

July 2006

JOURNEY

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a 100 year
debate

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20 years and still talking

After more than 20 years talking about sexuality and leadership, the conversation looks set to continue. *Journey* presents a short history of a divisive issue.

By Bruce Mullan

WHEN THE NEWS of Resolution 84 first hit newspaper headlines on 14 July 2003 many people inside and outside the Uniting Church were surprised and even shocked.

They would have been more surprised to discover that this conversation has been going on in the Uniting Church in Australia for more than 20 years.

Even prior to the formation of the Uniting Church in Australia in 1977 one of the former denominations, the Presbyterian Church, had made a statement in favour of homosexual law reform at its 1970 General Assembly.

Then in 1981, four years after church union, a candidate for ordination in Victoria told the Students' Committee that she was living in a lesbian relationship. The Students' Committee asked the national Assembly Standing Committee for guidance.

In 1985 the report *Homosexuality and the Church* was released. This report stated that homosexuality should not, in and of itself, make a person ineligible for membership of the Uniting Church but was ambivalent on the question of ordination.

In the same year a proposal to establish that "celibacy in singleness and faithfulness in marriage" be the standard of the Uniting Church in Australia in sexual ethics was presented to the 4th Assembly and, after debate, the Assembly agreed not to vote on the question.

The 5th Assembly in 1988 and the 6th Assembly in 1991 also determined not to vote on proposals calling for "celibacy in singleness and faithfulness in marriage".

In response to protests from members of the church the 6th Assembly decided to create a Task Group on Sexuality to explore the whole area of Christian sexual ethics and bring a report to the 8th Assembly in 1997.

Conflict in the Uniting Church over the issue of homosexuality and leadership intensified in July 1997 when debate on the final report called *Uniting Sexuality and Faith* began at the 8th Assembly in Perth.

The then Assembly's Director of Mission Rev Dorothy McRae-McMahon and several other Assembly members "came out", but after much discussion the Assembly decided not to make a decision on the question of the ordination of people in same-sex relationships.

On another matter, the Assembly affirmed that the Uniting Church "can celebrate the uniqueness of every individual and be encouraged to respect our differences; we allow opportunities for each individual to use their gifts within the community of faith".

President during the 1997 Assembly, Rev John Mavor described the decisions as a choice to live in the "messy middle".

Mr Mavor who served as Uniting Church President for the next three years after the 1997 meeting said he gave "three years of his life and got a half-blocked artery trying to hold the church together".

"My message was keep your eye on Jesus then we can live with difference, keep your eye on the difference and we'll tear ourselves apart."

In 2000 the 9th Assembly was again heading to a heated debate on the issue of sexuality and leadership but was headed off by a procedural motion not to consider any proposals relating to sexuality.

Assembly member Ms Carolyn Kitto who moved the proposal said that she believed most of the

people at the 9th Assembly did not want to make a decision in either direction.

"It's still that way as far as I can see in the Uniting Church. Most people are happy to do what John Mavor said three years before and that is to live in the 'messy middle'," she said.

While it determined not to consider any proposals on sexuality the 9th Assembly did approve a "Statement on Unity and Diversity."

This statement asked all councils of the church to deal effectively and consistently with instances of harassment and vilification.



Sex and splits is what the newspaper love to talk about. See page 7

More about Assembly issues

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Much more than a meeting

NEXT WEEK the National Assembly of the Uniting Church in Australia will convene in Brisbane.

An Assembly is much more than you may think, much more than a meeting, not least because people gather from across the nation and from every part of the church.

The membership of the Assembly reflects that rich and exciting diversity that helps make the Uniting Church unique.

The program of the Assembly is similarly diverse, incorporating worship, Bible study, story-telling, reporting, planning, visioning, sharing, fellowship, group-work and decision-making.

We will celebrate our international and ecumenical partnerships; affirm the nation-wide network of ministry provided by Frontier Services and UnitingCare; encourage those who stand with and speak on behalf of the poor and defenceless; commit ourselves afresh to journey in covenant with the Aboriginal and Islander people of our land; rejoice in the growing presence and influence in our church of people from other lands; and wrestle with issues that are significant for our life together as the people of God.

The Assembly is about being a national church!

It is quite wrong, therefore, as some are prone to do, to make judgements about the quality and effectiveness of an Assembly meeting based on the way in which one particular matter is addressed and resolved, and this will be the fourth consecutive Assembly at which debate will take place on the subject of sexuality and leadership in the life of our church.

Notwithstanding the protracted and divisive nature of this debate, and the fact that some ministers and members have left our church because of it, this issue does not define the Uniting Church.



Message from the Moderator

Rev Dr David Pitman

I have been encouraged over recent months by the number of people who are saying just that.

They know what they believe about this matter but are determined that neither the issue itself, nor the debate about it, will distract them from their commitment to active participation in the life of the church through its worship, witness and service.

In my address to the Synod, on the occasion of my induction as Moderator last September, I said this: "It is so easy to be distracted from our primary calling and purpose.

"I've seen it happen too many times over the years, in a great many different situations: God's people so quickly and readily embroiled in conflicts that sometimes rage on for years, diverting and consuming the time and energy that ought to be devoted to the mission of the church and the ministry of Christ!

"We don't have to surrender our convictions in order to get on with the work of the Kingdom!

"So long as we belong to the Uniting Church we must faithfully, obediently and passionately live out our call in partnership with all our brothers and sisters.

"That is what Christ expects, and we do it not to please ourselves or satisfy our own needs, but for the sake of the gospel and the coming of the Kingdom of God on earth!"

Therefore, I would ask three things of you all.

First, uphold in your prayers the President and General Secretary, those involved in the organisation and management of the agenda and associated events, those providing leadership of worship and small groups, all the representatives, and each aspect of the program.

Our prayer, as Jesus himself has taught us, should be that God's will might prevail and not our own!

Second, actively demonstrate respectfulness and openness in all your conversations and relationships, remembering that other people hold their convictions with the same passion and sincerity as you do.

Our commitment to live and work together as brothers and sisters in Christ will help us to deal with our differences constructively and positively.

Third, resolve to remain focussed on, and committed to, those things that are central to our life in Christ and our ministry in his name.

Let us worship fervently, witness courageously and serve compassionately, and so honour Christ, the Lord of the church.

The Assembly is much more than you may think, much more than a meeting!

From the Editor

In Christ there is no east or west,
In Him no south or north;
But one great fellowship of love
Throughout the whole wide earth.

I haven't sung this hymn for years but I remember the words from my childhood and it has haunted me as we put this edition of *Journey* together.

For over fifty years those who had a vision for bringing three churches together (the Congregational Union of Australia, the Methodist Church of Australasia and the Presbyterian Church of Australia) struggled with what it would mean to live out Christian unity as a single church.

Somehow the angst of recent years over the issue of sexuality and leadership doesn't sit comfortably with the vision and commitment that brought the Uniting Church in Australia into being on 22 June 1977.

In uniting members of the three previous denominations *The Basis of Union* tells us that it would "bear witness to that unity which is both Christ's gift and will for the Church".

I can't help thinking that it is this core value of unity, the very essence of this vision that became the Uniting Church in Australia, that has kept the church together and will continue to do so.

The Basis of Union says, "In this union these Churches commit their members to acknowledge one another in love and joy as believers in our Lord Jesus Christ."

Deep, deep down it is this commitment to one another that is the very essence of our Uniting Church DNA, and when people talk about splits or schism it eats at the quintessence of who we are in Christ.

This core commitment to unity is also the reason our hearts break when people leave the Uniting Church over differences of opinion on theological issues and doctrinal matters.

As we came into union as a church I was constantly reminded that the Uniting Church is called "uniting" not "united" because the unity in Jesus Christ which we sought was not yet complete.

I always assumed they were talking about unity with other churches. I wonder now whether maintaining healthy relationships within our church is the greatest challenge to the unity to which we are called.

There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope of your calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all. But each of us was given grace according to the measure of Christ's gift. (Ephesians 4:4-7)

Bruce Mullan

JOURNEY

Journey is published 11 times a year for the Queensland Synod of the Uniting Church in Australia.

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

Acceptance of advertising does not imply endorsement; inclusion of advertising material is at the discretion of the publisher.

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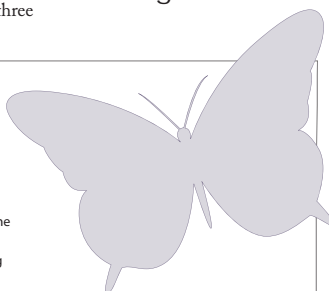
Editor
Associate editor / advertising
Designer

Bruce Mullan
Mardi Lumsden
Osler Lau

Production: Communications Services Unit
Printing: Rural Press (QLD) Printing, Ormiston,
Circulation 15,500
ISSN: 0817-4466

Closing date for editorial and advertising for August *Journey* is 14 July
Next issue of *Journey* will be available in churches on Sunday 6 August

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Sign of the Times



THIS *Sign of the Times* photograph was taken in the first week of June and advertised the public meeting hosted by the Mary Valley Uniting Church.

Mary Valley Minister Rev Iain Watt has exercised a wonderful ministry to those who will be affected by the proposed Mary River Dam (see page 3).

Moderator Rev Dr David

Pitman said Mr Watt is well known and greatly respected in the area.

"In the midst of this human crisis the demands on his time and energy have been considerable.

"Please pray for him, and the members of our congregations at Imbil and Amamoor, as they exercise a caring and supportive presence in the wider life of the community."

Moderator damns government over Mary River



Rev Ian Watt (left) and the Moderator in conversation with a Mary Valley farmer. Photo by Heather den Houting

QUEENSLAND'S moderator Rev Dr David Pitman marched on the ALP Convention in Brisbane in early June with residents who will be displaced by the proposed Traveston Crossing dam in the Sunshine Coast Hinterland.

Dr Pitman had earlier met with affected residents in the Mary Valley and toured the central Mary Valley to meet local people and gain a more complete understanding of the issues.

Dr Pitman listened to the concerns and responded to the grief and anger of the people with a commitment to support them in every way possible.

"The treatment of the people in the Mary Valley by this government is shameful and unacceptable," he said.

Local Uniting Church minister Rev Iain Watt said that those who have lived in the area for generations are distraught and children are stirred up and anxious as they see their parents continually stressed.

"The people living in the area affected (and it is much, much wider than those in the dam footprint) were not consulted but told blankly by the Premier that this is a fait accompli," he said.

"This is not democratic process - this is abuse."

The Moderator described the government's behaviour as abusive and callous.

"I personally feel a deep sense of outrage on behalf of the residents of the Mary Valley.

"They have been treated very badly by a government that constantly declares that it 'cares for people'. There is no evidence of that here."

Dr Pitman told the rally, "I want you to know that there are a lot of people in the city who are with you."

"There are those of us who are willing to change our lifestyles so you don't have to lose yours."

"The Uniting Church will stand by you in your struggle."

The church's Social Justice Advocate Ms Heather den Houting who travelled to Imbil with the Moderator said the Uniting Church in Australia has clear environmental policies which cover the building of major water catchments and storage facilities.

"The church says that such disturbances should be determined in a democratically legitimate process, with respect for the rights of nature and only where the disturbance is not inordinate."

After a day and a half of consultations Dr Pitman concluded, "I am not a geologist or an engineer but there seems to be a significant body of opinion that seriously questions the construction of this particular dam in this area."

"I would like the Premier to explain the basis on which he can commit to this project before the investigation has concluded, and in the absence of any prior consultation with those most directly and adversely affected."

"I find his attitude and the intention both mystifying and irresponsible."

At the time *Journey* went to print the government was standing firm on the Traveston Crossing dam project.

Dr Pitman believes that the local residents and the Save the Mary River Committee are more than capable of arguing the environmental case against the government proposals.

"Our primary concern is for the people and the way they are being treated."

By Bruce Mullan

The church still needs you...

By Bruce Mullan

ACTING CHAIRPERSON of the synod's Future of Ministry Project Team Rev Dennis Robinson has urged congregations to focus their worship and prayer on the need to encourage people in the church to listen for the call of God to ministry.

Sunday, 23 July has been designated Ministry Sunday to help

the Uniting Church in Queensland to focus on the urgent need for people to offer themselves as candidates for specified ministries.

"We invite preachers and worship leaders to place the call to ministry before their congregations as they gather for worship and prayer," Mr Robinson said.

"The lectionary readings on that Sunday from Jeremiah and Mark will give congregations an opportunity to reflect upon the nature of leadership."

The Future of Ministry Project Team was appointed by the Synod Leadership Team after the 23rd Synod in 2002 to help the church increase the number of ministers available for placement in congregations.

Chairperson of the Team Rev John Mavor said that the task of implementing the principles had been a frustrating one.

"The Team cannot escape the

feeling that the culture of the Church is the predominate problem and until that is changed it will be hard to recruit sufficient people for the Specified Ministries," he said.

Mr Mavor said the Project Team believes maximum support and resourcing need to be given to helping ministers become missional leaders.

"Ministers and congregations need to be held accountable as to whether they are fulfilling the Great Commission."

On Ministry Sunday, congregation members will be asked to reflect, pray and ask the question, "Are there any people in our congregation with undiscovered or yet-to-be-recognised gifts for ministry?"

"If you discern someone who is gifted and suitable for leadership in the Uniting Church, why not challenge them to be open to the call of God?" Mr Robinson said.



Acting Chairperson of the synod's Future of Ministry Project Team Rev Dennis Robinson

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We're still able to talk about it

THE ISSUE of sexual orientation and leadership in the Uniting Church will be with us for some time and it hardly needs to be said that this is an issue that generates high levels of emotion and distress.

When we are worked up, it becomes very difficult to keep the channels of communication open.

Anger can be a useful emotion. It can fire us to engage in constructive action for change.

If we don't feel strongly about something, it's unlikely that we'll do anything about it.

But we also know that anger can be destructive. When we're worked up it's much more likely that we'll launch a personal attack or make a comment calculated to annoy.

So what are some guiding principles to help us keep talking constructively despite our strong feelings?

Maintain an attitude of respect for the other person.

I have an acquaintance who I admire in many respects. He holds tightly to his convictions. He cares deeply about his values and does everything he can to advance them.

I've observed, though, that when he can't convince the other person he gets really angry and things turn ugly. It is as though his conversation partner ceases being a person and becomes a thing for moulding to his point of view.

If we really believe that all people are made in the image of God, we will treat others as persons and not as objects to be shaped by us.

Let the other person know that you are hearing them.

If I'm not interested in hearing my conversation partner, dialogue

is impossible. Martin Buber, philosopher and deeply religious Jew, said that "inclusion" is essential if I really want to hear the other.

That is, I need to include myself in her inner universe - in her way of thinking, her assumptions, her values.

The only way that I know whether or not I am really connecting with the other person is to feed back to her in my own words what I think she is saying. "You seem to be saying that..."

When she says, "Yeah, that's exactly it..." I know that I have heard her and, even more importantly, she knows that I have heard her.

Focus on the values behind the views expressed.

Sometimes we react to the particular view that is expressed (for or against the ordination of practicing homosexuals) without taking the trouble to ask about the values behind the view.

When I get in touch with the guiding principles that shape the view of the other person I may see him in a different light.

If I can respect his values, I have a basis for dialogue.

Christ's exhortation to love one another becomes particularly challenging when there is a lot at stake and emotions run high.

One significant test of Christian love is whether or not we are prepared to maintain the disciplines of genuine dialogue when the heat is on.

Rev Dr Neil Pembroke is Lecturer in Pastoral Studies at the School of History, Philosophy, Religion, and Classics at the University of Queensland



ST JOHN THE BAPTIST was painted by Leonardo da Vinci around 1513-1516 with oil on wood. It was his last painting and is now housed in the Louvre in Paris.

The work shows John the Baptist dressed in animal skins with long curly hair and smiling enigmatically in a similar manner to Leonardo's famous *Mona Lisa*. In his left hand he holds a reed cross and his right hand points up toward heaven. Some believe the cross and skins were added at a later date by another painter.

Some art critics see this work as imbued with homoerotic overtones while most acknowledge that John's appearance is at the least androgynous. John certainly appears soft and feminine if not gender-ambiguous.

Think faithfully about big issues

GENERAL SECRETARY of the National Assembly Rev Terence Corkin points out that in the last few years there has been much discussion about the way in which the Uniting Church determines the will of God on important matters and, in particular, the place that the Bible is given in the life of the Uniting Church.

Mr Corkin said the task of theological reflection is the responsibility of all Christ's people.

He said this commitment to an informed faith was evident in

the Methodist, Presbyterian and Congregational churches that came into the Uniting Church.

"Each of these traditions relied upon more than a bald reading of the scriptures when it came to 'faithful thinking'."

"For example the four-fold schema of John Wesley, scripture, tradition, experience and reason, was well established."

To help guide the church the National Working Group on Doctrine has prepared a paper for the 11th Assembly that outlines the Uniting Church way of engaging

in "faithful thinking".

Guidance for the Church's Faithful Thinking is a helpful statement of a Uniting Church approach to theological reflection.

This document lists a number of considerations which inform the church when it considers contentious issues.

These include the person of Jesus Christ, faithful use of scripture, other sources from the church's heritage, the catholicity of the church, and taking time to listen to each other.

The statement says that as a church we deal with disputes differently from other organisations.

It says we do that by engaging together in responsible, prayerful, thoughtful theological reflection and sometimes rigorous debate.

"We are one not because we all agree on every point of theology, nor because we all worship the same way, or witness and serve in the same way."

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Discerning truth is a corporate process

By Bruce Mullan

MODERATOR OF the Queensland Synod Rev Dr David Pitman believes that one of the most serious challenges facing the Uniting Church is a breakdown of relationships.

He sees this evidenced in a loss of trust and a widespread tendency for people to blame those with whom they disagree for the dilemma the church is in over the debate on sexuality and leadership.

Dr Pitman told a Leadership Forum in Brisbane in April that the ongoing debate over the authority and interpretation of scripture in relation to sexuality and leadership does not release anyone from the obligation to listen to what the Bible says about a range of other matters about attitudes and behaviour and the way people treat each other.

"We cannot address the issues that threaten to divide us in isolation from the biblical imperatives that call us to live and work together for the sake of the Kingdom," he said.

Dr Pitman said he had witnessed some awful behaviour over the past 15 years, most of it directly linked in some way with the debate over sexuality and leadership, but that he had also witnessed similar behaviour in relation to a whole range of other matters.

"Nothing disappoints or saddens me more than to experience the capacity Christians have to treat each other so badly and then compound their appalling behaviour by excusing themselves and blaming others.

"Our responsibility in leadership is to confront bad behaviour when we see it and actively work to

create and sustain communities within which people relate and communicate respectfully, recognising that others hold their convictions with the same passion and sincerity we do."

Dr Pitman said he had been encouraged over the last six months by the quality of the conversations had with people from many different parts of the church and that the majority of people he had met were gracious and respectful.

Dr Pitman has a consistent passion for the unity of the church that Christ prayed for.

"It is a unity that transcends all our human differences, whether they are theological, cultural, social or political.

"This is not a unity created by uniformity. It is a unity that embraces diversity."

Dr Pitman also questions the proposition that truth is more important than unity.

"The implications of this assertion are very serious, not least because it encourages intellectual and spiritual arrogance and makes significant dialogue impossible.

"More importantly it is the very argument that has been used to justify schism on many occasions.

"I cannot see how these two dimensions of our faith and life can be separated."

Dr Pitman said that truth does not exist in a vacuum or isolation, but is experienced and discerned in community.

"No one of us can perfectly discern the truth. We discover it together as we journey together.

"God still has so much to teach us."



THE FALL FROM GRACE was painted on the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel by Michelangelo between 1508 and 1512. On the left Adam, far from being seduced by Eve reaches out eagerly for the forbidden fruit. The reclining Eve reaches out towards the snake (with a woman's body) to take the fruit from her hand.

The work was not without conflict between Michelangelo and Pope Julius II. At one stage a furious Julius threatened to throw Michelangelo from the scaffold. Michelangelo immediately took it down and refused to add gold leaf and make changes Julius was asking for.

Church heads say no to extended Pacific solution

LEADERS OF seven Australian Churches have collectively written to the Prime Minister John Howard, expressing their opposition to the changes proposed to Australia's processing of asylum seekers. The changes mean Australia will send asylum seekers who arrive here to Nauru until their claims are processed.

"If this new Bill passes into legislation, it will effectively mean that Australia will cease to be a place of refuge for those directly fleeing from violence and persecution," said Rev John Henderson, General Secretary of the NCCA.

"If other countries behaved like this, the world would become a much more dangerous place for

everyone, especially those being persecuted. There would simply be nowhere to go when you are in fear of your life. We can and should do better than that.

"The regime of detention forced upon people by the Pacific Solution has already been shown to cause unnecessary trauma through prolonged and isolated detention."

Assembly: more than one issue

WHILE SEXUALITY and leadership might be the only issue reported on radio, television and in newspapers the Assembly will be considering a number of other matters. These discussions will include:

- calling the Uniting Church to adopt lifestyles which have a minimal impact on global warming;
- encouraging synods, presbyteries and agencies to hold discussions about enhancing the practical expression of the covenant between Congress and the rest of the church;
- allowing synods and presbyteries to tell the Assembly when they feel a decision is "vital to the life of the church";
- offering maximum support to the Evangelical Christian Church in the Land of Papua as Papuan culture faces marginalisation through transmigration to, and

heavy-handed military action in, West Papua;

- considering changes that would allow for better support and more guidance for a full-time President;
- endorsing a document called *Being Church Differently*, that will help foster faith development outside the structures of "normal" congregations;
- adopting a statement on human rights which would commit the church to ongoing assessment of Australian Government policy and practice against the international human rights instruments;
- considering a report from the Specified Ministries Task Group which proposes to amalgamate the existing ministries of lay pastor, community minister and youth worker into one new ministry called the "Specified Ministry of Pastor" to be in operation by 2008.

Marjorie Lewis-Jones from *Insights* provided this summary

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NOLI ME TANGERE by Titian c. 1510-15 depicts Mary Magdalene kneeling and reaching out to the gardener who she discovers is actually the risen Jesus. Acknowledged as one of Titian's greatest works it depicts a woman who has enjoyed the pleasures of the flesh and has been found acceptable to Christ.

Mary reaches out to Jesus for the familiar physical touch to express her love for him.

Like many Venetian artists Titian worked out his painting on the canvas. An X-ray examination showed the painting was changed at an advanced stage of the composition.

Jesus was originally painted walking to the left rejecting Mary's love and not offering his own but in the finished work Christ draws back from one kind of contact and offers another.

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

The reappearance of the debate on the issue of sexuality and leadership at the 10th Assembly in Melbourne in 2003 caught many by surprise.

Supporters of what is now known as Resolution 84 claim the decisions made reaffirmed the status quo that presbyteries, as always, make decisions on the suitability of candidates for ordination, do so on a case by case basis and can include consideration of the applicant's sexuality.

Mr Mavor, who moved Resolution 84 at the 10th Assembly on behalf of the Assembly Standing Committee, hopes that the 11th Assembly will reaffirm the current policy.

"That's where I thought we needed to be at the last Assembly and that's where we need to be still. And love each other in the process."

Those opposed to the resolution claim that it represents a significant change in the Church's faith and practice as it is now formally stated that it could be possible for a practising homosexual living

in a committed relationship to be accepted as a candidate for the ministry.

National Chair and Spokesperson for the Evangelical Members Union (EMU) Rev Steve Estherby feels this message has not been heard by those who will make the decisions on sexuality and leadership at the next Assembly.

"I am convinced that we face a situation in which we are not strong enough or clever enough to solve on our own.

"In human terms we are already defeated. We need God's help because we face an impossible situation," he said.

The resolution did acknowledge that within the Church there are a range of views on questions of biblical interpretation of various matters of Christian faith and practice, and called on members of the church to continue "to live together as people of faith" with these differences.

The debate will be held at the 11th Assembly in Brisbane this month will test the Uniting Church's ability to do just that.

Further reading on sexuality and leadership

THE Uniting Church, along with many other churches, has done much prayerful, thoughtful, scholarly work over a 25 year period on the issue of people in committed same-gender relationships.

The available Uniting Church publications include:

Homosexuality and the Bible (1985)

Responses to Homosexuality and the Bible (1987)

Looking Beyond the Fig Leaves (1993)

Sexuality: Exploring the Issues (1996)

Uniting Sexuality and Faith (1997)

Unique Prophetic and Apostolic Witness (2000)

Sexuality and Leadership (2004).

Reflecting on unity

Management consultant and counsellor Greg Brown reflects on the notion of Christian unity and what it means to be Christians together.

UNITY COULD be thought of as being like-minded - having the same or similar views. So some may feel they can't be like-minded with those whom they perceive to hold unbiblical views - e.g. views in relation to homosexuality.

Or it may be that unity is equated with harmony - behaving well with and towards each other.

However, such understandings of unity fail to take into account the significance of Paul's words in Ephesians 4:2, "Show your love by being tolerant with one another" (Good News Bible).

By definition, there is no need for tolerance where there are no differences. It is not difficult to live in harmony with people who agree with us. A church in which everybody thinks and believes alike (a likely story!) may be harmonious, but that is not what the scripture is talking about when it addresses the issue of unity.

Harmony and like-mindedness are not the same as unity.

Biblical unity is all about what happens when people disagree.

It has to do with living authentically in Christ in community with those with whom we differ and, whether we like it or not, we are linked with all those who claim the name of Christ.

Bonhoeffer helps us to understand this when he says: "One is a brother [sic] to another only through Jesus Christ... Our community with one another consists solely in what Christ has done to both of us... The more genuine and deeper our community becomes, the more will everything else between us recede, the more clearly and purely will Jesus Christ and his work become the one and only thing that is vital between us."

Some understand the UCA as a theological spectrum under a single umbrella. They are neither surprised nor threatened when a theology surfaces under the umbrella which they have not encountered previously or which differs from their own.

In fact, they rejoice in this expression of diversity. For them, that is what the umbrella is all about. For them it might even be hypocritical to preach about unity if it can't be authentically demonstrated.

There can be no doubt that scripture calls us to live in unity with each other, and that means fellowshiping with those with whom we differ. Author Tommy Tenney writes, "If you make 100% doctrinal agreement grounds for fellowship... the only one you can have fellowship with is yourself."

When things are good in a relationship we rarely stop to think about why they are good, or even why we are in the relationship. It is when things get rocky that we begin to ask questions. However, this is not always a good time to ask these questions. Our thought processes might be contaminated by ill-will or pain or mistrust. Emotion can get in the way of logic.

In times of relational difficulty we need to go back to the values and covenants that led us into the relationship in the first place, and trust that we made good decisions at the time for the right reasons.

Separating from the UCA at a time when we feel disappointed or disillusioned is not the answer. We must return to the fundamental principles that have guided us in the past, and allow them to inform us again in this current context.

Our trust and hope is not in the institutional church, but in a God who is and will ever be faithful to his people.

If we are hoping for the church to save us we will always be disappointed.

The UCA may well take on a different form as a result of our present debate. That is really God's business. What must remain as our primary focus is our unwavering commitment to the Kingdom and God continues to do Kingdom work through human religious systems (including the UCA) every one of which is flawed.

As long as we continue to focus on sexuality we are off the main game. Church consultant Lyle Schaller refers to arguing about this and similar issues as a 'recreational activity'. We simply don't have the time for this type of recreation!

The way forward seems clear. Get on with fulfilling the Great Commission! Any other course of action is not serving God's agenda, so whose agenda is it serving?

The full text of this paper can be accessed at www.journeyonline.com.au

Assembly news

TO KEEP up with the latest news during the Assembly meeting be sure to subscribe to the Daily News email alert at <http://lists.uca.org.au/?p=subscribe&id=9>.

This headline news alert will be sent electronically each night to your email address and will capture all the news of the day including stories, reports and resolutions.

An Assembly members' newsletter will be distributed daily and include preview stories of the day's business and stories from the previous day. A PDF will be uploaded to the 11th Assembly website each day <http://assembly.uca.org.au/11thassembly>.

Sex and splits: it's what the media talks about

By Bruce Mullan

IF THERE is one thing that the media loves it's a good fight, and the continuing debate over sexuality and leadership in the Uniting Church in Australia has been an established favourite.

Journey has researched the recent interest of major daily newspapers in this issue and predicts that media interest in the discussions at the 11th Assembly in Brisbane this month will be significant.

Journey tracked *The Courier*

Mail, *The Australian* and the *Sydney Morning Herald* over ten years logging every article which featured the words "Uniting Church" and "homosexual" or "gay" in the headline or first paragraph.

While there was some interest in the release of the *Interim Report on Sexuality* in 1996 it was during the 8th Assembly in 1997 that newspaper reports escalated dramatically and quoted significant dissenting voices such as that of Rev Fred Nile, a renowned

conservative minister from NSW, EMU spokesperson Rev Robert Iles and head of Sydney's Wesley Mission Rev Dr Gordon Moyes.

Newspapers also quoted Rev Dorothy McRae-McMahon and others who had "come out" during the Assembly.

Apart from a small flurry of excitement over the participation of a group of Uniting Church members marching in Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras under the banner "Celebrating Diversity",

media generally lost interest in the discussion for almost six years.

Some newspapers tried to resurrect the issue during the 9th Assembly in July 2000, but when the Assembly determined not to consider any proposals on sexuality, little media attention resulted.

While Uniting Church members continued to march in the Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras each year and the Uniting Network continued to hold their "Daring Gatherings" the three newspapers basically lost interest until the matter came up again at the 10th Assembly in Melbourne in 2003.

The debate on the issue caught both the media and much of the wider church by surprise, with no articles on homosexuality and the Uniting Church in the three papers studied in the first half of 2003 and then thirty in the second half, after the start of the Assembly.

The Australian led the way flagging the issue on 9 July, three days before the Assembly commenced.

The other two newspapers followed on 14 July, the day the proposal now known as Resolution 84 was presented to the Assembly.

Again the papers went to McRae-McMahon and Moyes,

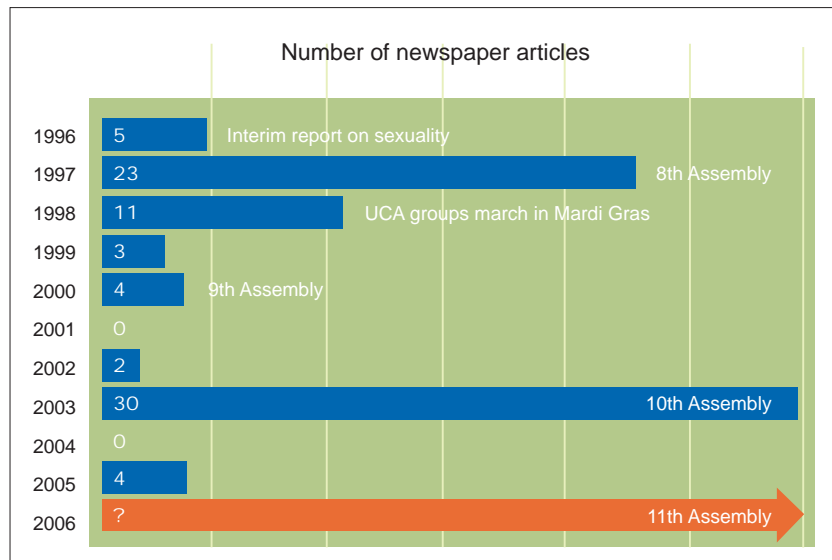
as well as the President as official church spokesperson.

The media activity around 10th Assembly debate is well documented by Dr John Harrison in a research analysis called *'Splits' and 'quits'* which concluded that the majority of news stories were framed using conflictual language and largely ignored the complexity of the issues being discussed.

There was a small flicker of interest in late 2003 when Sydney Anglican Archbishop Peter Jensen offered "refuge" to dissenting Uniting Church members and some attention to press releases from EMU and the Reforming Alliance during 2005.

When looked at in graph form *Journey* concludes that the media are most attentive to the issue of Sexuality and Leadership in the Uniting Church at the times it is being discussed at the National Assembly, and that this is fuelled by the willingness of proponents at both extremes in the debate to talk directly to the secular media.

With the 11th Assembly timetable to deal with the issue over a four day period it is reasonable to assume media attention will be intense in the weeks ahead.



The graph shows the number of newspaper articles for each year since 1996

Trinity sends students out

TWO STUDENTS completed their formal time at Trinity Theological College at the end of June.

Peter Taubner, as an Intern Minister of the Word, and Tanya Richards are both looking forward to the challenge of ministry.

Ms Richards will take a year of leave from formal training to work with the Christian Protestant Church in Bali (GKPB), particularly in the area of domestic violence and women's rights.

Mr Taubner will head west of Gladstone to the Banana Shire (named after a bull, not the fruit) to serve nine congregations spread over 15,729 square kilometers.

After being a youth worker for over twenty years, Mr Taubner decided it was time for his ministry to take a different direction.

"I guess it was a bit of a change of dimension. It was time for a transition to be faithful to my call and yet respond to the needs of the church."

As a youth worker, he had plenty of experience in training others to be leaders within church groups, congregations and their community.

While based in Moura, Mr Taubner said he would continue this tradition by resourcing ministry.

"I will be facilitating, training, supporting, and equipping."

"My studies at Trinity this time have been an opportunity to strengthen my understandings of the Bible, theology, doctrine and worship among other things."

"I encourage my fellow students to continue being formed, prepared and equipped and to all those out there considering any further studies - give it a go."

To congratulate them on their achievement, the Uniting Church Investment Service presented communion sets to the graduates.

By Mardi Lumsden



Trinity graduate Peter Taubner is off to the Dawson and Calide Valleys

VACANCY

General Practitioner

Koinonia Family Medical Centre is an innovative Christian General Practice in the centre of Toowoomba, aiming to provide excellence in our service and medical care. It is recognised for the development of innovative ideas and for its teaching and supportive network.

Koinonia is seeking a full time Vocationally Registered General Practitioner to join an exciting and supportive team, working together to provide quality care to our patients. The position can be either as an employee or as an assistant with a view to joining the leadership team. Identification with the philosophy of the **Koinonia Family Medical Centre** is essential.

Koinonia is a fully computerised, AGPAL accredited practice. It currently has five doctors supported by three nurses, three reception staff and a pastoral care worker. It has close association with psychologists, occupational therapists and an osteopath who share the same building.

Please send expressions of interest or applications to **Koinonia Family Medical Centre** at 114 Russell St, Toowoomba, 4350. For more information call **Dr Graham Emblen** 0418 630 081 or **Dr Hume Rendle-Short** 0402 059 618 or 07 4659 7199.

VACANCY

SYNOD SCHOOL'S COMMISSION



A vacancy exists for a Uniting Church Member to be appointed to the Schools' Commission of the Queensland Synod. The Synod is calling for expressions of interest for the position which is a voluntary one.

The Selection Criteria for the appointee are:

- Active Membership in the Uniting Church
- Commitment to the values, mission and ethos of the Uniting Church
- Knowledge and/or experience of church schools and the independent schooling sector
- Commitment to education in Christian schools
- Expertise in policy discernment and development which can be applied to church schools
- Expertise in a relevant discipline such as education, theology, law, accounting, marketing or business
- Eligibility for a Queensland Government Suitability Card for Child-related Employment
- Commitment to the faith growth of students within Christian schools

Expressions of interest addressing the above selection criteria and skills list should be forwarded to Rev. Jenny Tymms, General Secretary, at GPO Box 674, Brisbane. Qld. 4001 by 21 July 2006

Jan's story: doing theology in dialogue with the culture

JAN CONTINUES to struggle as the mother of a boy with ADHD.

It has been stressful and Jan can see that if she and her husband Theo are to maintain the quality of family life, something will have to give. Jan has been seriously considering giving up her job as a teacher aide which she loves.

In seeking to work through the issues in this decision, she made an appointment with Sarah Johnson the counsellor at the school where she works.

Jan explained she has found an important dimension of herself though working at the school over the last ten years. It has been an expression of vocation, not just a way of earning extra cash.

"As you know, Sarah, I'm a Christian. My faith plays an important role in how I see myself, my relationships, my life in general.

"The example of Christ is clear for me: he sacrificed himself for others. I feel like I need to make a sacrifice here too.

"That's why I think I need to give up this job – even though it means a lot to me."

Sarah responded, "Jan, I respect your commitment to your religion but I'm wondering if there's another way of looking at the issue.

"I'm not a card-carrying feminist but why does it always seem to be women who do the sacrificing when it comes to decisions like this one? What about Theo? Can he cut back on his hours or look for a new part-time job?"

Jan and Sarah batted this possibility around for some time without reaching a point of resolution.

"Well, you've certainly given me something to think about," Jan said by way of closing the conversation.

"I need to process this a bit more and then maybe we can talk again."

This was the first time that Jan had seriously questioned the idea that self-sacrifice is the Christian ideal for love. She found this quite unsettling, and decided to phone

her minister, Dane Sangren, to get his perspective.

Dane indicated that Christian theologians have been rethinking the ethic of love and that many now prefer to talk about equal regard rather than sacrifice.

The principle of equal regard, he pointed out, says that the Christian is called to love others neither more nor less than herself or himself. This means that there is both giving and receiving in a relationship.

In relation to the decision facing Jan and Theo, this indicates that they should both think about giving up something.

To offer to give up her job so that Theo would not be inconvenienced in any way is not necessarily a deeper expression of Christian love.

What we have here is an example of the dialogical form of theological reflection, involving a discourse between a Christian view of life and that of the surrounding culture.

It is founded on the premise that 'secular' thinking has something important to say to the Church.

The best thinking of the culture – as expressed in disciplines such as philosophy, sociology, and psychology – cannot be uncritically borrowed, but it does contain genuine wisdom.

In this way of doing theology, the best insights from the culture are integrated with the truths of the gospel.

This is the last episode of Jan's Story in *Journey*. If you'd like to discuss the series join the Queensland Synod theology and worship email discussion list. Visit the website www.turn.unitingchurch.org.au for more details.



Map of East Timor and surrounds courtesy of www.lib.utexas.edu

Rebuilding East Timor Appeal

REV JOHN MAVOR Acting National Director for Uniting Church Overseas Aid (UCOA) reports that the Uniting Church in Australia, through Uniting Church Overseas Aid, has been monitoring the crisis in East Timor very closely and was keeping in regular contact with our partner organisations on the ground.

Having carefully assessed the needs of the people most affected, YASONA, the community aid and development arm of the Protestant Church in East Timor (IPTL), has asked for Uniting Church support to provide emergency aid to people in need.

UCOA has sent an initial gift and is now asking the church to participate with us by providing further support.

Cheques should be made payable to Uniting Church Overseas Aid, Rebuilding East Timor, Uniting Church Overseas Aid, P.O. Box A2266, Sydney South NSW 1235.

For Credit Card donations call toll free 1800 998 122. Gifts are tax-deductible.



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AUSTRALIA

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ANGLICARE Education PO Box 427 Parramatta NSW 2124

Games are out, discipleship is in

By Steve Kersnovske and
Bruce Mullan

THROWING OUT the "entertainment" model of evangelism and replacing it with a group focused on getting to know Christ better will be the key message that Canadian-based Youth Worker Ken Moser will deliver to the Growing Apostles conference to be hosted by the Youth and Children's Ministry Unit (YACMU).

Moser spent 20 years working for the Anglican Church in Sydney and is convinced that developing intentional discipleship is the critical calling for those in youth ministry.

"We are not called to entertain this world, we are called to make disciples of Christ," he said.

"In the past our evangelism has depended on the attractiveness of the leaders or on the whiz-bang programs we tried to run. This has proved to be an ineffective and a damaging model."

Moser told *Journey* that strong discipleship will equip young

people themselves to be evangelists and reach out effectively.

"Other models tend to focus on entertainment as the way to reach the outsider.

"Quite often the youth minister says, 'What will bring kids to youth group so that I can tell them about Christ?'"

"This has led to youth ministry resembling amusement parlours or social clubs rather than groups

of people who pray and study the Word of God."

Moser told *Journey* he believed this was a deeply flawed and unbiblical approach to ministry.

"A better approach is to build up the young people in the church to be a community committed to Christ who seek to equip and encourage each other to live in an often dangerous world.

"This community then seeks to present an authentic witness for Christ. Instead of trying to attract their friends through entertainment they 'hold out the word of life'."

Moser claims that this style of ministry also gives clear direction to youth leaders.

"No longer are they charged up personalities who are there for a good time.

"They are now mentors and guides in the Christian life."

The Growing Apostles conference will be held in two parts from 26 to 30 August 2006. For more information phone 07 3377 9782 or email colleen.castray@yacmu.ucaqld.com.au



Ken Moser is speaker at the Growing Apostles conference

2006 Winter Studies



Introduction

THESE FIVE studies are for groups or individuals as they reflect on what it means to live in Christ's community.

The sessions link Biblical texts from the Revised Common Lectionary (July 16 - August 13), passages from the Uniting Church Basis of Union and other writings, with a series of questions designed to explore the subject of being in Christ's community.

If used in groups these sessions are designed in a way that does not necessitate the group having a leader. Group members share in facilitating the conversation and encouraging all to participate in the discussions. This is also a reason for the suggestion that a different person speak the blessing each week. The role of ministry in the Uniting Church is a shared responsibility.

The material in this Journey Winter Studies "lift-out" is prepared by the Queensland Synod Theology and Worship Committee. It is copyright free for use in congregations.

Group process

The studies follow a standard format but differ in content and emphasis.

Opening prayer

An opening prayer from *Uniting in Worship 2*, a book of prayers and resources for leaders of worship. The same opening prayer is used for each session.

Read

Read the Ephesians passage in a translation of your choice. Part of each study's Bible reading is provided, usually from The Message. There are also short extracts from The *Basis of Union* and quotes from other writers relating to the theme.

Reflect

A brief reflection on the theme for the week including a mission story from Queensland.

Talk about

Some questions for group discussion or individual reflection are given. The purpose is to explore the scripture, the understandings of the people of faith and the theme for the session. Feel free to pick and choose those questions which are most helpful to the group process.

So what?

This question is to focus us on the practical application of the theme in our daily lives.

Closing prayer

People are invited to participate in a shared prayer. Feel free to use other prayers or an open prayer time.

Blessing

The same blessing is used for each session. It is recommended that a different person offers the blessing to the group each week.

Opening prayer to use each week

Come to us, God of love.

Come with your extravagant kindness and your goodness.

Come, that we may see you in the people of every race and culture; that we may embrace you in the lonely, the bereaved and the rejected; that we may be an accepting and a caring church:

Come to us, God of love.

Come to us, God of unity.

Come with your forgiveness and your healing grace.

Come, that we may witness to reconciliation for a divided world;

that we may gather around Christ's table as one people;
that we may affirm one church, one faith, one Lord:

Come to us, God of unity.

Come to us, God of hope.

Come to us with your promises, come in your mysterious presence. Come, that we may marvel at your faithfulness in past generations; that we may celebrate the new things you are doing among us today; that we may be your pilgrim people on our journey to your kingdom:
Come to us, God of hope.

Blessing

Christ be with us, Christ within us, Christ behind us, Christ before us, Christ beside us, Christ to win us, Christ to comfort and restore us.

Christ beneath us, Christ above us, Christ in quiet, Christ in danger, Christ in hearts of all that love us, Christ in mouth of friend and stranger.

(Adapted from the *Breastplate of Patrick*)

Week 1 Community of freedom



Opening prayer

Ask one person in the group to lead the prayer with group members reading together the words in bold print.

Read

Read Ephesians 1:3-14.

Christ also brought you the truth, which is the good news about how you can be saved. You put your faith in Christ and were given the promised Holy Spirit to show that you belong to God. The Spirit also makes us sure that we will be given what God has stored up for his people. Then we will be set free, and God will be honoured and praised. (Ephesians 1:13-14 Contemporary English Version)

In love for the world, God gave the Son to take away the world's sin. Jesus of Nazareth announced the sovereign grace of God... (The *Basis of Union*, Paragraph 3).

We have to learn again that in the everyday life of secularism every single Christian represents the church. For that, however, one must offer something more than order – namely, the disciple's freedom that is the fruit of the Spirit. (Ernst Käsemann, *Jesus Means Freedom*)

Reflection

Russell Clark is chaplain at Lotus Glen Correctional Centre in Mareeba. In the April issue of *Journey* Russell wrote about seeing men in prison expressing their faith more openly than a lot of blokes in church. While these men may be locked away, they are experiencing an inner freedom in Christ.

Inner freedom is something that we all crave for. Given that it is a deep psychological and spiritual need, we would expect it to be a central concern of the Gospel. The writer of the letter to the Ephesians highlights for us the fact that indeed it is: "The Spirit is the guarantee that we shall receive what God has promised his people, and this assures us that God will give complete freedom to those who are his."

Ernst Käsemann was one of the great New Testament scholars of the 20th century. His book, *Jesus Means Freedom*, suggests that the essence of Jesus' life and message was liberating people from all forms of bondage.

Sin is another name for inner bondage. It holds us prisoner; we are unable to move freely in the world as God intends. The bondage has both individual and social expressions.

We are very familiar with the sinful tendencies in persons – individualism, narcissism, greed, aggressiveness, distorted sexual behaviour, and the like. We are perhaps

less used to thinking about the bondage associated with systemic distortions. Social and political systems are almost always set up with vested interests in mind. Those who have the education, power, wealth and influence in the society arrange society to support their privileged lifestyles. This means that there are those individuals and groups – those without power and status – who miss out.

Jesus came to break open all the constraining forces that are associated with our sinful tendencies. Freedom in Christ is now but not yet. Sin has been vanquished through Christ's life, death, and resurrection, but the victory is not yet complete. That's why the New Testament sets freedom in perspective, reminding us that our present freedom in Christ is a foretaste of the complete freedom which Christ will bring in the fullness of all time.

Talk about

Recall a time in your life when you felt most free. If you feel comfortable doing so, share something of this experience with the group. What was going on for you then? How would you characterise your relationship with God at that time?

What does inner freedom mean to you?

What are some of the things that bind us up?

How would you describe personal sin, and sins of community?

What good news for your community do you find in today's readings and reflection?

So what?

List three things that you could do to make Christ's gift of freedom more of a reality in your life and in the lives of those around you.

Prayer

Loving God, in Christ and through the Spirit you gift us with freedom. In you the cords that constrain us fall away. You allow us to share more abundantly in the life that we have from you. Everything we are, and everything that we do, is transformed by your grace. Thank you for your amazing love and your deep generosity. May we live more fully in the freedom that you offer us. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Blessing

Ask someone in the group to offer the blessing.

Week 2

Community without barriers



Opening prayer

Ask one person in the group to lead the prayer with group members reading together the words in bold print.

Read

Read Ephesians 2:11-22.

The Messiah has made things up between us so that we're now together on this, both non-Jewish outsiders and Jewish insiders. He tore down the wall we used to keep each other at a distance. He repealed the law code that had become so clogged with fine print and footnotes that it hindered more than it helped. Then he started over. Instead of continuing with two groups of people separated by centuries of animosity and suspicion, he created a new kind of human being, a fresh start for everybody. (Ephesians 2:14-16 The Message)

The Church... confesses that Jesus is Head over all things, the beginning of a new creation, of a new humanity. God in Christ has given to all people in the Church the Holy Spirit as a pledge and foretaste of that coming reconciliation and renewal which is the end in view for the whole creation. The Church's call is to serve that end: to be a fellowship of reconciliation, (*The Basis of Union*, Paragraph 3).

Jesus calls us to each other,
found in him are no divides.
Race and class and sex and language
– such are barriers he derides.
Join the hand of friend and stranger;
Join the hands of age and youth;
Join the faithful and the doubter
in their common search for truth.
(John Bell, Iona Community)

Reflection

Ashgrove Uniting Church has transformed a house into the place where they host 'Living Room', a home where people from many backgrounds can experience community. On Tuesday mornings people with a variety of disabilities and their carers, gather with friends to share life, worship, eat and drink together.

Most of us live in houses with walls that serve as boundaries of privacy. But we make a point of including living rooms in which we interact with other people. Our bodies provide us with a space in which we are clearly ourselves and not other people – space for differentiation. And yet our bodies give us the capacity to make contact with other people and with our environment. Healthy boundaries are clearly a part of living as persons in community. But what happens when we allow our points of difference to become barriers to interaction?

When Paul first arrived in Ephesus he spent three months speaking in Jewish synagogues before being told he wasn't welcome. He knew he wasn't welcome in the temples dedicated to the mystery cults or Artemis. He ended up renting a lecture hall for two years, developing a new community of people who could relate to one another, even in difference, because of their relationship with Jesus Christ. This was a new kind of community, not a club based on shared affinity, personality, theology or ethnicity.

The letter to the Ephesians refers to Jesus tearing down the wall that had separated Jews and Gentiles. This wasn't indicating that the distinctiveness of the Jewish people was being erased. Christ had broken down human barriers to unity by connecting each group with others in his community.

Today we are challenged to recognise and maybe celebrate our points of difference, without allowing our distinctiveness to separate us from Jesus and those he loves.

Talk about

Talk about a healthy way in which you distinguish yourself from other people, in terms of space, personality, theology, cultural preferences.

In what ways have you seen healthy boundaries becoming unhelpful barriers to community?

What barriers did Jesus break down

during his life? In what ways did his death and resurrection break down barriers between us?

What makes it difficult to cross barriers that Jesus has already broken down?

What can your group do to be a 'fellowship of reconciliation, a body within which the diverse gifts of its members are used for the building up of the whole, an instrument through which Christ may work and bear witness to himself'?

So what?

What will you do and say this week to join Jesus in the breaking down of barriers in your community?

Prayer

Lord Christ, at times we are like strangers on this earth, disconcerted by all the violence and harsh oppositions.

Like a gentle breeze, you breathe upon us the Spirit of peace. Transfigure the deserts of our doubts and so prepare us to be bearers of reconciliation wherever you place us, that the hope of peace may arise in our world. Amen. (Brother Roger of Taizé, 1915-2005)

Blessing

Ask someone in the group to offer the blessing.

Week 3

Extravagant community



Opening prayer

Ask one person in the group to lead the prayer with group members reading together the words in bold print.

Read

Read Ephesians 4:1-16.

My response is to get down on my knees before the Father, this magnificent God who parcels out all heaven and earth. I ask him to strengthen you by his Spirit – not a brute strength but a glorious inner strength – that Christ will live in you as you open the door and invite him in. And I ask him that with both feet planted firmly on love, you'll be able to take in with all Christians the extravagant dimensions of Christ's love. Reach out and experience the breadth! Test its length! Plumb the depths! Rise to the heights! Live full lives, full in the fullness of God. (Ephesians 3:14-19 The Message)

The Congregation is the embodiment in one place of the One Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church, worshipping, witnessing and serving as a fellowship of the Spirit of Christ. Its members meet regularly to hear God's Word, to celebrate the sacraments, to build one another up in love, to share in the wider responsibilities of the Church and to serve the world. (*Basis of Union*, Paragraph 15a)

The Church which forgets to whom it owes obedience, which seizes power for itself and makes itself sovereign, becomes shut up within itself. But if – despite all its failures – the Church remains intent on the kingdom coming through God's act and remembers to whom it belongs, for whom it has decided and must again and again uncompromisingly and unreservedly decide, it becomes truly free: free in imitating Christ in service to the world, free for the service of people in which it serves God and free for the service of God in which it serves people. (Hans Kung, *On being a Christian*, 1977)

Reflection

The congregations in Goodna and Redbank Plains are on a journey of prayer and discernment, exploring before God ways in which they might express the life of Jesus in the community. This journey is both exciting and painful. As a new life of witness, service and worship emerges, it is clear that there will be lots to work through, and new challenges to pick up.

The church is built on the extravagant love that comes from God, a solid foundation that has stood the test of time. God's extravagant love goes beyond the structure of denomination and church, constantly calling us to remember that it is God whom we serve. It is God whom we rely upon.

The challenge is to be constantly reviewing our direction as a community. Are we following God's extravagant love,

the unfathomable depths, and the boundless heights of God's love? Or are we protecting our patch and resting on our laurels?

When we confine God's love within a certain set of criteria we limit ourselves to being a club which will accept some and reject others.

The love of God is all encompassing, a love offered to all people, going beyond our human criteria and calling us to account. God's love shows commitment to reconciliation within the church and beyond the church, bypassing our rules and defying our human logic. This is the love we must strive to show as the gathered people. Are we reflecting that love and living it out in all we do and say?

As a people of God, as the embodiment of Christ, we need to be constantly questioning our programs, our outreach ventures, our missional imperatives. Do our activities reflect the extravagant love of God or are they simply reflecting our own needs and wants? Our need to feel that we have done something that will look good in the eyes of the world?

The extravagant love of God is a limitless resource, one which we must dive into time and time again in order that we as a people may be forgiven, renewed and fed along the way. Let us live out of that love and be freed by it to live as God's people.

Talk about

If there have been times when you have felt unloved by the church and you feel

comfortable to do so share these with your group? How did you react?

Are there people within or on the margins of your faith community at the moment who you feel are unloved? How might you reach out to them in God's love?

Name one way your community of faith shows God's extravagant love?

Name one program, or initiative that is failing to show that love? How might it be changed to show the love of God more fully?

So what?

What will you do and say this week to join Jesus in expressing the extravagant love of God in your community?

Prayer

God of love, we come before you knowing that we have failed to show your love in all we do and say. We ask you to forgive us. Help us to know that we are a people who are bound together in your extravagant love. Help us to live out of that love and encourage us to be bearers of that love in all we do and say. This we pray in Jesus name. Amen

Blessing

Ask someone in the group to offer the blessing.

Week 4

Searching for common unity

Opening prayer

Ask one person in the group to lead the prayer with group members reading together the words in bold print.

Read

Read Ephesians 4:1-16.

You were all called to travel on the one road and in the same direction, so stay together, both outwardly and inwardly. You have one Master, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who rules over all, works through all, and is present in all. Everything you are and think and do is permeated with Oneness. (Ephesians 4:4-6 The Message)

The Uniting Church in Australia believes that Christians in Australia are called to bear witness to a unity of faith and life in Christ which transcends cultural and economic, national and racial boundaries... (*Basis of Union*, Paragraph 2)

Christian [community] is not an ideal which we must realize; it is rather a reality created by God in Christ in which we may participate. (Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Life Together*)

Reflection

Jubilee School is a Prep to Year 7 school administered by the Catholic, Anglican, Uniting and Apostolic Churches on the North Gold Coast. Pupils, teachers, parents, and local church leaders carry out the motto of 'faith, learning, understanding' in everyday school life. It's a witness of unity to the wider community. However when a school mass (Catholic) or eucharist (Protestant) is held at the school, all share the tension of being different and to some extent separated from one another.

How often do we think that the writer of Ephesians is reaching for the impossible in his longing for the unity of the church? Can our present reality reflect the ideal and ultimate reality? Our life here is to be read from and tested by that vision of what God has in store for his people.

We do not only live each day as it comes, or look back to some idealised past, but move towards a future which God has promised. We are a pilgrim people, not just marking time. Paul and others also picture the church as athletes running towards a goal. The picture of the unity or oneness of the church in Christ gives guidance as to how our life together now is meant to function. That picture is above all, the maturity, the full stature of Christ.

Living in unity is not to be attempted in

human strength alone. God gives us gifts for living together, not just for individual achievement. As the Body of Christ we are growing together into maturity. When the people of the church are living well in the Spirit of Christ, the church as an organism (rather than an institution) will work properly in building itself up.

However, to understand this well, that final goal must be kept in view. This is not about a part of the church looking inwardly, simply concerned about its present organisation, but a church aiming to be what Christ wants his people together to be. This growth can only happen when people are respected and loved. No doubt this is why verses 2 and 3 refer to those qualities of humility, gentleness, patience, bearing with one another in love, and making great effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

Talk about

What is the most helpful picture for you of the unity of the church: the body with every part working together, the vine and the branches or another picture? How can this picture help everyone in the church live in the unity of Christ?

Are you a person who lives mostly in the present, the past or the future? What would you say is the emphasis of the life of your congregation? Can all three be kept in

balance?

When there are different opinions within the church, what does it mean for you personally to "make every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace"?

Today we have at least some awareness of the breadth of the church in many different countries, in different traditions of Christianity and different cultural expressions of the faith. What does this mean for your idea of the unity of the body of Christ?

So what?

What will you do and say this week to join Jesus in the seeking of common unity with people who see the world through different eyes?

Prayer

Gracious God, make me a channel of your peace.

Build your church into the fully working body of Christ, and give us your Holy Spirit that we may not lose the way.

Blessing

Ask someone in the group to offer the blessing.

Week 5

Living in community

Opening prayer

Ask one person in the group to lead the prayer with group members reading together the words in bold print.

Read

Read Ephesians 4:25-5:2.

Watch what God does, and then you do it, like children who learn proper behaviour from their parents. Mostly what God does is love you. Keep company with him and learn a life of love. Observe how Christ loved us. His love was not cautious but extravagant. He didn't love in order to get something from us but to give everything of himself to us. Love like that. Ephesians 5:1-2 (The Message)

The Church as the fellowship of the Holy Spirit confesses Jesus as Lord over its own life. The Church's call is to be a body within which the diverse gifts of its members are used for the building up of the whole, an instrument through which Christ may work and bear witness to himself. (*Basis of Union*, Para. 3)

Community is authentic only if all of its members are encouraged to assume and surpass their fears of loneliness, to develop greater inner freedom, to forgive, and to become more fully themselves, without hiding inside or behind the group. If obedience inside the group is too rigid, it can stifle the growth of personal conscience and inner freedom. (Jean Vanier, *Finding Peace*, 2003)

Reflection

Every Easter young people gather for experiences of 'temporary community'. At Easter camps, teenagers from differing family backgrounds form a new family for the weekend. With the guidance of leaders, behaviour guidelines are negotiated. How much noise is acceptable after lights-out?

If you were going to make up rules about living together, what would they be? Always put the toothpaste lid back on? Ring if you're going to be late? Clean up after yourself?

These rules are based on the idea of respect and sensitivity to each other. What then, of the list of guiding principles in this Ephesians passage? One clue after the other to act with integrity and respect. And why? Because of the truth that is named for us in verse 25. 'In Christ's body we are all connected to each other after all.'

The final verses provide us with words of wisdom – watch what God does and do that. And what is it that God does? Mostly – he loves us – love in absolute extravagance – without conditions – the gift of everything. What a benchmark!

Learning how to love extravagantly, with respect and sensitivity, requires self-awareness and an understanding of the consequences of our behaviour to each other. The list in Ephesians provides clues as to how we might behave towards each other. We know from our experience that there are many more clues to learn as we grow closer to each other.

Talk about

What are your rules for living together in

community? At home? In other shared spaces?

From which rules would you never budge? Why? Which are negotiable? Why?

When you read Ephesians 4:25, who do you think of? Who are you connected to?

What have you learnt about being in community through your relationship with these people?

So what?

With whom could you work together this week to negotiate clues for community?

Prayer

Creator God. We read again with gratitude and humility the words that you loved us through the life and death of Jesus – an extravagant love that we barely comprehend. Help us Lord to fulfil our promise as your children, learning the lessons of love from you. Let us keep the gifts of gentleness and sensitivity and forgo our attempts to control love. Lord as members of your community we pray. Amen.

Blessing

Ask someone in the group to offer the blessing.

Writers: Neil Pembroke, Duncan Macleod, Andrew Gunton, Geraldine Wheeler, Heather den Houting,
Editor: Duncan Macleod
Layout: Osker Lau

Textual notes

Readings for the Winter Studies are taken from the *Revised Common Lectionary* for July 16 (Ephesians 1:3-14), July 23, (Ephesians 2:11-22) July 30, (Ephesians 3:14-21) August 6, (Ephesians 4:1-16) and August 13 (Ephesians 4:25-5:2).

This lectionary is the work of two ecumenical bodies: the North American Consultation on Common Texts (CCT) www.commontexts.org and the International English Language Liturgical Consultation (ELLC). www.englishtexts.org

Unless otherwise stated, scripture quotations in these resources are from *The Message* by Eugene H. Peterson, copyright (c) 1993, 1994, 1995, 1996, 2000, 2001, 2002. Used by permission of NavPress Publishing Group www.navpress.com. All rights reserved. *The Message* is described by Eugene Peterson, the author, as a "translation of tone" or a "paraphrase from the original languages."

The original text of *The Basis of Union* was the document around which the union of three older traditions, Congregational, Methodist and Presbyterian, came into being in 1977. While the original text was finalised in 1971, where it is quoted in these resources the 1992 edition is used.

Uniting in Worship 2 is a new set of worship resources released in the Uniting Church in 2005 which gives local congregations scope to develop worship relevant to their setting. The book and accompanying CDROM provide a range of worship services and resource templates for congregations to use for the production of local booklets. *Uniting in Worship 2* can be ordered through the Uniting Church in Australia's publisher, MediaCom 1800 811 311 or mediacom.mediacomonline.org.au.

Further Studies

NOOMA

Nooma (a transliteration of the Greek word *Pneuma*) is a set of thirteen DVDs and personal/group reflection guides presented by Rob Bell, founding pastor of Mars Hill Bible Church in Grandville, Michigan (www.mhbcmi.org) and author of *Velvet Elvis*, *Repainting the Christian Faith*. Each DVD presents a short reflection with imagery, music and questions for consideration. *Nooma* DVDs can be purchased singly from Christian bookstores. The reflection guides are available for free download from www.nooma.com



RAIN

Things don't always work out the way we want them to, or the way we think they will. Sometimes we don't even see it coming. We get hit with some form of pain out of nowhere leaving us feeling desperate and

helpless. That's the way life is. Still, it makes us wonder how God can let these things happen to us. How God can just stand by and watch us suffer. Where is God when it really hurts? Maybe God is actually closer to us than we think. Maybe it's when we're in these situations, where everything seems to be falling apart, that God gets an opportunity to remind us of how much he really loves us.

FLAME

I love those shoes. Really? The same way I love my wife? What's up with the word "love"? It doesn't have much meaning when we use it so loosely. Maybe we don't really get it. Maybe we don't understand what real love is. What it involves to really love somebody.



What it means to give yourself to someone else. We mistake things like friendship, commitment, or lust for love, but God wired us a certain way to experience all that love was really meant to be. Not to hold us back or to make us miss out on the best that life has to offer. God created love, and wants us to feel it all in the way it's meant to be felt.

RHYTHM

What does it mean to have a relationship with God? What does it look like? For a lot of us it's a hard thing to fully understand. If God is an infinite spirit with no shape or form, how can we possibly relate to that? And what about Jesus? He said he came to give everyone life in its fullest. He came to show us how to live. Maybe it's through trusting Jesus and living the kind of life he taught us to live – a life of truth, love, justice, compassion, forgiveness, and sacrifice – that we have a relationship with God. Maybe the way we live every day, every single choice we make, determines how in tune with God we are.

BULLHORN

God loves everyone, so a Christian should, too. In fact, Jesus said that the most important thing in life is to love God with everything we've got and love others the same way. But it's not always easy to love everyone around us, is it? Sometimes we strongly disagree with other people's political views, religious



beliefs, behaviours, or something else, and it makes it hard to love them when we feel like we're right and they're very wrong. But Jesus doesn't separate loving God and loving others. So maybe the best way for us to show our love for God is actually by loving other people no matter how hard it sometimes is. Maybe it's the only way.

Looking for more options? Try Duncan Macleod's excellent [Educating Christians website](http://EducatingChristians.org.au), an A to Z of resources for Christian education in Uniting Church congregations. This site includes detailed reviews of small group and Christian education resources. educatingchristians.unitingchurch.org.au.

5 weeks of MOVIES

Here are five movies which explore the theme of community that you can rent from your local video store on VHS or DVD to watch. Please note the rating and that these are not necessarily "Christian" movies.



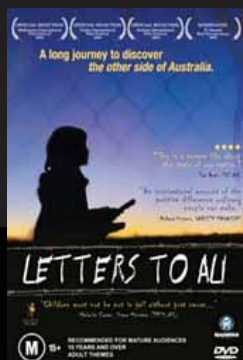
ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

The Visual Bible dramatisation using the New International Version. (G)



TAKE THE LEAD

Pierre Dulain, a ballroom dance teacher takes problem teenage students and introduces them to the lessons of respect and community. Together they develop new dance steps. (PG)



LETTERS TO ALI

A documentary following Trish and her family as they travel from Victoria to visit Ali, a 15 year-old boy detained in Port Hedland, Western Australia and take up his case for a visa. (M)



BABETTE'S FEAST

Martina and Philippa are daughters of a devout minister who preaches salvation through self-denial. Their lives are transformed by the arrival of Babette, a mysterious refugee from France's civil war. At the heart of the movie is an extravagant gourmet French meal. Based on a short story by Isak Dinesen. (G)



RABBIT PROOF FENCE

Molly Craig, her little sister and cousin escape from an internment camp to return to their family, finding their way by following the rabbit-proof fence over 2500 kms. (PG)

PRAYER DIARY

9 July: Holland Park
St Davids

Pray for the people of East Timor that they can experience peace and for the people who are there to assist in the peace-making process.

Pray for the leadership programs in place in that country to help the people of East Timor become more self-sufficient and engage in growing their own crops.

Pray for the calling of a new minister and any new directions in which this may lead. Pray for the congregation to accept any changes which may take place.

Pray for the congregation to discern God's will in calling them to volunteer for some positions in the church.

Pray for the people in outlying areas that they may be able to access medical assistance more easily without travelling long distances.

Pray for the work of the Patrol Padre in ministering to the people of the outback.

Pray for the children's activities in the church that they might lead to greater numbers in those participating and that these children will come to know the Lord. Pray for the leaders in this field of ministry.

Pray for the management of social issues concerning aboriginal children in the outback that they may feel safe.

16 July: Armitage

Armitage Uniting Church is situated in East Mackay. Armitage began as a Sunday school outpost in rapidly expanding suburbia some 65 years ago.

The Armitage name derives from an entire family of members lost at sea and a church hall was built in 1940 with funds donated in their memory. Some fifteen years ago the congregation deeded its property to the local Blue Nursing Service, allowing the property's value to be spent on a multi-purpose room attached to the Blue Nursing Administration Building.

This room/chapel commemorates the Armitage name, and is in use seven days a week for worship, staff training, various community groups and Allied Health meetings.

Armitage is unique in its purpose and responsibilities, being an on-site spiritual anchor for the work of Christ in community nursing and respite. During the building phase worship was conducted in the garage, continuity of worship being paramount. The congregation is aged, but friendly and welcoming.

Please pray for the Blue Nurses, in particular the Director of Nursing as she seeks God's direction in future management.

We thank God for his loving benevolence towards our congregation and the Blues, for the dedication of our musicians as they

entertain aged and infirm, for our members as they encourage each other through telephone, visitation and especially through prayer.

We thank God for the ministry of Rev Tony and Mrs Beth Paynter. (Tony recently died whilst still our minister; a faithful servant to the end).

Pray that we may be diligent in pursuing God's purpose as we seek a replacement minister and implement the little niceties that make all the difference to visitors and neighbours.

Help us to uphold our cane farmers, graziers, coal miners and local businessmen, as they struggle to separate need from greed in this flourishing district. Remember the disadvantaged; those who use Lifeline (also supported by congregational members).

Pray also for young people caught up in drug and alcohol abuse; they have rejected our values but God is bigger than their problems.

Finally pray that we may not grow weary in well-doing, but that we might be astute enough to recognise what God is doing in our sphere of experience so that we can continue to do His work.

23 July: Redland Bay

The Redland Bay Uniting Church is situated on a hill overlooking Moreton Bay and recently celebrated the 126th Anniversary of worship in the area. The Congregation is ministered to by Rev Arthur Tutin.

Part of our complex is a Chapel which was the original building. Some congregation members had a vision to develop the Chapel as a Centre of Spirituality. We made a part of it into a "quiet room" which was dedicated at the Anniversary. It has a library and is used for prayer and bible study. In the future we would like to see it used for small retreats and as an area where people can receive spiritual help. We would appreciate your prayers as we seek God's guidance.

Currently our Church is preparing for *40 Days of Purpose*. We have an enthusiastic team and we would again value your prayers as we seek to reach out to the many people who have moved into this area.

One of our major projects over the last few years has been the sponsoring of the translation of the Book of Mark into the Dili variety of Tetun language. With the present unrest in East Timor, this area is very much in our prayers and we ask for your prayers.

We have a number of social groups using our hall, and one of particular interest is our Indoor Bowls Club. This group is made up of members of the congregation and people from the community; it is celebrating its 25th anniversary this week. Please pray for our witness in all these activities.



McKay Patrol Minister Garry Hardingham serving outback Queensland

Jesus is already there

McKay Patrol minister Rev Garry Hardingham reflects in a light-hearted way about the move north that happens in the cooler months of the year.

WITH THE wet season finishes the invasion begins.

It's that time of the year when the grey nomads and geriatric gypsies from places down in the frozen wastes of southern Australia start invading our warmer climes.

Suddenly, we've gone from dodging washouts and mud to dodging caravans and campers, all in a few weeks.

But we don't mind because those who travel to spend their winter tripping around the north are the lifeblood of the local tourist industry.

And along with the grey nomads comes Jesus.

It's around this time of the year that the cold starts tickling the arthritis of many a wandering preacher who looks to the north as fertile ground for the Great Commission.

Well, one way to supplement your northern holiday is get retiring offerings from outback congregations who, they think, haven't heard of either Jesus or the Gospel for years.

And it all begins with a typical phone call.

"G'day, Cloncurry Uniting Church, Garry speaking."

"Yes hello, my name is Roger Jones from the Good News Hallelujah Harvest Mission Evangelical ministry based in Melbourne."

"Yes," I say hesitantly. "What can I do for you mate?"

"Well, we're conducting an evangelical mission into the outback and we have an important message from God to bring to the people out there who may not have heard about Jesus."

"Who? Jesus. Never heard of him," this usually throws them. "Yeah go on."

"And we're wanting to come up your way in (insert any cool month here) to tell the people about Jesus."

"Gee mate...I'm not sure about the date you wanna come through... How about in December...or February say?"

"Oh no, it's too hot then!!"

"Why, you worried that Jesus might melt? Doesn't he like the hot

weather or something?"

By this time they have usually cottoned on to my lack of interest. But there are the foolhardy who persist...

"You see, God has told me that the people up there are desperate to hear the Gospel and that..."

Hopefully, at this point my gesturing to Teresa pays off and she calls out "Cuppa's ready!!"

Now, this might come as a bit of a shock to some people but I think Jesus is already here.

In fact I'm sure I was speaking to him just last week when I was talking to a School of the Air mum who is missing her eldest child who's in her first year at boarding school. And this morning I thought I heard him talking to me as I slowly watched the outback slip away under MJJZ's fuselage.

I'd like to recommend to anyone who's never been out here to come and experience the outback.

Who knows you too might even find Jesus up here, throwing a ball or wetting a line or driving a truck.

And if you do see him, tell him I said, "G'day."

Ministry Team Leader

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- Growing small group ministry.
- Strong community service ministries.
- Seeking to grow in evangelism.
- Excellent church facilities.
- Walk to beach from manse.

An exciting placement for a Minister with vision for creative ministry in both church and community, energy, and delight in worship, with strong leadership and mentoring skills.

For further information, including a congregational profile, contact Rev Janet Dawson, phone (02) 6582 1767 or email mncpresby@tsn.cc.

Applications close 24 July 2006.

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

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Advertising and editorial deadline for August *Journey* Friday 14 July.



Peter Rollins emerging theologian. Photo courtesy of *Western Impact*

Emerging theologian visits down under

CONTROVERSIAL YOUNG Northern Ireland theologian Pete Rollins will be a keynote speaker at the next National Christian Youth Convention (NCYC 2007).

Rollins believes the emerging church presents a singular, unprecedented opportunity to transform the theological and moral architecture of the Christian community.

Rollins' recent book *How (Not) to Speak of God* is attracting interest world wide.

Author Brian McLaren describes himself as a "raving fan" of the book while Scot McKnight (also an author) says Rollin's book is a "firestorm". "The book runs a mad dash from the borderline brilliant to the most challenging suggestions I've read in some time," said McKnight.

Together with other speakers Tim Costello, Joyleen Koolmatie and Queenslander Dave Andrews, NCYC 2007 delegates, volunteers and participants will have the opportunity to engage with Rollins as he speaks at the evening rallies, Bible studies and electives throughout the convention week.

NCYC will be held at Scotch College, Swanbourne W.A. from 3-9 January 2007. For more information visit the official website at <http://agentsofchange.org.au> or call the office on 1300 00 6292

Mundubbera Uniting Church turns 90

TEN YEARS after Methodist services were first held in a Mundubbera home a church was erected on the outskirts of town.

Affectionately known as the 'Riverleigh Bark Cathedral' it was built by local people and it became the centre of worship in that farming district.

The church has been a place of worship through good times when it has been full to overflowing and in leaner times.

Now, with an ageing, rural population and financial and ministerial resources stretched beyond their limits, the congregation is rethinking how they do ministry.

They are travelling the way of the early pioneers and settlers and lay ministry is one of the ways forward to keep the witness of Christ and worship of God alive in rural areas.

Mundubbera Uniting Church celebrates its 90th Anniversary on the weekend of 22-23 July. Others are invited to join their celebrations.



The Bark Cathedral at Riverleigh built around 1914-15

Homooousios: a 100 year debate

By Duncan Macleod

THEOLOGICAL DEBATE is nothing new for the Christian church and just like today earlier disagreements were not easily resolved.

In the early fourth century a debate erupted over the concept of 'homooousios', a Greek word used to describe Jesus being of the same essence, being or substance as the Father.

A hundred years earlier Origen, a theologian based in Alexandria with an interest in exploring faith in terms that made sense to those schooled in Greek philosophy, had talked about God being one 'ousios' or essence, with three distinct expressions or forms of being – hypostasis.

He described Jesus in terms of the Logos, a phrase well known to followers of Greek philosopher Philo.

Over time discussion began over whether to talk about Jesus and God having homo ousios (one substance) or homoi ousios (similar substance).

In 264-268 the Synods of Antioch condemned the term 'homooousios' (same substance) because of its connections with Greek philosophy. They were also concerned that the concept, taken to extremes, could lead to a perception of Jesus that overlooked his humanity.

In 313 Arius, a Libyan trained in Antioch, was appointed as a presbyter (minister) near Alexandria. It wasn't too long before Arius fell out with his bishop.

He constantly warned his congregations against speculation on the pre-existent life of Jesus, opposing what he saw as an extreme and invalid form of Origenism.

Alexander, the bishop of Alexandria, put up with the tension for years but finally called a synod meeting, telling his colleagues that not only was Arius a threat to good theology, but his morals were in question – he was seen to have a disproportionate number of female supporters. The synod decided that Arius must go.

Like the Uniting Church in Australia, the early Church was governed by councils so what was agreed in Alexandria was not necessarily agreed elsewhere. It wasn't long before synods were called in Antioch and Bithynia which repudiated the Alexandrian decision.

Enter Constantine. The Emperor appears to have believed that he was ordained by God to unite the Eastern and Western parts of the Empire.

He had already advocated for the tolerance of the Christian movement and was hoping that the churches would be able to promulgate monotheism throughout the empire.

Perhaps with this in mind Constantine attempted to persuade Alexander and Arius to regard their dispute as trivial and to be reconciled. It was not to be.

In 325 Constantine called together Christian representatives from across the empire (from everywhere but Britain) to a council in the imperial city, Nicaea. The delegates were charged with ascertaining what had been taught from the beginning of the church.

As the writings of Arius were read out, it became clear that much of his theology was blasphemous and was downplaying the significance of Jesus.

So a creed was written for use at baptisms and for instruction of Christians and the word 'homooousion' was included to describe Jesus as being one in being with the Father.

All but two members of the Council of Nicaea signed the creed. Constantine is said to have announced the penalty of banishment for those who abstained.

For those in Alexander's group the wording of the creed seemed to be the only one that was close to Scriptural intent and yet unacceptable to Arius.

Others at the Council, although uncomfortable with Alexander's theology, were shocked by the extremist views of Arius and his colleague Eusebius of Nicomedia.

Despite the ruling of the Council, the debate had not been resolved. The identification of Jesus with God could be interpreted specifically as personal or in a vague symbolic sense.

With this ambiguity, delegates could return home without having changed their theology.

The use of an unpopular and ambiguous word as the focus to the solution to the Arian crisis created the semblance of unity, but only provided more material for disagreement.

The new link between the Empire and the direction of Christian theology led to 'homooousios' or 'homoi ousios' views being in or out of fashion in the East depending on which Emperor was in power.

With the death of Constantine in 337, Constantius took an even more direct approach to church government. With the support of some theologians he forced synods to issue Arian statements of faith and depose bishops sympathetic to the Nicene creed.

It was not until the time of Theodosius (379-395) that a constant imperial policy sympathetic to the Nicene faith was linked to genuine dialogue and anything close to a lasting resolution was brought about.

A hundred-year controversy was resolved through the agreement to use the messy-middle concept of 'homooousios', a position the majority were not entirely happy with.

Writing 'homooousion tō patri' (one in being with the Father) into the Nicene Creed was the way to protect the future of the Church from extremist views on either side of the debate.

Duncan Macleod is Vision for Mission Consultant with the Queensland Synod and believes understanding the history of the church helps us to live more effectively in its future.



Constantine, an Emperor with an agenda

Frances Seen an unassuming legend

By Kim Cain

THE SAGA of the Beaconsfield mine rescue threw up some heroes, from the miners themselves to their rescuers, the mine managers, the union leaders, the mayor and one special woman – Frances Seen.

As a young girl, she played in the hills and gullies around the (then abandoned) mine that would not only enter into the national story of survival and rescue, but also let her commitment to people and God be so visible.

In this small mining town, long before she became a community minister, she discovered the reality of God's love for all the rough diamonds who lived there.

Her own community was the place to make a difference to the world.

Her community record is bountiful. It ranges from 32 years on Beaconsfield hospital auxiliary and 27 years on the war memorial community centre committee, to the hours with the parents and friends committee of the schools, meals on wheels, State Emergency Service catering committee, Beaconsfield footy club ladies committee and North Launceston amateur athletics.

Add to that the 54 years of involvement in Beaconsfield church, first Methodist and then Uniting, 35 years as Sunday school superintendent, years of eldership and 18 years of presbytery meetings!

It is little wonder that last year Frances Seen was added to the Tasmanian Honour Roll of Women and was recently awarded a medal of the Order of Australia.

When asked what career she had before retirement she simply replied: "Four sons and a cleaner."

Frances is probably one of the few Uniting Church leaders who can tap a barrel of beer – a skill she learnt at the footy club.



Beaconsfield Community Minister Frances Seen with ABC radio's Tim Cox as he broadcasts to the rest of Australia the very moment when the two miners appeared on the surface. Photo by Kim Cain

Within the heart of a tough mining town, Frances Seen was able to mix her passion for community and faith in a down-to-earth and generous way, leading a vital ministry at the right time and place.

For years she lived with her husband, Elwyn, in a caravan park, and moved recently into a unit in Beaconsfield, for retirement.

But that only produced more work. She became community minister. (In fact, she's still 'learning the job' and is classified as interim community minister.)

Without a skerrick of any church stipend, she has gone about building up the community of faith.

So after the earth rumbled late on Anzac Day, trapping Todd Russell and Brant Webb deep in its bowels, Frances Seen knew what to do: throw the church doors open, light some candles and pray to keep hope alive. It was a ministry the town needed.

Her long local leadership gave her the authority to speak for the community and tell the world how the town was coping through its roller coaster ride of emotions.

Of course, this was backed up with heaps of hot soup, casseroles made by the neighbouring church, hot chocolate and the odd cold beer.

As she put it, "This is just about giving God the glory and being there to pray, to hug those who need a hug and to light a candle for those boys – rough diamonds we all care for."



Sharon Newnam will use the Uniting Church to study driver safety in not-for-profit organisations. Photo by Osker Lau

Church drivers under watchful eye

A STUDY on driver safety in Uniting Church fleet cars is about to begin in Queensland.

Sharon Newnam, a Postdoctoral Research Fellow at the Centre of Philanthropy and Nonprofit Studies at Queensland University of Technology, said the Uniting Church was a good candidate for study because of the range of vehicles and drivers used in Queensland.

"There has been very little research done in work related driver safety," Ms Newnam said.

"Previous research has included government fleets or council fleets, but not not-for-profit fleets."

The three-year study aims to design a model of the factors influencing the safety of drivers in nonprofit organisations and to design and implement fleet safety procedures.

According to Ms Newnam, road crashes have become the most common form of work-related death, injury and absence from work (whether for profit or nonprofit) in Australia.

"The Uniting Church has over 14,000 employees and volunteers and, as such, is an ideal industry partner to represent the nonprofit sector for this innovative research."

"The Uniting Church is a unique sample in that it comprises a multitude of various vehicle types representative of the driving community (sedans, station wagons, vans, and light trucks), varying aged road user groups, and remunerated and volunteer drivers."

It is expected that the results of the study will reduce the economic and social impact of work-related driving crashes and improve the safety of employed and volunteer drivers within the Uniting Church.

Call to celebrate

UNITING CHURCH members are invited to the Assembly Celebration service on Sunday 9 July at City Hall in Brisbane.

The celebration, organised by Megan Thomson, will be a celebration of diversity and the inclusive nature of the Uniting Church. Many languages will be used during the service.

It will also be particularly child friendly with special activity packs provided for children and an opportunity for their drawings to be displayed during the service.

The theme is 'cracking the code' and the service will include speaker Rev Mvume Dandala, a choir, an orchestra, dancing and much more. The congregation will be taken on a journey to discover "God's Word, God's World".

"I'm happy with how it's coming together. It should be a good night!" said Ms Thomson.

The service begins at 7pm and is set to be a great night of worship, but it is recommended to be early for a good seat.



GOD'S WORD
GOD'S WORLD



11th Assembly 2006

Assembly Celebration

Sunday evening, 9 July 2006

City Hall, Brisbane from 7.00pm - 8.45pm.

You are invited

Guest preacher will be the renowned Rev Mvume Dandala

This will be a child and family friendly event with music, visuals, drama, dance, spoken word, symbols and much more.

Come to laugh, cry, sing, pray, shout, be educated, enthused, challenged, or encouraged. Decipher the code to find if God is moving in the Uniting Church in Australia. (Megan Thomson, Celebration Coordinator)

WHAT'S ON

Wednesdays (during Term time), 9.15-11.30am. GUCCE – Gap UC Craft Experience, 1050 Waterworks Road, The Gap. Contact church office on 3300 2712 or email thegapuc@inet.net.au.

April 20-August 2, Thursdays 6.30-9pm. Living the Questions DVD and Discussion series. West End UC. \$30 for 12 sessions. For more information visit www.progressivespirituality.net.

July-August. Spirit Journeys to the Desert. Information on dates, costs, leaders and places available from www.desertjourneys.com. Contact spiritjourneys@pnc.com.au or 0425 314 863.

July 5-11. National Assembly meeting of the Uniting Church in Australia. University of Queensland, Brisbane.

July 7-8, 9.30am-5pm. Forge Queensland missional training intensive. Radical discipleship, the Spirit and sustainability. Leaders Tony and Felicity Dale from House2House Ministries. Hercules Rd Primary School, Kippa-Ring. Friday evening is Peter Breen speaking on 'Christ the emergent artist in the emergent culture'. 7.15pm Jugglers Art Space Fortitude Valley. Contact Bruce Moore ph 0409 545 063 or email hopecommunity@netspace.net.au.

July 9, 12noon-2pm. Monthly Barnabas Community Fellowship at the Oxley UC hall. Persons both disabled and able are invited to attend. Please join us and bring food to share.

July 9, 7-8.45pm. Assembly Celebration. City Hall, Brisbane.

July 10-11, 9.30am-5pm. Forge Queensland missional training intensive features Stephen Said and Dave Andrews from TEAR Australia. Gateway Baptist 1052 Mt Gravatt Capalaba Rd, Mackenzie. To register contact Kelly Edington on kellyedington@aapt.net.au or ph 0422 407 859. Registration forms at www.seedsofhope.unitingchurch.org.au.

July 16, 9.30am. Caloundra Uniting Church 25th Anniversary Service and gala morning tea to celebrate 25 years of the 'church on the hill'. Cnr Queen & Ulm Sts Caloundra. More information contact the church office 5491 5353 or email caloundra@dovenetq.net.au.

July 19. Connecting Pathways Art Exhibition at Chermide Bowls Club. Crossroads' Art Exhibition "Stories of Community". A professional demonstration of the group members' talents and abilities. It provides an opportunity to come together and celebrate our journey towards greater inclusion and recognition of people with disabilities. RSVP by July 5. Phone Glenys on 32564466.

July 22, 7-9pm. THE CHAPPS (Chris & Sue Chapman and family). A fabulous evening of comedy and music presented by St Marks Uniting Church Mt Gravatt. Broadwater Road Uniting Church Auditorium 481 Broadwater Road, Wishart. Sausage Sizzle from 5.30pm. \$10/\$5 or \$30 family from 3349 7168 or a St Marks ticket seller.

July 23. Ministry Sunday.

July 28, 10.30am. Australian Church Women's Fellowship day service at Ann St Church of Christ, Brisbane. Speaker Winnifred Kiek Scholar Tania Eichler. Enquiries to M.J. Hunt ph 3358 4349.

July 30, 5.30pm-late. JAM at Emmanuel UC. 249 South Pine Rd Enoggera. More info at www.emmanueluc.unitingchurch.org.au.

August 5, 1-5pm. Communication Training Day. St Francis' College, 233 Milton Rd, Milton. Contact Focus on 3835 2229.

August 6. Kawana Waters Congregation celebrates twenty years of worship and fellowship in their current building. Contact Trevor Huth on 54916632 or 0408723638 or email trevann@dovenetq.net.au.

August 25-September 16. 40-hour Calling & Caring Lab 1 course. Trainers Rev Peter Arnett and Mrs Pauline Thomas. Registration form and details available from Emmanuel Church office email euca@dovenetq.net.au or phone Rosemary on 3355 2162.

August 31-September 2. Sandgate Uniting Church Craft Fair. 116 Board St, Deagon. Phone Bobbie 3269 6565 or Jean 3265 2412.

September 2, 11am-4pm. Bremer Brisbane Fun Day. At Allawah Scout Park, Allawah Rd, Chuwar (UBD 173 Q9). Contact June Rice on 3202 7045.

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



Piles of paper come with a prayer

UNITING CHURCH congregations in Queensland were first in Australia to participate in the 2006 National Church Life Survey (NCLS) completing their surveys in June.

NCLS Logistics Co-ordinator Kathy Jacka said the distribution of surveys had gone smoothly.

"We've received pallet loads of surveys and we've started organising piles and piles of paper. Three paper cuts so far are not bad for a semi trailer load," she said.

"I'm excited to see it all coming together smoothly but more excited about the opportunities this will be giving to churches.

"It's fantastic to speak to people all over Australia and get a snap shot of their world and hear about their local area, and so they know, we'll be praying for each church as we pack their surveys too."

For more information about NCLS go to www.ncls.org.au

Banners conclude journey at Assembly

A GROUP of 34 banners have traveled to Uniting Churches around the country and will finish the journey at the National Assembly meeting in Brisbane in July.

The 'Clouds of Witnesses' banners represent the six months after Pentecost and have been made by Uniting Church Adult Fellowship groups all over the country.

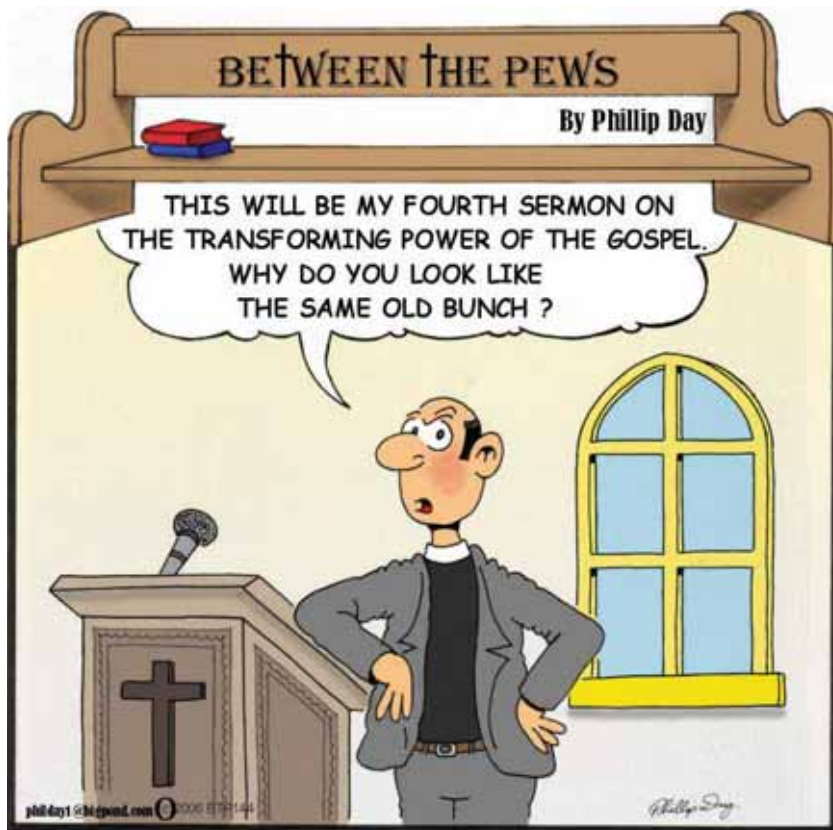
Six of the banners were made by congregations or groups within the Queensland Synod.

Pictured is the banner of Rahab created by Zone Fellowships in the Presbytery of Central Queensland.

The group said the banner was "made with great enthusiasm" and the red rope represents the blood of Christ.



NCLS survey forms stacked ready to go





Get Ready!

By Dr Rocktrn and the Groovemeisters
Emu Music Australia
RRP \$19.95

Those involved in children's ministry will find *Get Ready!* a good addition to their resource library with an interesting mix of musical styles from country to rock and just

plain quirky, and a range of options for using them with children.

One of the added benefits of *Get Ready* is the additional resources included on the CD such as 10 lessons of Sunday School material along with a complete songbook and overheads.

The well rounded material covers a broad range of topics and offers a range of activities, dramas to explore the Bible story, memory verse and songs.

The songs are aimed at preschool through to the end of primary school and broken into three different age ranges, to make it easier to work with larger groups.

Get Ready is a good Australian resource offering a broad spectrum of music and supplementary materials to assist churches in their whole ministry to children.

Andrew Bell is the Youth and Children's Ministry Regional Worker on the Darling Downs

The Da Vinci Code

Directed by Ron Howard
149 minutes
Rated M

The movie is never as good as the book. That is a fair statement.

While *The Da Vinci Code* basically follows the plot of the book, screen writer Avika Goldsman and director Ron Howard got around having to cut the 600 page book down to two and half hours of film time by merging plot lines and changing details.

I think my problem was that I finished the book the day before I saw the film so all the finer details were still imbedded in my mind. Having spoken with people who read the book a year ago, I found they did not quite share my level of disgust at what I saw as unnecessary changes.

Changes like the reason Sophie Neveu and her grandfather had not spoken. The film says it was an argument they had when she was in primary school about how her parents died, thus avoiding having to do a flash back to the Hieros Gamos ritual. That may have worked, except they do several flashbacks to the ritual but never explain it.

Understandably, the number of riddles and puzzles were cut down to cope with the film genre, but surely the Grand Master of the Priory would have gone to more trouble to hide the location of the Grail?

Perhaps the most frustrating change though was the nature of Sophie Neveu's character. The film portrays her as a silly little girl who is just along for the ride. It mentions that her grand father trained her all her life to decipher riddles and puzzles and yet she solves nothing in the film. Her character is almost unnecessary.

Audrey Tautou was great as Sophie Neveu, but was held back by the lack of strength in her character. Tom Hanks is vaguely believable as Robert Langdon, though why he needed terrible hair to be a believable Harvard professor is beyond me. Jean Reno (Captain Fache), Ian McKellen (Sir Leigh Teabing) and Paul Bettany (Silas) were particularly well cast.

There are some jump-in-your-seat moments provided by Silas and some comic relief from Teabing.

The brief history of Silas was confusing, as was the revelation of who the Teacher was (not helped by another character claiming to be the Teacher).

The film claims the knowing involvement of the Vatican. It shows the nun at Saint Sulpice with the names and phone numbers of all four keepers of the keystone written on a piece of paper, and the ending. Oh, the ending!

Some might think this is the most important part. The reason they kept reading or watching. The film was wrapped up in a matter of minutes with more unnecessary changes. However, there is a nice lighthearted moment when Neveu attempts to walk on water.

I took someone who had not read the book. He found it confusing and long. The filmmakers have done a wonderful job at making a good book into a boring film. At almost 2.5 hours, surely they had time to get the details right!

Mardi Lumsden is Associate Editor of *Journey*

REVIEWS

The Other Side of You

By Salley Vickers
HarperCollins
RRP \$32.95

A novel about psychotherapy featuring a story from the Gospel of Luke, a poem by T. S. Eliot and a painting by the Italian artist, Caravaggio, *The Other Side of You* is a feast of ideas and insights.

Vickers was trained as a psychoanalyst, of the Jungian kind, and writes about the healing power of memory, art and story.

Dr David McBride is the novel's gracious narrator who carries the pain of his childhood into his work as a hospital psychiatrist with those threatening harm to themselves or others.

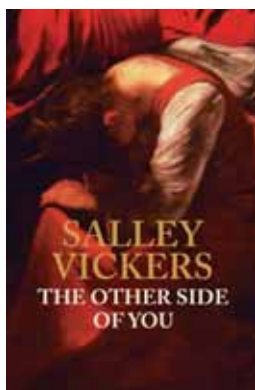
Elizabeth Cruikshank, a forlorn librarian, is one of his most challenging patients and David is able to elicit Elizabeth's tale of love and remorse by risking discovery of his own.

Vickers' fourth novel and her best so far, *The Other Side of You* is making a statement about the difference between a life propelled by buried wounds and one led by an admission of past pain.

It is also proclaiming the healing role of the artist, as Vickers weaves her narrative in and around Caravaggio's painting, "Supper at Emmaus".

The Other Side of You has plenty of discussion-starters about pastoral care, the therapeutic relationship, and the role of memory in decision-making about vocation and love, and will be appreciated by clergy and layperson alike.

Mark Young is a reviewer for *Journey*



Take My Life

By Garage Hymnal
Emu Music Australia
RRP \$29.95

Garage Hymnal's debut CD is an "impressive" contribution to the worship song repertoire available to the Australian Christian church for a number of reasons.

Take My Life is a collective work with its origins in 2004 in the band assembled for Sydney University's Evangelical Union Annual Conference.

The attractively packaged CD



makes the right connections with the young adult age group and the CD owner can access the band website (www.garagehymnal.com) and downloaded lead sheets and piano arrangements for the 13 worship songs.

"Impressive" describes the diversity of scripture used as the basis for most of the songs. Unlike some other 'stables' for contemporary worship songs in Australia, Garage Hymnal are prepared to tap into a broader range of scripture.

"Impressive" is the range of styles from distorted, 'grungy' rockers to reflective acoustic guitar-backed ballads.

Similarly impressive is the opportunity to sing some full-on songs in the "Hillsong United" or "Planet Shakers" style which express through the use of "we" and "us" what it means to be a community of Christ, not just a collection of individual believers.

If your congregation is blessed with a thriving rock-band or you simply want some new music to encourage your young people, *Take My Life* offers something quite "impressive".

David MacGregor (Indooropilly Uniting Church) is one of Australia's leading church music specialists. Visit David's website at www.togethertocelbrate.com.au

The Irresistible Revolution

By Shane Claiborne
Zondervan
RRP \$14.95

I was immediately drawn in by the provocative title of Shane Claiborne's compelling and challenging book and.

Claiborne is a founding member of an Intentional Christian Community called The Simple Way (www.thesimpleway.org) in Philadelphia, USA.

In his 30s, Claiborne has studied under Tony Campolo and others at Eastern University and served as an intern at Willow Creek.

He travelled to Iraq as a peacemaker while the bombs were falling, has been arrested countless times and challenges the church to wake up from its comfortable slumber.

Claiborne dares to believe that the kingdom or reign of God can be ushered in as 'ordinary radicals' dare to take Jesus at his word and follow him in a revolution of ordinary acts of love.

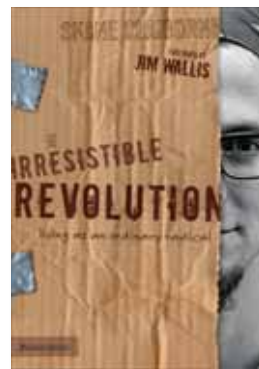
He advocates that the Bible

needs to be acted as much as it needs to be believed.

Claiborne loves the church enough to prophetically call it to step out beyond its wall and work with others for justice.

This is a book marked by passion, humility and love of God which has and will continue to challenge me.

Stuart Cameron is Lead Pastor at Robina Uniting Church Gold Coast



In Paradisum

By Canticum
Independent
RRP \$25

Australian choral music is a vast and wonderful genre and Canticum's *In Paradisum* has captured part of that world.

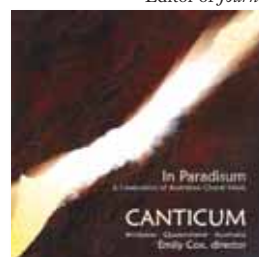
Canticum must be commended for joining the growing number of ensembles commissioning and touring the work from Australian composers, such as 24-year-old Joseph Twist.

In Paradisum comprises works performed by Canticum at the 7th World Symposium on Choral Music in Japan in 2005 and includes live recordings from the Symposium of three Australian folk songs. It is a very brave thing for a choir to include live recordings and shows the confidence director Emily Cox has in her singers.

With a mature sound rich in the traditional European choral history, Canticum have taken the step into Australian repertoire on this, their fourth recording with works from Gerard Brophy, Iain Grandage, Joseph Twist, Christopher Willcock, Sandra Milliken and Ian McKinley.

It is Grandage's *Three Australian Bush Songs* that remind the listener of the Australian content of the recording. These are beautifully done. Willcock's *John Shaw Neilson Triptych* is rich and technically difficult, at times reaching the limits of vocal range.

Mardi Lumsden is Associate Editor of *Journey*



LETTERS

Aspire to poverty

Congratulations on your article "Ecology – An Evolving Theology" (May *Journey*).

It is something that the whole Church needed to be aware of much sooner.

When Jesus said, "Remember the lilies" he was addressing the need for an holistic awareness to the created order. He was calling the human family to be aware that, as John Wesley said, "He has no rights to dispose of anything which is in his hands, but according to the will of his Lord".

Again in his sermon on the use of money Wesley says, "Gain all you can but not at the expense of life, or at the expense of health, save all you can, give all you can".

I marvel at the similarity of Wesley's teaching and that of St. Francis of Assisi (1181-1226) who following his conversion in 1226, turned his back on his family wealth and sought "Holy Poverty".

Rev John Tully OAM
Gold Coast

Distressing theology

I was distressed and angry when I read the article "Proclaiming Faith through a Biocentric Theology" (May *Journey*) by Jason John. What will the Uniting Church come to next?

If as Jason proposes, the creation of the earth, mankind and the fall are regarded merely as 'stories' then surely the very foundations of our faith are undermined.

Calling into question the reality of the truth contained in Genesis undermines the basis of our Christian faith and belief.

Furthermore to state; "that there is no such thing as original sin", cuts across the very purpose for which Christ came into the world, suffered and died.

As Christians I believe we need to be concerned about the environment and be good stewards of it. However to bring this debate

into the area of faith which is firstly an internal spiritual reality and secondly an outward practice is I believe a highly distorted view of the teaching of Scripture.

Journey magazine is a voice for the Uniting Church in many places. I am distressed that an article with such an appalling misrepresentation of theological truth has been printed.

John Biggs
On email

The real holiday

On 12 June we celebrated the 80th birthday of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II with a public holiday, each of us in whatever pleasurable way we chose.

My mind went back to princess days of 1947, when on 15 August she addressed a Christian youth rally in England:

"We are commissioned to be witnesses to the truth of the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. We need to have a knowledge of our Faith that we can be bold in our witness and adventurous in our living. We know that we shall probably be a minority wherever we are. We know that we shall have to face insecurity, opposition and perhaps danger in the confession of our faith. But the Christian Church has always prospered in adversity, and we certainly must not be afraid.

"Think of the other men and women in times past who, through the grace of God, were enabled to go forward into the unknown future with confidence and with resolve. I ask you to join me in offering ourselves anew to God, that we may be worthy successors of the pilgrims of old and be found valiant and devoted to the service of God and our fellow men."

Earlier that same year (21 April, addressing the Commonwealth from Cape Town), the twenty one year-old heir to the throne said: "I declare before you all that my whole life, whether it be long

or short, shall be devoted to your service, and the service of our great Imperial family to which we all belong". Such witness enhanced my celebration.

Phillip Ramsay
Manly West

Registering Dissent

The most frightening aspect of the Assembly proposal being put forward by the Moderator, Rev Dr David Pitman and the General Secretary, the Rev Jenny Tymms is the plan to set up a register of people opposed to the ordination of self-avowed homosexual ministers.

Imagine! A register of dissenters to evoke memories of Orwell's 1984!

How deceptively caring to infer that the substantial majority of UCA members who hold to orthodox belief on sexuality really are a minority whose rights need to be safeguarded.

Ironically, this proposal is being sponsored by the chief office-bearers of the one Synod which passed a proposal focusing on the positive, life-affirming splendour of our creation as male and female in the image of God.

Members have a right to ask whether the clear view of the Synod will be strongly supported by its Moderator and General Secretary.

Rev Dr Max Champion
National Chairperson of
the Reforming Alliance

Innisfail says thank you

I feel that it is time that I put pen to paper and offer sincere thanks to all who have prayed, expressed concern and offered help in so many different ways for the people here in Innisfail since Cyclone Larry.

Not only are we aware of prayers but we have been made aware that our church is a generous church. Thankyou!

It is with some degree of pride that I am glad to belong to a church that has given so generously in our time of need.

Our spirits have been lifted and we have been encouraged as we belong to the Uniting Church in Australia.

Personally, I would like to thank my previous congregation in Gympie. I have been overwhelmed by the generosity of this congregation and the people of the Gympie community, who gave – not only money, but pallet loads of personal items. It is hard to imagine the dollar value of their gifts. The folk in Gympie, through their love and support and generosity have really touched my emotions and I was taken aback to think that they thought so highly of us at this time.

All this and they are going through a drought themselves – along with many other places in the southern part of our state. What love.

I would also like to let the wider church community know that the recovery is going to be a long slow process.

There have been approximately 8000 insurance claims following Cyclone Larry, some small, some large, some very large. If, on average, each claim took about 80 hours to complete that would mean that there is a minimum of 164,000 hours of work.

I am told that there are 50 builders so they will all have full time work for the next 1½ years.

During this time people will still need to find somewhere to live. They will still need to find work. The bananas will not produce a return until the end of this year and the sugar industry might just break even if the sugar content is high enough.

It will be a long road to recovery and many people here are afraid that people outside of Innisfail will forget all too quickly the devastation and the slow road to recovery. We hope that this will not be so.

Thank you for your prayers, they have been appreciated and welcomed and we ask that they continue.

In the midst of the disasters, in the midst of calamity, we find God is journeying with us. God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Thanks be to God. Thanks be to God's people.

Rev Glenn Louttit
Innisfail

FAST NEWS

UCA takes another About FACE

THE LONG tradition of About FACE cross-cultural experiences will continue with the next program in July 2007.

About FACE is specifically for young adults aged between 18 and 30 years of age and provides

an opportunity to experience life and faith from a different cultural perspective, either in indigenous communities in Australia, or with a partner church community overseas.

Through the building of friendships and mutual understanding, participants are encouraged to have an 'about face' in their attitude and lifestyle and the experience enables them to

develop new insights and reflect on their own values and priorities.

The About FACE program is particularly pertinent for the Australian community as a whole, as we consider ways of relating to 'neighbour' in our global village.

It is also an investment into the lives of young adults in the Uniting Church, and into leadership for the present and into the future.

Expressions of interest or enquiries can be directed to the About FACE Coordinator on phone (08) 8236 4240 or email aboutface8@sa.uca.org.au.

CLASSIFIEDS

Accommodation

Fantastic location for beachfront holiday in charming cottage at Currumbin Beach, Qld. Vacancies available 2006. Phone 3376 4247.

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

King's Beach, Caloundra unit 2 bdrms, fully furnished, ne aspect, sea views. Reas rates. Ph 3378 5083.

Holiday unit, modern, pool. 100m from Kings Beach Caloundra from \$300/wk. Ph Ray 0427 990 161.

Wanted

Housesitter required for home in Townsville from mid September for ten weeks. Ph 07 47713235 if interested.

Journey would love to receive donations of the following working equipment to assist with daily press monitoring. One 34cm (small portable type) television set and one (electric powered) radio. Contact Bruce Mullan on ph 3377 9801 or email journey@uccentre.ucaqld.com.au.

Email your classified advertisements to
mardi.lumsden@uccentre.ucaqld.com.au
or fax 07 3377 9796



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

Maintain traditional law says NT Synod

DISTRESSED at the violence being perpetrated in Aboriginal communities the Northern Synod of the Uniting Church has released a statement condemning violence against both the young and old in those communities where violence is rife.

The Synod believes that much of the trouble stems from the Aboriginal minority group trying to live in the shadow of the dominant society.

Synod General Secretary Mr Kevin Davis said it is obvious that the dominant society on the whole does not respect Aboriginal culture.

"In response to the criticism of the use of traditional law and how it appears to conflict in the dominant society, the Synod reaffirms its support for the integrity of traditional law."

The statement said that by undermining traditional law, Aboriginal communities do not have an appropriate structure to enforce law and order within their own communities.

"A few policemen in the community is not the solution.

"The amount of media coverage on problems in Aboriginal communities fails to acknowledge those communities that are providing law and order and good services to their community members.

The Northern Synod called upon the whole of the Uniting Church in Australia to recognise that the problems existing in Aboriginal communities are perhaps the greatest social injustice issue that the nation is currently confronted with.

Soccer promotes interfaith peace

WHILE SOCCER fans throughout the world enjoy the World Cup in Germany, religious leaders hope to use the month-long event to promote peace between the faiths.

In Berlin, Christians, Jews and Muslims played an inter-religious soccer tournament on 25 June, following a first match between Christian clerics and Muslim imams in May.

"We played for the peace message, and that's a good reason to play on," said Christopher Jage-Bowler, the Church of England chaplain in Berlin, who helped dream up the idea.

In Seoul, South Korea, more than 100 clerics from the traditions of Buddhism, Catholicism, Protestantism and Won Buddhism took part in an inter-religious soccer tournament on 25 May.

Son Chang-seon, a Won Buddhist representative said, "We have different doctrines," but "the fundamental goal we are aiming for is the same".

By Frauke Brauns (Ecumenical News International)

Foundation fund off to flying start

ONE OF THE many ministries that have been doing it tough in the outback is the McKay Patrol.

In an unprecedented move, the Uniting Church Foundation in its first round of grants for 2006 has set aside \$10,000 as a first annual contribution to establish a new Foundation fund to be known as the McKay Patrol Aircraft Engine Replacement Fund.

Presbytery Chairperson Rev Bruce Cornish said the McKay Patrol continues to be an icon of the Queensland Synod.

"It is often held up by many people inside and outside the life of the Uniting Church as a wonderful example of the church continuing to care for people in the bush."

Patrol Minister Rev Garry Hardingham operates the Patrol's aircraft out of Cloncurry.

"Thanks to this innovative move by the UC Foundation one of the major burdens has been taken off the McKay Patrol's ministry."

"This is of vital importance to outback people spread over an area significantly larger than Victoria," Mr Hardingham said.

"In addition, I have received a donation of \$5,000 from one dedicated family, after they heard of the Patrol's plight from the Foundation."

People who wish to make a significant gift or a bequest in their will to this important new Foundation fund should phone Ken Edwards on (07) 3377 9777.

In the greatest geographic spread ever, other first round 2006 Foundation grants ranged from Mossman in the north to Logan in the south, and Norfolk Island in the east.

Order of Australia honours for UCA members

By Bruce Mullan

PRESIDENT OF the National Council of Churches in Australia and former Uniting Church President Rev Professor James Haire was appointed as a Member (AM) of the Order of Australia for service to religion and to the community through the promotion of ecumenical and interfaith dialogue, the Uniting Church in Australia and theological education.

National Chair, Uniting International Mission and Uniting Church Overseas Aid Professor Haire is also a member of the Methodist-Roman Catholic International Commission and Joint Chair of Uniting and Roman Catholic Church Australian National Dialogue.

Professor Haire was involved in negotiations ending Christian/Muslim Conflict in Moluccas, Indonesia, in 2001-2002.

Professor Haire was one of 670 Queen's Birthday awardees announced by Governor-General

His Excellency Major General Michael Jeffery in recognition of a diverse range of contributions and service by fellow citizens who have distinguished themselves at home and internationally. Major General Jeffery is Chancellor of the Order of Australia.

Beaconsfield Tasmania's legendary Community Minister Mrs Frances Seen was awarded a Medal (OAM) of the Order of Australia for service to the community of Beaconsfield through the Uniting Church in Australia and through aged care, health and youth groups.

National Director, Frontier Services Ms Rosemary Young was also appointed as a Member of the Order of Australia

Queensland Uniting Church Members honoured included Mr David Vann, member of the Synod's Finance and Property Board and Chair of the Uniting Church Foundation, Mrs Gavina McLucas from Bundaberg Mrs Dell Saxby from Rockhampton and Mrs Doreen Gillespie.



Former Uniting Church President Rev Professor James Haire AM.
Photo by Osker Lau



Patrol Minister Rev Garry Hardingham admires the Patrol plane's new engine

Latest Uniting Church Foundation grant recipients

Thanks mainly to the wonderful people whose Will has resulted in an unrestricted bequest being received for God's work, the Foundation has been able to disburse its tax-free interest earnings on such funds in the form of these general grants. Their special gift to future generations, from their accumulation of a lifetime of God's blessings, is a true reflection of the values and principles they treasured.

The closing date for the next round of general grants is 30 September 2006, for disbursement during December. For more information about bequests to the Church and for grant application forms, please contact the Foundation right now at www.foundation.ucaqld.com.au or phone the Development Manager on (07) 3377 9777.

Applicant	Project	Amount
Logan UC	Auslife @ Springwood High seminar for Y10 students	\$800
McKay Patrol	Support towards aircraft engine replacement	\$10,000
Mary Valley UC	Community Lifekeys resources for family courses	\$3,875
Mossman UC	How to Drug Proof Your Kids	\$2,400
Norfolk Island UC	Foundation Day community breakfast	\$1,000
St David's UCA Neighbourhood Centre Coopers Plains	Pilot ten month trial of one day per month of respite for young survivors of strokes	\$5,300
St Paul's UC Stafford	Some of Life's Answers Revisited (SOLAR)	\$3,000
The Lakes UC	Ditto	\$3,000
	Total	\$29,375

Historically Speaking



FROM PADDLEWHEELERS TO THE CITY CATS

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

One special cross-river ferry was the steam-driven paddlewheeler vehicular vessel, the Hetherington, which saw more than 40 years service on the river. Named after a Brisbane City Council alderman, the Hetherington initially linked Kangaroo Point to Charlotte Street in the city in a service which operated from 1915 to 1921.

From 1923, 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 1955.

Alex Gow Funerals

A Brisbane owned family business, established in 1840.

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JOURNEY asks...

What was it like being a member of the 10th Assembly during the debate on sexuality and leadership?

Sharon Kirk

I REMEMBER the noise, the clamour of loud voices demanding to be heard. I remember being bombarded with opinions and people's deeply held beliefs.

I remember the noise of my own internal debate as I struggled to make sense of it all arguing the case from my deeply held beliefs but finding that I could agree with most of the speakers on many points.

I realised that if I was going to make any sense of what was happening I needed to be quiet and to be still, to listen and to hear, to seek to understand those whose views and experience were different to mine.

I prayed, "Where are you God in all of this? Where is your voice to be heard?"

I thought about Jesus and the crowds he encountered and wondered what would Jesus make of this Assembly crowd? Where would Jesus position himself? What would Jesus and I have to say to each other about these issues?

The debate was intense and urgent. It produced more questions. We were looking for clear cut answers, but the dilemmas we were grappling with were very complex.



It seemed to me that the whole measure of my faith and my credibility as a Christian person rested on the outcome of the decisions being made and which way I was going to vote. I was very uncomfortable with that. My discomfort grew as the debate polarised.

I started to become anxious about the conversations that inevitably I would be having in my local congregation, Presbytery, and in the Synod. It was going to be extremely difficult to help people understand the decision that was made and I knew that some people's anger would be directed at Assembly members.

I prayed for courage to continue the dialogue.

I prayed that I would be able to respect those with whom I would not agree, that we would be able to find a space in which to express our deeply held beliefs and from which we could move forward together.

Sharon Kirk is a member of the Gladstone Uniting Church and Secretary of the Presbytery of Central Queensland

Barbara Bailey

ASSEMBLIES WERE not new to me, but this time seemed different. We sat at round tables often sharing with people we had never met. I wondered what they were thinking, how they were handling the pressure of the vote we were about to take.

A former president, delegates from several states, a self-confessed lesbian and I sat together. The air was thick with apprehension; the media had set up behind us and we knew if we rose to speak the cameras would be recording.

Earlier in the day my phone was in overload with voice and text messages, most suggesting how I should vote. In the gallery above us visitors waited nervously watching our every move.



Beyond the floor of the Assembly few seemed to understand the complexity of the resolution, and the number of amendments we had endured.

Although formerly a Toowoomba girl, the cold of a Melbourne winter chilled me as we walked some distance in biting winds. As I sat there in my winter woollies waiting for the session to begin I resolved to call for a private ballot but a colleague reminded me that we prided ourselves on being an open church.

I have regretted my inaction at that point ever since.

I did rise to speak during the debate, wanting an assurance if a certain outcome did eventuate. Immediately the cameras focused on me. How intrusive that was when such a sensitive matter was being debated.

I thought of those in the Presbytery which I led. I knew they would be in prayer and this kept me going. How would I share with them this environment, the debate itself and the outcome?

Why was this issue dividing a church which God through the power of his Spirit had called into being?

I heard pain and heartache in stories from both points of view and I felt pain deep within my soul.

Rev Barbara Bailey is retired after her last placement as Chairperson of the Presbytery of North Queensland

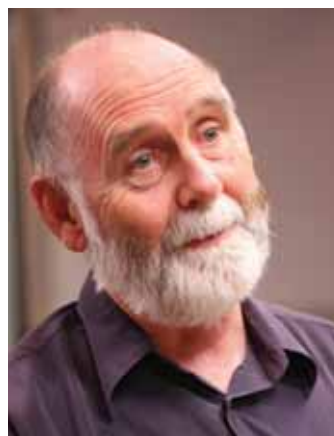
David Fanning

THE TENTH assembly debate and decision making on sexuality and leadership produced a roller coaster of feelings within me.

Initially the proposals, which eventually evolved to become Resolution 84 engendered in me a feeling of hope, a hope grounded in the vision of our Basis of Union that the unity which is Christ's gift and will for the church would be maintained.

The proposers indicated that the proposals were not intended to be the official position of our church, but a statement of where we were and offering a way forward.

Hope dimmed when confusion and suspicion emerged. At the outset of the



debate I became confused by the meeting's decision to associate a member of Uniting Network and a member of E.M.U. for this business. Why associate anyone if we were only making a statement of current reality? Suspicion blossomed when these associated members spoke to the house.

I felt betrayed by the assembly processes. Members of the Assembly agreed that the President would be the only one to make public statements to the media on this issue. This did not seem to apply to associated members who freely spoke to the media at the conclusion of this business.

Having the media present was also less than helpful. They targeted several people for their points of view. So much for the voice of the president!

Hope was all but extinguished when I thought of my presbytery people back home having to cope with the possibility of sensational headlines fuelled by irresponsible comments by members and associated members of the assembly.

Sadly the assembly ended for me after Resolution 84 passed. I spend most of the last two days outside the meeting on the phone conversing with distraught presbytery members.

And the hope? It continues to flicker. Assembly 2006 may see it fully restored.

Rev David Fanning is Chairperson of the Presbytery of Mary Burnett



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