all prisoners), and Indigenous people were 11 times more likely to be in prison than non-Indigenous people.

Uniting Church Minister and Prison Chaplain Rev Dennis Corowa reports that at Stuart Prison in Townsville, 60% of the prison population is Indigenous.

"This situation is deplorable but I have always tried to approach ministry in practical ways," he said.

Pastor Corowa felt led by the Spirit to work with the men through cultural activities although this was not always seen as an acceptable chaplaincy activity.

"I feel that many urban Aboriginal and Islander people have lost their sense of identity and pride in their heritage so we respond to this by demonstrating that the involvement of the church is not only spiritual but encompasses a cultural dimension as well."

He describes it as a holistic approach where Aboriginal prisoners are empowered to express their gifts and skills in culturally appropriate ways such as song, dance, art and storytelling.

Pastor Corowa has found that because Aboriginal and Islander men in prison are isolated from family and community life, they have time to think about their lives.

"There is the possibility of greater opportunity to experience the presence of God anew in their lives.

"Most of our people have experienced Christian teaching and influence but people often suppress

this as they follow other influences and forces in their lives."

Pastor Corowa also found that Aboriginal and Islander men have tremendous respect for church and chaplains.

"They were always willing to be involved in Bible study, prayer, playing guitar and singing, discussions, and cultural groups that we have conducted."

Pastor Corowa believes that we are all wrongdoers and sinners.

"In approaching ministry with people in prison we are called to compassion and kindness and we recall the passage from Hebrews 13, 'Remember those who are in prison as though you were in prison with them. Remember those who are suffering, as though you were suffering as they are.'"



Rev Dennis Corowa has both Aboriginal and Islander family heritage and has ministered in the Townsville community since 1989.

After an extended break from prison ministry he has once again taken up the role of prison chaplain in 2006. Pastor Corowa's totem is milmarjl - the barramundi.



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THE UNITING CHURCH INVESTMENT SERVICE

Cromwell College students learn the secret to success



Cromwell College senior David Stone, Matt Noffs and freshman Adam Bartels.
Photo and story by Mardi Lumsden

The one thing Matt Noffs of the Ted Noffs Foundation was not going to tell students at Cromwell College during his presentation entitled 'Sex, Booze and Honour Rolls' was not to drink.

Thanks to a UC Foundation grant, the co-ed Uniting Church residential college on campus at the University of Queensland brought Matt up from Kings Cross, Sydney, to talk to first year students about their newfound freedom.

"The most important thing for young people leaving home and entering the wider world is support. In this particular circumstance, young people going to University are in the process of re-evaluating their identities – they are re-searching (and researching!) themselves," said Matt in reflection.

"Support to do this 're-searching' is important because it calls for new ways of living life, it acts as a safety net, it evaluates their progress and

allows them to consider who they want to be as an adult."

Matt referred to what he calls "the Four Things" (Family, Education, Mentorship and Meaning) to assist and support young people.

"If these 'four things' exist as support networks surrounding them, their physical, emotional and mental health should be in perfect shape for their new transition into adulthood," he said.

"My time at Cromwell, truth be told, was the single most enjoyable presentation I've ever done! It was intrinsically motivating to see the energy that was pouring out of those guys... It made me realise what an exciting time University is for a human being who has now realised their capacity in the world and wants to harness their potential for the future."

For more information on Cromwell College go to www.cromwell.uq.edu.au

Youth worker's doco leaves viewers breathless

Centenary Uniting Church youth worker Jason Bray launched his debut film at the Palace Centro cinema, New Farm, in February to a full house and with endorsement from Queensland Governor Quentin Bryce.

Breathless is a documentary dealing with the issue of chemical sniffing, known as chroming, that is plaguing homeless, low-income and Indigenous youth in Queensland.

Told through the voices of a mother whose 17-year-old daughter died from chroming, a homeless man, a street kid and many others, *Breathless* introduces the homeless, marginalised, abused and addicted living in South East Queensland.

"While these stories contain sadness and heartache, by the end of the film the viewer will also have gained a sense of hope and admiration for the strength of our subjects," said Mr Bray.

"The Uniting Church Queensland Synod is excited by this creative endeavour which seeks to influence many workers across the youth sector as well as bring the issues of homelessness, drug use and marginalised youth into the public eye."

The film is confronting in its straight up manner and includes a scene where a group of young girls describe the different kinds of hallucinogenic benefits achieved from inhaling different coloured paints.

Mr Bray said he is looking for further distribution of *Breathless*.

"The documentary is in the process of being released to social workers and the general public in Queensland."

For more information or to order a copy of *Breathless*, visit www.redearthfilms.com/breathless

By Mardi Lumsden



Film maker and youth worker Jason Bray at the launch of *Breathless*.
Photo by Mardi Lumsden



"JUST MARRIED" (at the Albert Street Uniting Church) is a painting by Internationally known Queensland naïve artist, Katy Edwards.

It is a scene close to her heart, as she and her husband were married there, and also her parents, sixty years ago.

It is available in print form as a limited edition of only 500, signed and numbered, from any good framing shops in SE Queensland, or by safe ordering through her award-winning website - www.katyedwards.com

Price - about \$120.

If you are interested in the original painting, Katy would be happy to hear from you by email katy@katyedwards.com



Neil Waldron, Naomi Waldron and Adele Garnett from TEA Party, visiting the Quakers Meeting House

TEA Party on Tour

Toowoong Uniting Church Early Adults went 'on tour' during January to explore local churches.

Participant Naomi Waldron said the aim was to "experience a wide range of worship styles and hopefully take back some fresh, new ideas for our planning meeting."

The tour started at St Mary's Catholic Community at South Brisbane, known for its strong social justice agenda. Next on the list was the Progressive Spirituality Network hosted by West End Uniting Church, which engaged the young people in conversation about the relevance of Christian traditions and doctrine to modern thinkers and society.

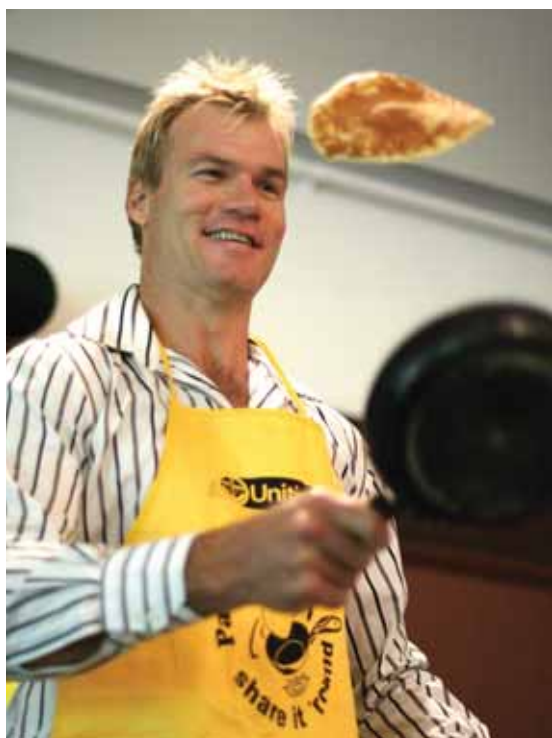
A visit to the Quakers Meeting House at Kelvin Grove saw the group sit in a circle in silence broken only by prayer or thoughtful comments for an hour, a challenge for people in today's busy world.

"For most of us, it was the first time that we had sat still for an hour in many years. It was relaxing, thought-provoking, and at times for us, a little boring," said Ms Waldron.

At New Hope Brisbane, a group who meet at La Boite theatre in Kelvin Grove, TEA Partiers attended a mini-conference that featured videos of famous and inspiring American pastors discussing spiritual leadership.

The experience of visiting several worshipping communities proved to be rewarding and opened their minds to new ways of worshipping, some of which they look forward to incorporating in the TEA Party.

"We recognised that there are lots of different ways to be Christian, and that as long as people agree with the principles of the Gospels, the rest doesn't matter as much."



Ex Brisbane Lion Richard Champion flipping for UnitingCare.
Photo by Osker Lau

Pancake Day proves flipping good fun

By Mardi Lumsden

The annual UnitingCare Pancake Day held on 28 February was a huge success with around 660 groups running Pancake Day events.

The number of groups participating was more than double that of the 2005 event which had 282 official groups.

Queensland Pancake Day Coordinator Bernie Williams said that last year's Pancake Day raised around \$45,000 for UnitingCare organisations and expected this year to possibly double that with the proceeds in Queensland going to Blue Care and Wesley Mission Brisbane.

The annual corporate breakfast was held at the Carlton Crest Hotel in Brisbane with guest speaker Heather Foord, 4BC's Rupert McCall as MC and an all-star line up in a pancake-flipping contest.

UnitingCare Director Anne

Cross acknowledged sponsors and supporters and Queensland Moderator Rev Dr David Pitman gave thanks.

Stepping up to the flipping challenge were ex Brisbane Lion Richard Champion, Australian softballer and Olympic bronze medallist Brooke Wilkins and current Brisbane Lion Anthony Corrie. Mr Corrie proved too fast for the competition, leading the pack with a whopping 194 flips in two minutes.

Pancake Day was celebrated all over the country to raise money for UnitingCare, one of Australia's largest not-for-profit organisations which in Queensland oversees Crossroads (QLD), Lifeline Community Care, Blue Care, Uniting Health Care (including six hospitals), Wesley Mission Brisbane, Wesley Mission Ipswich, and the Centre for Social Justice.



Waxy, the KidsGames 2006 mascot

Churches are ready to play

The Winter Olympics, Commonwealth Games and the World Cup are just minor lead-up events to KidsGames, organisers claim.

The big event will see thousands of children playing and learning together in holiday programs from 25 June to 2 July 2006.

Opening ceremonies will be held in eleven districts across Brisbane and neighbouring areas and the week of games and Bible teaching will conclude with a spectacular closing ceremony at the RNA Show Grounds.

Operations manager of KidsGames Terry Williams said churches that ran KidsGames programs back in 2003 experienced significant growth and forged stronger links with their local schools and communities.

"There were 2,400 children involved in the first Brisbane KidsGames with 70 church and community groups offering programs in 55 locations," he said. "Twelve of these were Uniting Churches."

Training and resources are all provided and churches need to register as soon as possible.

If you are "Ready to play" visit
www.brisbanekidsgames.org.au
or give the info line a call on
3632 2255.

60 year history of camping at Alex Park

2006 marks the 60th anniversary of one of Queensland's longest serving and most popular campsites, Alexandra Park.

Purchased by the Youth Department of the Presbyterian Church, Alex Park was officially opened and dedicated during an evening dinner on Good Friday, 19 April 1946.

Located directly opposite the Alexandra Headland surf beach, the camp originally consisted of 173 acres of natural coastal forest and a couple of timber structures.

Today, a little over 24 acres remain of this once expansive seaside parkland.

Over the years, the campsite has undergone a number of changes and developments and the current 168 bed Alex Park campsite consisting of two accommodation blocks and

a main auditorium and dining area was officially opened in 1989.

Manager of Mission Support Enterprises Mr Mark Lee said that eight two-bedroom bungalows have recently been constructed beneath the forest canopy, each with five beds, ensuite and timber deck entrance.

"Landscaped gardens and floodlit pathways connect the individual bungalows with the conference room and the main building," he said.

"The new bungalows raise the standard of accommodation at the centre and have increased the bed capacity to 250."

A dinner to mark the 60th Anniversary of Alex Park will be held on Good Friday evening, 14 April 2006. For more information phone 07 5443 8966.



Alex Park then and now

Want more news?

Read it all at
www.journeyonline.com.au

REDISCOVER

Community, faith, Jesus

This year sees the 400th anniversary of the remarkable Portuguese navigator who claimed our part of the world for a grand spiritual mission. His name, de Quirós.

Could this vision be what we were meant to become? In a world of turmoil, moral confusion and competing visions of the future, could it be time to rediscover the source of harmony and community?

- Rediscover the source of real faith for a new millennium
- Rediscover the source of what's best in western society

So do yourself and your family a favour this Easter. Rediscover the real meaning of Easter where it all begins.

Contact: 1300 369 264
email: national@unitedchurches.org.au

March with 1000's this Easter

Sunday April 16th, 2006. Gather 1:15pm. March 2pm

WHAT TO BRING: FM radio. Tune to an FM nationwide broadcast & Large Sunflowers.

Story brochures, balloons, programs, festival activities and top entertainment will be provided.

The Easter Marches are a project of the AUSTRALIAN AWAKENING Movement including the Christian Churches of Australia integrated by FUSION Australia & SCHOOLS IN HARMONY. APR 26 06 273 155

EDUCATION AND VALUES FOR LIFE

Clayfield College Girls: Prep to Year 12 Boarding: Girls over 10 years. Boys: Prep to Year 5.	07 3262 0262 www.clayfield.qld.edu.au
Somerville House Day and boarding school for girls Preparatory to Year 12	07 3248 9200 www.somerville.qld.edu.au
Brisbane Boys' College Boarding and day school for boys in Years 4-12	07 3309 3500 www.bbc.qld.edu.au
Sunshine Coast Grammar School Co-educational day school Preschool to Year 12	07 5445 4444 www.scs.qld.edu.au
Moreton Bay Boys' College Day school for boys from Prep to Year 7 in 2006	07 3906 9444 www.mbbc.qld.edu.au

Presbyterian and Methodist Schools Association
www.pmsa-schools.edu.au

A ministry of the Uniting and Presbyterian Churches, providing excellence in education in a Christian and caring environment.

A penny for your thoughts

Writing an autobiography can be a hard task. Penny Harland, a Knox Uniting Church Moorooka member, embraced the idea and launched her book *A Penny for your Thoughts* in October 2005 despite her multiple disabilities.

Penny Harland has been both deaf and blind since early childhood. She suffers from balance problems and a muscle-wasting disease and

communicates with a special sign language called finger-spelling.

Ms Harland and her co-writer and carer Sarah Patterson have truly captured what life was like for a highly intelligent young woman who was shunned for wanting to be educated past the expectations of people with disabilities.

Supported by her family, Ms Harland has acquired three

University degrees, including a Masters degree.

Launched by former footballer Wally Lewis, *A Penny for your Thoughts* is an inspirational tale of persistence, challenging norms and being led by faith.

Read Emma-Kate Moore's review of *A Penny for your Thoughts* on page 13.



Penny Harland communicates by finger spelling. Photo by Mardi Lumsden



Assembly volunteer program coordinator Mrs Jos Bush

Volunteers will help the Assembly work

The Queensland Synod is looking for volunteers to help host the Uniting Church National Assembly at the University of Queensland campus in July.

The Assembly meeting's administrator Mr Tony Litfin says volunteers will undertake a range of tasks to ensure that interstate and international guests have a memorable, comfortable and welcoming stay.

"We will be in the spotlight and this is an opportunity to show the friendly, courteous and smiling face of our Queensland Uniting Church," he said.

Mr Litfin said that volunteers will offer administrative assistance, be guides and stewards, serve on the information and registration desks, handle luggage and assist with transportation.

Coordinator of the volunteers program and Queensland President of the Uniting Church Adult

Fellowship Mrs Jos Bush sees the role of volunteers as vital to the organisational management of the Assembly gathering.

Mrs Bush sees the Adult Fellowship making a unique and valuable contribution to the volunteer program.

"Let's face it, we've been organising and staffing activities throughout the life of the church since whenever," she said.

"There are many people in our church committees and in local communities who have the knowledge, training and expertise we need in our volunteer teams.

"I will give my energy, my skills and my total commitment to this task and I am thrilled to be in action."

To be part of the Assembly volunteer program contact Jos Bush on 07 3341 5042, email joshaybush@acenet.net.au or write to 16 Bonython Street, Roshedale South QLD 4123.



A growing faith experience for young people

Sometimes misunderstood and often not known about, Chrysalis weekends introduce young adults to Christianity as a lifestyle.

The highly structured three day experience is designed to strengthen and renew the faith of young Christians and, through them, all those with whom they come into contact.

Queensland Chrysalis committee member Andrew Johnson told how people often won't say much about what happens on the weekend because they believe that people have to experience Chrysalis for themselves.

"It's because the experiences on the weekend have a power and uniqueness that are difficult to describe," he said.

Chrysalis veteran Amaya Coit told how Chrysalis had been a meaningful part of her life and had helped her experience God in different ways.

"Chrysalis has also helped me by giving me the courage to love others with agape love, to be a servant to others and help them experience God's love and grace in a safe environment," she said.

"Chrysalis has also helped me to make some amazing friendships that, although time may pass and lives regain normality, continue to inspire and grow."

The Chrysalis program is an offshoot of the Walk to Emmaus movement and is designed for young people from 16 to 22 years of age from any denomination.

Mr Johnson said the focus of Chrysalis is commitment to Jesus Christ through the local church.

"The aim is to inspire, challenge, and equip young people from the local church for a closer friendship with Christ, and for Christian action at home, church, school, and in the community."

For more details about Chrysalis visit www.chrysalis.emmaus.org.au email s365741@student.uq.edu or contact 07 3847 3113 or 0417 783 495.

Child Care Centres or Independent Living Units on Church property?

Has your parish, school or agency considered leasing your surplus land for the establishment of a Child Care Centre, or for Low Care accommodation for seniors as an income stream as well as expanding the Mission of the Church?

Inquiries and brochures on both concepts to National Child Care Centre Pty Ltd 1300 364 064 or email: office@nccc.net.au



Helping others to hear is good news

Deaf Ministries International (DMI) is a Christian Mission to the deaf in several developing countries of Asia and Africa.

The ministry commenced in Korea in 1979 by Neville and Lill Muir who continue to coordinate programs in the Philippines, Taiwan, Japan, Myanmar, Thailand, Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Rwanda and Burundi from their base in Victoria.

Thanks to DMI, churches, schools, small factories, hearing

clinics, farm projects, dormitories and training centres have been established to bring aid and education to deaf people.

In countries where deafness is otherwise hidden, children with hearing loss are provided with food and clothing, the tools for a productive, meaningful future and a sense of purpose.

For more information see the Deaf Ministries International advertisement on page 12.

Growing boys into men

By Bruce Mullan

Sure and steadfast is still the motto of the Boys' Brigade and, despite the changing times, the organisation continues to find a place in the lives of thousands of young Australians.

The movement has changed dramatically since 1883 when young Sunday School teacher William Alexander Smith formed the first Boys' Brigade company in Glasgow, Scotland.

Later to become Sir William, Smith was concerned that the boys in his Sunday School class couldn't settle down enough for him to teach them about Jesus and how to be better people.

Mr Smith was an Officer in the Volunteers (similar to Army Reserves) on the weekend and could get many men to do exactly as he wanted when he drilled them and decided that if boys in Sunday School were as well trained and behaved like his Volunteers through doing drill and other activities, he would be able to teach them.

Executive Officer of the Boys' Brigade in Queensland, Gordon Wallace, said that Queensland had the largest Boys' Brigade contingent in the nation with 1400 men and boys participating in 38 Queensland Boys' Brigade companies.

"All of those companies are church based and about one-third of those are associated with Uniting Church congregations," said Mr Wallace.

Queensland Governor and Brigade Patron Her Excellency Ms Quentin Bryce recently presented 11 Queen's Awardees with their badges but President of the Boys' Brigade in Queensland Rod Adam says the focus these days is much more relational.

"The emphasis isn't on producing Queen's badges but on developing boys' self identity and growing them into manhood," he said.



Queensland Boys' Brigade President Mr Rod Adam

Mr Adam, a member of the Samford Valley Uniting Church, said it is imperative that significant adults are able to take the time and interest to listen to boys and to understand and affirm them in their developing manhood.

"Research shows that all young people need acknowledgment by caring adults if they are to develop into rounded, capable adults themselves and there are few places in today's busy lifestyles where they will experience this in any long-term way."

Mr Wallace agreed. "Mothers particularly bring their eight and nine year old boys to the Boys' Brigade and say 'I want you to do something with my boy'."

The Sunday Times (UK) recently reported that the Boys' Brigade in Scotland was considering admitting girls for the first time but Mr Wallace said that while the Boys' Brigade and Girls' Brigade in Queensland work closely together there was no intention to amalgamate.

"Both movements still believe very much in the benefits of a single-gender organisation."

For more information about the Boys' Brigade contact Mr Gordon Wallace Phone: 07 3855 5211 Fax: 07 3855 5244 or email bbqld@brigadeaustralia.org or visit their website at www.brigadeaustralia.org



Rev Dr Greg Jenks and Rev Rex Hunt at the Celebrating a Progressive Easter workshops. Photo by Tony Robertson

Re-thinking Easter

By Noel Preston

A're-think' of the meaning of the cross and resurrection and our understanding of the Jesus story was the key aim of the "Celebrating a Progressive Easter" workshops organised by the Progressive Spirituality Network and the Queensland branch of the Centre for Progressive Religious Thought (CPRT) on the first Sunday in Lent.

Participants wrestled with implications of contemporary New Testament scholarship and progressive theology for the rituals and observance of Holy Week and Easter.

Rev Dr Greg Jenks, a fellow of the Jesus Seminar, examined Mark's Gospel record which he argued draws on cultural myths of the ancient world to recount a story of a "Divine/Crucified Hero who is ultimately a threat to the Roman Empire and indeed to the powers that be, or any empire".

Speaking later at the West End Uniting Church, Director of CPRT in Canberra Rev Rex Hunt said that throughout the last 500 years of church history, people have wrestled with the clash between the Bible and modern science.

"Many have coped by a 'suspension of belief' for an hour or two each week...The urgent questions for the church right now in the twenty-first century is: How long can we count on suspended disbelief to shore up its outworn myths?"

"The Jesus movement now needs people of extraordinary religious insight who in intentional ways can stir up goodness, struggle for justice, speak up for those who stutter or do not speak the languages of power, band together to stand resolutely and non-violently before evil, and refuse to be absorbed into it, or intimidated by it."

Mr Hunt sounded a warning, confessing that he constantly wrestles with the question, "How far do we push all this? When do we depart from the tradition to become a mere 'cult'?"

In answer to his own question he observed that we need to be able to discern the difference between "traditionalism" and "tradition".

The Progressive Spirituality Network meets each Sunday night at the West End Uniting Church.

For more details visit www.progressivespirituality.net



QUEENSLAND CHURCHES TOGETHER

Position Vacant
Field Worker, QCT-Christian World Service

Christian World Service is a programme of Queensland Churches Together and the National Council of Churches in Australia (NCCA).

CWS promotes awareness of global justice issues and raises funds for ecumenical projects overseas and at home. CWS advocates on behalf of those affected by poverty, injustice and division both globally and locally. Refugees and displaced people form a particular focus of the work.

We are looking for a FIELD WORKER for QCT-CWS for four days a week.

For details and job description please phone 07 3369 6792 or email qctadmin@tpg.com.au.

Applications close April 19.



Don't listen to rumours!

Have you heard only one opinion about the Reforming Alliance?

Why not make up your own mind?

We believe the 11th Assembly will determine the future of the Uniting Church within the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church.

Proposal for the Eleventh Assembly

The Reforming Alliance initiated proposal on sexuality has now been presented to the Assembly from Presbyteries in N.S.W., Queensland, South Australia and Victoria, and by the Queensland Synod.

It will be considered at the 11th Assembly in Brisbane: 5 - 11 July 2006.

If approved it will provide a clear statement of the position of the Uniting Church, and negate the confusion created by Resolution 84.

For further information visit our website:

www.reformingalliance.org.au or for a copy of the latest RA newsletter

Contact:
admin@reformingalliance.org.au
PO Box 968, Newtown 2042
(02) 9550 5358

Advance Notice:

The Reforming Alliance will hold a Special Annual Meeting and Joint Summit with EMU: 11- 12 July (immediately after the 11th Assembly) at King's College, University of Queensland



Ex prisoner Marc Renton finds a welcoming church after release. Photo by Osker Lau

Living life on the outside

By Mardi Lumsden

After thirteen and a half years in prison, Marc Renton walked free in January of this year and headed straight for a church.

Not just any church, he headed for the Uniting Church congregation led by prison chaplain Beatriz Skippen.

With little preparation for the outside world, Mr Renton feels lucky to have met chaplains inside prison who helped him prepare for the next stage of his life.

"I think I'm blessed actually," Mr Renton said while celebrating the work of former prison chaplaincy head, Charlie Greer (aka Charlie Chaplin).

"There has been no real transition for me. I think the Holy Spirit has been with me the whole time. Prison ministry is a very important tool for rehabilitation.

"It's hard to explain the overall effect prison chaplains have on people. It would be hard for me to translate it to you until a door is slammed shut behind you and you are there alone. The prison ministers come in and there is a light. They have an ability to lead people back. If it wasn't for them, I'd still be lost."

It was only a few months ago that Mr Renton first met chaplain Beatriz Skippen at a Bible study in prison.

"There is a saying in jail, a prison minister is called a sky pilot. God calls them and puts them in the right spot.

"To be a prison minister I'd say would be a very daunting task at the start. A lot of different things are going to happen every time they come in. A lot of prisoners don't like them. A lot of prisoners won't even talk to them. When you sit there talking to them you'll hear sneers in the background."

To live anywhere isolated from the outside world is difficult, but prisons can be boiling pots of anger, frustration and despair. Large numbers of inmates, including Mr Renton, suffer mental illnesses such as depression while in prison.

"To start with, you are in an abnormal environment. People have a lot of stereotypical ideas of what a prison is like and all of those stereotypes are wrong. A lot of the things you hear about do happen, but they happen out here as well. It is not a very nice place, but prison ministers help.

"If you are lucky enough to be led back to the Lord, it doesn't matter if you are in prison or out here. It is all the same, you are still free."

To Mr Renton, prison chaplains are a perfect example of what it is to be a Christian.

"Have a look at what Jesus did. Who did he talk to? Adulterers, prostitutes, tax collectors and so forth. Prison ministers come in and they act like Jesus acted. They take the time. Like on Christmas day, where was Beatriz? In prison having a church service with us! I'm sure a lot of other people would have preferred to be at home with their families."

Prison ministry and the ability to pursue his faith while imprisoned

gave Mr Renton "direction" in his life.

"Who understands a prisoner? Where do you go? What do you do? You think everyone is looking at you. I went straight to the Uniting Church.

"What a good church! I was welcomed straight away. Without that, it would have been very difficult. It is unfortunate there is not more funding that goes into prison ministry."

With a large number of inmates being repeat offenders, we need to ask if prisons are the best thing to deal with crime in society.

"Something has to be done but what do you do? If you follow the Christian model, forgiveness should be enough. But you are looking at a system that looks at retribution and punishment, and what is justice? It is about bringing balance, it shouldn't be about retribution.

"Whether they like it or not, 99% of the prisoners are going to be released back into the community. It is how you release them back in the community that will affect the community.

"The only solution is to look at the reintegration. How do we re-establish prisoners? How do we put them back in the community? How do we reduce their chances of re-offending?

"These are the things that need to be looked at. That should be the focus. You are detained for 'x' amount of years, what's the plan? Everyone needs a plan."

Mr Renton began a science degree while an inmate and is set to complete his studies this year.

Does the correctional system really correct?

By Bruce Mullan

In November 2004 the results of a comprehensive investigation into prison release practice and policy in Queensland was released.

Given that 99.9% of prisoners in the Queensland prisons will one day return to life on the "outside", the *INCorrections* study initiated by the UnitingCare Queensland Centre for Social Justice focused on the impact of the correctional system on community safety.

Speaking with ABC Radio's Steve Austin at the time the report was released, Former Supreme Court Judge and special adviser to the project Hon W C Carter QC stressed that almost every prisoner will one day return to the community – "perhaps to an address near you".

"The question is how do we best organise that process in the interest of community safety to ensure that when those people do come back into the community they are better adjusted, better equipped, better able to handle the problems of life, and better able to get on with their lives in a way which is offence free," he said.

The report's author, Tamara Walsh from the Queensland University of Technology's Law Faculty, said the aim of the report was to investigate whether the correctional system was actually 'correcting'.

"We call it the 'corrections system' and we hope it will be doing some 'correcting'," said Ms Walsh whose report made 50 recommendations for improvements to the Queensland correctional system.

Former Director of the Centre for Social Justice Rev Dr Noel Preston described the prisoner rehabilitation process as completely ineffective.

"They come out unprepared and more likely to be a danger. More than 60% go back to prison and this is the highest rate in Australia," he said.

Mr Carter, who is also a former Chair of the Parole Board, told of dramatic changes to release programs after the 1988 Kennedy Report was implemented.

"The implications for the community were absolutely monumental because here there was a new process within the system. We had a corrections system properly so-called," he said.

"If we could use the custodial system as an opportunity to introduce programs to correct, then the person could go out hopefully a changed person."

The *INCorrections* report indicated the gains made in the early to mid-1990s had been significantly eroded.

After a delay of almost a year, the Queensland Department of Corrective Services released a written response to *INCorrections* in September 2005.

The Department was defensive of its work and critical of the *INCorrections* research methodology, and it labelled the report as containing old, recycled and unsubstantiated claims.

Independent investigator and former Director General of Corrective Services in Queensland Mr Keith Hamburger defended the report at a community forum in October 2005 saying he had great personal and professional respect for the people responsible for the *INCorrections* project.

"We have a report in which a tremendous amount of intellectual capital has been invested by very committed, professional, learned and highly respected people who think deeply about social issues and who have come to conclusions about the state of corrective services in Queensland," he said.

As department head responsible for implementing the Kennedy Reform agenda from 1988 to 1997 Mr Hamburger pointed out that if it was possible to punish crime away, the United States of America (with four times the imprisonment rate of Australia) would be well on the way to being a crime-free society.

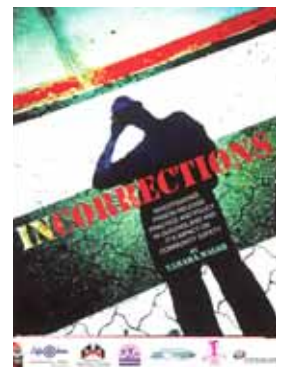
Mr Hamburger said it is the care and support for offenders that "distinguishes a humane and civilised corrections system that reduces crime, from a prison system of inhumane human storage that increases crime."

The *INCorrections* report concludes that while prisoners agree that prisons should not be five-star resorts and acknowledge that they deserve punishment, the flaws in the current correctional system and current recidivism statistics demonstrate that "correction" is not occurring.

It calls on Queensland prisons to protect prisoners from brutality and sodomy, provide drug treatment, medical treatment and counselling and create a system of progressive increase in liberty and participation in the community.

Ms Walsh says she hopes that in the future the Department will be more willing to listen to the stories of the prisoners in its care.

"It is they who know the system best and it is they whose lives are most affected by it."





Christians can't condone the death penalty

By Andrew Johnson

On 2 December 2005 a bell tolled 25 times in Melbourne while a young man was hanged in Singapore's Changi Prison. He was a convicted drug trafficker, caught carrying 400g of heroin. The pictures on the television were heart wrenching: a mother embracing her son following his brother's execution.

Capital punishment has been the subject of much debate over many years. The Van Nguyen case has again brought this issue to the forefront of public debate. So, how should Christians approach capital punishment?

Think back 2000 years. Jesus was sitting in the temple teaching and while he was there, a woman was brought to him by the Pharisees. He was told she had been caught in the very act of adultery and was reminded of the Mosaic Law that the penalty for adultery is stoning. The Pharisees ask, "Now what do you say?"

The question resonates for us. What do we say about capital punishment in a world dominated by talkback kings declaring, 'An eye for an eye'? The Mosaic Law prescribes the death penalty for some 37 offences including being a wizard yet we would not advocate death to all magicians. Therefore the Law of Moses is not helpful to a Christian understanding of capital punishment.

Jesus explicitly calls us beyond an eye for an eye when he says, "But I say to you, do not resist an evildoer."

Some Christians have claimed that Jesus was saying Christians shouldn't impose the death penalty, but that the state needs capital punishment in order to maintain good order. This approach comes to the heart of our understanding of what sentencing is about.



Sentencing has widely been seen as having four roles: punishment, deterrence, protection, and rehabilitation.

Punishment has always been an argument for the death penalty. This has often been motivated (although rarely stated) by revenge. Leviticus 19:17 says "you shall not take vengeance...against any of your people, but you shall love your neighbour as yourself" - a command which Jesus reiterates in "The Golden Rule".

Many have argued the only way to properly punish murder is to take life, but arguments like these led to torture. All human forms of punishment are flawed and inadequate, therefore ultimately the responsibility lies with God.

Deterrence has also been cited as

a reason for capital punishment. It has been described as the "ultimate" deterrent yet the statistics do not bear that out. In fact the Bible reminds us that from Adam and Eve onwards people have rarely considered the consequences of their actions.

Protection of innocent people is also cited as grounds for capital punishment. The death penalty does provide protection for the community from one individual. It does not protect the innocent who have been sentenced to death. Life imprisonment protects those who are wrongly convicted.

Finally, rehabilitation is not the goal of capital punishment. Some transformation may occur in a person who is on death row but it is certainly not the aim.

So, what did Jesus say? He said, "Whoever is without sin cast the first stone." He challenged the Pharisees to condemn the woman, and they all walked away. Jesus was left alone standing with the woman. He asked if anyone had condemned her, no one had and he concluded "Neither do I condemn you. Go your way, and from now on do not sin again."

Jesus sees the chance for rehabilitation and redemption of all. No one is beyond God's love.

As Christians we should be asking how we deal with those whom society believes are beyond saving. We need to be a prophetic voice to the community about the values of Christ. Our approach to capital punishment demonstrates Christ to the world.

Andrew Johnson is a member of Broadwater Road Uniting Church and serves as a Social Responsibility Advocate in the Queensland Synod.

Wake up and smell the coffee

By Duane A Vachon

The problems in finding accommodation faced by those who have served prison sentences highlights what happens when the corrective services system is allowed to be hijacked by political parties who, with no real agenda, use law and order as their mantra to get elected.

Of course this problem is also compounded by endless bleating by advocates of victims' rights groups. A media that would be one of the most dysfunctional and ineffective in the entire world tops all this off.

The current government in Queensland has allowed and indeed encouraged this situation to reach crisis point. It has been decided that victims should have the right to see the offender serve his entire sentence in prison. This totally overlooks the fact that it will deny the offender the opportunity to have some kind of supervised release back into the community.

Putting aside any concept of justice, which as we all know is pretty thin on the ground in Queensland, common sense would suggest that no offender except those the State doesn't intend to release should spend their entire sentence in a maximum security prison or for that matter any prison at all.

If anything they should be paroled sooner rather than later, because once they are paroled from prison, they can spend the rest of their sentence being helped to reintegrate back into society.

Despite the rhetoric that there are programs in prisons to do this, the reality is that it simply does not happen. If you need confirmation of this, all you need to do is look at the recidivism rates in this State. The idea of using programs to determine how an inmate progresses through the system is just plain stupid.

You can't force anyone to rehabilitate. Unless they have a real desire to do so it simply won't happen. This, combined with the fact that many of the programs are outdated or facilitated by children who have only just finished their schooling and who in most cases are serving their internships, would suggest that a great deal of money and resources are being frittered away by the current correctional system and the bureaucrats administrating it.

Unfortunately, we have allowed ourselves to be hoodwinked into allowing the government to turn our prisons into appalling places that achieve nothing other than to deprive those who enter them of hope and to turn angry people into angry, bitter people. Then for some strange reason we throw our hands in horror when we find these people are released worse criminals than when they entered prison.

Duane A Vachon MPsych (Clin) MTh is a member of the American Psychological Society and is currently working towards his PhD in philosophy. Duane has been in prison for a decade and has written more than 200 articles for various publications.

Thanking the sky pilots

By Bernie Matthews

*He's here to help them all that he can,
To make them feel wanted he's a good holy man.
Sky pilot, sky pilot, how high can you fly?
You'll never, never, never reach the sky.*

The lyrics of Eric Burdon and The Animals echoed a message of hope throughout the 1960s while The Beatles, Jimi Hendrix and The Rolling Stones carried a thundering vibration of social revolution into the streets.

It was an era that gave birth to the Age of Aquarius. Hippies. Free love. Flower power. And a military madness that condoned a massacre in a Vietnamese hamlet called My Lai.

In Australia the social revolution came to a grinding halt with the decision that Ronald Ryan would be another casualty of a legal system that embraced the death penalty. The controversial hanging occurred inside Pentridge Prison on 3 February 1967.

One of the many outspoken critics of the death penalty in relation to Ryan's execution was a sky pilot, universal prison jargon for a priest, nun or chaplain. Father John Brosnan, the sky pilot of Pentridge, ministered to Ryan during his last hours.

Fr Brosnan was a prison chaplain. A man of the cloth. A sky pilot. And to all those who walked the yard in Pentridge during the 1960s he was affectionately known as Broz - the priest with compassion.

Fr Brosnan's fight against social injustice left a lasting impression inside the walls of Pentridge, as it did on the streets of Melbourne, but those impressions blended with a decade of change that ended in 1969 - the year I went to prison for armed robbery.

During the summer of '71 I was classified as "intractable" and transferred to Grafton Jail. At the time I was serving 28 days solitary. Nothing ever changed in solitary at Grafton. Oatmeal mush for breakfast. Oatmeal mush for tea. And silence. Total silence. Punishment for breaching the silence rule was brutally extreme inside Grafton Jail.

As the days whittled away in solitary I realised it was nearly Christmas and 1972 was just around the corner. One day the screws (prison guards) opened the solitary confinement cell and a

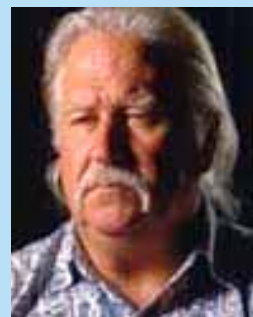
brown paper bag was thrust inside. Just as quickly as the cell door opened it was slammed shut again.

A bag of fruit with a card attached rested against the wall. I looked at the brown paper bag for what seemed like an eternity before I crawled over and read the card. The card said: "Merry Christmas from The Sisters of Mercy." It was Christmas Day 1971.

That brown paper bag filled with fruit was one of the most memorable Christmas dinners I have ever eaten in my life.

In retrospect, it does seem ironic that those unassuming men and women of the cloth achieved more than was ever achieved by the full brutal weight of any prison system.

Perhaps that is why poignant memories of the sky pilots still linger long after the prisons have been vacated and demolished.



Bernie Matthews is a convicted bank robber and prison escapee who has intermittently served time in Australian prisons since 1969. He is now a journalist. The full text of this article is available at <http://www.onlineopinion.com.au/view.asp?article=477>



Children from the devastated province of Aceh.
Photo courtesy of Gavin Melvin

Wave of generosity swept through the Uniting Church

By Bruce Mullan

Former Director of Uniting Church Overseas Aid (UCOA) Rev Bill Fisher was amazed and overwhelmed by the generosity of Uniting Church members in response to the tsunami that devastated communities around the Indian Ocean on 26 December 2004.

"The \$2,484,000 donated exceeded our expectations by a large magnitude," said Mr Fisher.

The money was all channelled through the Uniting Church in Australia's partner churches and the relief effort provided immediate assistance at local levels within hours of the tsunami. It continued through to rehabilitation and restoration of the livelihood of people and to the reconstruction of houses and community infrastructure.

Mr Fisher said in the first year UCOA had been able to expend 83% of the funds received.

"A further 10% has been committed to projects but not yet expended and the remaining 7% which has not been committed is expected to be expended by April 2006 on projects that we are currently discussing with our partners."

Immediate aid in South India saw school kits given to children and students in examination years provided with supplementary education and special coaching.

In Sri Lanka kerosene lamps were provided for families in refugee centres, and boats and nets were provided to restore the livelihood of fishing families.

Other works undertaken in the longer term included the repair of houses, the provision of bicycles for transportation, and repair of infrastructure through dredging of canals, digging ponds, clearing land and repairing roads.

Mr Fisher said that he had seen God working for good in the midst of tragedy and expressed the thanks of Uniting Church Overseas Aid to the members of the Uniting Church for their very generous support.

"Your generosity has meant that the lives of tens of thousands of people have been touched in a time of momentous suffering," he said.

"We will never know how much difference has been made in the lives of individuals and families."

For more detail on UCOA's tsunami relief effort, visit their website at <http://uim.org.au/ucua/tsunami>.



Preston book launch

In early April Zeus Publications (07 5575 5141) will release *Beyond the Boundary: a memoir exploring ethics, politics and spirituality* by Noel Preston. (318pp, RRP \$28.95 with Forewords by Tony Fitzgerald QC AC, Dorothy McRae-McMahon and John Uhr).

Noel Preston writes from the vantage of a varied career challenging social boundaries of Queensland society through the sixties, the controversial Bjelke-Petersen years, and the aftermath of the Fitzgerald Inquiry.

"Though this story traverses more than half a century, it is significant how many of the events discussed and issues examined are contemporary and relevant to society in the first decade of the twenty-first century. Racism, anti-war resistance, unaccountability in government, the role of education, the church and homosexuality, fundamentalism and the interplay between religion and politics – to say nothing of the challenges of personal vocation and integrity in public life – are central themes of today's current affairs, just as they are of this book." (from The Preface.)

Tuesday May 2, 6.30pm in the Avid Reader Bookshop, Boundary Street, West End: *Beyond the Boundary: a memoir exploring ethics, politics and spirituality* will be launched by Her Excellency the Governor Ms Quentin Bryce AC (RSVP 3846 3422).

Sunday May 14, 6.30pm a Dedication of *Beyond the Boundary: a memoir exploring ethics, politics and spirituality* will be held at the West End Uniting Church, Sussex Street. In association with the Progressive Spirituality Network the evening chaired by Rev John Woodley will feature readings and commentary by the author and a time for response.

WCC wrap-up

The World Council of Churches ended its seven-yearly assembly with calls to reach out to Roman Catholic, Pentecostal and Evangelical churches that do not belong to the Geneva-based grouping.

"The quest for the visible unity of the church remains at the heart

of the WCC," stated a policy document presented on the last day of the grouping's February assembly in Porto Alegre.

"Our ultimate vision is that we will achieve, by God's grace, the visible unity of Christ's Church and will be able to welcome one another at the Lord's table, to reconcile our

ministries, and to be committed together to the reconciliation of the world."

The gathering urged an easing of the region's debt burden, describing it as "unjust, illegitimate and immoral", noting that according to UN statistics, 40 per cent of Latin Americans live in poverty.

With Brazilian Lutheran Walter Altmann elected as moderator of the WCC's main governing body, alongside Kenyan Methodist,

Samuel Kobia, as the group's general secretary, participants said they will look to the WCC to articulate the voice of the global south in coming debates about globalisation and economic injustice.

The mid-point of the WCC's Decade to Overcome Violence initiative was marked by a thousand-strong march through the streets of Porto Alegre led by Archbishop Desmond Tutu.

Scholarship program helps send right message

The East Timor scholarship program sponsors East Timorese people to gain education, particularly in the English language.

Indooroopilly Uniting Church assists the program by providing home stay accommodation for

participants when they are studying in Brisbane.

Valentino L. Marcal, also known as Afun, is one such participant. In East Timor, Afun works for Yasona, the welfare and development arm of the Protestant Church of East Timor (IPTTL).

His organisation currently runs five projects focusing on education, health, small business, agriculture and humanitarian aid to assist people living in poverty.

Yasona also runs three medical clinics around the country and a mobile clinic that travels to villages each week.

"Also, we provide food for families of patients in hospital.

It is very difficult for people from villages to go to Dili. Sometimes they don't have food or mattresses," said Afun.

"When the government brings someone to hospital from a village, it is not their responsibility to take

them home after they are well.

"Sometimes, if the person has died, we pay for them to be taken home to be buried. Or if they are well we pay for a bus trip."

Afun says that due to corruption in government departments it will take a long time before East Timor is running smoothly by itself.

"According to the Yasona program, we would like to improve economics in the villages and reduce poverty. Then we must prevent corruption in the church and government. The church hides corruption.

"If we don't have corruption many people will have an improved economy. With corruption only one or two people are rich."

"I hope in 2020 or 2050 East Timor will be like Australia. Many people living happily. I want East Timor to have a good economy, good education and to be safe."

By Mardi Lumsden



Valentino L. Marcal.
Photo by Osker Lau



CHAPLAIN

UnitingCare Burnside is seeking an enthusiastic and motivated person to fulfil the designated ministry of Chaplain to be situated within the Social Justice, Partnerships and Communication Program.

We are seeking someone with a Bachelor of Theology or equivalent, an excellent communicator, with demonstrated understanding of social justice issues affecting children, young people and families and demonstrated skills in community development and/or social justice education. Experience working in a church agency or community services context would be highly regarded.

The position is full time and based at Burnside's Head Office in North Parramatta with some travel to regional services.

For an information package including the job description and selection criteria please contact Naifee O'Brien on (02) 9768 6874. Applications should be sent prior to Friday 28th April 2006 to Rev Diane Anderson, Associate Secretary, NSW Synod, PO Box A2178, Sydney South NSW 1235.

This position is of child-related employment and will require a 'Working with Children' check under the Commission for Children and Young people Act 1998. It is illegal for prohibited persons to apply.

because
children
matter

Preaching in the marketplace

By John Osborne

I don't know if you've noticed this, but work tends to gets a bad rap among Christians. We often see it as an inconvenience to the lives that we want to live for God. We are busy surviving work so that we can serve God in the Church outside work hours. Our jobs stress and worry us. Many within the church are discontented with what they do.

I believe the workplace ministry of Christians is vital to this nation, and that God wants to do a new thing in this area. We have to ask ourselves, "What is the Spirit saying to the churches in regard to workplace ministry?"

Maybe it's time we stopped asking the "Saints in the marketplace" only one question "How can we get you involved in the outreach and ministry of the local Church?", and started asking them another question as well "How can we equip you and your colleagues to take the Church out there and impact your field and your profession?". There are so many people and places that cannot be reached by traditional church based evangelism.

In Ephesians 4 we read that Christ Jesus "gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets,

some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God's people for works of service..." I want you to imagine people with these callings operating in the marketplace.

Imagine pastors offering prayer and counselling to customers. Imagine evangelists using their gift to lead people to Christ as they travel in business and meet with people from all nations. Imagine prophetically gifted saints predicting the course of events and advising nations, companies and individuals on what action to take.

Imagine ministers doing what this scripture says they will do: preparing God's people for works of service; training other saints to follow in their footsteps; mentoring tradesmen, teachers, doctors and engineers in how to hear the voice of God, operate in the gifts of the Spirit, and live for Christ in their chosen profession.

God is calling us to change the way we think about work. God is calling us to expand our vision of where ministry occurs and of what a Christian in the marketplace looks like.

I believe that the time has come for Christians in the marketplace to begin demonstrating the kingdom of God in a way that the world has never seen before.

I believe God is calling us to equip and mentor individuals for the coming harvest that he wishes to bring into the workplaces of this nation.

Let us not be as the Pharisees, who could not 'interpret the present time', and so missed the Saviour. Jesus is calling to us, and he's asking us: "Who will go and preach in the marketplace?"

John Osborne is a member of Aitkenvale Uniting Church and a student at James Cook University. He presented these ideas at a meeting of the North Queensland Presbytery in March. Read the full text on www.journeyonline.com.au



Jan's decision: doing theology day by day

For most Christian people, doing theology is part of their everyday lives

Jan is a working mum who has three children. Her husband is very busy in his sign writing business and works long hours. Jan works part time as receptionist and bookkeeper for the business and also as a teacher's aide at her children's school.

Her youngest child has shown behavioural problems since he was a small child. In kindy there was an understanding that he needed to be watched all the time as he would push other children off the slide and disrupt the sleep time.

He has not grown out of this behaviour, and now, at primary school, the teachers are suggesting that Jan's son has ADHD.

She has been hoping and praying that he might just grow out of it but this diagnosis affects her profoundly – what might this mean for her family and her child? Devastated by the news, she wonders if she is a failure as a mum. How should they manage the situation? Does God have something to do with this? Isn't her son just being who he is and what right do they have to think of medicating him?

Doing theology with the Bible study group

Still reeling from the news, Jan makes an appointment with a child psychologist which will take place in a few days time.

That night she attends her Bible study group that has been meeting together for some years. When the group hears the news, they immediately respond with warmth and compassion for Jan. They pray with her and for her family.

"Thank you for your prayers, but I've been praying for years for God to look after my children. I can't help wondering whether prayers are going to be enough," Jan said.

A teacher in the group said, "Getting good help certainly worked for a child I taught once. After she had been diagnosed and medicated she was really able to settle down and concentrate."

Another said, "Aren't we glad that we live in a modern age where we can understand a bit about what is happening. In biblical times you probably just prayed and hoped for the best."

Another person said, "I think that asking Jesus for healing is just as effective as other ways. My nephew has had several diagnoses about his behaviours and I'm afraid the treatment he received didn't do much good."

The group leader said, "But what about Job? He prayed a lot and was faithful to God, but still suffered – it seems as though no one is immune from suffering."

Jan's Bible study group is engaging in theology based on story telling, reflecting on experiences from their own lives and from scripture.

When we ask the question, "Where is God in our stories?", we discover new perspectives and new questions.

The next few issues of *Journey* will follow Jan's story as she discusses theology day-by-day with soccer mums, a school counsellor, and an elder at her church.

See the Synod's Theology and Worship website: www.turn.unitingchurch.org.au for more details.



Oxley UC celebrates 20 years of Friday Night Youth Group

Twenty Uniting Church celebrated twenty years of Friday Night Youth Group in February with past and present members of the group coming from all over Australia.

Over 70 people marked the event with a barbecue and reminisced over photographs, memorabilia and videos. Friendships were re-kindled and life stories shared. Many of the people who attended spoke of their current involvement in local congregations and the grounding they received in faith through the Youth Group.

The ministry of Oxley UC is not all in the past though. Oxley continues to support a strong Friday Night Youth Group and other groups for youth and children. They also celebrate the recent employment of Ken Acworth as Youth and Children's Worker.



Amy and Kelly Holcroft: Amy has been a youth grouper and leader for over five years. Current member Kelly is in Year 12. Photo courtesy of Oxley UC

Prison Ministry: want to get involved?
Prison Ministry is looking for volunteers in many areas:

Administration; visiting prisons; pen pals; music groups to participate in church services in the prison; people who would like to provide transport for families of prisoners to visit their loved ones; distribution of groceries to families in need; coordinate fund raising; coordinate banner prayer-groups; become a chaplain; prayer warriors and many, many more.

Contact Beatriz Skippen
pager 3830 5585 or mobile 0409 080 251,
e-mail Beatriz.Skippen@lccq.org.au
or visit www.ucaprisonministry.com

What's On

Wednesdays (during Term time), 9.15-11.30am. GUCCE - Gap UC Craft Experience, 1050 Waterworks Road, The Gap. Morning Tea and lots of fun and fellowship. \$3. Child minding \$3/child. Contact church office on 3300 2712 or email thegapuc@iinet.net.au.

March 5-April 9, 5.30pm Sundays. To the wellspring... Meditative worship during Lent using the songs and prayers of the Taizé community. St. Philip's Anglican Church, 115 Cornwall St, Annerley. Enquiries to James Macdonald 3393 1567.

March 31 and April 1, 9am-4pm. 2006 Focus on Mission hosts two daylong seminars with Bishop Tom Wright. Marymac Community Centre, Ipswich Rd Annerly. \$30/ seminar. Register by 24 March. Online registration at www.bne.catholic.net.au/mission, ph 3336 9351, or email em.fl@bne.catholic.net.au.

April 8, 7.30am-12.30pm. Buderim Uniting Church Annual Fair in the Church grounds cnr Gloucester Road & King Street, Buderim. Stalls selling books, jams, cakes & sweets, craft, pre-loved jewellery, plants & flowers along with a huge white elephant stall. Morning tea and a bbq lunch available. McDonalds Farm will be on site. For more details, contact Bob on 5445 6518.

April 8-9. Young Adults Mission Immersion Weekend. Margate Conference Centre. Jointly coordinated by YACMU, International Mission in the Queensland Synod, and Uniting International Mission. Cost is generously subsidised by UIM. More information from Mike Jeffrey (YACMU) ph 3377 9782 or Andrew Johnson (Qld Synod-International Mission) ph 3377 9911, or Sandy Boyce, People in Mission Coordinator, ph (08) 8236 4240.

April 9, noon-2pm. Barnabas Fellowship meets at Oxley UC hall. Bring Lunch to share. Enquiries ph Mareta 3279 9065 or Ed / Olive 5598 2439 / 0411782439.

April 13-17. Easter Family Adventure Camp. Rocky Creek Scout Camp, Landsborough, Sunshine Coast. Caravans, tents & cabins for families & singles to worship out-of-doors, camp-fires, scenic trips, bushwalking, bush-dancing/table games, stargazing & a mystery event. Contact Rev John Woodley 5495 3360 / 0419 025 150 or John Horchner 5496 8371 or marjanhorchner@bigpond.com.

April 13-17. Easter Camp. Alex Park Conference Centre, Alexandra Headland. Cost \$135. Guest speaker Nigel Rogers. Have fun, spend time with friends new and old, beach walks, outdoor adventure fun, awesome worship and most importantly a time to renew our faith and deepen our relationship with God. Contact Louise Edwards on 0407 152 863 or email edwardslj@hotmail.com.

April 14, 6pm for 6.30 start. Alexandra Park 60th Anniversary Dinner. Alexandra Park Conference Centre, Mari Street Alexandra Headland. \$25/person. RSVP to 5443 8970 (numbers limited).

April 14-16. Australian Gospel Music Festival, Toowoomba.

April 20, 8am. Day Tour to Port of Brisbane leaving Moorooka at 8am for Cleveland Museum, lunch at a park and then to The Port of Brisbane. \$33/person inc morning tea and admission to Museum. BYO Picnic lunch. Phone 3848 6168 or 3838 7588.

April 20-August 2, Thursdays 6.30-9pm. Living the Questions DVD and Discussion series. West End UC. \$30 for 12 sessions. Contact Elaine or Ray Richmond on 3488 2300, email psnwestend@iinet.net.au or visit www.progressivespirituality.net.

April 22, 11.30am. The Australian Nurses Christian Movement (ANCM) and Nurses Christian fellowship (NCF) reunion in Roma Street parklands (grass beside the lake). Past members welcome. Bring picnic lunch and memorabilia. Enquiries to June on 3205 1478.

April 22-23. Gladstone UC 10th anniversary and move to new building in Dixon Dr. Special guest Rev Dr Dean Drayton. Celebration dinner on the 22nd. Sunday worship lead by Dr Drayton, followed by lunch. All past and present members of Gladstone Uniting, and any other interested people invited. Contact Margaret Cathcart 4979 3131.

April 28-May 1. Bulimba UC 3rd annual Round-About Arts & Crafts show. Contact Wendy 3399 8657.

April 29. Paradise Point Uniting Church Garage Sale. Sausage sizzle from 6am-12noon. Bargains galore! 126 Paradise Point Parade, Paradise Point.

30 April, 5.30pm-late. JAM presents Falling Short at Emmanuel UC, 249 South Pine Rd Enoggera. BBQ on sale from 5.30pm. More info at www.emmanueluc.unitingchurch.org.au.

May 6, 6.30pm. Dinner Dance. An evening of fine dining, dazzle and dance at the Pacific Golf Club, Carindale. Three course meal, demonstrations by "Dance Fever", featuring old-time and new dances. \$55/person. Fundraiser for South Moreton presbytery delegates to attend the NCYC in Perth, 2007. Contact Tanya 0409 326 042.

May 9-10. Festival of Banners at Nambour UC Complex, Coronation Ave, Nambour. Banners from across Australia are now on tour and will be on show at Assembly in July. Theme: 'Cloud of Witnesses'. Official opening 7pm 9 May cost \$7 inc supper and music. 10 May open 9.30am-4pm. \$4. Craft demonstrations, stalls, food available.

Want to promote an event?

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



The Newsboys prepare to rock the Australian Gospel Music Festival. Photo courtesy of The Rock Across Australia

Bringing the Gospel to the Deaf



In the developing countries of Africa & Asia, DMI's schools provide deaf children with food, clothing, an education and Christian training. A commitment of \$30 per month enables you to become a DMI child sponsor - a vital link in helping us to provide a secure future and an opportunity for growth, for these children who may, one day, become leaders in their communities.

Will you join the team?



Deaf Ministries International ABN: 96832871076
PO Box 395, Beaconsfield Victoria 3807, Australia
Tel: 9768 9844 SMS: 0402 181820
email: info@deafmin.org

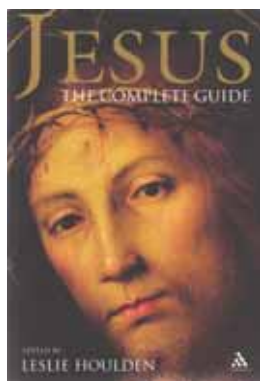
AGMF heats up Easter

It is that time of year again. Not only is Easter upon us but so too is the annual Australian Gospel Music Festival in Toowoomba held from 14-16 April.

The largest gospel music festival in Australia, AGMF 06 boasts a huge line up of acts from Australia and overseas. This year headlining musicians include Rebecca St James, Newsboys, Hillsong, and MIC to name a few. Local big names playing include Leo Nine, Soulframe and Compliments of Gus (VIC). All up there are more than 170 bands or artists playing over the Easter long weekend.

If you get tired of the music there are countless other things happening at AGMF 06 including snowboarding!

Delegates and the community are invited to join a massed choir performing on Easter Sunday. More details on Page 14.



Jesus: The Complete Guide
 Edited by Leslie Houlden
 Continuum
 RRP \$69.95

Notwithstanding its slightly over-ambitious subtitle, this is an impressive book. Leslie Houlden has assembled 117 scholars to produce a 922-page encyclopaedic overview of Jesus' life, mission, context and historical impact. The range of the more than 200 alphabetically-arranged entries is vast and transcends the categories usually covered in one volume.

There are predictable entries on each of the gospels, the social context of ancient Palestine, and the various christological debates of the early church. There is also a wide range of entries which cover the accounts of Jesus given by Christianity's seminal thinkers in the medieval and modern eras.

Reflections about Jesus in contemporary schools of thought are well presented with high-quality entries on, for instance, feminist theology (written by the UCA's Dorothy Lee), radical orthodoxy and liberation theology.

Although the contributors are largely from the UK, USA and Europe, a wider horizon is achieved through the inclusion of articles which consider the understandings of Jesus in African Christianity, Indian Christianity and Chinese Christianity. Specific entries consider the approach to Jesus in Buddhism, Hinduism and Islam. These are especially valuable in the contemporary context.

The book is not limited to a narrow academic agenda. There are helpful entries on the representation of Jesus in film, the media, art and music.

A series of entries on the main themes of the New Testament accounts of Jesus (origins, teachings, parables, miracles, death, resurrection, and achievement) are the heart of the book. Despite a certain historicist bias, they give a good overview of the study of these themes in contemporary scholarship.

An impressively comprehensive index and a well-organised glossary add to the book's usefulness. I would recommend the book not only to ministers and students of theology, but also to congregations as a one-volume theological resource for use by leaders of study groups.

Geoff Thompson

Reviews

A Penny for Your Thoughts
 By Penny Harland with Sarah Patterson
 RRP \$29.95

In *A Penny for Your Thoughts*, author Penny Harland (with the help of co-author Sarah Patterson) courageously shares herself as she tells her lifelong journey of finding abundant life in the midst of increasing disability.

Penny is both blind and deaf. In early childhood she lost both her sight and her hearing, followed quickly by difficulties with balance, loss of coordination and muscle strength. While these disabilities define her sensory world, they by no means define her contribution to the world at large. A bright and intelligent woman with a thankful and cheerful heart, Penny is one who perseveres and succeeds. More astounding than her completion of three university degrees is her unwavering attitude of hope and possibility.

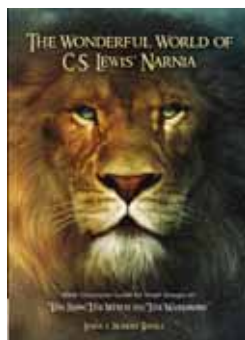
Her story is engaging. With pictures scattered throughout the pages I was introduced to both the people and places of significant times. Her vivid descriptions of life as a child are delightful in their gaiety and innocence. At times her tone is almost impishly mischievous, feisty and a bit cheeky in a likeable way!

Her story is inspiring. For one with seemingly much to be upset about, Penny never speaks bitterly. With frank and refreshing honesty she recounts many dark and difficult times – the oppressive experience of boarding school, the frustrations of being in the medical 'too hard basket', the nightmare of an eating disorder, the interminable loneliness of living in a dark and silent world, the crushing despair of shattered dreams, and the constant battle to create ways of completing ordinary daily tasks. I would have enjoyed knowing more about her journey of faith in the midst of adversity.

You get to meet Penny in the pages of her book. I discovered not only much about her – truly remarkable facts – but also some of who she is. And I liked what I discovered.

To purchase Penny's book go to www.apennyforyourthoughts.net.

Emma-Kate Moore



The Wonderful World of CS Lewis' Narnia
 By Linda and Robert Banks.
 Bible Society NSW
 RRP \$5.95 or
 \$50 for a pack of 10

This small booklet of five discussion group studies follows the release of the movie *The Lion, The Witch and The Wardrobe* which is based on the children's book written by C.S. Lewis. The studies reflect a growing interest in the connections between Lewis' *Narnia* stories and the major themes of Christianity.

Each study is based on several chapters from *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, and although designed for adults, invites each participant to come to the group having read these chapters aloud, preferable to children.

The discussion format follows a three-fold pattern, reflecting the movement of the children from their ordinary world into the world of Narnia through the back of the wardrobe, and back again. The "starting from our world" question is designed to connect each participant with their own life experience. The next part "exploring a parallel world" brings aspects of the story into conversation with selected biblical texts. The third movement "connecting back into our world", offers questions aimed at re-engaging our lives in fresh ways in light of any insights we may have gained, particularly in our parenting or ministry with children.

The studies are illustrated with black and white photographs from the movie and include brief quotations from various writings by C.S. Lewis. At the end of the booklet there are three useful paragraphs on the best way to understand the value of *The Lion the Witch and the Wardrobe* for children, for seekers and for Christian adults.

If you grew up with the stories of Narnia and want to engage the theme of the first book again as an adult; or if you are looking for a way to theologically reflect on a great children's book with the Bible in one hand and the book in the other, then get a group of friends from church together because this study is for you. Highly recommended.

Jenny Tymms

Disclosures: Conversations Gay and Spiritual
 By Michael Ford
 Darton, Longman & Todd Ltd
 RRP \$29.95

This book is confronting, and reading it can hurt. Michael Ford interviews 25 people from a wide range of backgrounds – men and women, African, British, and American, Greek Orthodox, un-churched, Anglican and Roman Catholic.

While the brevity of each interview leaves us wanting to know more, common to all is a palpable transparency of pain.

Many of the interviewees have been savaged by the Church as they attempted to be both homosexual and Christian. In *Disclosures: Conversations Gay and Spiritual* we meet Martin, a former candidate for the priesthood, who was asked to undergo a psychological examination; Rowland, an African-Caribbean member of a British congregation, approached by his church leadership who attempted to exorcise his demons; and Rowan Smith, Dean of Cape Town, who declared his homosexuality openly in 1994. Smith pays tribute to Desmond Tutu, who supported him, and said "To discriminate against our sisters and brothers who are lesbian or gay... is as totally unacceptable and unjust as apartheid ever was."

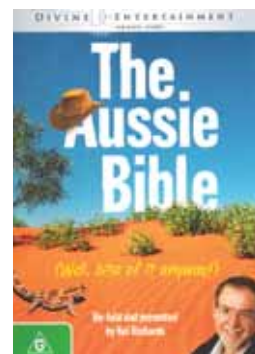
For some, the expectation that they will not 'rock the boat', and be complicit with a covert 'we won't ask and you won't tell' lifestyle eats at the heart of their integrity and the integrity of the Church.

For others, who are at peace with their orientation, the suggestion that homosexuality is 'objectively disordered' lacks academic integrity and is personally insulting. Even worse is the attempt by some Church leaders to conflate homosexuality with paedophilia, escaping culpability through scapegoating.

Clearly there are weaknesses in reaching conclusions through anecdote. However this book demonstrates there are also very real pitfalls in arriving at conclusions, and administering them, without empathy for the real human realities of the marginalised.

Disclosures is an important book. Whatever conclusions we reach regarding homosexuality, we should meet the human face, and count the human cost.

John Patton



The Aussie Bible (Well, bits of it anyway)
 Re-told and presented by Kel Richards
 DVD Divine Entertainment
 RRP \$25.95

A few years ago I took a youth group on a chalk chase where we nearly got into a street fight with some older boys who were wandering the streets. That night it so happened that devotions were on some of Jesus' most radical teachings. As I read the words of Jesus on "cheek turning" and "enemy loving" these boys laughed out loud – "as if anyone would ever do that!"

The Aussie Bible DVD brings the Gospel to us in a fresh, disarming and surprising way that makes us laugh, muse and think again at this most remarkable of stories.

Kel Richards, master of words, brings us the "ridgy-didge, fair dinkum" version of events from Palestine 2000 years ago (well, bits of it anyway) plus a bush poet version of Psalm 23.

The Aussie colloquialisms flow faster than the Murray in flood, full of sheilas, barbies and nick-names. It is right up my alley but may not be everyone's cup of tea.

Kel tells the stories in seven minute sections as he sets up a picnic, cooks a BBQ and cleans the pool.

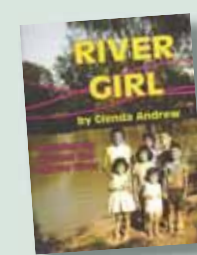
Great as a discussion starter for a Bible study, or even to enliven worship, I reckon every true blue Aussie church should have a copy.

Some have remarked that unless you know the 'real' version you just 'don't get' what Kel has done. But since the book version is a best-seller there must be a whole lot of average Aussies who do 'get it'.

Paul Clark

Read more at
www.journeyonline.com.au

Hotel Rwanda DVD
 Turtle Egg Day
 Psalms for the Secular
 River Girl



PRAYER DIARY

9 April: St George

St George Uniting Church has boundaries that are mostly unknown. The simplest description would be approximately 120km radius from the town of St George, but it stretches beyond this boundary. We cover 110km towards Goondiwindi, 120km towards Moonie, 150km towards Cunamulla, 150km towards Mitchell, 110km towards Surat, 118km down to the NSW border at Mungindi, and again meeting the border 165km to Hebel. The 'parish' takes in the towns of St George, Thallon, Hebel, Nindigully, Mungindi, Dirranbandi, Bollon, and Weengallon.

St George is a very young community and our vibrant and growing congregation reflects that. You can find details of our ministries on our websites www.stgeorgeunitingchurch.org.au and www.stgeorgeyouth.org.au.

Give thanks to God for his gracious blessings he has brought on this church. Thank him for our members and for the growth he has brought to us over the last year. With growth comes a new challenge. We've run out of places to put people. Pray God would provide funds for much needed additional seating.

Pray for our minister, Michael Brumpton, and his family – that God would protect them and guide them in his service.

Pray for our Drug Proofing Your Kids program running in Dirranbandi. It will also be run for the second time in St George. Pray God will use this service to meet needs and build relationships that will lead to a commitment to Christ.

Pray for StGeorgeYouth, a new youth group, currently attracting 18 high school kids. Pray for JAFFA, a new monthly kids club. Pray for our Sunday School. Thank God for the large number of kids coming along to it. Pray for their families, and their salvation.

Pray for our church as Assembly approaches and all the uncertainty associated with that.

16 April: Kenmore

This year has seen much activity as we prepared for 40 Days of Purpose. As is so often the case, there is always more to do than one thinks and we are almost at the end of the program. We have been challenged to consider the purpose of our lives and this has created much discussion and sharing. It has also prompted many of us to think about the purpose of our life together as a congregation.

Please pray for us as we come to the end of this incredibly challenging and enlightening time.

In response to God's call to serve those in need, we also find ourselves overwhelmed by the needs of our world.

This year we will raise funds in different ways for our local high school chaplain, the breakfast and lunch program at Carole Park State School, an aged hostel in Khamman, India, a program working against women and child trafficking in Bangladesh, scholarships for young people attending university in East Timor and support an international micro-credit scheme.

These activities are just some of many that are close to our hearts here at Kenmore Uniting Church.

Please pray for those throughout our world who aim to make the plight of another easier.

23 April: Chermside Kedron

Our congregation sits in the middle of north Brisbane, watching change and growth all around us. Our building and its resources have, at times, over a thousand people a week passing through the doors.

Our prayer is that our congregation can embrace the changes, welcome all people, and let God's love simply flow!

Please pray for the new mediation and reconciliation process, developed by our own Elders with professional assistance. This will be introduced to our congregation during May and June.

Pray that this will become a vehicle of love which will bring about justice and forgiveness between people.

For the ever-changing ministerial team. Pray that they will be able to cope with the workload and demands, and see beyond the everyday tasks towards a real passion for ministry.

For our "Chatters" Coffee Shop and "Grapples" Thrift Shop. Pray that people will come through their doors and experience God's love, and that all staff be encouraged to share that love in an attitude of service.

For the wonderful children and young people who bless us with their presence in a variety of ways. Pray that we will have an environment in our worship services, in which the children of God learn and experience the wonder and the mystery of God,

and are free to respond with a full range of expression, from laughter to sorrow to tears and back to laughter again.

Our vision statement asks for transformation, as we experience and share God's love for all people. Pray that the Chermside Kedron Community Uniting Church will not "slide away" into an indifferent, lifeless wasteland, but will be transformed into a passionate community of the resurrection.

30 April: Banora Point

Our church was opened on 21st March, 1993 due to the vision of two congregations - Coolangatta and Kingscliff. Former members of those two continuing congregations were founding members.

About 100 people join in worship and the congregation continues to grow. A small Sunday School is held week by week. R.E. classes are conducted weekly at two local schools, while a third school sets aside daily time one week per term.

We praise God our teachers share God's love in these schools. Pray for our teachers in local schools and our Sunday School team.

Living close to the beaches where Little Nippers clubs are a great attraction, and with splendid picnic and fishing opportunities, we especially need to remember children and pray they will be enthusiastic to attend each Sunday.

Our congregation has a group to ensure pastoral care reaches everyone. Our Minister visits aged care villages and conducts regular monthly services at one of these.

Together with Coolangatta and Kingscliff we support Blair Athol Accommodation and Support Services for disadvantaged persons. With them we supply volunteers for a bargain shop to help finance Blair Athol. Please pray for the operations team of the centre and the shop volunteers.

We have an active fund raising committee, and social activities such as a musical theatrical performance and fete provide fun for the congregation and community.

Pray for the dedicated people who enhance our services with PowerPoint presentations.

We give thanks for our Minister and his wife as they welcome people to the manse for study groups.

Our Adult Fellowship is active and appreciative of prayers as they reach into the community.

The fortnightly Craft Club and our weekly Playtots group are touching the lives of many families, and we ask for prayers for each team and for the safety of children.

Please pray for all members of our dedicated leadership team as they plan for care and growth.

We give praise and thanksgiving in Jesus' name by the power of the Holy Spirit for the ministry and witness to the community that we are able to exercise.



Rebecca St James will also be performing at AGMF. Photo courtesy of www.therockacrossaustralia.com.au

Hymns of Praise 2006

Here is a chance to be thrilled and inspired by two and a half hours of rousing sacred music, gospel songs and hymn singing.

The first half includes a 120 voice massed choir with guest soloists: Ryan Lim, Brad Kendrick, Ruth Ballinger, Emma Cerqui, Erin McLellan, Daniel Baxter and a special appearance by the band Family.

The second half is the Easter Musical, *You are the Christ*.

"Brash, bold, transparent and volatile are all the characteristics used to describe Peter, the most distinctive of Jesus' disciples. Yet the special bond between Peter and Jesus is unquestioned. Jesus once asked, "Who do you say that I am?" It was Peter who immediately replied on behalf of the disciples, "You are the Christ!"

Through the transparency of Peter, we understand in a deeper way the message of Christ's sacrificial love. And through Peter's humble response to Jesus' invitation to follow Him, we too are challenged to new levels of service. The eternal question rings forth from Jesus even today: "Who do you say that I am?"

The Hymns of Praise concert concludes with the traditional finale: The Hallelujah Chorus.

At the Empire Theatre, Toowoomba, on Easter Sunday, at 2.00pm this is one of the major events of the Australian Gospel Music Festival.

Churches gather to pray for the city

Acknowledging Brisbane's strong and proud Christian heritage Lord Mayor Campbell Newman welcomed over 440 church leaders and ministers to the inaugural City of Brisbane Lord Mayor's Prayer Breakfast and invited them to share a pledge affirming loyalty to Australia and its people.

"It's a heritage that has helped our city to grow into a modern, caring, multicultural community that is open and accepting of people from all walks of life," he said.

Uniting Church representative on the organising group and Synod Mission Consultant Graham Beattie said strengthening bonds of fellowship between denominations and building relationships between church and civic leadership were the aims of the inter-church event.

"The breakfast showed the desire of our civic leadership to recognise and work collaboratively, especially with the community service work of the churches in the Brisbane city region," he said.

Nine men, all key leaders in the various denominations represented, led the gathering in prayers for the community, and Executive Chairman of the Australian Christian Lobby Brigadier Jim Wallace was key note speaker.

NCYC issues a call to leadership

"To lead is to undertake a journey," says The Hon. Justice (John) McKechnie, chairperson of the National Christian Youth Convention management team for 2007.

Mr McKechnie's vision for NCYC 2007 is to lead delegates on a journey of transformation. "The noun 'leadership' has no content unless the destination is known," he said.

"For NCYC 2007, the destination is to transform delegates – youth and adults into Agents of Change."

Mr McKechnie is part of an experienced team which manages the direction of NCYC 2007.

A Supreme Court judge in WA, he has previously served as a general counsel regularly representing the State in the High Court and all Western Australian courts and was appointed a Queen's Counsel in 1989 after 15 years in practice.



**The Uniting Church
in Western Australia**

Associate General Secretary (Pastoral)

The Uniting Church in Western Australia is seeking a motivated and skilled person, lay or ordained, to provide key leadership in the new Presbytery of Western Australia. The person will provide pastoral care of all ministry workers, and leadership in the areas of pastoral relations and placements.

This is a full-time position based in the Church Office. The appointee will also be a member of the Senior Co-ordination Team, working with the General Secretary in guiding the work of the Church Office.

For an information package, please contact Revd Dr John Evans, General Secretary. Expressions of interest to be sent by Friday 21 April, 2006 to GPO Box M952, Perth WA, 6843. Ph (08) 94861577 or email john.evans@wa.uca.org.au

LETTERS

Thanks for the memories

I noticed with interest the Synod photo published in the March *Journey*.

The gentleman on the far right end of the front row is my grandfather Rev George Phillips, who by 1955 was retired after 40 years of service both as a Home Missionary and Ordained Minister of the Word with the Methodist church throughout the state of Queensland.

I believe his last posting was to the Redland Bay Circuit, and I remember as a child, when visiting my grandparents, travelling with him on the boat to Russell Island when he took bi-monthly Religious Education at the very small island school.

Thanks for the memories

Annette Brown

Editor's Note: Thanks to all those who wrote in response to the photograph of the 1955 Methodist Synod meeting. The names have been passed on to the holder of the original photograph.

Time to move on

In response to the letters I read in *Journey*, I shake my head in disbelief that our wonderful UCA is influenced by ideas that are no longer relevant to the society in which I live.

I believe it is time to move our theology into the present by opening up all of our held beliefs that underpin the Uniting Church.

It is time to be honest and match current beliefs with current learning and knowledge so that the church once again becomes alive and meaningful to those who follow after us.

Many issues confront us as part of a modern society living in the 21st century. Issues facing us now include moves to stop parliament opening with a prayer, disbanding religious education in our schools, abortion, medical ethics being

determined by politicians and sexuality to name a few. We just need to look at any newspaper to see where moral, ethical and spiritual issues are present in all parts of our community life.

Having a vision is all well and good but what is this based on? If it is based on a tired mythical theology, then it is obvious that it will not be accepted nor have any appeal to the 20 to 40 year old.

We need to change how we think to what we know in the 21st century. This means that beliefs must change. This means that teaching must change if spirituality is to be developed in those who follow us.

Anyone who studies theology or religious topics today is presented with many challenging ideas that are based on research and knowledge in other academic areas of study. Yet we see very little of this challenging thought in sermons I now hear.

Why are we frightened to drag our religious thoughts out of the past into the 21st century so that the ideas match current knowledge.

This is the challenge before us if the Uniting Church is to survive.

Alwyn Thomas

Journey leans left?

March *Journey*'s lead story "Should God Get a Vote?" shows just how far the UCA has gone to the Looney Left. What about some balance? The three authorities cited on Page 1 are Anglican Labor politician Kevin Rudd, Jesuit educated Professor Wadhurst, and Hindu Mahatma Gandhi. The only UCA sweethearts missing are ABC Radio National and the Australian Democrats!

Must we wait until we are only 1% of the population before the UCA hierarchy gets the message that the people in the pew are just not interested in your political agenda?

Stan Klan



Have your say

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

Post: *Journey* GPO Box 674 Brisbane 4001

Email: journey@uccentre.ucaqld.com.au

Who'll fess up?

In the February *Journey*, Dr David Pitman proposed a way forward for the 11th Assembly on the sexuality and leadership issue in the UCA.

Part of his proposal was that a register of ministers and congregations, who are unable to accept ministerial placements or candidacy of people in same sex relationships, be set up.

Whilst this does seem to be a panacea, it would be more 'user-friendly' to have a register of ministers and congregations who are open to homosexual clergy.

This is what people in the community would expect to see, the same way that restaurants promote certain credit cards as being accepted, and some holiday accommodations promote themselves as being fully disabled-friendly.

So, if there needs to be a register, set one up to identify pro-homosexual congregations so that everyone knows where they stand.

Karen Mitchell

Apology

The letter from Graham Hall 'Find a new Church' published in March *Journey*, the third last sentence should have read: "You will discover good friends wherever you worship." Not "good mends" as published.

Klan got it wrong

Your correspondent ("Stay Out of Politics", *Journey*, March 2006) offers a sadly deficient case for what is, in origin, a position enunciated by Luther but one which the father of the Reformation never really embraced himself (e.g. *Luther's Works*, 45, p.83f).

The 'Two Kingdoms' model of the Church/State relationship endorsed so enthusiastically by Stan Klan is the classical Lutheran position which certainly provided the basis for the Bjelke Petersen years. However, it finds little support among contemporary Australian Lutheran academics.

Stan's exegesis of the 'render unto Caesar' text is simplistic and, in general, his position is theologically legless, being notably deficient in Christology, soteriology, ecclesiology - and probably a few other 'ologies' that escape me at the moment. His superficial reading of Pope Benedict's encyclical is a matter of concern and regret.

We are, of course, bound to eschew biased party-political pronouncements and trivial, incessant, ill-informed 'nagging' in the political arena. But there can be no doubt that, when the Body of Christ addresses significant national issues prayerfully and speaks out of considered reflection on the word of God, it makes an

absolutely unique (and, hopefully, uniquely absolute!) contribution to the political debate.

Otto Kaiser, a Lutheran scholar, offers a very useful comment: "The Christian church owes as a duty to the secular community, the proclamation of the law and the gospel in concrete terms, the wrath of God against sin and the offer of grace available to sinners; but not amateurish political preaching." (*Isaiah 1-12*, p.106)

Peter Banney

In brief

Although I have great respect for our Moderator, David Pittman's views, I'm afraid his makeover plans could still leave some UC members dissatisfied. Instead of being 'Uniting' we would remain 'dividing'. Without a definite 'yes' or 'no' statement, it appears to become a 'compromise' resolution which achieves little.

Beris Pomroy

When you look at history you can see why separation of church and state has worked well.

As Christians, if we are elected to office we can make a definite contribution on an individual basis as we do in society. However, we have to watch that individual freedoms are not lost.

Eric Sullivan

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Historically Speaking



FROM PADDLEWHEELERS TO THE CITY CATS

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

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

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

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Advertising and editorial deadline for May *Journey* Thursday, 13 April

I was in prison and you visited me. (Matthew 25:36)

JOURNEY asks...

Where have you met Jesus in prison?



Russell Clark

I have a passion to see men come to a faith in God. Wouldn't it be great to see a company of men praising God in our churches? I mean real men, men built like front row forwards, guys with tattoos on their arm, men with rough hands, men who aren't afraid to say they love Jesus.

Well, I have found such a company of men among the inmates of Lotus Glen. Here in prison, the conversation goes beyond the footy and the weather. Christian men in prison seem to express their faith more openly than a lot of blokes in church. Why? I believe it's because their sins are open for the public to read about in the tabloids, and they have plenty of time to reflect on their own lives. We 'more respectable' men can hide our sins in the cupboard, and fill our reflection time by being busy.

So where have I met Jesus in prison? I've met him in the company of men living out their faith in an environment that is angry and hostile. I've found him among inmates who sing out of tune, but sing with such joy and enthusiasm.

One particular encounter with Jesus occurred while sharing with an inmate. "Russ", he said. "In here we have a criminal record. That record is permanent. Long after we are dead and gone, our file is still on record. Isn't it exciting to know that Jesus has already thrown our file away and recorded 'not guilty'?"

Isn't it wonderful that Jesus has forgotten what the world refuses to forget?

Pastor Russell Clark is in ministry at Mareeba Uniting Church congregation and is chaplain to Lotus Glen Correctional Centre.

Pat Imhoff

A kaleidoscope of scenes whirls through my memory – moments, places, people – locked in a cell for four hours with two life sentence prisoners, sitting on concrete steps in intimate conversation with one woman while the things of earth grew strangely dim around us. Moments of prayer that have changed a woman's anger into tears of healing, or have broken the hold of darkness and brought the light of Jesus shining in.

Prison seems an unlikely setting for 'holy moments' when Jesus' presence becomes so real that it almost takes your breath away, but "I'm absolutely convinced that nothing – nothing living or dead, angelic or demonic, today or tomorrow, high or low, thinkable or unthinkable – absolutely nothing can get between us and God's love because of the way that Jesus our Master has embraced us" (Romans 8:38-39 *The Message*). The setting doesn't matter in the least; nothing can separate us from the love and the presence of God.

Recently in a small group of women gathered spontaneously in prayer, sharing and worship in a gym, I was overwhelmed with Jesus' lovely presence and blessed because the Jesus in them ministered so deeply to me. I well know that I do not go to take Jesus into the prison; I simply go to meet him there.

Even solitary confinement cells are no barrier to Jesus' presence just popping in with his wry sense of humour to convict and convince. I visited some women there and one had been reading the book of James loudly to the other, to carry through the concrete wall between. A discussion followed with both of them about the issue of 'taming the tongue'.

Both freely admitted that their tongues had put them in their present situation. In a setting where denial of responsibility is the norm, this was a breakthrough. The love of Jesus I felt for those two women in that place was indescribable.

Where have I met Jesus in prison? In the eyes of every seeking soul.

Pat Imhoff is Chaplain to the Brisbane Women's Prison.



Trish Milne

Jesus, in his lifetime, identified himself, very especially, with the poor and the oppressed; the outcast and the under privileged. When crucified, who were on his right and left? To whom was he still reaching out? To two criminals!

Meeting Jesus in prison necessitates viewing both sides of the same coin.

Spin up heads to reveal our crowned Saviour and Redeemer who 'bore our griefs' and 'took upon himself all our afflictions'. The oneness of Christ with each and every person tells me I meet Christ in the 'potential for righteousness' of every human being.

Spin up tails and find that our living Lord's ministry of holistic healing and reconciliation continues. Yes, even within the de-humanising environment of a correctional centre!

Christ is there in the fellowship of a growing faith community in their everyday words and deeds as they struggle to understand and come to terms with the nature of God's amazing love, mercy and grace for them; as they strive to turn the other cheek and love their enemies; and as they go the extra mile or give freely to another.

Christ is there in one inmate's ministry of supplying Christian literature and CDs throughout Queensland prisons so that others may come to know and believe. Many tithe their \$11 a week earnings.

Christ is there when a prisoner gets bashed for making a stance for equity and social justice, and when others hoard the set rations of breakfast cereal.

Christ is there in the holistic healing of mind, body and soul after years of substance



abuse or enormous guilt issues – anywhere there is restoration of a sense of self, the taking of responsibility and reconciliation with family members and communities.

"There is so much good in the worst of us
And so much bad in the best of us
That it hardly becomes any of us
To talk about the rest of us.

... we are not asked to judge ... Christ is judge." (*The Interpreter's Bible* page 563)

We are commanded to love and serve our Lord.

Trish Milne is Chaplain to Maryborough Correctional Centre and UCA Chaplain to St Stephen's Private Hospital.

