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WHEN THE SAINTS GO MARCHING IN

Sometimes they inspire us to great heights in our Christian pilgrimage and sometimes they make us feel inadequate. The church has a love / hate relationship with its saints and this month *Journey* looks at the saints and heroes of the faith.

By Bruce Mullan

THE BOOK of Hebrews talks about us being surrounded by a great cloud of witnesses but for Australian culture with its levelling social attitude sometimes known as the "tall poppy syndrome", to elevate others to a position of honour or respect can create a sense of dis-ease.

Writing in a pastoral note to the church in late 2003 Uniting Church Assembly General Secretary Terence Corkin said, "I know that we Protestants don't go much for saints but I do rather like All Saints Day. Maybe it appeals to my egalitarian streak where every saint is given equal place!"

"Of course in our tradition we don't single out saints – all the servants of God are equally valued and valuable. At least that is the theology."

The term 'saint' often describes someone who had demonstrated exceptional faith or commitment but in the New Testament it is used some 50 times to refer to all Christian believers and always in the plural.

The church before and since the Reformation has designated particular people as Saints with a capital "S" but does so with some wariness so that basically no matter how holy you might seem, you don't get canonised until you are dead and have a few miracles to boot.

Given the propensity for contemporary popular idols and heroes to stumble and fail, this theoretically enables the church to see an individual's entire life before passing judgment on it.

Even in those Christian traditions with a high view of sainthood, the saints are not "worshipped" (that is reserved for God alone) but are venerated, a term suggesting they should be respected and recognised as role models.

So saints like Francis of Assisi while not great scholars or powerful leaders have moved history and transformed Christianity



Members of Ashmore Uniting Church on the Gold Coast are among the saints of God. Photo by Bruce Mullan and Osker Lau

because of the particular way they lived out the Gospel and carried their Christian commitment with them through every aspect of daily life.

St Francis was not lecturing in a seminary, preaching from a pulpit or writing a profound treatise when he took off his clothes and walked naked from his home town of Assisi.

He was simply making a gesture, but it was so powerful in its symbolism that seven hundred years later and another seven hundred years from now it will continue to speak to generations of Christian women and men.

Yet as egalitarian Aussies know too well, there is a danger that, in believing only greatness can make a difference, we might abrogate our own Christian responsibility to strive for a world transformed.

Helen Keller said, "The world is moved

along not only by the mighty shoves of its heroes, but also by the aggregate of the tiny pushes of each honest worker"

Mr Corkin agrees saying his favourite reading for All Saints Day is Matthew 1.

"I am always encouraged, and somewhat relieved, that God has used prostitutes, foreigners who share a bed with the landowner, a polygamous lustful murderer, and the dubious relationship of a teenage girl to undertake amazing things.

"I hope I do not miss seeing God at work in people because I look only at the surface and not the mystery of how God uses the most curious people to work out the salvation of the whole creation."

There are Christian saints all around us quietly making God's world a better place by their small actions; loving their neighbours, practising hospitality and working for justice.

More about saints

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Where are our saints and heroes?

I SUBSCRIBE to *The Bulletin* as one way of keeping in touch with news and events around the world.

I read the October 10th issue with a growing sense of unease.

It included the following stories: the alarming increase in the number of Australians addicted to methamphetamines (known as "ice"); a crisis within the indigenous community at Maningrida over allegations of sexual abuse; a sad reminder of the terrible and pointless loss of heroic Australian lives during the battle of Passchendaele in Belgium during WWI; the rapidly growing disillusionment in Australia (and other Western countries) over the war in Iraq; a grim reminder in a review of the autobiography of environmentalist, David Suzuki, of the accelerating impact of climate change on our world; and a couple of reflections on the dysfunctional lives of certain well-known celebrities.

I realised afterwards that my unease stemmed in part from a sense of the sheer weight of the problems and challenges identified in one issue of just one journal.

Addiction, abuse, armed conflict, global warming and social dysfunction are the realities we see and hear about every day.

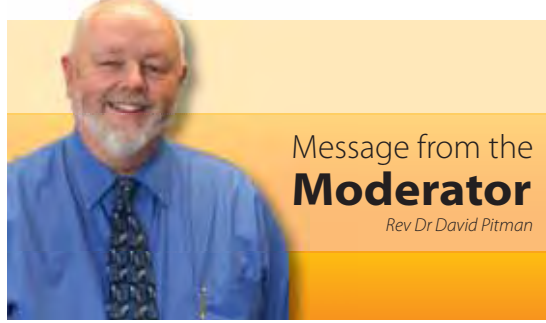
The constant repetition of similar stories is part of the crisis.

We can feel alarmed or sad or angry at any given moment, as the case may be, but it's all too easy to become increasingly insensitive and indifferent.

The saints and heroes in every generation are those who, because they are alive to God and the movement of the Spirit, remain alert and responsive to what is going on around them and passionate about ensuring that the Gospel is proclaimed and enacted.

Around 140 AD, a baby girl was born to wealthy Greek Christian parents.

They called her Paraskevi. From a young age, Paraskevi embraced the Christian faith wholeheartedly.



Message from the Moderator

Rev Dr David Pitman

When her parents died, she sold everything she owned and distributed most of the money amongst the poor and needy.

With the remainder she established a home for young women and widows who had, like herself, dedicated their lives to Christian witness and service.

Inevitably, Paraskevi became the target of those opposed to Christianity.

Formal complaints were made against her. She was imprisoned and tortured.

However, they could not break her spirit or force her to recant her faith.

Eventually, she was released, and she immediately returned to her life of Christian service.

“Let us honour them, pray for them, and demand justice on their behalf.”

When there was a further wave of persecution against the Christians, Paraskevi was arrested once more, again subjected to appalling torture, and was finally beheaded, faithful to Christ to the very end of her remarkable life!

In March this year Oscar Munoz, a Christian Pastor in Buenaventura (Colombia), was shot and killed in the street by paramilitary militia as he walked to his home.

Oscar was deeply committed

to his congregation and his community. He became yet another victim in a brutal conflict in which church leaders are often targeted because they are active and public advocates for peace, justice, reconciliation and stability.

In his life, and in his death, Oscar Munoz, faithful to Jesus his Lord and Saviour, proclaimed the reign of God.

In recent years many Christian priests and pastors have been murdered in the Philippines, all of them courageous advocates for the poor and oppressed.

These killings have taken place in the context of widespread human rights abuses.

Investigations into the murders by independent groups, including Amnesty International and the Commission on Human Rights in the Philippines itself, point to the direct involvement of the military.

Appeals to President Arroyo have resulted in many promises but very little action.

There has been some publicity recently regarding the public statements of Federal Parliamentarian, Kevin Rudd, who strongly supports the prophetic role of the Christian Churches in contemporary society and their right to hold governments accountable for their policies and actions in relation to matters of justice.

Rudd identifies Christian martyr Dietrich Bonhoeffer as his faith hero and quotes his statement from 1937: "When Christ calls a man, he bids him come and die."

Here in Australia at this time it is hard for us to grasp the real significance of that declaration.

On the other hand, willingness to die for the sake of Christ is a daily reality for those of our brothers and sisters in the Philippines who have committed themselves to stand with the poor and oppressed.

They are our contemporary saints and heroes. Let us honour them, pray for them, and demand justice on their behalf.

From the Editor

All right, I admit it. I hate Halloween and all the garbage that goes with it.

Each 31 October I put a sign on our front door that says "No Tricks and No Treats". I don't have to buy any lollies but I do have to wash the smashed egg off the front of the house next morning.

Not only do I see Halloween as a sign of US cultural imperialism run riot through our otherwise quiet and ordered neighbourhood, but it ends up looking like a merchandising convention from the other side of hell.

Many Christian traditions designate particular feast days for the various saints, the main one traditionally being All Saints Day also known as "All Hallows".

It was instituted to honour all the saints both known and unknown and to make up for any deficiencies in the other celebrations of saints' feasts throughout the year.

Thanks to a decision of Pope Gregory IV (827-844) for western Christians this falls on 1 November while the Eastern Orthodox Church follows the earlier tradition of celebrating the feast on the first Sunday after Pentecost which marks the close of the Easter season.

Like many Christian celebrations All Hallows was originally a day of religious festivities in northern European pagan traditions, until it was appropriated by Christian missionaries and the hope of the Gospel became integral to the celebrations.

By contrast, the customs of Halloween are about fear. It was a Celtic belief that evil spirits roamed the earth on the last night of the Celtic year (October 31) and got up to mischief. Part of that belief was that people could survive the night safely by dressing up as ghosts or witches or by bribing the evil spirits with treats.

Now the bed-sheets and pumpkins are long gone and the masks and outfits are sold in K-Mart. Commercialism has overtaken the panhandling and mild vandalism is retribution for non-participation.

Like Christmas and Easter, All Saints Day has been lost in secularisation, commercialism and consumerism and is beyond recognition.

While the two big festivals maintain enough of the faith story to warrant perseverance by the Church, All Hallows is a lost cause.

Let's dump it fast and look for an alternative way to celebrate that great communion of saints to which Christ has given us membership.

Bruce Mullan

Sign of the Times



THERE WAS a short period of confusion for members and minister when this sign appeared on the notice board of the Star of the Sea Catholic Church which is diagonally opposite the Cleveland Uniting Church.

Was Rev Doug Jones leaving the congregation or had the Cleveland Uniting Church Office Administrator, who is a faithful member of the Star of the Sea congregation, inadvertently put the notice up on the wrong notice board?

But Cleveland congregation member Mr John Whitlock said the notice was indeed correct.

"Mr Jones is Director of Studies in Old Testament at Trinity Theological College and had been invited by the Star of the Sea Adult Faith Education Committee to lead a two hour seminar on the Psalms.

"The invitation came because a member of the committee had studied with Mr Jones at the Brisbane College of Theology earlier this year."

Send your sign photographs to journey@ucentre.ucaql.com.au.

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Sharing more than Idol faith

By Mardi Lumsden

THE BAND Soulframe has graced stages of numerous festivals (including the Australian Gospel Music Festival and the National Christian Youth Convention), won major song writing awards throughout Australia, have supported some of the big names in the international music industry, just released their second album and had their website declared the most visited band website in Australia (tipping Hi5 off the top spot).

But only in the last six months has the Gold Coast four-piece become a household name with lead singer Guy 'Mutto' Mutton performing on *Australian Idol*.

Mutto, as he is known, got to the final nine and, since leaving *Idol*, has hit the ground running to get the most from his *Idol* experience.

When *Journey* spoke to an exhausted Mutto just days after leaving *Idol*, he was firmly focused on the future for Soulframe and reflected on his *Idol* experience from the perspective of his faith.

"I think there is a season and a time for everything and I was just viewing that as a season and a time for learning and to try to represent myself and the band the best that I could," said Mutto.

"The song choices I made, I was thinking beyond *Idol*. *Idol* is the vehicle for life beyond it really and I wanted to be able to do a bit with how I was going to be perceived when I came out. I was sort of thinking of it as a platform for the future."

Mutto's Soulframe band members were some of his biggest supporters during *Idol*. "The



Soulframe frontman and Australian Idol contestant Mutto onstage at the 2006 Australian Gospel Music Festival. Photo by Adam Weathered and courtesy of www.therockacrossaustralia.com.au

original plan for entering *Idol* was that Soulframe was at a bit of an emotional hump," said Mutto.

"We felt like we were pushing down doors and nothing was really opening up for us. We had a fair bit of interest from a label in the States and that kind of fell through.

"Then the *Idol* thing came up and I thought it would give people an opportunity to get to know me and get to know my voice and hopefully transpose into the band getting a bit of exposure.

"Initially there was a bit of uncertainty in terms of the band but we all thought about it and talked about it and realised that it could be a really good opportunity for us and so they have been very supportive."

If Mutto had won *Australian Idol* he would have been under a very strict contract that would no doubt bill him as a solo artist but that was a risk Soulframe was willing to take.

"Obviously it is a very uncontrollable outcome. If I would have won it, that was going to present a new set of issues. But we talked through that and they were all ready to jump on the band wagon whatever the outcome was."

Australian Idol is at the top of the pop culture food chain; watched by more people than the football grand final. In such a setting it was interesting to see a number of the final twelve *Idol* contestants were clearly Christians.

"There was a fairly strong Christian culture in the *Idol*

experience. Erana Clark the vocal coach is a Christian and one of the backup singers is a Christian, so there was a lot of prayer happening and a lot of relying on the Lord, particularly before performances, praying with each other.

"Christianity is always one of those things that, potentially in many minds, can create a certain persona or a certain stigma attached to it. The Christians in the house are very mindful of that and tried not to force it down anyone's throat, but still live their life.

"Like, Dean and I, we'd sit together and talk about things and pray together and read our Bibles together and just try and live life, not with any agenda but just live."

During the program Mutto decided to write a word on his hand

Another Australian idol contender Jessica Mauboy is a member of the Indonesian Missionary Uniting Church in Darwin.

Proud aunt and minister of the congregation Rev Thresi Mauboy told *Journey* of the overwhelming excitement of the congregation about Jessica's success.

Rev Mauboy said since she was two years of age Jessica would grab a lime from the fridge and put it on her hands and mouth and "Was always singing, singing, never stopped."

"We believe she is the next Australian Idol, I think.

"We trust our God and every Sunday we have a special time of silence for two or three minutes and pray for her before she goes on the stage.

"She does too. She said, 'I'm praying that God can look after me and I can sing well because it is a very special gift from God'."

to help him express his meaning and to remind himself what each song meant to him.

"That was purely for *Idol*. I had one minute 45 to communicate a song; such a short timeframe to communicate what I wanted to."

So with Mutto out of *Australian Idol* the band is making the most of their new found fans and working hard to promote themselves both in the mainstream music industry and the Christian music industry. One of the many possibilities for Soulframe is to play NCYC in Perth in January.

While the band walks the tough roads to success in the music industry, fans can sit back and enjoy the ride. We have not seen the last of Mutto and Soulframe. This, I suspect, is only the beginning.

Kevin Rudd gets confessional

By Bruce Mullan

IN A MUCH publicised 5000 word essay in the October issue of *The Monthly*, Opposition spokesperson on Foreign Affairs Kevin Rudd has pointed to German theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer as the model for Christian involvement in political life.

Rudd advocates an "alternative vision for Australia's future" shaped by Christian values.

Mr Rudd, who is also chairperson of Labor's committee on faith, politics and values, has been consistently seeking to move the support of Christians away from what he sees as conservative "tick-the-box" moral agendas.

He points to Bonhoeffer as "An eloquent corrective to those who would seek today to traduce Christianity by turning it into the political handmaiden of the conservative political establishment."

"At the time of the Great Judgement Christians will be asked not how pious they have been but

instead whether they helped to feed the hungry, clothe the naked and visit the lonely," he said.

"What I'm seeking to do in this debate is to simply restore the balance and ensure that Christians of varying traditions have a sense that they can have their express political view in politics but they don't necessarily have to vote conservative."

In a response to Rudd's essay Sydney Anglican Archbishop Peter Jensen said that the strength of the Rudd position is that he invites debate.

"Unlike some others who wish to see the Christian voice stifled and who call upon little-understood mantras such as the separation of church and state, Rudd sees value in Christian leadership expressing itself by applying the insights of the biblical revelation."

Mr Rudd said he believed that Bonhoeffer would be traumatised by the "Privatised, pietised and politically compliant Christianity



Mr Kevin Rudd Member for Griffith

on offer from the televangelists of the twenty-first century."

"Bonhoeffer's Christianity was, and remains, a more demanding challenge than that."

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Twelve year old Rachel Seaton from Mt Louisa reaching up at Camp Out.
Photo by Stephen Kersnovske

Camping out in NQ

SPREAD OVER two weekends in two locations over a hundred excited children from across North Queensland attended this years Kids Camp Out in Townsville and Cairns.

A non-stop program included crafts, playing games and rides with a special worship service organised and led by children on Sunday morning.

Youth and Children's Ministry Unit (YACMU) Regional Worker and Camp Out organiser Mr Stephen Kersnovske said the great thing about Kids Camp Out is that all congregations need to do is invite children and provide leaders.

"All the rest of the organising is done.

"One congregation brought two boys but both got to see and experience the wider church in action.

"One congregation advertised Camp Out in their local school and most of the children that attended had no connection with the church."

Contact Stephen Kersnovske at 07 4036 4440 or email stevek@yacmu.ucaql.com.au

Birdsville backing children's ministry

HEAD STRAIGHT down the road for 200 kilometres, take the turn to the right just after you hit the gravel, follow the gravel road for about 300 kilometres and when you pass through the randomly placed tents and caravans, you're at Birdsville.

It sounds like something out of a bush ballad, but they were the directions given to Youth and Children's Ministry Unit (YACMU) Regional Worker Andrew Bell to guide him to Birdsville for race weekend.

The Birdsville Races attract over 5000 visitors from all over the world and have sometimes had a reputation for being a wild weekend.

Mr Bell said the local shire Council wants to change that and promote a more family friendly image so they specifically approached Frontier Services minister Rev John Case and asked him to help put something together for the children.

So Mr Case and Mr Bell assembled a team that included

Frontier Services Remote Area Families Service workers from Charleville, a former Religious Education Officer from Murgon and a truck driver from Gympie.

"With basically no idea of how many children would attend and what ages they might be, it was very much a journey into the unknown," Mr Bell said.

"Prepare for anything and be flexible were the keys as children from four States shared in hours of fun craft, games, singing and even a local whip-cracking contest."

One mother from a local grazing property said it was great to have a program for her children where she knew they would have fun and be safe.

Mr Bell says if any Uniting Church people were looking for something a little different they could consider getting involved in next year's program.

Andrew Bell, YACMU Regional Worker can be contacted on 07 4634 7174 or email andrewb@yacmu.com.au



YACMU Regional Worker Andrew Bell finds a quiet spot with children at the Birdsville Races. Photo by Fay Barton



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Travelling to make a difference

TOUR GROUP Uniting Church Safaris don't just travel through outback Queensland, they make an important contribution to struggling Uniting Church Congregations in remote areas.

Chairperson of the UC Safaris management team Mr Doug Fergusson said that while tours are budgeted to break even on costs a strong response to the tours has provided an excess of funds to give back to the church in remote areas.

Following the very successful 2006 Torres Strait Escape tour the UC Safaris group has gifted funds to assist in repainting the Longreach Uniting Church worship centre and manse, for repairs and painting for the Hughenden manse and to provide a vehicle for the minister of the Northern Coalfields congregations.

Mr Fergusson said that it was a particular blessing to be able to share with people in outback Queensland when the safari groups

were travelling through.

"Our 2006 Safari enabled us to make contact with our Church people from Thursday Island and to swell the numbers for their service on Horn Island.

"We also shared an evening meal with two young Uniting Church ministry trainees who are serving in the Emerald Church with financial assistance from UC Safaris."

The next safari will be travelling through Longreach, Moranbah and Hughenden in early 2007 and the group is looking forward to visiting the congregations to hear how things are going.

Mr Fergusson said that will be a nice addition to visits to the Waltzing Matilda Centre in Winton, the Flying Doctor Base in Charleville and Magnetic Island.

The full itinerary and cost for the Outback Experience Safari, April-May 2007 can be obtained from Doug Fergusson 07 3273 2689 or doug_fergusson@hotmail.com.

Queenslanders go beyond to the Black Stump

By Catherine Mullan

QUEENSLAND BANDS stole the show at the Black Stump Christian music and arts festival held on the NSW Labour Day holiday.

Held at Cataract Park, 90 minutes south of Sydney, about 5000 young people gathered together to experience four days of Australia's best Christian music, arts and teaching.

This year Queensland bands led the entertainment front.

Brisbane rockers Another Day Down wowed the audience playing at their first Black Stump Festival.

Guitarist for the band, Phil said, "It was really relaxed and at first we were surprised by just how relaxed it was, but we figured that that's one of the essential ingredients of the festival."

Playing at a packed out tent, the boys commented, "Our show was a lot of fun and we were really encouraged and blessed by the amount of people who came to see us play."

Queensland jazz band Scat was also experiencing their first taste of Stump.



Brisbane band Scat perform at the 2006 Black Stump Festival. Photo by Trent Rouillon www.trentrouillon.com

Scat leader Craig Burnett said, "After the initial culture adjustments we really dug the vibe. Stump is culturally diverse and experimental, with broad expressions of faith, worship and

service and a good dose of whack!"

Cairns indie band Sleeping in Trains had a massive impact on the crowds and musicians alike with their ambient soundscapes and moments of raw intensity.

The festival was abuzz about the North Queensland band.

Mark from the band said the Black Stump Festival was the most fun the group had had all year.

"Black Stump was awesome but

a long way to travel from Cairns."

Sadly for many, Brisbane band Rhubarb chose to end their performing days at Black Stump 2006, after three hit albums.

But it wasn't just Queensland musicians having a crack at Black Stump.

The Gold Coast funny man Dean Barker had the crowd in stitches two nights in a row.

Dean said he saw the opportunity to perform stand up comedy at Black Stump amongst other Christians as a real treat from God.

"Even though it isn't the usual worldly mission field most Christian artists are used to, it is just such a breath of fresh air," Dean said.

He rated Black Stump as the best Christian festival in Australia.

"It's not just music, but just about every type of arts you can think of."

Dean says he will definitely be making the pilgrimage to Black Stump again in 2007, even if he has to go through Sydney.

"Can you believe they're still talking about the Olympics?"

A Christian burial for a great king

IMMEDIATE PAST President of the Uniting Church in Australia Rev Dr Dean Drayton was deeply moved to stand with the people of Tonga as they said farewell to their King in a ceremony containing Tongan traditions dating back a thousand years.

The body of King Taufa'ahau Tupou IV was flown back to Tonga after his death in Auckland on 11 September.

On the Sunday Dr Drayton expressed the sympathy of Tongans and Australians in the Uniting Church to the King's daughter Princess PiloLevu before being led to stand at the open door of the palace where the body of the King lay in state.

"For six days services had been held continuously at the palace as people from village after village of the Friendly Islands prayed for their King and the royal family in their grief," Dr Drayton said.

Queenslander Judy Morrison who also was in Nikolufu for the funeral said hundreds of people poured in to the Palace grounds to be part of the singing.

"Hundreds of others milled in the streets outside. The atmosphere was amazing and the singing spine-tingling."

Dr Drayton described an enormous catafalque 20 metres long on the front lawn.

"As we stood at the palace, the guard of honour placed the coffin on the bier, and slowly marched up the ramp onto an enormous platform and placed it under the square black canopy at the centre."

"It was then the moment I will never forget happened. More than

150 young men from the seminary bent down, grasped the poles, and this enormous structure was lifted high on their shoulders.

"We, the officiating ministers followed the band and stepped in front of the immense structure, while troops processed afterwards."

"We marched nearly a kilometre to the royal tombs, slow step following slow step."

"Young female students were seated every three metres along the tapa covered road, their eyes downcast, with the people of Tonga filling every place on the side of the road, seated, looking up with digital cameras in the eerie silence of tramping feet."

Dr Drayton said over the next three hours the coffin was ceremoniously uncovered with

military and naval pomp, carried to the royal tomb, then lowered, sealed in place, and the tomb filled with sand.

Dr Drayton was incensed by a BBC News report that evening which said "Today the King of Tonga was buried with Christian and pagan rites!"

"What incredible arrogance," Dr Drayton said. "In fact, the King of Tonga was buried with Christian and Tongan rites. A local preacher, a supporter of the church; his was a Christian funeral."

Dr Drayton said Tonga and the new King face a rapidly changing future.

"On this day however I was deeply moved to be there as the Tongan people buried their King with such dignity and grace."



Seminarians carry the Catafalque for King Taufa'ahau Tupou IV

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Seeking asylum not child's play

By **Mardi Lumsden**

BETWEEN 1999 and 2003, 290 children (aged between eight and 17) without valid visas or adult accompaniment sought entry to Australia.

This alarming fact is the basis of a study entitled *Seeking Asylum Alone* by University of Sydney law academic Dr Mary Crock.

An in-depth study into policy and practice regarding unaccompanied and separated children as asylum seekers, Dr Crock said, "Australia has been part of a global trend in which between two and five percent of asylum seekers present as child migrants travelling without the protection of a parent or guardian."

Dr Crock said that since her study was released, there have been positive changes to the way immigration deals with unaccompanied children.

"There are some changes that have already been made that represent dramatic improvement."

"We used to put unaccompanied children in remote detention centres. This doesn't happen as a matter of course anymore, although if you are stopped before getting to Australia it still can happen."

"We still have a policy of sending everyone who is caught before reaching Australia on a boat off to Nauru."

According to Dr Crock, Australia has some of the worst practices in the world at recognising and dealing appropriately with unaccompanied children.

"In England, if immigration authorities recognise a child who is travelling by themselves, they take

them straight out and put them into the child protection system.

"They are given a guardian, a lawyer to work out what their legal status is."

"In Australia, we take the child into immigration questioning and we hit them with a bunch of questions without any information given to them about why they are being questioned or what the significance of their answers are."

"We still don't appoint a guardian until down the track and that is a practice I would like to see changed."

Certain church and community groups in Queensland go to exceptional effort to assist asylum seekers.

"Groups in and around Weipa must be mentioned for their response to the boat of refugees from Papua who arrived earlier this year."

Dr Crock said unaccompanied children need more than good legal advice.

"What they need is family. Human beings need one person who is going to believe in them, who is going to care whether they cut themselves or that they are happy or sad."

"In the communities that are going well that is what has happened. People have actually stepped in and adopted the kids, sometimes literally."

"I think churches and community groups are in a unique position to do that."

"It is difficult for them too in the sense that the unaccompanied kids don't see themselves as charity cases and will resent that very much, particularly if you come in

with a controlling agenda."

"I think that has been a problem. Many of these young people were Muslim and they have lost all sense of their religious identity."

"There are church groups that will go in with a conversion mentality and that doesn't help"

Adjunct Professor in the Griffith University Key Centre for Ethics, Law, Justice and Governance and Uniting Church member Dr Noel Preston AM helped launch *Seeking Asylum Alone* and said Dr Crock's

study calls Christians to reflect on the biblical call to social justice.

"The biblical call to social justice requires us to respond especially to the most vulnerable and marginalised in our society."

"Surely then there are few groups requiring our support, through advocacy and direct assistance, more than young people and children who seek refuge in Australia from persecution and deprivation in their country of origin."

"This issue is one of the key tests about the moral character of our nation."

"What kind of a nation have we become if our immigration laws and officials are not required to treat those young people seeking asylum alone with absolute respect, empathy and support?"

Derogatory language regarding asylum seekers is common in Australia, but Dr Crock urges people to try to understand why they are seeking asylum.

"There is this talk that asylum seekers are queue jumpers and so on. It is a way of talking that is totally inappropriate for children."

"We have lived through a very difficult period in Australian history with, unfortunately, a government that has been all too happy to use the race card and make people afraid. I have become more understanding of the way people think when I reflect on what they have been told."

"I would like to see the community; A, recognise the existence of these kids, B, get in and do something for them, and C, understand the complexity of the situation."

"Children in those situations can either be lost souls or they can be heroes who are saved to go on to do amazing things in the community."

"Our response determines which way they can go."

"They either become long term problems or they become the future of a multi-cultural Australia."

Seeking Asylum Alone is available online at

www.humanrights.harvard.edu
or through Federation Press
phone (02) 9552 2200



JUSTICE AND INTERNATIONAL MISSION ADVOCATE



**The Uniting Church in Australia
Queensland Synod**
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Applications are invited for the position of **Justice & International Mission Advocate**.

Working in a variety of ways, the person in this role will energise, educate, resource and provide guidance on issues of social justice and international mission for the church in Queensland. This will include the development of practices and methodologies that will strengthen the capacity of local communities and congregations to actively engage social justice and international mission issues. The responsibilities also include research and the provision of advice to the Moderator on contemporary public issues relating to matters of justice.

The successful applicant will have excellent communication skills (oral and written), be conversant with the various forms of electronic communication, be a team player, have good knowledge of international mission and the Church in contemporary Australian society and be committed to social justice and the ethos of the Uniting Church in Australia.

The position will be based in Brisbane, with intra and interstate travel.

Please contact Kristine Bromiley (07) 3377 9825 or kristine.bromiley@uccentre.ucaqld.com.au for an information pack containing a more detailed position description.

Marked CONFIDENTIAL, applications should be forwarded to Rev Jenny Tymms, General Secretary, UCA Qld Synod, GPO Box 674, Brisbane Q 4001 by 5 pm Monday 4th December 06.

UnitingCare Queensland Board Member

UnitingCare Queensland is seeking a new Board Member who will also serve the Board's Audit Risk and Compliance Committee. Community service, business and professional leaders who can demonstrate outstanding achievement and appropriate qualifications are encouraged to express their interest. In particular a background including significant strategic and governance experience in risk management, and/or audit in a large organisation would be beneficial.

UnitingCare Queensland is the community service ministry of The Uniting Church in Australia (Queensland Synod). It is one of Australia's largest not-for-profit organisations and Queensland's largest provider of health and community services. UnitingCare Queensland employs 15,000 people and has an annual turnover in excess of \$780m. Its network of services includes Blue Care, Lifeline Community Care, Crossroads and hospitals such as The Wesley Hospital Brisbane, St Andrew's War Memorial Hospital Brisbane, and four regional hospitals.

The UnitingCare Board is responsible to the Church for ensuring the organisation is dynamic, visionary, values driven and sustainable into the future. Recent changes to governance structures and a comprehensive strategic agenda will continue to provide a challenging environment.

An information kit can be obtained by emailing Beverley.Hollands@ucaqld.com.au or phoning (07) 3512 9400. Your expression of interest should be submitted by 23 November 2006.



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IF THE Three Wise Men had really been wise, they would have chosen their presents from *Arguably, The World's Most Useful Gift Catalogue*.

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Living vicariously with the Saints

By Scott Stephens

DURING HIS 26 year reign as pontiff, John Paul II canonised 484 saints and beatified a further 1,338 individuals, thus placing them on the slow but sure road to sainthood.

His intention, no doubt, was to remind an age now notorious for its moral bankruptcy and ethical amnesia of those beacons of virtue that have illuminated the Church's path for centuries.

This reminder, he hoped, would urge Christians today to pursue saintly lives of their own, whatever their station in life.

This perhaps was John Paul's fiercest protest against Christianity's current impotence, a clarion call for the Church to oppose the infiltration of the 'spirit of the times' into faith and virtue.

Nevertheless, much like the eastern European Communism he so despised, John Paul underestimated the resilience of Western culture.

Capitalism, or 'the free market economy', has proven itself more adaptive than any other cultural form, particularly in its uncanny ability to assimilate and neutralise every oppositional force, whether political, ethnic, environmental, or even moral-religious.

Take, for instance, the way that the old slogans of non-conformist youth culture, not to mention dissident figures such as Che Guevara and Vladimir Lenin, are taken over and used to sell clothing brands like Industrie or Kenji Urban.

Or, along similar lines, the way that the causes of environmental conservation and Third World debt relief are made chic and eminently marketable by their association with the likes of George Clooney, Julia Roberts, Bob Geldof and, of course, Bono.

Not even religion is immune to the all-pervasiveness of capitalism.

Much Christianity and the now-oh-so-trendy practice of Buddhist meditation act like cultural pressure valves.

They provide forms of penance designed to alleviate the weight of guilt that accrues from our vocational promiscuity, so that we can carry on behaving as we did before.

Michael Moore was uncharacteristically observant when he wrote: "I think recycling is like going to church – you show up once a week, it makes you feel good, and you've done your duty. Then you can get back to all the fun of sinning!"



So why did John Paul's elevation of so many moral exemplars not have the desired effect of inspiring Christian virtue?

Because he failed to recognise the way that such 'saints' function in our time.

Our cultural space is, after all, filled with saintly figures, people whose lives are more authentic

"All you have to do is attend and pay your money they take care of the rest!"

than ours, in comparison to whom our existence is at best banal, and at worst futile and purposeless.

We call these people celebrities, and they range from the sublime ('martyrs' like Steve Irwin and Princess Di) to the ridiculous (Paris Hilton and Tom Cruise).

The best way of understanding how 'saints' function these days is by reference to Peter Weir's 1998 blockbuster, *The Truman Show*.

The film's hero, Truman Burbank (Jim Carrey), is the unknowing subject of a 24/7 reality television show that tracks every moment of his life in the idyllic, artificial town of Seahaven.

Both Truman and his environment are stunning, and entirely unreal: the colours are bright and distinct; the lines of the houses, picket-fences and lawns are sharp and clearly defined; the sky is always blue; etc.

In contrast to Truman, his audience is dull, overweight, set in drab grey-brown tones, engaged in the most menial tasks (soaking in a bath, knitting, monitoring security cameras). But they are all captivated by Truman's life – even when he is asleep.

It is clear that the audience is living vicariously through Truman.

Their lives only have meaning through their voyeuristic involvement in Truman's life.

This is the devastating logic of vicarious participation in our time. Saints do not, in fact, inspire similarly virtuous behaviour, but rather voyeuristic passivity.

We feel better by our mere observation of their good deeds, as if we have participated in them.

So by listening to U2, we feel as though we have joined Bono in his crusade to eradicate Third World debt; by watching Steve Irwin's memorial service, we have flagged our commitment to conservation.

To be a little more specific, we are urged, as a kind of acceptable form of penance, to engage in symbolic but ultimately pointless tasks (like making some negligible donation to charity).

We feel better for having supported a worthy cause, but the way that we are complicit in the economic blood-guilt of our culture remains unchallenged and unaffected.

And, if we're not careful, our own worship can get caught in this same vicarious economy.

This is especially true in the case of some mega-churches.

By means of their prolonged, performance-like worship, along with the consistent elevation of the minister as an icon of faith and divine potency, these churches effectively stage a kind of 'canned worship'.

Just as the actors on American sit-coms crack the jokes and the studio audience does the laughing for you, so too such churches do the worshipping and believing on your behalf.

All you have to do is attend and pay your money – they take care of the rest!

If anything, we need fewer 'saints' today, not more. Stripped of those celebrities who wear the responsibility for public virtue and private conscience, perhaps we will finally own the Christian duties of justice and mission for ourselves.

Scott Stephens is an author, theologian, and minister at Chermiside Kedron Uniting Church and writes regularly for *Journey*

Favourite Saints

JOURNEY ASKED people to name a favourite saint or hero.

George MacLeod, the founder of Iona Community (1938), became a campaigner for nuclear disarmament. His life story continues to inspire my commitment to holistic worship, social justice and ecumenism.

Duncan Macleod, Vision for Mission Advocate

Padre Meraj Masihi who in the late 70s and early 80s was pastor to the small Christian communities living in the slums of Lahore. Meraj showed me that compassion, generosity and hospitality were intrinsic to Christian discipleship.

Geoff Thompson, Trinity Theological College

Mr Bush, a gentle and kind man, the superintendent of our Booval Presbyterian Sunday School when I was a child, a railway blacksmith, to whom I owe so much of my faith.

Alan Renton, Magnetic Island

Hildegard von Bingen. I visited Hildegard Praxis at Lake Constance (Germany) to learn about her life and teachings. That experience changed my life.

Hildegard Malik, Woodford

Captain David Rogerson (Salvation Army) brought me back to the ways of the Lord after many years of drug and alcohol abuse. I now live a drug and alcohol free life, thanking God daily.

Gary Booth, Magnetic Island

Val Freeman, a member of my congregation, is a hero for her courage in carrying the burden of a severe physical disability without complaint and a saint for her constant and inspirational faithfulness.

Val Davies, Edmonton

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Surrounded by a great cloud of witnesses

Recalling some Queensland Uniting Church heroes

Remembering the multitude of Queensland "saints" who helped bring the Uniting Church in Australia into being in 1977 Journey asked former Synod Secretary Rev Duncan Harrison and former Moderator Rev Don Whebell for their recollections.

Initially reluctant to talk with *Journey* claiming failing memories and the dread of forgetting to mention some important contributors Mr Harrison and Mr Whebell dragged up a great cloud of witnesses under three groups: the visionaries, the planners and the implementers.

Under visionaries Rev Rollie Busch featured large (see



Rev Duncan Harrison

"Remembering Rollie Busch" on page 10).

Alongside Busch was visionary leader Rev Ian Gillman whose great contribution was described as preparing the people for Union.

"With deep spiritual insight, warmth and wit, he brought to meetings and conversations a strong theological scholarship and a gift for communication that was consistently encouraging as we journeyed towards union," said Mr Whebell who had been a student under Mr Gillman.

Among the planners who worked on the preparations necessary to establish the new church were members of the Joint Planning Committee in Queensland.

"Doug Kirkup, Calder Allan, George Smith, Ron Elvery and John Richardson gave highly significant and caring leadership to their churches as discussions revolved around patterns of life and ministry that were emerging," Mr Harrison said.

"They tirelessly made themselves available to people in congregations and regional councils in affirming and implementing the vision of worship, witness and service expressed in the *Basis of Union*."

Through meetings with congregations and Provisional Presbyteries, the task of the Joint

Planning Committee was to help people understand the new structure of a 'series of inter-related councils', a concept that Mr Whebell and Mr Harrison feel is still not fully grasped in the Uniting Church today.

Mr Whebell recalled his part in the Church Union Education Program which was offered to joint groups of Congregational, Methodist and Presbyterians to explore the *Basis of Union* and build new relationships.

He recalled colleagues Ron Adie, Lew Born, Bob Warrick and Col Ray helping people to reach an informed vote on the *Basis of Union* and to do the preparatory work on establishing Interim Councils and Regulations.

Mr Whebell said Methodist regional leaders like Ron Smith, Syd Cassells, Alan Kidd, Rollie Barnes and Aubrey Baker provided great encouragement to congregations in Provisional Presbyteries.

"They encouraged congregations to pray, think and work creatively for the new future into which the Gospel was calling them."

Mr Harrison recalled a Joint Committee on Evangelism where he shared with Roy Edwards and Tom Scarlett.

A Committee on Paraphernalia and Titles chaired by Ipswich Congregational minister Rev

Frank Whyte included Brisbane architect Jim Gibson who had the responsibility for the design of the UCA logo.

"Drawing together concepts that he gathered from Rob Evans, Christine Gillman and Don Hutton, the logo was offered to the churches and became one of the most recognisable emblems in Australia," Mr Harrison said.

Implementers, like Syd Cassells with a vision for Uniting Church Foundation, Arthur Preston with the Blue Nursing Service and Ivan Alcorn with LifeLine, were too many to mention but Mr Whebell said are well documented in John Harrison's *Baptism of Fire* and the later book *The Uniting Church in Australia* edited by William and Susan Emilsen.

"The real visionaries, planners and implementers in Queensland were the many ministers and laypersons who caught the vision of Jesus' prayer for unity," said Mr Harrison

"They embraced it and as the people of God 'on the way to the promised end' helped us all to move forward in faith."

Journey is aware that because of limitations of space and memory other significant names are not mentioned here but they and their contribution to the Uniting Church is greatly valued.



Madonna and Child with Saints by Pietro da Cortona c. 1622-1628

Is Mary a saint?

SHE HAS many names. The Blessed Virgin, Our Lady Queen of the Apostles, Mary Mother of Divine Providence and Our Lady of Consolation to name a few.

Not only is Mary the mother of Jesus a saint, in some circles she has also been named the 'Queen of Heaven'.

For some Mary almost sits above the saints as they claim she is seated

at the right hand of Jesus.

She is the patron saint of many places and things including Australia, Australian Military Chaplains and the Catholic diocese of Townsville.

For Catholics, Mary has over 50 memorial days and feasts dedicated to her throughout the year.

For some Christians Mary is not only a saint, she is THE saint.



Did you know that saint is a term used to refer to someone who is a holy person. The term comes from the New Testament, where it is used to refer to all Christian believers. There are possibly over 10,000 named saints and in 1969 the Catholic Church undertook an investigation of all the saints to see if there was historical evidence they existed and lived a holy life. They discovered little proof that many "saints" ever lived and these were subsequently dropped from the universal calendar.

St Simeon was a holy fool

THE DESERT saints of the early centuries were a wild and strange breed – and none were bred wilder or stranger than the saints of Syria.

Some of them stood and prayed for years on end without sitting down.

Others lived on top of pillars in the desert where they preached, wrote epistles and drew crowds of pilgrims.

Numbered among these maverick saints is St Simeon the Holy Fool.

Simeon's saintly career started out quite normally. It was the usual

story: 29 years living on lentils in an isolated cave next to the Dead Sea, at first struggling against temptation and then advancing to an alarming degree of holiness.

But Simeon's story took a dramatic turn when he left his cave one day and set out for the city of Emesa in Syria. Arriving at the city gate, he found a dead dog on a dungheap, tied its leg to the rope around his waist, and entered the city dragging the comatose canine behind him.

This was only the beginning. For Simeon had decided to play the fool in order to mock the idiocy of the

world and also to conceal his own identity as a saint.

His behaviour was eccentric and, of course, scandalous.

During the church services, he threw nuts at the clergy and blew out the candles.

In the circus, he wrapped his arms around the dancing-girls and went skipping and dancing across the arena.

In the streets, he tripped people up, developed a theatrical limp, and dragged himself around on his buttocks.

In the bath-house, he ran naked into the crowded women's section.

On solemn fasting days he feasted riotously, consuming vast amounts of beans – with predictable and hilarious results.

In his lifetime, Simeon was regarded as a madman, as an unholy scandal.

It was only after his death that the secret life of Simeon came to light.

People started to talk about his acts of kindness – and about his strange and powerful miracles.

There was the poor mule driver whose vinegar Simeon turned into wine so that he could start a successful tavern.

There was the rich man who was saved from death when Simeon threw a lucky triple six at dice.

And there was the young man Simeon punched on the jaw to save him from an affair with a married woman.

St Simeon the Holy Fool was a secret saint.

His story was a holy farce, and his life shows how God chooses "the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; the weak things of the world to shame the strong" (1 Corinthians 1:27).

By Greg Jenkins, editor of the British satirical Christian website *Ship of Fools* <http://shipoffools.com> St Simeon is the *Ship of Fools* patron saint

This bishop saw red

DOM HELDER CAMARA was born in 1909 in Brazil, eleventh son in a family of thirteen children almost half of whom died of the flu.

His father was not very religious but the young Helder was very much influenced by an order of priests who served in his home town.

By the age of four, Helder was "playing church" and saying he wanted to be a priest when he grew up and at 14 entered a seminary where he studied philosophy and theology and developed his formidable debating skills.

At the tender age of 22 Helder was ordained a priest and at his ordination was commissioned to "speak for humble people".

Right from the start of his ministry he advocated human rights setting up trade union-type organizations for both women and men.

Helder became increasingly and personally involved in the struggle of people living in the favelas, the slums in Rio de Janeiro and in 1964 Helder was appointed Bishop in one of the poorest parts of the country.

Within a few days of his taking up office there was a military coup in

A queen who served beggars

ELISABETH VON THURINGIA was born in 1207, daughter of King Andrew II and Queen Gertrude of Hungary. By all reports her father was a bad king, whose misrule led his nobles to revolt against him.

Queen Gertrude was apparently a good woman who unfortunately got implicated in the politics of the day, and was assassinated by the nobles in 1213.

Elisabeth was just seven years old when her mother was murdered but, before she died, Gertrude managed to do two things that were to shape the rest of her daughter's life.

The first thing was to share her faith with her daughter. Gertrude was a very devout Christian who encouraged Elisabeth to pray regularly from a very young age. The second was to arrange her daughter's marriage at the age of two to the eldest son of a local Count.

When he died, she was betrothed to the second eldest – Ludwig who married Elisabeth when he was twenty-one and she was just fourteen.

Ludwig proposed that they take 'Piety, Chastity, and Justice' as their family motto and they committed themselves as a couple to pray regularly, practise hospitality, and rule justly.

In the same year Ludwig and Elisabeth were married, the Franciscans set up their first base in Germany and Brother Rodeger, one of the first Germans to become a Franciscan, became Elisabeth's spiritual mentor. He encouraged her to live out the Franciscan ideals of kindness and service as much as she could.

Elisabeth was very rich before her marriage to Ludwig and was called 'Elisabeth of Many Castles' but, as time went by, this very wealthy woman became increasingly concerned for the poor. She began to ride around the countryside assessing the plight of the impoverished among her people and responded by distributing alms all over the kingdom.

Once she started giving she couldn't stop at charity; she looked for ways to give herself. She built a twenty-eight-bed hospital for the poor in Wartburg, and daily visited the patients and helped feed nine hundred hungry people herself.

Ludwig and Elisabeth lived such exemplary lives that people started to refer to them as 'St Ludwig' and 'St Elisabeth'.

In 1227 Elisabeth's beloved husband died and the twenty-year-old was inconsolable. 'The world and all its joys is now dead to me,' she cried.

The next year Elisabeth sent her three children to stay with her aunt, and formally 'renounced the world' giving away her inheritance and joining the Franciscans.

The queen now dedicated herself to serving beggars providing them with clothes, shoes and agricultural tools.

The political philosopher, John Ralston Saul, said of Elisabeth, "She and Francis of Assisi were the most famous activists (of their day). To a great extent they laid out the modern democratic model of inclusion - an important step towards egalitarianism. Elisabeth used her position, as a member of the ruling class, to put the ideas into action."

At the age of just twenty-four Elisabeth died one of the most influential activists in thirteenth century Europe.

Saul said that like many others Elisabeth created a hospice but unlike others she washed the sick and buried the dead. "Elisabeth ...took the elements of personal responsibility, set out tantalisingly in the New Testament, and imagined a social model which ...would change our societies."

By Dave Andrews, an activist serving in inner city Brisbane with the Christian community network, the Waiters Union

Brazil. The democratic government was overthrown and many of the catholic leaders and union organisers were thrown into prison.

Helder spoke out against what he called the "reign of terror" and when questioned about his courageous stand, he answered testily: "I am trying to send men to heaven, not sheep. And certainly not sheep with their stomachs empty and their testicles crushed."

The military promptly branded him "The Red Bishop" but Helder replied with his famous statement, "When I feed the poor, they call me a saint. When I ask why the poor have no food, they call me a communist!"

Helder always insisted he was Christian - not a Marxist.

Helder was only five feet tall but during the 1970s he became a huge beacon of hope for people around the world who supported a radically compassionate spirituality and opposed oppressive political structures.

In 1985 Dom Helder Camara retired and in 1999, at the age of ninety, he died.

By Dave Andrews, author of many books and articles, including *Christi-Anarchy, Not Religion, But Love, Building A Better World and Compassionate Community Work*

Strange saints remembered

THE HISTORY of the church is full of interesting figures and many bizarre and unusual saints are now associated with modern occupations and life conditions.

Erasmus, also known as St Emo, is the Patron of explosives workers. This came about because at one time he had hot iron hooks stuck into his intestines by persecutors. He miraculously endured the wounds.

Even arms dealers and prison guards have Patron Saints.

Although he had not even been baptised Adrian of Nicomedia declared himself a Christian.

He was immediately arrested, tortured, hacked to pieces and his body was burned. When a storm extinguished the fire his wife salvaged his hand as a relic.

Joseph of Cupertino demonstrated many gifts, including the ability to fly through the air. He is now the Patron Saint of air-travellers and Astronauts.

Patron of Bellmakers, St Agatha was supposedly tortured and had her breasts cut off. She was often depicted carrying her breasts on a plate. It is thought that blessing of the bread that takes place on her feast may have come from the mistaken notion that she was carrying loaves of bread.

Patron of Blood Banks, St Januarius, was thrown to wild beasts, but when the animals did not attack him, he was beheaded. What is claimed to be Januarius' blood liquefies and bubbles in the Naples cathedral and, so far, scientists have not been able to explain this phenomenon.

The Patron Saint of Brewers, Augustine of Hippo was converted from a former life of loose living which included parties and entertainment.

Saint Dominic Savio disappeared when he was four. His mother went looking for him and found him in the corner praying with his head bowed and his hands joined. At five he was an altar boy, and is now the Patron Saint of choirboys.

Joseph of Arimathea who provided a proper burial for Jesus after his crucifixion is now the Patron Saint of funeral directors.

St Apollonia was martyred for not renouncing her faith and consequently had all her teeth knocked out. After this she was threatened with fire unless she renounced her faith, so she jumped into the flames voluntarily. Apollonia is the Patron Saint of Dentists.

Even television has its own saint. Clare, best known as being the first Franciscan nun, was too ill to attend Mass, so an image of the service would display on the wall of her room.

By Catherine Mullan

Remembering Rollie Busch

By Bruce Mullan

ON THE morning after he was admitted to hospital for the last time, Rollie Busch at age 65 said to then General Secretary of the Uniting Church Assembly Rev David Gill, "David for the first time I am staring death in the face and, you know, I am not afraid."

Rev Professor Rolland Arthur Busch died with all the faith and courage that he had displayed as one of the founding leaders of the Uniting Church in Australia.

Growing up as a Lutheran in Toowoomba Rollie Busch joined the Presbyterian Church in his teenage years and left school at 16 to work in the Post Office. He enlisted in the Army at 18 serving in New Guinea where he met Mavis, his wife to be.

Ordained in 1954 Rollie Busch was appointed as Chair of New

Testament in 1961, Dean of the Faculty of Theology later that year, and Principal of Emmanuel College at the University of Queensland two years later.

Former Moderator Rev Don Whebell said that Rollie Busch was respected for his openness, conviction and scholarship. "Not everyone in the church agreed with the position he took. But nobody was ever in doubt about his Gospel-centred integrity."

Colleague and friend, the late Rev Dr Ian Gillman agreed: "Such staunchness earned him a reputation for forthrightness and mail aplenty, some supportive and much of it judgmental."

In his own words Busch said: "The church then which says nothing and does nothing about poverty, and delinquency and drug

addiction, about political corruption and commercial malpractice, about racial and social discrimination of every kind, is failing in its reconciling task.

"Reconciliation does not mean the absence of dissent. It does mean honest effort to speak the truth in love, which is a different and much more difficult thing to do."

One of many tributes to his ministry came from former head of the ABC Religious Programs Department Florence Spurling who said, "His efforts for social justice and for academic integrity were part of the banners which flew from his soul as a whole person."

It was for his foundational leadership of the fledgling Uniting Church in Australia that Rollie Busch will be remembered.

Rev Doug Kirkup who served as Synod Secretary alongside Rollie Busch during his term as the first Moderator of the Queensland Synod said he was "forever struggling" to keep up with the ubiquitous Moderator.

Rollie Busch was appointed in 1982 as the second President of the Uniting Church in Australia and died just eight years after the inauguration of the Uniting Church. For over five of those years he exercised moderatorial and presidential leadership during the most formative years of the church he had worked to create.

Mr Kirkup asked, "Did we ask too much of one human being?" Rollie Busch's reflections on the ministry of Jesus provide an answer.

"Jesus said the all embracing 'yes' in circumstances from which most of us would shrink crying, 'No, no. Not me'..."

"In that Upper Room Jesus commissions his apostles to continue the affirmation that in him God meets positively all the needs of human existence.

"Promising them the gift of the Spirit, Jesus bids them witness to the ends of the earth that because he has come, the Kingdom is here."



Controversial German theologian and martyr Dietrich Bonhoeffer



Rev Professor Rolland Arthur Busch 1920 - 1985

Why we all should hate Dietrich Bonhoeffer

By Scott Stephens

THIS YEAR marks the centenary of the birth of Dietrich Bonhoeffer and as one might expect on occasions such as this, commemorations of his legacy seem to be everywhere.

Even Kevin Rudd is getting in on the action invoking Bonhoeffer as the patron saint for all those sick and tired of Christianity being coopted by Right-wing politics in the interests of moral wowsership and family values.

But there is something deeply disingenuous about Bonhoeffer's current celebrity status. Whether it is the reduction of his immensely demanding and controversial writings to an 'Everyday-with-Dietrich' style anthology of sayings and tidbits of spiritual advice, or his appropriation as a political wedge by the opposition - Bonhoeffer has been thoroughly domesticated.

In his case, even worse than

being ignored as a rather obscure academic is being embraced as a popular hero.

Our veneration of Bonhoeffer is thus a kiss of death, just another way of ridding his thought of its sting, the intense ethical and theological challenge he represents to us and our flaccid ecclesiology. By all rights, we should hate him.

So, before becoming too sentimental about Bonhoeffer the martyr/pastor/pacifist, there are a few things we ought to remember.

The first is the unreserved disdain Bonhoeffer felt for 'empty ecumenism', the surge towards unity that abandons the hard core of radical Christ-centred belief. Any church without this Christ-centre, he says, is no church at all!

We should also keep in mind that Bonhoeffer's celebrated opposition to Hitler's regime was almost entirely ungrounded in his Christian belief.

He knew that one must resist, but couldn't formulate what form that resistance should take and so his decision to take part in a plot to assassinate Hitler by means of a suicide bomber was a step into the moral void. Sometimes discipleship, he puts it, doesn't have a safety net.

Bonhoeffer, finally, stressed the indispensability of theological instruction - in the seminary, behind the pulpit - and lamented the toothless homilies to which congregations are so often subjected.

Doesn't this go to show that Dietrich Bonhoeffer is hardly our kind of saint?

Maybe we'd all feel a little more comfortable if we'd never even heard of him.

Scott Stephens is an author, theologian, and minister at Chermiside Kedron Uniting Church



Uniting Church in Australia
Northern Synod

THEOLOGY TEACHER
School of Theology, Nungalinga College

The Synod in cooperation with NRCC propose to fund a Theology Teacher on the staff of Nungalinga College. Nungalinga caters for Aboriginal students primarily from non-English language backgrounds and use of Aboriginal languages is encouraged. The teacher will be a member of the College staff responsible to the Principal.

Major duties include:

- preparation and teaching of modules for accredited courses
- develop materials for on and off campus delivery
- providing counselling and spiritual guidance to students

Tenure: Initially the position is a two year appointment
Commencing end of January 2007
Conditions: Equivalent to a stipend
Closing Date: 10th November 2006

Further details contact:

NRCC Resource Person, Mr Howard Amery
Ph: 08 8982 3444 Email: howard.amery@ards.com.au
Northern Synod General Secretary, Mr Kevin Davis AM
Ph: 08 8982 3400 Email: kevin.davis@ns.uca.org.au



Perth Theological Hall of
the Uniting Church in Australia (Synod of WA)
invites applications from lay or ordained members of
the Uniting Church for the full time position of

DIRECTOR OF LAY AND CONTINUING EDUCATION

The appointee will lead, promote and coordinate lay education programmes; and coordinate continuing education for ministers in the Presbytery/Synod of Western Australia.

The appointee will be responsible for

- The promotion and coordination of Lay Education and Training, including adult spiritual formation and adult Christian education
- Developing and leading appropriate Lay Education programmes
- The coordination, oversight and, where appropriate, leading of the formation and training of Lay Ministry Teams
- The coordination and oversight of Continuing Ministerial Education
- The organisation of the annual Ministers' School of Theology

The position is for an initial period of three years with the possibility of a further term.

Closing date: 17 November 2006

For enquires and job description contact Anne Watson, Secretary,
Ministerial Education Board Ph (08) 9360 6880; fax (08) 9360 6889;
email: a.watson@murdoch.edu.au

Public perception meets the need

ACCORDING TO a Brisbane survey released in October, two thirds of the public still want to "increase our overseas aid to countries that are poor, have poor social services, poor health standards or who are suffering from a natural disaster or post-conflict trauma".

Meet the Need: Public perception, knowledge and opinion of Australia's foreign aid to developing countries is a survey commissioned by the Micah Action Group (Queensland) and the United Nations Association of Australia (Queensland Branch) and produced with assistance from Uniting Church Queensland Synod Social Responsibility advocate Heather den Houting.

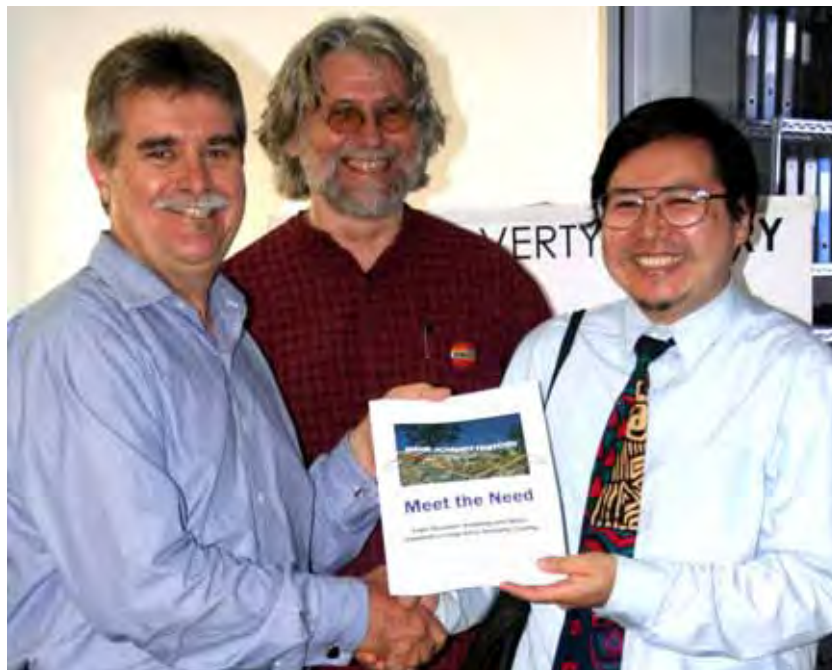
Dave Andrews of Micah Challenge, who undertook the in-depth survey with the help of

staff from the Department of Social Sciences at the University of Queensland for the Make Poverty History campaign, said the results were "an exciting discovery" for advocates of more poverty-focused overseas aid.

Mr Andrews says Micah Challenge, a movement of people from many different faith communities committed to work together to pursue global justice, will use this feedback "from ordinary Aussies to lobby our government to increase aid to half of one per cent of our GDP and focus our aid on poverty alleviation, so we can halve absolute global poverty by 2015."

The survey was conducted around Browns Plains, Indooroopilly, Chermiside and the Brisbane CBD.

Mardi Lumsden



Ross Wilson, Queensland Coordinator Micah Action Group, presents *Meet the Need* to Dave Andrews of Micah Challenge and Enoch Choy of the United Nations Association of Australia (QLD Branch). Photo by Mardi Lumsden

Report shows poverty is close to home

QUEENSLAND GOVERNOR Quentin Bryce launched a Queensland Council for Social Service (QCOSS) report during anti-poverty week at St Mary's Catholic Church in South Brisbane.

The report, undertaken by the University of Queensland Social Research Centre, examines the extent of income poverty in Queensland and looks at the impacts of poverty on particular groups in the community.

QCOSS President Karyn Walsh said that poverty is not something that should be up to individuals to solve and that there needs to be a community response to help solve poverty.

"We need to link people's social needs with economic participation in the community," she said.

"The report also reveals key locations around the state that are also affected by poverty. Five Federal electorates in Queensland are experiencing very high rates of poverty. These include Wide Bay, Hinkler including Bundaberg and Gladstone, Maranoa in the far southwest, Capricornia including Rockhampton and Longman covering Caboolture."

Moderator Rev Dr David Pitman spoke on the church's responsibility to assist people in need and the commitment the Uniting Church made in 1977 to respond to such needs.



Moderator Rev Dr David Pitman speaking at the launch of the QCOSS Poverty in Queensland report. Photo by Mardi Lumsden

"Anti-Poverty Week is an important time for the Church, and our service agencies, to stand in solidarity with people who are experiencing poverty; who are marginalised or dislocated; who are living on the fringes of our society," said Dr Pitman.

"It is also important that we use

this week to ask questions of our leaders and questions of ourselves. The symbolism of Anti-Poverty Week is important, but it is also important that our reflections motivate an agenda for change."

UnitingCare director Anne Cross chaired the proceedings.

Mardi Lumsden



Christmas all year round in the Solomons

WORKING IN partnership with the Solomon Islands Christian Association the Christmas Bowl works all year round with people in local communities in the Solomon Islands, one of the least developed countries in the Pacific.

The aims are to reduce child mortality rates, improve maternal health, and combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases.

Particularly important in creating community confidence is literacy which gives people increased employment prospects, opportunities for further education

and better understanding of government and the electoral process.

The Christmas Bowl is part of the global action by churches around the world in support of the people in the Solomon Islands.

The Christmas Bowl also works in Australia with refugees and displaced people as well as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Contact Greg Jenks email gqtcws@tpg.com.au, phone 3369 6792 or visit www.ncca.org.au/cws/christmasbowl



WHAT'S ON

November 1-30, 10.30am-1pm. Christmas Gift Market. Each week day in the foyer of Chermide Kedron Community Church, cnr Gympie & Rode Rds, Chermide. Craft, Dress-ups, Glass Jewellery, Plants, Cards, Christmas gifts and more. Phone 3350 4302.

November 4, 10am-3pm. 4th Annual Family Fun Day. Earnshaw State College sports field. Earnshaw Rd, Banyo. BBQ, face painting, fun and games. Everything is free! Contact Graham Power on 3267 5895 or email gajhpower@bigpond.com.

November 8-11. Bald Hills / Bracken Ridge Christmas Craft Show. Bracken Ridge Uniting Church. Opening night 7.30pm. \$7 includes supper and entertainment. Thursday/Friday 9.30am-8pm, Saturday 9am-1pm. Contact Pam Harris on 3261 2000 or email pamreg@optusnet.com.au.

November 11, 9am-12pm. Trinity Wilston Uniting Church Market Day. Cnr Kedron Brook Rd and Hawdon St. Craft, food, books, jumble, plants stalls, morning tea. Contact Thelma Lane on 3856 4306.

November 12, 2-4pm. 10th Anniversary of the opening of Barnabas House, Durack. Worship and afternoon tea at Oxley Uniting.

November 12, 3pm. Pop Goes the Organ. Concert of popular classics, songs, spirituals and light jazz featuring Steven Nisbet (organ) and St Andrew's Uniting Church Sanctuary Choir conducted by Lynne Maurer. St Andrew's Uniting Church, Cnr Creek & Ann Sts, Brisbane. Admission \$15/\$10, children free. Proceeds to St Andrew's outreach activities and organ maintenance fund. Phone 3411 2811.

November 16-18. Wheller Gardens Auxiliary Rummage Sale. Uhl Hall 930 Gympie Rd, Chermide. 16-17 open 8.30am-3pm. 18 open 8am-12noon. Pre-loved clothes, books and knick knacks. For more information contact Merril Herbert on 3857 4668.

November 19, 10am. Allora Uniting Church Centenary Celebration. Service followed by lunch. All welcome. RSVP 11 November. Contact Don Burge on 4696 4255 or Joy Agnew on 4666 3225 or email agnewj@yahoo.com.au.

November 19, 4pm. Dedication of the New Middle Ridge Worship Centre. 264 Stenner Street, Toowoomba. All past and present friends are invited to participate. Dedication followed by refreshments. Contact the church office by emailing margaretburgess@bigpond.com or phone 4636 3850.

November 23, 10am. Frontier Services Auxiliary Christmas Cheer morning tea. Program by the Wesley choir. \$6. Stalls. Contact Jessie Logan on 3278 1868.

November 26, 2pm. Advent Concert. Presented by Gold Coast City Choir at Southport Uniting Church, Cnr Scarborough & Short Sts. \$10, includes afternoon tea. Phone 5532 5915 to order tickets.

November 28-29, 9am-4pm. Mental Health First Aid Course at Emmanuel Uniting Church, Enoggera. Provides skills and knowledge designed to help a person better manage a potential or developing mental health problem in him/herself, a family member, a friend or work colleague. \$100 includes morning/afternoon tea and lunch. Further information can be found at www.mhfa.com.au. Contact Stephen Kersnovske on 4036 4440.

December 2-23, 10am-3.30pm. Montville Uniting Church Christmas Display. Main St Montville. Theme Songs of the Season... Truth or Tradition.

December 8, 4.00pm. Musical Christmas Dinner at Moorooka Uniting. Entertainment by Chansons. \$15/person. Bookings required. Phone 3848 6168 or 3848 6220.

December 10, 9am. Celebration & Thanksgiving service for Labrador Uniting Church, which closes at the end of 2006. Worship followed by morning tea. 55 Billington St, Labrador. Contact Rev Sue Page on 5529 1869 or suepage@optusnet.com.au.

December 10, 6pm. Caloundra Uniting Church Annual Carol Service. Beginning with a sausage sizzle in the Church hall, cnr Queen & Elm Streets. Everyone welcome. Items by Girls Brigade & Unity College. Glow sticks on sale \$2.

Want to promote an event?

Go to www.journeyonline.com.au and click on 'What's on' or email mardi.lumsden@ucaqld.com.au



Skype @ Scots

Uniting Church school Scots PGC College at Warwick has introduced voice over internet protocol (VOIP) technology for use by its boarding students, in both boys' and girls' boarding houses.

This new Internet communication software has allowed both Australian and international boarders to talk with their parents, friends and relatives over the internet in real-time and face-to-face via a webcam.

Scots is using the Skype program allowing unlimited free voice and video communication between Skype users.

Head of Boys Boarding Mr Greg Wacker said, "It is important for the students to feel they can communicate with their family by phone, email and letters."

"Skype now gives the students the opportunity to see their loved ones where they can smile, wave, say hello and have that one to one video connection."

Romero Calendar

The 2007 Romero Centre calendar is now available for purchase.

The ecumenical community-based organisation gives practical support to refugees on Temporary Protection Visas, former TPV holders and their families, some asylum seekers and stateless people as well as other disadvantaged refugees.

Gwen Gorman of the Romero Centre said, "We are dependent on funds raised in the community to continue our work and we're hoping that our 2007 calendar will help us in the regard."

The 2007 calendar costs \$10. Major Christian and Islamic festivals are indicated, as are Queensland school holidays and dates of social and cultural significance.

A cheque or money order made payable to Romero Centre can be posted with orders to: PO Box 6115, Buranda, Queensland 4102.

For more information contact Katrina Beutel on 3393 2500 or email romerocentre@bigpond.com.

\$1000 mystery donation found

The *Isis Town & Country Newspaper* reported that the honesty of a Uniting Church volunteer may be a blessing for someone who's thrown out more than they meant to.

The page one story on Thursday, 12 October said the volunteer, who did not wish to be named, was sorting through the donated clothes deposited in the church charity bin near the Motel Childers when she found \$1000 in an item of clothing. The volunteer took the money to the Childers police station explaining her find.

Childers Police Sergeant Geoff Fay said it was unlikely the owner of the clothes meant to make the very generous donation and may be unaware the item of clothing had been deemed unwanted and donated to the church.

Sergeant Fay commended the honesty of the church volunteer and said in the event the money is not claimed within three months, it will be donated to the Uniting Church.

Sunnybank speaks new language

Sunnybank Uniting Church has launched a new Korean language service under the leadership of Rev David Won Kim and invites Korean speaking Christians to join the Korean language services and programs.

Located at the Sunnybank Uniting Church in Sunnybank Hills, the Sunday Korean language service is at 12.30pm and a midweek prayer meeting is held at 7pm on Wednesdays. For more information visit www.abidingwaycommunity.org.

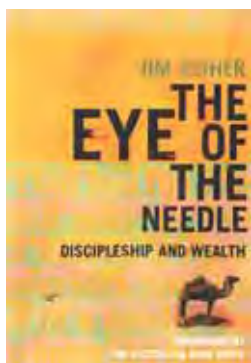
Victoria Point thanks teachers

Victoria Point State High School hosted a ceremony to thank teachers in September.

Arranged by a team led by school chaplain Brett Saunders, the ceremony included donations from local business for a sumptuous lunch for teachers, students and guests. Teachers also received a free massage and a card containing thank you messages from students.

Both the principal John Corbett and deputy Ian Ferguson are active in their local congregations.





The Eye of the Needle:
Discipleship and Wealth
By Jim Reiher
Urban Neighbours of Hope
RRP: \$25

Reiher's book is a comprehensive answer to the seductive doctrine of prosperity teaching still popular in some circles of the Christian church.

His language is non-academic making this book an easy read.

Each principle of prosperity teaching is refuted over and again. Reiher gives us an honest treatment of Biblical references surrounding important questions for Christians

such as tithing and seeking wealth for God's work.

Reiher effectively recovers the prophetic punch in the sayings of Jesus. He deals a staggering blow to those who attempt to soften Jesus' challenge to greed and materialism.

Hearing the words of Jesus about the difficulty of the rich entering the Kingdom of God should provoke us to radical discipleship.

Reiher is adamant that life is more complex than prosperity teaching suggests.

I particularly appreciated Reiher's appendix in which he makes an enlightening comparison between prosperity teaching and the New Age movement. Both of these streams of thought emphasise Karma ('you reap what you sow') and 'You can have it all' beliefs. He concludes, "Prosperity teachers are promoting New Age philosophy and humanism in the church. They throw in God and try to make it sound Christian... The 'God' of prosperity teaching is redefined and boxed into a specific role: he is there for *our* pleasure and desires."

This is a book that should be available in every church's library and on every church's bookstand.

Glenn Johnston is minister at Elanora Uniting Church

An Inconvenient Truth

Documentary film
Directed by Davis Guggenheim and starring Al Gore
Rated PG

The movie *An Inconvenient Truth*, directed by Davis Guggenheim, is a 97 minute documentary based upon a lecture that one time US presidential candidate Al Gore has given over one thousand times in recent years around the globe.

It is an eclectic mix of science, pseudo-science, personal anecdote, political reminiscences and posturing, graphic and humorous examples and memorable images that explore the science, evidence and impact of global warming, and the window of opportunity to constructively respond.

Strongly influenced by his college professor Roger Revelle, Gore has pursued a campaign to address the build-up of greenhouse gases such as carbon dioxide that will have an impact upon global temperature and climate.

Ostracized as a mad extremist by his political opponents in the 1980s, Gore must now feel somewhat vindicated that he has not wasted the past thirty years of his life trying to get people to face up to the impact that humanity is having upon global temperature and climate.

With the passion, conviction and rhetorical skill of a focussed crusader, Gore seeks to change the climate of public opinion about climate change.

At times, Gore allows hyperbole to distort or exaggerate. For example, the massive shrinkage of Lake Chad in Africa and the Aral Sea in Asia are not simply the result of global warming.

Such hyperbole is perhaps understandable given the critical importance of the subject that Gore presents. However, with his two "canaries in the coal mine", the Arctic and the Antarctic, Gore presents dramatic evidence – melting icshelves, threatened extinction of the polar bear and impacts upon ocean currents.

Much of what Gore has to say is corroborated by research by some 300 scientists working on the Arctic Climate Impact Assessment.

The material Gore presents is not new but, as a good rhetorician, Gore presents it for maximum impact and, as a consequence, global stewardship takes on a whole new perspective and urgency.

An Inconvenient Truth is an important documentary. If you miss it at the cinema, it is due for release on DVD later in the year.

Douglas L. Jones is Director of Old Testament Studies at Trinity Theological College



REVIEWS

Sovereign Grace Music Live
Sovereign Grace Ministries
Emu Music
RRP: \$29.95

Sovereign Grace Ministries is U.S. based and describe their doctrine as being "essentially Reformed, yet including a commitment to charismatic practice as biblically defined".

This is a church which has made significant worldwide contributions to the praise and worship genre of contemporary church music since the 1980s.

Sovereign grace, not unexpectedly, is the theme behind much of the music on offer. Such



titles as "His Forever" and "Grace Unmeasured" reveal a passion for worship music which both praises and responds to the grace of God in Jesus Christ.

Offered in this collection is 65 minutes of worship music, with the added benefit of a website with free lead-sheet downloads of a vast array of material.

Listen to "O God, Our Help in Ages Past" and "God Moves" and discover something stylistically light years from their original Isaac Watts and William Cowper settings. I prefer the originals!

Better options are tracks such as "Surrender All" – a great possibility for those times in worship where commitment or recommitment to God is expressed.

All in all this is a commendable worship music resource. Not a stunner, but a resource with considerable Biblical, theological and lyrical depth.

David MacGregor is one of Australia's leading church music specialists. Visit www.together-tocelebrate.com.au

Prayer. Does it make any difference?

By Philip Yancy
Hodder and Stoughton
RRP: \$29.95

Yancy's books are easy to read, clear and straightforward, with relevant examples from daily life and ministry, and this book is no exception.

Everyday, ordinary people can read this book and discover something not just about prayer, but also about themselves and their faith.

The author explores a multitude of topics about prayer using such headings as "Keeping company with

God", "Unravelling the mysteries" and "The practice of prayer".

Each section is divided into small chunks of discourse like "Why pray?" and "Unanswered prayer: whose fault?".

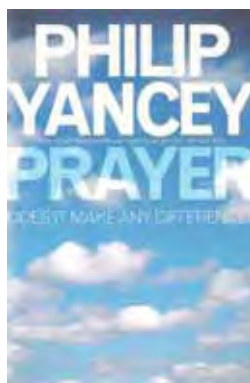
He writes of the theory and theology behind the idea of praying, and the practicalities – words used, and what it is we pray for.

As a Hospital Chaplain, I appreciated reading the sections about healing and prayer.

I personally support most of Yancy's words about prayer and would urge anyone to read the book, whether or not they agree with the author's theology, for prayer is such a significant part of our Christian journey.

I continually meet patients in hospital who ask about prayer and think about it as something central in their lives and that of their families. Yancy's book encouraged me to revisit the whole idea of prayer.

Rev Rowena Harris is Head of the Department of Pastoral Care at the Wesley Hospital and a member of "The Grove" Uniting



Hear the Heart Beat - with Henri Nouwen: Reflections on the Way of Seeking Heart

By Charles R. Ringma
Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge (SPCK), London www.spckonline.com

Henri Nouwen (1932-1996) is widely recognised as one of the most popular and prolific writers on spirituality in recent years.

In this reflective reader, Ringma has built on Nouwen's invitation for us to be in touch with our inner selves and invites us to join him as he contemplates this in the footsteps of Nouwen, the "fragile human being ever wrestling with his identity and security".

Ringma sees our inner being, our heart, as a place divided where the opposites of fear and love, faith and doubt, insecurity and control, love and resentment cohabit our 'inner house'. He sees the need to contemplate the many and conflicting cries of our own hearts as we live fully in the real world of today.

He tells of the inner trans-



formation of our hearts as we listen to the voice of God, as we mature in our faith, as we develop new goals and values. He talks of a faith which engages the head as well as the heart.

He writes of the darkness of the wounded heart and describes the heart's true home as finding a resting place in the heart of God.

Sometimes a little heavy and laboured we will all recognise ourselves in these pages and read it more than once.

Rod Jensen is a retired Professor of Economics and a member of Indooroopilly Uniting

Child of the Light – Walking through Advent and Christmas

By Beth A. Richardson
Upper Room Books
RRP: \$15.35

The approach of Christmas brings with it lots of things to be done and a great sense of busy-ness.

One of the great challenges during the Advent season can be intentionally making time for God amongst all the activity.

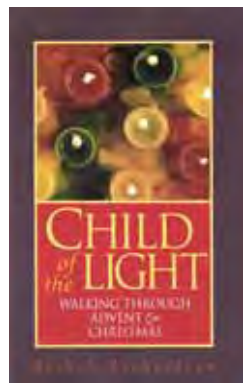
Child of the Light provides a great way to do that without being too time consuming.

Beth Richardson has used songs and hymns as the basis for a journey through the Advent and Christmas season using a portion of the song's lyrics to guide the thoughts and reflections each day.

Child of the Light will help readers connect with God during the course of the weeks and also discover anew poignant hymns and songs for the season.

The ease and simplicity of this devotional will help the reader rediscover the joy and wonder of Advent and Christmas.

Andrew Bell is YACMU Regional Worker in the Downs Presbytery



PRAYER DIARY

5 November:
Cairns Emmanuel

Please pray for our congregation.

- Twelve week Bible Study Series 'Christian Community'. We are seeking to grow in our understanding and practice of what it means to be a Christian Community so that we may become more alive and active in our witness to Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour of the world.

- A new home group has begun in our congregation this year which is exciting and we pray that other new groups may form as a result of this new group.

- The Good Samaritan Ministry Centre began in May. We lease property from BlueCare in Cairns and are currently trying to develop a Christian ministry training centre, as well as providing low cost accommodation for congregation and community members.

- Multicultural ministry. We are currently sharing our facilities with five other congregations from different cultures. Every three months we have a combined multicultural worship service. We pray that God will continue to draw us closer together as one people united in Christ.

12 November:
Ashgrove Ave / The Grove

The past few months have been an eventful time for us here at 'the Grove'. We sadly said goodbye to our minister of six years in August and welcomed our new supply minister. Change can affect people in a number of different ways. Although there may be some feelings of uncertainty with regard to our future, on the whole we look towards it enthusiastically.

- Please pray for our future and for all those involved in the decision making process. May they have God's wisdom regarding the best way we may effectively be used to further God's kingdom in these communities.

- Our 'Living Room' program that ministers to adults with

intellectual disabilities. We are continually amazed at the impact this service has. Pray for continued purpose and direction for this program as well as for all those who are involved.

- A genuine 'connection' between the Living Room and the Grove congregations, and practical and purposeful ways in which such a connection can be facilitated.

- For wisdom in successfully providing meaningful ministry to a multi-ethnic and multi-generational congregation.

- Our long-serving elders as they continue to faithfully serve this congregation.

19 November:
Ashmore

More commonly known as The Church of The Good Shepherd, Ashmore Uniting is on the Central Gold Coast.

The church shares its building with a Seventh Day Adventist congregation.

We are right next door to Ashmore Shopping Plaza which offers great exposure for the Church in the community. We are currently working through a visioning process, asking God for guidance as we seek to respond to needs in our community. Pray that our congregation takes the next step in faith as we trust and respond to the journey God is leading us along.

Our new minister, Rev Bradley Foote and his family have settled in well and we give thanks to God for that smooth transition. We also have begun to partner with Robina Uniting Church.

We would value prayer for:

- The outworking of this relationship as it seeks to develop Kingdom values that will grow the Church and develop people's gifts of service and witness.

- Our Op Shop in the Plaza has been a beautiful place for the face of the Church to be experienced in our community. Pray for manager Jill and her merry band of volunteers, the customers and donors.

- Our playgroup began earlier this year and many families have

found a place of friendship, social connection and Christian love.

Pray for our leaders, parents and children as we try to make significant bridges with our Sunday School.

26 November:
Beaudesert District

We are in an area that is starting to see significant changes and projections are for even greater growth and development.

Community reactions to this vary from a sense of excitement through sadness and even fear. Rathdowney, Lamington and Barney View congregations are largely unaffected at this stage.

The community of Rathdowney is relieved but still a little shaken by the now rejected dam proposal.

The people of Canungra are very concerned at the proposal to pump water from Canungra Creek.

Interim minister Brian Whitlock helped make some structural changes and opened eyes and hearts to the need for and benefits of change.

The arrival of our new minister from South Australia brought more than a new accent and love for AFL.

It is wonderful to see teams of people involved in leadership and the life of the church, especially true for Beaudesert.

The style of worship is in transition and regular social events attract people of all ages.

We have a great sign in a visible location and people appreciate the changing messages.

We are beginning to see a growing Sunday School and more young people.

Pray that growth will continue and for leaders to emerge.

Pray also for:

- Drought breaking rains.
- Communities in transition.
- Social outreach.
- Deeper relational connections into changing communities.

- Ministry to families in Beaudesert and Canungra.

- Developing music and worship team in Beaudesert.

- Growing sense of community and fun in the life of the churches.

- Pastoral carers

- Sunday school teachers and leaders.



Mt Mee ramps up access

Built in 1922 the modest timber Mt Mee Community Church was to serve all Protestant denominations and this early ecumenical position was extended later to include Catholic services.

As a six-year-old girl Olive Bass was one of the early members of the Sunday school and she continued to attend until church records minute her apology from a church committee meeting shortly before her death in 2002. In September this year a Service of Commemoration was held for Olive and a new ramp access to the church and new gardens were dedicated in her honour.

Jean celebrates 104 years

Granite Belt Parish member Jean Pidgeon celebrated her 104th birthday in October with the help of relatives, staff and friends at Carramar, a hostel for senior citizens, in Stanthorpe.

A remarkable woman, Mrs Pidgeon was the first president of the Dalveen CWA, ran a farm with her husband Stan during World War II to produce food for the war effort and was awarded a BEM for efforts above and beyond the call of "duty". They donated timber for the present Dalveen Uniting Church.

Granite Belt minister Rev David Graham said when he visits Mrs Pidgeon she often asks, "Why does God still keep me alive?"

He replies; "Because you continue to be such an inspiration to others".

"To me she exemplifies what Jesus meant when he taught us to go the second mile, for in a world so often tainted by selfishness, her continuing generosity continues to inspire us all to do better."



Jean Pidgeon celebrates her 104th birthday with great-grand niece Dominique Lamont. Photo courtesy of Graeme Parkinson

Preliminary Notice

Kamp Stacey is 50 in 2007!

Saturday 21 April 2007 10am-3pm

Come one, come all to celebrate and share lunch and memories.

Lunch will be catered on site at a cost of \$12.50 per person, or \$20 per couple. Numbers are limited so book early.

If sufficient interest is shown for the hiring of a bus from Brisbane on the day this could be organised but will depend on early advice - contact **Kamp Stacey** on **07 4666 1240**.



Invitation

Alexandra Park is 60 this year!

Monday 27 November 2006 10am-3pm

Come one, come all to celebrate and share lunch and memories, with special guest Dorothy Gibson.

Lunch will be catered on site by Alexandra Park staff at a cost of \$12.50, or \$20 per couple. Numbers are limited to 100 so book early.

Reserve your place by contacting **Alexandra Park** on **07 5443 8966** during office hours

Bus departs Broadwater Road Uniting Church at 8am and at Sandgate Uniting Church at 9am.



On the threshold of joy...

Meditative prayer for Advent using the songs and prayers of the Taizé community.

St. Philip's Anglican Church, 115 Cornwall St., Annerley.
5.30pm Sunday
November 26 to
December 17.

Enquiries to
James Macdonald 3391 3915.

Divorce: nothing has changed

I was so saddened by the article you write in the October edition of *Journey* titled "Churches Divorce Traditional Attitudes".

Despite your arguments, I still believe that God hates divorce.

He said so quite clearly in the Bible and I don't see how that could have changed.

According to your argument, Jesus' radical views of marriage and divorce were spoken because divorce was so "common practice" and women were often disadvantaged by divorce.

I don't see how either of those factors have changed!

One treads on very dangerous ground when they try to re-interpret such direct statements from God in order to suit the culture of today.

Though it is certainly wrong for the church to not accept divorcees and for the church to make them feel uncomfortable, it is a separate issue that should not be rectified through declaring that divorce is no longer "bad".

This willingness to cloud the distinction between right and wrong makes me incredibly sad and brings me one step closer to leaving the Uniting Church.

Kristin Heron
Townsville

Thanks

Three cheers for the letters of the Rev Aubrey Baker and Rev Dr Bill Adams in the October edition of *Journey*.

I could not agree more. Let's get on with the job; proclaim the gospel and truly exercise the ministry of Christ.

Ted Hutton
Strathpine

Sin and climate change

Bible students know that sin in the world, a spiritual malaise, affects the physical realm. The first example we have of this was when the Edenic couple disobeyed God and they saw the first leaf die off a tree, lambs were slaughtered to provide them with sheep skins for covering, because their robe of Christ's righteousness that had until then covered them, had departed.

Further the prohibitions against pagan worship forms foretold the inevitable consequences in droughts, wars and starvation.

So instead of discussing the effects of climate change, we should be calling for repentance and forsaking of sin, the cause of the problems, and then the God of creation will correct the dislocation in creation.

Charles Gaitskill
Stanthorpe

Alcohol and young people

If you care for the welfare of others, think of adolescent drinkers.

In a national survey of young Australians in the 12-14 age group, one quarter of them said they often get drunk.

A further 10% of the same group said they wished they could. The common reason stated was "something to do" and "killing time".

There are other contemporary signs: youthful binge drinking is the fashion; vodka and rum preferred to wine and beer (a faster way to the desired 'glow'); and the celebration of "Schoolies Week" where a common expectation is to go "blotto", or some other term for being drunk.

Such a destructive mindset is a world away from "social drinking" and the 12% of Australian youth who choose abstinence.

A young person lives for today and tomorrow's downturn, or ill-health in twenty years, is not a concern.

In *Reader's Digest*, years ago, I wrote "too many parents associate alcohol education with a total ban on drinking; or they thrust



Have your say

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

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The dead stare of disconnection

One of the things that continues to disturb me about Brisbane city life is the disconnection that seems to exist among people.

This has been emphasized for me in recent days by the number of people who serve me in shops and fail to engage me. In some cases there is no eye contact and little more than the required monosyllabic responses.

After a while I get an eerie feeling and wonder whether there is something wrong with me until I notice how other people are treated in a similar way.

This kind of disconnection is highlighted walking around streets and shopping centres where rather than acknowledge

each other's existence the tendency of people seems to be to wrap themselves in their own concerns and avoid any kind of eye contact or acknowledgement of those they scurry past.

Not everyone is so disconnected but sometimes when some sort of connection is made it feels almost as if a taboo has been broken.

This all takes me back to year 11 at school when we studied the play *Equus* in English at school.

One of the lines has stayed with me all these years:

"The Normal is the good smile in a child's eyes. It's also the dead stare in a million adults."

The implication of the statement is scary.

The transition from childhood

to adulthood somehow robs us of life.

If the norm for adults is the soulless 'dead stare' then we are in trouble as a society as the lack of human connection breaks down communities.

Christianity offers a powerful corrective to this dead stare. The imperative for us as Christians is to love one another. This means to live in loving community with God and each other.

In an age when other relationships are breaking down the importance of the Church providing a place of connection and care is elevated all the more.

Peter Lockhart
Clayfield/Hamilton

alcohol upon their children in the misguided belief that they are aiding their education.

Good education, in this field, consists of a frank and informed two-way discussion that helps the child to recognize the problem, then to encourage them to find their own solution.

Socrates gave a wise word to his scholars. He advised them that it was not the formal lessons that would determine the outcome of their lives – but the forces at work in the market place.

The young soon come to see the pressure of peers, but the relentless drive toward social conformity they may yet have to learn.

They already know the power of alluring advertisements, one aspect of mass media.

Phillip Ramsay
Manly West

Music Giveaway

Mr Alex Tucker has more than 200 pieces of sheet music from the estate of his late wife to give away. Most is for soprano voice with a few items for baritone or chorus.

He has prepared separate indexes and can send copies of all or any on request to atu15402@bigpond.net.au or by phone at 3420 0187.

Support prison ministry

Musicians to go to Women's and Men's prisons, volunteers to lead a Bible study with a chaplain, volunteers for phone counselling with Lifeline Community Care in the area of Prison Ministry, Christmas Hampers for families of prisoners and much more.

Please contact Prison Ministry Coordinator Beatriz Skippen by pager 3830 5585 or mobile 0409 080 251.

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Historically Speaking



The oldest funeral business in Queensland

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

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

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

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

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

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

Alex Gow Funerals

A Brisbane-owned family business, established in 1840.

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JOURNEY asks...

Who is your faith hero or favourite saint and how does that person inspire you?

Neil Sims

My favourite saint won't be found in the pages of church history. Instead, he is a living saint, one who inspired me as I began my ministry.

If we define a saint as "one whom the light shines through", Maurie Harriman offered true light to me when I became his colleague in Stafford - Everton Park - West Chermiside Presbyterian Charge following my ordination on 26 October, 1973.

Maurie provided a warm, nurturing environment for a young minister learning the ropes.

We met weekly for prayer and planning, for sharing and stimulation. I genuinely looked forward to my time with him, and valued the hospitality of a cuppa and some toast with Promite.

His respect for people and care in relationships became a model for me. It didn't matter that I was just starting out. He treated me as an equal.

When I was unsure of myself in ministry, Maurie offered guidance.

Before my first visit to a couple seeking baptism for their child, I asked him what he did, he told me, I wrote it down, and then I went out and did it.

For years afterwards, I continued to evaluate my practice - but Maurie gave me a beginning.

Perhaps Maurie didn't realize how much he was mentoring me. We were only together for about 15 months.

He never "big-noted" himself, and he consistently sought to be authentic.

When we studied the Bible together, his humility showed through as he was open to new learnings.

He was not afraid to share his vulnerability - to tell me how he once was not coping in ministry.



At times, he may have been too self-effacing, too aware of his shortcomings.

When he wrestled with pastoral issues, he struggled to discern what it is to be a faithful disciple of Christ.

Maurie did not model an easy faith where one was always "on top".

His faith was authentic and his life was marked by integrity - what a precious gift that was!

This saint majored on attitudes

ahead of actions - on nurture and hospitality, on respect and care, on guidance and honesty.

Saint Maurice lit the path of ministry for me!

Neil Sims is Director of Studies in Ministry and Mission and Director of Field Education at Trinity Theological College and is currently Acting Principal.

Rev Maurie Harriman gave permission for this story to be shared

Laura Brown

The greatest influences in my faith have been my parents, John and Yvonne, particularly my father.

I was lucky enough to be brought up in a Christian home as part of the Catholic Church and as children we learnt about a God who loved us more than anything we could imagine.

My father taught me to question and to explore what it was that I believed.

When I went along to the Uniting Church Youth Group in Year 11 he encouraged me, as that was what I wanted.

I remember him saying "Go - just don't blindly accept everything. Think about what it is you are learning and believing."

I am inspired by my father's love and acceptance of others, no matter their race or creed.

Dad does not sit in judgement of others, he accepts them for who they are although he may not agree with everything they say or do.

I remember when he would have great discussions with a neighbour who was a member of the Jehovah Witnesses. Dad did not agree with all he said, but he accepted him for who he was.

My father has inspired me to love and accept others, no matter the differences.

He has inspired me to ask questions about what it is that I believe and this has helped me to grow in my relationship with Jesus Christ.

I am also inspired by my father's faith. He is very strong in what he believes and is prepared to stand up for it.

My parents brought us out from South Africa because they did not want to bring their children up with apartheid - something they did not agree with. That has inspired me - to be so strong in what you believe, that you are willing to leave your family and friends behind.

Laura Brown is a registered nurse working in community health, Secretary of the Prosepine-Witsunday Church Council and is currently undertaking a Period of Discernment



Joan Cook

My favourite 'Saint' is Aidan, a relatively unknown figure in the history of the English Church who came from the monastery at Iona.

In 562 Columba, a priest in Ireland, came to Britain to preach to the Picts, settling at Iona with his monks and building the monastery which is still there. (The Picts had colonised what is now Lowland Scotland).

It was from this monastery that Aidan came to Northumbria, an area south of the present Scottish border, at the request of King Oswald.

Oswald had seen Christianity in action while he was in exile among the Scots as a young man, and



when he became King he wanted to teach his people about Jesus.

The King gave Aidan and his monks Lindisfarne for their monastery.

Aidan and his monks lived simply, walking through the

country, and pausing at each marketplace, where they set up a cross, sat down and told the good news of Jesus.

King Oswald became a saintly Christian and during his lifetime, four provinces, with four languages came together, making Northumbria the largest kingdom in the land.

Aidan brought an enduring faith to the people of the north. He died in 612 and was buried at Lindisfarne.

Britain at this time, was a series of small kingdoms of different tribes who had invaded and settled.

There were the original Britons in the West, Scots from Ireland in

the north, Picts from Scandinavia, Angles (English), with Saxons and Jutes in the south, the last three from Europe.

So there were different languages and many conflicts over territory, while different beliefs proliferated.

The unification of England came through Christianity, and

Aidan was a significant part of the process.

What I like about Aidan, is his grass-roots approach to teaching the people; because it was lasting and not dependent on the faith of the King imposed on his people.

Joan Cook is a lay member of the Wavell Heights congregation